THE DETTLINGS IN MY PAST

A Memoir for My Children and Grandchildren

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There were two--at least two--strong women in my maternal ancestry. Both were German immigrants and unmarried when they arrived; both were married in Wilmington, Delaware, and to an Andrew Dettling--but not the same Andrew Dettling, for one married the father and one the son; and both became widows, almost penniless and with five young children, at the early death of their husbands.

I choose to start an account of my Dettling ancestry in reverse chronological order with the younger of these two women, my grandmother, born Sophia Julia Hanselmann. She was the only grandparent I ever saw; the others had died before I was born.

I did not know this grandmother very well, for she died February 2, 1925, when I was not yet eleven and her home in Wilmington had been fourteen blocks from my own. I do remember, perversely, her funeral because as the only grandchild I was made much of by the relatives and friends who came to the Dettling house at 507 West 22nd Street. I opened and shut doors, and I enjoyed the food that was put on the Dettlings' dining room table after the interment in Riverview Cemetery.

As I recall my grandmother, she seems an austere and some- what forbidding figure. "Kiss grandmother," my mother directed me when we were going to her house in Wilmington or to her summer home in Arden; "she may not look as though she likes it but she does." And I recall being taken upstairs to her bedside when she was stricken with the heart attack that led to her death.

I was born in March 1914[1] and my earliest memory of my grandmother dates from 1917 or 1918, during the first World War. I was accustomed to seeing Army trucks passing our house at 3031 Market Street; I used to stand on the curb and salute them as they went by. My father had taken me to town to see an airplane displayed on Court House Square (now Rodney Square) in connection with the sale of war bonds. I was well aware of the war and of who the enemy was. For this reason my mother cautioned me as

we were on our way to Arden one day, "Don't mention the war to Grandmother; it makes her sad to think about it. She has relatives (nephews) in the German army."

There probably was a jollier side to Grandmother, but it was repressed. In her last years her unmarried daughters, living at home, called her "Soph" (Sofe) in a chummy fashion. (Her name was usually written Sophie J. instead of the formal Sophia Julia.) And my father told me of teasing her, telling her, for instance, how something should be cooked or giving her gratuitous household hints, imaginatively fashioned despite ignorance of the subject. "Oh, you, Peter, you." she would cry, throwing up her hands in disbelief. (Once he did persuade her to cook a ham with the string in it--it was there for flavor, he said, and he may have believed it. The results were disastrous.)

When my father was courting my mother--he went with her for seven years, from the time she was seventeen, before they were married--Grandmother would interrupt them late at night, calling down from upstairs, "Peter, it's time you went home. Mary has to go to work tomorrow, and so do you."

I see my grandmother most clearly through a snapshot of her that my mother had enlarged. She stands partly behind a bush in her yard at Arden, a gray-haired, elderly woman (it astonishes me now when I am so much older to realize that she was only 62 when she died), of middle height, erect, fairly stout, to me the model of a German hausfrau.

I do not remember seeing her smiling or laughing, but I know she had had a hard life. She was born at Sindringen, in the kingdom of Württemberg, on June 7, 1862, the daughter of a carter, Johan Hanselmann, and his wife Barbara. Her parents owned a farm of about 100 acres and a house in the town, which had once been walled and lay in a hilly area beside the Kocher River.[2]

Sophie's mother died when the young woman was about fourteen, and her father some three years later. She then moved to Stuttgart, the capital of Württemberg, to live with a married sister, Kate Goetz. The oldest of her brothers acquired the house in town,

but from it or from the farm or both Sophie had a small inheritance, though it would not be hers to dispose of until she reached the age of maturity. The money became a bone of contention in the Goetz household, for her brother-in-law, a saloonkeeper with political aspirations, wanted control of it.[3]

Reluctant to yield control and eager to find an escape from this embarrassment, Sophie, in 1881, seized the opportunity offered her of accompanying acquaintances to America. The acquaintances were an older couple, a Mr. and Mrs. Adam Wagner, from Ober Ohrm, a town near Sindringen.[4] Newly-married, they were traveling to visit Mrs. Wagner's son from an earlier marriage, a man of approximately Sophie's age named Harry Schnepf, who had settled a few years earlier in Wilmington, Delaware. On their way to America the two Wagners and Sophie ran into an even greater adventure than they anticipated.

They sailed from Hamburg in northwest Germany on the Vandalia, of the Hamburg-America Line.[5] Three days out at sea disaster struck when the ship lost its screw propeller. ("Broke its shaft" are the words the New York Times used in reporting the accident on July 6.) Unable to make any headway, the Vandalia lay at the mercy of the waves and the wind, driven this way and that, for over three weeks. The ship was sighted on June 26, and two days later two tugs were sent out from the River Clyde but their first searches were unsuccessful. The captain of one tug, giving up the mission, reported that "he met a heavy westerly gale and thick weather"; even if he had found the ship he could not have towed her. Another tug was being sent out from Thurso on July 5, and the manager of the Hamburg-America line had gone to Glasgow, trying to get a large steamer to go out. The Admiralty had ordered a steamer then at Queenstown, in Ireland, to join the search.

Meanwhile on the Vandalia, affairs were becoming desperate. Food ran short, and fresh water was exhausted. The crew managed to distill some sea water, and finally after 22 days, they were sighted thirteen miles off the Hebridean island of Lewis by a

Scottish mailboat which towed her to within four miles of Stornoway, the island's chief port, and there tugs took the Vandalia in tow to Glasgow for repairs (New York Times, July 9, 1881). Eventually, whether on another ship or on the repaired Vandalia is not clear, the Wagners and Sophie Hanselmann reached New York, and then, by train, Wilmington.

I have heard that Mrs. Wagner had it in mind that Sophie--was her inheritance thought of?--would make a good wife for her bachelor son. But, as she had demonstrated in the Goetz household in Stuttgart, Sophie had a mind of her own. After staying briefly with the Wagners, Sophie moved to the home of the Rollers, a German family who had a bakery in the area referred to as "over Third Street Bridge" or South Wilmington. Healthy, industrious young German girls were in demand for housework, and before long Sophie moved to the home of the Liebermans, on West Street between Eighth and Ninth. The Liebermans, who owned a store at Sixth and Market, were one of the first prominent Jewish families in Wilmington.

Somehow, probably through Zion Lutheran Church, which was a rallying place for Protestant Germans in Wilmington, she made the acquaintance of young Andrew Dettling. On November 26, 1884, when Sophie was 22 and the groom was 25, they were married by Zion's pastor, Dr. Paul Isenschmid. A learned and respected man who was also a doctor, he was nevertheless commonly referred to as "Poppy " Isenschmid, without, so far as I know, any wish to be disrespectful.

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The marriage of Sophie brings this story to a point where I must introduce Wilhelmina Maier (or possibly Mayer) the second, the older, of the two strong women mentioned in my opening paragraph. The mother of the bridegroom had also, like Sophie, come to America as a single young woman from the south German kingdom of Württemberg. The daughter of Martin and Maria Margaretha Maier, she was born in 1836 in the village of Adelmannsfelden, a pleasant little community with two inns and

one church (Lutheran), set among the fertile rolling hills of the Hohenlohe, an area of Württemberg not far northwest of Aalen.

Dorothy and I visited Adelmannsfelden with our son Michael in the summer of 1969. We entered an inn and were hospitably greeted by the proprietor, who introduced his father-in-law (I think that was the relationship), a man who knew some English from having worked in Scotland. He made a point that only Scots and Germans could really pronounce the "ch" sound to each other's satisfaction. We visited the church, probably the one my ancestors had attended. Inquiring for family names, we received a response only when we mentioned Klaitz. Miss Klaitz would be glad to see us, we were assured, even though she was very old and not well. But at this moment, unfortunately, she would not be home, she was out berrying.

Why Wilhelmina Maier came to America is a mystery. She did come, however, at the age of eighteen, in 1854, with an uncle from either Dayton or Canton, Ohio, who had made out well in America and was visiting in Germany. He paid her passage, but she was to repay him later and intended to go west with him. However, on the ship she became friendly with a girl who was going to Philadelphia. This friend was met there by a relative and went into service in Bridgeton, New Jersey. To be near her, Wilhelmina took a job as a maid in Philadelphia and later came to Wilmington. Perhaps she came to Wilmington as a domestic servant, but her first job mentioned in family stories was in Stuck's bakery, which later became Staib's bakery, for after Mr. Stuck died his widow married Staib, who took over the business. Apparently this bakery served meals, for it is said that Wilhelmina met her future husband, Andreas Dettling, of Dettlingen, because he ate where she worked.

This would not have been necessary to their becoming acquainted, since the Germans in Wilmington, or at least the Lutheran Germans, largely immigrants, formed a community. Their language and their religion distinguished them from other Wilmington

residents, and by associating together they could enjoy the customs and the food and drink that had been part of their lives in the old world.

The Catholic German immigrants, of whom there were many in Wilmington, remained a separate group. They attended Sacred Heart Church, where the priests, regular not secular clergy, usually, perhaps always, spoke German.

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Andreas Dettling, my great-grandfather, actually came from a Catholic background. He was born in the village of Dettlingen in 1827 or 1828. Dettlingen (the accent is on the middle syllable) was in the principality of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, a part of the Kingdom of Prussia. The village lies in beautiful hilly country on the eastern side of the Schwarzwald (the Black Forest), a low range of wooded hills that form the boundary between Baden and Württemburg.

Though politically united to Prussia, the people of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen (including the villagers of Dettlingen at the principality's western extremity), were not Prussians, but Swabians, for this area, like most of Württemburg, which almost entirely surrounds it, was part of the ancient Duchy of Swabia, home of the people the Romans called Suevi.

My old colleague Walther Kirchner, a native of Berlin, prepared me for my visit to my great-grandfather's town by explaining that Swabians are considered a jolly, backward sort--like American hillbillies, he said--worth a chuckle to more sophisticated Germans, but well-liked all the same.

"If people learn you are Swabian," he explained, "they'll smile. But don't be concerned, they'll like you. Now, I'm a Prussian. Nobody likes me."

These comments helped me when I got to Stuttgart, the capital of Württemburg, in 1962, during my first trip to Europe. A few doors from my hotel, a bookstore window was filled with copies of a book bearing a title that would otherwise have been cryptic to me. It was Die Schwaben Sind Auch Menschen (Swabians Are People Too).

One day earlier, when I visited Dettlingen, I had felt the force of Kirchner's comment about the backwardness of the Swabians. We arrived in Dettlingen at the end of a paved secondary road, seven miles off the main highway that ran through Horb. There were about thirty houses, a compost heap in the front of each one. To reach the inn or gasthaus we climbed to a second floor, the first apparently being used as a stable or workshop. We found the host to be a stout, clownish fellow whose trousers were held up by a string instead of a belt. He knew no English and his dialectic German was beyond my understanding. Fortunately a boy was there, presumably his son, not very clean, but intelligent and with some knowledge of English.

Through the boy we tried to place an order for some lunch, but all the proprietor had to offer was a string of wurst, so shriveled and unpalatable looking that we decided to pass it up and settle for some beer. This came in bottles with old-fashioned ceramic stoppers held on by wires and reusable.

Though the facades of the houses were decorated by window boxes with flowers, their possible attractiveness was spoiled by the utilitarian compost heaps, from which the residents, probably farmers all, could load their carts as they trudged out to their fields in the morning. I saw few people in my brief stop at Dettlingen, but later on the same trip when I visited Sindringen I saw people--practically all women--plodding beside their carts to and from their fields at noon time. Here beside the Kocher, on the other side of Stuttgart, the countryside was beautiful and hilly, as around Dettlingen, but the women were living in a socio-economic world that was at least a century behind the stylish urban mode of life in Stuttgart. I was very glad that two of my ancestors, Andreas Dettling and Sophie Hanselmann, had left these towns where they might have been very comfortable but where opportunities for advancement, particularly in any intellectual field, seemed very scant. (I had a similar feeling when I visited the Irish village that my father's family came from.)

It seems clear that Andreas Dettling began his travels in 1846, when he made his first entries in a "Wanderbuch" that I have inherited. According to a travel permit issued to him at Glatt in that year, he was then sixteen and a carpenter by trade. In 1846-1847 and again in 1850-1852 his Wanderbuch is stamped by authorities at many locations in Germany and Switzerland--at Zurich, St. Gallen, Konstanz, Sigmaringen, Friedrichshafen, and Winterthur, among those that can be read clearly. In 1853 he received a passport allowing him to travel across France to Havre to take ship to America.

Why he settled in Delaware is not known. From notes he made, it is clear he was in New York and at another time in Philadelphia and also in Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania. From May 1853 to March 1854 he recorded a series of payments for board and laundry to an M. Benson, probably in Wilmington. From April 30, 1853, to March 11, 1854, he records payments received from a Mr. Paullin. Soon he is keeping his notes in English, which he is struggling, apparently successfully, to learn. Through a number of pages he has written vocabulary lists, and on one page he copies the Lord's prayer in English.

His notes reveal that he was in Salem, New Jersey, at one time and that he worked for a while in Dover, Delaware. While in Dover he appeared before the prothonotary for Kent County on April 26, 1854, to register his intention of becoming an American citizen. He completed the citizenship process on September 14, 1858, when he appeared in Wilmington before Leonard Wales, clerk of the United States District Court. There Christian Knauch testified on Andreas's behalf that he had resided for at least one year in Delaware and for five years in the United States. Finding he was of good moral character and receiving his promise to support the Constitution of the United States, the Court issued the certificate of naturalization he sought.

By the time he became a citizen Andreas Dettling was a married man. I do not know the exact date of his marriage to Wilhelmina Maier, but their first child, my

grandfather, was born on March 24, 1859. There is no listing for Andreas in the 1859-1860 Wilmington city directory, but his name had appeared in the 1857 directory as a carpenter residing at the boarding house of Sarah Zourns, 42 Lombard Street. No directory is available for 1861, but the 1862-1863 directory lists Andreas (whom I shall henceforth call Andrew, as the directory does) as a carpenter working at 513 Orange Street but residing at East Seventh and King. In a few years his work address shifted to 200 Walnut Street and his home to Linden Street, near West Seventh, and then to 211 Walnut Street, where he was still living when he died in June 1871.

I have few hints of what my great-grandfather was like. I know that he had some social instincts, for he became a charter member of a new lodge of Odd Fellows, the Herrmann Lodge, when it was established in June 1859. (Scharf, II, 823.) Like the name of the lodge (for an ancient German hero), the names of the other seven charter members--Greiner, Keinley, Krouch, Rehfuss, and Pretzschner among them--reflect a Germanic connection. Obviously some Germans belonged to other older lodges, for in 1857 Jacob Stuck was listed in the directory as a high lodge official called the "sachem." The same Jacob Stuck, possibly the baker who employed Wilhelmina Maier, was vice-president of another German society, the Wilmington Saengerbund, and it is likely that Andrew Dettling jointed this group too. He seems also to have been a Mason, for the newspaper obituary for his widow declared that his Masonic brethren had come to her aid at his death. (Every Evening, June 25, 1900.)

His social life was probably enlivened through these years by the presence in Wilmington of two of his sisters, Theresa Spiegelhalter and Agnes Seiller. They were his witnesses in 1863 when he was granted exemption from the Civil War draft as a married man aged thirty-five or more.

I have no idea whether they preceded or followed Andrew to Wilmington. If the former, their presence probably explains his settling here. Apparently two more sisters of Andrew were in Wilmington, a Mrs. Meyer and a Mrs. Balling, but they were Catholic

and were not on close terms with the other sisters, who had, like Andrew, changed religion, as well as nationality, after leaving Dettlingen. (This is supposition. I am not sure of this family's religious background other than that Dettlingen was a Catholic village.)[6]

Mrs. Meyer had several children, at least two boys and one girl. The last was Lena Ritchie, who lived in Richardson Park and was a friend of my great-aunt Mary Hurff--and I think like her a member of St. Stephen's Lutheran Church. (I believe a cousin of mine, Matt Spiegelhalter, a bachelor, lived with her.) I have been told that Mrs. Balling also had several children, including three boys and a girl who taught piano. One of the boys became a house painter and had a son who worked as a printer at the Newark Post. The printer had two sons, Frank and William, graduates of Newark High School and the University of Delaware. I spoke to Frank Balling about his ancestry, but he knew nothing of a connection with either the Dettlings or the Catholic church. (But my mother felt quite sure about this relationship.)

The Spiegelhalters were close friends of older members of my family. Theresa Spiegelhalter had two sons, Andrew and William, and the former became my grandfather's bosom chum. I do not entirely understand my relationship to the Spiegelhalters. In some generation, possibly the first in America, there were two marriages; the children of one were my cousins, but the children of the other marriage were not. Andrew's children were, however, at least close family friends, and I was sent to the home of Andrew and Laura Spiegelhalter in the first block of East 13th Street when their grandson Bobby Watson was visiting. (His mother was their daughter Rose, who had married a storekeeper of Altoona, Pennsylvania.)

Their second daughter Laura was the secretary of my friend Alexander J. Taylor, Jr., at the Delaware School Foundation (a Pierre S. du Pont benevolence). Laura's brother Andrew, his wife Jenny (Chandler), and their daughter Jane once lived in an apartment on the second floor of my great-aunt's home at 3029 Market Street, next door

to the house where my family lived. Andrew eventually became president of the Pusey and Jones Company, where his father had worked in some modest capacity.

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Five children were born to the marriage of Andrew Dettling and Wilhelmina Maier. After my grandfather, Andrew Matthew Dettling, born March 24, 1859, the order of births is not clear to me, but probably Kate (Katharina Theresa) was next, then Mary (Maria Margaretha, my Aunt Mame) and Wilhelmina Fredericka, who died young (overburdened by her name, Aunt Mame once suggested to me). The youngest child, Charles Martin, owed his first name to his sister Mary; it was not a family name, but she thought it pretty and its adoption indicates the degree to which the family was becoming American.

In 1871, when he was slightly more than forty, my great-grandfather died, leaving a widow with five young children and few resources. Lodge brothers raffled off a piece of her furniture to give the forsaken family a nest egg. With the proceeds my great-grandmother set up a little store in her frame house at 211 Walnut Street.

In the little store my great-grandmother sold everything--everything, that is, that might yield a profit. Bread and kerosene and penny candy were among her goods, and in the family the store was called "Wanamaker's" because of the range of items she handled. Through hard work and through great economy my great-grandmother supported her family without recourse to outside assistance, and she saw to it that her two boys learned a trade, Andrew as a machinist and Charles as a draughtsman. Mary, the daughter who stayed home and helped with the store, was sent to Newark, New Jersey, to learn to make large funeral sprays--"Gates Ajar " was a favorite, she told me. I believe she also studied millinery, in a day when women's hats were elaborately decorated.

Every day great-grandmother was up at 4 a.m. to meet the bread man and the milk man. At ten she stopped work for a glass of beer and a sandwich. Feldmeier's saloon across the street was the source of the beer. A child (my mother at one time) would be

dispatched to Feldmeier's (to a side door, not into the saloon proper) with ten cents and a pail. This was called "rushing the duck" and ten cents purchased enough beer not just for my great-grandmother but for any friend who might stop by. If there was no child available to get the beer--as would be true in winter when the children were in school--my great-grandmother had coffee with her sandwich.

It is worth noting that in the Dettling family beer was regarded as a rather ordinary comestible. Not so whiskey or other strong liquor. These women would not touch it. Late in her life my mother scolded me for cashing a check of hers in a liquor store. And a family adage declared that money made in the liquor business did no one any good.

Among the many stories I heard of my great-grandmother's frugality is a tale my mother told of an unwise purchase (as a bargain) of a lot of little candy men. They did not sell, so until they were used up, the family had to substitute them for sugar in their coffee or tea.

Back in Germany, Wilhelmina had left two brothers and a sister. When her father died is not clear, but at one point she wrote her mother to request a photograph. The mother walked twelve miles to Ulm to have a likeness taken. Wilhelmina treasured it, keeping it in a small room between her store and her kitchen. One day she took up this tintype to show it to a neighbor. It looked dusty, so she wiped it off, and with the dust the likeness disappeared too, for steam had softened it.

Life in America was sufficiently good to Wilhelmina that she encouraged her sister, Dorothea, to come join her in this country, and to bring her family. By a strange coincidence, Dorothea, whose married name was Klaitz was also a widow with five children. (By a further coincidence, the same fate of widowhood with five children was later to beset Wilhelmina's daughter-in-law, Sophie Dettling, and her niece Katharine Krapf).

Having been forced by her situation to work in the fields, Dorothea was amenable to persuasion and, despite her mother's worried attempts to dissuade her, undertook the long voyage with her children: Katharine (aged 16), Frederick (15), Bernard, George, and Jacob.

Following their departure, Dorothea's mother looked each day in the mail for word of the travelers, fearing some dreadful accident. Finally the postman delivered a letter from America announcing their safe arrival. The 82-year-old woman (my great-great-grandmother) read it with such a spasm of relief that she cried out "Thank God!" and fell over dead.

The Kleitz voyage must have occurred shortly before 1883 because in that year Dorothea's name (shortened to Dora) appears in the Wilmington directory. Wilhelmina met the immigrants in New York to guide them to their new home. The Dettling children were excited, as Aunt Mame told me, at the prospect of meeting these cousins and sat on their front steps awaiting the arrival. The newcomers were heard before they were seen because they came down the street (Walnut) from the depot with pots and pans rattling at their waists and carrying feather beds--five children preceded by their mother and their aunt. A house had been rented for them by Wilhelmina. It was in Spring Alley, around the corner from the Dettling home at 211 Walnut, and here they were installed after the jubilation of the sisters' reunion and the children's becoming acquainted.

There were many tales told in my youth about the experiences of the young Kleitzes, but the only one I recall clearly is the amusement of the Dettling children when George and Bernard read a sign for what these German children called "ikey kreem," which was how they pronounced “ice cream." Work was ready for Dorothea--probably washing and ironing--and very soon the oldest boy, Fred, was working as a morocco dresser in one of Wilmington's many morocco leather shops. Eventually Fred became a saloonkeeper, partner of a man named Spoerle, in an establishment my father knew as "Dutch Joe's." Bernard and George became very successful wholesale jewelers (with a

retail business also) at Sixth and Market. Jake worked for the railroad, but died so early that I do not remember him, though I remember his widow and daughter, Fanny and Bernice, who owned an apartment house, still standing, at 23rd and Washington. Katharine married a man named Krapf. By the time I knew her she was a widow with five children, all grown, however--four boys and one girl. An exceptionally fine person, she taught a Bible class that my mother eventually took over.

The only one of this generation ever to return to Germany was Fred Kleitz. It was probably in the 1920s that he made the trip, with Dr. and Mrs. Kleinstuber, friends of the family and also from Wilmington. Leaving his companions in order to visit Adelmannsfelden, Fred sought out his old schoolmates and was surprised to find them fag-toothed, senile old men. They looked to him for a treat, so he gave a party for the whole village, with free beer, wurst, etc., for all. There were two taverns in the town, and consequently at an appointed hour the first was closed and the party moved to the second -- to divide the business.

Fred went to the school he had attended and found his seat with his name carved on it. He hired a photographer to come out from Ulm and take pictures of the Maier house, the Kleitz home, and the church. When some of Fred's relatives later sent him a picture of themselves they had posed for it against the side of the stone poor house because it was such an elegant building. Several of his old chums wanted Fred to bring them to America, where they expected to find gold in the streets.

In my boyhood I often heard the descendants of Wilhelmina Dettling and Dorothea Kleitz (the two Maier sisters) referred to as the "Maier Stamm" - "stamm" meaning "stock" and referring to certain inherited features, whether of form or of mind. In addition to these families, the Adelmanns - Felden group in this vicinity included Julius Hoffmann, the Hutts in Philadelphia, Julie Mayer Dottling, her two sisters and two brothers (Ernst de Vetter and Bernhard). To me they are only names.

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As the Dettling children grew up the only one to marry early, aside from my grandfather, was his sister Kate. Her husband, Maris Vandever, came from what may have been the oldest family of European descent in Delaware. Vandever Avenue in Wilmington is named for the family, who once owned an island in the Brandywine, toward which the avenue ran. By Maris's time, however, they were humble farming folk, who lived near Center Friends Meeting, of which they may have been members. He worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad.

I remember Kate, my great-aunt, as enormously fat, but since I was a little boy when I knew her, I may have exaggerated her size. Her sister, Aunt Mame, said Kate was very jolly and carefree, qualities that may not have helped her strive with the adversity that met her when her husband died, leaving her with six children. It seemed to me when I visited the Vandevers as a young boy that they lived in poor circumstances, in a row house in a crowded, bleak area of Philadelphia. Probably the house was better than my great-grandmother's at 211 Walnut (which had no indoor plumbing), but I never knew this Wilmington house, and I must have heard my mother and Aunt Mame deplore the situation of the Vandevers.[7]

Either Helen or Anna was the oldest of Aunt Kate's daughters. Anna, who was very nice to me when I was a little boy, married a man named Earnest, a man who deserted her after they had three children. Anna died at about this time, and her children had to be sent to the Lutheran orphans' home in Germantown.[8] I suppose Aunt Kate had already died. Anna's sister Helen married a good, responsible man named Albert Harrison. They had three children and lived in a very nice section of Frankford in northeastern Philadelphia, but they seemed to have little contact with the rest of Helen's siblings. I seem to remember family whisperings to the effect that Helen wanted to get away from the poverty in which she was reared.[9]

A third Vandever sister, Katie, was very unprepossessing. She married a man named White. They both died after begetting several children. I know only of two girls,

who like Anna's children were reared in an orphans' home, a Catholic home since Mr. White was a Catholic. I never saw the White children, though I know my mother kept in touch with them.[10] They were younger than Anna's children, whom I did see often, partly because mother's church and its members had a connection through the Lutheran Ministerium with the Germantown home. Indeed, my cousin Fred Krapf (son of Katharine Kleitz Krapf) was once president of its board of trustees.

I remember the youngest of the Vandever girls very well. Her name was Mildred, and she worked for Smith, Kline, and French, a pharmaceutical company. I think she kept the family together as best she could, though she was young, not far from my age. Eventually she too married, her husband being a man named John Vermeulen, who was a structural steel worker on large projects like bridges. They moved to California, where he worked on bridges in the San Francisco Bay area. I saw them last in 1952 when they came to visit Dorothy and me in a motel in El Cerrito, where we were staying as we traveled up the coast--bringing presents with them. Mildred, with whom I once exchanged stamps, both being interested in stamp collecting, had married rather late and had no children. I believe her husband was considerably older than she.

I knew the older of Mildred's brothers, Maris, Jr., who often visited Aunt Mame. He seemed a rather ineffectual man who worked at the Masonic temple in Philadelphia in some clerical capacity, but he did show a real interest in his sister Anna's children, visiting them regularly at the Lutheran home. His brother Charles, probably the youngest of the Vandever children was completely unknown to me; I believe he kept out of sight through shyness when we visited. After he married, however, he and his wife, whose name was Grace, did see my parents regularly. My mother said his wife was the making of him, bringing him out of his shyness, I expect, though she also had him change the spelling of his name to Van De Vere. After my mother's death and burial, when I examined the book signed by those attending the funeral or the undertaker's viewing, I saw that Charles had been present, which meant a considerable journey by train and

street transportation from Philadelphia (unless he had a car), but he never introduced himself to me.

With two sets of grandchildren reared in orphanages, what went wrong with Kate Dettling Vandever's marriage? Did her husband drink, I asked my mother. No, I was told, nor gamble either. The problem was primarily an inability to handle money, a failure to be able to cope with the adversities of life, magnified by the expense of a large family. Everybody liked Kate, but perhaps she was more like my grandfather than like the sterner women in my family.

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I fear that my grandfather displayed little of his mother's frugality. Her store did well. Flourished would be too strong a word, but the economy was great and savings were inevitable. She may have lost the ownership of 211 Walnut Street after her husband's death, but if so, she soon bought it back, and eventually she also bought the three-story brick house next door at 209 Walnut Street. She intended to move into it, but she died first, in 1900. However, she was laid out in the new house and her funeral was conducted from there.

The store business, at first listed in the city directories as "varieties," became "notions" in 1881, and soon the listing changed to "groceries." Aunt Mame assisted her mother with the store, but gave it up when her mother died. With her husband, Harry Hurff, of whom more later, she moved into the new house briefly, staying there for a year or so until Uncle Harry bought an old farm house at 3029 Market Street, on the north end of Wilmington.

In 1885, a year after Sophie Hanselmann and Andrew Dettling were married, they bought a two-story brick house at 302 Lombard Street, a house with indoor plumbing, a luxury that Wilhelmina's house at 211 Walnut did not have. There was a $500 Wilmington Savings Fund Society mortgage on the house, which was undoubtedly bought with Sophie's inheritance. In the following thirteen years of his marriage,

Andrew never paid off a cent of the mortgage. Worse than that, he let his insurance lapse, so there was nothing for his family when he died in 1898, at the age of 39.

Andrew had lived well, in the manner of a young German-American artisan of the late nineteenth century. He went out many nights by himself, my mother told me. Sometimes it was to a lodge, as to Delaware Tribe No. 1 of the Improved Order of Red Men, of which he was "keeper of wampum" (treasurer, I suppose) in 1887 {Scharf, 824}. He also belonged to the Saengerbund, and my mother remembered him as singing "The Bulldog on the Bank and the Bullfrog in the Pool." I have seen his name on several social committees in connection with events at German-American Hall. On some evenings he brought cronies home, Andy Spiegelhalter, perhaps, or one of the Springers.

My grandfather was a sport. He made twenty-five dollars a week and spent it. Probably he was a good machinist; certainly he was regularly employed. According to city directories he worked either for George W. Baker or for John G. Baker from at least 1881 to 1895, when he founded his own business, A. M. Dettling and Company, in partnership with George A. Henry. Their machine shop was at 418 West Front Street, though it may have moved to another West Front Street address if the 1897 directory is correct. But apparently the business failed. At any rate, in 1898, the last year of his life, he is listed as foreman with F. F. Slocomb and Company.

In the fourteen years of his marriage, five children had been born: Wilhelmina Rosa, on January 15, 1886; Mary Frieda (my mother), on April 18, 1887; Katharine Sophia, on January 18, 1890; Andrew, April 13, 1892; and Pauline, November 16, 1897.

At his death in 1898, an old story repeated itself: a Dettling widow was left with five young children and no resources beyond the mortgaged house bought with her inheritance. Like her mother-in-law, Sophie proved equal to the daunting task of raising a family of five children, in age from twelve to less than one. She took in washing and ironing for single men and she rented out a room for three dollars a week. In the evening she had the whole family (those who were big enough) sit around the table and string tags

on goods, either price tags or shipping tags. Some of the children would be sent out with Andy's wagon to bring the tags home in boxes. Then Sophie would gather the children around the table where they would put a string through the hole in each tag.

She made all the clothes for her children and frowned at any idea of accepting charity. Her mother-in-law would sometimes send such goods as apples and moldy cheese. Mrs. Rosa Yetter, who had a bakery and was my grandmother's close friend, would save unsold bread and load up the children with it every Sunday. Mr. Stafford, the milkman, would give an extra measure of milk for the money. Grandmother saw to it that they always had plenty of eggs and milk, as well as Mrs. Yetter's bread. They had soup every day and French toast (using up the bread and eggs) so often that my mother never made it after she had her own home. Stale cream puffs were a treat. When the milk got old it was used to make cottage cheese. Soap was also made at home for laundry use.

My mother explained to me once that she had to learn to cook after she was married. Before, they were too poor to permit experimenting by the children.

Once grandmother learned that the women of Zion Church planned to give her a "pound party." Each person would bring a pound of something and also some cake to eat, making the affair a party. Grandmother was not pleased. "No charity." She said she wouldn't let the women enter her house on such an errand. Her minister did succeed in persuading her to accept ten dollars (a large sum then) from Mrs. Stoeckle, wife of the brewer who was the richest member of her church.

My grandmother felt to some degree that her mother-in-law, Wilhelmina, did not show the interest she might have in the welfare of her grandchildren. Perhaps, my mother thought, there was a little jealousy because Sophie's house was better than Wilhelmina's. Hardship had probably hardened Wilhelmina, as, indeed, it seemed to harden Grandmother so that when I was a boy I found her a rather distant person.

The two older children, Mena and Mary, spent a lot of time at their grandmother's, especially after their father died. They were not being entertained, however; they were useful workers in the store. They were fed and housed during the week (they returned on Saturday evening to go to Sunday school the next morning), but they were not clothed. My mother, at twelve, received five cents a week as pay for her work, but the money was not hers to spend; it went into a little bank to be used for new stockings. Her grandmother kept the key to the bank.

After her father died, my mother would go to her grandmother's every Monday after school. She was delivery boy, clerk, and general household drudge--helping with the preparation of sauerkraut, for instance. Every one of one thousand heads of cabbage that were put up each fall had to be cored and trimmed. Her grandmother also made ketchup, chow chow, peppersauce, and preserves of all kinds. Something--apple butter, perhaps--was always on the stove, with pickled fish in the oven.

There was no running water inside the house. All water had to be brought from a pump in the yard, which often had to be thawed out in winter. The wash was done by hand on a washboard in galvanized tubs. I depend for these stories on a reminiscence my mother wrote. No wonder, she writes, that under such conditions she sometimes helped herself to penny candies, even though she would have been punished severely if she had been caught. During those years, however, she established a close relationship with the aunt for whom she was named, Aunt Mame, who helped with the store to the time of Wilhelmina's death. Aunt Mame told me once that she and my mother had never quarreled, and her friendship for my mother occasioned some jealousy in the family--understandable on the part of Sophie, concerned for all of her children.

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It broke Sophie's heart when she had to require her two oldest children to leave school at the end of the eighth grade and go to work in a textile mill to help support the family. First Mena (Wilhelmina) went to work and then my mother (Mary). (Perhaps

Katie did briefly, too.) They called themselves Vassar girls as a joke, either because it was the Vassar mill where they worked or perhaps some product bore the name Vassar.

Here each of them suffered a hand injury. Apparently the fingers of these young fourteen-year-old girls caught in some lace that they were feeding to stitching machines. The lace pulled their hands into the machines and the damage was done before the machines could be turned off. Mena and Mary bore the scars of their industrial accidents to the grave. There were no workmen's compensation laws at that time.

But Sophie Dettling did not intend that her daughters would remain mill workers. Almost immediately they began attending night school, a private business school run by a man named Beacom. (Eventually it became part of Goldey-Beacom College.) As soon as possible they left the mill and took clerical jobs. Mena went to the Topkis clothing and dry goods store in the 400 block on Market Street, later the site of the Wilmington Dry Goods store. (The Topkises also were in the textile manufacturing business and were owners of several movie theaters.) Mena was soon promoted to the job of top bookkeeper. Mary became secretary to the leading plumbing firm in Wilmington, operated by John Bryson.

Katie became secretary to the Star Publishing Company, publishers of a weekly newspaper, the Sunday Star. In my boyhood this paper carried her name on its masthead as secretary-treasurer, but she had long left employment at the Star (after a nervous breakdown probably induced by an unrequited passion for the president of the firm) and had joined Mena as an employee of Topkis's store. While Mena was apparently good with figures, Katie enjoyed contact with customers and became head of the children's department. I recall one vision from those early Topkis days--of seeing a girls' baseball team, the Topkis Bloomer Girls, playing on the Arden green.

Eventually, with help from relatives, including Aunt Mame, Katie started a children's store of her own on King Street, the Jack and Jill Tog Shop. My mother, who loved to sell, helped in the store at busy times, such as Saturday nights and "dollar days"

(sale days). The store was a great success as long as Katie remained interested. She had many good ideas. There was a cute drawing of Jack and Jill with a pail of water that was the store's logo. An arrangement with the Kleitz jewelry store allowed Aunt Katie to send a letter to every new mother (from the "births" column in the daily paper) offering a coupon if she stopped at the store that would entitle her to pick up a small pin for which my aunt paid a small wholesale price. This acquainted new mothers with Aunt Katie's store and with Kleitz's.

After a brief period on the east side of King Street two doors below Eighth, a location that was soon taken over by a larger enterprise, the Jack and Jill Tog Shop relocated on the west side of King near Ninth, in back of the Wilmington Savings Fund Society. Next door was The Corset Shop, run by a Mrs. Cannon, the mother of Roxanna Arsht and of Dr. Norman Cannon. When I was a boy, before my high school years, the store was my headquarters in downtown Wilmington. I would ride my bike to town, park it inside the store in the back, and be free to wander on Market Street, to go to the movies or do some shopping. I liked to go into variety chain stores like Kresge's and Neissner's and go through the racks of sheet music. I would ask the clerk to play several pieces for me and then make a purchase--30 cents a piece for most sheet music, but 35 cents for show tunes. This was the beginning of a collection I later gave to the University of Delaware library, after selling some pieces. Occasionally I bought a New York or Philadelphia newspaper to check carefully over the announcement of ship movements, for I had a passion for ocean shipping and knew the names and routes of most of the ships sailing regular schedules in the North Atlantic--like the Cunard Line, the Red Star Line, the North German Lloyd, etc.

When my mother worked at the store on Saturday nights I would come to town with my father and we would go to the movies. His main recreation was to stand on a Market Street corner and talk with old friends. One favorite corner was on the southeast of the intersection of Seventh and Market. His greatest pal seemed to be Jimmy Dugan,

then occupied as a bookmaker, which sounds like an unsavory occupation and was certainly illegal. But Mr. Dugan, who had learned his trade as a moulder, was a naturally refined, soft-spoken man who did not drink. He and my father would sometimes go to Govatos's for an ice cream soda--but these were times when I was not there, for when I was, Dad was attending to me and I did not like to wait long while he talked.

Aunt Katie in those days became very active in the Business and Professional Women's Club and in the National Woman's Party, groups that Aunt Pauline also joined. Through them I became acquainted with a remarkable and distinguished woman, Florence Bayard (Mrs. William) Hilles, the daughter of U. S. Secretary of State Thomas F. Bayard. Aunt Katie once went with Mrs. Hilles by automobile to a convention in Des Moines.

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With three daughters proving reliable breadwinners, the financial status of the Dettlings improved notably. The mortgage on the 302 Lombard Street house was completely paid off by 1906, eight years after my grandfather's death, and when the oldest children were only twenty and nineteen. In about eight more years the Dettlings had sold this house to buy another in the more upscale area at 507 West 22nd Street in the developing Washington Heights section, near the Baynard Boulevard.[11] Because Sophie developed a heart problem and in order to avoid the heat of the city, the Dettlings began to rent places for the summer--one-story houses in the hilly region north of Wilmington, first in Montrose or Gordon Heights and then in Arden.

I remember two rented houses in Arden, one on the lane that led to the pool and one on Miller Road, next to a family named Weiss, with whom the Dettlings became very friendly. (Madeleine Weiss married Percy Cole--a chemist and the first Ph.D. that I ever met, son of a famous wood engraver, Timothy Cole. Her sister, Angela Weiss, a linguist, was interviewed by Dean Robinson for a position at the Women's College in my

grandmother's house on West 22nd Street.) Finally the Dettlings bought a house at the corner of Little Lane and Miller Road which they kept long after my grandmother died.

The attraction of Arden was not only that the house was of one story, easier on Sophie's heart, but also it reminded her of her native region of Germany, I was told, because the residents planted not only flowers but also vegetables in their yards. My father, who was then working five and a half days a week, hated to go there over Saturday night because Sophie put him to work in the garden, for he was the only male in the family aside from Andy.

Nobody got much work out of Andy. As the only boy in the family, he was spoiled. He could have stayed in school through high school, but he played "hooky." When Sophie found that he was missing classes she arranged for him to learn a trade through an apprenticeship at Slocomb's machine shop, where his father had been working when he died. (And where my son Michael tells me he was once offered a job three quarters of a century later.) Sophie felt Andy must not be allowed to become a "rummy" like some other boys in the neighborhood--such as the Le Capentiers.

Andy completed his apprenticeship, but he did not persevere with his trade. He found it easy to loaf at the Democratic League. His sisters made things easy for him. My mother, for instance, did his laundry. After the West 22nd Street house was sold (in about 1933) Andy lived in the Arden house in the summer and with us in the winter. He became a bartender at the club and eventually its steward. (During Prohibition the Democratic League, like most clubs, did a thriving business providing its members with illicit liquor. Once it was raided by government agents, but Andy managed to get rid of the liquor before it could be seized.)

Andy might have been spoiled and lazy, but he was not wild. He saved his money with passion. His drink was beer, and while he overindulged I never saw him drunk, nor did I ever hear him talk rough or tell a dirty story. Eventually he married--to Frances Buckley--but that was after I married. They had a nice home, as would be

expected, for Frances had a responsible job in the office of the recorder of deeds. She was a very active Democrat and procured for my wife an appointment one year to a polling place in Newark.

Pauline, the youngest of the Dettlings, was the one with whom I had the most in common. She was much more feisty than I. By the time she grew up, circumstances were greatly improved in the Dettling household with two girls working. She was graduated from Wilmington High School in 1916 and wanted to enter the Women's College in Newark, which had opened only two years earlier. There was money accumulated to see her through a year or two, for she had a small inheritance from the estate of her grandmother, who died when she was two years old. However, Aunt Mame, as executor of the estate, had control of the money, and refused to relinquish it to Pauline until she came of age.

Girls did not need to go to college, Aunt Mame said. Knowing Pauline, I am sure she was not diplomatic in the least when faced with Aunt Mame's prejudice against advanced education for women. She took night school courses and became a secretary in the Du Pont Company. When she finally received her allowance, she spent it in a week, all to spite Aunt Mame.

My father told me of a difference he observed between Katie and Pauline when he was courting my mother. When Katie came home late and her mother was angry, Katie soon sweet-talked the anger out of her, telling stories about the evening's events. When Pauline came in late and her mother was angry, they clashed and a battle royal--of words--ensued, for Pauline would not give an inch and refused to ask forgiveness. (She was, of course, more than seven years younger than Katie, so there was more reason for her mother's concern.)

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My father started courting my mother when she was little more than seventeen. They met at a dance that followed a straw ride to the village of Christiana (pronounced

Christeen). They were thrown together as the only two who knew the dance step that led the opening procession. (I used to know the building where they danced, a ramshackle one by my day, on the street across from the old Presbyterian church.) My mother was not allowed to attend dances alone; at least two sisters must go together. So she was accompanied by either Mena or Katie on such outings.

The courtship was a long one, and a very happy one as my father recalled it. He loved to dance, and so did my mother, and he said she was very good. (She did not talk of such things.)

And she was very pretty, he said. And very jolly. When she heard him talk like this, she would just wave a hand dismissively. Or say something like, "Let him go on." She didn't like bragging about dancing ability or anything else. She would use a German phrase that means "Self-praise smells," "Eingelob stinckt." She knew household German from her mother and her grandmother, and church German from the fact that her Sunday school, including catechetical classes, had been conducted in German at Zion Lutheran Church.

Probably the fact that my father was Catholic accounted for the long courtship, though I never heard any of the Dettlings, not even the super-religious Mena, say anything negative about my father's faith. But he had a responsibility at his home during most of these years, for his father was ailing and he was the only other man in the house. All of the emphasis that I heard, however, was on the matter of saving money. He had none when my mother and he met and became close enough that she examined into his resources. He had no bank account whatever. This would not do. They could not marry, my mother decreed, until they had saved enough to buy a house.

And save they did. My father dutifully put some of each week's pay--which was little enough, I'm sure--into the bank. Knowing my mother, I wouldn't be surprised if she kept his bank book (as she did after their marriage). In time as the savings grew, it was arranged that Aunt Mame's husband, Harry Hurff, who dealt in real estate, would build

them a house in his side yard on Market Street. They would pay for it, of course, but he would hold a mortgage. So they were married--by a Catholic priest (she had no instruction, my mother said) on Thanksgiving eve in 1912, the date chosen so that they could take a week-end honeymoon trip to New York, without my father losing a day from work. He got no vacation at all until long years later, and I never remember his taking a day off from work unless he was very sick.

I was born in the new house, with the help of old Dr. Springer (so he was called), on March 15, 1914. On the north side, our house adjoined a similar house that my great-uncle built as a speculation. He employed no architect. He just had his builders follow plans that he liked on other new houses being built in what was called the Ninth Ward. On the south side, across an alley, was the large frame house where Uncle Harry and Aunt Mame lived, as did her brother Charlie.

These relatives, a great-aunt and two great-uncles, were of the greatest importance in my early life. Indeed Aunt Mame was a figure of importance until I was thirty-three, for she lived to 1947, long enough to start a bank account for my son Stephen. And her significance extended beyond her death. My mother was her sole heir, and I was my mother's (after my father's death), and so Aunt Mame's and Uncle Harry's care in managing their resources has eased my financial path and that of my children.

But Aunt Mame's influence was much more than a matter of money. She was my mother's--and my father's--highly respected elder counsellor in many matters. She was the only baby-sitter I ever had. When I was small my parents did not go out at night unless they took me with them. (Inasmuch as my father had to get up at 5 in the morning, as my mother did too, there was little temptation except on Saturday night or the rare holiday.) My mother did sometimes need to go out in the day, and then I was left next door with Aunt Mame. I recall her amusing me at the piano. She could not play, but I didn't know it. She would one-finger the melody of "My Darling Nelly Gray" or "Old Dog Tray" to my delight.

There was no fence between the two houses, so with a sandbox under a front maple tree I had the run of both lawns. Ours was small, but Uncle Harry's was large. He owned more than a double lot, all the way to the corner of 30th and Market. Uncle Charlie, who was a grouch when sober, cautioned me about letting other children run over the lawn. He'd give me money--as much as five dollars when he was drinking--which my mother would take at once and put in my bank account. One of these relatives would give me money for every "A" on my report card--a dollar, I believe--which also went in the bank.

Though Aunt Mame was the great and lasting influence on me, both Uncle Harry and Uncle Charlie deserve attention. Harry Hurff was a New Jersey native, from the family for whom the village of Hurffville is named. Left an orphan, he was reared by a great-uncle and great-aunt, parents of a Mrs. Lizzie Comly, who once lived on a farm up the road east of Cooch's Bridge and Dayett's Mill (possibly at the corner where Route 72 crosses this road today). I knew her as Aunt Lizzie, which is what Aunt Mame called her, for she was Harry's aunt though roughly of the same age. Visiting her farm is my one memory of a farm in my boyhood, but her husband must have died early, for she was a widow living in the city when I remember her best. She had a daughter, Elsie, who was apparently also a widow, and Elsie had a daughter Elinor, a bit younger than I was. They visited the Hurffs often, and though Elsie and Elinor seemed cyphers, Aunt Lizzie was a very pleasant, kind old lady.

Uncle Harry had little education but he was a very canny businessman. His name first appears in the city directory--in 1883-1884 and again in 1885--as a tinsmith, but I know nothing of this phase of his career. In 1890 he is listed as a dealer in milk, which means, I suppose, that he had a milk route, very likely supplying stores like Wilhelmina's. By 1897 he had shifted his business to oil, which means coal oil. Coal oil was sold in grocery stores, like the Dettling store, and it was in connection with this business that he became acquainted with Mary Dettling, my Aunt Mame.

Harry Hurff had been married earlier (possibly to a Brittingham), but his wife had died after a short marriage. I suppose Aunt Mame was no beauty; she always disliked her pictures. But she had been far too careful to enter any foolish marriage, though I understand her nieces, most likely Katie and Pauline (certainly not my mother or Mena) had spoken of her as an old maid, which hurt her. Her marriage to Harry Hurff, who was two years the younger, proved a very happy one. It took place shortly before her mother died in 1900. Aunt Mame and Uncle Harry at first occupied the house Wilhelmina had bought at 209 Walnut Street and had been renting out with the intention of eventually moving into it.

Harry immediately started looking for another property in a less congested part of the city. His choice fell on an old frame house on Market Street between 30th and 31st. It had a large yard comprising most of the block on the west side, across from Watson's body shop, where bodies were built for delivery trucks, like milk wagons, most of them horse drawn in my boyhood. The street number for the house in the 1901 directory was 3033, but the numbers were rearranged after our house was built next door and I knew Aunt Mame's house as 3029. It was still a strangely high number, since there were no structures between it and 30th Street, where the numbering presumably began. None, that is, except Uncle Harry's barn or stable, where he kept a horse and carriage. I am told I fed the horse, but I do not remember anything in the way of transportation before a series of Franklin air-cooled cars that he finally kept in a garage he built off the kitchen of his house on the south side.

My mother and father were entertained here a lot before they were married. Uncle Harry and Aunt Mame both appreciated having younger people about, and, as I have said, Aunt Mame and my mother always got along together very well.

Meeting Aunt Mame's expectations was important for me as I grew up. I was so young when my grandmother died that Aunt Mame became the surrogate grandmother

for me, the elder statesman of the family. Even my father kow-towed quite willingly to Aunt Mame.

Aunt Mame supported my mother in all her endeavors, though she took pains not to interfere with my mother's control of me. My mother was very nervous and high strung when I was young, so much so that I was a little afraid of her. Aunt Mame would help in strategic ways. My father told me that my mother was about to break down in crying when she broke a valued plate (and any plate she had in those days of scrimping and saving was valued). In summer, when windows were open Aunt Mame heard her across the alley between the houses and promptly dropped one of her plates on the floor, calling over, "See, Mary, I can break a plate too."

Uncle Charlie was a disagreeable little man unless he was drinking, when he became very jolly. I have a photo of him at his club, the Idle Hour, on the Delaware above Wilmington. He is dressed as a woman for a mock wedding. This was all great sport for the members, largely German-Americans, and I'm sure Uncle Harry, very sober and reserved, enjoyed it when he and Aunt Mame, maybe with my parents and me, attended the club on a weekend. But Aunt Mame always had the fear that Charlie would go too far, that he would be lured into drinking in a saloon or speakeasy until he was sick or all the money he had was gone. On rare occasions he disappeared for several days--after he had retired, I suppose. He did retire early because his work (he was a draughtsman) was moved to Buffalo. Aunt Mame would have been scared to let him go there alone--and he would not consider going without her approval and encouragement.

In those later years she encouraged him to have beer in the house so he would not go out and begin drinking hard liquor. On the occasions when he did go on a binge, she phoned all over to find him, summoning the aid of her friends and his, threatening illicit liquor dealers (during Prohibition) who might be taking advantage of him. Once he was delivered to her doorstep prone from a taxi. She was terribly ashamed and she berated

him and, I think, smacked him. He would take such treatment from her, knowing he brought it on himself. I recall that once he had to be hospitalized with delirium tremens.

Uncle Harry invested Charlie's money, especially liking mortgages, which would bring him income but could not be cashed in. When my mother moved our family to a house on 607 West 20th Street after the Market Street area became commercialized, Uncle Charlie took a mortgage on our new house that Aunt Mame asked her never to pay off--it would revert to mother when Charlie died, as it did, but it would be dangerous for him to have ready money.

I think Charlie had a terrific inferiority complex which he could overcome only with a few drinks. He lived all his life under his sister's protection and respected her intelligence and sagacity. I should not neglect to note that Uncle Charlie gladly gave me blood in a series of person-to-person transfusions when I was eighteen. If I recall correctly, he enjoyed the fact that he was given a shot of liquor after a transfusion. (But this was in 1932, when Prohibition was still the law, so could the story be true?) The important point I want to make is that despite my picture of him as a grouch, Uncle Charlie had a high sense of family responsibility.

After Uncle Harry died in 1933, Charlie was Aunt Mame's only companion. She (and Uncle Harry till he died) tried to keep Charlie busy with projects around the house. He was an excellent, very careful workman with wood. His tools were a model of order, and his cellar workbench very neat. But he was crabby, and when Aunt Mame's lady friends, like Lene Hamann, called, Charlie went off to his room.

But when Charlie went blind in about 1944, the result of past excesses, I suppose, his demeanor changed. He became exceedingly agreeable. He boasted of how well he could get around the house without help; he enjoyed Aunt Mame's company; he was at last a comfort to her, a companion for her old age. Her protectiveness toward him continued. "Imagine," she said to me one day, "Charlie is now seventy!" I wasn't surprised, but I recognized that she always thought of him as a youth.

Charlie never married, nor did he ever go around with women so far as I knew. My father said he once had a girl who was an Irish Catholic, and that Aunt Mame and Uncle Harry had disapproved, which had spoiled the relationship. My father regarded this as a sad outcome, but my father was a romantic and probably built much more into the affair than was warranted. His story did not decrease my father's respect for Aunt Mame and Uncle Harry, but it does indicate that he found some prejudice against Irish Catholics among the Protestants he was attached to by marriage.

Though an oil dealer when he married, Uncle Harry soon gave up his business for real estate, which he conducted from the Bayard Building at Ninth and Market, but only briefly before he moved the business to his home. He retired when hardly more than forty--obviously a lesson to me on how important it was to save. He still dealt in real estate, but only his own. He owned some rather poor houses on the east side and in the suburbs, renting them by the week to Negroes and immigrants. Weekly he made the collections himself as the only way to get his money. When his tenants could not pay he had them work out the debt by repairs to his properties. In time he gave these properties up and contented himself with mortgages and with active participation in the stock market. He spent his days in his last years at the brokerage offices of Laird, Bissell and Meeds in the Du Pont Building.

My mother sought to follow his path to financial success. After the mortgage on her first home at 3031 Market Street was paid off (I remember sitting at the kitchen table with my parents as they celebrated that event, and of being given a sip of port wine on the happy occasion), my mother had my father invest in a small house on Robinson Street on the east side. The tenant was a Polish immigrant and he had a hard time. My father was simply unable to collect the rent when it was due; he gave up trying and sold the house. Then a house two doors away on Market Street (3035) came up for sale. Friends named Jones lived in it, and my parents bought it. After Mr. Jones, who worked on the railroad, was killed in an industrial accident, his widow moved out. The next tenants had

no trouble making money--the man worked for Delmarva Power--but they lived hand to mouth and would spend it rapidly. They were decent people but they gradually got farther and farther back in their payments. My father took to going to their home on the man's pay day, hoping to get there before he and his wife had walked two blocks to a neighboring tap room.

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This adventure brings us into the period after repeal of Prohibition, by which time my parents had two more financial lessons. My mother had inherited a small amount of money when her mother died in 1925, and after I had finished the fifth grade at No. 23 School at 30th and Madison and gone on to No. 24 School on Washington Street across the bridge from the Ninth Ward, she began to look for a house that would be closer to my school and to the high school that I would soon be attending.

She was also motivated to move by changes in our neighborhood. An ugly string of one-story shops had been erected between 29th and 30th Streets on Market, which was very busy as a main road between Wilmington and Philadelphia, and a gas station was built across Market Street. A special impetus to moving came when Aunt Mame and Uncle Harry sold their property to the Atlantic Refining Company. The company wanted only the corner of 30th and Market for a gas station, but Uncle Harry insisted they take all his holding. When they did so he moved to Baynard Boulevard.

Mother found a house that was a good bargain at 607 West 20th Street and moved the family there on her birthday, April 18, 1927, over my protests and my father's. She saw clearly that West 20th Street would be a happier location for us all in the future--as it proved to be. My parents stayed in this house for the rest of their long lives.

To help pay for the new house my mother rented a large back room to a widow from the neighborhood, a Mrs. McGill, whom I unjustly resented. We also had my father's ineffectual bachelor brother Willie living with us at this time.

My parents did not sell the 3031 Market Street house but rented it out. The first tenants were excellent, but their successors, stricken by the Depression, stopped paying rent. By this time (about 1931 or 1932), the Depression had also affected my father's work, and he was often at home for a week or a month with no income (and no unemployment insurance in those days). There was nothing to do but sell the two houses (3031 and 3035 Market Street), as they did.

Back in the 1920s my mother had also tried to follow Uncle Harry's success by investing in stocks. At his suggestion, she bought shares in Baldwin Locomotive, which company soon failed and her investment was gone. Uncle Harry was abashed at the result of his advice, however, and paid my mother all she had lost (undoubtedly at Aunt Mame's instigation).

Remembering Aunt Mame's tough attitude toward Aunt Pauline when she wanted to use her own money for college, it is almost embarrassing to relate how differently I was treated. I was a male, and that probably made a great difference. But something must be said for Aunt Mame. I think that if Pauline had taken night courses (if possible) or worked a while and started classes on her own, my great-aunt would have relented. But diplomacy or soft dealing was not Pauline's way.

At any rate when I was ready for college there was no question but that I should go. I had been suffering from a bleeding disease called purpura and had narrowly escaped death because of a serious internal hemorrhage shortly before graduation from high school. I was saved by a hasty person-to-person transfusion from my mother, supplemented by at least one from Uncle Charlie.

The costs at Delaware College were about $150 for the year. There was no thought, no possibility of my going anywhere else, and of course in my state of health (I had been in bed part of the summer and confined to the house much of the rest) no possibility of my living on campus even if I could have afforded it. Besides the college fees, there would be transportation expenses and there would be books to buy. Many of

the books were available second hand and some, for outside reading, could be shared. Uncle Harry gave me a dollar a week for my transportation, which cost 25 cents a day, riding with another student. Furthermore, I had a bank account, one that had been building up all my life and this was the first time I needed to use it. As for lunch, I carried it in a brown bag and ate it in a locker room in the basement of Old College. I often spent a nickel on a chocolate-flavored milk drink called a 500 at Rhodes Drug Store--at my mother's suggestion. I never ate in the college dining room, the Commons, which was over top of the locker room on the main floor of Old College.

Uncle Harry died while I was in college, but Aunt Mame continued the weekly payments he had begun. Years later she came to my aid again. After I taught at Newark High School from January 1936 (during my senior year) to June 1939, I planned to go to graduate school (having completed the course work for an M. A. at Delaware during the summers). I received a tuition scholarship from Johns Hopkins, with a promise of tuition plus $600 for a second year. The sum, $600, was enough for a year's support in 1939, and I had this much in the bank. But Aunt Mame, egged on, I suppose, by my mother, offered to pay my tuition for a year at the University of Pennsylvania, where I could commute while continuing to live at home. She did it because of my mother's fear that I would not be eating properly or properly taking care of myself in Baltimore, especially while trying to save money. Rather reluctantly, I accepted. But it was fortunate that I did. My health broke down during the first term. My platelet count fell and I was experiencing small hemorrhages. I saw Dr. Lewis Flinn secretly so as not to alarm my parents, and I borrowed the money from Aunt Mame (the only time I ever asked her--or anyone--to lend me money) so I could pay him in cash at every visit to avoid the chance of a bill coming home. But finally Dr. Flinn insisted I must give up my classes in Philadelphia. It was not safe for me to be out, he said.

After I rested at home for two months (I was able to keep up with my reading) he let me go back to the university, on the understanding that I would avoid steps as far as

possible and come home immediately at the end of each day's classes. I was able to continue my work without dropping a course, though I was taking, by special permission, one more course than normally allowed. Had I been at the Hopkins in Baltimore I would have lost the whole year, putting my entire enterprise in danger, for it would have frightened me, possibly, out of the risk of continuing my pursuit of a Ph.D. in favor of the safer course of continuing to teach high school.

When I was young Aunt Mame and Uncle Harry frequently took my parents and me for an automobile ride, for my parents never had a car. It was with Uncle Harry that I first recall seeing Newark. We often drove to the (Oliver) Mousleys, at the top of Penny Hill, and to the (Clem) Scouts, below Smyrna. From both families my uncle had at various times bought eggs, and the families thus became close acquaintances. Uncle Harry fitted in with country people easily.

After I bought a car in 1936 I often took Aunt Mame out on Sundays, sometimes even when my parents couldn't go. Through the years of my life Aunt Mame was always our anchor to windward, our unfailing reliance should anything go wrong. My mother saw to it that we got along on our own, but there was this assurance that we were not alone. Uncle Harry had been rated at a tax assessment of $2,000 to $3,000 in 1898, when our cousin Bernard Kleitz, who as a manufacturing jeweler had also done well, was rated at $3,000 to $4,000. Both improved their resources thereafter, and on their own. Uncle Harry seemed to me like a David Harum. He passed much of his accumulated wisdom on to Aunt Mame, and she proved a willing pupil. And Aunt Mame, in turn, taught my mother, who lacked her toughness.

At Charlie's funeral, held in the Haines funeral home at 23rd or 24th and Market, Aunt Mame said to me, "It's a decent burial, isn't it?" She was always worried about Charlie, and even at the time of his funeral she was concerned about keeping up his good name. He was a Mason, and I have seen his name as a benefactor in the Masonic Home on the Lancaster Pike, outside Wilmington.

* * * *

I was surrounded by doting aunts in my boyhood. Besides Aunt Mame, who was never to be called "doting" though most dependable of all, there were my mother's three unmarried sisters, Mena, Katie, and Pauline. Mena and Katie were generous and kind to me; Pauline, also generous, was always seeking to educate me. She gave me books that were classics, illustrated by the great artists of that genre--N. C. Wyeth and Maxfield Parrish, among them. They were books I delighted in taking to elementary school and showing off when we had a day appointed for such display. One book that I didn't appreciate was Alice in Orchestralia, which sought to introduce orchestra instruments to children by having them explored by a girl modeled on Lewis Carroll's Alice. I see the point of it now, but it was a little too "educational" and I didn't care for it. My mother must have told Aunt Pauline, who retrieved it--"if I didn't appreciate it, she'd be glad to take it off my hands"--and probably gave me the money it had cost. She wasn't cheap. When I was having a certain birthday--whether the 16th, 18th or 21st, I don't recall--Aunt Pauline offered to take me to New York, where she had once lived (at the Barbizon Hotel) when her boss in the Du Pont Company had been transferred there for a few years. I made the mistake of answering that I couldn't very well go because I knew my mother was inviting Aunt Mame to have dinner with us on my birthday. That really wrinkled her nose, for her old feud with Aunt Mame was not forgotten.

When I was in high school Aunt Pauline paid me ten cents a day to make her bed at the home she, Katie and Andy shared at 507 West 22nd Street--only two blocks from my parents' home at 607 West 20th. It was a form of subsidy that she thought would be helpful to me in those high school years. She added extra money in summer by getting me to water the grass. At one time she arranged to teach me and another young man--an office boy, I believe--to play bridge. And when in 1941 I wrote an M.A. thesis, she typed it for me, at her own volition, supplying the paper and doing such a superior job that Dr. George Ryden, who was in charge of it, commented on the quality of the typing. I

believe she also typed some articles I had copied from rare manuscript sources or early publications when I was beginning my doctoral studies in Philadelphia.

Her office on the ninth floor of the Du Pont Building was familiar to me. I saw the events in front of the public building from there on the occasion of FDR's visit to Wilmington in 1938 for the Swedish Tercentennial--when the Crown Price of Sweden (who was ill and stayed on his ship) and Secretary of State Cordell Hull were also here. Hull spoke in front of City Hall.

Aunt Pauline also took me to some special events, like movies that were extraordinary and shown with reserved seats at the Playhouse. Occasionally later in my life I stopped at her apartment with a date. She was friendly with a number of artists in Wilmington, especially a slightly crippled woman named Carolyn Smith, a great-granddaughter of President Purnell, of Delaware College. I remember that once an exhibition of rejected work from a local art show was mounted in her apartment, which was in the basement of an old house at Delaware Avenue and Broom.

A great commotion was caused in my mother's family in the early 1920s when Aunt Mena eloped to marry Eddie Spirer in Chicago. Her mother was very angry. Partly it was a latent German anti-Semitism, I think, and partly it was a feeling that Mena was playing the fool. She was fat, "big Mena" I have seen her called in some early photo albums, and I doubt that she had had much attention from men. But she was smart with figures and was a respected bookkeeper, and she was also a devoted church worker and teacher. Eddie, a young Jewish contractor, was as small as Mena was large (he was about 5 feet, 1 inch) and nine years younger than she. They became acquainted through work he did for the Topkis firm, where she was head bookkeeper, and, mirabile dictu, she converted him to Christianity. He moved to California to be free from his father's disapproval, and from there he proposed to Mena, who met him in Chicago. I have seen a letter she wrote to my mother on the occasion. "Steve Brodie took a chance," she

wrote, "and so will I," repeating a popular saying about a man who jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge.

If Mena's mother was outraged, Eddie's father and family were at least equally upset. They declared him dead. And consider his father's dismay when Eddie decided to become a minister and proceeded to carry out this desire by attending the Lutheran theological seminary in Lincoln, Nebraska, where he and Mena lived in a garage.

Mena's sisters did not disown her. On the contrary, they supported her in every way they could, and even Aunt Mame helped, though to what extent I do not know. After the death of Eddie's father, his mother forgave him and in her last years actually made her home with him and Mena in California, where they had settled. One of his brothers helped him with free architectural plans for a church Eddie had to reconstruct in Kauai, Hawaii, after a hurricane in the 1980s. All of the Dettlings (except Mena's mother, who died relatively soon after the elopement, and Andy, who never went traveling) visited Mean and Eddie in their North Hollywood home--including Aunt Mame and Uncle Charlie.

I like the story Uncle Charlie told me about his visit with Mena. She had a sassy little dog, he said, that she would call so loud it should have disturbed the neighbors. Charlie, an acknowledged curmudgeon, disliked pets, but Mena told him, "See, Uncle Charlie, how my dog admires you. He always looks at you, nobody else, when you are in the room" No wonder the dog looked at me, Charlie explained to me. When Mena wasn't around I used to kick the nasty little thing.

Since there is a biography in print of Eddie,[12] I need write nothing more, except that my father was annoyed by his cloying sweetness. But, as my mother said, it might have been different had Eddie become a Catholic.

Mena had a large circle of friends and spent much of her time on the phone when she visited us. She was a person who loved to write and keep accounts and teach in Sunday school, but she had little housekeeping experience before she married (having

been forced to become a breadwinner at an early age) and she left most of the cooking to Eddie. However, she was a great help to him when he was founding a church, St. Matthew's, in North Hollywood. They were both kind to Dorothy and me when we went to California with two children and stayed with them briefly in 1951. I visited them again in 1971. And after Mena's death, Dorothy and I visited Eddie at his last church on Kauai, Hawaii, in 1983.

One more story about Mena and her good-heartedness. Before she was married she bought an automobile, but never learned to drive it. Her driver was her brother Andy, whom she paid for his services. But sometimes when she wanted the car, my father told me, Andy was off with it with some of his drinking companions.

As a minister's wife Mena never had much money, but even after I was married and a professor she would send me ten dollars on my birthday with a note reading, "Buy yourself an ice cream soda."

Mena never had any children. Neither did Katie or Pauline, though Katie did eventually marry. My mother thought Katie was a little man-crazy, but she was ambitious and liked at least two men who were quite superior (one was a publisher and one an Episcopal minister), but did not reciprocate her interest. She had a flair for imaginative enterprise and began to neglect her store for a role in a radio station, WILM, where she developed a very successful children's program as "Aunt Ellen." For a time she was sponsored by Bond Bread, but for the most part she worked for love of the business. She organized large children's parties, held at places like the Hotel Darling, for Aunt Ellen's Candlelight Club. I was deathly afraid she would mention me on her program when I was in the fourth or fifth grade, because I thought I was beyond such kid stuff. Eventually she gave up her store altogether to work for the station, where she met the man she married, Emil Tessmann, a flamboyant fiddle player from Virginia.

Emil was a big, gruff, kind-hearted man who had gone to the University of Virginia and spent enough time to be graduated, his mother told me, but had instead run

off with a minstrel troupe. Emil's father was the German bandmaster at Hampton Institute, and so Emil had grown up with instrumental music. His brother Bill, who also settled in Wilmington, became a piano tuner. Emil was a useful man in the radio world and became program director at WILM. He was younger than Aunt Katie, whose life changed drastically after marriage.

From being a prima donna, loving attention and a public role (Mrs. Hilles told me she liked Katie better than Pauline because Katie was essentially sweet, which I report in case I am being too hard on her), Katie began to devote herself to try to make something of Emil. He became superintendent of the Sunday School at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, but she prepared his lessons for him while he read Western stories. (She had been Sunday school superintendent at Zion Church.)

He became head of a Southern hillbilly band that advertised Crazy Water Crystals on a Philadelphia station, but when that contract played out Aunt Katie used her friendships to get him a job as a salesman at Delmarva Power, which then marketed appliances. When the war began, he took a job with the rent control office, and after the war he stayed in real estate, working as a salesman for Arnold Goldsborough. He was accustomed to drinking a good bit, and his drinking eventually hurt his health.

They had bought a house in Ardentown that had once been the home of Bill Frank and his first wife, Miriam Hetzel, and they entertained a lot. For a time they used to be regular entertainers for the cast of the summer Robin Hood Theater--a barn theater. They also had many old friends, including cousins, like Dorothy Kleitz, Dan and Rita Krapf, the Bachers, whom they foregathered with. I remember a great party they had for Dorothy and me after we were engaged. My mother and father were often there, though my mother was scandalized at the expense, and usually provided something, even money.

Katie became completely dependent on Emil. Before marriage she had been so proud that she would not ride trolley cars. When she spent a winter living with my parents, she had a taxi come to take her to work each morning. After marriage, she

stopped doing any shopping. She ordered clothes through the mail or had Emil get them for her. She had never learned to drive, but she very frequently went with him on his sales errands. As his health disintegrated, she began to go to pieces. In 1964 he took himself to the hospital for a gall bladder operation. My mother could not get Katie on the phone so she had me drive her to Ardentown, where she found the fence around the house locked. (It had been built to contain a dog that was dead by this time.) She had my father, who was then about 84, climb over the fence and open it and the house. (With my arthritis I could not have done this.)

Katie was in the house, but in a stupor. My mother had her taken, by ambulance, to the hospital where Emil was. Emil died, but Katie recovered. After staying for a while with my mother, she returned to Ardentown and lived alone until her death from cancer seven or eight years later. One of her worries was their finances, which were in bad shape. (Emil bought a new Oldsmobile almost every other year, never paying off his debt but just extending it.) My mother straightened out their confused accounts (which apparently had worried Aunt Katie to a point where she could not face them), paid off their bills, and made clear to Katie what she had to live on, which was enough for the modest style of life she now adopted.

To get Katie established on her own again was, I think, my mother's last major achievement. Katie lived out her years as a virtual recluse. Kind friends did all manner of chores for her. The Biesingers (Frank and Natalie) took her to church every Sunday and did her laundry. They were unbelievably kind to her. But Katie had a sweet disposition, as Mrs. Hilles had noted, which did win people. Sometimes when my mother was in her last sickness in 1965 and I drove to Wilmington to take her out, she would send me instead to Ardentown to take Aunt Katie out. Aunt Katie would go out for a ride with no one else, though others offered.

Unlike his sisters Uncle Andy never spoiled me. In the winter, when he stayed with my parents, he embarrassed my mother by leaving his dirty Model A Ford, which he never washed, in front of our house.

I do recall a few favors from Uncle Andy. One incident, remembered with some remorse, was when he took me to the rooms of an old political club, the Bayard Legion. I believe the club had disintegrated. Uncle Andy told me to help myself to any books or papers that were lying around. The few books were of little interest to me, but true to my economical upbringing I gathered up various papers that had one side unused with the expectation of using them for note taking in my graduate studies. (Incidentally I have written the first draft of this narrative on the back of typed pages used for various articles I have read and have no further use for.) Among the papers I picked up were block lists of potential Democratic voters in Wilmington, compiled, as I recall, by Harry Graham--lists that could be very useful to party workers in getting out the vote on election day. I also found stacks of old ballots from the loose-ballot era, just then ending, prior to the use of voting machines. In those days Delaware printed more ballots than there were registered voters. A party worker would circulate them to voters in his district and help mark them, if his help was wanted. Extra copies were available in each voting booth where the voter was required to enter, though he could vote the ballot he brought with him and had marked at home.

I am sorry now that I cut these ballots up and used them in the summer of 1940 when I was taking notes for my master's thesis. They would be rare relics today.

Uncle Andy always appeared at our house on feast days, like Christmas, and also often for Sunday dinner. With him he would bring his dirty wash for my mother to do. My father resented this work put on my mother, but he enjoyed Andy's company when they had a glass of beer together. He had, after all, known Andy from the latter's boyhood.

In 1938 or thereabouts I was annoyed when Uncle Andy refused me the use of his car when I had a date and my car had broken down. Fortunately Earl Krapf lent me his car and I was able to take my date to the Robin Hood Theater, a summer barn theater in Arden, as planned. The point is--he didn't spoil me as his sisters would have in a similar situation.

Some years earlier the family buzzed with praise of Andy for the garage he had built beside the Arden house. He was a good, careful workman (much like Uncle Charlie) when he cared to be, which was not often. I recall also that he painted the Dettlings' outdoor privy in Arden, where for many years their cottage did not have running water. He intended to paint it a brown shade that would help it blend in with the trees and shrubs that were around it. But being color-blind, like me, his brown was very bright, practically yellow, so that the privy stood out clearly from its background. When I heard the story and saw the effect of Andy's work I laughed so hard that I started my nose bleeding.

After Uncle Andy's marriage to Frances Buckley in about 1948 he settled down and was a participant in many family parties, sometimes with my parents, at the Tessmanns' in Ardentown. Eventually he had to have a leg amputated. The artificial leg Andy wore thereafter was a source of great interest to my son Stephen, who was particularly intrigued when Andy told him he often felt an itch in the missing leg.

* * * *

To back up chronologically to the Great Depression, it was then that my mother revealed she was made of the same material as her mother and grandmother. Her situation was never as bad as theirs. But starting in 1931 there were long stretches of time when my father had no work. The foundry where he was employed from his teens, Lobdell's, simply had no orders and had to close temporarily between jobs.

My father was too proud to go look for work. He would do any job my mother found for him, putting up a cousin's awnings, painting a relative's house (though he was

no painter), and he would give up his few unnecessary expenses. He stopped smoking, for instance (he had smoked cigars). He would walk everywhere in town, and save money on street car fare. He would eat whatever was put before him and never expect better. (My parents usually ate well, but not expensively.)

But such a passive mood was not my mother's. She racked her brain on ways to make money. After Aunt Katie's store closed, my mother brought some of the goods left over to our house and sold them to a few friends. She got herself a job on sale days at Kuschan's store, which had moved from varieties to children's ware to take over much of the Jack and Jill Tog Shop's business. The proprietors, Arthur and Amy Kuschan (brother and sister), were friends from Zion Lutheran Church.

My mother also rented out a room--sometimes two rooms. She developed a considerable trade in stretching lace curtains. She made angel food cakes and sold them. Because of my blood condition she gave me the raw yolks of two eggs each morning, stirred up in orange juice (my father brought it to me early when I was still in bed), and the whites, used in angel cake, were left over. Before she started making these cakes she visited someone who was expert at it and learned how.

Once a week my mother went to Mary (Mrs. Bernard) Kleitz's house on Lovering Avenue and Harrison Street to do the cleaning. She walked there, across Van Buren Street Bridge and up the hill on the other side. And walking was not easy for my mother, for she had broken a bone in her foot on one of the metal knobs that were set in the street at Tenth and Market to mark a safety zone for people boarding trolley cars. Dr. Irvine Flinn wanted to operate on the foot, but she refused, fearing an operation might leave her unable to walk. Her walking did get worse as years passed, but she never stopped going where she wanted to go. In her late years she never walked to Zion Lutheran Church for an early morning sunrise service as she had frequently done years earlier, but by those years of her life she could afford to take a taxi. Indeed, she customarily went to church

by taxi then, sharing it with Mrs. Carrie Scott, the mother of my contemporary and friend, Marguerite Heiss (Mrs. J. William Black).

It is a measure of the straits we were in that my mother sold all of her jewelry, which was not large, except her wedding ring. Perhaps the situation was eased in January 1936 when I began teaching at Newark High School and paying my mother for room and board. Today, however, when I think back upon it I realize she continued to spend a lot of money on me. I never remember, for instance, buying a shirt or underwear for myself. I did buy my suits and shoes, and in June 1936, at the end of my first term of teaching, I bought a Chevrolet automobile, a new one, aided by a discount Uncle Andy arranged for me because he knew the salesman for Hastings Chevrolet, in Richardson Park. Thereafter I could help by taking my mother shopping and often to and from church. Mother also loved to go for a Sunday drive, with my father and Aunt Mame as well. Sometimes we drove fairly far--to Rehoboth, to Reading, to the Delaware Water Gap. Mother loved to eat at the Spring Mountain House, near Schwenksville, Pennsylvania, and also at the Inglenook, in Swarthmore. Aunt Mame paid me several times to take her, and of course my parents, to see an old childhood friend who lived near Quakertown, Pennsylvania, and another near Lansdale.

There is an amusing story about my selection of my first car. I was buying it sight unseen (after all, I couldn't drive) and from Hastings Chevrolet, because of the discount, and I was getting the cheapest 4-door Chevrolet. They told me by phone they had two cars available of the model I wanted--and I wanted to get it quickly so I could learn to drive before summer school started at the University of Delaware, for I could lose no time in beginning graduate work. They had models in steel and maroon. I didn't care much for steel, and I had no idea what color maroon was, so I asked for the maroon car. When it was delivered I was delighted to see it was black, though later I found it sometimes was red to me. I simply had little color sense.

I had not saved enough in the one term (plus a few weeks) that I had taught to pay for the car in toto. My salary was $1285 a year, from which I paid my mother $10 a week and had other expenses, for commuting, lunch, and some clothes. The cost of the car was a little over $600, so I bought it with a loan from GMAC that I paid off in a year. (My Uncle Emil was a lesson to me not to get entangled in long-term car loans.)

The Depression didn't end until the coming of war in Europe in 1939 set American business to humming. So in early 1939 when I made up my mind to quit my job and go after a Ph.D. I was worried about the family's finances. I would finish my course work on the M.A. at Delaware in the coming summer, so this seemed to be the time to strike out on my needed degree for a college position, which is what I wanted. I had discovered that I loved teaching, though I had been afraid of it before I began. I was shy, but I learned that my shyness disappeared after I had taught a new class three or four days. Then I felt more at home and at ease in the classroom and with my students than I ever did in social situations.

But there was much about high school teaching I did not like. I hated to have to keep order in study hall. I disliked keeping records of attendance and tardiness, as I did the task of policing halls. With two exceptions (Bob Kern and Harvey Moore--and Harvey was there only in my last year), I had little in common with the men teachers. They didn't read, didn't go to plays or share any of my intellectual interests. Some of the women did, but as a commuter I felt the need of male company. Or, at least, I felt the want of the stimulating company that my professors at Delaware were. I decided I wanted to be in a college, though I never dreamed I might find a job at the University of Delaware.

I applied for fellowships at Yale, Columbia, Penn, and Hopkins. I was admitted to every university to which I applied, but only at Johns Hopkins, where some of my Delaware teachers had friends who arranged a personal interview, was I offered a fellowship. I have explained how I gave that up to go to Penn as a commuter. (Nobody

told me about teaching assistantships, so I had not applied for anything less than an outright fellowship.)

I really wanted to get away from home and be on my own, but I failed. My health was always a deterrent to being on my own--at least until I was about thirty[13].

* * * *

But to continue this as a story of the Dettlings, let me explain that my mother and father and Aunt Mame, too, backed me in my desire to return to school. I worried about my family's financial situation, but inasmuch as I had a teaching certificate I felt I could always go back to public school teaching, if necessary. I thought of my parents as old, but they don't seem so now. My father was sixty in 1939, but he was exceptionally hardy; indeed when he was eighty I believe he was strong enough to knock me down. My mother was only 52 in 1939, and though she did come to have a number of ailments, they were minor. Her mind continued strong to the time of her death. And her handwriting never shook as mine does now.

As it happened, everything turned out well financially, because Lobdell's became busy in 1939 and my father never was without work again until he retired in 1949 at seventy. I got a teaching assistantship at Penn in 1940, which paid me tuition and $300. This doesn't seem much now, but it was worth about $1,000 then (tuition being about $700), and it conferred other benefits: I had a desk in the history office, I had good company from the other assistants, I was on fairly close terms with the faculty, and I had some teaching to do, which pleased me, though not as much as when I had classes wholly of my own. And I was able in two and a half years to complete all the requirements for a Ph.D. except the dissertation and to take a job at Delaware, which was supposed to be for a term but lasted over forty years.

However, as a family story the important point I want to make is that I had the complete backing of my parents in all my ambitions. My mother's was the most important, because on educational matters my father would accept her leadership. And

while Aunt Mame was an independent person, she greatly valued my mother's opinion and fell in with it. Besides paying my tuition the first year she gave me further help by letting me keep my car free in her garage, which she had been renting out. Although I kept my car, which was useful in running errands for the family, I commuted by train to Pennsylvania.

When was ever a young man closer to his family than I was? Closer than I wanted to be, but my health kept me in familial thralldom. Not intellectually, however, for few in the family had my interest in books, etc. Perhaps only Aunt Pauline, and her interests were self-developed. But from the family I learned a lot. Watching Aunt Katie and Emil taught me to be careful with money (as if that lesson was not constantly drummed into me). Watching Uncle Andy taught me to try to make something of myself, not that he was a bad man, but that he did not try to become something more than he was.

The important matter is that the family stood by me--my parents, my aunts, my great-aunt. They made it clear that they were proud when I got a good grade in school, when anything happened that seemed to my credit. Aunt Mame sent me to custom tailors to have a suit made when I received the Ph.D. It turned out that Reynolds Clothiers (operated by George Kelly) had given up the custom business for ready-made, but no matter. Emil and Katie brought my parents to my wedding and to my son Stephen's graduation from St. Andrew's School. Uncle Eddie participated in Stephen's baptism. Aunt Pauline paid for a rental car Dorothy and I used when the University sent me to Europe in 1962 (and she persuaded Aunt Frances, Andy's widow, to share the expense with her). No one else in this family had gone to college. They must have had doubts about what I was doing. But they were always there. How I would have suffered if I had ever embarrassed them by my conduct! How dreadful I would have felt!

Genealogical Appendix
to
The Dettlings in My Past

I. First Generation

A. Andrew Dettling (originally Andreas)
b.1828 ca., Dettlingen (in Principality of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen)
d.June 1871, Wilmington
To America, 1853
Naturalized Sept. 14, 1858, Wilmington
Married, before 9/14/58.
211 Walnut St., residence at death

B. Wilhelmina Maier (or Mayer)
b.1836, Adelmannsfelden, Württemberg
d.1900, June 27, Wilmington
Parents: Martin and Maria Margarethe Maier
To America, 1854
Children:
Andrew, 1859-1898
Kate (Mrs. Maris Vandever)
Mary (Mrs. Harry Hurff), 1863-1947
Wilhelmina (died young)
Charles, 1870-1946
Known siblings of Andrew (Andreas)
Theresa (Mrs. Andrew) Spiegelhalter, Wilmington
Agnes Seiller, Wilmington
Mrs. Meyer, Wilmington
Mrs. Balling, Wilmington
Known siblings of Wilhelmina
Dorothea (Mrs. George) Kleitz (originally Klaitz)
Came to America, c 1882
Children: Fred, Bernard, George, Jacob, Katharine (Krapf)

II. Second generation

A. Andrew Matthew Dettling
b.March 24, 1859, Wilmington
d.July 6, 1898, Wilmington

Married Nov. 26, 1884, Wilmington
1895, owned A.M. Dettling & Co. Machine shop

B. Sophia Julia Hanselmann
b.June 7, 1862, Sindringen, Württemberg
d.Feb. 2, 1925, Wilmington
Parents: Johan (d.1878) and Barbara (d.1875) Hanselmann
To America, 1881 (to Wilmington)
Siblings of Andrew
Kate (Mrs. Maris) Vandever
Mary (Mrs. Harry) Hurff
Wilhelmina (died young)
Charles
Known siblings of Sophia
Brother, in family home in Sindringen
Kate Goetz, in Stuttgart
Children
Wilhelmina Rose, Jan. 15, 1886 - Jan. 22, 1974,
(Mrs. Edward N.) Spirer
Mary Frieda, Apr. 18, 1887 - Dec. 24, 1965,
(Mrs. Michael J.) Munroe
Katharine Sophia, Jan. 18, 1890 - Oct. 27, 1970,
(Mrs. Emil G.) Tessmann
Andrew, Apr. 13, 1892 - Apr. 18, 1961
Pauline, Nov. 16, 1897 - Sept. 9, 1975

III. Third Generation

A. Mary Frieda Dettling
b.Apr. 18, 1887, Wilmington
d.Dec. 24, 1965, Wilmington
Married Michael Munroe, November 1912, Wilmington

B. Michael John Munroe
b.Sept. 27, 1879, Wilmington
d.Nov. 9, 1969, Wilmington
Parents: Martin and Bridget (McCabe) Munroe,
immigrants from Ireland

Mary's siblings
Wilhelmina Rose (Mrs. Edward) Spirer
Katharine Sophia (Mrs. Emil G.) Tessmann
Andrew
Pauline

Michael's siblings
Mary (Mrs. Reuben) Brown (children)
William

Patrick (later Frank Monroe) (children)
Margaret
Catherine (Mrs. John) Collins (children)
Sarah (Mrs. Charles) Geffken
Martin (died young)

Son: John Andrew Munroe, 1914

IV. Fourth Generation

A. John Andrew Munroe
b.March 15, 1914, Wilmington

1936, graduated Univ. of Delaware; M.A. in 1941
1942-1982, on history faculty, Univ. of Delaware
1945, married Dorothy Levis, Baltimore
1947, Ph.D., Univ. of Pennsylvania

B. Dorothy Imogene Levis
b.Dec. 23, 1922, Baltimore

Parents: Alfred Conrow and Katheryne Irene (Crook) Levis

1944, graduated University of North Carolina Women's College, Greensboro, N.C.
To Univ. of Delaware (M.A. 1946)

Dorothy's siblings
Grace Crook (Mrs. Frank) Schwartz, d.Jan. 1998
Katheryne Crook (Mrs. Richard P.) McCormick

Children
Stephen Horner Munroe (June 3, 1946)
married Aug. 12, 1978, to Cordelia Ellen Swain (June 4, 1947)
Their children:
David Andrew Munroe (Sept. 12, 1981)
Margaret Parrish Munroe (Apr. 26, 1984)
Carol Levis Munroe (Dec. 28, 1948)
married Aug. 23, 1980, to András Janos Riedlmayer (Nov. 28, 1947)
Their children:
Alexander John Riedlmayer (July 26, 1984)
Anna Valeria Riedlmayer (Dec. 1, 1986)
John Michael Munroe (Feb. 21, 1953)

married Sept. 8, 1979, to Julie Kay Crum (Nov. 6, 1954)

Their children:

Randall Patrick Munroe (Oct. 17, 1984)

Richard Neal Munroe (Apr. 4, 1987)

Douglas John Munroe (June 9, 1990)

ENDNOTES

[1] My father told me my mother's sisters wanted me named Andrew, but that he preferred his middle name, John, so I became John Andrew. I have always been pleased with the name.

[2] Sindringen (or Sündringen), once a walled town, lies on the Kocher River, east of the city of Heilbronn. It had been part of Württemberg only since 1806, when Napoleon reorganized the territories of the German states. Previously it was in the principality of Hohenlohe-Bartenstein. Its residents spoke a Franconian dialect (not Swabian) and were almost all Lutherans. The population was 750 in 1869, a decline from 950 in 1839. In the absence of railroad connections or new industry a steady emigration reduced the papulation further to 504 in 1910.

[3] Sophie's three brothers were named Johan, Fritz, and Gottlieb.

[4] A girl back in Ober Ohrm, Pauline Bauer, who did not know Sophie Hanselmann, heard about her decision to leave Germany. Pauline was a niece of Mrs. Wagner, whose maiden name was Bauer, and she told me of her memories when she was an elderly widow living on West Fifth Street in Wilmington, where she had come as a young girl of eleven some years after Sophie. Her late husband, Harry Neher, had been a brewmaster, an occupation he shared with an in-law relation of Sophie, a man named Goetz, who was a brewmaster in Philadelphia for Bergdoll. The Hanselmanns had a connection with Ober Ohrm, Pauline Neher's home town, for Sophie's sister Kate was married there.

[5] According to the New York Times of July 19, 1881, in that year 74,633 German emigrants passed through Hamburg en route to America between January 1 and June 30.

[6] The only other relatives I heard of in America were two elderly sisters named Dottling in Philadelphia. The similarity of the name was, I believe, accidental. I never saw them but recall they were to be informed of deaths in the family.

[7] In my boyhood when I lived next door to Aunt Mame, I recall that the Vandever children were at her house often. I do not recall ever seeing their father or the youngest child, Charles.

[8] The Earnest children were Mary (who married Russell Boller, a dentist from Holley, in upstate New York), Anne (Mrs. Henry Heller, of East Lansdowne, Pa.), and Grover. I remained in touch with Anne, whose son Raymond is a graduate of the University of Delaware.

[9] Helen's children were Betty (Mrs. Austin O'Grady, of near Atlanta), Albert, Jr., and Robert.

[10] Katie's children that my mother kept in touch with were Mildred (Mrs. Perry Stirling) and Cassie (Mrs. Joseph Suzminski). Both lived in Philadelphia. I have no specific record of other children.

[11] I understand that between leaving Lombard Street and occupying the house at 507 West 22nd Street, the Dettlings resided briefly in the 200-block on 22nd Street, probably renting there.

[12] Ross F. Hidy, Eddie Spirer, the Little Minister (Concord, CA: Lutheran History Center of the West, 1992)

[13] When I was about eleven it was discovered I had thrombocytopaenic purpura, a bleeding disease marked by a paucity of platelets (thrombocytes). The body seems gradually to adjust, and the problem is said to disappear after the patient passes thirty--and so it did in my case.
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