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HIGH OCTANE

A Rearview Mirror Retrospective

by

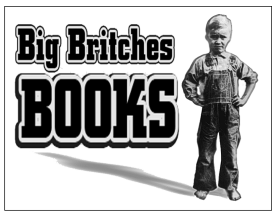
Jim McCormick

with Peter Weisz

FINAL DRAFT

October 10, 2005

ISBN 0-9749838-2-9



Published by Big Britches Books
an imprint of
Peter Weisz Publishing, LLC
11571 Westbury Place Drive
Carmel, Indiana 46032 USA
(317) 702-4174
peter@peterweisz.com
homepage.mac.com/pweisz/PetersPortfolio/Menu30.html

ISBN: 0-9749838-2-9

Printed in the U.S.A.
by Ewing Printing, Inc.
Vincennes, Indiana

Cover photo by Elson-Alexandre Studios
Cover design by Peter Weisz

First Printing October, 2005

A Chorus of Acclaim for "High Octane." A sampling…

" I have known and admired Jim McCormick as a close family friend for over 45 years. In *High Octane*, Jim has captured the driving determination and powerful passions that have fueled his extraordinary career. From the humblest of beginnings to the pinnacle of his industry, Jim's journey serves as an inspiration to all who would strive for success in America. This book recounts that journey faithfully, eloquently and in a highly entertaining manner. I recommend it to anyone who is looking for an outstanding and uplifting testimony to the American Dream."

Birch Bayh,
Former United States Senator

" Jim McCormick is quintessentially American – a humble man from the heartland of our country who has achieved great things through hard work, perseverance and an unfailing optimism that inspires all who know him. All of these qualities shine through in *High Octane*, a wonderful story, simply and eloquently told. All who aspire to success in business, entrepreneurship, leadership and life should read this book and take its plain spoken wisdom to heart."

Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
United States Chamber of Commerce

" As the pages of *High Octane* reveal, Jim McCormick is the kind of person everyone wishes they were. Once you read it, you'll have no excuse for not being great yourself because he has set the example and laid the pattern in front of you. He has high ideals, finishes what he starts, hugs you when you need it, and is a perfect foxhole partner.

" As another great writer, Mr. Louis Lamour (whom we met together at Tamarron) would say: 'Jim McCormick is a man to ride the river with.' "

Wayne E. Ahart
Chairman
Brokers National Life Assurance Co.

"*High Octane* really describes the amazing life of Jim McCormick. As a friend, there is none more loyal; as a partner in work or play, there is none more enjoyable and productive. Above all, comes his God and his family. This book completely captures his drive, his passions and his faithfulness."

John Erickson
Former President, Fellowship of Christian Athletes
Former Head Basketball Coach, University of Wisconsin

"An engaging autobiography by a man who has lived life with gusto. Memorable both as a business chronicle and as a deeply personal tale."

Robert H. McKinney
Chairman of the Executive Committee and former Chairman
First Indiana Corporation
and former chairman, Federal Home Loan Bank Board

"High Octane is a must read for individuals who have drive and energy and who aspire to a successful career. Jim McCormick, throughout his lifetime, embodied these attributes and his autobiography clearly indicates how these characteristics contributed to his success."

— Bennett C. Whitlock Jr.
Former President of American Trucking Associations

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Magnificent Marilyn,

and to the blessed memory of my beloved Bettye,

and to my children, Jane, Mac, Pat, Mike and their families.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the following individuals and institutions for their very valuable assistance in the preparation of this book. Please accept these sentiments of sincere appreciation for helping to make this book a reality.

To Senator Birch E. Bayh, for his immeasurable assistance regarding the 25th Amendment.

To Kenny Cragen, Tisha Eder and the staff of the Indiana Motor Truck Association.

To the Indiana Chamber of Commerce.

To the American Trucking Associations.

To Bus 'N Bikers for their research assistance.

To my wife, Marilyn McCormick, for her valuable input and editorial assistance.

To Sherry Ellerman, for her outstanding transcription work.

To Sharon Merin, for her excellent transcription and proofreading assistance.

To DogEar Publishing, Indianapolis, for their editorial expertise and production assistance.

To Susan Christopherson, for her outstanding copy editing and editorial services.

To Jim Ziegler and everyone at Ewing Printing, Vincennes, Indiana, for their hard work in the printing and production of this book.

And finally, to Peter Weisz, whose essential assistance in all areas, including authoring, research, organization, layout, production and project management proved invaluable. I could not have completed this book without Peter's wise counsel and guidance.

"I expect to pass through this life but once. If, therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not deter or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again."

— William Penn

INTRODUCTION

Comparing the course of a person's life to a wandering highway — with its ups and downs and twists and turns — is probably the most overused metaphor in all of literature. Despite that, and fully aware that we're all bound for the same eventual and unavoidable destination, I still can't help looking at my own life as an amazing and adventure-filled journey.

Perhaps the reason I find this metaphor so attractive is that much of my life has been spent in motion — both literally and figuratively. From my youngest days amidst the cornrows of our southwest Indiana farm, I have held a deep-rooted fascination with high-powered machines of locomotion. The one characteristic that all such vehicles share — be they tractors, autos, eighteen-wheelers, boats, airplanes, motor coaches, or motorcycles — is their dependence on fuel to power and propel them on their way. Similarly, my life's journey has been fueled by my

faith and by family values of hard work, self-discipline, and vision I absorbed back on the farm. That is a powerful potion that has kept me going strong for fourscore (that's 80) plus years. In fact, it has been God's grace that has enabled me to reach this 80-year milestone and that has served as the inexhaustible "high octane" power source that has faithfully fueled my life's journey.

Whenever a person sits down and tries to record the highlights of a lifetime, a lot of questions start to pop up. Questions like: "Will everyone think I'm an egomaniac for writing my autobiography?" and "Who is going to actually read this book?" and "What if I leave someone out or get someone upset?" I think the easiest way to explain my purpose in writing this book is to list those things that I intend for this book *not* to be.

First of all, I'm **not** seeking to trumpet a self-congratulatory litany of my life's accomplishments. I intend to stay away, as much as possible, from the perpendicular pronoun "I", and focus instead upon the many faces and forces that have helped to shape my journey. This desire does not spring from false humility. Rather, I find those books that follow the format of "and then I did this, and then I did that…" unbearably boring. And I truly want this book to be a pleasant, meaningful, and enjoyable ride for the reader.

I'm also **not** trying to produce a bestseller that might get turned into a major motion picture. Although episodes in my life could rightly be viewed as thrilling and action packed, keeping you on the edge of your seat is **not** high on my agenda.

This book is definitely not motivated by any desire for revenge or an "I told you so" attitude. That type of thing would go contrary to the values to which I alluded earlier. All in all, I've been very fortunate in terms of my relationships. I have friends today with whom I first became acquainted back in grade school, and I'm on good terms with all my former business associates and family members.

The people closest to me have urged me for years to document what they always refer to as "such an interesting life." Providing a response to all this urging, although definitely a factor, is **not** the primary mission of this book, either.

I believe it to be important to view one's life in a context outside of one's own personal experience. The journey is not the destination. For each of us to feel fulfilled, we must be convinced that our life's odyssey has a valid meaning. I've always tried to stick to some solid advice often offered by my father: "Try to go through this old world and leave it in a bit better shape than when you found it."

Now, don't get me wrong. I didn't write this book to reveal the meaning of life or to espouse any personal ideologies. I'll leave that job to the philosophers and the pundits. Likewise, this book should not be regarded as a road map. If someone reads it and decides to take a page or two of guidance from my experiences, well, that's good and fine with me. But if you are expecting a point-by-point prescription for how to achieve success in business or in life, I'm afraid you've picked up the wrong book. The self-help section of any bookstore is loaded with volumes that promise that sort of thing.

Nothing would please me more than if some young people, after having read this book and, finding themselves at a crossroad in life, should use what they've learned from my life's lessons to help them in making decisions about which road to follow — to leave the world a bit better than they found it.

When faced with choosing from 80 years of life's episodes and experiences, determinations need to be made about which stories to cover in this book and which ones to omit. In contemplating those decisions, I have tried to keep that young person at the crossroad in my thoughts. I have asked myself, "Will this story help to propel him or her down the right road, or is it not really all that relevant?" It is my wish that adhering to this guideline has served to imbue my narrative with something of a higher purpose. I am hopeful that my personal testimony will help the next generation get a sense of who they are and where they fit into the larger picture.

Looking back toward the heritage of my pioneering ancestors, while at the same time looking ahead into the faces of my children and grandchildren, I am able to view my own life as part of a continuum through the centuries. I hope to pass this feeling of continuity and transmission of tradition along to the reader and, in particular, to my family and heirs.

Finally, a bit of a disclaimer. In the preparation of this book, I have spent considerable time and energy in making sure that I have my facts straight. In the knowledge that my memory is far from a photographic one, I have conducted research, carried out interviews, and submitted prepublication chapters for review to informed parties, in an effort to ensure accuracy. I wanted to do all I could to make sure that names are spelled correctly and dates are accurate. Despite these best efforts, and given human fallibility, it is conceivable that errors may have crept in to this, my personal history. In terms of factual content, for the most part, this is the way that I remember how events happened, and I may have recalled some details incorrectly. If you spot an error of any sort in the text of this book, please understand that it was not included intentionally. I urge you to contact me and let me know about any errors you discover. If possible, I will see that the error is corrected in the book's next printing. Thank you for your understanding.

In preparing this book, I have often yearned to be able to read personal recollections penned by my long-ago relatives. While a family history of sorts was published in the 1930s by my great uncle Shuler McCormick, a first-hand account of my great-grandfather John McCormick's life, for example, written as he served in the Grand Army of the Republic during the Civil War, would be of priceless value. Unfortunately, no such diary or memoir exists. I suppose that it is this deficiency that I am seeking to remedy by writing these words. In case some future McCormick in the year 2150 has an urge to learn about me back here in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries — and assuming that such things as books still exist — he or she will be able to read about me in my own words. Words written while I still walked the earth, not after I was buried in it.

Which brings me to the most important aspect of why I decided to write this book. It's simply a sense of gratitude and obligation to the Good Lord who has granted me a soundness of mind and body so that even after I hit 80, I'm still firing on all cylinders, and, as long as I keep running on that "high octane" fuel — I don't intend to slow down one bit!

So, for all these reasons, I invite you to pull yourself up into the cab and sit next to me for a spell. As the miles and the memories flash by, I'll try to keep you interested and entertained as I share some true stories about the roadblocks, detours, summits, and valleys of my long, and occasionally profitable, journey. Sit back and buckle up. I promise you the ride of a lifetime.

"If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

—Henry David Thoreau

PROLOGUE

An enormous wake of road dust — visible for miles along the flat Indiana farmland — arose from the long stretch of gravel road and billowed out behind my newly purchased, bright-red 1942 K-5 one-and-one-half ton International truck with its 16-foot-long combination grain and stock body. The dust swelled and ballooned in mighty clouds against the red dawn sky as my brother Ed and I tore across the Knox County roads on our way to the old St. Thomas auxiliary airfield. I was behind the big steering wheel and Nipper, my little rat terrier, sat perched on Ed's lap with his head popped out the window, luxuriating in the cool, rushing air stream. Ed was only eight but was old enough to help with the chores at St. Thomas farm. As the war in Europe and the Pacific consumed most of America's aircraft, by the spring of 1944 the Army no longer felt the need to maintain these several hundred acres as an auxiliary airstrip to George Field and had decided to lease the land to local farmers. The terrain was level and not too gravelly, so our family decided to farm some of it in the hope of increasing our crop production. After all, I had been deferred from military service so that I could serve on the home front, raising needed foodstuffs for our troops. As a 19-year-old

Indiana farm boy, I was doing my bit, and little brother Ed was right there to help me.

The K-5 was my very first truck and it was understandably my life's pride and joy. I had bought it from our neighbor, Walter "Bub" DeLisle (pronounced de-leel'), who operated a produce and hauling business. Bub had managed to demonstrate a vital need to the authorities, and thereby got his hands on a rare Transport Coupon. This was the only way anyone could purchase a new vehicle during those WWII rationing years, and Bub had managed to convince the authorities that he qualified for the purchase of a new truck. So as soon as Bub took delivery of his brand new truck, he placed his used K-5 on the market.

As soon as I saw that truck setting next to Bub's melon-packing shed with a "For Sale" sign stuck to the windshield, I knew I had to have it. I finally understood the Biblical commandment about "Thou shalt not covet…" because I coveted that truck to pieces. The 16-foot chassis had a stiff-leg tandem welded on the back of the frame. This extra axle was not connected to the differential and simply provided more support, allowing for heavier payloads. The truck could haul either grain or livestock, and I recall feeling that this truck represented my ticket into the future.

It broke my heart to do it, but I was forced to sell my prized, metallic-blue 1941 Ford convertible to raise the money to buy Bub's truck. I had bought that car just the summer before from Duke Memering, who owned the Texaco station at eighth and main streets in Vincennes, with its adjacent used car lot. It was my first car and it held lots of great "top-down" memories of cruising the streets of Vincennes with my "pals and gals." But, by early 1944, I was 19 and the time had come to get serious about the farm and my future. Of course, I could easily justify the truck purchase because every farm can use a truck for general hauling of feed, livestock and fertilizer, but that wasn't the only thing on my mind. With a truck like this, I could start hauling produce and freight for a fee. For me, becoming a trucker was a step up from my "dirt farmer" roots, and this vehicle could make that step a reality. My idea was to haul produce, as Bub was doing, during that somewhat idle summer

period after all the crops had been "laid by" and received their final cultivation before the harvest.

I wound up selling the Ford convertible to a newly commissioned second lieutenant over at George Field, Illinois, and combining the proceeds with what little money I had accumulated thanks to 4-H projects and the like. I closed the deal with Bub in the spring of 1944. By mid-May, there was still plenty of fieldwork to be done, both at our homestead and over at St. Thomas, before the time came for me to start my "hoped-for" career as a produce hauler. So as Ed, Nipper and I sped across the countryside that morning, I imagined myself racing the clock up to Chicago with a load of ripe watermelons ready for market. I glanced over at Ed and saw that he looked a bit drowsy.

"Did you have fun on the last day of school?" I asked Ed sharply.

"Yeah, we just played outside and had some cookies and stuff," he replied with a little yawn. As in most Midwest rural communities, the public schools finished their classes in May to allow students to stay home and work on the farm. Ed was a genuinely big help and seemed to enjoy working outdoors all day.

"What do you want me to bring you from Chicago?" I said with a grin.

"When're you going to Chicago?" he exclaimed in his high-pitched squeal.

"Oh, after the crops get laid by, I suppose," I replied.

"Why you going there?" he asked.

"I gotta make some money with this truck somehow, Eddie," I explained. "I'm going to use this truck to haul watermelons to the big south side produce market up there."

"Just bring me a new basketball, okay?" Ed requested after a bit of pondering.

"Sure thing," I chuckled as I mashed the accelerator down after throwing the transmission into high gear. I knew this route so well — along the Old Decker Road — that I could drive it blindfolded. So as my left foot automatically moved to the

clutch, allowing me to downshift as we approached Purcell (pronounced purr'-sell) Station just past the South Bridge Road. I knew that I had to come to a complete stop as the East Purcell Station Road crossed over a railroad embankment en route to U.S. Highway 41. Our road intersected the rail line at a sharp angle, and, as I had done many times before, I brought the nose of the truck all the way up the berm to the very edge of the tracks. From my past experience I didn't expect any trains to pass through Purcell Station at this hour, so stopping at the crossing was, by this point, a formality. There was no barrier arm, and no safety lights or bells were in evidence. Just a simple X-shaped sign marked "Railroad Crossing" by the side of the road.

Because of the sharp angle, I enjoyed a long, clear view down the track to my left and, after coming to my sloppy stop, I could see that it was all clear in that direction. Rather than contort my body around to the right in order to check the opposite direction, I said over my shoulder, "How does it look, Ed?"

Ed took a moment to readjust Nipper, who had the boy more or less pinned against his seat, while I slowly began to roll forward, inching closer to the tracks. After dislodging the pooch, Ed turned around sharply to his right, and I'll never forget his breathless, terror-soaked stutter: "Th-th-th-there it is!"

The massive locomotive struck the truck and I mashed down on the brake pedal with all my strength.

I sat there frozen in fear, waiting for the world to come to an end. But that didn't happen. Instead, I noticed a "clunk-clunk-clunk" coming from the front of the truck at regular 2-second intervals. Although still paralyzed with shock, I began to comprehend that the train engine had merely clipped the truck's front bumper and probably bent it out of shape. As each subsequent train car whooshed by, it, too, grazed against the bent bumper accounting for the rhythmic clunking. By this time I realized that a distance of less than a few inches had spared our lives. With my body still rendered motionless, my mind rushed to consider what might have happened. Had I pulled up just a bit further before stopping, the train would

certainly have smashed into the truck's chassis. As it was, disaster was averted by good fortune and the slimmest possible margin. As I mutely watched car after rolling car swiftly strike the bumper, my thinking eventually began to clear. I realized that the front of the truck was setting on a sharp incline. All I had to do was release the brake and the truck would roll gently back down to the roadbed and out of harm's way. As I slid gingerly down and away from the onrushing train, I realized that my failure to act quickly had exposed us to great and avoidable danger. Any one of those cars could have snagged our truck by the bumper and dragged us along into disaster.

"You okay, Ed?" I finally got out, but my brother was too terrified to speak.

Finally, Nipper's barking brought us back to reality. Before we continued on to St. Thomas, I got out and made sure that the bent-back bumper was not rubbing against the front tire. Evidently, the war effort had played havoc with the train schedules and, from what I learned later, freight trains were likely to come through at almost any time these days.

In recounting the episode to my mother that evening, I told her the whole story. I'll always remember the anguish in her eyes as she contemplated the loss of two of her children. My father, who in those days was serving in Washington, DC, with the Commodity Credit Corporation, did not learn about the episode until the following weekend when he arrived home for his regular monthly visit. He chewed me out for my recklessness, but also spoke to me earnestly about the dangers of becoming frozen with fear.

Looking back on that close call from today's perspective, I have come to realize that this was one of the first times in my life that the Good Lord saw fit to look out for my welfare. As do many survivors of tragedy, I felt that our lives were spared for some sort of purpose. A few inches closer to the rail, and by now both Ed and I would be nothing more than long-forgotten memories.

The effects of that day have stayed with me over the years in more ways than one. Obviously, the whole experience brought me into contact with my own mortality. It also taught me to expect the unexpected, because you never know when a speeding freight train might be just around the bend. But aside from these basic life lessons, that episode had a much deeper impact on the 19-year-old farm boy that I was, and upon the man that I was to become. I came away from the experience with a new appreciation of where I stood in the chain of continuity that made up my family and my community. I began to take an interest in how our people had arrived to this corner of the world, and the forces that accounted for who we were as a family.

Shortly after the train incident, I read Uncle Shuler McCormick's book, *Who We Are*. He had presented it to me some years before, but I had previously only glanced through its chronicles of our family history. Now that I had picked it up and began poring over its pages, I found that I could not put it down. Thanks to some intensive genealogy research carried out by my great-uncle Shuler (my Grandpa McCormick's brother) in the 1930s, a record exists of our family lineage on my father's side all the way back to Ireland in the seventeenth century. Looking it over, one can see that our family's roots have been embedded into the rich soil of the Wabash Valley for generations. But going back even further, we can get a glimpse of where we came from and thereby put our lives into some sort of historic perspective. I can honestly say that reading that book at that critical juncture did a great deal to help me put my life "on track," so to speak. Perhaps this book will have a similar effect on future readers.

From the pages of Uncle Shuler's book, I was able to trace the McCormicks all the way back to Ireland. The oldest relative mentioned was James McCormick, who was born in Londonderry, Ireland, around 1685 into a family that had recently immigrated there from Scotland.

Two of James' sons, Hugh and Thomas, left Ireland for America in 1735. Thomas settled in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, and married Jean Oliver. The

couple had six children, and the fourth, born around 1740, was named after their uncle Hugh.

The younger Hugh McCormick and his wife Mary Alcorn also had six children. The third was a son named George, born around 1771.

George's father, Hugh, owned a gristmill in Hickory Creek in Pennsylvania that was serviced by a large water wheel. The power provided by the giant wheel was used to mill the community's wheat and corn, and stoke the flames in the blacksmith shop. Hugh also provided milling services to the many independent distillers in the area. Unfortunately for Hugh's whiskey-based business, history was about to intervene.

In the first test of power for the new federal government organized under the U.S. Constitution, Congress passed a federal excise tax on all whiskey produced in the states. This news was not well received by the thousands of private still owners throughout Pennsylvania, who reacted by tarring and feathering government tax collectors whenever they appeared. President Washington, determined to assert the power of the new national government, labeled such acts as "rebellious" and the perpetrators as "insurgents." What ensued was known as the Whiskey Rebellion, and its outcome — in Washington's favor — helped to establish the authority of the newly minted United States government.

Although the McCormicks were not directly involved in the Rebellion, this outcome had a negative effect on the whiskey trade and caused Hugh, then 57, to pack up his family and effects and say good-bye to the state of Pennsylvania. The group traveled by wagon along the Monongahela toward the Potomac and then up the Shenandoah Valley. In 1798 the family reached Kentucky and settled in an area that today includes the city of Louisville.

Along with the rest of the family, Hugh's son George, age 27, arrived in Kentucky with his wife, who, it is believed, was murdered by Indians shortly after their arrival. This was painfully ironic, because reports of relative peace between

the Indians and the white man are what had prompted the family to immigrate to Kentucky in the first place.

The following year, 1799, widower George McCormick left the little Louisville settlement of 400 people and came over the old Buffalo Trace with his sister and his motherless son. The creel baskets, borne on the backs of George's mules, carried the blacksmithing tools forged by his grandfather, Thomas, back in Pennsylvania.

George settled near Vincennes in Knox County, Indiana, in the heart of the fertile Wabash Valley. According to most historians, the Wabash Valley, along with the rest of the Indiana Territory, had been granted to the United States after the Revolutionary War, thanks to George Rogers Clark's stunning victory over the British, under command of Colonel Hamilton, at the Battle of Vincennes (aka the Battle of Fort Sackville) in 1779. By taking the daughter of one of the first American settlers of the area, Susannah McClure, as his second wife in 1802, George established the McCormicks as one of the "First Families" of Vincennes and of Indiana. George McCormick, my great-great-great grandfather, fleeing federal tax assessors and warring Indians, planted our family's roots in and around Vincennes, Indiana, more than two hundred years ago, and, in so doing, made possible all that has transpired since.

Around 1815, George's wife, Susannah, gave birth to their third child and named him young George. The elder George, our family patriarch, died in 1839 and is buried in an unmarked grave beside the Upper Indiana Presbyterian Church near Vincennes. At about the same time, George Jr. became a father and named his first-born John. The tradition of naming first-born sons after the father was carried on when John's first son was born around 1870 and was named John Edward McCormick. The boy grew up to become, among other things, my paternal grandfather.

John Edward married Minerva Rhodarmel and they had six children. Their third was named Clarence James, born March 26, 1902, and would grow up to become my father.

On August 28, 1923 Clarence James McCormick married Emma Hattie Louise Bobe, and two years later, on January 3, 1925, I came along. Following the family tradition, I was named after my dad, Clarence James McCormick, but everyone soon started calling me Jimmie.

Just to bring matters up-to-date, in 1946 I married Bettye Jean Gramelspacher and we had four wonderful children: Michael Duane, born on March 18, 1948; Patrick Edward, born on January 25, 1950; Clarence James III (Mac), born on October 23, 1951; and Jane Ann, born on May 9, 1954. I lost my Bettye on February 28, 1997 and was re-married to Marilyn Louise Fletcher Hanson on January 3, 1998.

The purpose of reciting this family history is not to impress the reader with my pedigree or even to make the case that we come from "good, pioneer stock." It is merely offered to set the scene for what is to follow. It is perhaps trite to say that "we stand on the shoulders of giants," but it is important to understand that whatever I managed to accomplish in my life could not have taken place without the efforts, courage, and genetic code of those who came before me. After all, we have all drunk from wells that we did not dig and have been warmed by fires that we did not build.

I feel the guiding hand of my forebears with increasing frequency nowadays as the years swiftly go rolling by. I cannot overstate the effect and influence that my family history has had on all I've managed to do and the person I eventually became. My heritage has undeniably left an enormous impact upon my life. All the impact, in fact, of a fast-moving, high octane freight train barreling past a frightened 19-year-old farm boy and his little brother at an Indiana railroad crossing a long, long time ago.

"The greatest gifts my parents gave me…were their unconditional love and a set of values. Values that they lived and didn't just lecture about. Values that included an understanding of the simple difference between right and wrong, a belief in God, the importance of hard work and education, self-respect, and a belief in America."

— *Colin Powell*

CHAPTER ONE – EARLY TIMES

The winter of 1924 had left a fragile frosting all across southwest Indiana, and by early January of 1925 my mother, Emma, was putting the finishing touches on the double-knit baby blanket she'd been working on since September. It was a blanket that would keep her new baby — due to arrive any day — well protected against the encroaching frost. My father, Clarence, a farmer who worked Mr. Roy Mail's acreage during the summer months, was sitting in the front room of the two-story white clapboard house on that Saturday morning, January 3rd, working on his lesson plans for the coming semester. The home sat about eight and a half miles south of Vincennes, Indiana, on the corner of the Main Street Road and what is today Indiana State Highway 241. Christmas break was almost over and school would be back in session in less than two days. In addition to teaching manual training, Dad served as the basketball coach at Decker High School, where he was respected as a no-nonsense and fair-minded straight shooter.

Clarence James McCormick had married Emma Hattie Louise Bobe two years before, and the young couple soon began putting down roots in the lush soil of the central Wabash Valley — the site of our sturdy family tree ever since 1800. Today that family tree was going to sprout yet another branch as Emma nodded to her young husband that it was time. Clarence cranked up the old wall-mounted telephone and instructed the operator to summon his uncle, Dr. Hubert McCormick. By doing so, my father was informing the entire area of greater Vincennes of my impending arrival. Uncle Doc, as everyone called him, jumped into his trusty sedan after receiving the call and barreled down the eight and half miles of gravel road — racing the stork to our homestead. He made it in time and officially welcomed me to my mother's bosom and into America's heartland.

As was the custom with first-born sons, I was deemed my father's namesake, Clarence James McCormick, Jr., but I soon became known simply as Little Jimmie. My earliest memories center around our family pet, Trixie, a cute little rat terrier. The story of how I followed Trixie into the cornfields during my third summer has been repeated so often that I'm not sure whether I actually remember it or merely the telling of it.

It was in early August, when the stalks were all upright and thickly tasseled, that I decided to follow Trixie as she meandered into the dense rows of field corn. After a while she emerged back at the homestead…but I did not. My mother, quickly noticing my absence, got down on her knees and looked that terrier hard in the face.

"Where's my little Jimmie boy?" The little dog seemed to understand as it cocked its head and ran back into the cornfield.

After an anxious search by the farm hands and neighbors, whom my dad had summoned for help, several of them found me merrily weaving in and out among the corn stalks. I guess I caused quite a scare, but there was really no harm done.

A couple of years after the cornfield incident, my mother packed me along to a meeting of the Ladies Aid Society of the Trinity Methodist Church. The *hen fest*, as

my dad liked to call it, was being held at the home of my Aunt Midah Neal, Dad's oldest sister. Another of my aunts, Dorothy Marchino, had arrived to the meeting in her brand-new car and had parked it facing uphill alongside the house.

While my mother, my aunts, and the others were "Ladies Aid"-ing, I wandered outside and was immediately drawn to Aunt Dorothy's shiny vehicle. I scootched behind the wheel and began fiddling with the knobs and levers, somehow managing to release the parking brake. Away I went — careening blindly backward down the hill until the speeding sedan smacked right into the front end of a parked car. I was unhurt by the collision, but the birch rod discipline dispensed by my dad once he heard about my exploits and the damage done was bruising to both my young body and my spirit. My punishment was not painful enough, however, to erase the thrill I felt when that car took off with me behind the wheel. That feeling of excitement was something I would encounter, enjoy — and eventually, seek out — time and again across the long road that lay ahead.

My first years at the Mail place, where I was born, do not reside in my memory. They came too early in life for me to have any clear recollections. But when I was two years old we moved to what was known as the "King Place," and although I do have a sense of it, the memories are hazy and blurred. The King Place was the first house on the curvy road heading up the hill past the Knox County Poor Farm. Although we were literally living "on the road to the poorhouse," our little family prospered there, so that by the time I was five we were able to move to what became the nominal "home place" of my childhood.

Agnes Barnes' country farmhouse was about as lovely a spread as one could imagine. And imagining is something our family did plenty of in those days. We lived there, at first, as tenants, working the hundred acres, imagining what it would be like to one day own a piece of farmland that we could call our own. Dad was ultimately able to purchase the property from Miss Barnes through a complex financial agreement that I was too young to understand. But even as a youngster, I could sense the change when the "Barnes Place" became the "McCormick Place."

We were still dirt farmers, but the fact that it was *our* dirt made all the difference in the world.

Situated on lower Hart Street about seven miles southeast of Vincennes, the spot is today known as McCormick Corner. The structure that housed our family for so many good, hard years still stands upon its foundation, and today it houses some of my most cherished childhood memories.

As I cast my mind back to those innocent years, it's easy to get lost in a wash of nostalgia and reverie. It was a hardscrabble existence, to be sure, but to a young lad riding along on his father's plow, the whole world was just a sunny day. During those pre-tractor years, horses, mules, and just plain muscle and sweat powered our plowing. Dad fashioned a two-by-six board that he wedged under his plow seat, and this was my perch. Sitting on that bumpy board and looking forward, around my dad, all I could see were the south ends of three northbound horses; and looking back, there was little Trixie, our rat terrier, following through the dusty furrows all day long.

When I became a bit older — around six or seven — I was given the reins and allowed to drive the plow horses by myself, while Dad or the hired farm hand followed behind me steering another team and a walking plow. It made me feel important, as it would any six-year-old, to be the one driving the team on the riding plow. But truth be told, those horses had traversed that field so many times that they were pulling from sheer strength of habit. Sometimes just a whiff of horse manure nowadays will send me back to that plow seat where I cultivated so many of my most idyllic memories.

My grandfather, John E. McCormick, was something of an agricultural innovator. He often worked closely with Purdue University, the country's foremost agricultural college. Through his contacts he managed to import the first strains of "beardless" wheat seed (or Ghirka) from Russia to reach the American Midwest. Regular shocks of wheat contain a stringy tassel that is very hard on the hands. Beardless wheat, imported because of its resistance to drought and soil erosion, was

bred with a minimum of these “beards,” and hence the shocks could be bundled and harvested much more easily.

Grandpa McCormick’s homestead was something of a science laboratory. He was always experimenting with new strains of one crop or another. The stars of the show were Grandpa’s peach and apple orchards. My two brothers and I were enlisted during the picking season to help Grandpa by “working in the peaches.” The most distasteful and grueling part of the job, at least for our crew of six- to eight-year-old grandkids, involved sorting the peaches by size. Grandpa would sit me down in front of a box of rollers controlled by a large hand crank. As the peaches were unloaded from the field baskets, it was my job to turn the crank that would then rotate the various-sized rollers, and thereby separate the peaches according to their girth. After they were properly sorted, the peaches could then be uniformly packaged and shipped off to market.

To illustrate the fact that life on the farm for a young boy was not always sunshine and joy, I need only recall my first introduction to that hellish peach sorter. The boredom of sitting in the dust all day, just cranking and forever cranking the endless ocean of peaches, was soul-less, mind-numbing work. But it was not the worst part. The sorting process scraped the fuzz from the skin of each peach and created a cloud of itchy, sticky crud that got into my eyes, my mouth, and my lungs. I don’t think I was ever so miserable as during those hot, sweaty days — sitting crouched in a filthy cloud of dust, flies, and peach fuzz, cranking away like some crazy sidewalk organ-grinder — only this time the monkey was me!

When that mighty cloud of economic anxiety known as the Great Depression (although I never knew what was so great about it) crossed our doorstep, it made life tougher — but only by degrees. For the Midwest farmer, the Depression years were years of struggle, but not total devastation. I was old enough to understand what was happening as the banks and insurance companies closed down one family farm after another. My dad made it clear that our future was not going to be foreclosed, however. All we had to do was work extra hard and we’d come through

okay. After all, hadn't President Hoover told us that prosperity was just around the corner? Unfortunately, we were so busy cutting those corners that we probably wouldn't recognize old man prosperity when he finally managed to show up.

Although our family had no disposable income to speak of, this did not pose much of a problem since none of us was aware of the concept. We didn't know what it was, so we didn't miss it. Despite the "slim pickins" of those lean years, Mother made sure we never went hungry. Every one of us received a full dinner bucket for school, or a full lunch bucket during the farming months. We raised our own poultry; so fried chicken was a staple on the family menu. I used to watch how quickly Mother prepared the batter and grease and then almost instantly converted a bird that had been walking in the chicken yard just a few moments before into a meal for the entire family. She was so swift that I actually thought that was the reason they called it "sudden fried chicken." I later learned it was supposed to be called "southern fried chicken."

Some farming folks made it a family ritual to go into town every Saturday afternoon for provisions. While there, some would seek out recreation and idle away the hours playing cards in the local poolrooms. This would really get my father's goat.

"Don't those folks have anything better to do than la-di-dah around town when there's all sorts of work that needs doing?" he would grouse when I suggested that we join the slackers and do some Saturday shopping. My suggestion received a definite "No!" because visiting town would involve entirely too much time lost from production. Instead we relied upon a peddler who came around once a week with his old truck loaded down with canned goods, jars of pickles, dried fruit, fresh bread, and other staples. The rest of our diet was supplied by food raised on our own farm. In addition to the chickens, we had our own dairy cows — that I had been milking daily since I was five years old — brood sows, sheep, beef cattle, and, naturally, hogs. We did our own slaughtering and butchering and shared a pretty

good-sized smokehouse with other family members over at Grandpa McCormick's place.

My father enjoyed an extraordinary career that propelled him from a country farmer and schoolteacher, through government agencies, into county politics, and ultimately on to his cabinet-level service as the United States Undersecretary of Agriculture under President Harry S Truman. As a father, the lessons and values he imparted to me, his eldest son, were solid-gold guideposts as I made my way through life. The most important value that my dad taught me was how to accept responsibility at an early age. By expressing confidence that a pint-sized kid could drive a three-horse team, he gave me the gumption I needed to do it. Naturally, he taught me that such principles as "If you're going to do it, do it right," and "Your word is your bond" were not mere platitudes. His most frequently repeated lesson, which I'm sure he learned from his own dad, had to do with credit and credibility.

"Getting credit – or getting people to believe what you say — is pretty easy the first time around," he would say, "but once you lose it, it's next to impossible to get it back." Fortunately I took this lesson to heart and let it guide me in my business affairs in later life. How right he was. Just as he advised, I learned that people will generally extend the benefit of the doubt during your first time out, but once you've let them down, it's very tough to get a second chance.

Of course, the twin virtues of thrift and humility were constantly extolled by both of my parents. When our home was finally wired for electricity (thanks, in large part, to Dad's efforts), his most common outburst was, "Turn off those lights! Are you trying to burn a hole in the daylight?!"

Having graduated from college, as did all of his siblings but one, Dad fiercely and frequently drove home the value of a higher education. Mother joined him in his passion for academics. A cheerful and genuinely attractive woman with a warm, embracing personality, Mother's kitchen door remained constantly open to family, neighbors, and friends. Visitors were often greeted with a warm slice of her home-baked pie, and always with the warmth of her big, dimpled smile. Those friends and

neighbors knew her as a first-rate cook and a hard-working farm wife. Thanks to Mother, my puritan work ethic was poured into me like mother's milk and has fortified me to this day.

Mother was a rather remarkable woman in so many different ways. Having lost her own mother when she was only seven years old, little Emma was expected by her father to pitch in with all the farm chores. Although this harsh reality forced her to suspend her formal education after the eighth grade, she never stopped learning and was a voracious reader. Mother taught herself to play the piano. For many years she served as the official organist/pianist at our local Trinity Church. As a vocalist in the church choir, she could sing either soprano or alto parts, as needed. Perhaps her most visible talent was in the field of handiwork and crafts. A skilled seamstress, she taught herself the arts of knitting, quilting, crochet, and needlepoint.

In addition to her domestic duties, Mother served a key role in the management of our farm. Having mastered basic accounting skills, she maintained all of the farm's bookkeeping and banking records and could account for every dollar that flowed into and out of the operation. She served as president of the Ladies Aid Society, as well as the Home Economics Club, and became very active in volunteer charitable activities. A passionate and effective fund-raiser, Mother served on the board of the Vincennes University Foundation and devoted much of her time to volunteer work at Good Samaritan Hospital. Not long after she had become a "bona fide" senior citizen, she was voted the State of Indiana Senior Queen.

My most fully formed memory of my mother is one of a woman steadfastly devoted to her family. Her deep-rooted affection for her children manifested itself in countless ways, and, after we had all taken spouses, Mother managed to transfer that love to her daughters-in-law and son-in-law. The mountain of affection that my mother heaped upon her grandchildren was legendary as well.

Mother endured many lonely years during the 1940s while Dad was away for long stretches serving the government in Washington, D.C. As is described in Chapter 20, Mother's most arduous trial came at the close of Dad's life. At that

point, he had been ravaged by the debilitating effects of Parkinson's disease and relied upon Mother as his primary caregiver. Not once during this most trying and difficult period of her life did Mother ever lose her characteristic and infectious dimpled smile and cheery demeanor. After we lost Dad in 1983, the decline of Mother's health accelerated. As Alzheimer's set in, it insidiously robbed her of her personality. We could only watch as the quality of her life descended to zero. She quietly left this world on February 13, 1988, having left it a better place than when she arrived some 86 years earlier. She was, without question, the most profound guiding influence of my life.

Another major influence that shaped my path as a youngster was Mother's brother, my Uncle Ray Bobe. Unlike my dad, who didn't have a very good feel for machinery, his brother-in-law Ray could fix just about anything. He was the one who taught me the importance of keeping all the moving parts properly greased and maintained. The fascination that I have always enjoyed with the way things work — with gears and flywheels and pistons and sparkplugs — was planted in my young soul by Uncle Ray.

My mother's sister Helen married Riley Osborne who, as with Uncle Ray, proved to be a major influence on the course of my life. Uncle Riley was the first person who demonstrated faith in my abilities as a businessman. He took a chance on me several times as I was starting down the road and, as a result, opened numerous doors through which I would pass. I didn't know the meaning of the word at the time, but Uncle Riley was the first "entrepreneur" to play a part in my life, and I believe he helped to kindle the spirit of enterprise in my heart that has burned brightly to this day.

As are most men, I am indebted to the family mentors who so strongly shaped my earliest steps. But I feel uncommonly fortunate that while my parents and my uncles were plowing the fields and raising the livestock, they took the time to cultivate a young, wide-eyed boy and imbue him with the solid, steadfast values that have served me well throughout my life.

Being a good deal older than my siblings meant that I became something halfway between their parent and their playmate as they were growing up. Next oldest was my brother, Don, who came along on April 10, 1930. My earliest memory of Don was when he was just a tyke of three or four, and I was nine years old and putting in full days on the farm. Don's job was to bring me some cool water and a snack around mid-morning as I was seated on the plow tilling the fields. I remember stopping the team as little Donnie arrived. I always gave the horses a rest while I took my morning break. I gratefully took the water jug and oatmeal cookie, and sat there cooling off while my little brother ran off to the side of the field to play. Just as I took my first bite of cookie, a big dirt clod hit me in the back of the head. I turned to see Donnie giggling and pointing at me with glee.

"You stop that right now, Don!" I commanded him, but he paid me no heed whatsoever and kept lobbing the big dirt clods my way. After a few swift steps, I had him by the scruff of the neck.

"So you like dirt, do you? Well, here. Have all you want!" And with that I smooshed his face right down into the freshly plowed earth and quickly let him go. When he came back up, he had mud all over his face and in his red hair. He looked like a chimney sweep as he stared fiercely at me but did not utter a sound. He quietly turned and ran the 300 yards or so back across the field toward the house. When he reached the range of Mother's hearing, he let out the most blood-curdling scream you could imagine. Anyone hearing him would have thought that he'd been run over by a mad bull…or worse! He kept up the dramatics until he reached the house, where Mother came out to the yard to see what the fuss was all about and to console her child with a maternal embrace. I later learned that Don had labeled me a "bad boy" for rubbing his face into the dirt, but had conveniently failed to mention anything about his acts of provocation. Mother cleaned his face and I managed to clear my name. I'm pleased to say that there were no more mud-slinging episodes after that.

As I had, my siblings learned the difference between right and wrong from our parents. But for more intensive lessons in ethics and morality, we all were required to attend Sunday school and church services each week. This was not an option. We just went. That was it. Our family attended Trinity Methodist Church on lower Hart Street in Vincennes. I was baptized there by the Right Reverend John Sutch — a pious and somewhat dour fellow, who never strayed from his dark blue preacher's suit and starched white shirt with its stiff white collar. He looked like a poor man's Warren Harding, but did a good job of keeping his flock on the straight and narrow.

At age ten, I did what most farm kids did and became involved with the 4-H Club. 4-H Clubs (Health, Heart, Head, Hand) strive to promote American agrarian values by teaching farming skills to rural youngsters. At age ten, I was required to put together a 4-H Club project, and I decided to go whole hog. I borrowed the $3.50 from my dad needed to purchase a grade-A Berkshire pig. With Dad's help, I bought the animal and began to raise him in the hopes of winning a blue ribbon or some similar prize. He was the size of a small dog, and I naturally began treating him like a pampered pet.

After three days of this, the pig evidently had tolerated my affections long enough and decided to hightail it for the cornfield. I was heartbroken and spent the rest of the day walking up and down the corn rows searching for my prize-winning pig. It was well after dark when Dad returned home and found me marching through the cornfield in the moonlight. He could tell that I had been crying, and he sat down to offer me some comfort.

"Son, you have to remember that no matter how much you want him to be a dog, a pig will always be a pig." He then recited one of his proverbs. "They say you should never try to teach a pig to sing. It'll waste your time and annoy the pig." I started laughing at that one and decided to call it a day. The next morning, bright and early, that stray pig was back snorting for corn in the barnyard, and I couldn't have been happier. He grew into a nice fat pig that summer, and although I never won my blue ribbon, I did manage to sell him for a profit. That sale was my first

business transaction and I was extremely proud of myself. My parents took the money I had earned and opened a special bank account just for me. While most ten-year-olds were putting their money into a piggy bank, I was putting my piggy money into a real bank, and it made me feel ten feet tall.

Over the next few years, I became more and more involved in 4-H Club work. By the time I was twelve, I was old enough to attend 4-H Summer Camp at Shakamak State Park near Jasonville, off State Road 48. Located some 50 miles northeast of Vincennes, Shakamak was only a three-day camp but it was the high point of my summer. We'd stay in rustic cabins and learn all sorts of Indian lore handed down from the Kickapoo Indians (we thought that was an awfully funny name). The days were filled with swimming, fishing, and hiking, and nights were spent around the campfire meeting other guys and, for the first time…meeting girls!

Another summer highlight of those years was the all-day picnic at Harmony Park put on by the Knox County Farm Bureau. It's no doubt hard to comprehend why a simple picnic could generate such excitement in the heart of a 12-year-old farm boy, but one thing should not be overlooked: Kids in that time and place lived isolated, rather dreary lives. Television did not exist and even radio reception was very poor out in the boondocks (once we got electricity). Movies were few and far between, and other forms of "big city" entertainment simply weren't available. Not only that, we couldn't just pop next door to play with the neighbor kids. It took real effort to get a group of boys and girls together socially outside the schoolroom. So when a county fair or church picnic came along, we kids arrived parched for companionship and fun.

I don't really recall having any playmates other than my cousin, Billie Bobe, who would accompany his parents on visits to our farm every so often. Billie, who was Uncle Gib's oldest son, lived in town with his family, and in the 1950s he opened the first Pizzeria (Bill Bobe, the Pizza Man) in Vincennes. Bill's family still runs that independent restaurant today, some 50 years later, and they still make the very best pizza this side of Sicily. I also remember playing with Wally Nolting once

in a while, whenever his parents and mine would get together for an evening of playing cards; they played a card game called "500," as I recall. That was about it. The rest of the time my chums were "me, myself, and I."

Sundays were a different story. After church, the family would gather either over at Grandpa McCormick's place or at Grandpa Bobe's, and in the summer months, we'd enjoy having a big family dinner together. I rode ponies, wrestled with my cousins, and played a little baseball. But strangely, my most vivid memories of those visits are drawn from the hours I spent by myself. During those days my Uncle Ray had not yet married and was still living on the farm with his father, Grandpa Bobe. I would invariably sneak off to the barn and climb up into the driver's seat of Uncle Ray's truck, trying to turn the wheel and making motor-ish noises as I pretended to shift the gears. This was my first taste of being behind the wheel of a big, powerful machine, and I was immediately bitten by the bug. I would sit there for hours on end dreaming of the day when I could take a truck like this one out on my own. It was an infection of the soul that I picked up then, many miles and many years ago, behind the wheel of Uncle Ray's unmoving truck. And I haven't found the cure for it yet.

Our church, Trinity Methodist, held its picnic every year on the first Thursday in August. Church picnics, to us, were a welcome form of entertainment that helped to break up some of the grinding monotony of farm life. I recall my father giving me a quarter as we neared the picnic grounds, and how I would mentally have that quarter spent down to the last penny before it ever reached my pocket. Our church's picnic was usually followed by the Lower Presbyterian Church (a.k.a. "The Brick Church") affair, held on the second Thursday in August, and many of us Trinity Methodists would attend this event as well. Labor Day was the date for the annual St. Vincent's Catholic Church picnic, followed by the St. Thomas Catholic and the St. Peter's Lutheran picnics. Our family went to them all because we felt it was important for one church to support another in what were, essentially, fund-raising

events. But aside from these occasional social high points, day-to-day life on the farm was filled mostly with hard work and long stretches of solitude.

By attending all the church picnics each year, we also felt that we were, in some small way, improving our chances of gaining entry into heaven. If I ever do get inside those pearly gates, it will not surprise me a bit to find that the place is filled with fried chicken and Fricassee, just like those old-time church picnics.

I should explain about Fricassee. Most people have heard of fricasseed chicken, but the dish that is closely associated with church picnics in southwest Indiana is eaten with a spoon, not a fork. Known as Fricassee Soup or simply Fricassee, this spicy, gumbo-like concoction is brewed up in huge metal kettles, each containing between 15 and 20 gallons of the delicacy. After being cooked to perfection, it is ladled out by the bowlful, and when the patrons' appetites have been satisfied, it's then packed into the take-home containers folks often bring along for just this purpose.

Fricassee was believed to have originated with the French Canadians who originally settled Vincennes. Some speculate that it was brought into the region in the seventeenth century by the Arcadians who stopped in Vincennes en route to their eventual destination of New Orleans. By that time Fricassee had morphed into Cajun (Arcadian) Filet Gumbo. Although the precise recipe for each church's Fricassee is a closely-guarded secret, handed down from generation to generation — churches still compete today to see who can produce the tastier concoction — I am able to reveal the following ingredients, although I am not at liberty to list the exact quantities.

Vegetable stock, lightly fried and diced fatty bacon, mixed vegetables, cut-up stewed tomatoes, black-eyed peas or pinto beans, cubed sweet potatoes, and a blend of Cajun seasonings are all possible ingredients. Sometimes the cooking juices from a roast chicken may be added to the brew. Occasionally roast beef, chicken, or pork is folded in as well. These components are then heated in the cauldron for hours on end until a thick and chunky stew is produced and finally served up piping hot in

big soup bowls. Nothing I have ever tasted before or since manages to come close to the unique and pungent flavor of Indiana kettle-cooked Fricassee.

A quick review of church Web sites in the Vincennes area reveals that Fricassee still remains very much a part of today's culinary culture. St. Francis Xavier Parish Social features "Fricassee by the bowl or in bulk." The St. John the Baptist event advertises, "Fricassee by the bowl or carryout." The Sacred Heart Summer Social lists "Fricassee (carryout available)" as the first item on its lengthy list of featured foods and events. And St. Peter Lutheran's Web page announces that "Fricassee, prepared in kettles" will be available at their annual picnic starting at noon and continuing until all of it is sold.

Although many of the aspects of my younger days on the farm have "gone with the wind," it is somewhat heartwarming to know that this tasty feature still remains. In the present era, a time when most would agree that fast food chains have wiped out nearly every vestige of local flavor and regional cuisine, it is comforting to know that this delicacy is still being prepared and consumed as it has been for several centuries, and the only place you can get it is at a church social in the environs of old Vincennes.

After the church social season had ended and the summer had waned, it was once again back to the long stretches of solitude and isolation that characterized life on the farm for so many of us. Sure, it would have been nice to have a group of buddies to hang out with, as the city kids did, and to be able to play baseball every day and not just once or twice over the summer. But that sentiment did not prompt me to envy city boys in any way. We were proud of who we were, and understood that farm kids were tougher and more responsible than our city cousins. Well, we got our chance to prove it, thanks to something that is almost a cultish religion in rural Indiana. That something, of course, was basketball.

Basketball wasn't simply a sport, like baseball or boxing. Basketball defined us and, in many ways, refined us. It was, ultimately, a civilizing force that we embraced and feared at the same time. Basketball was not merely a part of our

culture; in a way, it was our culture. And it all began in grade school at Purcell Elementary.

I was lucky in grade school. I've been lucky all my life, but it all began in grade school. I was born a few days after the cut-off date of December 31st, but thanks to my dad's influence with the Township Trustee — an old-time political office that was set up to look after the welfare of area children, widows, and orphans — I was able to get into first grade at Purcell Elementary when I was only five years old. Those early years are a blur, but I do remember a childhood fascination with shooting marbles. This was my first taste of competitive sports and I usually managed to wind up with a few of the other boys' marbles in my bag — including several of their big, prized agates.

It wasn't until I reached fifth grade that I first fell under the wing of a teacher who would turn out to be something of mentor and guiding force in my young life. Among his many other innovations at Purcell, Carl Johnson brought in ping-pong and taught us all the nuances of the game. He set up ping-pong tournaments that taught us coordination and the basics of good sportsmanship. But Mr. Johnson also wanted us to learn teamwork, and for that purpose he introduced us to the hoop and the hardwood. Our "gym" was nothing more than the basement of the schoolhouse, and our baskets were posted eight, rather than 10, feet off the floor. This was not done in compensation for our relative height — or lack of it — but rather because the basement had only a 10-foot ceiling. We were probably the only basketball team whose players mastered the art of making a shot by banking the ball off the ceiling — as the many scuff marks right above the baskets clearly attested. We all learned the fundamentals of shooting and dribbling and passing. But what Mr. Johnson really taught us was the importance of teamwork in any sort of endeavor.

I was fortunate to have Mr. Johnson again as a teacher when I reached seventh grade; and by this time I was playing on the school's basketball team against other area grade schools. Mr. Johnson was our coach and believed that we were not too young, at ages 11 and 12, to understand the principles of cooperation and discipline.

These were important values that, if presented by a strong and dynamic figure such as Carl Johnson, can mold a boy's personality and influence him for the rest of his life.

Basketball was a key focal point of my high school years. It represented a quest for glory through hard-won achievement. We really did not view basketball as a ticket out of our less-than-perfect lives, as many urban young people view the sport today. None of us held aspirations of becoming professional basketball players. The NBA didn't even exist yet. Our goal was to win the county, the regional, and ultimately the state championship trophy, and to permit the glow of that trophy to brighten and illuminate our lives.

It's hard to imagine in this age, as we're all toting around wireless camera-phones, that my childhood home had no electricity and no indoor plumbing. Outside our front door stood a windmill that served to power our water pump. The pump drove water from our well into a 50-gallon crock that sat in the corner of our kitchen. The water from that crock quenched our thirst, washed our clothing and, once a week, was heated over a wood burning stove to provide us the bathwater that filled our old cast-iron tub. Out in back was a single-hole outhouse. I don't recall whether it had a crescent moon on the door, but it's a fact that our Charmin-of-choice was a well-known publication called the Sears & Roebuck Catalogue. During the winter months, a person spending too much time perusing that catalog in the unheated outhouse could wind up with a bad case of "blue butt." To avoid this possibility, I made a point of taking care of my winter toilet needs in the warm porcelain confines of the boys' room at school.

Before the New Deal and the REA (Rural Electrification Administration) brought the wonders of electricity to our area, we depended on an assortment of gadgets and technologies to make life a bit more comfortable. I remember radios with huge acid batteries attached to them. Most rural homes in the 1930s used kerosene lamps for nighttime illumination, but we were a step up from that. Dad had set up a carbide gas light system that ran off of a buried 50-gallon tank. You

activated the system by first filling the tank with the gray carbide pellets and then pouring in a few buckets of water. The water would mix with the pellets and give off a gas by-product that was piped inside to fuel our wall-mounted light fixtures. It was often my job to release a bit of gas and then light it with a special flint "igniter." The advantage over the more common kerosene lamps was that carbide lamps gave off a clean, white light rather than the dingy, yellow cast emitted by the kerosene ones. The odor was much less offensive as well. We still needed kerosene lanterns to carry around with us to do those frosty morning chores, however. I'd be sure to hang a kerosene lantern on a nail in the barn as I did the milking. In that way I could see where I was going and could avoid getting kicked — as much!

Believe it or not, with water right in the kitchen and with carbide lighting installed, our family was considered well ahead of our time. Our heating system, however, was strictly from the dark ages. In the kitchen, Mother held forth over an imposing wood-burning stove — sometimes she burned coal in it as well — where she would regularly prepare our family's meals. In the winter months Mother would open the oven doors and let the heat radiate into the kitchen while she was doing the cooking. We did own a second coal-burning stove in the dining room, but this was used only during those rare times that we had company for dinner during the winter. As for warming up the rest of the house, however, it mostly boiled down to blankets and body heat. Bedtime, during the frigid winter months, would witness each of us trudging off to bed carrying our bath towel wrapped around a brick, which had been freshly heated in Mother's oven. That bunk-warming brick, when tucked under the covers, would radiate warmth long enough to permit each of us to fall off to sleep peacefully.

My elementary school years at Purcell ended after the eighth grade when I was 13. Evidently, my parents' emphasis on academics had paid off, because I managed to finish at the top of my class and was named Valedictorian for our commencement exercises. Here is the text of the Valedictory speech that I delivered — with great pride — before the assembled students and teachers of our school:

Parents, teachers and friends:

You have heard our songs and speeches, our poem, will, and prophecy, all of which we trust you have enjoyed. The program is ended, and nothing remains to us but to say farewell — a word which seems to express so little and yet means so much.

Although for the greater part of eight years we have eagerly looked forward to this occasion, upon its arrival we feel an unexpected sadness, a genuine regret that the ties of friendship binding us so clearly in our work and in our recreation must now be broken, as our band separates.

For tonight we are leaving Purcell School forever. Some of us will enter the same high school, it is true, but our friendly groups will never again be united as they have been during the past eight years, and it is with sorrow that we say farewell to our teachers and to each other.

To you, our principal, and to you, our patient and persevering teachers who have helped us thus far on our way, we owe more gratitude than can be expressed in mere words. You have given us liberally of your time, experience and wisdom. Because of you, we shall leave Purcell School with the best possible preparation, namely, an appreciation of high ideals, respect for the rights of others, the ability to use our time wisely, and above all, a determination to succeed. May we bring credit upon your training.

To our friends, the seventh-graders, we wish success and happiness. Our days together will not be forgotten. We hope you will miss us sometimes in the halls and on the playground.

And now, fellow members of the graduating class, we, too, must part. This is our last appearance as a class, and what has been a happy, united group will soon become only a delightful memory.

Our years here together have been happy and profitable. We have learned much and our opportunities for enjoyment have been great. We trust that throughout our entire lives we shall remember and practice the ideals of our school and, according to our abilities, do our best each day.

In closing, I'd like to ask our teachers and classmates to recall only our virtues, to forget our faults, and to keep nothing but kind recollections of the members of the class of 1938 who now bid you goodnight and good-bye.

Jimmy McCormick

Spring, 1938

I did not realize it at the time I delivered the words of my address, but events in places far removed from our little world would soon alter our lives in ways we could not begin to imagine. I could see that the wheels of the world were turning at an ever more rapid pace, and as I entered my teenage years, I was bursting with a passion to see just how fast and how far I could manage to go.

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"I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past."

— *Thomas Jefferson*

CHAPTER TWO: DECKER DAYS

The first set of wheels that I regularly rode upon were attached to an old yellow school bus that picked me up every sleepy school day, just after I'd completed the milking, slopping, feeding, and other familiar farm chores. I would yearn for that bus to show up each morning because at least it was moving —it was going *some*where. Somewhere…if not over the rainbow, at least over the next ridge and on to a place where I could learn about and imagine the fast-paced, bigger world that I secretly yearned to explore. I was delivered to school each morning, but the place I imagined, just over the ridge — just slightly out of my view and a bit beyond my grasp — was a place called "the future."

The future started early in those days. Our farm was the very first stop on the school bus route, so we had to be ready and waiting at 7:05 every morning. The busing actually involved two stages. All the buses would convene at Purcell

Elementary, and then we high school students transferred to another bus for the ride to Decker High. These bus rides consumed a good hour and 15 minutes every a.m. before school and every p.m. after school. During those long bus rides to and from my new school, I used to daydream about the previous summer's adventure with Uncle Ray. After the corn had been laid by, I had asked Uncle Ray to let me come with him on a trip to Chicago that he had planned in order to deliver a truckload of Knox County cantaloupes to the well-known South Water Produce Terminal near the Loop. The giant produce market was operated by the Sante Fe and Illinois Central Railways and handled over 100,000 boxcars of fresh fruits and vegetables each year. The site still exists today as a wholesale market — the rail terminal and auction were closed down after WWII — and is located near Fifteenth and Racine Streets.

I recall every detail of the trip as if it had taken place yesterday. We arrived at the South Water Market around 3:00 a.m. and pulled into a stall. Uncle Ray said we should get some shut-eye because the buyers would be pulling in around 4:30 or so. I went to sleep on the seat, and before long I heard the worst "cussin' and carryin' on" I could ever imagine. This verbal assault got my attention but quick. I peeked out the window to see what the all the fussing was about. I was sure somebody was about to get killed. I looked at Uncle Ray, who was just grinning and laughing. "That's the way all those good ol' boys talk around here. Welcome to the big city, Jim."

Well, we unloaded the melon crates and took care of business. On the way back I talked Uncle Ray into letting me drive his truck down U.S. 41 for close to a hundred miles. That ride, my first trip outside the area into which I'd been born, was the highlight of my summer, and it was also my first taste of highway driving. (Remember, I was 13 at the time.) I was definitely hooked. Driving down the highway at a good clip with the wind in my hair is something for which I still have a strong appetite.

Decker High was one of the many country schools that dotted the southern part of the state. The town of Decker sets about ten miles south of Vincennes, just east of U.S. Highway 41. Even though our farm was closer to the much larger Vincennes Lincoln High School located at the Knox County seat, we lived just inside the Johnson Township line, so I was required to attend the Johnson Township Decker High. Naturally, a keen rivalry existed between Vincennes High School and all 10 of the smaller county schools, which, like Decker, were located in the outlying rural areas. As Decker students, it was our constant dream to unseat and defeat the Vincennes basketball team. We would soon get our chance.

The most memorable change in my life from the way things had been done in grade school had to do with lunch. We were permitted to leave the school building and go "downtown" to buy our lunch at a restaurant each day. My mother would give me a quarter every morning for lunch money. I soon discovered, along with my best buddy, Albert Burkhart, that if we visited Sanders Pool Room during our lunch hour we could enjoy a 10-cent hot dog and still have enough money left over for three games of pool, at a nickel per rack, before having to return to class. We played strictly for fun and never did any wagering. The term "pool room" was probably too grandiose to apply to the Sanders place. It was nothing more than a small room with a single booth, a pool table, and a short-order counter. Despite its humble trappings, we learned a thing or two, not only about playing pool but also about the wicked world in general, during those noontime sessions at Sanders. Lessons that were well worth the mere 15 cents per day it cost us.

Albert Burkhart had moved nearby the previous year when his mother had married a local widower farmer. Albert and I hit it off right away and became real bosom buddies. After completing high school, he accepted a job as a lineman with Public Service of Indiana, the electrical utility company, where he worked until his retirement. About 10 years ago Albert and I became church-mates when his North United Methodist merged with our Trinity United Methodist. We would kid each other about remembering to pray for forgiveness because of our misspent youth in

Sander's Pool Room in Decker! He was a wonderful man and I'm proud to say that our friendship lasted until his passing in 2004.

My most powerful memory of that period in my life is of a young solitary shooter, silhouetted against the waning rays of the setting sun, as he slaps an old basketball against the tamped-down dirt in the chicken yard at the side of the house. I can clearly see that youthful dribbler, who was me, firing shot after shot at a rusty barrel stave that my father had nailed up to a homemade backboard in a crude semblance of a basketball goal. Night after night — when the evening chores were finished and before we had our supper — the chicken courtyard was my domain. For some odd reason, this area had always been my favorite spot on the entire farm. My mother was aware of this and liked to tell the following story to her friends:

"You know, my Jimmie boy loved to spend all day out there with the hens and roosters, just scratching and cackling away. One time he came running into the house from there all upset.

" 'Why, what's wrong, son?' I asked him.

" 'I dropped my chewing gum in the chicken yard, Mother,' he told me.

" 'Oh, that's okay, Jimmie. We'll find you another piece,' I said.

" 'But, Mother, I went to pick it up and put it back into my mouth…and, Mother, I picked up the wrong piece and it tasted just awful!'"

Looking back today, I can understand how the scene of that young basketball shooter in the chicken yard — the image that still remains so vibrant in my memory — was probably being replicated and duplicated on farm after family farm all over the Wabash Valley. The rhythmic sound of all those basketballs being bounced against the fertile Indiana soil created something of a heartbeat that kept the high-octane lifeblood of our youth circulating and coursing through the vessels of our lives.

I doubt if things are all that different today. Now, as it did then, southern Indiana basketball goes with high school just as mustard goes with a hot dog. Not surprisingly, I went out for the freshman basketball team just as soon as I was able to do so. I played guard and, as my height shot up, I moved over to center. As does any 14-year-old, I was delighting in my rapid rise — both in my stature as a basketball player and in terms of my physical height. I seemed to be growing an inch or two every week. But, as I soon learned, there was a dark side to my newfound heights of glory. And the name of that dark side was Osgood-Schlatter.

When I was about halfway through our freshman basketball season, I began to notice a sharp, constant pain in both of my knees. The pain was acute and seemed to be getting worse. I complained to the coach, who spoke to my dad, who agreed to have me looked at. Dad and I went to see his uncle, Dr. Hubert McCormick. Hubert was my grandpa's brother and a fine physician whom everyone knew as "Uncle Doc." He arranged for me to undergo an X-ray examination at Good Samaritan Hospital in Vincennes, and then called us in to go over the results.

"Have you ever heard of Osgood-Schlatter Disease?" Uncle Doc asked my dad, who answered that he thought he might have suffered from it when he was a teenager. "But I don't rightly recall, Uncle Doc. What are we talking about here?"

"Well, it sounds worse than it is, but Jim definitely has it," Uncle Doc explained. "It mostly affects boys when they're doing a lot of fast growing and playing sports. Girl ballet dancers get it, too."

"Well, he's on the freshman basketball team at Decker and he's shot up like a weed this year, so I guess that fits," responded Dad. "I don't know about any ballet, though."

Osgood-Schlatter Disease (or OSD) was first diagnosed in 1903 by Robert Osgood and Carl Schlatter. It affects young people between the ages of 8 and 16 and is caused by the powerful thigh muscles pulling on the attachment point of the patellar tendon during strenuous athletic activities. As the muscle pulls the tendon

away from the bone, it causes severe knee pain. Kids who come down with OSD these days are told to treat it with ice packs, rest, and maybe a knee immobilizer for a few days. Severe cases may be referred to a sports medicine or orthopedic specialist. But back then, when fear of polio was rampant, doctors were not apt to take any chances. I was ordered to wear full-length leg splints all day long. They were constructed of shiny aluminum and attached to the back of both my legs, from my buttocks all the way down to my ankles, with thick leather straps and buckles. The idea was for my knee joints to remain immobile long enough to provide time for the tender ligaments to grow back to the bones.

My condition, naturally, removed me from the basketball team and, more significantly, kept me from fulfilling my responsibilities on the farm over the following summer. This posed a real hardship for our family, since they depended on me more and more with each successive season. Fortunately, my dad was able to hire another farmhand, and the work, as it always does, managed to get done somehow.

Uncle Doc had given me a pair of crutches that I was supposed to use whenever I wanted to get around, but I couldn't stand them and preferred to hobble here and there on my own. I perfected a method of bracing myself with both arms on a tabletop and then swinging both legs around. Somewhere around mid-July, I was permitted to remove one brace from my right leg, and this made a huge difference. With only one leg immobilized, I could manage to get around rather respectably with just one single crutch. By summer's end Uncle Doc OK'd the removal of the second brace and gave me a green light to play basketball again in the fall. You can easily imagine how I felt. Getting free of those braces was the closest I've ever come to being released from prison. I still carry a visible bump on my left leg to this day that is a constant reminder of that episode. The entire experience taught me never to take anything — and particularly not my health — for granted.

For many years afterward I lived with the threat of a crippling illness hanging over my head. I was convinced that by the time I was 40 years old I would be

completely handicapped. This fear, perhaps irrational but nevertheless quite real, forced me to adopt a certain cavalier "live for today" outlook that drove me to push my limits as far as I could in every direction. I decided to enjoy life to the fullest while I had the ability to do so. I'm not saying I was disappointed when age 40 came and went and I remained in perfect health. Just slightly surprised.

The one thing that made that sedentary summer more bearable was that romance had taken root and blossomed in my young, fertile heart. I had met and fallen madly in love with Sis Jordan. She was a clean-scrubbed and petite blonde with a dazzling smile and perky personality. Sis was on the high school cheerleading team and was also very active in the Youth Organization of the Decker Methodist Church, and she managed to get me involved as well. In fact, most of our so-called "dates" in those days centered around church activities. Once I was able to drive legally, I would traverse the seven miles to her home just north of Decker to pick her up for a real date. These dates most typically involved a movie in Vincennes and then a stop by the Greek Candy Kitchen afterward for a Coke. Sis and I dated as "steadies" throughout high school. However, when I took off for college at Purdue in 1942, because of the distance between us – both geographic and otherwise — passions simply cooled and we parted ways but remained friends. I went out on a few dates at Purdue, but given the seven-to-one male-to-female student ratio at that time, life was pretty darned near monastic.

Academically, I worked hard and earned top grades at Decker. My best subjects were Math and English, and my least popular were History and Biology. I also excelled at accounting and typing. I'm grateful that I studied typing in high school, because it helped to make me more computer literate in later life.

After enduring my "immobilized" summer, I could not wait to get back to school in September and rejoin my old basketball buddies who were by now playing on the Junior Varsity team. Our coach was an extraordinary individual by the name of Don Davis. He taught us the fundamentals and gave us the drive to become champions. I was always a bit shy about shooting the ball, and I recall how Coach Davis would

exhort and encourage me: “Now Jim, when you get that ball, go ahead and put it up to the basket. You’ll be amazed at how many will actually fall in!”

During my junior year, Coach Davis guided our team to the Wabash Valley Regional Tournament finals. Second in size and stature to the IHSAA State Championship Tournament, the Wabash Valley Tourney was the most exciting and important event of our entire year. Two years before Don Davis had arrived at Decker, his predecessor, Coach Bill Purcell, had led the Decker team to victory in the championship game at Terre Haute. Now it was our turn, and Davis, the new coach, was anxious to prove himself by earning another title for our school.

The tourney started in January and attracted 110 teams from up and down the Wabash Valley and from both sides of the Indiana-Illinois border. The first leg of the tourney was in Vincennes, and from this event the top two teams were selected to compete in Terre Haute for the final trophy. In 1941 one of those two teams was ours, the Decker Aces. Once we arrived in Terre Haute, as long as we kept on winning, we would be required to play an exhausting schedule until the final match-up.

Roy Luther Lane and I started at the guard position, while Dimmer Brown played center. At forward we had Herschel Lane (no relation to Roy Luther Lane), and the other forward was Hippo Scaggs. Orie Ragle also saw lots of action at forward, as did his older brother Milo, who played guard. We were as colorful a team as our names suggested, and thanks to Coach Davis, we arrived at Terre Haute fired up and fearsome. We made it safely through to the final contest against the Palestine, Illinois, team as a slight favorite.

As we were warming up on the court before the championship game, I went up for a rebound and came down hard on my left ankle. The shooting pain told me that I had probably sprained it; I had to be helped off the floor into the locker room, where I had the ankle taped up tightly. As the tape bound my ankle, I was just as bound and determined not to let a minor distraction like a sprained ankle sideline me during the biggest game of my life.

I was able to play, but not very well, I'm afraid. I'll never know for sure whether my injury was the reason, but we lost that game by a single point (25 to 24) and limped home without the coveted trophy. But as they say, there's always next year.

Well, next year arrived before we knew it, and I was once again out on the court, this time as a senior member of the varsity basketball team. But by now, Coach Davis had moved on to Monroe City High School, and the school had hired a new coach by the name of James Jenkins. Except for the fact that Jenkins knew next to nothing about high school basketball, we thought he was a swell fellow. He barely understood the rules of the game, but despite this handicap, we managed to win most of our early matches. Finally, the school administration recognized that Coach Jenkins needed some help, and invited Don Palmer, Sr. to assist him on the bench. Don Palmer, Sr. had been a top-rated basketball player at Decker years before when my dad was the coach. He played in the YMCA league and knew all the fundamentals of the game. In fact, Don had worked as a teacher and coach at Decker Junior High School. Don did not have the proper credentials to serve as a high school coach, but the school was able to enlist his services as a volunteer, and that enabled him to work furiously with the team every day until we began to show our true potential.

The starting line-up had changed since the previous year. Because of my height, I had moved over to the center post. Our forwards were Orie Ragle and Big Chew Lane (no relation to Roy Luther Lane or Herschel Lane), with Wayne Mayes and Bill McRae serving as guards. Our back-up teammates were Bosco McRae (Bill's brother), Bob Wonning, Earl Phegley, Jim Bippus, and my ol' buddy Albert Burkhart. Errol Hoffman served as our student manager. We were enjoying a winning season and were primed to compete in the state sectional tournament. The last game of our regular season was against a bigger school, Bicknell High School. Other than Vincennes, it was the biggest school in the county and for a small school like Decker, a victory over Bicknell would be viewed as a real coup. I'm proud to

say that we did defeat them by a solid 10 points and, making the victory even sweeter, it was on their home court.

The victory against Bicknell gave the team, and the entire school, a real morale boost just as we were going into the sectional tournament. To qualify as the sectional champion team, we had to emerge victorious in Vincennes. And that usually meant having to beat Vincennes Lincoln High for the title. But to qualify to do battle with Vincennes, we first had to beat a team from Frichton. Frichton was a small school but it had an outstanding coach, Johnny Baratto, who, as a fundamentalist, had molded the team into a force to be reckoned with.

We were paired against Frichton for the opening game, and it was a tight match with the lead shifting frequently. During the fourth quarter I scrambled for a loose ball, lost my balance, and wound up hitting the floor head first. Our coach called a time-out so that he could examine my injury.

"How's it feel, Jim?" he whispered in my ear.

"I'll be fine," I answered bravely, rubbing the sore spot as I shook my head to clear my foggy vision. The coach looked me in the eyes, and I guess he determined that I was not suffering from a concussion, because he sent me back out on to the floor. As the clock started, I grabbed the ball and, to show everyone that I was in good shape, I dribbled from one end of the court to the other and executed a perfect lay-up right into the basket. Unfortunately, it was Frichton's basket!

I realized my goof when, instead of the usual applause and cheering that greeted every point scored, this time I was hearing laughs and shrieks from the overflow crowd. "Omigosh!" I thought, clasping my head with both hands. I turned bright red and wished I could just sink down into the floor and die. But when I had overcome my humiliation sufficiently to look in the coach's direction, I was happy to see that he was not pulling me out of the game. I'm not sure whether this was because of his high level of confidence in me, or because Jenkins simply didn't understand how

the game was played, but in either case, I was buoyed by the fact that I would to continue playing despite my enormous gaffe.

With only seconds remaining I made a successful jump shot to send the game into overtime. Fortunately, we prevailed and emerged victorious when the overtime clock ran out. My scoring that basket for the opposing team ranks as one of my life's most humbling and embarrassing moments. I think back to that day whenever I sense that I could use a little shot of humility.

The following afternoon, we were poised to play the most formidable team in our region, the Vincennes Alices. The team was so named because of a popular novel and stage play written by Maurice Thompson in 1900 titled *Alice of Old Vincennes*. The book more or less put Vincennes, Indiana, on the map the same way that the song "Gary, Indiana" from *The Music Man* would do for *that* Hoosier town some years later. The name Alices was adopted by Vincennes Lincoln High School in honor of the book's title character, and although it was frequently assumed that the Alices were a girls' basketball team, they were about as tough a team in the 1940s as you could expect to see out on the court.

On that particular Saturday afternoon, five kids with funny nicknames from tiny Decker High made basketball history by doing the impossible. We defeated the mighty Alices, 26 to 25, and were now one step away from becoming the state sectional champs of 1942. This had never happened before. In fact only once before had a county team like ours defeated Vincennes for this title. As you might surmise, Knox County went wild with pure basketball bliss. There now remained only one more obstacle to our becoming the sectional champs. We had to beat Bicknell that evening in the final game and then the title would be ours — for the first time in our school's history. This was the same Bicknell team that we had defeated handily on their own home court just a few weeks before.

Following the afternoon game, when the jubilation had died down inside the Coliseum, our team was supposed to walk the few blocks from the Coliseum over to the Vincennes Grand Hotel, where we were scheduled to rest up in preparation for

that night's championship game against Bicknell. Naturally, it was rather hard for us to come down to earth after defeating the biggest school in the county, and besides…hadn't we just "whupped" Bicknell a few weeks before? We were feeling pretty invincible at that point.

As we made our way from the Coliseum to the hotel along Vincennes' main drag, we were buoyed along on a wave of overjoyed supporters, family, and fans who insisted on shaking our hands and patting us on the back with every step. It took my teammates and me more than an hour to make our way through the throngs and finally reach the hotel for our purported beauty sleep. Actually, none of us slept a wink. We spent what was left of the afternoon savoring our victory and reliving the game highlights over and over again.

Finally, the time arrived for the championship game, with our team, the Decker Aces, highly favored over the Bicknell Bulldogs. Our cockiness was further enhanced when we quickly stepped out into a five-to-nothing lead. But the afternoon's revelry took its toll. One by one our crew began to fade and wilt, and by the third quarter, it was clear that we did not have the endurance to "give it our all" twice in the same day. Essentially, we were so pooped and drained thanks to our Vincennes victory that we just plain ran out of the high-octane adrenaline that had been fueling us. Bicknell defeated us, 26 to 21. The Bulldogs extracted their sweet revenge against us and, as sectional champs, they went on to the Regionals in Washington, Indiana, the following weekend. We licked our wounds and were consoled by the singular fact that although we were not taking home the trophy, at least we had toppled the invincible Alices — and that was a sweetness that we savored for years and years to come.

As my senior year drew to a close, I recall sitting beside the other 25 graduates — one of the larger classes in Decker's history — awaiting receipt of my high school diploma. I knew where I was headed, Purdue University, but I wasn't so sure about where I was going.

The world that greeted me in the summer of '42, as I emerged from the provincial embrace of Decker High School, was filled with a certain uncertainty. We could no longer dwell innocently in peaceful oblivion — forever secure in our sleepy little corner of the universe. Events were escalating ever more rapidly, and we had no idea how they would ultimately affect our education, our careers, our families, and our very lives. Pearl Harbor had been attacked just seven months before, and the nation was mobilizing for war. I looked back at that skinny 13-year-old farm boy, who, just four years earlier, had stood waiting for the early morning school bus to whisk him off to the new and novel realms of high school. On this day, the old school building seemed anything but worldly or exciting. It appeared quaint and rather smallish in comparison to the Big Ten University I would soon be attending. But, more than that, I looked at Decker High the same way that a bug looks at his larva shell. It was something that kept me warm and comfortable for a while, but, by golly, I had outgrown it and now was my time to fly. And that's just what I set out to do.

"One Hundred percent of the shots you don't take don't go in."

Wayne Gretzky

CHAPTER THREE: BOILERMAKER

It was always assumed that I would attend Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, upon graduation from high school. Purdue's standing as one of the nation's leading agricultural schools, along with its in-state proximity and available scholarship grants, made the choice a real "no-brainer." After I had applied and been accepted, I received word from the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity that they wanted me to come up to the campus for a visit. And although I didn't know much about fraternity life, I readily accepted. What I found when I got there was a friendly bunch of guys — most of them from Indiana — who had interests similar to my own. I learned that the fraternity was founded in 1904 by agriculture students at the University of Ohio and, simultaneously, at the University of Illinois. They started out as two separate groups with the identical mission of becoming both a professional and a social campus men's organization. Adopting the first three letters of the word "agriculture" as their Greek moniker, the two groups joined forces during a convention at the Claypool Hotel in Indianapolis, and two years later the fraternity's fourth house, Delta Chapter, was founded at Purdue. I felt at home the minute I walked into the spacious chapter house, and, not

surprisingly, I signed up immediately and moved in at the beginning of my freshman year.

I enrolled in the School of Agriculture, majoring in animal husbandry, without any clear career destination in mind. Occasionally I envisioned myself, upon graduation, going to work for a large corporation, such as a meat packer or a grocery chain, for example, as a buyer of farm products. At this point I was 17 and hence too young to enlist in the military, but I knew that if this war continued, I would, in all likelihood, be facing military service before I graduated. I also knew that I had no desire to return to Vincennes and work solely as a farmer. I had two younger brothers who were coming up, and I believed that one or both of them would eventually take over the farming operations, enabling me to follow other, more exciting and rewarding pursuits. Actually, it did come to pass that my brother Don took over the farming operations after Dad went back to Washington, D.C., to serve as Undersecretary of Agriculture in 1950.

As an AGR pledge I was assigned to a room with a sophomore and a senior as roommates. The idea was for one of the upperclassmen to serve as an advisor for the green freshman. During my first semester at Purdue, my senior advisor was Howard "Gus" Diesslin, a true BMOC (Big Man On Campus) and bona fide student leader. Gus, to his credit, took a real interest in me and was determined to turn this "wet-behind-the-ears" Knox County farm boy into a real Purdue Boilermaker. All I can say is that he succeeded. He taught me the ropes — everything from how to get into those classes taught by the best professors to how I should tie my necktie — so that I eventually began to regard him as a virtual big brother. Growing up, I had never had a real big brother. That was simply because I was always required to *be* the big brother. But with Gus, I had found, for the first time, someone older, other than my dad, in whom I could confide and share my thoughts and feelings.

Gus completed his studies and joined the military at the conclusion of my first semester at Purdue. His place was filled by an absolutely terrific fellow from Knightstown, Indiana, by the name of Russ Hardin. Russ helped me understand the

value of social involvement and helped me to shed some of my "rube" dirt farmer attributes. He seemed to be grooming and molding me as Eliza Doolittle had been in *My Fair Lady*. Russ finally revealed his intentions to me during one late-night bull session:

"Jim, do you know that there's a freshman class election next month?" he asked me.

"Yes, I've heard about it," I replied. "That's when the freshmen elect the class president and other officers, right?"

"That's it. I just know that I could run you for president and we can win," he announced fervently. This took me by surprise and I had to pause to think for a moment. After a bit I responded:

"Well, Russ, wouldn't I have to know a lot of people and be real popular?" I asked. "I only know you guys here at the house, a few classmates, and the guys on the basketball team. That's hardly enough votes to win an election."

"You just let me handle all that," stated Russ in the same way that I imagine Col. Parker reassured Elvis. After receiving a bit more persuasion and ego stroking, I cautiously agreed to let Russ toss my hat into the ring, all the while praying that I wouldn't lose my head in the process. He proceeded to put my name on the ballot.

The first thing I learned as a candidate was that the political process is not always what it appears to be to the casual observer. I naively believed that each student decided which candidate he or she liked the best and then went ahead and cast his or her vote accordingly. What I learned was that votes could be acquired, delivered, negotiated, and withheld by those in positions of some power on campus. Russ used his many campus contacts to win me much-needed endorsements. For example, he persuaded campus athletic leaders to support me. Russ was a master at putting together these "coalitions" and rounding up endorsements. Thanks almost entirely to his efforts, I was elected freshman class president in January of 1943, shortly after I turned eighteen. My duties were rather limited. In fact, it was not

required that I attend many student council meetings during my tenure as president. Class president turned out to be a rather interesting position, albeit not a particularly powerful one. It does, however, look impressive on my résumé.

Once again, thanks to Russ's urging, I offered my name and was elected to represent our fraternity in the campus-wide Skull & Crescent honorary fraternity. Each fraternity house elected a representative to the Skull & Crescent, and I do recall attending several of their meetings. I enjoyed attending because it gave me a chance to get to know students from backgrounds different than my own. AGR was filled with guys who were pretty much just like me. This made me feel at home, but it didn't really provide me with the challenging exposure and broadening of one's horizons that college life is supposed to provide. I cherished my membership in Skull & Crescent because it placed me on an even peer status with members of some of the more urban, upscale fraternities. Let's face it: I enjoyed rubbing shoulders with the rich kids on campus.

My fondest memories of my time at Purdue revolve around the twin star seniors known as "Gus 'n' Russ." I was privileged to endow a scholarship at Purdue in each of their names a few years back. I decided to do it as a tribute to those two upperclassmen who stood tall as they bent over to help a green farm boy evolve into a true Purdue Man of the World.

Gus Dieslin, who graduated after my first semester at Purdue, had joined the military. After the war, Gus returned to Purdue as a faculty member and went on to enjoy a highly distinguished career, culminating in his service as a Dean in the School of Agriculture. After retiring from Purdue, Gus took a part-time position working at his son's stock brokerage office in West Lafayette, Indiana.

Russ went on to veterinary school and is today retired after completing a highly distinguished career in Lebanon, Indiana. We remain close friends, and I like to think I was able to offer him some consolation and advice at the time his wife passed away, shortly after I lost my first wife, Bettye, in 1997.

"Savor the memories, Russ," I counseled, "but don't wallow in them. And find yourself a new mate." Which may sound like odd advice to be giving to an eighty-one-year-old man, but he must have listened, because that's exactly what he did.

Russ never calls me by name. It's a mark of our affection for each other that he still refers to me as "my freshman" to this day. At a recent outing, Russ introduced me to some of his golf buddies with:

"Fellows, meet my freshman from Vincennes. Would you believe it? This guy used to shine my shoes and belt buckles when we were both back at Purdue!" Russ was recently named one of AGR's Top Fifty Alumni of All Time. A truly well-deserved honor.

My academic performance at Purdue was nothing to write home about during my first semester. I was placed into a chemistry class and, not having had any sort of science training at Decker High School, I struggled through, but just barely. During my second semester, I decided to buckle down, and the effort paid off. At year's end I managed to earn a Distinguished Student designation — comparable to the Dean's List — awarded to all those students who turn in a minimum of 3.5 out of a 4.0 overall grade point average.

It should not come as any surprise that I went out for basketball at Purdue. It was a heady time for Purdue basketball during the waning years of Head Coach Ward "Piggy" Lambert's immortal reign. Lambert dominated Purdue basketball from 1916 through 1946 and racked up an astounding 371-152 win/loss record over 29 regular seasons. The Boilermakers, thanks to his leadership, collected eleven Big Ten titles, including a National Championship in 1932. He went on from Purdue to serve as commissioner of the National Professional Basketball League (a precursor of the NBA) and authorized the first recognized basketball "bible" called *Practical Basketball*.

Although we reported to Dutch Fehring, the freshman basketball coach, Piggy Lambert was present during most of our practices and stressed the value of player

speed and the mastery of the "fast-break," a widely adopted technique he had developed and pioneered.

Along with about 50 other freshmen, I attempted to make the basketball team as a "walk-on," or a nonscholarship player. During the prior year, Purdue's basketball scouts had scoured the state (and beyond) seeking out worthy additions to their freshman line-up. Most of the twenty or so recruits received some level of financial assistance (such grants are typically labeled "scholarships" although this is a misnomer because they have little to do with actual scholarship and are based upon athletic, rather than academic, ability) as a means of luring them to Purdue. Big Ten scouts normally focus on the big cities as they trawl for high school hot-shots, and seldom venture out to communities they would consider to be "Podunk" towns with schools like Decker High.

Students like me, who wished to be considered for the team, were instructed to show up for practice, where their talents could be evaluated. At the end of each week a "cut list" would be posted in the locker room containing the names of those players who would be asked to continue playing during the following week. I was pleased to see that my name was still listed after the second and the third week's cut lists were posted. The final cut list was to go up at the end of the fourth week. So all of us who were on the line put out an inordinate amount of extra effort to ensure that we would make the final cut.

My own personal efforts that week caught the eye of Coach Lambert. He was striding up and down the sidelines, his pugnacious gait enhancing the stature that nature had denied to him. Suddenly he stopped dead as he observed me sink a basket from a distance that would have earned me three points under today's rules.

"What's your name, son?" he shouted out.

"McCormick. Jim McCormick, sir," I replied.

"Where you from?" shot back Lambert.

"Vincennes, sir," I said, offering the name of my hometown, but not the name of my high school. At this, he scratched the back of his head a moment as he pondered this bit of information. It was pretty easy for me to read his mind. I obviously had some talent and if I had played for Vincennes why had I been overlooked by Purdue's scouts?

"Wait a minute," he exclaimed as the revelation hit him. "You didn't play for Vincennes. You went to Decker!"

"That's right, sir," I admitted, slightly embarrassed. Having solved his little mystery, Lambert trotted off with a satisfied little smile.

At the conclusion of the fourth week, the final cut list was posted in the usual spot in the men's locker room. I was pleased and gratified to discover that my name was on the list of permanent players, and that I was one of the three students, from among the 50 or so who had tried out, to make the final cut.

I was never a starter and in fact didn't get all that much court time. I soon learned that the primary role of the Freshman Men's Basketball Team is to serve as practice fodder for the Varsity Men's Basketball Team. Our practice scrimmages against the upperclassmen were one long, uninterrupted reign of pain. Endless elbows, nonstop knees, and unremitting abuse were our daily dosage as the varsity players chewed up the freshmen in an ongoing effort to get themselves in shape for the next big game.

The highlight of my freshman season was during the home game against the University of Illinois. The Illinois team included a highly touted hot-shot starter named Dwight Edelman, from Centralia, Illinois, who had been strongly recruited. Although I was not a starter, I had been put into the game by Coach Fehring as part of the standard rotation that ensured that every player got to play a minimum number of quarters. Things just bounced my way, and I wound up scoring 10 points and heavily contributing to the defeat of our Illini opponents. My AGR fraternity

brothers, who had filled the bleachers to see me play, all went wild at my strong performance. What an unforgettable night that was!

After the basketball season was over, I, along with the other members of the team, was awarded the much-coveted Purdue Freshman Basketball black and gold sweater bearing the team member's anticipated graduation year — in my case, it read: 1946.

The cheers from the crowd during my moment of glory on the basketball court were still ringing in my ears when I received word of a far-reaching war-related announcement. In the spring of 1943 we learned that, due to the war, Purdue would be closing its doors as a civilian university and instead would become a part of the Navy's V-5/V-12 officer training programs.

The V-5 and the V-12 Navy college training programs were initiated in 1943 to meet both the immediate and the long-range needs for commissioned officers to man ships, fly planes, and command troops called into duty during World War II. The draft age was lowered to 18 in November of 1942, and the Navy understood that this would create a shortage of college-educated officers. By the same token, many colleges and universities, such as Purdue, felt that with so many young college-aged men entering the military, they would lose enrollment and be forced to close their doors for the duration.

The V-5 (Naval) and V-12 (Marine Corps) programs accepted students who were already enrolled in college reserve programs, enlisted men who were recommended by their commanding officers, and high school seniors who passed a qualifying exam. Beginning on July 1, 1943, more than 125,000 college-aged men were enrolled into the two programs at 131 schools around the country. Schools such as Purdue.

Although I was enrolled in the ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) program at Purdue, that program was administered under the auspices of the U.S. Army. To

qualify for the V-5 or V-12 programs, I would have had to be enrolled in either the Navy or the Marine Corps officer training programs.

Although we were all mentally prepared for the unexpected during those days, the news that Purdue was closing came as a major jolt. It served to bring the world situation home to our doorstep, however, and made my next move a very clear choice indeed. As I packed my bags at the conclusion of my freshman year, while observing my fraternity brothers shuttering up the house for who knew how long, I bid farewell to my brothers, my classmates, and the few girls I had dated during the year, and headed off to the same destination as the rest of the men around me. Destination: Draft Board.

"To be a leader means willingness to risk — and a willingness to love. Has the leader given you something from the heart?"

— Hubert H. Humphrey

CHAPTER FOUR: MEMORIES OF WAR AND DAD

As I turned 18 in January of 1943, I faced the requirement to register with my local draft board. So when the school year was over, it was decision time. I could either wait around for the draft board to call my number, or I could enlist. Even though Purdue had closed its doors to civilians like me, I still harbored hopes of returning, after the war, to the campus with which I had so deeply fallen in love. Because the V-5 Program, in which Purdue was participating, was administered by the Navy, I decided to try enlisting in this branch rather than wait around to be drafted. Perhaps I could wind up back at Purdue after all. I was also drawn to the Navy because some of my college buddies had enlisted and were attending the Navy Flight School. Dad was not too excited about this plan, but I nevertheless convinced him to accompany me to Evansville, Indiana, to visit a regional recruiting office for the Navy. We walked in the door and the recruiting

officer asked us both to take a seat. He pulled out a form and began asking me the usual questions.

"How old are you?"

"Eighteen, sir," I replied.

"You're interested in serving in the Naval Air Corps, I see, so tell me a little bit about yourself."

"Well, sir, I just finished my freshman year at Purdue," I recounted. "I live on a farm outside of Vincennes. We have about 30 or 40 milk cows, some beef cattle and hogs, and we raise corn, soybeans, and wheat."

"I see," he said. "And who actually runs the farm? Your dad, your brothers, perhaps?"

"Oh, no, sir," I responded. "Dad spends most of his time in Washington, D.C. these days. My brothers help out, but you see, they're just kids. So I guess it's just my mother, the hired hand, and me."

The officer put his pencil down and gave my dad a knowing look. Then he looked me straight in the eye and said:

"Son, I'm sure you would make a fine naval officer and a terrific flyer, but the country needs men like you to stay home and raise the food needed for our troops. Unless I miss my guess, if you took off into the wild blue yonder, your farm would stop producing the food items you mentioned, and Uncle Sam can't afford for that to happen right now."

I gave the officer a puzzled look and shot a glance at my dad. The officer understood my confusion and said clearly:

"Young man, I'm recommending you for a deferment for the duration. You are going to help us win this war by providing healthy food to sustain our fighting men. It's a very important job, so don't let us down. Your country is depending on you."

Although I didn't know it at the time, agricultural deferments, like the one that was to be issued to me, were the subject of no small controversy as the nation struggled to adequately mobilize its manpower as part of the overall war effort. In November of 1942 Congress had amended the Selective Service Act to defer essential farm workers from military service unless satisfactory replacement workers could be found to fill in. In February of 1943 the President's powerful War Manpower Commission called upon the Selective Service to reclassify farm workers as "nondeferrable" and issue new 1-A classifications to all previously deferred farmers, but the local draft boards refused to obey this order and continued to issue deferments to farm workers just as before. By 1944 this practice led to an outright scandal as it was discovered that men were taking agricultural jobs merely to avoid military service. In January, 1945, President Roosevelt, having been advised that the only remaining pool of combat-aged men in the country were farm workers like me, agreed to authorize our re-classification. The presidential order was blocked, however, by an act of Congress that kept the deferments in place. As soon as the measure reached newly sworn-in President Truman's desk, he promptly vetoed it, making it once again possible to draft farm workers. All this back and forth resulted in delaying matters, so that farm workers could not legally be called into military service until two days before VE day.

As a result, I was not called into the military and spent the following two years, along with my mother and our hired hand, managing the family farm. My father, as mentioned earlier, was assisting the war effort in Washington, D.C., working with the United States Department of Agriculture, a department that he would be virtually running in a few more years. My father's career in public service is one that can only be characterized as a true American success story. From a hardscrabble dirt farmer, working the soil of rural Indiana, to a respected, president-appointed undersecretary cabinet officer, my father's was an amazing journey that deserves to be recounted.

As mentioned in the Prologue, Dad was born on March 26, 1902, on a family farm south of Vincennes. Just as I did, he graduated from Decker High School and then went on to study at the Indiana Normal College, today known as Indiana State University at Terre Haute. He also studied agriculture and science at Vincennes University and went on to teach these subjects at Decker High from 1922 through 1926. It was during this period that he married my mother and became a father as I entered the picture. Dad's political life began in 1934. He first served as secretary and office manager of the Knox County Corn-Hog Association, headquartered in Vincennes. He became connected with the newly formed AAA (Agricultural Adjustment Administration), an agency that set up county offices to aid farmers across the country. Dad worked with AAA in setting up effective corn-hog price subsidy programs. He did similar work for Purdue University during this time period. In 1936 he helped to found the Knox County Rural Electrification Administration (REA) cooperative, which succeeded in bringing sorely needed electrical power to our area. This accomplishment had an enormous effect on our entire way of life, from the way we ran our farm to how we washed our clothes.

I remember that it was shortly after we became "electrified" that one of our neighbors, Maurice Jackson from near Monroe City, took a job as a salesman for Gibson Appliances. He wasted no time in selling us a refrigerator, several radios, and a newfangled electric washing machine. One of the radios — a little $6 job — wound up on my nightstand right next to my bed. That radio would transport me every night to the ballrooms of the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans or to the swank nightclubs of Chicago, as the swinging big band music of the era filled the airwaves and consumed my young imagination. The biggest innovation brought about by electrification at our home was the addition of a coal furnace with an electric stoker.

In the summer of 1940, Dad, the hired hand, and I strategically placed support struts all around our house and began hand digging a new basement that would house the furnace. After we gained some purchase and were able to stand up in the pit we had dug, we hitched up some big dirt scrapers to a team of horses, and they

helped us to carve out a full-sized dirt-floor cellar. We made sure that there was enough room for the furnace itself plus a coal bin large enough to hold the stoker coal that we would unload from a truck through a basement window. Stoker coal is rather small, no more than one inch in diameter, and using it enabled us to employ the electric stoker that automatically took coal from the bin and fed it into the furnace as needed. This device was considered the height of technology in those days, but the next innovation to make the scene was even more welcomed by all of us.

My Dad, as mentioned, taught shop or "manual training" at Decker High, hence he was very adept at carpentry and all forms of household fabrication. So what came next was not too ambitious an undertaking for him. He sliced off part of the side porch and built a small room addition off of his and Mother's bedroom. He equipped the new room with running water and housed that most lusted-for of modern conveniences, an indoor toilet.

With the introduction of indoor plumbing, our family finally felt as though we had died and gone to heaven. With a hot water heater that ran off the coal furnace, we were able to plumb hot and cold faucets throughout the house. Looking around our upgraded home, now equipped with radios, central heat, running water, and an electric stove, we saw ourselves as the thoroughly modern McCormicks. Most wondrous and wonderful of all was the new electric washing machine that effectively eliminated Mother's backbreaking burden of hand-washing our family laundry. It was a dramatic moment as we tore down the old outhouse and junked it along with the carbide pellet lighting system. Those relics from our past would not be needed as we inhabited the home of the future; in fact, we didn't want them around to remind us of our prior way of life. Even though we didn't believe that the Depression was really over, this period represented a turning point in our family life and permitted us to hope that maybe happy days of prosperity really were just around the corner.

The modern miracles brought about through electrification were being repeated in rural landscapes across America. And in our section of the world, Dad received a good deal of acclaim for his role in making this happen. It was this fact that led to his appointment to the state governing body of the AAA called the Indiana State Committee in 1938. In this capacity he and the other committee members were responsible for the statewide administration of the AAA programs. It was through this role that Dad came into close contact with the United States Department of Agriculture. In 1940 President Roosevelt appointed Claude D. Wickard from Indiana to serve as his new Secretary of Agriculture. Wickard worked closely with Dad as the AAA carried out many of the DOA's policies and programs.

In 1942, Wickard asked Dad to join him at the Department in Washington, to serve as chief of the corn and soybean sections of the Commodity Credit Corporation. This CCC (not to be confused with another New Deal alphabet agency, the Civilian Conservation Corps) was involved in loaning farmers money as an incentive for them to place their crops into storage and off the market — a practice that would result in maintaining or increasing price levels and thereby generate more income for the farmer.

Our lives were also affected by the other CCC. The Civilian Conservation Corps was based upon the romantic proletariat notion that out-of-work men and women from the nation's large cities could be recruited — and somehow ennobled — by working the land through government "Make Work" programs. Although the program never actually achieved all of its stated objectives, it did manage to keep unemployed young people occupied and away from the temptation of turning to crime. Able-bodied men and women were directed to CCC camps set up around the country, where they would be provided with housing, clothing and a small stipend for food. In exchange, they were asked to work on conservation projects. Given his access and local political connections, Dad saw the CCC recruits as a source of cheap labor. In 1940, he succeeded in getting a group of them assigned to our farm for the better part of the summer. Several of the farm ponds they dug that year are

still on the property some 65 years later. The most advanced work they performed was assisting us in terracing a sloped area of our farm. The terrace walls were used to hold the fertile topsoil in place and keep it from washing down the hill into the creek. There was a problem, however. The terraces made it very difficult to work the ground because they were relatively small and odd-shaped — not divided into neat rectangular parcels.

As it turned out, that was the summer of our entry into the modern world. We had just acquired our first farm tractor. It was a JI Case Model-S10 (tricycle type) that we had purchased new from Able Bros. in Bridgeport, Illinois, for $1,060. I honestly felt like the king of the world atop that tractor. I was able to view nature's beauty all around me, instead of being forced to stare at a mule's rear end for 10 hours at a stretch.

One sunny day, I took our new tractor to plow the terraced area. Things were going fine until I was forced to navigate a tight turn and the top-heavy tractor tipped over the side of the terrace wall, toppling me to the ground. Luckily, I was uninjured and the damage to the tractor was slight. Nevertheless, I dreaded the tongue-lashing I was sure to receive from Dad when he returned home. Fortunately for me, he was very understanding about how easily the accident had occurred.

The Roosevelt years were characterized by a belief that greater government regulation would solve the nation's agricultural problems. It was this philosophy that led to the creation of the AAA in the first place. Part of Dad's job was to educate and encourage farmers to engage in voluntary cutbacks of crop production. My dad correctly understood that this, and other, similar government practices, succeeded in bringing the family farmer back from the edge of the financial abyss.

Wickard left the cabinet when Truman became president in 1945, and the following year my dad left Washington and returned to Indiana. Throughout those years of service, Dad would commute by train to Washington, usually returning home only once a month. A big kick for me in those days was being permitted to stay up late on those nights that Dad was to return home so that I could go to the

station and meet his train. Dad's absence posed a hardship — not so much on the farm management but upon our family members, who deeply missed his presence in our lives. Mother and I were old enough to understand that this was wartime, and many families were making much greater sacrifices than we were. I recall quite a few Gold Star houses in and around Vincennes during those difficult days. But for my younger siblings, it was hard to grasp why Dad was around only now and then. When the war was over, Mother expressed to Dad how difficult things were without him in our lives.

"Clarence, Jim's a big help, but I've got these two boys and Lorene coming up and it's just getting to be too much for me," she said, pouring out her heart to her husband shortly after VE day.

"Well, Emma, you'll be pleased to know that I've thought it over and I'm coming home next month to stay," said Dad, offering up a slight smile.

"Thank the Lord," said Mother as she gave him an uncharacteristic embrace.

After he saw what was waiting for him in the stalls of our barn, Dad might have wished he had remained in the halls of government. On his first day back home, we were busy cleaning out the cattle barns. This unsavory task involved shoveling loads of cow manure out of the barn into a manure spreader and then spreading it across the fields for use as fertilizer. It was backbreaking work, and it concerned me because I felt that dear old Dad — who was all of 44 — had grown pretty soft sitting behind a desk for the past four years. Much to my surprise, he jumped in literally with both feet and worked like a dog, shoveling and hauling, all day and into the evening hours. I'm certain that he must have felt sore as his muscles felt the strain and as the new blisters appeared on his palms the next day. Nevertheless, he appeared genuinely to enjoy handling the natural kind of manure found on our farm much more than the political variety he had been forced to deal with back in Washington.

Once back in Indiana full time, Dad remained active in agricultural affairs. He served as a field representative of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, became president of the Knox County Farm Bureau, and a member of the Indiana Farm Bureau Board of Directors. Dad was fortunate to benefit from a political issue that arose in 1948. President Truman was blaming the Republican Congress for not supporting the American farmer, and as a result, he pointed out, farmers were unable to build enough grain bins to store their crops. There was a bumper grain crop in 1948, and much of it rotted on the ground because farmers had nowhere to store it. As a result of Truman making this issue something of a political football, the Congress approved a program to underwrite the construction of thousands of grain bins — sometimes called Butler feed storage tanks — to avoid a repetition of what had happened in 1948. Dad succeeded in landing a government contract to construct 5,000 metal grain bins. These bins were used to store grain that was kept off the market as part of the government's price support program. The majority of the bins were delivered to north central Illinois, the home of Dad's business partner in the bin-building venture. The activity consumed most of Dad's time during 1948 and 1949. Then in early 1950 fortune smiled again, and this time it put a smile on my face as well. Based on his efficiency in delivering the initial 5,000 storage bins, Dad was offered a contract for another thousand units. Generously, he asked me whether I would be interested in taking part of the contract. Boy, would I! Naturally, I jumped at the opportunity. As is recounted in the next chapter, by this time I was married with two kids of my own, working as a small independent trucker, and this little windfall really came in handy.

By this time circumstances were again changing in Washington. There had been another changing of the guard at the USDA as Secretary Wickard's successor, Clinton P. Anderson, a close friend of President Truman's, decided to give up the post and run for a vacant New Mexico Senate seat. The president promoted his undersecretary, Charles F. Brannan, a Denver attorney, to the top post. Brannan was a great fellow, but unfortunately he knew very little about farming. He needed and

sought out an individual to fill the position that he had just left. He wanted a seasoned and knowledgeable individual who would make up for his lack of expertise. In other words, he was looking for a dirt farmer. Claude Wickard, who was now head of the REA, was still very well connected in Washington. Wickard contacted Brannan and told him that he knew just the man for the job. He offered the name of Clarence J. McCormick of Indiana. Brannan liked the idea and instructed Wickard to contact Dad in order to feel him out for the post.

Dad soon received a phone call from Claude Wickard, who informed him that he had mentioned Dad's name as a candidate for consideration as the new Undersecretary of Agriculture.

"Will you take it if they offer it to you, Clarence?" asked Wickard.

"I don't rightly know, Claude," he said honestly, "I'll have to discuss it with my family. You know I told them five years ago that I was coming home for good. I know they're not going to be too happy about it if I head back to Washington."

"Look, Clarence, Brannan needs somebody like you — somebody that understands the farmer — to give him an assist." Wickard went on, "I don't know what's going to happen to farm subsidies if you don't get the appointment, but I do know that unless you're there to guide things along, it's going to be a lot tougher for all of us here in Indiana and other similar places."

Dad agreed to get back to Wickard promptly, and next did something he had never done before. He called a family meeting. At this point, I was 25 with a wife and two children plus a White truck dealership and a small trucking business. Brother Don, 20, had just finished his sophomore year at Purdue and was helping to manage the family farm over the summer months. If Dad had ever, in his heart, felt any disappointment over the fact that I had elected not to stay on the farm — which I suspect that he did — he never showed it, and, in particular, he did not show it on that day as we all sat in the family living room to discuss our family's future.

A big part of the problem was that we were not in a position to move the entire family to Washington if Dad accepted the appointment. We couldn't afford to live there, and we were all tied to the farm or to our other activities here in Indiana. Because I was the oldest, Dad started with me after laying out all the facts.

"Well, Jim, what do you think I should do?" he asked, looking me squarely in the eye.

"Dad, I really think that you should go for it," I advised. "And if doesn't work out? Nothing ventured, nothing gained." Dad nodded and looked to Mother. I could see — or rather, I could feel — that Mother was opposed to the idea and did not care to once again give up her husband to the wilds of Washington. Nevertheless, she never let on and did not raise any objection — at least not while the children were within earshot.

When it appeared that the family all supported Dad's acceptance, the question then came up about the fate of the farm. To his credit, Don stepped right up and agreed to forgo his final two years of schooling at Purdue and return to full-time management of the farm. His sacrifice was sweetened somewhat by the fact that this move enabled him to marry Gladys, his sweetheart, two years ahead of schedule. I don't believe that Don ever regretted that decision. He was able to later leverage his agribusiness experience into a very successful insurance agency, and I don't honestly believe his failure to receive a college degree has ever hampered him in any way. Dad asked Lorene, age 16 at the time, and Ed, age 14, for their votes and, given their youth, they both agreed with Don and me.

So the decision was made — as a family — for Dad to accept the appointment if it were to be offered. This fact was communicated to our "inside man," Claude Wickard, who called back in a few days to inform Dad that his appointment was a sealed deal. However, he would have to go through the proper protocol to get his name into consideration for the post.

"Now you've been around long enough to know how these things work, Clarence," counseled Wickard. "You need to visit your County Democrat Chairman and you say to him, 'I hear there's a very slight possibility that I might be in line for consideration for the Undersecretary of Agriculture opening and I need a letter of support from you.' Then you go to your District Chairman and you tell him the same thing. After that you go visit the State Chairman and get his letter. Do you follow me?"

Dad assured Wickard he would make the necessary rounds and get all his political ducks in a row. I recall the reaction of State Democratic Chairman Charlie Skillen when Dad approached him with a request for his support. It was pretty much the same response he had received at the county and district levels:

"Sure, Clarence, I'll be glad to give you a letter of support," assured Skillen with characteristic expansiveness. "But you know, simply being under consideration for a Presidential appointment is a real big honor. You shouldn't feel too put out if they give it to someone else." These local pols, who thought Dad was whistling in the dark, were amazed when the news came down in early July that Dad had been awarded the appointment and would, if confirmed by the Senate, soon be on his way to Washington to serve under Secretary Brannan.

Charles Brannan, at this point, found himself embroiled in a bitter struggle with the nation's farm bureaus over how federal price supports were to be allocated. The Brannan Plan, as it was dubbed, called for broad price parity, whereas the American Farm Bureau Federation was fighting for a sliding scale that would peg supports to actual production output — large supports when production was high, and smaller ones when production dropped off. The appointment of my father, who had, since leaving Washington five years earlier, been aligned with the Farm Bureaus, was viewed by many Washington observers as a peace offering intended to gain the Bureaus' support for the Brannan Plan. It was a tactic that worked for the Truman administration, because Dad's first words when arriving to Washington were: "I support the Brannan Plan."

Dad was formally nominated by President Truman on July 10, 1950, to serve as the nation's only Undersecretary of Agriculture. He was confirmed by the Senate and was sworn in on July 28. After a big surprise send-off party at our home the night before, the family piled into our Oldsmobile and Dad's Chrysler to drive to Washington for the swearing-in ceremony. After checking in at the Statler Hilton Hotel, we made our way to the Department of Agriculture, where we witnessed the oath of office being administered by United States Supreme Court Justice Sherman Minton — an Indiana native.

Officially, Dad was in charge of all soil conservation activities, the Farmers' Home Administration, and the Forest Service, but in actuality, his role was a much broader one. In fact, as the following opening minutes of an October 27, 1950, cabinet meeting reveal, Dad represented the USDA at most cabinet meetings at the White House:

> Fri. Oct. 27, 1950 / 10 AM
>
> Cabinet Meeting
>
> General Omar Bradley briefed the Cabinet. Vice President absent; Post Office and Department of Labor not respresented (sic); the Solicitor General represented the Department of Justice; Under Secretary (sic) McCormick again represented Agriculture.

Dad's service as Undersecretary of Agriculture was marked with accomplishment that filled all of us — his family and his Indiana neighbors — with enormous pride. The state's largest newspaper offered the following quote about our family's reaction to Dad's appointment:

> His family is happy, naturally, but it appears that Mrs. McCormick and the grown-up children will stay on the farm because "there's work to be done!"

—From the July 12, 1950, edition of the Indianapolis News daily newspaper

Although this book is not the place to recount Dad's career and his countless contributions as a spokesman for the nation's farming community, I would hope

that someone would examine that critical period of American history and record the important work that he and others shouldered as the nation's post-war agricultural infrastructure was being fashioned. If so, the author would find ample source material. The file on Dad among the official papers housed in the Harry S Truman presidential library occupies one linear foot — more space than any other Undersecretary in the administration.

Perhaps his most noteworthy achievement was his appointment by President Truman as one of five administration representatives to the President's Advisory Committee on Management Improvement, a commission charged with modernizing the Federal Civil Service and bureaucracy.

In 1952, when I was 27, Dad invited Bettye and me to join him at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, where he was to attend as a delegate. I couldn't wait to accept. President Truman had announced that he would not be seeking reelection, even though under the law at that time, he would have been legally able to do so. (Note: Under the provisions of the 25th Amendment, authored by Indiana lawmaker Birch Bayh and ratified in 1967, Truman's first term from April 1945 to January 1949 would have been considered a "full term" because it lasted more than two years. Hence he would have been barred from running in 1952 after having served two "full" terms.)

Dad, along with all the other cabinet officials, was provided with a private box in the huge stadium. This was the first "open convention" for the Democrats in 20 years, and there were close to a dozen candidates seeking the nomination. The six-day event — the longest in post-World War II history — saw floor fights over loyalty oaths and delegate credentials, as well as lots of political jockeying as the candidates struggled to line up sufficient support on the convention floor. President Truman, who had originally planned not to attend the convention, flew in to throw his support behind Governor Adlai E. Stevenson, a favorite-son candidate from Illinois. Finally, on the third ballot, the delegates awarded the nomination to Stevenson, son of the former Vice President, while naming Senator John Sparkman

of Alabama as his running mate. Observing all these political machinations was incredibly exciting, and I feel fortunate to have witnessed the last real "old-style" American political convention. It was a far cry from the insipid infomercials and preprogrammed yawners that pass for national political conventions these days.

I recall meeting Senator Richard Russell, considered the most powerful member of Congress at the time, as well as Senator Sparkman, who had just been named to the ticket. We went with him to the Stockyards Inn to celebrate, and when we got there, I was tickled to meet Faye Emerson, the well-known motion picture and TV personality, along with her husband Elliot Roosevelt, the late President's son. My dad also introduced me to the sitting Vice President, Alben Barkley, who, at age 75, was the oldest man ever to hold the office before or since. I remarked about the fact that he looked very fit and vigorous, and Dad clued me in about his secret.

"I campaigned with the Veep during the last election (Barkley was the first Vice President to be known as "Veep," a term that he claimed was coined by his grandson), and I observed him religiously lie down for a quick nap every day after lunch no matter what." I've never observed that policy myself, but I do know successful business leaders who do. In any case, the memories of that convention have stayed with me over the years as a real high point of my life.

Dad left Washington on the same day that Harry Truman went home to Missouri, January 20, 1953. Bettye, Mother, and I were with Dad in Washington on that day to witness the inauguration of Dwight D. Eisenhower as America's 34th president. As a Cabinet-level official, Dad had been extended an invitation to the ceremony and was able to include a few close family members as well. After the ceremony, we joined a small crowd of about 100 well-wishers and Democratic faithful to see the ex-President off as he boarded a westbound train heading for Missouri. I'll always remember seeing Truman, his wife, Bess, and daughter, Margaret, as they waved and smiled to all of us gathered on the platform. It was at this point that Dad turned to me, feeling the poignancy of the moment, and said:

"Jim, I may not live to see the day, but you will, I'm sure. President Truman will go down in history as one of the greatest presidents of all time." I met this outlandish prediction with a response that arose mostly from the "know-it-all" arrogance of my youth:

"Dad, you're too close to the trees to see the whole forest. Truman is leaving office with an approval rating under 20 percent. Greatest president? That's just not going to happen," I scoffed.

"Mark my words, Jim, someday people will understand what Truman did to save Europe after the war, and what he did to stand up to Communism." Dad, of course, was right. He did not live to see it, although by the time of Dad's death in 1983, Truman's reputation had already been somewhat burnished in the public consciousness. Historians today are uniform in their assessment of Truman: that his straight-talking, ethically guided leadership on the world stage accounted for the survival of the West during the critically tenuous post-World War II and early Cold War period.

After a few years back in Indiana, Dad once again served as delegate-at-large to the 1956 Democratic Convention that was again held in Chicago. He was instrumental in garnering support for Adlai Stevenson, who received the nomination along with Senator Estes Kefauver as his coon-capped running mate. Dad remained an active farmer until his retirement in 1967, and an active Democrat for the rest of his life.

"I would rather try and fail — and rise up and try again, than to have never tried and wondered if I could have — had I tried."

— C. James McCormick

CHAPTER FIVE: IGNITION

By the winter of 1943, as the winds of war blew fiercely in Europe and the Pacific, I fulfilled my patriotic duty of harvesting the crops that would find their way to our boys overseas. I did not have a clear picture of where I was heading, but I knew that once I was no longer needed on the home front, I would

be leaving the farm behind. The dreams that filled my head as I cruised the countryside in my cherished blue Ford convertible all revolved around getting a glimpse of the world. If I were not destined to do so as a soldier, then I'd find another way. Perhaps as a pilot or a boat captain. Or even a truck driver. One way or another I was going exchange that plow and tractor for something faster and then — look out, world. Here I come!

My daydreaming was brought to quick halt when I received a phone call from my buddy, Paul DeLisle, a few days before Christmas 1943. Paul was a distant relative of Bub DeLisle, who would soon sell me my first truck (see Prologue) — the truck that I would be driving at that fateful railroad crossing the following spring.

Paul was something of a flashy dresser, thanks to the fact that his dad owned a well-known men's store on Main Street. Paul was a lifeguard at the local municipal swimming pool, Rainbow Beach, and cut a pretty swell figure with the ladies. I enjoyed double dating with Paul after we had graduated from high school, because it would invariably impress my date to be in Paul's close company for the evening. It was in this context that Paul called me to discuss a date he had lined up with a girl named Bettye from Jasper, Indiana. Paul had met Bettye during the previous summer when she was staying in Vincennes, visiting her good friend Athalin Menefee.

The two girls, Bettye and Athalin, had been close friends since childhood, thanks to their fathers' business relationship. Bettye's dad, Virgil Gramelspacher, was a principal owner of the Jasper Veneer Mills. The company fabricated thin wooden slats used by farmers to build the melon crates that I had handled so often. Athalin's father, George Menefee, was a sales agent for Jasper Veneer Mills. George's job was to supply area melon growers with the slats and crates they needed to pack their produce.

Both men, George Menefee and Virgil Gramelspacher, had teen-aged daughters who enjoyed spending their summers together at either Athalin's home in Vincennes, or at Bettye's home in Jasper. It was during one of Bettye's Vincennes visits that she had become friendly with Paul and the other teenagers in his crowd.

"I've got a date Saturday night with Bettye over in Jasper," Paul explained over the phone. "I don't think you've met her. Her last name is Gramelspacher, and she was visiting over at Athalin Menefee's last summer." Paul was correct. I had never met Bettye.

"We were going to go over to Calumet Lake and do some dancing and…" I cut him off.

"Let me guess," I said. "You don't have any wheels and so you'd like to double date with Kay and me, right?"

"Buddy, you're a mind reader. What time are you and Kay going to pick me up on Saturday?" Kay Madden was a Vincennes girl whom I had been dating steadily at the time — although, by this time, I had come to the conclusion that our relationship wasn't really headed anywhere. Nevertheless, it sounded like a good time, so I agreed to be Paul's double-date partner and chauffeur.

On the following Saturday, I got behind the wheel of my buffed and polished Ford convertible and, after picking up Kay Madden and Paul, we set off on the 45-minute drive to Jasper to pick up Paul's date, Bettye. I was impressed with Bettye the minute she got into the car. She seemed self-assured, well mannered, and perky. Bettye explained that she had just returned home for Christmas from Columbia, Missouri. She had been attending Stephens College, a forward-thinking girl's school that had, just the year before, pioneered the teaching of aviation skills to women. Bettye explained to us that she had begged her parents to permit her to take flying lessons but that her father had put his foot down and absolutely refused. I could not help but be impressed with her pluck. She seemed like a real fun-loving gal.

From my standpoint, it was a splendid evening that saw me invite Bettye out on the dance floor for a few spins myself. She was a fluid and poised dancer, and the more words that passed between us, the more interested I became in getting to know her better. I could not help but notice the lack of any serious affection between Paul and Bettye. This was no burning romance, to be sure. As the evening drew to a close, I ventured to raise the matter with Paul.

"No, Jim, you're right," he told me. "There's nothing going on between Bettye and me. We're friends — dance partners — that's all." He expressed no objections to my calling Bettye for a date myself. Which is exactly what I intended to do.

The following week, as New Year's approached, I tried to track down Paul DeLisle to ask him for Bettye's phone number, but he was nowhere to be found. Finally, I called Directory Assistance and then, armed with the number, phoned Bettye.

"Hello, Bettye?" I started. "This is Jim McCormick over in Vincennes."

"Oh, hi, Jim," she chimed pleasantly. "How's Paul?"

"I haven't seen him," I replied. "In fact, I was trying to find him to get your phone number. I wound up dialing Information to get it."

"How were you able to spell my name?" she asked, and I could sense her slight smile that flavored the question.

"Oh, spelling a good name like Gramelspacher is no problem for me," I answered confidently.

"Well, I'm impressed," she said with a little laugh that I found absolutely charming. I asked her to join me again the following Saturday evening. I suggested that we go back to Calumet Lake since we'd had such a good time there before, and she agreed. That date led to another, followed by one more, and pretty soon we were "going steady." The romance flourished as the war dragged on over the coming year. Bettye and would often discuss our future and I shared my dreams of world conquest with her. Instead of dismissing them as the foolish fantasies of a Vincennes farm boy, Bettye was very supportive and it was thanks to her expressed faith in me and in my dreams that I decided to act upon them.

The first step was a painful one. As mentioned, selling that beloved, blue convertible — the very symbol of my carefree youth — was a wrenching experience. But I realized that it represented my past and that I would be riding that 1942 International K-5 truck (that I was now able to purchase from Bub DeLisle) into my future. Despite my little misadventure at the Purcell railroad crossing, I soon came to believe that becoming a trucker was my surest ticket off the farm.

It was shortly after that episode that I contacted a neighboring farmer named Al Fossmeyer. In addition to raising crops, Al's company, Checker Express, held an ICC (Interstate Commerce Commission) certificate, which authorized him to haul Purina feed from the mill in St. Louis to stores within a certain region of southern Indiana. This, of course, was before the deregulation of the trucking industry that took place in 1980, and it was then necessary for a common carrier driver who wished to work as a commercial trucker (of goods other than grain, livestock, or fresh produce) to first obtain a government-issued license. These licenses, or certificates, were awarded by the ICC — in cases involving routes that crossed state lines — for a particular type of freight and for a specific geographic route. The subject of trucking deregulation is a complex yet very important one that I go into more fully in Chapter 9.

I went to visit Al in his little office at the end of the freight terminal building that we now own, at 11th and Prairie Streets in Vincennes. I explained that I owned a truck, and now that our crops were all laid by, I was interested in doing some hauling for him. Al said that he would keep me in mind, and he was as good as his word. A few days later the phone rang.

"Jim, this is Al," he said briskly. "You still interested in hauling some feed?"

"I sure am," I shot back.

"Do you think that 16-foot K-5 can handle a ten-ton load of feed?" he asked.

"I sure do, Al," I said confidently. "She's got a stiff-leg tandem on her and can haul that much with no trouble. You know it's got a combination grain and livestock body, too." I did not mention that the truck was rated with only a ton and a half capacity.

"Okay, then," he instructed, "you'll need to deadhead [drive an empty truck] over to the Purina plant in St. Louis, pick up the load and deliver it to Ferdinand, Indiana. When can you leave?"

"I just left," I joked, and quickly got the directions before jumping into the cab for my first ride as a commercial truck driver. Before heading west, I swung by Al's place to pick up a copy of his ICC certificate that, as a leased trucker, I was required

to carry with me in the cab during the run. And I was running, all right. I was running on high octane all the way to St. Louis.

I tore across Illinois as fast as that truck would carry me and crossed the Mississippi just as a light mist descended across St. Louis. I pulled up to the Purina loading dock and watched several big and burly handlers pitch hundred-pound feed bags — two hundred of them — onto the bed of my open-air truck. I checked the tires after the loaders were finished, and everything checked out okay — except for one small problem. It started sprinkling. "Not to worry," I thought to myself. "I'll just cover the load with the tarp and I'll be fine." I knew the truck had a tarpaulin cover. Bub had quickly pulled it out to show me when I bought the truck several months before. It was stuffed into a storage box along with enough rope to lash it down to whatever cargo I had in the bed. Bub had assured me that it was a good tarp at the time I purchased the truck, and I did not wish to offend him by inspecting it and appearing to question his word. I'd had no occasion to look at the tarp during the few months since I had bought the truck, but a few minutes later, I was wishing that I had been a bit more thorough back there with Bub. As I began to unfurl the giant canvas covering, I quickly noticed that it was infested with hundreds of little holes. It looked as though the moths had been feasting on it all summer long. "Well," I surmised, "if the rain doesn't get any worse, this thing should hold up okay until I can get back home." So I strapped it as tightly as I could across the cargo and headed back toward Indiana across U.S. 50 just as the sun was going down.

I'll remember that night of misery as long as I live. Instead of the rain's letting up, the heavens burst and the deluge came down stronger and stronger as I made my way eastward at about 35 miles per hour on level terrain. Of course, with this rainstorm and an overly heavy load, there were times that I was lucky to do 30. My frustration at this slow pace was aggravated by a convoy of commercial semi-trailers with whom I was forced to share the roadway that night. In those days there were two large trucking companies that held numerous ICC certificates for the U.S. 50 route from St. Louis to Cincinnati and Louisville. Both Hussman & Roper and Western Trucking had several trucks working this route every night of the week. As I

struggled through the downpour, these big commercial semis would pass me going at least sixty, splashing their watery wakes across my windshield. My little wiper motor couldn't keep up, and I had to pull over every time until I was able to see clearly again. I would spot the convoy of five or six semis parked at a truck stop — their drivers cozily inside enjoying their pie and coffee — while I plodded on in the rain. A bit later they would all pass me again as they rushed by on their way to the next truck "stop." This "tortoise and hare" game continued four more times all the way across Illinois.

I finally pulled into our home at 2:30 a.m. I ran inside for shelter and a little sleep, but the truck sat out in the rain until I got back in at 6:00 a.m. to deliver the load to the town of Ferdinand, Indiana. Because it was Saturday, I called ahead to speak with the German feed store proprietors, the Bartley brothers, and learn whether I could deliver that morning. They agreed to unload me, and I headed east toward Ferdinand as the rain finally abated with the morning sun.

Suddenly I began to hear a strange knocking sound coming from the rear axle. The next town of any size was Jasper, and I stopped there at a service station only to discover that I had burned out a wheel bearing. I was able to limp over to the Hoffman Garage; the mechanics there replaced my wheel bearing in about an hour and got me rolling again. One hour later I pulled up to the loading dock at the Ferdinand Purina outlet. The two Bartley brothers helped pull back the tarp and we just stood there, gaping. All we could see, front to back, was twenty thousand pounds of wet Purina feed. It was clear that the tarp had leaked all night long and offered precious little protection to my cargo. Fortunately the Germans were very understanding and helped me go through the load for a closer inspection. They said they would accept whatever they thought was salable and refuse only the badly damaged product. After going through it all, bag by bag, they wound up refusing only the 75 bags of Purina chow that had been at the top of the load and borne the worst of the damage. The Bartleys said they would put in a claim with Purina for the 75 bags, and accepted the remaining 125. I was delighted by this, because I had expected them to refuse the entire shipment, which they easily had every right to do.

I apologized for the disaster and hit the road back to Vincennes, all the way trying to think of whom I could contact about purchasing some wet Purina feed at a really sweet price. As soon as I got home, I got on the phone and began calling every name I could come up with. This went on all night Saturday and up until church time on Sunday morning. I spent Sunday afternoon delivering the wet feed, and by that evening it was all sold. Since I was responsible for what had happened, I would have to pay Purina for the loss. Cargo insurance was not something I had even heard about at that stage of the game.

When it was all over I sat down and did a final accounting of my first venture into the world of commercial trucking. I had received payment of $44 for my services. This amount, plus the money I received from selling the wet feed, exactly matched my total expenses. These included the payment to Purina and the gasoline required to cover 425 miles, plus the cost of the wheel bearing replacement in Jasper. In other words, I wound up making absolutely zip from my first time at bat as a trucker. I had spent three days of my time, but on the other hand, I was not out of pocket any cash. So I guess the entire episode could be considered a wash.

The thought of knocking on Bub DeLisle's door and giving him a piece of my mind about the "holey" tarpaulin did cross my mind, but I was too embarrassed to face him. I never said a word to him about it, and instead purchased a new tarp that I protected carefully from that day on. I chalked up the entire experience to a lesson in "caveat emptor" (buyer beware) and never looked back.

Despite my less-than-spectacular debut as an over-the-road trucker, I, nevertheless, still had the bug and decided to give it another try. As mentioned, a trucker did not need a certificate to haul grain, livestock, or produce, and because we were in the heart of the Indiana melon-growing region, I thought it would be a good idea to look into hauling melons. I decided to begin at church. After services at Trinity Methodist a few Sundays later, I approached a fellow congregant, Harold "Boots" Butler, whom I knew to have a fair-sized melon farm. He told me that he did have a patch of early watermelons that would be coming off the field in late July.

"Do you think I could haul them to the market and sell them for you, Boots?" I asked.

"Well, I usually sell 'em myself," he answered slowly as he thought things over a bit. "But we could do it this way. You pick 'em up and go sell 'em for the best price you can get. You take out your pay for doing the hauling and bring me back the rest. That way we both come out okay." This sounded pretty good to me since I wouldn't have to invest any cash in the deal other than the cost of the gasoline.

"You've got a deal, Boots," I said, shaking his hand enthusiastically.

I pulled into Boots' melon patch on a late July morning just as arranged, and he helped me load my truck full of melons. I would say there were just about 800 of them, and they averaged about 25 lbs. apiece. So, once again, at about 10 tons, I was well over my truck's weight limit. I waved good-bye to Boots and told him that I'd be back in a few days with the money.

I had previously contacted my uncle Riley Osborne, who did some melon hauling. He owned several trucks and had used them to transport produce to market many times over the years. Uncle Riley had been very helpful. He had told me where I needed to go if I wanted to sell melons. Riley was something of a rural wheeler-dealer. During the season, he was continually buying and selling produce and enjoyed an excellent reputation for honesty and expertise. He recommended that I head to Akron, Ohio — a place where he usually had good luck in attracting top dollar for his produce. Akron was 450 miles away and a good 12- to 14-hour drive.

"Can't you think of anyplace closer for me to go, Uncle Riley?" I asked.

"Oh, if they're any closer they just send a truck down here and pick up a load themselves. It's cheaper for them in Indianapolis, say, to do it that way. So you've got to reach out," Riley explained. "Anyway, the further you go, the more the melons are worth. They just love good sweet Indiana melons over in east Ohio, Jim, and they'll pay top dollar for them." Uncle Riley then proceeded to provide me with the names and addresses of several of his regular customers in Akron and suggested where I should go first, second, and so on.

So, with a full load of watermelons and a hot list of prospects, I was all set for my first foray as an independent melon hauler. There was only one problem. I was exhausted after loading all those melons, and I wasn't sure I had the stamina to make it all the way to Akron and back. I decided that I had better enlist a partner, so I called another uncle. Uncle John McCormick was Dad's younger brother, and he said that he'd be happy to come along for the ride. So I drove most of the night, with Uncle John driving for a short stretch, until we reached Akron, Ohio, early the next day. We headed immediately to the first produce market on Uncle Riley's list, and they bought 25 melons. This was my first sale and I was off to a great start. We went from market to fruit stand to restaurant according to Riley's directions, and by mid-afternoon we had sold all but about 50 of the melons. We had managed to charge top dollar — averaging just under $1 per melon — at almost every stop. I knew that Boots would be delighted when I brought home the handsome payoff.

As we had just about finished unloading our last 50 melons at a roadside fruit stand, I spotted a dark, greenish-brown Chevy heading in our direction at top speed. The car came to a screeching halt, and I recognized it as a local police vehicle. Out jumped a police officer, wearing a uniform that matched the "puke-ish" green color of the police car. A half-second later, an irate little man jumped out of the passenger side of the car and began shouting as he pointed an accusatory finger at me.

"There he is!" he squealed, pointing right at me. "There's that crook! Officer, arrest that young man!" I was totally confounded. I could not imagine what could have brought on this indictment, but as I approached the officer I could see that the angry accuser was a fellow to whom we had sold some melons earlier that morning.

"Are these your melons, young man?" asked the police officer.

"Yes, sir, what's left of them," I replied. "We're just about to unload the last of them. Why — what's the problem, officer?" The little man turned to the policeman and began jabbing his finger at me as he repeated:

"He sold me green watermelons! He sold me green watermelons!" extending his arm at me with each repetition. The cop remained unruffled and asked me rather

calmly “This gentleman claims you sold him 75 melons this morning and that they all were green. Do you remember doing that?”

“I remember selling him the melons, but he inspected them and took them all just fine,” I recounted to the cop. “And we didn’t have any that were green. He plugged two or three of them, and they were all red and ripe. And on top of that, we’ve been selling these melons all day long and nobody else has complained a bit.”

“But after you guys left,” explained the little vendor in an angry and agitated voice, “a lady customer came in and she wanted me to plug a melon for her. So when I pulled out the plug — it was all green. Inside and outside. I couldn’t sell a melon to her or to anybody else after that. You crooks had better give me back my money. Right?” As he said this he looked to the cop for assurance. The officer ignored the question and turned to face me.

“Better let me see your license,” he said, looking directly at me. I pulled out my Indiana driver’s license and handed it to him. He gave me a pained grimace.

“Sorry, son,” he said, “I want to see your peddler’s license. Do you have one?” This threw me for a loop. I knew I didn’t need an ICC certificate, since I was hauling produce.

“Well, officer, these are my own melons that I’m selling,” I said calmly. “I don’t believe I need a license to peddle my own melons.”

“In Akron, Ohio, you do!” he said tersely.

“Sorry, sir, but I didn’t know that,” I admitted sheepishly. The officer looked me over, and I suppose he figured that I was about as green as the alleged watermelons.

“Here’s what I’m gonna do, son,” he finally came out with. “I’m going to give you two choices.” He paused for dramatic effect and then went on. “The first choice is that I haul you down to jail where you can spend the night and then you can talk to the judge tomorrow about peddling without a license.”

“What’s the other choice?” I said right on cue. “’Cause I don’t rightly care for that one at all!”

"Well, you look like an honest, hard-working young fellow, and it's possible that they don't have such things as peddlers' licenses back where you come from in Indiana. So the second choice is this: I want you to put all these melons back in your truck and give the man back the money he paid you. Then I want you to go back to every fruit stand and market you sold to today and do the same thing — including this guy's place," he said, jerking his thumb toward the little complainer. "Am I making myself clear?"

"Yes, sir," I said dejectedly.

"And then I want you to take your melons and your truck and your uncle and yourself, and get out of Akron and then out of Ohio. Don't stop until you hit Indiana. And I recommend that you do not come back. Understood?" There was really no choice about it. This one-man "good cop/bad cop" routine had succeeded in convincing me to comply; despite the fact that I knew I was right. I certainly had no interest in spending a night in jail and then arguing about melon ripeness to a criminal judge in a strange city the next morning.

Uncle John and I retraced our steps, stopping and explaining that the melons we had sold earlier now had to be "recalled." We picked up every melon we could (some had already been sold by the vendors between the time we dropped them off and the time we returned) and paid the vendors their money back, to the penny. As we left the last stop and as we headed out of Akron toward the Indiana border, I turned to Uncle John and said, "We're going sell every one of these melons before we hit the Indiana line!" Uncle John understood and just gave me a wink and a smile.

It was nearing sunset as we approached the first country fruit stand just outside Akron. Uncle John and I hopped to the ground and offered the proprietor an attractive price.

We hit every fruit stand, truck stop, grocery store, old-folks' home, gas station, doghouse, and outhouse between Akron and the Indiana border, and because we decided to offer a small discount on the melons, we got almost the entire load sold by the time we crossed the Indiana line. The last 50 melons were unloaded at a fruit

stand in Richmond, Indiana, after which we hightailed it straight home, glad to have kept a little money in our pockets and our rear ends out of jail.

After getting a good twelve hours of sleep the following night, I went to report to Boots Butler. I recounted the entire gruesome episode to him, and when I got to the point about nearly being hauled off to jail, Boots reacted by unleashing a huge belly laugh.

"Now look here, Boots," I complained. "There's nothing funny about this. That cop was really going to arrest us."

"I'm sorry, Jim," he said, wiping away a tear, "but the thought of you spending the night in the hoosegow just tickled me. So I guess you fellows didn't come out too good on this deal. How much money did you bring back?"

When I showed him the total, it was clear that we had not come out too badly by selling the melons on the road. Boots was pleasantly surprised.

"That's not too bad, I'd say," he went on. "Have you already taken out your cut?"

"No, that's all of it, Boots," I replied. "You trusted me with the melons and with the money, so I'll just leave it up to you to pay me whatever you think is fair under the circumstances."

Boots paid me fairly, but after I paid Uncle John and deducted what I had spent on the road for gasoline and other items, I calculated that I had earned a whopping $5 per day over my four-day stint. It was rather paltry, but I took some encouragement from the fact that at least I had come out better than after that first Purina feed run. "Things are getting better," I told myself, full of youthful optimism and enthusiasm.

At this point I had completed my first two jobs as a "for hire" trucker. Both ventures, actually adventures, had turned out to be financial disasters. A logical conclusion at that point probably should have been: "I'd better put this truck up for sale and go back to farming." But I wasn't a particularly logical person. Despite the fact that both of my first two attempts had turned into fiascos, I still loved being a trucker. I was totally and completely committed to trucking. Perhaps I should have been committed to an asylum, but I was not going let a little thing like financial

ruination stand between me and my chosen profession. I had made up my mind. This was the work I wanted to do and, by golly, it was the work I was going to keep on doing — at least until I got it right. I was determined and I had something I wanted to prove to myself. I certainly was not about to give up and head back to the farm after just having gotten started down life's highway.

I did share my tale of woe with Uncle Riley, and he was understanding and encouraged me not to give up. He immediately gave me the names of several of his wholesaler accounts in Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Youngstown, Ohio. I started once again running melons from our region into Ohio, although I never did wind up getting an Ohio peddler's license. I made several more successful trips, and by summer's end I was beginning to enjoy a renewed confidence in my ability to earn a living at this game.

As the fall of 1944 turned to winter, I managed to get a few livestock hauling jobs that took me to the stockyards in Indianapolis, but for the most part the truck remained idle as I examined my options. I soon realized that hauling produce was seasonal work and that unless I could find a means of keeping myself busy year round, I could forget about working as a full-time trucker. This meant that I had to content myself with hauling produce from the south over the winter months, or connect with a licensed common carrier who held a certificate and who would be able to provide me with a steady, year-round assignment. Fortunately, I was about to cross paths with a man named John Gregory.

I had gotten to know John Gregory through his daughter, Barbara. She and I were freshmen together at Purdue, and, since both of us were from Vincennes, we stuck together pretty closely that year as we both got used to campus life. I often commented to Barbara that I probably could not have made it through that year without the use of her trusty bicycle. She lived at the Delta Gamma house, the sorority directly across the street from the AGR house. Barbara would often permit me to borrow her bike so that I could get across campus to my far-flung Ag classes more quickly.

John Gregory, Barb's father, was the local distributor for Wonder Bread. I had been aware of him simply as Barbara's father. But now I saw him in a new light. This was thanks to my relationship with the man whom Barbara had married shortly after the war, Gene DeBoer. Gene was a handsome former Army Air Corps Captain who operated a gas station in Vincennes. Gene would grant me a small quantity discount on the gasoline I needed for my trucks. Gene and I spoke regularly, and he had, upon occasion, mentioned his father-in-law, John Gregory's, work as a Wonder Bread distributor. Thanks to my conversations with Gene, I knew that the bread his father-in-law distributed was baked in Indianapolis, a three-hour drive away, and that John needed to have it available fresh every day for his customers — the groceries and general stores around Vincennes. I decided to speak with John about hauling his bread for him. He was very friendly and glad to talk to me about it.

"Well, you know I have a trucker right now that I use," explained John when I posed the question. "John Franklin runs up to Indy every night and brings me a load of fresh bread that I split with Marshall Whittington over at Lawrenceville, Illinois." John Gregory went on to educate me about the intricacies of trucking regulation. Since Lawrenceville was across the state line in Illinois, Franklin would have needed an ICC certificate to deliver directly to Whittington. To get around this requirement, Franklin left Whittington's bread at John Gregory's place, and Whittington would drive the 10 miles each morning to pick it up. Since Whittington was hauling his own inventory — and not someone else's — across the state line, he was not considered a common carrier and therefore was not subject to regulation. After the explanation, I asked John Gregory the key question: "Is Franklin doing a good job for you guys?"

"To tell you the truth — I'd have to say that he's not," said John as he slowly shook his head. John went on to explain about some of the problems he was facing with Franklin. There were too many times, he said, that Franklin was not getting his bread to him on time. This delay caused John Gregory to become tardy in servicing his accounts, and this was costing him money.

"If I'm not there first thing in the morning with Wonder Bread when the grocery store opens its door," John explained, "all the early customers will wind up buying

Colonial Bread and I lose sales. And then I get killed the next day with all the stale product I have to pick up." Then John Gregory said the words I truly wanted to hear: "If you think you can do a better job, and if you want to try and get a contract carrier permit from the Public Service Commission of Indiana to haul bread from Indy to Vincennes, then I'll give you my support." As explained, under the trucking regulations of the day all common and contract carriers involved in interstate commerce had to obtain a license from the ICC in order to operate. Intrastate commerce, however — which is what this was — was regulated by the PSC of Indiana. To obtain a PSC permit or certificate, I had to go before a PSC hearing examiner and testify as to why it was in the public interest for me to be granted a contract permit to haul bread between Indianapolis and Vincennes. To plead my case, I would be required to demonstrate a specific need for my services, and that's where John Gregory's testimony would come in. He had agreed to go before the Commission and declare that switching from his current carrier, John Franklin, to me, Jim McCormick, was a necessary move for him to continue to successfully carry on his Wonder Bread distribution business.

Armed with John Gregory's words of support, I took the next step. I contacted my close friend and mentor, Herb Klein, who owned and operated the Osborne Trucking Company, and asked him to recommend a lawyer I could use to assist me in obtaining a contract permit from the PSC. He gave me the name of Ferdinand Born, a first-rate transportation attorney based in Indianapolis. I met with Mr. Born at his office in the Chamber of Commerce building in downtown Indianapolis, and after preparing our case, Mr. Born and I appeared before the hearing examiner and explained that I had all my ducks in a row. I presented documents showing ownership of a suitable vehicle, insurance coverage, and so on. And then I finally laid out all that I would do in terms of providing better service to John Gregory. Thanks to John Gregory's making an appearance and supporting my position, the Commission proved agreeable, and soon thereafter, I was thrilled to receive the requested authorization that would allow John to switch his bread-hauling business over to me. I would have a steady trucking job at last and, boy, that sure felt great.

Before going before the Commission, I had to get my hands on a larger and more up-to-date vehicle. The old 16-foot straight truck was entirely too small for this sort of work. I needed a full-sized, enclosed semi tractor-trailer rig. At this point, it was still impossible to buy a new truck (the war and associated rationing would not end for several more months), so I began scouring the newspapers, truck stops, and garages to locate a suitable vehicle. Before long, I located a used K-7 International tractor with a sleeper cab that was having some maintenance work done to it, in a Kentucky Avenue garage in Indianapolis. The mechanic gave me the name of the owner — an independent hauler from Denver — and told me that the tractor was for sale. I quickly tracked down the owner and we made a deal on the spot.

I was now the proud owner of a tractor, but before I could put it to use, I naturally needed a trailer. I soon found what I was looking for right in Vincennes. It was a used, 28-foot, single-axle Trailmobile that had come in for servicing. I heard about the trailer from a fellow who worked as a janitor at the Vincennes garage that was performing the service. Ulysses "Slim" Bouchie knew I was looking for a trailer, and when this one came along, Slim caught up with me and suggested that I come over and have a look.

"It looks pretty good, Slim," I told him after giving it the once-over. "How much do you think he'll take for it?"

"Oh, I wouldn't know, Jim," he answered, "but I bet if you buy it, you'll need a driver, right?"

"Well, I don't know if I can afford a driver at this point, Slim. I was planning to do the driving myself," I explained. Bouchie informed me that he had considerable experience as a truck driver and that he really wanted to get out on the road again. Actually, it was never my intention to do *all* the driving myself. At this point, in early 1946, I was still needed on the farm, and hauling bread in the middle of the night did not fit very well with my workaday schedule. I offered Slim $50 per week to make five round trips between Vincennes and Indianapolis. This was 25 percent more than he was earning as a janitor. He enthusiastically accepted my offer.

I bought the trailer and we began regular operations in early 1946. We were in business — in the trucking business — and it was steady, regular work that a man could count on. In addition to servicing John Gregory, I soon picked up another account in Washington, Indiana, hauling bread into the Templin Bakery. This addition required a second PSC permit that I was able to obtain with much less difficulty than the first, since I now enjoyed an established track record. During most of 1946 I was attempting to manage my fledgling trucking business while simultaneously keeping up with my responsibilities on the farm. Not surprisingly, these two roles would sometimes conflict.

Although Slim handled most of it, I did wind up doing some of the driving myself, after all. In order for John Gregory's customers to have sufficient bread to carry them through the weekend, we were required to haul two loads every Friday night. Slim would make the first run and would return and be unloaded by 8:30 p.m. Then, after putting in a full day on the farm, I would jump aboard the old K-7 and head back to Indianapolis to pick up the second load. I would usually pull into the bakery at around midnight each week. By the time I returned to Vincennes, unloaded the bread, dropped the tractor-trailer at the storage lot, and drove home, it was close to 5:30 a.m. After a couple hours of shut-eye, I would be up at daybreak to finish my farm duties all day Saturday.

One particular Saturday morning, I was hauling a truckload of our tomatoes to the Vincennes Packing Company where we had contracted to sell them. We had begun raising tomatoes during the war and had several acres dedicated to them. This was sufficient to yield a large volume of tomatoes and succeeded in creating a problem for us. We had no workforce to help us bring in this abundant tomato harvest since, during those years, most working-age men and women were needed in the war effort. We attempted to use high school students for this task, but it didn't work out very well, since they preferred throwing tomatoes at each other over picking them and placing them into the crates. Finally, it was publicized that we would be able to enlist the services of German prisoners-of-war interned at a POW camp at nearby Kimmel Park on the banks of the Wabash. They were mostly young boys but, nevertheless,

hard workers — spurred into action by my mother's down-home cooking that was far superior to anything they were fed at the camp or even back home in Germany. My mother, because of her German heritage, took a liking to these young soldiers and enjoyed practicing her minimal German language skills with them as she stuffed them with her country cuisine of fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, and — naturally — sliced tomatoes! I sometimes wonder whether there are any German men in their eighties today who hold youthful memories of picking tomatoes — and consuming fried chicken — on our farm during those warm Indiana summers long ago.

On this particular Saturday morning, at about 8 a.m., I was behind the wheel and parked behind six other trucks, all laden with tomatoes, waiting for the Vincennes Packing Company inspector to get to me. Since I had been busy hauling bread during the night, and since I had only gotten perhaps an hour or two of sleep, I was pretty grumpy as I tried to catch a few winks, as the K-5 International crawled along the waiting line. I recall marveling at the foolishness of the inspection process. The company inspector would jump up on the back of each truck and examine only those tomatoes he found in the crates within his reach. Based upon this cursory investigation, he would pass judgment on the entire load. This decision would determine the grade, and hence the price, at which the load would be accepted. Not too surprisingly, no loads were ever rejected, since all a grower had to do was pick out his finest-looking product and make sure that it was visible and within easy reach from the back of the truck.

On the other hand, I thought to myself, Vincennes Packing Company did not get to be as successful as it was by being naïve and foolish. The inspection process was probably just for show, and the price we were being paid was based upon the prevailing tomato market and not on any sort of inspector's report or upon our bogus, doctored loads.

I was contemplating all this, hunkered low in the driver's seat with my cap tilted down over my eyes, when I caught sight of a shiny new 1946 Plymouth as it came to a stop right next to me. A well-dressed, strapping young fellow jumped out and

walked toward me, flashing a smile every bit as bright as the chrome grillwork on his big Plymouth.

"Are you Jim McCormick?" he shouted my way.

"Yeah," I grunted apprehensively, wondering who this strange fellow was and what he was going to try to sell me.

"My name's Williams. Howard Williams," he said, extending a meaty palm, and "Could I have a minute of your time?"

"Okay," I answered. "What's on your mind?"

"You're hauling bread for Roy Templin, right?" I nodded. "Well, Roy's a cousin of mine and I know about you because I'm a CPA and I do his books." Books? CPA? I shot Howard a quizzical look that said, "I'm not with you, buddy."

"Certified Public Accountant," he explained, apparently reading my mind. "I'm Roy's bookkeeper and I know how much he pays you because I'm the one who makes out your check. Are you hauling for anyone else?" he asked, as he looked up and down my tomato-filled lorry.

"These are our own tomatoes," I replied. "I'm working for our farm today. But I also haul bread into Vincennes, and I do some produce hauling as well."

"Looks like you're doing okay, Jim. Let me ask you something."

"Here comes the kicker," I thought.

"Do you have anyone doing your taxes?" he asked sincerely.

"Uh, well…no. No, I don't," I admitted.

"Well, you really should, you know." He kept walking alongside my truck as I slowly crawled up a notch in line. "There are federal income taxes, state income taxes, county taxes, unemployment taxes. If you're in business today, you really should have someone who knows the tax laws working in your corner. And I'd like to be the one to do that for you." Howard had my attention, but I wasn't sold.

"Well, I pretty much handle all that stuff myself." I stated. "I keep my checkbook right here in my shirt pocket. I know how much I have in the bank and how much money I owe. I really don't see what you could do for me?"

"I really feel you ought to consider it," he responded. "Even if you don't use me, you ought to use someone."

"Well, how much do you charge?" I answered, taking the bait.

"I'll handle all your taxes, keep your business books up-to-date, set up your depreciation schedules, and keep track of your balances, so you've got everything organized and squared away. And since you do business with cousin Roy, I'll only charge you $25 per month for my services."

I expected it to be more, but I did not let on. I sat and pretended to ponder his offer for about 30 seconds. I knew that the worst thing you could do to a bookkeeper was to accept his first offer. Finally, I looked Howard in the eye and stuck my hand out of the window. "You've got a deal, by golly!" Howard's tentative smile betrayed his chagrin at not having asked for more.

That introduction was the beginning of a lifelong friendship between Howard Williams and me. Howard became much more than my accountant. He was my trusted business and financial advisor as I established new businesses and grew them into successful enterprises. He was always there as a close confidante and trusted friend and, as such, became one of my all-time heroes. His larger-than-life persona concealed a quiet integrity and rock-solid character. Howard spent a good part of his career as a partner in the successful accountancy firm of Bailey, Cord and Williams until his untimely death on April 28, 1982.

By the end of 1946, the road ahead looked mostly clear and sunny. I had managed to establish a steady business and as I peered into the future a bit, I could envision leaving the farm behind and then settling down with the right girl and raising a family. But I was soon to run into a serious obstacle. An obstacle named Charlie Miller.

I received a phone call that spring that marked the beginning of a 45-year struggle. It went like this:

"Hello, is this Jim McCormick?" I said that it was.

"This is Charlie Miller calling," said the seemingly friendly voice. "I'm the local Teamsters business agent."

"What can I do for you, Mr. Miller?" I said cordially.

"Well, I'm just calling to tell you that your driver, Mr. Bouchie, has indicated his desire to join the Teamsters Union by filling out a sign-up card. I'd like to drop off a copy of the standard Teamsters contract for you to look over and then sign."

I couldn't believe it. I had taken Slim Bouchie from pushing a broom as a janitor and given him a better-paying, more prestigious job, and this was his way of thanking me! Not once did Slim ever ask me for a raise or express his dissatisfaction in any other way. So it truly hurt when I learned that he had run to Charlie Miller and signed up with the Teamsters. I suspected that the union had been trying to get their hooks into me since they learned about the PSC's granting me a contract carrier permit. By not driving the rig myself and hiring an employee, I had opened myself up to being "unionized." And now I had no way to fight it. If I refused to deal with Charlie and the Teamsters, he could shut me down with a snap of his fingers. If that happened, John Gregory would be forced to go back to John Franklin to do his bread hauling. I realized that I had no choice, given the fact that Charlie held all the cards — particularly Slim Bouchie's sign-up card — but that realization failed to make it any easier to swallow.

Bouchie's betrayal was a painful disappointment, but I managed to live through it and move on. Not too long after that episode, I sold the bread-hauling contract to my produce partner, Alvin Thomas, and Mr. Bouchie found himself out of a job.

Obviously, my relationship with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters is a major aspect of my story and my career. It began on that day with a phone call from Charlie Miller and culminated many years later as I faced off against Teamsters International President Frank Fitzsimmons, seated in his spacious and palatial white marble office at the International Teamsters building in Washington, D.C. (see Chapter 9). The Slim Bouchie episode was my first taste of doing battle with the Teamsters, and I'll always look back on it as a turning point in my life. No matter how many times a boxer enters the ring, he always carries the memory of his first blow — and his first blood.

Despite such setbacks and roadblocks, I was still as anxious as I could be to see what lay around the next bend in the road. Little did I know that it was a delightful detour called “Love.”

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?"

— Robert Browning

CHAPTER SIX: THE WHEELS BEGIN TO TURN

As did so many other young men who came of age during World War II, I found the period immediately after the war full of promise, expectation, and a goodly share of struggle. I saw myself as ready to move ahead, one mile at a time, toward the independence and success that awaited me as a professional trucker. Although 1946 began with a single man, a single truck, a single route, and a single employee, things didn't stay single for very long.

As soon as new trucks again became available on the market, I walked into the Westfall Motor Company in Vincennes, where I immediately spotted a brand new WC20 truck, built by the White Motor Company. It was a long-wheelbase chassis straight truck and it was fresh from the factory. There was only one problem: I needed a tractor, not a straight truck. Nevertheless, I did not wish to pass up this opportunity — my only opportunity to acquire a brand-new vehicle. We had been starved for new

equipment for years and, to my hungry eyes, this White straight truck looked just like Christmas dinner. I bought it and immediately drove it to the Hocker Power Brake Company in Evansville. Per my instructions, they shortened the frame and wheelbase, added air over hydraulic brakes, installed a fifth wheel, and saddle tanks, all of which converted it into a first-rate tractor that I could use with my existing trailer.

While I was in Evansville I spotted an "almost" new tractor for sale that really appealed to me. It was a K-8 International with a K-10 engine — which was considered a monster in those days. It had only a few miles on it. I paid $5,000 for it and I recall driving that big unit up to our farmhouse door and showing it off to my family.

"My goodness, Jim," gasped Dad when I told him what I had paid. "How in the world are you ever going to make enough money with that truck to pay for it?"

"I'm going to haul produce, Dad," I answered confidently. "I just bought a Fruehauf 32-foot Tandem trailer to go with her, and I've got three runs lined up this week. I think I can keep her busy enough to make it pay."

"Well, I just hope you haven't bitten off more than you can chew," he cautioned. As it turned out, I hadn't, and I simply could not wait to bite off a bit more.

Purchasing the K-8 International made it necessary to hire a driver to operate it. I located a veteran trucker from Jasper by the name of Herb Rohlman. Herb was an honest, raw-boned journeyman who handled his job with efficiency and dedication. We got along well and formed a solid relationship based on mutual respect. Several months after the Slim Bouchie/Teamsters debacle, I learned that Herb had also been approached by Charlie Miller, who had, not surprisingly, urged him to fill out a Teamsters sign-up card. The contract that I had previously signed with the Teamsters covered only the bread-hauling route that Slim Bouchie was driving. Herb was hired on to cover different routes, so the existing contract did not cover him.

Herb tried to explain to Charlie Miller that he was not interested. If Herb had a flaw, it was that he was a bit too honest. According to Herb, and others, after Miller persisted in pestering him continually about joining the Union, Herb finally laid it on the line as they stood on the Checker Express freight dock.

"Look, Miller," he said impatiently, "Jim McCormick treats me very well and I don't need you, or anyone else, getting between me and my employer. And I am sure as hell not going to let you put your hand into my pocket every week to collect your lousy union dues! Do you understand?"

Evidently Miller understood clearly, and he responded in typical goon fashion. He bent over and picked up the closest heavy object within reach — which happened to be a full gallon bucket of paint — and swung it directly at Herb's head, striking him squarely in the face. Herb wound up with a huge knot on his forehead and an open, bloody gash in his cheek. Miller didn't wait around for any retaliation but turned and took off, cursing, spouting, and fuming in mortal anger.

After hearing about the incident and examining Herb's injuries, I began to more fully appreciate the Teamsters' use of Mafia-style intimidation tactics. We both understood that at that place and time the Teamsters were so all-powerful that reporting the assault to the police would have been futile. I advised Herb not to retaliate, pointing out that any attempt to do so could prove dangerous and wind up escalating the situation. I thanked him for his loyalty and promised to do all I could to continue to earn it. This was my second run-in with the Teamsters. It would not be my last.

My next truck purchase was a new three-ton Dodge tractor that I bought from a dealer named O.A. Birr in Indianapolis. After that acquisition, I sold the K-7 International and purchased a new two-ton Dodge from Mr. Birr. Birr was actually a major passenger car dealer, but things were so tight after the war that car dealers were willing to stock any new vehicles they could lay their hands on — including trucks. Birr did not have a clue about how to market and sell the trucks that had fallen into his lap. Instead of prominently displaying the shiny new rigs, he had them hidden in the back lot. It was just by happenstance that I stumbled across them. Thanks to the fact that Birr didn't know much about the truck business and was very anxious to move his inventory quickly to make room for the passenger cars he had been promised by the factory, I was able to get a very favorable price on both of these vehicles.

Purchasing this additional equipment called for some rather creative financing. I called upon Mr. Richard A. McKinley, president of the fairly new Security Bank and Trust Company in Vincennes. Mr. Mac, as everyone called him, had served as the state's very first director of the Indiana Department of Financial Institutions. This federal regulatory agency was commissioned in 1933 during FDR's celebrated "100 days" period and was charged with supervising all Indiana financial entities including banks, trust companies, Savings & Loans, and credit unions. The agency's seven-member, bi-partisan board is appointed by the Governor and, according to statute, its director must be a member in good standing of the banking community. Mr. Mac was, in 1933, one of the most highly regarded bankers in Indiana, and during his five years of government service, he established the protocols and procedures that are still observed by the Department today.

When Mr. Mac resigned his post in 1938, he moved to Vincennes and founded Security Bank. One of his many gestures aimed at ingratiating his bank with the community was his publicized practice of depositing $1 into a savings account whenever a new child was born to a bank customer. Each of my four children received a $1 bank account opened by Mr. Mac within days of their birth.

Mr. Mac was very receptive as I sought the bank's help in financing my truck purchases. I was able to leverage what little equity I had in my existing equipment to secure the funds needed for my down payment. Of course, the bank would need to hold liens against the newly purchased vehicles as security and I would have to find the money for the down payment.

In order to raise the needed funds, I was able to sell my very first truck, the K-5 International, to a young serviceman who had just returned to Vincennes from duty overseas. Johnny Cooper came home with "money in both pockets," thanks to some good luck during a nonstop dice contest in the hold of his homebound trans-Atlantic troop transport vessel. It was a real floating crap game, you might say. A few days after hitting town, Johnny made me an offer for the K-5. Naturally, I was torn. That truck held its share of sentimental memories. After all, it was the purchase of this truck that had marked the beginning of my career, and it was in its cab that my life

and my brother's young life had been spared at that fateful railroad crossing a few years before (see Prologue). Still, I could not help but be delighted when Lucky Johnny came marching home again and paid me off with his freshly won cash. I was especially pleased because I actually managed to turn a profit on the deal.

With the money from Johnny and the bank loan from Mr. Mac, I was now the owner of a small fleet of new, post-war trucks and, despite the shadow of the Teamsters, under which I now found myself, I was anxious to get things rolling. But first, I decided to take a slight detour toward romance.

Bettye and I had managed to remain a "steady" couple as the war came to a close and as I, with her steadfast encouragement, began to establish my first trucking business. This was somewhat amazing given the fact that our backgrounds were really quite different. She was a Roman Catholic and I was a Methodist. I was, at that point in 1946, still regarded as a farmer, although I did not intend to remain one for very long. Bettye, on the other hand, came from a refined family who had, I was quite convinced, expected better things when contemplating their daughter's future spouse. Nevertheless, despite the long odds and short supply of cash, I decided to propose marriage to Bettye during the fall of 1946. I was delighted when she said "Yes."

After talking things over with Howard Williams, who pointed out that there would be a tax savings if we were to get married before the year was out, I recommended that we set the date for December 28th, 1946. Bettye agreed (although I did not mention the tax angle), and I now found myself in need of a diamond ring — something that I knew absolutely nothing about. I needed help, so I decided to turn to my Mother's younger brother, Uncle Gib Bobe, the used car salesman.

Uncle Gib was a one-of-a-kind, "man-of-the-world" character. I suppose if he'd had more money, he would have been called "eccentric." He and his pals used to do goofy things such as send a driver on a six-hour round-trip drive to Indianapolis just to bring back a couple of "fried brain sandwiches" from the Capitol Tavern next to the Statehouse in Indianapolis. Such sandwiches were popularized throughout the Wabash Valley by Dutch and German immigrants, some of whom passed down cherished recipes for the delicacy across multiple generations. Fried brain sandwiches

can be found on the menu today at certain German-heritage area restaurants such as the Hilltop Inn in Evansville, Indiana.

"Uncle Gib," I asked him as we strolled along his modest used car lot at the corner of Second and Broadway, "do you know where I can get a good deal on a diamond ring?"

"I sure do," he responded quickly. I felt that he was prepared with his answer as soon as I got out the words "...a good deal on."

"Here you go," I said, handing him a stuffed white envelope. "There's $250 in there. Get me the best quality ring you can with that, okay?" Uncle Gib complied and on his next visit to Indianapolis, he came back with a solitaire diamond that weighed in at one quarter of a carat. Bettye thought it was beautiful — and she said so, so I guess Uncle Gib did just fine.

Being young, neither Bettye nor I considered the strain that our wedding plans would exert on her parents. Bettye's older sister, Dolores, was engaged to marry Victor Eckert, and they decided to tie the knot on October 24, 1946. Both weddings were scheduled to take place within two months of each other, although Dolores and Victor were to be married in Jasper's St. Joseph's Catholic Church. Because ours was an "interfaith" marriage, Bettye and I were wed in the living room of the Gramelspacher home at 333 West Sixth Street. I still don't know how Bettye's parents pulled it off, but I'm very glad that they did. That house on Sixth Street is still standing, and today it is home to Bettye's nephew, Philip Gramelspacher, his wife, Annie, and their family.

Phil Winslow, a Purdue fraternity brother from Carthage, Indiana, served as my best man. Another fraternity brother, Bob Caldwell from Connersville, Indiana, along with my brother Don, stood up for me as well. Bettye's maid of honor was her good friend Rosemary Fuhs, and Bettye's sister, Connie Gramelspacher, served as bridesmaid. The reception was held at the tasteful Jasper Country Club. As Bettye and I rushed through the traditional shower of rice, we discovered that our sneaky "friends" had deflated all the tires of the big Studebaker sedan we had arranged to borrow from Bettye's aunt, Elsie Christian, for our honeymoon trip to Mexico. After

a bit of good-natured kidding as the guests were treated to the sight of the formally dressed groom pumping air into his tires, we were on our way southward aboard Aunt Elsie's pre-war Studebaker. We spent the night in the bridal suite at the McCurdy Hotel, overlooking the Ohio River in downtown Evansville. The next morning we began our trek to Mexico anew, never suspecting that wartime rubber rationing might succeed in deflating our plans.

Our itinerary took us across the nation's southland and into the depths of Arkansas. As we pulled into a little town called Hope, Bettye and I both heard the loud pop and soon felt the unmistakable flopping noise of a blowout. I pulled over and examined the damaged tire. It was obvious that although the car was a late model, the tires were all retreads — the result of home-front deprivations. I put on the spare tire (also a retread) and began to look around town for a replacement to put in our trunk. I soon discovered that because new tire prices were so highly inflated, my old tire would have to remain deflated. Post-war shortages had driven the price of a new tire way beyond my budget. So we proceeded out of town on four recapped tires and no spare. I learned some time later that had we arrived in Hope, Arkansas, just four months earlier, we would have been present for another "big blowout" as future president Bill Clinton was born.

As we made our way toward Monterrey, our honeymoon destination in Mexico, we said a little prayer with every mile we traversed, asking that we not be faced with another blowout. Fortunately, our prayers were answered and we arrived to our destination safely and enjoyed a heavenly honeymoon. We again were forced to place our tires and our trust into the hands of the almighty during our return journey through New Orleans and back to Jasper, traveling all the way on just "four wheels and a prayer." Had we encountered another flat, we would have found ourselves up the proverbial creek without the celebrated paddle. It was a foolhardy thing to do and one that, I'm proud to say, I've never done since. But, as turbo-charged newlyweds, we were entitled to be a bit young and foolish.

I had great respect and affection for Bettye's parents. They were courageous and innovative in many ways — including admitting people into their family. The fact

was that for a non-Catholic like me to marry into a respected Catholic family was nearly unheard of — particularly in Jasper, Indiana — given the social and religious mores of the time. But Virgil was an open-minded man who was able to look beyond religious prejudice when seeking the best life for his children. His every interaction with me — whether in word or in deed — never communicated anything other than his full acceptance of me in every respect. To his credit, not once did he even hint that he would have preferred to see our children enrolled at a Catholic school, for example. Virgil and I remained close throughout his lifetime, and he became more of a "best friend" than a typical father-in-law does. I thought so much of the man that a few years ago we directed a special grant to the Jasper campus of Vincennes University in the memory of both Virgil and his wife, Catherine. Today the main entry to this beautiful wooded campus is graced by an ornate and dramatic arched gateway, to which is permanently affixed a simple brass plaque bearing the names of Virgil J. and Catherine Gramelspacher.

Sadly, I never had the opportunity of getting to know Bettye's mother, Catherine, very well, because of her untimely death on January 14, 1951, just a few years after our marriage. She was a wonderful, pious woman who passed on her best qualities to her daughter Bettye.

These were the earliest steps in an extraordinary, love-filled marriage that lasted just over half a century and ended with Bettye's death on February 28, 1997 (see Chapter 18). From the time of that perilous cross-country honeymoon forward, I felt that the Good Lord was always looking out for us. For more than 50 years, He helped us to come safely through the treacherous turns and high-risk hurdles of our life together. And thankfully, He always made sure that our marriage never ran low on that "High Octane" fuel known as "Love."

"If you want to be successful, know what you are doing, love what you are doing, and believe in what you are doing."

— *Will Rogers*

CHAPTER SEVEN: FIRST GEAR

A few months before the wedding, I sat down and had a talk with my dad about our new living arrangements. It was a tough situation. I didn't want to live at the home place with my parents any longer — particularly not with my new bride. Yet my services were still needed on the farm, so I couldn't stray too far.

"I don't know," I responded when Dad asked me where we were planning to live after the wedding. "I guess we'll just get an apartment in town." Dad came up with the following suggestion:

"Well, you two could live in those corn cribs we were working on," he offered.

Dad was referring to the two wooden corn grain cribs that he and I had worked on in order to convert them into housing for a hired hand. These cribs had been purchased from the Federal Government in Petersburg, Indiana, and were intended for use as storage containers in the field. Faced with the ongoing labor shortage

during those years, Dad had decided to refurbish the two cribs by recycling the lumber and fashioning an acceptable domicile for a hired hand. Such housing would help attract a quality laborer, as it had done at other similar farms in our surrounding community. We were about halfway through the construction project when I announced to Dad that Bettye and I were going to get married. So instead of building a hired hand's homestead, we switched direction and began working on a "honeymoon" couple's two-story bungalow.

When finished, the place was practical, but tiny as a Teamster boss's heart. The eight-foot-by-eight-foot living room contained a sofa, chair, and coffee table. Unfortunately, when these furniture items were in place, there was hardly any room left for us. The other room on the first floor was the (so-called) kitchen, which was as cramped as the living room. You didn't have to worry about too many cooks spoiling the broth in *this* kitchen. It didn't have room for more than one! The kitchen also held the very steep stairway that led upstairs to the sleeping quarters. To bring running water to the home, we had laid a two-inch pipe from my parents' well, some 600 yards uphill from our converted corncrib. The water ran downhill so that enough pressure was generated through gravity to provide us with real running water. A bathroom, if you can call it that, consisted of a small shower, a toilet bowl, and a mini-sink. So, we had it all. Running water, indoor plumbing, and electricity. All the modern conveniences — but in miniature.

Bettye's mother, Catherine, visited us after the wedding. She could not conceal the fact that she was taken aback after viewing her daughter living in a converted corncrib next to a pasture in rural Knox County, Indiana. On her next visit, she brought us three sapling trees to plant in front of our corncrib home. "If you're going to live here for very long, you'll need some shade," she proffered. We did live there long enough to see those trees begin to cast some real shadows. Sadly, by then, my mother-in-law had passed away. That house stood for nearly 40 years before being bulldozed to the ground by my nephew Ray McCormick. Catherine's

trees are still standing, and they are huge — the lasting legacy of an outstanding woman.

The Corn Crib House did serve as our family's first home during the early years of our marriage. But it was another sort of crib that we were thinking about when our first child, Michael Duane, was welcomed to the world on March 18, 1948. Our little cottage was filled with joy at the arrival of this new visitor, but it would be another visitor — this one unwelcome — that would prompt us to say good-bye to that cozy corn crib home.

When Mike was almost one year old, we began to hear strange scratching noises under the floorboards at night, and started noticing that someone or something had been nibbling on our stored food in the pantry. It didn't take long to tell from the good-sized droppings that we had picked up a boarder by the name of R-A-T. We did all the usual things to try to catch him — baiting and setting traps, putting out poisoned food, etc. — but nothing seemed to work. One night, after returning home from the movies, we switched on the light in the kitchen and spotted Mr. Rat hastily beating a retreat from our large, overturned garbage can. This old granddaddy of a rodent was a furry, long-tailed monster. He was a good 10 inches in body length — possibly even a foot long, not counting his tail. As soon as we entered, he scampered across the room and down to his basement lair.

This cat-and-mouse game lasted over the summer until finally, in the fall of 1949, I was awakened by a solid and steady "thump-thump-thump" coming from the stairway to the second floor. "That old bugger is climbing up the steps," I thought to myself, as I got out of bed and quickly ran to the baby's room. I found Mr. Rat just as he was about to enter baby Mike's crib. I grabbed the baby and handed him to Mama. By the time I got back, the rodent had vanished. Bettye and I agreed that night that we had lost our war against Mr. Rat. We admitted defeat and began looking for a new home the very next morning. We were careful not to leave a forwarding address for Mr. Rat, however.

Although we moved out of the Corn Crib House after that incident, the little bungalow remained standing. It would serve as a newlywed cottage three more times as each of my siblings, Don, Lorene, and Ed, would, along with their new spouses, occupy the house as their first home as a married couple. Living in the Corn Crib House became something of a rite of passage in our family as, one by one, we entered the world of adulthood and responsibility. After Ed and his wife moved out, the little house reverted back to its original purpose and served as lodging quarters for a series of farmhands over the ensuing years.

We soon located an attractive Permastone two-bedroom home with a full basement and bath, located just south of Vincennes on U.S. 41. John Tennyson, who operated a restaurant at Tenth and Main Street, owned the home. Mr. Tennyson and I haggled over the price for a bit until I finally agreed to pay him $9,750 for the property as long as he threw in the fancy REO lawnmower as part of the package. It turned out to be a lovely place that Bettye soon converted into a warm and inviting home. The U.S. 41 house would serve as our home for the next four years, ones that encompassed the birth of our next son, Patrick Edward, on January 25, 1950.

Today, Pat and Lynn's lovely home is directly across the highway from the house we bought from Mr. Tennyson. I would venture that in today's world, there are not too many men in their fifties fortunate enough to look out their front window in the morning and be able to gaze upon the home in which they were born. The fact that my son Pat is able to do so says something about our family's deeply rooted connection to this piece of Indiana farmland we lovingly call home.

One of the reasons this home so appealed to us was its location. It was only one mile south of our office, which sat on some property that I had recently acquired. It was shortly before buying the U.S. 41 house that I purchased a parcel of commercial property that would serve as home to several of our businesses over the coming years. The lot, also on U.S. 41, was briefly held by my uncle, Riley Osborne. He had bought it from W. Audrey Wilson, who had first operated a filling

station and later a cantaloupe packing operation, on the site. The only structures on the lot were a tiny filling station office and a shed that housed the rollers and crates needed to pack up the cantaloupes and prepare them for market. Uncle Riley discontinued the packing shed operation and simply held the property as an investment, hoping to soon find a suitable buyer. He did find one. Me.

By this time, in the fall of 1947, I was actively building up our produce hauling business, and Uncle Riley thought I could do with an office and a place to store our growing fleet of trucks. When he told me the asking price, I jumped at it and we had a deal. The little office became the headquarters for the produce brokering and hauling business I had recently put together with Alvin Thomas. Alvin was a neighboring farmer in his mid-thirties who owned a Chevrolet straight truck and used it in the same manner as I did, to haul farmers' produce to market during the late summer months. Alvin was a hard worker and the two of us got along quite well. We had both hauled produce loads for the C. C. Winkler Commission House. Mr. Winkler served as an independent sales agent for most of the area growers. He would accept a load of melons or other fruit, for example, and find a buyer for it at one of the large produce terminals in the region. After a deal was made, he had to arrange for transport, and that's when he would engage drivers such as Alvin and me.

I suggested to Alvin that the two of us join forces and make our own deals, picking up the commissions ourselves instead of relying upon Mr. Winkler. Alvin quickly agreed, and in the summer of 1947 he and I formed a 50/50 business partnership, the M-T Produce Company. The M-T stood for McCormick and Thomas, and although some folks thought that labeling a trucking company "Empty (M-T)" was odd, we stuck with the name.

M-T quickly set up shop in the little office, and I recall our conversation as we stood inside the cramped space for the first time.

"What do you think, Alvin?" I asked him hesitantly. "Can we operate out of this place?"

"Wa-al, I reckon we can," he stated in his customary listless drawl. "You suppose there's room for a card table in here?" Alvin was making a reference to Winkler's place, where drivers would normally sit around playing cards waiting to be called up to take a load. I responded quickly.

"Alvin, there's NOT going to be any card table in our place!" I stated emphatically. "We are going to be way too busy buying, selling, and hauling for us to have time for any of that." And that was the end of it. We moved in and my expectations proved accurate; we soon were earning a respectable income from our M-T operations.

During those years I was weaning myself from the farming end of things and getting more and more involved with my true love, trucking. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I had purchased a WC 20 White Motor Company truck from Westfall Motors back in 1946 and was using it to haul produce. The reason I was able to get such a good deal on that truck at the time was that Ralph Westfall was primarily an Oldsmobile passenger car dealer and had little interest in remaining a White Truck dealer. He had served in that capacity after the war only in order to obtain some new inventory to sell during a time of scarcity. Now that things were easing up, Westfall became entirely focused on selling Oldsmobiles to consumers and had lost interest in his White dealership. As the owner of a White tractor, I was impressed with the truck's power and durability. Because it was an excellent product and there was no one seriously selling the line in our area, I decided to see whether an opportunity existed for me.

I traveled to Terre Haute to see Harry Willey, a successful White Truck regional distributor.

"Harry," I told him, "I know I can do a better job for you selling White trucks than Westfall's been doing." I went on, "I really don't think Westfall's interested in maintaining the dealership. He's busy selling new Oldsmobiles and doesn't have much interest in White trucks anymore."

"You're right, Jim," Harry responded. "Westfall's sales figures have been downright lousy. Do you know anything about selling trucks?"

"I sure do," I shot back — not sure exactly what I would say next. "I've sold a few trucks on my own already, and there's no bigger fan of the White Motor Company than Jim McCormick. They make a darn fine vehicle. On top of that, I know a lot of people who need trucks and need 'em bad. Every produce hauler in Knox County is a friend of mine, and I don't know a single one that doesn't yearn for a new truck." Evidently Harry was impressed by my enthusiasm; he encouraged me to get myself organized and in position to become a White dealer.

On April 1, 1948 — with Howard Williams's help — we formed McCormick, Inc./White Sales and Service, with me as president and treasurer. Dad was the vice president and Bettye served as secretary. I had obtained approval from the White Motor Company pending the submission and satisfactory review of my financial statement. The company would not issue the authorization unless it was convinced that I had sufficient operating capital to do business. Unfortunately, I didn't. My only assets were whatever equity I had in my truck fleet, along with my good name and reputation. That would not cut the mustard, however, and I needed to find some assets — the real kind. In other words, cash.

Although I dreaded asking my father-in-law for financial assistance, I didn't know where else to turn. On our next visit to Bettye's parents' home in Jasper, I finally got up enough nerve to ask Virgil if I could have a few words with him in private. "Sure. What can I do for you, Jim?" he replied.

"Well, it's like this," I said, considering my words carefully. "I've got a golden opportunity of picking up the White Truck dealership in Vincennes. They're first-rate trucks and I know I could do a bang-up job of selling them, but before they'll grant me the OK, they say I need to have a certain amount of cash in the bank."

"I see," said Virgil. "How much?"

"Two thousand dollars," I answered. "Would you consider loaning me the money? I'll pay it back with interest just as soon as I'm able to."

Virgil looked at me and did not speak a syllable. He walked over to his desk, sat down, and wrote me a check for $2,000. "Here you go, Jim. Good luck to you."

I will never forget that act of faith and generosity as long as I live. The money served as the capital basis for McCormick, Inc. and was paid back in full within a year. Whereas some men might have subjected me to a third-degree investigation before extending such a loan, Virgil was an exceptional individual. He knew that if I said I needed it, I needed it, and if I said I'd pay it back, I would pay it back. That loan marked the formal beginning of my career as a heavy-duty truck dealer. It was the ignition spark that got the motor going — a motor that has never idled for very long.

In contrast to the mindset of my parents' generation who, because of their deprivations during the Great Depression, eschewed any type of indebtedness in favor of a "pay as you go" attitude, I was starting out my business career $2,000 in debt. This practice continued as I progressed through ever-bigger business deals. In the beginning I was able to leverage my reputation as Clarence McCormick's son and Ed McCormick's grandson to obtain credit from the local bank. And as the scope of my business ventures expanded, it was my own reputation that enabled me to gain the trust and confidence of those who held the purse strings. It is safe to say that I would never have achieved anywhere near the success I have enjoyed over the years if I had not maximized my ability to secure legitimate financing. I soon became aware that debt is a business tool like any other, which, if managed properly, will enable and cultivate growth. In fact, I surmised that it is nearly impossible to achieve any type of growth without learning to manage your debt.

I also soon learned the value of diversification. In later life, people would often ask me about how I managed to conduct several businesses at the same time. "It's not easy," I would reply, "but I wouldn't have it any other way." When one business is a little soft, the other is booming and, if worse comes to worst in one

arena, you've got another deal going to back you up. I always believed that money is just like manure — it doesn't do you any good unless you spread it around.

Thanks to the loan from Virgil, the White Motor Company granted me the dealership, and McCormick, Inc. soon set up shop at the same location as M-T Produce on old South U.S. 41. The old packing shed became the parts department as we got busy refurbishing the place and turning it into a respectable truck dealership that would proudly display the White Trucks Company logo.

The White Motor Company had started life when America was exactly 100 years old. It was founded in Massachusetts by Thomas White, a successful builder of sewing machines. White soon moved his company to Cleveland in search of greater opportunity. His sons, Windsor and Rollin White, set up the Automobile Department during the early twentieth century to cash in on this booming new industry. They produced their first steam-powered car, and its success led to the formation of a new entity, the White Motor Car Company. Sensing that there was less competition in the truck manufacturing business, the brothers switched right before World War I and soon captured more than 10 percent of the American truck market. A well-heralded sale of nearly 100 trucks to Czar Nicholas II of Russia helped to make White Trucks a household name around the world. During the Depression, with White family members no longer involved, the company fell on hard times; in 1933 it became the first automotive company in America to be picketed by striking, unionized auto-workers. During the strike, the company was merged, for a short time, with the Indiana-based automaker Studebaker, but this did not help elevate its flagging fortunes. Fortunately a "white knight" came to the company's rescue. A white knight named Black.

Robert Fager Black was appointed president of The White Motor Company in 1935. A former executive at a competing truck company, Black immediately approached the picket lines and began talking with the striking workers. Seeing that they were bored standing on the picket line, he had baseball equipment purchased and distributed, and allowed them to play baseball on company ball diamonds

during the strike. He also worked with them to restore the White Motor family feeling, and the strike quickly dissolved. Black was universally loved by all members of White's work force. He spent at least an hour on the plant floor every day and worked hard to learn the names of as many employees as possible. He called on White's customers personally to see if they were satisfied with their trucks; he also followed a strict open-door policy, letting employees stop in and see him anytime they wanted to.

Black succeeded in bringing the White back into the "black," and during World War II the company flourished as a major supplier of trucks for the military. After the war, at the time I became involved with the company, Black had concluded that they should focus primarily on the heavy-truck sales, and in order to enter that market, the company began purchasing smaller firms that specialized in heavy vehicles only, such as Sterling, Reo, Diamond T, and Autocar. White also entered into an agreement with heavy-truck producer Consolidated Freightways of Oregon; White would sell the CF trucks in its own dealerships, and CF would re-badge the trucks as White-Freightliner. The company was eventually sold to Volvo in the 1990s, which maintained the Volvo/White Truck brand until it was finally dropped in 1999.

I had made it my business to learn as much as I could about White and the vehicles it produced. In this way, I could speak with authority to prospective customers, and I felt as though I, too, was now part of the White Motor family. Before accepting our first truck for sale, we poured a new concrete floor, drilled a well, put in flush toilets and running water, and generally tried to make the place look respectable. Of course, my first need was to find a competent mechanic. I knew Conway Williams from the Shell Service Station over in Westport, Illinois, where I purchased almost all of my gasoline (I was able to get a better price per gallon across the state line). Conway was a first-rate technician, and when I offered him a job at $1.00 per hour, he grabbed it. This worked out for me because we charged our outside customers $2.00 per hour for service, so if I could keep him

busy most of the day, things would work out well. I hired Uncle Riley's daughter, Carol Osborne (later Carol Deem) to work as our phone receptionist and bookkeeper. As we began to gear up, a large part of my new business involved the maintenance of our own fleet and the sale and installation of truck parts. I became an authorized dealer for Hocker Power Brakes, Bendix-Westinghouse, and a few other truck part lines.

It was a heady and something of a whirlwind atmosphere in those early days, which saw me wearing every type of different hat imaginable. I became the Parts Manager, the Service Manager, the Sales Manager, and the janitor every night at closing. New truck salesman, however, was my most challenging role. We typically had only two new trucks to show to prospective buyers, and we kept them outdoors on the lot. One of the very first truck sales we consummated was to Alois Yochum. Alois was a young man who had grown up on the farm and had now decided he wanted to be a trucker. Alois and I remained good friends for 55 years — right up to his death in the spring of 2005.

Our fledgling dealership soon succeeded in picking up another product line, as I signed an agreement with the Kingham Trailer Company, headquartered in Louisville. Now we could provide our customers with a complete tractor-trailer rig, and that fact helped to boost things along. Our relationship with Kingham Trailers lasted until it went out of business in 1965. We replaced the line with Great Dane Trailers of Savannah, Georgia — a fine old southern manufacturer.

Naturally we handled the servicing of all of M-T Produce's trucks, and this pretty much kept Conway busy most of the time. As we began selling new and used trucks and felt the need to service these vehicles as well, it became apparent that Conway needed some help. I'm proud to say that McCormick, Inc. was the first shop in southern Indiana to hire an African-American mechanic and thereby set up a racially integrated business in the late 1940s, less than one hundred miles from the Mason-Dixon line where Jim Crow was still king. Eugene Martin was a returning veteran who came to work for us as an apprentice under the GI Bill. He was trained

by Conway and soon evolved into a first-rate mechanic. Eugene was a loyal employee who stayed with us for many long years and wound up becoming a close friend.

By 1950, McCormick, Inc. was moving an average of 10 White tractors per year at a selling price of about $7,000 per vehicle. This revenue, along with our parts and service business, was earning me a respectable income that was supplemented by the money coming in from M-T Produce. But I was still far too young to become complacent, and when another opportunity came knocking, I rushed to open the door.

The fist I heard knocking on that door, back in 1950, emerged from a French-cuffed sleeve and was graced with neatly manicured fingernails. Harold Hawke, by the looks of his dapper wardrobe, was as unlikely a seller of truck tires as you could imagine. Harold was a former naval officer and had the bearing and magnetic personality of a salesman first class. He called on us for our tire business as part of his duties as manager of the Vincennes-based Saiter-Morgan Company's General Tires operation. Harold would pull up on our lot in his enormous and pristine prewar Packard sedan, decked out to the nines in a tailored suit and a snow-blind white shirt, looking every bit the snake oil salesman. But no, Harold Hawke sold dirty, smelly truck tires. And he sold them very successfully. Whenever Harold stopped by, I would step out and admire his stunning Packard. He knew all about cars, and especially about Packards.

"You know, Jim," he mentioned one day, "Packard is going to be coming out with a totally new modern design for 1951, and I've seen some of the advance drawings. It's going to be a real 'Wow!'"

"No kidding," I said, right on cue. "I'll bet you that it'll be a big seller for them."

"You can say that again," he replied, and then came the kicker. "You know, what you and I ought to do is get that Packard dealership for Vincennes. You could sell these babies right off your lot here." Harold kept on talking and I just kept on

nodding my head. By the time we were both done, we had agreed to sign up for a Packard dealership.

This was no trivial matter. In order to sell cars — particularly flashy cars like the new Packard — I needed an indoor showroom with high visibility from the road. So as soon as I managed to secure the Packard dealership (a much easier process than obtaining the White Motor Truck franchise a couple of years before), I scraped up the financing and got to work building our new auto showroom. We installed two huge plate glass windows on two sides of the new building so that passers-by could see inside from either direction and view the two vehicles we were able to fit into the showroom. Somewhere along the line, Harold backed out of becoming a partner in the deal. I understood that being in business for yourself is not for everyone, and Harold, at that time, was much more comfortable working as a salesman for someone else. This did not cause a rift in our friendship as one might expect. We have remained close friends for decades, and in fact, I recently was invited to help him celebrate his 85th birthday at his home in Decatur, Illinois.

Harold had been completely correct about the new Packard models. They were total knockouts, and when the first ones showed up at our place, we had crowds of curiosity shoppers to deal with for days. Once again, I was faced with the challenge of securing capital to handle the used cars being traded in on the new Packards. I needed a $10,000 revolving line of credit. Once again, I knocked on Virgil's door for help. Only this time, I wasn't asking for a direct loan. I had enough business experience under my belt that I could now go to a traditional lender and obtain a conventional commercial loan. I did not, however, have sufficient assets to secure that note with merely my own holdings as collateral. Hence, I needed a co-signer, and asked Virgil if he would extend the guarantee. He and I visited the local German American Bank in Jasper, and with no questions asked, Virgil put his name on the line for $10,000 in my behalf. Once again, my fantastic father-in-law had come through.

If someone had tried to tell me, on the day I received that loan from German American Bank, that 55 years later I would become one of the bank's major shareholders and hold a seat on its Board of Directors, I would have told that someone that he or she was losing his or her marbles!

So now, in addition to being a produce hauler and a truck dealer, I was also a new and used car dealer. I received some healthy advice from a fellow car dealer very early on that I followed, and that I'm convinced kept me out of a lot of financial trouble. As a seller of new and used cars, I would often take a customer's old car in trade for a new one. That trade-in then became part of my inventory until I was able to resell it to another customer. As with many car dealers, I did not like seeing all my capital tied up in inventory and sought ways to free some of it up. One popular method was a system offered by loan companies called "floor planning." A car dealer could borrow a sum equal to the market value of a car and then pay back only the interest on that loan each month as long as the car remained on the lot (up to a maximum of 180 days). After the car sold, presumably for more than the amount of the loan, the dealer would take the sale proceeds, pay off the note, and pocket the profit. This practice helped car dealers achieve growth by leveraging the equity in their inventory of cars and permitting them to use the proceeds to expand their operations. Where many dealers got into trouble — and the trap I was cautioned to avoid — came about when a floor planned car was sold and the dealer decided he had a better use for the money than paying off the loan. If he was discovered to be "out of trust" in this way by a loan examiner, the dealer could be convicted of a felony.

In my situation, I did not engage in floor planning per se. I had a revolving line of credit of $10,000 that was secured by my father-in-law's signature. Nevertheless, I kept a log on every car on my lot that showed the car's fair market value. As soon as a given car was sold, I looked up the value and paid down my note by that entire sum — no matter how much I might have needed that money elsewhere at the time. I did this even though I did not have to; no inspector from the bank was going to

visit my lot and go over my inventory, because the note was not secured by my stock of cars. But by acting as though it was, I managed to avoid the temptation of going deeper into debt than the equity in my inventory permitted. This was a valuable lesson that undeniably kept me from the ruination I witnessed so often among my fellow car dealers.

Selling cars is a great way to learn about business in general. It has all the diverse elements and dynamic drama you could imagine, and is based upon sound economic principles that apply to every other type of business. After a while I began hiring salesmen to assist me, and one of the earliest was Henry Early (father of my good friend Rex Early, a successful Indiana businessman and one-time gubernatorial candidate). I always tried to make it a practice to learn all I could from the experienced sales people I would bring in. Henry had a selling technique that was innovative and highly effective. The technique was known as "temporary ownership."

After getting to know a prospect and sizing him up, Henry would encourage the customer to take home the car he was looking at overnight. He believed — quite correctly — that once the customer had taken home a shiny new Packard and had shown it to his wife, family, friends and neighbors, the sale was in the bag. He correctly assumed that once a customer had left a brand-new car setting in his driveway overnight (there weren't that many home garages in those days) where all the neighbors could see it, he would be too embarrassed to account for its absence on the next day if he wound up not buying the car. It was a powerful yet very subtle sales technique that was anything but high pressure. In fact, the customer wound up feeling highly flattered that a car dealer would sufficiently trust him to the point of letting him take home a brand-new car on spec. In case you're wondering, we never had a car fail to come back, and we never had a single car damaged — not even a scratch.

Of course, we depended upon talented sales people for our success in moving our truck lines as well. Operating three companies simultaneously gave me some

needed flexibility when it came to fitting the right peg into the right hole. For example, one of our first truck salesmen, Carl Ruehle, started out as a driver for my other company, C. James McCormick, Inc. In 1953, Carl was moved over to selling trucks instead of driving them. Carl was a big burly trucker who, we soon noticed, was blessed (or possibly cursed) with a mighty gift of gab. We pulled Carl off the road and put him to work selling White trucks. Eventually, I was able to shift the management of the Parts Department onto the shoulders of a qualified employee, Earl VanFleet, Jr. We operated McCormick, Inc. with the following line-up with steady success for several more years: Conway Williams handling mechanical service, Earl VanFleet covering Parts Sales, and Carl Ruehle in charge of new and used truck sales. In 1955, sadly and suddenly, Conway Williams suffered a fatal heart attack. It was a tragic loss, but we realized that we were obliged to carry on. We soon hired a young man, Walt Shots, to fill Con's position.

As I had done with cousin Carol Osborne, I would occasionally draw upon family members to help me fill slots as my growing organization expanded. In late 1955, my cousin, John Bobe — recently married and looking for work — approached me for a job. By this time, I had sold M-T Produce and was running I & S Motor Express out of Indianapolis (see Chapter 8). I put John to work as a bill collector, running down delinquent shippers who owed us money. That lasted a few months and then I moved him over to McCormick, Inc., where he became a sales trainee working under Carl Ruehle. He took to selling tractors and trailers like a duck takes to water. His enthusiasm and strong personality started paying off as we watched our sales figures climb, thanks to his hard work and dedication.

Those years, during the early fifties, as we built up our dealerships and watched our trucking business undergo steady growth, were filled with great hope as we found ourselves continually on the edge of expectation. It was during this period that Bettye's and my third son, Clarence James, III, was born, on October 23, 1951.

"Well, darling," I commented gently to Bettye as we brought little "Mac" home from the hospital, "I guess we'll have to keep at it until the Good Lord decides to give us a girl." Bettye smiled wearily and just answered with a kiss.

With three little tykes running around the house, Bettye certainly had her hands full as I busied myself with building up my businesses. I felt lucky because I knew that despite her heavy load on the domestic front, I could always count on Bettye's help in the business end whenever it was needed. The following story provides just one example.

As part of our M-T Produce operation, Alvin and I had become successful in hauling tomato loads out of Homestead, Florida, and into Indiana during the winter months. In order to make the runs financially viable, we had to haul full truckloads that weighed roughly 33,000 lbs. This became a problem because in order to travel from Florida to Indiana by road most efficiently, it was necessary to cross the great Commonwealth of Kentucky. In its wisdom, and unlike any of the other states on the Florida-to-Indiana route, the Kentucky state legislature had imposed a 42,000-lb. gross weight limit on all vehicles traveling across the public highways. Because our tractors and empty trailers weighed close to 16,000 pounds, this placed our tomato-laden vehicles well over the legal limit. Fortunately, the state weighing stations were not staffed around the clock, and a driver could slip through the state if he timed his journey to coincide with the hours that the scales were shut down. In the days before CB radios and cell phones, it became a part of every trucker's skill set to arrange his route in such a way as to avoid being weighed in Kentucky. Because the weighing station's hours of operation were well circulated, it sometimes meant that a driver would sit for several hours by the Kentucky state line, waiting until it was safe for him to proceed. One of the best exponents of this Kentucky cat-and-mouse game was my driver Hawkshaw Shelton. He had made the Homestead-to-Indianapolis run dozens of times and had always managed to avoid detection by Kentucky's scales of injustice. That's why I was so surprised to hear

his voice on the line after I picked up the phone that had awakened Bettye and me at 2 a.m. in December 1952.

"What is it, Hawkshaw?" I mumbled. "What's the trouble?" I knew that he would have phoned me at this hour only if a problem had surfaced.

"Sorry to wake you up, boss," he said quickly, "but I'm in Hopkinsville, Kentucky." He knew that I knew that there was a weigh station right outside of Hopkinsville. "They opened the scales on me and now they want to weigh me."

"So did you get weighed?" I asked.

"No. I wouldn't let them," he said with a little snicker. "I told them that I was sick and I just couldn't drive the rig onto the scales right now."

"Did they let you go on, then?" I asked urgently, wishing he would simply spit it out.

"Well, no, sir," he said sheepishly. "They said they were going to put me in jail until I felt well enough to have the truck weighed. I'm calling you from the county lock-up. I go before the magistrate in the morning."

"I'm glad you called, Hawkshaw," I said reassuringly. "I'll meet you in court in the morning. Try to get some sleep and don't worry about a thing." I hung up and immediately called another driver, Francie Vieck.

"Francie, it's Jim. Sorry to get you out of bed, but it's important and I need to meet you over at the office right away." Francie didn't ask any questions and said he would be there in 15 minutes. I started to get dressed and Bettye, who had overheard the phone conversations, asked what was going on. As soon as I told her, she insisted on joining me. She placed a quick phone call to our baby-sitter, who arrived within minutes and agreed to stay with our boys until we returned. That baby-sitter, by the way, was a neighbor boy named Jim Osborne, who today is the presiding judge of the Knox County Superior Court. I don't know whether he ever

learned that by watching our children that night, Jim enabled Bettye and me to go and sidestep the laws of Kentucky.

Once we were convened at the office, I explained that it was going to be our job to make sure that Hawkshaw's truck was within the proper weight limits by the time it was to be weighed in the morning.

"Francie, you jump into the WC-14 White," I said, referring to the 16-foot straight truck with the tandem axle, "and hightail it to Hopkinsville. You'll spot Hawkshaw's tractor-trailer on the road shoulder by the weighing station. Bettye and I will meet you right there."

We made the two-and-a-half-hour run to Hopkinsville and found the semi right where Hawkshaw said it would be. There was not a soul in sight as we pulled up behind the loaded tractor-trailer. I used my spare key to open the trailer, and Francie and I began unloading the cargo one crate at a time. Bettye served as our lookout. We put on the speed since we both knew that we had to get this job done before daylight. I realized, as I passed one tomato crate after another over to Francie, that had this load been found to be overweight, it would have been impounded, and on top of losing the load, we would have been slapped with at least a $1,000 fine. And I didn't have the thousand bucks. As I thought about all this, I also realized that it felt good to have a partner like Bettye by my side as we carried out our nocturnal tomato transfer.

We eventually off-loaded about 12,000 lbs. of tomatoes onto the straight truck. After rearranging the remaining cargo inside the trailer to balance the load across the axles, I turned to Francie:

"You point that truck toward Indiana and don't look back until you hit the state line. You got it?"

"I'll meet you on the lot in Vincennes and we can put the load back together then," he said as he roared off to the north. I went over to some nearby woods and

broke off a couple of tree branches. Bettye was puzzled by this at first, but then quickly understood.

"Big Chief Jim cover-um up tracks," she said in mock Indian dialect.

"That's right, and squaw can help," I responded as I took the branches, handed one to her, and began to smooth out the straight truck's tire tracks in the chit gravel road shoulder, leaving no trace of our clandestine activities. After inspecting the area, we agreed that our mission was accomplished. I had told Hawkshaw I would see him in court, but it was still too early for that. Bettye and I drove part of the way into Hopkinsville and then pulled over and took a little nap in the front seat. As I felt her head resting on my shoulder, I wondered to myself what Bettye's parents would think of their daughter sneaking around on some Kentucky highway, under the cloak of darkness, transferring a truckload of tomatoes in order to beat the state highway authorities.

Bettye and I arrived at the Hopkinsville hoosegow at 7:30 a.m. and were permitted to speak with Hawkshaw in private. I lowered my voice and looked him in the eye.

"Now here's what you tell that judge," I instructed him after glancing quickly over both my shoulders. "When he asks you why you wouldn't permit them to weigh your truck, you answer that you were on some new medication and that it made you so nervous that you thought you might pass out at any moment. And then you say, 'Your honor, we can go weigh that truck right now if you want, and you'll see that I wasn't over the limit.' You got that, Hawkshaw?"

"I got it," he said with a quick wink.

We all entered the courtroom as the previous case was just winding up. I did not like what I was seeing. The prior defendant was a deadbeat dad who was delinquent in his child support payments. The judge ripped into the man with unrestrained fury — castigating him violently for causing his children such suffering. The judge seemed to become more enraged with each word that he hurled at the defendant. He

meted out the most severe sentence possible as his gavel came down with a gunshot-like crack.

"My goodness," I thought to myself, "this judge is so worked up he's going to throw the book at us for sure." I sat nervously holding Bettye's hand as Hawkshaw approached the bench and began to tell his story. He did his job perfectly — recounting the story about the new medication and offering to now have the truck weighed.

"Well, I guess the thing to do," said the judge, evidently having regained his composure, "is to go out right now and have the truck weighed, and if it's not overweight, then 'Case Dismissed.' You'd better be correct, Mr. Shelton, because if I see you back in here, I will not be pleased." Needless to say, the truck was placed on the scales and found to be under the limit. Hawkshaw was free to go and rejoined us back in Vincennes, where he and Francie reassembled the load and he took off for Indianapolis to make the delivery. About a year after this incident, the Commonwealth of Kentucky decided to join the rest of the Union and revised its weight limit laws. I'm pleased to say that neither Bettye nor I were ever called upon to perform another such Kentucky weight-loss program.

Back in the fall of 1951, when our son Mac was born, we felt that we had outgrown the U.S. 41 house and started looking for a bigger place. One of Mike's school friends, Charlie Stevens, told Mike that he was leaving town the following semester and moving to Bloomington because his father was selling his foundry business in Vincennes. When Mike told me about this, I phoned Charlie's dad and asked whether he had sold his house yet. He replied that he hadn't had time to list the home with a realtor yet, and if we could reach a deal without one, then we'd both save the broker's commission. Bettye and I ran right over and we fell in love with the place immediately. It was a spacious ranch-style home with all the latest appliances and plenty of bedrooms.

It wasn't long after we moved into our beautiful home on Old Orchard Place in 1953 that Bettye began to once again put on weight during her pregnancy with our

fourth child. After three fabulous boys, you can bet that we both were praying for a beautiful little girl this time. Speaking of bets, I had, in fact, placed one on the outcome of this delivery. A group of us were having lunch at our favorite restaurant in the spring of 1954. The eatery was crowded, but I happened to spot Dr. Virgil McMahan, Bettye's OB/GYN. Dr. McMahan had delivered all three of our boys and was now managing Bettye's care during this fourth pregnancy. He spotted me and came over to our table.

"Hello, Jim," he said, shaking my hand as he greeted me. "How's Bettye doing?"

"Oh, she's holding up just fine," I answered. "Say, listen, Doc. How about getting us a girl this time? We're about due for one." He pondered this a moment and evidently took me seriously.

"Well, there are some tests we could do, but they're pretty expensive and not too reliable." He began explaining about something called amniocentesis, and I stopped him.

"No, I'm not talking about anything like that," I said with a smile. "How does this sound?" And for the life of me I don't where I came up with this, but I extended the following proposition out of the clear blue: "Doc, what do you say to a double-or-nothing deal? If you deliver a little girl, I'll pay you twice your regular fee. But if it's another boy, then it's Free Delivery. What do you say?"

I don't know if he had an inside line or not, but he jumped at the deal. "I'll do it!" he exclaimed, shaking my hand again vigorously. Well, I don't know if it was the result of our prayers or because of the bet — or neither one — but on May 9, 1954, Mother's Day, Bettye and I felt very blessed as little Jane Ann made her entrance into our lives in a big way.

A few weeks later we received our statement from Dr. McMahan, and instead of the usual $150 charge, the bill called for $300. I paid it gladly and wrote Dr. McMahan a note thanking him and suggesting he share some of the extra money with the stork.

It seemed as though we had reached the fulfillment point as a family. At age thirty, Bettye and I had four wonderful children, a beautiful home, two thriving businesses, and a healthy, loving marriage. We thanked God for our blessings daily. I suppose that some would have viewed this point in the road as the time to put it into cruise control and keep to the "Status Quo" highway. Well, that wasn't me, I'm afraid. Just as everything was rolling smoothly, I had an overwhelming urge to kick in the turbocharger and put it into "Overdrive!" I got wind of another opportunity drifting my way from Indianapolis, and I found the aroma irresistible.

As before, this opportunity was directed toward me by Howard Williams and would introduce me to a venture that would take me to the next level of my career. In so doing, it would bring me closer to the goals I held dear while taking me further away from my dear family. The opportunity in question was mundanely named "Indianapolis and Southern Motor Express, Inc." But it held the keys to the highway, as is recounted in the next chapter. I had never been more poised and ready for expansion, and I simply could not wait to see what was around the next bend.

"When one door closes another door opens; but we so often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door, that we do not see the ones which open for us."

— Alexander Graham Bell

CHAPTER EIGHT: SECOND GEAR

As I became more focused on the trucking end of things during the early 1950's, I could see that opportunities existed beyond mere produce hauling. I discussed my accelerating ambition with Howard Williams. Howard mentioned that one of his other clients, Cecil Matthewson, might be worth talking to. I had heard of Cecil; he owned a successful freight company called Indianapolis & Southern Motor Express, Inc. Howard explained that Cecil might be interested in talking to me because Cecil's brother, John, who actually ran the day-to-day operations, had just passed away. Howard was more than the company's CPA — he was its business advisor and was very familiar with the workings of the company. He pointed out that John's death had left a significant vacuum because Cecil was primarily involved in "front office" work, such as appearing before regulatory commissions, purchasing equipment, handling the insurance, and so

forth. Cecil, according to Howard, did not know a great deal about the nuts and bolts of operating a truck line.

"I'll bet that Cecil decides to put the company up for sale one of these days," Howard conjectured, "and I'll let you know if he does." I endorsed that idea and, in the spring of 1954, I got that call from Howard.

"I think it's going to happen, Jim," he said. "Are you still interested?"

"I sure am, Howard," I shot back. "How much is he asking?"

"I think he's going to need $250,000, but don't get scared by that number. I'm working on a stock redemption plan that will benefit both of you, if you decide to make the deal."

"Well, how would that benefit him?" I asked. "I can't pay him that kind of money up front. He'd have to extend me credit, and that means taking a risk on me."

"There are some new tax regulations in the federal code that were just handed down recently," explained Howard patiently. "They allow a seller who defers his receipt of payment to also defer any capital gains tax that the sale might generate. By spreading out the tax across many years, the seller can stay in a lower tax bracket and wind up saving a bundle. So if a seller isn't desperate for the money — he can enjoy a benefit. And I know Cecil. He lives very simply among the Amish in Montgomery, Indiana, and if he is willing to wait for his money, he can save a great deal on his taxes."

Howard was a real wizard. Because he was intimately familiar both with me and Cecil's company (I&S Motor Express), he was in a prime position to serve as our "matchmaker." On top of that, Howard's brilliant creativity when it came to financial matters truly came into play with this deal. As soon as I expressed a positive interest, Howard went to work.

Because both the buyer and the seller in this transaction were represented by Howard, someone might presume that this represented a conflict of interest. But neither Cecil nor I felt that way. Howard explained to Cecil why it would make financial sense for him to sell out to someone like me over time, rather than to a larger concern that would pay him all at one time. He also convinced Cecil — based on everything he knew about me — that I was a good risk and that he did not have to worry about not getting paid down the road. He was also candid with me. He pointed out that given the poor condition of I&S's equipment and facilities, coupled with the loss of John, the company's key manager, it was really not all that attractive. Another potential buyer who was considering the deal stated that he was primarily interested in taking over the ICC certificates and did not plan to carry on I&S's operations.

It is a testimony to Howard's far-reaching vision that he could look at a small-time produce hauler from the sticks and a crumbling big-city common carrier company and imagine that the two were made for each other. And, as things turned out, he was absolutely correct. When it was all said and done, Cecil wound up with a good deal more in his pocket than if he had sold out to the other suitor. As for me, the purchase represented one of the pivotal decisions of my career. I was able, with the help of many hard-working associates, to turn that company around and ultimately bring about a true American success story.

The buy-out strategy that Howard devised is commonplace today, but in the mid-fifties it was considered revolutionary. The idea was to make the sale as affordable as possible to a buyer in my position, while at the same time minimizing the seller's capital gains tax bite. Because Cecil and his brother had founded the company years earlier on a shoestring, Cecil had very little cost basis, and nearly every dollar he received by selling it was subject to capital gains taxation. In consideration of these factors, Howard came up with an ingenious stock redemption plan that went as follows:

I would put up a $25,000 down payment and would receive 51 percent of the company stock. This would give me controlling interest. At the same time, I would sign a 15-year note for the balance of the total purchase price (net of the $25,000 down payment). The shares representing my 51 percent would be transferred to my name at the time of purchase, but Cecil would hold them as collateral to secure the note. As I paid off the note over the next 15 years, Cecil would release the shares to me incrementally. At the end of 15 years, when the note was paid off, I would hold clear title to 51 percent of the shares. At that point, the corporation would have redeemed or retired the remaining outstanding shares. My shares would then represent 100% of the company equity and I would hold full and sole ownership of the company.

The deal was a good one for Cecil because the taxes generated by the transaction would be at a much lower tax rate. Obviously it was a great deal for me because it would enable me to acquire control of a trucking company worth $250,000 for only $25,000. There was only one hitch. I didn't have the $25,000!

What I did have, however, was equity in two going concerns, the M-T Produce Company and my Packard Auto/White Truck dealership. I had already made up my mind to get out of the auto sales business and focus on my truck dealership. Doing so would be even more compelling if I were to take over I&S, where having a connection to a truck manufacturer such as White Trucks would be a real asset. So the problem became, "How do I get my equity out of this Packard franchise?"

Selling the three new cars in our inventory was no problem. They moved off our lot as part of the regular course of our business. We simply did not order any new ones. Likewise, I had been ramping down our used car business by not accepting very many trade-ins. We did, however, have several thousand dollars tied up in tools, parts, and equipment, not to mention our key asset, the Packard franchise. The only source that would find value in these assets would be another auto dealer. I immediately thought of the Bergman brothers, owners of Bergman Studebaker in Vincennes. The Bergman family had been Studebaker dealers for generations — all

the way back to the days when two Hoosier brothers, Henry and Clement Studebaker from South Bend, Indiana, founded the world's largest maker of horse-drawn wagons.

I arranged to meet with the Bergmans in their impressive new building on Second Street in Vincennes. The older brother, Gerhard, greeted me warmly, although this was our first meeting. I decided to play it casual and do a little bluffing as part of my sales pitch. In poker, they call this "slow playing" the hand.

"You know, I envy you fellows," I said, after sitting back in one of the richly upholstered chairs in Gerhard's office. "Your whole family is involved in your business. Me, I'm on my own. My brother runs the farm and it'll be years before my kids are old enough to pitch in." We all agreed that having family support was a real blessing for any business.

"For example, when I picked up the Packard dealership in 1950, I thought I could handle it along with the White Truck line. And I've been going at it for the past four years, but the thing just keeps growing and growing. Now it looks like I'm going to be running a motor freight company out of Indianapolis on top of everything else. I just can't keep up with it by myself, and I figured I'd better look around and see if anyone was interested in taking over the Packard end of the business. That's why I asked to see you fellows."

A deal almost identical to my suggested merger of our Studebaker and Packard dealerships was in the works on a much higher level by the owners of the two respective auto companies. Those discussions culminated in the 1956 merger that created the Studebaker-Packard line of automobiles. The Packard brand name would survive for only another two years after that before joining all those other old auto names in Hubcap Heaven.

I never knew for sure whether the Bergmans were aware of the impending Packard-Studebaker merger at the time I approached them. If so, that knowledge might have influenced their decision to accept my offer. But I like to think that it

was my tactic of not appearing too anxious, and of acting cool and confident, that carried the day. In this way I played upon the Bergmans' perception of the Packard line as a step up from Studebaker. After all, Studebaker was a homegrown company whose franchise they had inherited. Packard, on the other hand, was a national brand that had produced some of the finest luxury cars on the market. I could tell that they held Packard in high esteem and believed that becoming Packard dealers would enhance their status as quality auto dealers. For whatever the reasons, the Bergmans agreed to buy me out lock, stock, and double-barreled carburetor. I was paid book value and was simply happy to take off my Packard hat without losing my shirt.

This move, though freeing up some of my time, did not result in putting $25,000 in my pocket. To reach this sum I would have to sell my interest in the M-T Produce Company. I naturally turned to my partner and friend, Alvin Thomas. Alvin contacted another local trucker by the name of Huber Gilliatt, and the two of them agreed to buy me out. I offered them my full 50 percent interest in the produce hauling operation and my equity in our small fleet of trucks.

It's always amazing to me how honest people can make an honest deal without the use of lawyers, accountants, or other types of intermediaries. When the time came, we sat down at a table with me on one side and Alvin and Huber on the other. I wrote down on a slip of paper what I thought my interest was worth, and I asked them to do the same thing. Alvin and Huber conferred a bit and then Alvin wrote down his number, folded up his slip, and handed it to me. I opened both slips and we could all see that there wasn't more than $5,000 dollars difference between our two figures. This made negotiations swift and simple. Alvin, along with his new partner, Huber, paid me $25,000 for all my interests in M-T Produce, including my produce tractors and trailors. They took over ownership in September 1954.

At age 29, I viewed myself as being bright eyed, hard nosed, and anxious to move ahead into the next phase of my career. I had the money I needed, but, more important, I was armed with something even more valuable: experience. I had

learned a lot during my four years as a car dealer. It was a time of learning and loving every minute of it. I learned about people — how to motivate them and inspire them to deliver their best. The value of the learning I acquired while working with Alvin Thomas also proved incalculable. I honestly felt that I had paid my dues and was now fully equipped to take on my next assignment.

But I was in for a shock.

Part of my deal with I&S was that I would draw no more than $100 per week in salary. By coincidence, when I went on the company payroll in the fall of 1954, I was listed as employee number 100. I further noticed that at the time I took over, the company held title to exactly 100 trucks, tractors, and trailers. I'm not into numerology or a superstitious person by nature, but I had to think that the stars were in some sort of alignment, and I took the "Miracle of the Three Hundreds" as a good omen for my future success.

As stated, I was young and confident, and I thought that I had learned nearly all of what there was to know about trucks. I knew how to "spec out" a truck and how to set up an effective maintenance schedule. Yes, I knew plenty about trucks, but I soon found that I knew next to nothing about operating a truck line. I&S was a common carrier freight company that handled thousands of shipments each day, from several terminal points across southern Indiana and Ohio. The actual care and feeding of the vehicles themselves, although vitally important, was not the primary operational challenge of this business. Managing the trucks was secondary to the logistical task of making sure that those trucks were deployed in the most efficient manner possible. Whereas a dead battery was a problem, a "deadhead," or making an empty run, was a much bigger one.

The I&S headquarters was located at 1410 South Capitol Avenue in an industrial section of Indianapolis. As I looked around the property, which consisted of an old house serving as the office, a run-down terminal with its dilapidated loading docks, and a tiny garage used to maintain the fleet, I could see that it would take some work to bring this place up to standards. As the autumn began to paint the southern

Indiana fall foliage with a panoramic palette of color, I found myself residing for several days of each week at the Indianapolis Marrott Hotel along the banks of Fall Creek. Because of my frequent visits, I worked out a favorable rate of just $6 per night, and found the place clean and comfortable.

During the day I did all I could to absorb the intricacies of the trucking business. As mentioned earlier, Cecil Matthewson, the former owner, lived in the Amish community of Montgomery, Indiana, and came into Indianapolis at least four days per week to work with me. He, of course, still held a vested interest in the business, and he had a large-stake interest in my achieving success. Cecil served as a mentor and was very supportive in offering me whatever direction and guidance he could. Our headquarters was actually a converted old house, and Cecil's office had been in the house's bedroom. After I took over, Cecil would repair to that bedroom to chat with salesmen while keeping himself available whenever I had a question. Unfortunately, when it came to day-to-day operational matters, I was pretty much on my own because Cecil's late brother John had been the one in charge of all that.

I determined that it wasn't a good idea to make any major overhauls in the business operations at the outset — no matter how much they were needed. Instead I began at a steady pace to begin replacing outdated equipment and implementing other modernization measures to lead the business toward increased efficiency and profitability. To his credit, Cecil never once raised a voice in objection to any of the measures I was putting into place. He was determined to be a facilitator and not an obstacle to our progress. It didn't necessarily have to be that way. Often when a transition like this takes place and control of a business is transferred from a founder to a new, young "whippersnapper" like me, resentment can be the result. I recognized that I was very fortunate that Cecil did not react that way and instead permitted me to do things my way right from the start.

We maintained the I&S office in Indianapolis for the rest of 1954 and all of the following year. In 1956 I floated the idea of moving the home office down to Vincennes, during a conversation with Howard Williams.

"You know, Howard, at first it wasn't so bad, but that two-and-a-half-hour drive from Indy back home is starting to get to me. I waste a lot of time on the road," I said in frustration. "And Bettye's not thrilled with the situation, either."

"Well, why don't you move your office to Vincennes?" he suggested. "There's no reason that you need to be parked right next to the Indy terminal. You've got five others, and they operate just fine without you on the premises." As usual, Howard had a good point. The six terminals we operated — one in Indy, four in southern Indiana and one in Cincinnati — would go on functioning regardless of where the general office were located. The terminals were staging areas where freight would be dropped off by the straight truck pick-up driver and then, after being sorted and segregated according to destination, and moved across to the loading docks, it was placed onto the delivery driver's semi. The semi driver would then drive from Terminal A to Terminal B, where the process was reversed and straight trucks were used to deliver each shipment to the end recipient. The I&S home office handled all the billing, payroll, taxes, accounts receivable, payables, purchasing, and various other administrative functions. Howard was correct. These tasks could be carried out anywhere, including Vincennes. Because we already owned a piece of commercial property currently being used by McCormick, Inc. for the White Truck dealership, setting up shop in Vincennes would be a breeze.

So we made the announcement and asked those administrative employees who were able to relocate to move to Vincennes with us. As I recall, only the chief bookkeeper and his assistant made the move. But in no time at all, we were set up with newly hired staff, and the Indianapolis & Southern Motor Express Company general office was fully functional alongside McCormick, Inc. on South U.S. 41.

Up until now, most of our fleet maintenance had been carried out at our rather marginal Indianapolis garage facility. Soon after moving our general offices to Vincennes, we decided to follow suit with our major fleet maintenance. After being re-situated, I&S would subcontract its maintenance needs to a local third party named, not surprisingly, McCormick, Inc. As we saw it, this move meant

dependable service for I&S's growing fleet, and more business for McCormick, Inc. The transition went very smoothly, and, helped along by the fact that all of I&S's over-the-road vehicles were White Trucks, the marriage of our two companies appeared to be a win-win situation made in heaven. Unfortunately, with this move, the dark clouds of Hades began to form.

Those clouds would brew into a violent storm that hung over my head for the next 35 five years. By seeking to maximize our efficiency and expand our business, we had aroused the unwelcome attention of that perennial thorn in my side, Charlie Miller. One sunny day in 1957, Miller's burly shadow darkened my door once again.

"Carrying any paint cans today, Charlie?" I asked him somewhat snidely, remembering what he'd done to Herb Rohlman (see Chapter 6).

"I don't know what you're talking about, Jim," he answered stiffly.

"What's on your mind today, Charlie? I'm kind of busy."

"Oh, I just stopped by to show you my card," he said with a little grin as he approached my desk. "In fact I've got a bunch of cards to show. Take a look." At that, Charlie dumped a stack of blue Teamsters Union sign-up cards across my desk.

"Count 'em, Jim," he said. "They're all there." I glanced through the cards and saw that our mechanics had been convinced to fill out sign-up cards indicating their desire to join the Teamsters Union. I picked up Ralph Miller's card. Ralph was the chief mechanic at McCormick, Inc., and I suspected that he was the ringleader. I later learned I was right, but that fact did me no good at this point. The truth was that Charlie Miller had me, and he wouldn't need to knock a can of paint into my head to convince me of the fact. Had I known then what I know today about the Teamsters, I might have taken a stand and tried to fight them. But I understood that they had the power, and if I wanted to keep our trucks rolling, I had to accept it. In those days the trucking industry operated under the golden rule: Jimmy Hoffa had

the gold, so he made all the rules. So, from the moment I signed the Teamsters contract in 1957, until 1993 when the Teamsters organized a strike against McCormick, Inc. (see Chapter 11), I lived with the Teamsters' anchor chain around my neck. It slowed me down, but I'm proud to say that it did not stop me.

"There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long-range risks and cost of comfortable inaction."

— John F. Kennedy

CHAPTER NINE: THIRD GEAR

As things began picking up steam at I&S, we found ourselves forced to devise new and creative methods of meeting the needs of our customers. One such path led us to develop a new entity to provide commercial leasing services. In January of 1957, we changed the name of an existing corporation, from C. James McCormick, Inc. — which had been set up during my John Gregory/Wonder Bread years — to Commercial Rentals, Inc., for just this purpose.

At times, we learned, it was more favorable to lease trucking equipment to a customer rather than to contract with the customer conventionally. The reason was simple: that old ICC certificate. If I&S Motor Express picked up your cargo and delivered it to your customer, then I&S was serving as a common carrier and was required to own an ICC certificate, or face a federal felony count. But if you operated a company hauling your own product to your own customer, then no certificate was required.

Our major truck-leasing customer was a local concern called the Hamilton Glass Company. Hamilton manufactured several glass products, including mirrors, glass shelving for refrigerators, tempered glass, and other similar glass products. Leasing equipment from us and using its own drivers represented a considerable savings for Hamilton Glass, compared to what it would have been required to pay a common carrier to haul its freight. Although the cost savings it experienced by not having to use certified common carriers would have been beneficial to any shipper, this set-up was particularly advantageous to Hamilton Glass. The company not only saved on freight charges but also avoided having to package its fragile merchandise as thoroughly as common carriers required. This savings in packing material was considerable over a year's time. In addition, Hamilton was unique because its shipments were such that semi-trailers could be loaded with upwards of fifteen different shipments at a time. By using "its own" trucks and drivers, Hamilton could carry out all these deliveries directly to its customers. A commercial carrier would have been required to split up the shipments at freight terminals and then deliver each of them using a local delivery truck. Conversely, by using the "leased truck" method, Hamilton could get a delivery to a customer overnight, whereas the same shipment would have required two or three days via common carrier.

Hamilton's local plant manager in Vincennes, Bernie Nathan, was a long-standing friend of mine. I knew that he had several tractors and trailers leased from a trucker in nearby Sullivan, Indiana. One day Bernie and I were having lunch, and I asked him whether he was satisfied with his present business arrangement with the man from Sullivan. He confided with me that he was not. I then asked him outright, "Bernie, if we could put together a truck leasing deal that would better meet your needs, would you take a look at it?" Bernie gladly agreed, and soon thereafter, we struck a deal that launched our Commercial Rentals operation.

We had our first major customer and were on our way. It turned out to be a beautiful relationship that extended from 1957 through 1981. In 1980, we had 43 tractors and 54 trailers leased to Hamilton, its affiliates, and to other customers.

Sadly, Bernie Nathan died from brain cancer during the late 1970s, and soon thereafter Hamilton Glass was sold. We continued to furnish the new owners with the over-the-road equipment they needed to make their shipments. However, the products manufactured and marketed by Hamilton changed quite drastically after Bernie's death, and, as the company's needs changed, the size of our leased fleet began to decline.

In 1979, Hamilton started an operation at Laurinburg, North Carolina, and offered us the opportunity to set up a support operation there as part of the company's needed infrastructure. In May 1979, our son Pat and one of our mechanics, my old Decker High School classmate, Louie Vieck, went to Laurinburg with 12 tractors and 15 trailers to launch that venture. For living quarters, we bought a 72-by-14-foot mobile home that served as Pat and Louie's residence during the time they were in North Carolina. Next, we obtained an airplane hanger from Southern Pines Airways at the Laurinburg-Maxton airport to set up our operation. From Thursdays through Mondays, Pat and Louie rushed to get the fleet serviced and ready to go back on the road by Monday evening.

When all the trucks were out, Pat didn't have much to do until they started coming back in the following Thursday. Pat had obtained his private pilot's license in August 1968 in Indiana, but he did not have an instrument "ticket." So, during his free time he rented a Cessna 182 to master flying by instruments. He succeeded in obtaining his instrument ticket on March 15, 1981, after undergoing intensive training while in North Carolina.

That operation went along smoothly for two years, until Ryder Truck Rentals approached Hamilton and underbid us considerably. With Bernie Nathan gone, I no longer enjoyed a special relationship with Hamilton Glass, and we wound up losing the account and closing our North Carolina operations. As you will read a bit later, the timing for this change worked out well. We had just purchased P&S Express from Paul Yochum and we needed Pat's services back in Vincennes. We put most of the equipment to work for P&S, and the balance was sold.

Hamilton Glass was not our only commercial leasing customer in the glass manufacturing business. We also enjoyed a long-standing relationship with the Cadillac Glass Company of Detroit, Michigan. Cadillac Glass was a distributor of Libbey-Owens-Ford automotive glass products and operated under many of the same constraints as Hamilton Glass. Our system of providing leased vehicles to Cadillac Glass's crew of drivers was an ideal solution for Hamilton Glass as well.

It was through our relationship with Cadillac Glass that I got to know Dick Martin, Cadillac's dynamic chairman, during the early 1950s. Dick and I became friends, and over lunch with him at the Detroit Golf Club, I met one of the most unforgettable individuals it has been my pleasure to know.

Edgar A. Guest, the well-known journalist and poet, was a close friend of Dick's and had been invited by him to join us for lunch. I had heard of Guest and was familiar with one of his poems; the well known *"They Said It Couldn't Be Done"* had been one of my favorites because it accurately summed up my feelings about the importance of determination and "stick-to-it-ive-ness." We said our hellos, and I found Guest to be a warm and personable man who insisted that I call him Eddie. I learned that he was originally from Great Britain and had immigrated to America as a child. He had worked his entire career — 65 years — for the *Detroit Free Press* as a reporter, columnist, and resident poet. His popular column, which often featured his sentimental and highly accessible poetry, was titled "Breakfast Table Chat" and was syndicated in more than 300 newspapers. Although Guest was often hailed as the "poet of the people," he preferred to refer to himself as a "newspaper man who happens to write verses." By the time we met, he had published more than 11,000 poems, most of them exactly 14 lines long and dealing with aspects of everyday life. I asked him a question that he must have faced hundreds of times before, but his answer was as fresh as it was sincere.

"Eddie," I ventured, " I imagine you get asked this a lot, but where do you get your ideas for the poems you write?"

"You're right, Jim," he answered warmly. "The answer is that I take ordinary, everyday things that have happened to me, and I figure that the same things happen to a lot of other people, and I just make simple rhymes out of them."

At the conclusion of our lunch, Eddie presented me with an autographed copy of a poem he had recently published. It has become my favorite Guest poem, and I still cherish it to this day. When Eddie Guest passed away in 1959, America lost one of its truly great poets. The poem he gave to me is in the form of advice directed to a boy about the importance of a good name. I have included it below:

YOUR NAME

by Edgar A. Guest

You got it from your father. 'Twas the best he had to give.
And rightly gladly he bestowed it. It's yours, the while you live.
You may lose the watch he gave you — and another you may claim,
But remember, when you're tempted, to be careful of his name.
It was fair the day you got it, and a worthy name to bear.
When he took it from his father, there was no dishonor there.
Through the years he proudly wore it, to his father he was true,
And that name was clean and spotless when he passed it on to you.
Oh, there's much that he has given that he values not at all.
He has watched you break your playthings in the days when you were small.
You have lost the knife he gave you and you've scattered many a game,
But you'll never hurt your father if you're careful with his name.
It's yours to wear forever, yours to wear the while you live.
Yours, perhaps, some distant morning, to another boy to give.
And you'll smile, as did your father — with a smile that all can share —
If a clean name and a good name you are giving him to wear.

Besides Hamilton Glass, Commercial Rentals had a few other customers, such as Dumes, Inc., a local scrap dealer; B. F. Goodrich; and Edson Corp. But by 1990, the truck-leasing business had declined to the point that we decided to merge the corporation into McCormick, Inc.

Another company that had its beginnings during this period and has survived to this day is JAMAC Corporation. Back in 1960, on the advice of Howard Williams, we had formed a real estate holding company and named it JAMAC Corporation. JAMAC took title to all the commercial real estate we held and leased it back to our businesses. By separating myself into landlord Jim and tenant Jim, I was able to control the terms of the leases and thereby generate some attractive tax benefits.

As I&S grew during the late fifties and early sixties, I felt that we were making good progress but hardly good money. The latter was due to the labor-intensive nature of the business. We had no raw materials, no inventory, nothing we could buy here and sell there at a marked-up price. What we did have to sell was our service. Our rates, and those of our competitors, were controlled by the various regulatory rate bureaus. Service was our commodity, and we worked hard to provide the level of service to our customers that kept them specifying I&S as their preferred carrier.

I worked long hours and really loved every minute of it. The biggest downside was that my work kept me from spending as much time with my wife and children as I wanted to. Oh, I was there for the ballgames and I coached basketball at the YMCA, but I was away from home during the week a great deal of the time. Things improved somewhat after we moved the I&S general offices to Vincennes, but I was still spending a lot of windshield time early in the mornings and late at night as I drove from one of our terminals to another constructing a smooth-running and profitable organization.

We were also making progress at McCormick, Inc., the White Truck dealership. In 1963 we were successful in acquiring the White Motor Company factory branch in Indianapolis from the manufacturer. In common with many auto and truck

makers, White had built up its business through corporate owned, rather than franchiser held, dealerships in many of the nation's major cities. In the early sixties White's top management made the decision to divest themselves of these dealerships and offer them to some of their key independent dealers. By this time I had become quite friendly with two of White's top executives, Nev Bauman, Executive Vice President, and Hank Nave, Vice President of White's parts and service division. Hank was from Attica, Indiana, so when we would meet at company sales meetings, we shared a sense of Hoosier solidarity and kinship. I recall our conversation that got things rolling at a confab at White's home offices in Cleveland.

"I hear Mr. Black wants to get rid of factory branches and sell them to independent dealers," I said casually. "Is that right?"

"You've got it right, Jim," said Nev. "We're sticking to building them and we're going to leave the selling to you guys who do it best."

"Why do you ask?" asked Hank.

"Well," I said, "I know most of the truck operators in and around Indianapolis, and with our airplane, we are only an hour from Vincennes to Indianapolis. I believe we could do a bang-up job running a dealership in Indianapolis. Yep, I definitely am interested in working out a deal with White to take over the Indianapolis branch operation."

What I failed to mention was that I didn't have anywhere near the money needed to purchase that dealership. Evidently, Nev and Hank took me seriously, because within a month I was in meetings with the home office about taking over the Indianapolis dealership. They offered me a very generous financing package to get up and running. As it turned out, I had to raise only enough money to place down payments on the parts inventory and provide for one month's operating capital. I told them that I thought I could raise that much through my bank, if White would stand behind me and back me up. They agreed, and in the summer of 1963 we

executed a franchise agreement for both the White Truck and the Autocar lines to be sold in the Indianapolis territory. Autocar was a second brand of tractors owned by White and marketed through its dealer network. Hence, we became the new Indianapolis White and Autocar dealer in the Indianapolis and central Indiana territory.

When it came time to secure additional funding for this venture, White dispatched one of its vice presidents, Jerry Tobin, a good friend and Indiana University graduate, to Indianapolis to offer his assistance. Jerry accompanied me on my visit to the American Fletcher National Bank (AFNB) headquartered in the heart of downtown, on the well-known Monument Circle next door to the venerated Columbia Club. Jerry and I met with the bank's loan committee to make our case. Among the bankers assembled was a junior loan officer trainee name Joe Barnett, who would later rise to become Chairman and CEO of AFNB and its successor, Bank One. Joe and I are still good friends today and sometimes reminisce about that day when a novice loan officer faced a nervous loan applicant about buying a local truck dealership.

Thanks to Jerry's support — he explained that White Motors had a vested interest in seeing its dealers succeed, and that was why they were selling franchises only to operators like me who had proven themselves in the field — AFNB granted the loan, and we were off and running.

As explained, a few years earlier I had moved the I&S operations from Indianapolis back to my hometown of Vincennes to cut down on the time my work was taking away from my family. Now, here I was again, launching a major undertaking back in Indy. Fortunately, by this time I had some options open to me. My sister, Lorene, had married George Shunk. The two had met at Purdue University, where he had majored in business management. After college, George had entered a management-training program at retailer J. C. Penney's, but after less than a year, he found he was unhappy with the limited opportunities available to him there. In 1957, I offered him a position at our I&S Cincinnati terminal as a

management trainee. He readily accepted, and he and Lorene moved to Cincinnati after spending a few months at the "home office" in Vincennes getting acquainted with the administrative aspects of the business. During their brief stay in Vincennes, they resided in the noted "corncrib" house where Bettye and I had set up housekeeping some 10 years earlier. George progressed through the management-training program and was soon promoted to Terminal Manager. I was aware that Lorene and George would welcome the opportunity to move back to Indiana, so after we launched Indianapolis White-Autocar, Inc., I called George and offered him the manager's position at our new dealership. George accepted my offer and in short order was learning the ropes of running a major heavy-duty truck dealership.

In the beginning, I found myself traveling to Indianapolis two to three times per week as the business got onto its feet. But after a year, my visits became less frequent as George took over the day-to-day management chores. We held on to that White-Autocar dealership for 10 years. At the end, I sold it to the White Truck dealer from Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Although the dealership never emerged as the gold mine we were hoping for, it always operated in the black.

During the early 1960s, Herb Klein, one of my early mentors, was forced to close down his company, Osborne Trucking, because of ongoing labor demands being issued by the Teamsters Union. I approached Herb a few years later and offered to buy his headquarters building at 11th and Prairie Street in Vincennes. We worked out a fair price and closed the deal. I next contacted Vern Kimmel, a local architect, and asked him to draw up plans to convert the building into new administrative offices for I&S. It was quite an undertaking, given the fact that the building had been previously used as an office, parts department, and maintenance facility for Osborne's fleet of trucks. Nevertheless, it came off beautifully and we soon found ourselves in more spacious surroundings, no longer forced to share space with McCormick, Inc., our truck dealership. By this stage of the game I had turned much of I&S's operations over to my brother Ed as I became more and more involved in our trade associations at the state and national levels (see Chapter 13).

Ed was named Executive Vice President and General Manager at the age of 29 in 1965.

I was a ripe old man of 42 when I&S underwent a major expansion by consummating a merger with McDaniel Freight Lines of Crawfordsville, Indiana. The trucking company was founded by Leonard McDaniel in the 1930s, and he was still operating it by 1967, but had recently begun looking about for a buyer.

McDaniel Freight Lines enjoyed an excellent reputation and was nearly the same size as our company. It operated four terminals — one in Crawfordsville, next to its home office, and three more in Danville, Illinois; Indianapolis; and Lafayette, Indiana. It seemed to be an almost ideal match because the only overlap was in Indianapolis. Our service area would now extend to include Lafayette, Crawfordsville, and Danville, Illinois.

We signed the agreement to purchase McDaniel Freight Lines on October 7, 1967, and it took several months to get all the regulatory approval needed to merge the two companies. We commenced our merged operations in January 1968 and renamed the company I&S-McDaniel, Inc.

The first order of business was combining the two terminals in Indianapolis. Maintaining two terminals in one city was not an option, so we had to make a decision — which turned out to be an easy one. A few years before, I&S had finally abandoned the old Indianapolis terminal on South Capitol Avenue and built a modern new facility at the city's largest industrial park, Park Fletcher. Fortunately, we were thinking ahead when we secured the real estate for the Park Fletcher facility, and our property included vacant space that would allow for expansion. Merging the two terminals turned into a massive undertaking. We attempted to add 40 loading doors during the winter of 1967-68 and became seriously delayed by the weather. I recall seeing long queues of interline carriers backed up as they waited to unload at our terminal, and having to tell the drivers that we had no space to unload them. It was utter chaos and commotion that finally settled down a bit by springtime.

Our next challenge was disposing of the old McDaniel terminal, which we no longer needed. It was in excellent condition and in a great location, so I did not expect any difficulty in selling it. Of course, a trucking terminal is a piece of property with a rather limited market appeal. If you're not in the common carrier trucking business, it really has little value for you. Fortunately, by this point in my career I knew just about all the common carriers in the country. This was due to my accelerating involvement with the Regular Common Carriers Conference, the largest division of our national trade association, the American Trucking Associations (ATA). I discuss my activities with the RCCC and the ATA in Chapter 13.

Through the RCCC and the ATA, I had come to know Cal Zwingle, president of Pacific Intermountain Express, known as PIE. Cal had just recently completed a term as Chairman of ATA in 1965-66. I offered the property to Cal, who had been looking to expand his Indianapolis operations. The McDaniel terminal suited his operation well, and we were able to make a satisfactory deal that I greatly appreciated — because he paid for the property in cash at closing.

Our merger with McDaniel Freight Lines was a success. Our revenues grew as we continued picking up routes and expanding our service area. The late sixties represented a period of major growth for I&S-McDaniel — growth fueled primarily through strategic acquisitions.

Our purchase of J. A. Grant & Son represents a good example. In 1969 I had caught wind of the fact that an old family trucking business, situated in Rensselaer, Indiana, might be available for sale by its owner, Sam Grant. The Grant operation extended from Lafayette northward toward Chicago and offered short and mid-haul service to a number of smaller communities in the northwestern sector of the state. Their routes dovetailed perfectly with ours, so when I made contact with Sam Grant's attorney and he advised that the company might be available, I immediately asked him to set up a meeting.

I met with Sam and in very little time we had an agreement in place. Although we acquired trucks, terminals, drivers, and an administrative staff as part of the purchase, the key assets we were buying were the ICC certificates. Those certificates granted us the right to operate the routes we needed if we were to grow. We now had a direct route to Chicago from any point in our territory, and this fact maximized our efficiency.

Our game plan was to assemble a five-state Midwest regional operating system. To achieve this, we needed clear routes to Louisville and St. Louis. I knew of one independent trucker, Bob Crecilius, whom we had used to deliver local freight in and around Salem, Indiana. I was aware that Bob had a small general commodities authority between Salem and Louisville. I contacted Bob at home and suggested the following:

"Bob, we're interested in getting routes into Louisville," I explained, "and I was wondering if you'd be interested in selling your general commodities certificate."

"Well, Jim," he replied, "I depend on that route for my livelihood. I don't know what I'd do if I were to get rid of it."

"You'll come to work for I&S," I offered. "As an I&S-McDaniel driver you'll have steady work, a health insurance plan, paid vacations, and all sorts of benefits you're missing as an independent. I'll even send you a card on your birthday each year."

Bob laughed at this remark, and it didn't take long for him to agree to my offer. And now we were in Louisville.

As it turned out, getting to St. Louis would not be quite so easy. When I heard through the "trucking grapevine" that Killion Motor Express had been sold, I immediately called one of my oldest and best friends in the trucking fraternity, Bernie Killion, originally from Washington, Indiana. Bernie's dad founded Killion Motor Express back in the 1930s, at the time when trucking regulation was being introduced. Killion's basic interstate authority was from Louisville through

Washington, Indiana, and on to St. Louis. Bernie had moved to Louisville in the 1940s to head up Killion's largest operation there. Bernie confirmed that he had sold the company to a large concern headquartered in Denver. The buyer needed to get authority from Louisville to Lawrenceville, Illinois, in order to tie in with its existing routes.

Just as soon as the ink was dry on the sale of Killion, I contacted the new owner in Denver. I correctly guessed that because the company now had the Killion Louisville-Lawrenceville route in hand, it might be interested in selling the Lawrenceville-St. Louis authority because this represented a duplication for it. Lawrenceville, Illinois, was a service point for I&S, so if we could buy the Lawrenceville to St. Louis authority, that would put us into St. Louis. I had never done business with the Denver fellow before, but I knew him to be a tough and shrewd operator. I was on my guard when I contacted him, fully expecting to haggle about terms and conditions. I was delighted to encounter none of that. He was direct and down to earth, agreeing that he could easily forgo the route authorization that I was interested in. We settled on a price and quickly made a deal that he honored to the letter. It was truly an unanticipated pleasure doing business with him.

With this acquisition, I&S-McDaniel had completed the circle of service. From Cincinnati, Louisville, and Evansville along the Ohio River to St. Louis to the west, Indianapolis in the center, and Chicago to the north, our authorized routes enabled us to span five states and propelled us to the next level — that of regional common carrier. We were clearly on a roll, and this new status translated into more direct freight and less low-margin interline business. The shift drove up our revenue per mile performance, and consequently steadily served to enhance our bottom line.

By the mid-1970s, our company management team and I felt that our business was heading in the right direction after several years of steady growth. But it was at this point that a cloud appeared on the horizon. We had no way of knowing what a

rain of ruin this cloud, known as deregulation, would deliver upon our business — and upon America's transportation industry.

In August 1974, Gerald Ford became president of the United States upon Richard Nixon's resignation in the wake of the Watergate scandal. President Ford made it one of his priorities to do away with unnecessary governmental regulation. He and his advisors viewed regulation as a hindrance to free trade and believed that "getting the federal government off the backs of business" would help to strengthen the economy. To fully understand the impact of this trend toward deregulation, one needs to understand some of the history of the Interstate Commerce Commission (I.C.C.).

Drawing its mandate from the words of the United States Constitution that grants Congress the right to regulate interstate commerce, the I.C.C. was established in 1887 as the result of a public outcry against the powerful railroad interests that had arisen in post-Civil War America. The public felt that the railroads enjoyed too much political power and needed to be reined in by Uncle Sam. The I.C.C. was intended to do just that, through the regulation of freight charges and approval of new routes that crossed state lines. Unfortunately, this first American regulatory agency was not given any enforcement powers. Without teeth, the anemic agency was ignored by the railroads until, in the early twentieth century, as part of the Reform Movement, Congress saw fit to strengthen the I.C.C. by giving it the power to levy fines and issue licenses. Finally, the I.C.C. was actually granted the muscle it required to regulate rates and thereby control business practices in the railroad industry.

Ironically, instead of eliminating monopolies and stimulating competition — which was the I.C.C.'s initial mission — in the years following the Great War, the I.C.C. served just the opposite function. It was a classic case of the watchdog protecting the wolves. Through the issuance of licenses, the I.C.C. had created an entry barrier for any new operators wishing to challenge the established players.

And by setting rates and promoting mergers, it helped to secure and solidify the railroad monopolies' control of America's freight transport industry.

By the mid-1930s the railroads started to feel increased competition from the trucking industry as shippers found truck transport increasingly more economical and dependable than rail. Finally, the railroads raised their voices in protest at being the only regulated industry in the country. But rather than encourage Congress to do away with the regulations that protected them from competition, they demanded that I.C.C. regulation be extended to the trucking industry. Through the Transportation Act of 1940, Congress did just that. By the time I got into the business in the mid-1940s, it was necessary for a trucker hauling anything for hire other than farm produce, livestock or grain across state lines to own a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity — just as the railroads had to.

In 1958 the federal government finally determined that railroads no longer posed a monopolistic threat and began loosening rail regulations. That was the beginning of the end for America's railroad's domination of freight transportation. By this time, the trucking industry had become as dependent upon I.C.C. regulation as the railroads had been a generation before. While keeping things flowing smoothly, the regulations made it very difficult for new companies to enter the trucking business because the I.C.C. set the rate schedules and issued exclusive Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity. Hence, the value of these certificates made up, in the case of many trucking companies, the largest single asset on their balance sheets. If the trucking industry were to become deregulated, then the value of these certificates would be nil. I understood, perhaps a little better than the next fellow, that with deregulation in the air, it was time to secure shelter or risk being blown away with the wind.

Although Congress did not act upon President Ford's deregulation initiatives, his successor, Jimmy Carter, sensing a popular political issue, pushed for it. In 1980, through something called the Staggers Rail and Motor Carriers Act, the I.C.C.'s powers over rates and routes in both the rail and trucking industries were curtailed.

By 1994, all vestiges of trucking control were eliminated, and the I.C.C. itself was put to death in 1995 at age 108.

By mid-1975, we were facing a slump in business that had placed us marginally in the red, and I began seriously searching for answers. At this point, I had served in a national leadership capacity for our industry's premier trade associations. I had conferred with the President at the White House about commerce issues facing the country, and I was, at that stage in my career, perhaps better informed about the trucking industry landscape than were most business owners (see Chapter 13 for an account of my trade association activities).

Based upon the current state of our business and on what I felt was the coming impact of deregulation, I embarked upon some very serious soul searching about the future of I&S-McDaniel. I sat down repeatedly with my long-standing business advisor, Howard Williams, and reviewed all the numbers.

"You know, Howard," I opined, "we've been forced to live with the Teamsters on our necks for all these years and it hasn't been fun, but we've made it. If deregulation comes down, I'm not sure we'll be as lucky."

"Jim, you're absolutely right," answered Howard, who was not by nature a yes-man. "From the attitude in Washington these days, they'll do anything to bring inflation under control. The politicians think that getting rid of regulations will stimulate competition and bring down prices."

"Yes, but they'll destroy the industry in the process," I pointed out. "If I'm forced to operate under the new Teamsters contract when deregulation comes down, the combination of the two will wipe us out for sure. I don't know, Howard, this might be the right time to quietly start looking around for a buyer." Howard slowly nodded his head in resigned agreement.

"But before we try to sell out," I added after a moment's deliberation, "there are two things I have to try first. I owe it to myself and to all of our associates who have

put their lives into this company to do absolutely everything possible to keep us intact." Howard looked intrigued and urged me to go on.

"First, I want to meet with Frank Fitzsimmons face to face," I announced, referring to the international president of the Teamsters Union. "Like LBJ used to say, I want to sit down with him and try to 'reason together.' He's simply got to understand that this new contract will put companies like ours out of business and put millions of Teamster members out of work. He can't want that to happen."

"It shouldn't be too hard to set up," Howard responded, "but don't get your hopes up about making Fitzsimmons see the light. He looks like a pretty hard case to me. What's the second thing?"

"I want to talk, face to face, to every single Teamster member in our company and explain the situation," I said. "I want them to understand that their future depends upon their decertifying the Union. If I can convince them of that, then we can call for an election and we might have a chance."

"Decertifications are possible," advised Howard, "but they're rare. The only way it can happen is if your employees believe you when you say you'll close up shop or sell out before signing the new contract." I understood this point fully and thanked Howard for his counsel. Next, I immediately went to work setting up a meeting with Teamsters boss Frank Fitzsimmons.

As mentioned, the Teamsters had just succeeded in getting their latest national agreement put into place. The contract, now awaiting almost certain ratification, contained some of the most generous terms ever bestowed upon the truck drivers of America, and it would adversely affect every single union trucking company across the country. During the reign of Jimmy Hoffa in the 1960s, his power was so immense that he succeeded in getting rid of regional labor contracts and went on to introduce the National Master Freight Agreement, a universal, uniform contract that called for the same terms in every corner of the country, regardless of the prevailing local conditions. This practice — Hoffa's legacy — had continued into the 1970s,

with the demands being sought by the Teamsters growing more and more outrageous with each go-round.

I took one look at the new 1976 contract and knew in an instant that it represented a "coup de grace" for our company, I&S-McDaniel. I felt somewhat fortunate, however, because at that time I was in a position to do something about it. I was serving on the board of the Trucking Employers, Inc (TEI). Our job was to represent management in labor negotiations with the Teamsters. Actually, we appointed a smaller negotiating team to meet with the Teamsters and to negotiate terms that our board would ostensibly review and then either approve or reject. Although I did not serve on the negotiating team itself, I made it my business to monitor every step of the process.

In truth, there really was no actual good-faith negotiating — in the traditional sense — taking place at all. The Teamsters put their demands on the table, and we either agreed to them or the entire U.S. economy would come to a screeching halt as Fitzsimmons authorized a nationwide truck strike with a single stroke of his pen. We had nothing on our side of the table that would come close to offsetting that sort of power. Hence, we had no leverage and found ourselves quibbling over whatever petty crumbs Fitzsimmons had decided to leave on the table. In practical terms, this exercise was meaningless; it was simply a case of going through the motions to make it appear as though we had actually negotiated a contract. I soon learned that trying to negotiate from a position of weakness serves only to further strengthen the hand of your adversary. I concluded that doing so is a practice that should be avoided at all costs.

My mission in meeting with Fitzsimmons was to make him understand that the current contract would result not only in putting me out of business but also in sparking the collapse of the nation's entire trucking industry. Such a scenario would obviously have a devastating effect on the Teamsters' revenue stream: Out-of-work truck drivers don't pay any union dues. Armed with all of the facts I could assemble, I made the appointment to see Fitzsimmons.

I was filled with determination as I entered the magnificent marble edifice that served as Teamsters headquarters at the foot of Capitol Hill in Washington. Fitzsimmons greeted me cordially and asked me to take a seat after I was finally shown into his palatial office suite. Before setting foot in his spacious digs, I had been forced to first go through the receptionist and then wait to see the office manager, who escorted me to the office of the president's secretary; there, I waited for Mr. Fitzsimmons' personal secretary, who escorted me on the final leg of my route and asked me to take a seat. I felt as though I had been granted an audience with the Pope, and, in a sense, I had.

"Good to see you again, Jim," said the burly Pontiff as he leaned back in his throne-like chair. He and I had run into each other at various official functions over the years. "What can I do for you this morning?"

"Well, Mr. Fitzsimmons," I began, "as you know, there are thousands of small trucking operations like ours across the country, and we simply cannot survive under the terms of this new contract. I am not exaggerating here. This contract will put every one of us out of business. And if deregulation comes along, it will all happen that much sooner. Each of our companies employs between one hundred and a thousand dues-paying drivers. That's a million men out of work and not paying dues to the Brotherhood. Why would you want that to happen?"

Fitzsimmons leaned back a bit further and tapped his desk with a pencil he was fiddling with. "First of all, call me Fitz," he said with a slight smile. He went on, "I hear what you're saying, Jim. But you've got to understand that that's just the way it is. You've got to do what you've got to do, and I've got to do my part. We've all got our roles to play. My job is to ask for as much as I can to benefit my people. Your job is to keep as much for yourself and your stockholders as you can get away with. Somehow we always manage to work it out, and I'm sure we will this time, too."

"No, not this time, Fitz," I proclaimed as I stood to leave. "This time you're going to reap the whirlwind." I was not a bit happy about receiving the brush-off and my face showed it. I said good-bye and stiffly thanked him for his time as I made my way out of his spacious sanctum — disheartened, but not yet defeated.

My warning turned out to be prophetic. This contract, when coupled with the impact of the imminent deregulation of the trucking industry, marked the beginning of the end of the almighty Teamsters Union's stranglehold on the common carrier trucking industry in America.. After enduring a dramatic membership decline during the 1980s, the Teamsters, in 1989, signed a consent decree with the federal government that in essence allowed the government to take over the Teamsters headquarters and ground the five-jet "Teamsters Air Force" while curtailing other such lavish excesses, and to conduct supervised elections. These corruption-fighting measures actually succeeded in marginalizing the Teamsters Union as a force to be reckoned with.

As membership continued to wane during the 1990s, the Teamsters diversified into a variety of related job categories in order to fill its ranks. The IBT today claims 1.4 million members in a diverse array of professions. Only 120,000 of these are actual truck drivers, down from 1.5 million in 1957. Under the leadership of president Jimmy R. Hoffa (son of Jimmy P. Hoffa) since 1999, the Teamsters today seek to put their corruption-riddled past — with its organized crime connections — behind them and to rebuild their decimated organization through the creation of cooperative, rather than adversarial, relationships with management.

Despite being rebuffed by "Fitz," I nevertheless wished to carry out the second step of my last-ditch efforts to prevent the sale of I&S-McDaniel. This step involved meeting face to face with each one of our company's 400-plus Teamsters members. The loading docks at our larger terminals were 'round-the-clock operations, so reaching everyone meant scheduling meetings in those cities during each of the three daily shifts. Both dockworkers and drivers were paid to attend and listen to a vitally important message from management — a message to be delivered by me personally. The Union was made aware of the scheduled meetings and elected to send one of its representatives to attend and observe only one of them — the day-shift meeting held in Indianapolis. The Union failed to make an appearance at our other terminal meetings, so at most locations I was "permitted" the right to address our own

employees directly, without Union intervention. My message to them was a heartfelt, last-ditch plea to let our company live:

"Thank you all for coming to this important meeting," I would typically begin, even though we were paying them all to be there. "What I have to tell you today is so important that I decided to come here and speak with you face to face. Another reason I'm here is because, after I say what I have to say, I want to do some listening and hear back from you. The truth is that I&S-McDaniel is in serious trouble, and the key to getting us out of it rests in your hands. The latest National Master Freight Agreement, which is about to be ratified, is a contract that will cripple our company. If we sign it, we'll be signing our own death warrant. What I'm asking you all to do is not going to be easy — but it's what must be done in order to preserve our company's future. I'm talking about decertifying the Teamsters, or, in other words, kicking out the Union. If you have the wisdom and the courage to make our company a non-union operation, and I'll explain exactly how to do that in a minute, we will together be doing the right thing for our futures and for our families."

Audiences at our smaller-sized facilities — communities such as Washington and Jasper, Indiana — seemed receptive to my message. As I looked into the faces of our workforce, many of whom had been on the job for 20 years or more, I could tell that I was getting through. I could see in their eyes that they understood the gravity of the situation and would be willing to make the necessary concessions to keep us alive. This was not the case at our larger locations such as those in Chicago, St. Louis, Louisville, and Cincinnati. Audiences at those venues appeared to view me with glassy-eyed indifference, as if they had heard all this before. My worst experience of the tour was in Indianapolis, where a Teamsters business agent appeared to monitor my utterances for any possible "unfair labor practice" infractions.

I could see that the Union agent's attitude during my remarks was derisive, as he rolled his eyes and silently chuckled at my dire warnings. Following his lead, the audience in Indianapolis also paid little heed to what I had to say, electing instead to believe the Union representative when he got up and made his predictable pronouncement:

"We've all just heard Jim McCormick sing us the same old song and use the same old scare tactics that management has been trotting out for years. Well, on behalf of all of the rank and file here and throughout the company, we're not going to be scared away from our Union. Not today and not tomorrow and not ever. All we can tell you, Mr. McCormick, is this. You want these hard-working men and women to kick out the Union that has been protecting them for years, and it's never going to happen. Forget about it. This is a Teamsters workplace today, tomorrow, and forever."

In the end, forever turned out to be a very short period of time. There was no decertification, and, despite my desperate last-ditch efforts, we were forced to submit to the onerous terms of the new National Master Freight Agreement. I was left with no choice but to move ahead with my plans to sell I&S-McDaniel — while I still had something worth selling.

Although it was of little consolation to me, within a few years three quarters of those loyal Teamsters members who had risen to their feet to cheer their union representative at the Indianapolis meeting found themselves out of work.

Looking back at that period, it becomes clear that it was the perverse manner in which Teamsters contracts were negotiated that impelled the government down the road to deregulation of the trucking industry. Time after time, the Teamsters and the TEI (Trucking Employers, Inc. representing management) would emerge from their contract talks and joyfully announce that a nationwide work stoppage had been averted and a new National Master Freight Agreement had been reached. The terms of the agreement would invariably be very close to those dictated by the Teamsters. Although it was, as explained earlier, the Teamsters' enormous power to cripple the U.S. economy that gave them such unfair negotiating clout at the bargaining table, there was, in addition, another factor at work that enhanced their strength even further. It was, in fact, government regulation that permitted the Union to continually shove such terms down the throat of the trucking industry with impunity.

The Teamsters understood clearly that if the new contract resulted in, say, a five percent increase in the cost of doing business, trucking company owners would,

within days of signing the new contract, run to their respective Motor Rate and Tariff bureaus requesting permission to raise their freight fees by five percent — and the requests would be approved. It was this "escape hatch" that empowered and emboldened the Teamsters in making ever more unreasonable demands.

When trucking company owners such as I squawked that these increased labor costs would put us out of business, the Teamsters simply and accurately responded with: "What are you worried about? You can always go to your rate bureau and get them to approve another increase." They were correct, of course, but there was a consequence to this type of cavalier thinking — and this was the point that I had tried to get through to Frank Fitzsimmons and to our own union workforce: The fact was that this scenario always served to fuel the fires of inflation because the cost of transporting goods across the highways of America took a big jump with each new contract. In the end, the American consumer was forced to pick up the tab for whatever increased benefits the Teamsters had managed to extract from the trucking industry. Although this situation was not the Teamsters' problem, it *was* a major challenge being faced by the U.S. government during the 1970s. Runaway inflation was debilitating the U.S. economy during this period and was, therefore, driving Washington to take unprecedented steps toward bringing prices under control.

Deregulation of the trucking industry was seen as a positive step toward breaking the inflationary cycle driven by ever more extravagant Teamsters contracts. It was believed that forcing the open market to set the cost of handling freight, rather than have those costs set by quasi-governmental Motor Rate and Tariff Bureaus, would provide the trucking industry with the backbone it needed to stand up to the Teamsters. Once deregulation set in, during the 1980s, this strategy succeeded in breaking the grip of the Teamsters and in helping to bring down inflation. Unfortunately, the process resulted in a wave of economic disruption throughout the trucking industry — a wave whose ripples are still being felt today.

Electing to put I&S-McDaniel on the block was perhaps the toughest business decision I'd ever made. This company had been a part of my spirit and soul since 1954. "My" I&S-McDaniel was 22 years old (the company itself was nearly 50 years

old), but it was still my baby. I recall spending many solitary nights sitting at my desk going over everything in my mind — again and again and again. After deliberating and arguing with myself for the three thousandth time, I was left with the same grim conclusion: This was definitely the time to get out. If we waited even another year, we might lose everything. At some point — and no one knew exactly when — our company's primary assets, those ICC Certificates of Convenience and Necessity, would be rendered into worthless scraps of paper. I had to cash out now, before much more of the industry woke up to the fact that we were on a one-way route to oblivion. It was time to shift into high gear, and that's exactly what I did!

I reviewed the operations and certification routes of quite a few other companies, trying to find just the right fit. I was looking for a company whose routes complemented ours and had the wherewithal to make us a serious offer. One company stood out head and shoulders above the others. The Briggs Transportation Company out of St. Paul, Minnesota seemed perfect. Superimposing its routes over ours on a U.S. map, I could see very little overlap. In fact, the two layouts fit together like two big jigsaw puzzle pieces. On top of that, I was friendly with George Briggs, the company's founder and chairman. This was another case of my calling upon one of my industry contacts that I had accumulated through my years of Association leadership. About 10 years before, I had followed George as chairman of the Equipment Interchange Association. He and I had traveled across the country, even venturing into Mexico, speaking to trucking groups about our vision of trailer interchanges that would allow carriers to swap full trailers with one another. Truckers would pay a small fee to the interchange association to handle the paperwork. The entire concept was designed to maximize efficiency. We achieved a modicum of success but would have to wait for widespread computerization to take hold before the interchange concept became truly practical.

As a result of that experience, I had come to know George Briggs and his president and CEO, Mike Wardwell, rather well. George and Mike were both on the board of the RCCC, a powerful national common carrier group of which I had held

the chairmanship several years earlier (see Chapter 13). In fact, it was at the February 1976 meeting of the RCCC Board of Governors that I first approached Mike. I felt that this matter warranted a face-to-face, rather than a telephoned conversation. After asking him to step over to a quiet corner, I got right to the point:

"Mike, I'm thinking about finding a partner and selling out," I said. He was taken aback.

"What's going on, Jim?" he asked. "I thought you guys at I&S-McDaniel were going great guns."

"Oh, business is great. We're having a hard time keeping up with it," I said with a bit of exaggeration. After all, the negotiating starts as soon as you put the ball into play.

"I've studied your routes and it's clear that our routes would be a perfect complement. I think, if you guys are interested, this could be a match made in heaven," I went on.

"I'll have to check with George about scheduling a meeting and get back to you in a week or so," Mike answered, adding, "And yes, we are interested. I don't have to check with George about that."

A few days later I got a call from Mike indicating that he and George thought it would be a good idea to have a meeting. He suggested that we meet at the office of Briggs' attorney in downtown Chicago the following Wednesday. Briggs' attorney was one of the finest transportation attorneys in the nation. I knew this because he had, upon occasion, represented our company. I had connected with David Axelrod shortly after Ferd Born, my Indianapolis attorney, had passed away. I met David through the RCCC and had used his services frequently over the past few years. I held David in the highest regard and knew him to be a man of principle and impeccable integrity.

As soon as we were all seated in his office, the first topic, of course, was the apparent conflict of interest. David explained that because he had represented both

Briggs and my company, he could not represent either of us in these proceedings without the full approval of the other. Now this might have been a real problem in some other business, but we were all truckers, used to operating in a regulated environment. We did not really think of ourselves as diehard competitors; we seldom had the opportunity of going after the same client or bidding against each other for the same routes. At that time, everyone was pretty "palsy-walsy," and this made it easy for us to get over this hurdle. I spoke up right away.

"Look, you fellows brought David into this deal, so he ought to be working for you," I offered. "I'll just find myself another lawyer and we'll be all set. I trust David well enough that I'm sure he's not going to do anything unethical. Actually, the fact that he knows my company so well is a good thing. He'll be able to verify my operating figures and answer all your questions about I&S-McDaniel. David, you draw up a paper that says I agree to waive any conflict of interest considerations, and I'll sign it, and let's get going."

In May of 1976, after several negotiating sessions, we struck a deal with Briggs on price and terms and executed a sales agreement. Ironically, I had discussed selling I&S-McDaniel with David Axelrod some months before Briggs got into the picture. David knew the market very well, and I remember asking him what he thought our company would fetch. He came back with a figure of $1.5 million. So when we closed the deal with Briggs at $3 million — and David was representing the buyer — I felt pretty good. In fact, I felt great!

Now in most businesses, this would have been the end of the story. We close the deal and go on our merry ways. But life is never that simple in the world of regulated industry. We signed the agreement in May 1976 but it would, in all likelihood, be May 1977 before the I.C.C. got around to ruling on the merger. Fortunately, my years of industry leadership spent learning the ropes of the I.C.C. once again paid off in this instance. I had become good friends with the I.C.C.'s chairperson, Virginia Mae Brown — the first woman to hold that post.

Having no inkling that seven years later I would be calling upon her services in connection with the sale of my primary business, Bettye and I had invited Commissioner Brown and her husband to be our guests at the Indianapolis 500 Mile Race in May of 1969. That was the year that Mario Andretti won the 500. Mario and his lovely wife (soon to give birth to their daughter, Barbie) joined us and the Browns at a post-race reception at the Indianapolis Airport Holiday Inn, hosted by my friend, the sitting senior U.S. Senator from Indiana, Vance Hartke. I enjoyed a strong connection with Senator Hartke (see Chapter 14), and he appreciated the opportunity of socializing a bit with the I.C.C. chairperson — particularly because he sat on the Senate Transportation Committee and had voted in favor of her appointment. We pulled out all the stops to show the Commissioner and her husband an unforgettable time. After all, she was the top official of the agency that was keeping tabs on our industry. As part of the national leadership of that industry, it was, naturally, in my best interests to remain on good terms with Virginia Mae.

As soon as the ink was dry on the merger agreement between I&S-McDaniel and Briggs International, I hightailed it to Washington and knocked on Virginia Mae Brown's door. She agreed to see me immediately. After exchanging pleasantries and reminiscing about the 1969 500 Mile Race, I got down to business.

"Commissioner Brown, I'm here because you're looking at a man who's at the end of his rope," I began. "The Teamsters have really put a squeeze on me over these past few years, and it's gotten to the point that I simply don't have the heart — or the wherewithal — to go on in business with this noose around my neck, watching it get tighter, little by little. I've decided to sell out to Briggs Transportation, and we have filed an application for approval of the transaction." She listened politely as I went on with my plea for help.

"If we have to wait in line to get our application approved, we'll be sitting around for close to a year. I don't know if I can make it for another year, to tell you the truth." At this point my voice turned serious, and she could tell that I was

speaking from the bottom of my heart. She tapped her fingers together for a moment pensively and then stood up smartly, extending her hand.

"It was good to see you again, Jim," she said brightly. "Let me see what I can do, and give my best to Bettye." I stepped out of her office into the bright July sunlight of Washington, hoping that my visit had done some good. Ninety days later the Commission handed down its approval of the merger.

The public announcement of the approval hit the street on October 15, 1976, and our industry colleagues could not understand how we had managed to gain approval so quickly. I didn't share the fact of my Washington visit with them. Some things are better kept under one's hat. Until now, at least.

I don't believe that the fellows at Briggs knew how tight things really were at I&S-McDaniel financially. I was so relieved that the approval came down when it did, because it meant that we had a mandatory deadline to consummate the transfer within 30 days. That meant that Briggs would have to take over ownership by November 15, 1976. I was deathly afraid that the transfer might get pushed back until after the holidays, and we did not have the funds to pay the Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day holiday pay rates as called for by our Teamsters Union contract. We simply did not have sufficient operating capital to keep us going until the end of the year.

Finally, we closed the deal in David Axelrod's office on November 12, 1976. As I recall, it was a Friday, and Briggs took over our operations on the following Monday morning, November 15, 1976. After the takeover, I was given the title of Vice Chairman and awarded a seat on the board. I was assigned to act as the liaison between Briggs and Washington, D.C. I drew a modest salary plus expenses for this role, and it allowed me to keep my hand in trucking affairs. I would report to the Briggs Board of Directors during each quarterly meeting in St. Paul about current deregulation matters, and try to keep them abreast of the latest trends and legislative initiatives.

It was at this point that I felt extremely grateful to Howard Williams for convincing me, back in the 1960s, to set up JAMAC Corp. JAMAC, along with all the real estate and bricks and mortar that it owned, was not part of the Briggs transaction. That stayed with JAMAC. The leases were all taken over by Briggs at the same favorable rate that JAMAC had been charging I&S-McDaniel. This fact would become rather important, as things turned out. So in addition to the loan payments from Briggs, I still had an income stream from rental revenue now being generated by the Indianapolis, Lafayette, Washington (Indiana), and Evansville terminals. They did not take over our Vincennes administrative offices because Briggs controlled its operations from its headquarters in St. Paul.

By 1980, things began to go into decline for Briggs. As I had anticipated, the headlong rush toward deregulation culminated in 1980 with the passage of the far-reaching Staggers Act, which essentially removed all I.C.C. oversight from the rail and trucking industries. At about the same time, the Briggs CEO, Mike Wardwell, took ill and could not fully carry on in that capacity. On top of everything else, the Teamsters had rammed through their highly one-sided labor contract that Briggs would not be able to fulfill and still maintain its current profit margins. With the triple whammy of government deregulation, executive incapacitation, and union castration, it was no surprise to anyone when Briggs announced, in early 1981, that it was planning to file for bankruptcy protection. It was no surprise, but it was extremely sad just the same. My sadness was not based merely on pity for a company driven over the edge by unscrupulous Teamsters labor unions and other misfortunes. No, my misery was more personal. You see, I was one of Briggs' major creditors.

The sale that closed on Friday, November 12, 1976, was not a complete cash transaction. I agreed to accept a down payment equal to 29 percent of the $3 million sale price. The rest was to be paid over the following 10 years according to terms laid out in a standard sales contract. By the time of the Briggs bankruptcy, I had

received roughly half the money due to me under the terms of the contract. The fate of the other half was now up in the air.

At the time of the sale, I&S-McDaniel was probably the fiftieth small- to medium-sized trucking company that had been acquired by Briggs over the years. Acquisition was the company's primary growth mechanism, and it had succeeded in putting together an outstanding set of rights in the process. The terms of the sales contract to which I had agreed were identical to those that had been used during dozens of similar acquisitions. Every one of the previous sellers had been paid off in full. I had no reason, back in 1976, to even suspect that Briggs might default on the contract. It had never happened before, and despite my trepidations about the future of the industry, I never harbored the slightest doubts about Briggs' future ability to pay.

A fair question at this point might be: "If you understood that deregulation was going to be a death knell for I&S-McDaniel, why didn't you feel that it might also affect Briggs, and insist that you be paid in full up front?" That's a good question. To obtain the answer, one must understand three critical points.

It is first important to appreciate the difference between a short-haul and a medium- or long-haul carrier. Companies such as I&S-McDaniel typically had an average "length of haul" of approximately 100 miles. A medium-haul carrier such as Briggs, on the other hand, had an average "length of haul" of between 400 and 500 miles. The difference this made in man-hours per mile productivity was considerable. Our business, I&S-McDaniel, was in the most labor-intensive segment of the industry.

The second factor was the Teamsters contract we all were working under — the highly onerous National Master Freight Agreement. During the mid-1970s, the legacy of Jimmy Hoffa was still being felt in the trucking industry — an industry struggling under the most egregious labor contract that had ever been shoved down the throat of any industry. The contract's terms were universal. That meant that it covered every single teamster of a common carrier trucking company who was

saddled with the NMFA Teamsters contract— regardless of whether he worked for a large coast-to-coast truckload carrier or a small, regional short-hauler such as I&S-McDaniel. Geography and local cost-of-living indicators also made no difference. All truck drivers were paid at the same rate, regardless of prevailing conditions. This was an inherently unfair situation that placed particularly burdensome economic pressure on short-haul carriers such as I&S-McDaniel.

The third factor was that, as did most other short-haul carriers, we depended upon interline revenue for a major chunk of our business. A medium-haul carrier was able to move a good portion of its cargo from one large city freight terminal to another, but in order to get a shipment all the way to a small-town destination, for example, the carrier would contract with an interline carrier, which would accept the cargo and take it the rest of the way to its destination. The tariffs were structured so that the rate from point to point was the same, whether or not an interline carrier was used. Therefore, when the shipping fee was split between the primary and the interline carrier, both wound up receiving a below-market rate. The same shipment from, say, Indianapolis to Washington, Indiana, would generate about 75 percent of the revenue when it was an interline shipment, versus 100 percent if the origin and destination were both in I&S-McDaniel's territory. The more interline business a company did — and we did a lot — the lower its overall revenue per mile would be.

Based upon these three factors, I concluded that we short-haulers would be forced to pay the largest percent of our revenue out in wages, compared to long-haul operators, while at the same time earning the least amount per driven mile.

In 1976 I became convinced that although deregulation would spell the end of smaller, short-haul operators such as I&S-McDaniel, it would have little effect on the larger medium- and long-haul players like Briggs. It never entered my mind that a long-standing, powerful company such as Briggs could be affected by the turmoil in our industry. In fact, I anticipated that with the addition of I&S-McDaniel's routes and terminals, Briggs would become a real powerhouse and stronger than ever.

After five years it became painfully obvious that I had miscalculated. As it turned out, I had underestimated the pervasiveness of deregulation's impact. The very same forces that I saw headed toward me — forces that had driven me to seek sanctuary with a company such as Briggs in the first place — were now devouring Briggs itself and other companies its size as well. These carriers found that they could not continue to operate a Teamsters Union shop profitably in a deregulated environment, and they joined in the procession of doomed unionized common carriers jumping over the proverbial cliff one after the other. It was simply a matter of time. The short-haulers who had failed to get out of the way as I had done were the first to go, followed by medium haulers such as Briggs some five to 10 years later. The final stage eventually saw several long-haul, publicly traded companies such as Consolidated Freightways, at one time the largest trucking concern in the world, go over the cliff in 2002 (see Chapter 11).

Despite the devastation that deregulation wreaked on the industry, it undeniably had a positive side as well. The greatest and most satisfying thing about deregulation was that it accomplished what neither Bobby Kennedy nor the trucking industry itself could pull off. Namely, breaking the back of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. The worst thing about it was that it took so many good, established trucking companies down as well. But even this downside has a corresponding upside. The hundreds of new carriers that arose in the wake of deregulation are no longer bound by unfair and restrictive union contracts and can therefore operate more flexibly and more efficiently in today's market.

Because the note I was holding from Briggs was unsecured, I could do nothing to enforce my claim other than get in line with the rest of the creditors and hope for the best. As I waited to see what was to become of the money upon which I had planned our family's financial future, another point of aggravation developed. After it was placed under the court's bankruptcy protection, Briggs no longer had to pay me the highly discounted rent on our terminal buildings each month. It was able to discount the rent all the way down to zero and, under the law, I could not evict that

company in order to replace it with a paying tenant. Naturally, I was distressed to the point of depression about this entire turn of events, but then I began to think.

I don't know whether it was divine guidance that affected my mind and my heart, or just plain common sense kicking in, but after some thorough soul-searching I started looking at things a bit differently. I decided that I should count myself as pretty darned lucky for coming out of things as well as I did. I recalled that David Axelrod, when asked back in late 1975, what I&S-McDaniel would bring on the open market, came up with a figure of $1.5 million. Well, hadn't I received exactly that already? Also, as I looked around, I viewed company after trucking company — companies just like mine that had not sold out in the face of impending deregulation — go down the tubes, their owners walking away with just the shirts on their backs and a stack of worthless ICC certificates. After deregulation kicked in, the prized assets of all these companies — those cherished Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity — were not worth the paper they were written on. "At least," I consoled myself, "I'd had the foresight to get out while the getting was good." And, when all was said and done, I had actually received a fair market price for my business.

It was soon thereafter that Briggs ceased operations, failing to ever emerge from bankruptcy. We creditors received nothing, but this fact meant that Briggs was finally going to vacate our buildings. We set to work leasing them and were able to secure market rental rates on each one of them. The new rates were nearly twice as much as the amounts Briggs had been paying JAMAC. In this way, the Briggs bankruptcy was something of a blessing. It enabled us to get out, after only five years, of the sweetheart long-term (15-year) leases that we had been forced to extend to Briggs. There was a sizeable difference in the rental income that JAMAC enjoyed for the following 10 years between what we received and the lesser sum we would have received had Briggs continued in operation. Although it did not add up to the anticipated $1.5 million we had lost in the deal, it still made the pain a bit more bearable.

My renewed positive mental attitude could not dispel the black cloud over my head that seemed to be constantly dogging me, though. As were many folks in the late 1970s, I was searching for ways to shelter my income from the mountainous tax rates that were then in force. This problem became acute after selling I&S-McDaniel and facing hefty capital gains tax bites out of the quarterly payments I was receiving on the Briggs sales contract. The search for a shelter led me to Los Angeles.

In the early 1970s, and because of my industry connections, I had been offered, and had accepted, a seat on the board of a national insurance firm called Transport Indemnity Company, headquartered in Los Angeles. I made it a practice during those years to attend the quarterly board meetings. After the December 1979 board meeting had adjourned shortly before noon, a group of us repaired to the well-known Wilshire Country Club for lunch. I found myself in the company of fellow board member Alan Musgrove. I had known Alan for some time, having met him when he joined the Board of Governors of the Regular Common Carriers Conference (see Chapter 13). At that time Alan was the CEO of a publicly held carrier called IML, headquartered in Salt Lake City. Alan had been brought in by Charlie Gates, CEO of Gates Rubber Company, the company that owned IML, to head up the company. Alan looked every bit the part — smooth, cultured, debonair. Alan enjoyed an outstanding reputation as one of the "next generation" leaders of our industry. Alan and his lovely wife, Sally, became our good friends. Bettye and I enjoyed palling around with the two of them during industry conferences and often shared a dinner table with this vivacious couple.

I also knew that Alan had left IML to purchase Whitfield Tank Line, a fleet of tankers used to haul liquid cargo. Whitfield Tank was headquartered in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Shortly after taking it over, Alan moved the administrative offices to Phoenix where, after setting up shop, he purchased a palatial mansion in nearby Scottsdale. Looking at Alan in those days, he was the picture of corporate success from any angle: the head of a major tank line company,

a board member of Transport Indemnity Insurance, and a respected industry leader through his seat on the executive committee of the American Trucking Associations. So I was a bit startled by Alan's question as we chatted after lunch.

"Are things as tight financially over at Briggs as they are for me?" asked Alan, displaying an air of heavy frustration.

"It's getting tough all over," I commiserated.

"I just ordered 10 new Kenworth tractors and five Heil tank trailers, and I had to tell the dealer I couldn't take delivery," he said, shaking his head. "My financing fell through."

After hearing this, my mental wheels started turning. I asked Alan to give me some numbers, which I jotted down. I started doing some calculations and determined that if I were able to finance the purchase of that equipment and then lease it back to Alan, there would be sufficient cash flow to cover my loan payments. At the same time the venture would generate paper losses that could then be used to offset the profits that I was generating on the Briggs note. In other words, thanks to factors such as the new equipment Investment Tax Credit and accelerated depreciation, I could structure an effective tax shelter for myself. I shared my thinking with Alan, and naturally he was tickled pink by the idea. Now all I needed to do was to secure a source for the funds necessary to make the purchase.

I immediately thought of our fellow Board member Gil Richards. Gil was the chairman and CEO of the Budd Company. I knew a little about the background of the Budd Manufacturing Company and had always respected this fine old firm. The company was founded in 1912 by Edward G. Budd, who designed and built the first all-steel automobile body for use by Hupmobile. These unique solid-steel bodies were employed by many well-known auto manufacturers over the next 20 years. In 1932 Budd formed his own company to produce stainless-steel streamlined train cars that competed directly with those produced by the Pullman Company. This was made possible thanks to Budd's newly developed method of welding stainless steel.

As the company grew, it acquired existing companies and launched new ones in Germany and the U.S. Among these was a trailer company that produced conventional semi-trailers used in the trucking industry.

Edward G. Budd died in 1946, but his legacy endures. Today the Budd Company, headquartered in Troy, Michigan, is a leading producer of automotive and truck components. It is part of Thyssen Krupp Automotive AG of Bochum, Germany, a major global supplier of parts to the worldwide automotive industry.

I was aware that Budd operated a division called Budd Financial Corporation, which assisted its customers in financing major purchases. I invited Gil to join us and laid out my plan. I would take out a conventional loan through Budd Financial and use the proceeds to purchase the equipment that Musgrove needed for the Whitfield Tank Line. The note would be secured by the equipment and by my signature. I would then lease the equipment to Musgrove under the same terms as my note. I would receive the investment tax credit and the benefits of the accelerated depreciation that would provide me with an operating loss on paper. In those days, with no distinction between passive and active sources of income, I would be allowed to reduce my other income by my annual losses generated by the truck-leasing venture.

Gil said that he would contact the president of Budd Financial at once and explain that we wanted to put this deal together right away. The urgency arose from the fact that it was now mid-December and the deal needed to be consummated prior to December 31st for me to receive the aforementioned tax benefits in the current year. In a few days Alan Musgrove, the president of Budd Financial, and I met in Indianapolis with my attorney, Larry Strobel of Barnes and Thornburg, one of the largest law firms in the state. When I had phoned Larry earlier from L.A. and explained our proposed plan, he agreed to drop everything and put together the necessary documents in a flash.

At the meeting, we reviewed the papers Larry had drawn up and we hammered out the loan agreement between Budd and the new company I had established for

this purpose, CJ Leasing. We also went to work on the lease agreement between Whitfield Tank Lines and CJ Leasing. By burning the midnight oil, we had both agreements finalized and executed within 10 days of our lunch at the Wilshire Country Club, closing both deals just before Christmas, 1979. In consideration of my role as a Whitfield major creditor, I was to receive a seat on the board of Alan's company, Sundance Transportation, which served as the parent company of Whitfield Tank Lines. I was also awarded a small salaried position that involved my visiting Washington on a regular basis and surveying my government contacts to get a line on what was going on that might affect the trucking industry. It became my job to report this information at Sundance's quarterly board meetings.

Things moved along smoothly for about a year, with Whitfield Tank Lines making monthly payments to CJ Leasing, and CJ Leasing, in turn, making note payments to Budd Financial. My tax return for 1979 listed a substantial ordinary loss generated by CJ Leasing and those losses flowed through to me and enabled me to shelter the income I was receiving from Briggs.

I enjoyed getting back to Washington, D.C., and touching base with my old cronies, and then filing my report to the home office in Phoenix. Everything was going according to plan, but then things began to get a little quirky. Alan's payments started coming in later and later each month. We soon discovered what I should have determined before getting mixed up in business with him — that he definitely had caviar tastes and a peanut butter budget. His flamboyant lifestyle forced him to constantly borrow money without giving much thought to how it was to be paid back. It was about this time that the expense reimbursement checks that I received for my Washington visits stopped showing up.

When Alan's payments had become close to 90 days delinquent, I decided that I'd had enough. I recall telling John Bobe, who was running McCormick, Inc. at the time: "We'd better go to Phoenix and have a sit-down with Mr. Musgrove." Which is exactly what we did.

Our son Pat joined us for the journey, just in case we wound up repossessing any equipment. If so, we'd have some manpower on hand to drive the rigs back to Indiana. Alan was impressed that "the boys" had come to call, and evidently we put the fear of God into him. He paid us everything that was in arrears and brought his account up-to-date. He also swore on his mother's grave that he would continue to keep all future payments current.

Alan's payments did start coming in on time after that courtesy call — but just for a while, his mother's grave notwithstanding. Before long, he was back to his old habits and I began to fear the worst. Unfortunately, the worst arrived just as Briggs was filing for bankruptcy. Alan Musgrove defaulted on the lease agreement, and of course Budd Financial looked to me to keep up the loan payments. I was caught in a trap of my own design. The quarterly checks from Briggs stopped coming in. The rent payments to JAMAC stopped coming in. The lease payments from Whitfield Tank stopped coming in. The only thing that still kept coming in was the monthly statement from Budd requesting payment on the note.

Obviously, this was a traumatic time for me, for our business, and for our family. We scraped up every dollar we could lay our hands on, going so far as to mortgage our home just to keep up the payments to Budd. I recall paying a visit to our friend and banker Dick Baker, president of American National Bank, at the time. I was pretty much coming in on my hands and knees to appeal to his mercy.

"Dick, I'm going to lay all my cards on the table," I told him as sincerely as I could. "We're in trouble right now, but I've got a plan to work things out and I'm asking you to stick with me and give me a little more time. You will get your money repaid to you one way or another. Every penny of it, I swear. I'm asking you to give me another 60 days to make my next payment." He didn't move a muscle for a long minute, and then he finally cleared his throat and spoke. I'll always remember his words: "Jamsey, we're going to go along with you a little longer and see what comes out of this." I shook his hand and once again offered my assurances.

The next few months were very touch and go, but eventually we got it all handled and the bank came through it unscathed. Had they pulled the plug and not granted me the extra time to get myself reorganized, we would have lost our home and a good portion of our future.

As I made plans to attend the next Transport Indemnity board meeting, I was still holding out hope of coming to terms with Alan. At this point, he had not yet defaulted, but he was more than 90 days in arrears. I felt that instead of lambasting him over the telephone, I would be more effective in a face-to-face encounter with the man. I fully expected him to be at the board meeting because he had not missed a single one since we had begun serving together. Well, he missed this one. He was nowhere to be found, and I finally tracked him down by phone at his office in Phoenix.

"Alan, this is Jim," I started. " I'm at the Transport Board meeting and I thought we could talk in person, but I see you didn't make it."

"Jim, I'm working on a deal that's going to take care of everything," Alan explained, "and I simply couldn't get away at this point."

"What I wanted to say to you is that we've come to the end of the road. I cannot keep subsidizing your lease payments to Budd out of my own pocket. Alan, it's time to fish or cut bait."

"You're completely correct, Jim," he said graciously. Alan had never tried to deny his indebtedness or weasel out of his responsibilities. "That's the reason I'm working night and day to put together this restructuring. It will put enough cash into my pocket so that I'll be able to get fully current with you. I am very close to wrapping this up. Give me your phone number, stand by, and I'll call you back in 45 minutes with the good news." I did as he asked and waited by the phone for his call back. That happened 23 years ago, and I'm still waiting.

As mentioned, this was probably the lowest point of my business career, and I found myself turning to my faith and to my family in increasing doses during those

difficult days. Evidently, someone upstairs was listening. After Briggs folded up shop and I was able to re-lease my terminal properties, I could think more clearly and put things into their proper perspective. What happened next helped to restore my faith in myself and boosted my confidence as I faced the future.

Shortly after Musgrove's disappearance, I received a call from Phoenix from a fellow who had been Alan's top operating executive at Whitfield. He explained to me that he had worked out an arrangement with the court to take over the Whitfield operation. I knew him to be a man of honor, and when he assured me that I would get paid for the 10 Kenworths and five Heil trailers, I felt reasonably confident that it would happen. He refinanced the equipment and I was, in fact, soon paid in full. My only loss was some accrued past-due interest that I was forced to pay to Budd Financial. Budd, in turn, was also paid in full. Dick Baker was delighted when I walked into the American National Bank in Vincennes with check in hand to square up with them . . . and so was I.

By the early 1980s I felt as though I had been on a financial and emotional roller coaster ride. I had managed to evade disaster and keep one step ahead of the game. With these experiences behind me, some businessmen, I suspect, would look forward to spending their fifties and sixties just cooling down and coasting. But, as I've said before, that just wasn't me. The coming years would pit me in a battle to the death with my old nemesis, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Union. Coasting was just not in the cards. In fact, I felt as though my tank had just been refilled with high-octane fuel as I hit 55 and turbo-charged my business career.