

A Dream and an Honor

The Life Story of
Dr. Alan J. Snider

by Alan J. Snider, D.O.

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Edited by Anna-Lisa Nilsson

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*This book is dedicated to the
osteopathic medical profession
and the many physicians who have worked
so diligently to create and sustain
Sun Coast Hospital.*

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Forward

The Sun Coast Hospital Foundation Board of Trustees is pleased to introduce Dr. Alan J. Snider's life story, "A Dream and an Honor." The life and times of Dr. Snider are intimately intertwined with the founding of Sun Coast Hospital, which was accomplished in 1957. While he fulfilled his childhood dream, many other dreams have unfolded since then.

The past 50 years of Sun Coast Hospital have been years of significant growth. The city of Largo has grown from several thousand people to nearly 100,000 people. Sun Coast Hospital has kept pace with the growth of the community and offers a continuum of health care services. These include general and acute care, inpatient medical and surgical services and 24-hour emergency services.

The hospital's mission is to deliver quality patient care and improve the health status of the community. The Foundation's goal is to provide ongoing financial support to assure quality health care for the community.

It is Dr. Snider's special request that 100% of the proceeds from this book go to support Sun Coast Hospital. In fact, his motivation for writing the book was based on this understanding.

We hope you enjoy reading the trials and tribulations of Dr. Alan J. Snider and his journey from Canada, Pennsylvania, Maine to Florida. We ask you to show your appreciation in the form of a donation to the Sun Coast Hospital Foundation, which will go directly to benefit Sun Coast Hospital.

Preface

I never planned to write my life story. However, over the years, many of my patients who love Sun Coast Hospital urged me to do so. The late Colonel George Brown, a Sun Coast supporter and dedicated patient, was particularly insistent I take on this task and offered to help financially with the first edition.

But that was back in 1996, and here I am, 11 years later, updating and adding to my life story, which I hadn't planned to write to begin with.

In reading the original autobiography, I realized that the lifestyle I had so enjoyed – in that one-room school as a teacher, working my way through medical school, fathering five beautiful children, and so on – should require greater detail, thus the rewrite.

My daughter Gail (now Anna-Lisa) took my new handwritten notes, typed and re-organized them into chapters for both the original book and this update. Her husband Huch guided her along the way. Charlotte helped with the final polish. So, here is my little book – a bit longer, and celebrating Sun Coast Hospital's 50th anniversary.

I am a 95-year-old retired general surgeon. Through my experiences as a sickly boy, my life's dream from a very early age was to build a hospital for others in need of medical care. Sun Coast Hospital in Largo Florida, is the fruition of that lifelong dream. In five decades it has grown from a 24-bed hospital to a full-service, 200-bed acute care medical and surgical hospital.

This book details the life story of my childhood days in Canada, my journey as a teacher, an osteopathic physician, a general surgeon, a loving husband and a father of five. Although I am retired, I am still active with the Sun Coast Hospital and its fund-raising Foundation. My other passions involve gardening and relaxing with my wife, Charlotte, in the North Carolina mountains from May through October.

Fortunately, my enthusiasm and positive outlook on life are the same as when I was a young boy. In so many ways, my life has been a long, wonderful dream. My family, loyal friends and patients have offered ongoing love and support in my endeavors. I am especially indebted to my colleagues in the osteopathic medical profession.

I hope you enjoy reading about my life as much as I have enjoyed living it!

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following family and friends for making this book a possibility: my wife Charlotte Snider, my daughter Anna-Lisa Nilsson and her husband Bill “Red” Huch.

1 - My Ancestors

To think back over 95 years of my life has taken some in-depth thinking. Many events stand out in great detail, some are fuzzy, many are just plain forgotten. As a preamble, however, I must say my life has been a fascinating experience and one I hope to prolong!

To make my family history informative and interesting, especially for my children, I reached as far back into my family heritage as possible.

My Mother's Side

In 1875, my mother's father, James Lang, came to Canada from Scotland with his wife Ellen Lang, and seven children. My mother was two years old. He, a typical Scot, wanted to raise his family his own way. From Montreal, the family crossed Canada by the Canadian Pacific Railroad to the little town of Rat Portage, situated on beautiful Lake of the Woods in western Ontario, Canada.

James, a blacksmith, went to the C.P.R. shops and applied for work. He was hired immediately as a blacksmith in the round house. Why was the huge railway shop called a round house? The engine would be driven onto a huge turntable. The table would turn to the proper set of tracks for the necessary maintenance, it might be a place to change a wheel, do repairs or just be readied for the next day's journey back to where it came from. Each trip for an engine was 150 miles, then it would pull into a round house and be checked, fueled and watered, and turned around for the return trip.

While the family walked about the little town of Rat Portage beside the beautiful Lake of the Woods, they spied a tiny speck in the middle of the lake about a mile offshore. Grandfather Lang, being quite adventurous, rented a rowboat (there were no outboard motors in those days) and rowed with his wife and seven children across the lake to a tiny beach on the little island. They all disembarked, sat down on some rocks and ate their lunch – a loaf of bread, a lump of cheese and a large container of milk.

After lunch, they went exploring. There were no buildings on the island, only trees. They all felt right at home here. James said, "Ellen, dear, take the children and pick out the site for your home, because I am going to buy this island and christen it Lang's Island. We'll build a log cabin for our home." So Grandmother Ellen took off with her seven children to explore the island.

“James, I’ve found it, I’ve found the most beautiful place for our future home. Come see it!” called Grandmother Ellen. There on top of a little hill in the midst of great towering spruce and pine trees stood his little family. With tears in his eyes, that dour Scotsman ran up the hill, embraced his wife and children, then looked about. There in the distance, across the lake, he could see Rat Portage. He was thrilled. “James, can we put the doorway into our log cabin right where I’m standing? The view is spectacular from here.” And that’s what they did. They walked around the site of their future home, admiring the view and planning where each bedroom would be.

Soon you could hear the sound of chopping, for Grandfather Lang was constructing a dock on that tiny beach. He felled the trees and sawed the logs all by hand. My grandmother sat wistfully on a log remembering Scotland and how thrilled she was to live in this beautiful foreign country on their own island in their own log cabin. As a boy, I used to go over there with my family and pick wild blueberries and raspberries.

They scrambled on to the new dock and into the row boat. Young Jim, the oldest and strongest child, stood up in the prow of the rowboat with his long pole, and guided them from the dock to deep water, where Grandfather James took the oars and began to propel the rowboat toward Rat Portage. Upon arriving back at Rat Portage, James docked the row boat, helped his family to disembark, then headed to the post office to check on mail and establish their residency on the island. He named the island “Lang’s Island,” and it’s still called that to this day.

Off he went and found the tiny post office with the name of Rat Portage, and beside it, on the ground, a new sign reading “Kenora.” What’s this about?” asked James. “We are building a new post office and renaming our town Kenora,” said a group of townsfolk. “See that building over there? That’s our new post office.” James checked on the mail, then walked across to the very imposing three-story brick building. Some important-looking men examined the building. “This the new post office and the new name of our town?” he asked. “Yes, Kenora is a definite improvement on Rat Portage, don’t you think?” Grandfather agreed. He walked through the new building and discovered that the first and second floors were post office, but the third floor was the home for the caretaker as part of his salary. When he found out that the position of caretaker was open, he applied and got the job. So not only did he have a job as blacksmith in the C.P.R. round house, but had a second job and lodging for his family until the house was built, during his off-hours, on the island.

Newly arrived from Scotland, and with a Scottish brogue you could cut with a knife, they were settled. Several children were musical and offered their voices to the children’s choir. Grandmother Ellen joined the adult choir. The whole family made every effort to find a niche for themselves in this new country, with a new home, new job, new island home, and church.

The boys tried out for soccer and made the teams in their respective age brackets. One coach said, "My goodness, you Langs are good soccer players. How come?" "Well," said Grandfather James, "In Scotland, wee ones were born with soccer balls in their chubby hands." And so the little town of Kenora absorbed the Lang family as their own. The children met good playmates. Grandmother Ellen became a member of the Mother's club at church, Grandfather James became church treasurer.

Lake of the Woods, a long, deep, beautiful lake, forms part of the boundary between Canada and the United States. Thus Kenora became a port not only for Canadians who boated, but for Americans as well. It became a prosperous little summer resort town for the citizens of both countries.

But tragedy struck the happy family. They were settled in their log cabin on Lang's island and after about a year had passed, Grandmother Ellen became ill, apparently of pneumonia. She developed a high fever, and Grandfather James feared she was going to die. During the spring ice break-up, he poled his rowboat through the ice floes and approached his minister. "Sir, my wife is very ill, she may die. Could you come across and say a few words of comfort to her?"

The minister replied, "Jim, I cannot. It is too dangerous. I could die."

My grandfather tipped his hat, turned away and sought his doctor. "Sir, could you come and take care of my wife? She is very ill."

"Of course, Jim, let me get my medicine bag and I'll meet you at the dock."

My grandfather took the doctor across in his little rowboat, pushing the ice aside as they progressed. The doctor cared for Grandmother Ellen but, sorry to say, she died the next day. The family never attended the minister's church again. In fact, the funeral was conducted from a different church that the Lang family adopted, then and there, for all time.

When his wife died, he hired a "house mother" to help him. She cooked, cared for the clothes and did general household work. As a blacksmith for the Canadian Pacific Railroad shops, Grandfather James left for work early in the morning and came home late. He cleaned up, ate dinner, then did janitorial work at the Post Office before going to bed. (See where I come from? Hard work!) One day when Grandfather James had come down with a cold, he left work early and rowed across to Lang's Island. He heard the house mother berating his children.

"Get your duds packed, woman. You are leaving now. Nobody bawls out my family without just cause." She left in a hurry.

"Dad," said one of the teen-aged girls, "we don't need a housekeeper. We can cook, make beds and care for the little ones. Don't worry, we will get along fine."

“Thank you, children,” he said, “however, tomorrow I am bringing home a fine lady I met in church. Maybe she’ll be your new mother!” True to his word, he brought home a little English lady, Isabel, whom he had been visiting for the past four months. They all fell in love with her, and were so happy when, the next Sunday, they became man and wife. And interesting bonus to the marriage, Isabel was a fabulous chef. In England, she had been a chef for one of the royal families. She took over the kitchen and did all the cooking, wrote out lists of food for Dad to bring across in his rowboat, and they ate well. She had one peculiarity, however. She used pot after pot after pot in her food preparation and cooking. But when the food was put on the table and eaten, she headed for the bedroom and never washed a dish, pot, pan, knife, fork or spoon. But they got used to that pile of dirty dishes and felt it was only fair they should do them. They just dug in and got them done, and never told their dad about this peculiarity of his new bride!

One of my mother’s brothers, Jim, was a fine violin player and would hide himself in his bedroom and play for hours. As far as I know, he never played publicly. He became a machinist in the same round house where my grandfather worked. One day the supervisor approached him, patted him on the back and said, “Jim, you are the finest machinist here.”

Jim, a Scott, said, “Don’t patronize me.” He walked off the job and never went back. They blackballed him in the town’s work force and he ended up in a distant gold mine looking for employment. Scots are either stubborn or determined. I prefer the latter classification!

My Father’s Side

My father didn’t talk about his family very much. His mother died when he was an infant. His father was a millwright. He built flour mills in eastern Ontario. He died shortly after his wife died, I am not sure of the cause. Rumor has it he drank heavily to drown out his sorrow.

My Dad: Dan Snider

My dad was quite poor as a child. As an orphan, his aunt raised him on a farm, along with her three lovely children. He became a good farmer, but had a lifelong ambition, sparked by the engineer who always waved as the train passed by the field where the youngsters worked. Dad wanted to be an engineer, and he became one – a good one.

Thinking back over these years is indeed a pleasure. You see, my Dad was an engineer on the great Canadian Pacific Railroad that extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific, across the hinterlands of that great country called the Dominion of Canada. This railroad crossed mile after mile of virtually uninhabited land. As a result, this great company constructed tiny towns every 150 miles which contained round houses with shops to do any repairs their engines might need. Our family benefited by this concept –

my Father drove his engine with its string of boxcars from our home in Fort William – now called Thunder Bay, Ontario, the 150 miles due west to the town of Ignace. There, his engine would be uncoupled from the string of cars – another engine coupled on – while he then drove his engine to the round house for servicing.

Can you imagine an organization that big? That colossal? Depots every 150 miles across that mostly uninhabited part of the country?

My Mother: Nelle Lang

My mother was a pretty, tiny (5'2" in height) intelligent, kind and gentle young lady, who still, when excited, rolled her "r's" as a Scot. When she reached the age of 18, which in those days was the marrying age, a young railway engineer named Dan Snider appeared on the scene. Grandfather James Lang met him in the C.P.R. round house and thought he was one handsome young man, which he was. He invited Dan out to the island. Mother waited table and with the rest of the children, cleared the table, then served tea to the adults, which included her dad and Dan, the new guest. Mother helped wash the dishes, then sat down to hear the adult conversation. Dan was directing his remarks to my Mother, and she demurely answered them. Eventually Dan said his good-byes and left.

One week later, who showed up on the front porch but Dan Snider, as it turned out, about dinner time. My Granddad greeted him warmly and said, "Dan, why don't you stay for supper?"

Dan replied, "Mr. Lang, I would be pleased to."

After supper, Mother cleared all the dishes, as usual, tidied up the kitchen, and heard Dan's voice, "Where did Nelle go?" Mother was called out of the kitchen, sat down and listened timidly once again to the adult conversation. Next week, same time, Dan showed up on their porch, rapped on the door, and was admitted again for supper and an evening of entertainment at the Lang home. Finally, before leaving the house, he asked if he could talk to her. He and Nelle went out on the porch, alone, and he invited her to the dance the next week. She agreed to accompany him.

Next week, Dan arrived, looking just grand. He really was handsome. He took my Mother's hand, conducted her outside, and sat her in a rented row boat and they took off from Lang's Island to Kenora. That was the beginning of the courtship. It turned out that Dan was a railway engineer, had a steady job, and could well afford to marry and support a wife. They didn't tarry long. He proposed, she accepted, and they married in one week and moved to Fort William, Ontario.

Our Family

In short time, my mother and father had four children. My two brothers, Archie and Gordon, then me, then my sister Helen, who was quite petite, like my mother.

Unfortunately, the problem that was destined to harass them for their entire marriage showed up on the honeymoon – Dan appeared, showing the effects of too much liquor. Mother abhorred booze of all kinds. Unfortunately, the railway engineers of that era were frequently alcoholics, and Dad was no exception. Life became very, very difficult for this fine young bride, and Mother and Dad had an unhappy marriage. This is where all his money went. Strange how one can be two people – good when sober, cantankerous when drunk!

My parents stayed together to raise the family of four children. Neither had much education. I heard so much angry talk as I grew up and I hate arguing to this day. When a discussion becomes a heated argument, I freeze up, and I am afraid my children are the same way. “Peace at any price” is our motto.

I believe open discussion is good for the soul, a way for both parties to learn. Argument, on the other hand, is just beating the other person down to your way of thinking.

2 - *My Childhood*

I was born in Canada in the town of Fort William, Ontario, now called Thunder Bay. The year was 1911. The date was June 30. My childhood days in Canada were average. My mother understood me, but my father did not. To this day I don't know why.

At 9 years old, I was a sick little fellow and spent many days in a hospital in Canada. My condition: for a full year I had a violent urinary bladder infection so bad that I had permission to leave the classroom anytime, as often as needed. I would hurry to the lavatory, cry with pain, go back to my desk and in a few minutes repeat the routine. Finally they took me to a hospital, where they removed my appendix. After surgery, I lay in bed for a week and my symptoms subsided.

After returning to school, I became more active and the symptoms returned. I was again an invalid. I spent many more months in agony. Finally, back at the hospital, they took a "flat plate" of my abdomen. (This was in 1920, before X-ray film was widely used.) The plate revealed an egg-shaped stone in my bladder. The stone had created an irritation to the bladder wall and became severely infected. I was a sick lad. During surgery, they opened the bladder and removed the stone. My health finally began to improve.

During this whole year, truly a miserable one, a hospital was born in the mind of a 9-year-old boy. I could have drawn it for you at the drop of a hat. My vision to someday have a hospital of my own was very real to me. I spent hours dreaming of and designing this hospital. It would encompass all the diagnostic and therapeutic modalities known, so health problems could be detected and treated more readily.

After the hospital staff remedied my illness, my childhood was fine. I did well in school. I loved people and enjoyed chatting with everybody, and still do! Over time, I became truly healthy and took to skating, skiing and tramping through the woods.

My summers, between the ages of 10 and 16, were good, happy times, spent on the shores of the beautiful lake in Ignace. Brothers Gordon and Archie took canoe trips during those summers. My one disappointment was they never invited their little brother, me, on any of those trips. I guess little brothers are a nuisance.

We were not raised with a chorus of 'don't's. We were allowed to do, and most of the time, completely on our own. My little sister Helen, who was four years younger,

and I rowed in our snub-nosed punt boat called Jiggs all around the lake. We cast off a fishing line with a spinner on the end and rowed around and caught fish. These were brought back to our shack and Mother cooked them up. We dove off the boat, swam around and enjoyed life. Now, that was a healthful childhood. I wish I had pictures we took of our catch. Sometimes the pike or the pickerel would be quite large.

As a teenager, I played softball after school and was a fair player. I practiced with my pal, Howard Reid, who was our school catcher. I was assigned to 3rd base, the hot corner. On a hard throw to first to catch the runner, I hurt my shoulder, probably tore the rotator cuff. I developed a lame right shoulder and could not throw the ball very well to first base. I still wanted to play softball, so I learned to be a pitcher. In softball, a pitcher throws underhand, which I could do. I became the school's varsity pitcher. Occasionally I would ask my mother if Howard could have supper with us. She said, "Okay, but it is just leftovers." Howard was the only person who ever joined us at mealtime, and then rarely. We could not always figure on dad's condition.

I was browbeaten as a child, particularly at mealtimes, by my Dad and brother Archie. It intensified when I was about 12. Archie and Dad seemed to get pleasure out of heckling me. We sat down for a meal, and anything I said, they recited back and laughed at. In time, I began to stutter and become nervous. My little Scottish Mother stepped in and said, "You two lay off this little fellow, you'll spoil him. Why, he is stuttering already." That stopped the heckling, and I've no idea why it started in the first place. Maybe I was a cocky little lad, I don't know. Things settled down. Since then, I have a tendency to stutter when I am excessively tired. An offshoot of those years and heckling, Arch and I never spoke to each other for many years. I respected him, and as I matured and became a doctor and founded a hospital, we became friends. What a waste of all those years of companionship.

I loved to tramp through the woods hunting rabbits with Joe MacArthur. The woods were two miles from our home and the rabbits were plentiful. We sold them to the English families who considered them a delicacy. We would use the money we obtained to buy ammunition. (Ask my dad for money? Oh, no!)

How did I get my single shot 22-gauge rifle? During the summers, my mother, my sister Helen, and I picked large baskets of blueberries. Dad took them on his engine from Ignace to Fort William and sold them. My first rifle cost \$4.75. I loved it and took great care of it.

One day Joe and I went hunting, built a fire, put on a can of water to boil, put in some hotdogs and hunted while they cooked. As we walked back toward the fire, I saw a hotdog sticking out of the water and said to Joe, "Watch me nick that hotdog." I shot. "Ouch," said Joe. "You shot me!" Apparently the 22-caliber bullet had ricocheted off the pot of boiling water, came back toward us and struck him in the wrist. It was only a flesh wound, happily for Joe, who became one of our fine hockey players. He needed a good wrist.

3 - My Enthusiasm- Getting Things Done!

Growing up in Canada was okay. Oh, the winters were long and cold, but we did not seem to mind. Never were we confined at home because of the cold or stormy weather. We dressed for the cold, ran rather than walked. I guess that kept us warm!

One fall day during my early adolescence, a group of my pals got together and decided that we needed an ice skating rink – and possibly a hockey team. We began to plan. Along my street about three lots from my home was an empty lot. I elected to approach the owner to see if he would allow us to dig a trench along four sides of the lot – use the earth to make a bank of earth so we could flood the lot and have ice.

The owner was not too enthusiastic until we sold him on the idea that we would teach all the young people how to skate, free. He had a delightful 10-year-old daughter who was the apple of her Dad's eye, and this idea appealed to him. And she was very happy with the idea.

Then we set to work. With shovels and spades we dug the trenches around the lot, built up the banks for the rink. We approached the city fathers and asked if they would flood the rink for us. They send down the city engineer, he approved the site, they flooded it and we had a skating rink.

The gang decided we just had to have a hockey team. We canvassed the area, rapping on all doors and businesses, with the theme, “we will teach all children how to skate and the rink would be available to anyone, but we needed a contribution for sweaters and skates for our hockey team.” That theme worked. I think the idea of little kids being taught how to skate sold the idea. We chose our team colors – maroon and gold. Our emblem, believe it or not, was a swastika (Hitler's emblem). I swear, though, there was no thought of being neo-Nazis. We bought the felt and our girlfriends cut out the emblems and sewed them on our jerseys. We were proud!

The rink was quite a neighborhood success. Of course it snowed frequently and heavily, but the lads all got together and shoveled it off.

Spring came, you know in Canada you are shoveling snow one week then the weather changes suddenly and you are planting potatoes!

The owner of the lot called me. "What are you going to do to ready my lot for growing potatoes?" he asked.

"Just as soon as the frost leaves the ground, we will level the lot," I told him, and we did, of course. We thanked him and his 10-year-old daughter, and he promised us the use of the land for the next winter.

Remember that in Canada the weather changes dramatically from the cold of winter to the hot of summer. One day my gang was sitting around chatting.

"Why don't we have a tennis court?" one lad asked.

"Why not?" we answered, and began to plan.

Across the street from my home was an unused lot, ideal for a tennis court. We approached the owner, with a similar theme we had for the skating rink. If he would let us use his lot for a tennis court, we would teach any young people who wanted to how to play tennis.

Again the theme caught on. We got together and mowed the weeds. (It was unused, you see), planted grass seeds, marked out the court with white tape, set up the net, set up 2 x 4 timbers and strung chicken wire about the periphery of the lot.

Regularly we cut the grass and that summer and several following summers we played on our own tennis court. Once again we told the neighbors that the court was open to all, and it became quite a nice contribution to our youth activity.

As I became an older adolescent, on Saturday nights our city covered rink had a full band for skating. People of all ages convened in the huge colored area and as the band played, we skated round and round and round that big ice surface. Now, that was fun. The high school students came, skated in pairs with each other, and had a really good time. I think the tickets cost 35 cents, but we all dug up the money somehow and enjoyed ourselves.

Now that was Saturday nights, but on Friday nights, open air skating rinks were available. We would head out after dinner wearing warm duds, don our skates and skate, skate, skate. I believe we skated practically non-stop for about two hours.

Then home again. My mother would have a fresh loaf of her homemade bread ready. I'd cut two thick slices, lay on butter and a thick piece of Spanish onion (remember them) then the top layer of bread and, armed with a big tumbler of milk, I would head up to bed.

Now I tell you after that exercise, I slept, possibly aided by the onion sandwich.

Life in Canada, growing up, was simple, physical and good. My parents always fed us well – three square meals a day and a snack at bedtime.

We always looked forward to the Spring. One reason, the break-up of the ice on the local rivers. The chunks of ice were room-sized and 1 foot thick. We rode them down in the current. Oh, we fell down, slipped off sometimes, and it was, of course, dangerous, but really fun. When it became time to think of heading for home, we'd build a bonfire to dry off. Upon reaching home, and facing the scrutiny of our mothers, we would look quite respectable. Oh, if mothers only knew the hazards we took in the process of growing up.

One Spring, after riding the ice floes, we decided to build a log cabin clubhouse. The local library provided directions of how to construct a cabin. We dug out the foundation, which was 4 feet deep, then built a 4 foot structure. This created 8-foot walls for our cabin. We roofed it, but did not fill in the spaces between the logs. One Saturday, we all walked out, including our mothers (dads were not interested) to see our gang headquarters. Low and behold, rain storms had completely filled that 4 foot dug-out area. The rain had just poured in and flooded us. It was months before we evacuated the water then properly sealed the walls, using mud, of course.

Formal education in music was not thought of in my family, and I don't know why except that it would cost money for lessons. I could even have joined a church choir, but nobody suggested it. So I did not do it, and regret my lack of music today.

One thing I did toward a little music, on Saturdays I would walk or run up to our library, obtain several books, run, not walk home, go to our "parlor" and set a stack of records on the Victrola and close the doors. I would lie on my tummy and read by the hour. Reading became a large part of my life and still does. The Victrola provided my music education.

4 – *My Family*

I would like to tell you about my oldest brother Gordon. He spent his early childhood and adolescence in bed and then in a chair. At the age of eight, he developed a streptococci infection that invaded and partially destroyed the valves of his heart. This inflammation of the valve caused some destruction of its ability to close properly, creating a “leaking valve,” with the result that the heart became enlarged. Even mild exertion caused congestion of the lungs. This was before the advent of penicillin, of course. Our Mother cared for him night and day, slept in a chair bedside. She claimed she never changed her clothes some days when he was desperately ill.

Our family doctor, Dr. Cook, was her constant stand-by. She would call him anytime of the day or night, saying, “Dr. Cook, Gordon can’t breathe, I am worried. I know it’s 3 a.m.!”

“Nelle, sit tight, I’ll be right over.” And this splendid physician, along with our dedicated Mother, kept Gordon alive. Dad could never understand Gordon’s illness, his long periods of being confined to bed. In fact, I heard him slur to my brother once, “You’ll never amount to anything.” Imagine!

Gordon finally left the sick bed, but he was never robust. Over time he began to recover and became more active. But he was about sixteen years old before he learned to skate, ride a bike and paddle a canoe. He never complained.

My older brother Archie, on the other hand, was a character, a virtual Adonis, a born athlete. He was big and strong, even as a teen-ager, and he was self-sufficient in the woods. During his adolescent years, while summering at the lake at Ignace, he became a guide, paddling a canoe with one other paddler. They paddled and portaged hour after hour, carried the canoe and food across the portages to the next lake, sleeping under the canoe. Even when it rained, he practically lived off the land and water. In the process, he built up a splendid body. No wonder he was an Adonis.

One afternoon, a Saturday, during a school term, Arch went down to the fairgrounds to a dirt track near our home in Fort William. Lads his age were practicing sprints – 100 yards and 200 yards. They encouraged and then ridiculed Arch into competing with them. Reluctantly, he put on a pair of running shoes. He challenged their top sprinters and capably defeated them all – both in the 100 and 200 yard dash.

Another example of his prowess, after high school, where he studied technical courses – cars, bikes, outboard motors – he needed to get a job. Our Dad got him a free pass on the railroad to Ignace, Ontario. It was winter, snow 3 to 4 feet deep. He saw a sign, “Timber Cutters Needed.” Arch applied, was given a couple of axes, a crosscut saw and transported to the bush barracks. There were about twenty men there, mostly Finns, Swedes, Norwegians – all strong and capable timbermen. Arch joined a crew, began felling trees, and sawing them into pulpwood lengths. He had absolutely no trouble keeping up with these experienced, mature timbermen.

One weekend, he went into the town of Ignace, got a haircut, a square meal and observed some men boxing in a ring of the gymnasium in the local Y.M.C.A. He strolled over and observed the action.

“Come on, Arch, put on the gloves,” one said.

“No way,” said Arch, “I believe in ‘lovin,’ not fightin’.” He turned away but they came after him and induced him to put on the gloves. He stepped into the ring, the bell sounded, and in seconds he had knocked out their best boxer! What a future Arch could have had, had he been guided into a college into athletics. It’s hard to say how far he might have gone, but he did not have the ambition, the drive, to prod himself.

After his winter of cutting timber in the woods, he returned home and just sat around. Our Mother could not visualize a son of hers reaching adulthood and not being employed. She called a fellow Scot who worked in one of the Canadian Pacific Railway shops.

“Andrew,” she said, “my son Archie needs a job. Can you help?”

“Sure thing, Nelle, send him down tomorrow and we’ll see what can be done.” Archie applied for the job, got it, and was employed there for forty years.

One day, Arch announced, “I want you to meet Beatrice. We just got married.” Beatrice, a cute little girl from French-Canadian ancestry, proved a loving, capable wife and became the mother of three daughters.

But Arch was an alcoholic like Dad, typical of the machinists in the C.P.R. shops, and this became a bone of contention to his family. One day, his daughters, all adolescents by now, said, “Dad, we would like to talk to you sometime.”

“Why not now? Let’s go,” said Archie.

“Well, we all have jobs,” they said “We are going to rent an apartment and move out!”

“Why are you doing this?” inquired Arch.

“Well,” they said, “We have two fathers – one when sober, we love very much and when he is drunk – well, we are very disappointed.”

“What’s the alternative?” said Arch.

“There’s only one. You stop drinking.”

From that moment on, Arch stopped drinking, would serve drinks to his friends but never touched a drop.

5 – Summers of Work and Play

We spent countless years summering on the shores of the beautiful lake in Ignace, Ontario, from the time I was about eight years of age until my early teens. My Dad purchased a camp on the shores of this lake. It was a boxcar with a screened porch attached. He had a pump installed, but there was no electricity. It was very primitive.

The lake at Ignace was typical of thousands of lakes in that part of Canada, carved out by huge glaciers thousands of years before. The water was clear, shores were sandy and the population was scanty. My Dad would, on occasion, stay with us in our camp rather than the company barracks.

While not berry-picking with my Mother, my sister Helen and I had the exclusive use of a snub-nosed rowboat that we named Jiggs – named after that short, stubby character in the cartoons of that era.

Helen and I were completely on our own, at my tender age of 10 and hers of 6. We would row that boat and fish for hours. I wonder why we had such freedom, such unsupervised time. In retrospect, I realize that Mother, who really raised us, was kind and gentle, but tough Scottish stock. She just assumed we would be careful, and we were.

My mother was a jewel, loved by all, and a particular favorite of her grandchildren. I believe her greatest strengths were her ability to listen, reason and communicate.

She was my first booster, and never cast a doubt that I could and should have a hospital. Her confidence in me was a great help. We grew up in a period when mothers stayed home, or at least were always there when we returned from school. It takes a good mother to make a house a living home.

My older brothers, Gordon and Archie, at ages about 18 and 16, contracted with Dad to paint our two-story house in Fort William, and to receive a payment of a new canoe. The job being completed, Dad kept putting off the purchase of the canoe. My Mother stepped in and took the two boys to a local boat shop and purchased their canoe. This was the finest addition to our family. The two boys practically lived in it.

On a camping trip, Archie, Gordon and a neighboring camper, Lorne Carson, collected several partridges, cleaned them and stuffed them for a little personal feast.

They put them in Mrs. Carson's oven and went canoeing to an island for a swim. When they returned, they found Lorne's sister and a group of visiting girlfriends had eaten all the birds!

The boys held a bull session and decided the girls needed a lesson. They collected a whole bucket of frogs and toads, French-sheeted their beds, then loaded them with the captives. Imagine the screaming when the girls turned in! The girls never mentioned this in the morning. Everything was settled, at least momentarily.

The next day Archie, never one to under-do, made two pans of fudge. He put a strong laxative in one, then carried the pan to the girls to make amends, nibbling on the contents of the other. To make matters worse, he nailed shut the door of the outhouse. Confusion reigned, but in the end, everyone laughed.

During our summers at Ignace, Arch often teamed up with a bachelor friend, Chris O'Brien. They paddled in Chris's canoe across our lake, carried the canoe and food across a portage to another lake, and repeated this for a string of about 16 lakes, with portages in between. They slept under the canoe when it rained, used a slingshot unerringly and ate well of rabbits, partridges and fish. They would start with basic food, including cans of beans, a side of bacon, oatmeal, flour, sugar, salt, dried eggs, baking powder and tea. At the end of the 16 lakes, on White Otter Lake, sat an old log castle, built by a proud Scotsman.

It seems that James McClure was born and raised in a castle, a real one, in Scotland. He lost favor with his parents who said, "James, you will never be a success, you will never be able to make a good living, you will never live your life in a castle."

Well, now, James left Scotland, traveled across the Atlantic, railroaded to Ignace, Ontario (why, I guess we'll never know) and paddled a canoe, all by himself, as a young adult, from Ignace, along 16 lakes, carrying his canoe across the portages, until he found the site for his own castle. He built a huge three-floor log cabin, all by himself, with a tower, also of logs. He lived there the remainder of his life!

How did he get by? It was a wilderness. There were no people within 100 miles. Just wild animals, wild fruit and fish aplenty! James had a garden, a root house, and lived in solitary comfort for about 50 years. The castle still stands and is a Canadian historical building now.

One day my brother Gordon said, "Arch, you've guided many parties from Ignace to White Otter Lake. Do you think I could take this trip with you and see the castle?"

Arch felt sorry for our older brother. "Gord, let me think this over, and if it is humanly possible, we'll do it!"

In the meantime, Arch went up to wonderful old Dr. Cook and inquired, “Dr. Cook, I’ve paddled and portaged our canoe hundreds of miles, but never dared to take my brother Gordon. Do you think I dare try it?”

“Archie, you take your brother on that trip, it will do him more good than harm, just be careful, don’t let him get tired.”

You can imagine the joy that Gordon felt when Arch broke the news to him. “Gord, we’ve been cleared by Dr. Cook to take that wilderness trip to James McClure’s castle!”

Gordon sat proudly in the bow of their canoe and across the 16 lakes to White Otter Lake. They spent a few days living in the castle, then successfully paddled back to Ignace. That was the first of many trips that Gordon took, and he seemed to benefit by each and every one. Gordon lived a successful life, graduated as a certified public accountant and became manager of some good hotels in Canada – Niagara Falls, Sarnia, Windsor – he married, had 2 children and passed away at 52 years of age. Today Gordon would have been a candidate for a heart valve replacement.

Arch reached the age of 91. He had one incomplete ambition, to take his family to James McClure’s castle on White Otter Lake, which was still uninhabited wilderness! Arch was living in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I lived in Largo, Florida. He called me and told me of his ambition. I said, “Go ahead and do it. But first, go to your physician and get his approval.”

Arch, stubborn Scot that he was, did not see his physician. He took his entire family on the wilderness trip. His heart decompensated, feet and legs swelled, breathing became labored. They got him home and into an emergency room. He was put to bed, and never left it.

I knew from his symptoms, related to me by telephone, that the end was near. I got an early flight out of Tampa airport, flew up to Thunder Bay, and visited Arch’s bedside by the hour. We had our best and happiest conversations. All past doubts were erased, we talked freely.

One week later, Arch passed away. His last ambition, to show his family his childhood dream, James McClure’s castle, was realized. He died peacefully at 92 years of age.

Our last summer at camp, Eddie Stonehouse, a neighboring camper and I went by train from Fort William to Ignace to open our respective camps. We were both sixteen years old. The highlight of any day was to walk two miles from the lake into town. We would buy an ice cream cone for ten cents, then to the railway station to watch the train pull in.

One day at the station we heard the fellows talking about job openings at a lumber camp. We hurried back, closed our camps, and got out a racy little canoe. It was five miles to the portage, so we headed out. We paddled across a second lake of a similar size. It was a balmy day and the waves were two feet high.

We found a very rustic tar-papered lumber camp and approached the tobacco-chewing foreman, Slim Howe. "Mr. Howe, we were in Ignace at the station this morning and heard you might need some workers, and we are applying for a job."

Mr. Howe said, "You two lads paddled your canoe all the way across two choppy lakes to apply for work?"

"Yes, sir," we replied.

"Well, you are young, but obviously strong and healthy. You are hired," he said.

It was a good summer. Our job was to go out with a crew on a motorboat called an alligator. The prow of the boat could go up on the beach sand or rocks without damage. We would haul a long boom of chained logs and boom up the pulp wood along the shore and swamps from the prior winter's cutting. We were soaking wet all day long, working alongside rugged but kindhearted men. One of the crew would always go ahead, start a fire for lunch, and put on a big pail of water to boil for tea. By the time we got to the site, the tea was strong and black.

Our lunch was white bread, bacon, apple pie and tea. I wrote home to allay any fears they might have and told them how good the food was. Dad wrote back (it was one of two letters I received from him in my lifetime), "Don't tell too many people how good the food is. They will think we don't feed you well at home." Here I was trying to allay their fears! The food was plain, plain, plain!

One summer, while still in high school, I made a deal with my Mother. My parents had several building lots in a neighboring forest, and I agreed to clear those lots of trees and shrubs, to sort of pay for my room and board. I would collect the axes and saws from a neighbor, jog out the five miles to the lots, spend the day felling the timber, then jog back to town, have supper and go out on a date. I did not know what fatigue was!

I had many jobs during high school. Another was a night watchman on the SS Lemoyne, the largest cargo ship on the Great Lakes. My next door neighbor, William Smythe, said to me. "Alan, I have a job on the SS Lemoyne sailing down the entire chain of the Great Lakes. I am quitting, but I could recommend you for the job."

He was a deck watchman and walked the deck. It sounded simple, except one part of the job: to run a winch that wound a steel cable around a huge drum. This pulled the ship to dock. The winch was also used to slide open the huge telescoping steel doors of the hold.

“You know I am very poor at mechanics. I would be terrified if I had to make a mechanical decision,” I said. I was nervous I would operate the winch incorrectly, smash the ship against the dock or flip the steel doors into the water.

“Not to worry,” he replied. “You can handle it.”

The job description was six hours on and six hours off. I applied and got the job.

All went surprisingly well, but I was terrified, and I will never forget the terror. I handled it for eight weeks. When I told the gruff Scottish Captain I was leaving to go back to school, I received a good reaming out. He felt I was permanent and not a school boy.

Another summer I worked on a huge grain elevator being constructed at the edge of Lake Superior. This job was in the next town, Port Arthur. I traveled on two streetcars to get to work and two on my return home. I made forty cents an hour for a ten-hour day. More often than not, I would just take the one streetcar and walk home to save the ten-cent fare.

My main job was to dig pulpwood bark from around the pilings. I had to shovel the mud and muck into a wheelbarrow, and steer it along a narrow slippery strip of lumber, then dump the muck into the lake. Removing the bark peelings was necessary so the layer of concrete would be on a solid foundation.

One day, a big burly Ukrainian saw me struggling with the wheelbarrow up and down the narrow ramps. He said, “Here kid, let me take the wheelbarrow and you take my shovel.”

He handled it like a baby carriage. It looked so easy in his hands the foreman told him to “Hurry up, show more drive.”

“Nobody bosses me,” he said, and dumped the wheelbarrow into the lake and walked off the job.

The grain elevator just recently slid into the lake! Evidently we did not remove all the slippery bark about the pilings. This weakened the foundation of concrete and it collapsed in time.

Another job I had was to hire and supervise about 30 young boys to sell magazines door to door. The boys got 2 ½ cents, I got 2 ½ cents, and the magazine got the balance, 5 cents for each magazine sold.

6 - High School

In Fort William, now called Thunder Bay, our fine high school was called the Fort William Collegiate Institute. I enrolled and did not know which division of the school I should enroll in, commercial, as Gordon did, technical as Arch did, or classical. I recall, vividly, Gordon was shaving, I sat on the commode watching and said, “Gordon, I am going into high school tomorrow and I don’t have any idea what to study.”

“Take classical,” he said, “then you can go on to college if you like.”

I took his advice – strangely enough, Gordon had two years of commercial, Arch two years in technical and still, Gordon advised me to enroll in the four-year course in classical!

High school life was great. I went out for football, played end on both offensive and defensive lines at 135 pounds. Although I was not too good, I made the varsity team, played for one year and received my letter.

I was a member of the Student Council each year. As a freshman, I was elected president of the class, and was elected president of each class for the four years.

When I finished the second year of the collegiate institute, my Dad said, “Son, no more football or hockey or basketball for you, you are big enough to get a job. School is finished, same as your brothers.” But I was going to have a hospital and become a doctor. I needed an education.

Mother stepped in on my behalf. “Dan, I’ve told Alan that if he will care for his clothes and recreation, we will provide him with room and board, as long as he does well in school and wants to keep going.” So I stayed in school, but after school I always had a job, and every summer.

When I became a senior, I ran for the presidency of the Student Council in a school of 1,100 students. My platform was “elevators, escalators and soda fountains at each desk.” My opponent was a young lady, daughter of a professor. I defeated her and became president.

Being president of the student body was a great experience. I spoke before an assembly of students each week. Public speaking came easy to me and I had no fear of

large groups – I didn't know any better. I helped organize special dances, sporting events, helped on editing the collegiate yearbook, chaired meetings, and walked out of any class when necessary. As president, I thought I was a big shot. Then, I did a dumb thing. A professor I disliked taught chemistry, and that is the class I walked out of. The subject of chemistry has haunted me ever since.

The year before I became president of the student body, the yearbook had been too costly and the school was unable to go to print. Also, we held a school play each year and the students were the actors and actresses. We imported the script, costumes and directors from Toronto, 1,500 miles away. The profits were often negligible. In fact, the school usually took a loss.

Something had to change. During my year as president, we did not have an annual school play. Instead we wrote and acted out skits, and played "Broomola," performed on ice skates, using a football instead of a puck, and brooms instead of hockey sticks. It was great fun and we made a profit for the school.

We also rented the same ice rink for a night, organized races, complete with costume parties, and gave prizes for the best and funniest costumes. This was another moneymaker.

Overall, it was a successful year. We met all expenses, we published the yearbook and the students enjoyed the year.

7 - Normal School College

After high school graduation, I very much wanted to go to college, even though our family had never had a college graduate. There was no money available. Dad, typical of the railway engineers, had become an alcoholic. He stopped in at Simpson's, the local bar every night, met with his cronies, and drank. We would get a call from the bartender at midnight – "Please come up and collect Mr. Snider – he is unable to get home on his own."

The result, no money for me to go to college. Some friends from school were going to become teachers and thought I should come along. Now, Canada had a huge area of many thousands of miles of virtually uninhabited land surrounding James Bay and Hudson Bay and stretching up to the Arctic Circle. However, there were small communities of miners, fishermen, timbermen, etc., who married, had children and needed small schools. At that time, finances for teachers were interesting. If you signed up for a teaching assignment of three years in a rural school in need of a teacher out in the hinterlands, the Ontario government would give you free college tuition, free books, and one dollar a day. This dollar paid for my room and board. It sounded like a good way to get my college education, so I decided to become a teacher. We attended North Bay Normal School and learned how to teach.

The government also paid for my transportation between Fort William and North Bay. Here I did a dishonest thing. Since my dad was an engineer with the Canadian Pacific Railway, he gave me a free pass (his only contribution to my education). So I pocketed the cash for the 1,000-mile train journey. When I went home for Christmas and the summer, I did the same thing. As a result, my education was paid for scot free! The catch remained there, however. I would have to work in a rural school for three years.

College life was good, the work load was not too heavy, and I learned to teach. I went there with my brothers' cast-off duds. I thought blue serge suits were supposed to be shiny!

Having been president of the student body in high school, I decided to run for president of the student body at Normal School. I expected recognition as presidential material. Imagine my shock when I only made Secretary/Treasurer. Other classmates less conceited than I walked away with the higher offices. It was quite a let-down, and a good thing to experience. My lesson learned is that one cannot bank on yesterday's laurels. One must make today count.

8 – Life as a Teacher

*F*ollowing graduation from North Bay Normal School, and armed with a teaching certificate, I visited the superintendent of schools. He said there was a position in a tiny Danish farming settlement out in the woods called Pass Lake. Nine months of teaching at a salary of \$950.00 a year plus a house, called a teacherage, where I would live.

I accepted the position and went out the next day to look it over. I found it to be quite primitive. I would be teaching children of all ages from kindergarten to high school entrance, eighth grade. There was a one-room school with a small house next to it, my teacherage. For sanitation, there was a privy about 100 feet behind the school for the students and me, with a pump in the playground beside it. A pump in the kitchen was the only source of water in the house. There was no electricity. The heating system consisted of an oil drum lying in sand to heat the school, and an oil drum standing to heat my teacherage. Fuel came in 8 foot logs which I would saw then split. The kitchen had a big old black steel stove, and there was no refrigeration. Old cracked linoleum covered the floor of the house. The school contained a few books, a chalk blackboard with erasers, rows of desks and chairs going from small in the front to larger in the back, and a small teacher's desk in front.

The construction of the school building was flimsy, just one layer of lumber. They tacked paper on the inside walls of the building to keep the heat in and the cold out. But when the wind blew, it came right through the walls. The paper rattled, and it was cold, cold, cold. Only when the oil drum heater in the back of the room got brick red hot could I feel the warmth reach my desk at the front of the classroom.

The parents in Pass Lake were all Danish. The Ontario government wanted to populate a peninsula extending out into Lake Superior, so they lured these Danish families to come out and homestead, gave them 160 acres at a minimum and, I think 50 cents an acre. The land was covered with virgin timber. They were to cut it down, sell the timber, dynamite the roots to clear the land, then plant crops. The settlers lived off the land. Wildlife was plentiful including deer, rabbits, ducks and partridges. These were poor, poor people but I fit right in – because I was poor too! During the spring, if the children saw ducks on a nearby stream, they reported to me. I shot the ducks and added them to my egg crate freezer. That egg crate outside my kitchen was loaded with protein. Needless to say, I ate well.

The town of Pass Lake was on the shore of Lake Superior. When it froze, the lake averaged a thickness of two feet of ice, and the temperature could go to 30 degrees below zero. In the north country, we felt there were two seasons – summer and winter. Oh, yes, there was the fall, but it was a short period. One day we would be digging up potatoes and the next, shoveling snow. Late spring days were pleasant – good hunting and fishing. There was a good river just ¼ of a mile from school loaded with pickerel and bass.

The children arrived, all 25 of them and all classes, rosy-cheeked from having walked to school, some as much as three miles along the road that wound through the woods. In winter, some children skied to school, others skated on the river next to the school. One little blue-eyed 6-year-old girl rode a big, black horse five miles to school all alone. During the spring and fall, her parents put her in the saddle and she headed through the woods toward school. When she came to a swamp, she guided the horse to a stump, got off, led the horse through, got on another stump, then into the saddle again. During the winter months, her parents tucked her into a homemade sled hitched to the horse, and off she went, all along. If the weather became inclement during the day, she just stayed over with a neighbor. The parents did not seem to worry. They would just assume their little girl would be cared for, and she always was. Those people had faith. Remember, this was a wilderness area where bears, deer, moose and other wild animals were in abundance. In fact, my brother Archie shot a black bear along this child's route.

Classroom work was light and airy. On teaching a lesson in history, geography or hygiene, I'd tell the story, as dramatically as possible, with everyone listening. Then the classes would either read the chapter then write a composition, write a few sentences, or look up the meaning of the words in a dictionary which I would rearrange on the blackboard, depending on what grade they were in. Their spelling the next day would be those words. I did not attempt to develop Rhodes Scholars, but dwelt on the 3 Rs, reading, writing and arithmetic, adding to that history, geography and hygiene.

At lunchtime, those who lived near the school ran home. Others carried sandwiches. I went across to my teacherage and always had two different students join me for lunch. It was a good chance for one-on-one time with the children, and I always had a stew on my big, black stove. This lunch would consist of stew, home-made bread and butter, whole milk and an apple. They would have quite a contest while eating – was the meat moose, deer, bear or from a farm animal. Many times it was the meat their parents had sent over to me. Their parents realized that I could not live too high on the hog as far as food was concerned, so when they shot a moose, deer, bear or farm animal, I got a chunk of it, about a 10 pound chunk. This I would keep in an egg crate nailed outside my door. When I needed meat, I'd just saw off a piece to the desired thickness.

We always had about a half hour after lunch for outdoor activity. During the fall, it would be soccer and touch football. During the winter, we would don our skis and head to a nearby hill for downhill skiing. The older girls would dress the younger children, while the older boys cleaned the blackboard and stoked the fire. Everyone skied, of course. When the boys were finished, they headed out with me to try and beat

the little ones to the ski slope. We skied, and fell, and laughed, then headed back to school, cheeks glowing, relaxed and ready to learn.

Now in the winter, there could have been a foot of snow during the night, and when the wind blew off frozen Lake Superior, you can believe it was cold. Do you know, the weather never kept the children from going to school? Rain or snow or cold, they all showed up every day.

In this section of Canada, the weather changed rapidly and would become snowy and blustery without any warning. During these sudden storms, it was my job to transport the children home or to safe havens. The blue-eyed girl would stay overnight at one of the homesteader's homes until it cleared. Other children stayed with friends as well. How did I transport these children safely home? I tied a rope around my waist and led the children on skis, tied in succession (nearest home would be the last child) behind me, through the woods. The trees in the woods provided great shelter from the blustery wind and snow. I dropped off each child from the back of the line, and the parents at the last house invited me to supper. Having a hearty appetite, I indulged and then skied three miles back home.

Often, the snow fell as fast as twelve inches in twenty-four hours and stayed with us for six months. One bitter March there were still three and a half feet of snow on the ground. They never plowed the roads, so we just drove over the snow with sleds. By Christmas the snow would be two feet deep everywhere except in our playing field, where it was solidly packed.

The nearest store was five miles away. I would time myself with a nap-sack on my back, jogging when possible, skiing at other times. Since the roads were rarely plowed, the skiing on them was good.

The settlers always put a huge coffee pot brewing on the stove. At bedtime, they threw out the coffee grounds, called the "mother." They put on a new pot of coffee and brewed it all night for fresh coffee in the morning. New coffee was added to it as needed during the day.

Several times a week a child arrived with a note from a parent pinned to his or her jacket, inviting me to dinner the next night. I always accepted an invitation to their homes at mealtime! Meals were basic but tasted good. Their own vegetables, meat, either domestic or wild, gravy, their own milk, butter and cream, the fruit would be dried, usually apples. The desserts were apple pie, cake, cookies, always with thick cream, either whipped or not. After a delicious meal, the Danish parents would practice their English pronunciation, the most difficult words being "this" and "these" instead of "dis" and "dese." They did not have "th" in their language, and they had trouble twisting their tongues around "th."

I never had a behavior problem. The Danish settlers were a clean, well-disciplined group of people, and so were their children, except for one family. The father

grew cabbages, potatoes, turnips and carrots. He stored them in the basement under the house. They seemed to “ripen” during the winter, which added to the problem – his children would actually smell. I sent a note home with one of the children, “Could you please give them a bath?”

His answer: “No, it’s too cold. I stitched them into their underwear in the fall and will take it off in the spring.” We just lived with that very earthy smell.

9 - *The Teacherage*

*M*y teacherage next to the school had only one room, the original great room, which included a living area, dining area, and bedroom. The kitchen was in a small attached lean-to. It contained a black wood-burning stove, a water pump, and a sink and cabinet for storing food and dishes.

Outside I had nailed an egg crate to the wall, high enough so the varmints could not reach it. I stored several loaves of bread, among other things, which were always frozen solid. When I put the loaves into the oven in a brown paper bag, the loaves became fresh bread. (I guess this was the original frozen food!)

I had three great years there as their teacher. On school days, I would rise, start the fire in my old black iron stove, and immediately make the bed, because the bed was in the only room of the house and thus very conspicuous, particularly if unmade. I usually shaved in the morning. It seemed to set me up right. There was no electric razor, so I'd use a one blade safety razor and soap.

Breakfast was great. I'd cut several slices from the slab of bacon, none was already sliced, and drop them into a big, iron frying pan. I can still smell that delightful odor of frying bacon. Then two or three eggs in the bacon grease, then toast. Since there was no electricity, and therefore no toaster, I'd cut off two slices from a loaf (this was before sliced bread), drop them into the frying pan and toast them. Then, butter and jam. By that time, the coffee was ready. I sat down to a royal breakfast. I got the milk (unpasteurized, of course) in a gallon pail from a farmer. There was no trouble keeping the milk from souring with no refrigeration, for even summers were quite cool enough. Then over to the school and start the fire in the oil drum heater. I always had a stack of kindling ready, having sawed and split it earlier. Great exercise.

A staple for the settlers was homemade bread and could they make it! The wives thought I should make my own bread, so I finally agreed to try it. One night after dinner with a settler family, I borrowed a mixing bowl, yeast, flour, etc. and mixed up a batch of bread, kneaded it, and put the small mound of dough in a huge roasting pan. It was the middle of winter, so I put extra logs in my black iron oil drum heater. I then draped the pan with blankets and put it on the edge of the heater.

My Hudson Bay wool blankets and heavy long john underwear kept me warm from my toes to my fingers. No sheets, it was too cold. The paper I put between two mattresses didn't keep the cold out very well.

In the morning, I saw a half inch of frost on the windows. I poked my arm out of the blankets to reach the dipper in a bucket of water near the bed. It had an inch of ice on the top. I scrambled out of bed and ran to the kitchen. When my feet struck the linoleum, I was instantly awake.

I expected the beautiful aroma of freshly-risen bread, but it was not there. I uncovered the bread, hoping it had risen and filled the roasting pan. Instead, it was the same size as before.

I checked the fire and found the problem. I had been over-zealous and put two extra logs on the fire, which crushed out the flames. The logs were only charred. I quickly started a fire and put the dough in the oven, hoping to activate the leavening.

At lunchtime, I raced inside to check on my fresh homemade bread, but the dough had not risen. It had hardened. I could do no more, so I carved "AJS" on it, shellacked it and created a terrific doorstop. I returned the bowl to the settler's wife with my regrets. My bread baking days were over!

A neighbor across the road from the school had just returned from a visit to my hometown, Fort William. I had asked him to drop in to see my brother Gordon, who managed a hotel. He was outside, splitting 8 foot logs. I skied over and was chatting with him when he said, "Teacher, you had better take one of these axes and split these timbers, you'll freeze just standing there."

This I began to do, and it felt good. Suddenly I heard a shout from the direction of my teacherage. It was on fire!

I hurried across the road and the smoke was coming out of the window. Bullets began to explode. I could not retrieve anything but the clothes on my back.

We called an emergency meeting of the Board of Directors. They were not concerned about losing the building. They said it was really a firetrap and had two previous narrow escapes from fire. The old stove was deficient, too.

I was given a week off, was told there was a little old cabin in the woods that I could stay in until the end of the term. I skied up to the railroad in the dark and waited until the train came through. The railroad station was an old boxcar at the side of the tracks – no heating, no electricity. It was a cold, miserable wait. The train came along at dawn and I rode home.

When I walked into my old home, I must have looked rather frazzled. Mother said, "What happened?"

“I had a fire and lost everything. I’ve been up all night. Let me get some sleep and I’ll tell you all about it after I am rested.”

I never saw the school inspector the three years I was there. I guess if he did not have a trouble spot, he did not worry or need to investigate. My three years as a rural teacher in the woods were happy and healthy.

10 – Summers and Week-ends as a Teacher

On some weekends during the school year, I'd go to Fort William. That meant skiing 10 miles to the main highway, then hiding the skis by sticking them up in the snow – with about 25 other pairs of skis.

Then I'd flag down a pulpwood truck. They would always stop, load me on top of 8 cords of pulpwood, usually pine, then head for the mill 50-60 miles away. Now, riding outside on top of a big truck in a Canadian winter was no fun.

On reaching the pulp mill, I was given what they called a hook with which I helped unload 8 to 10 cords of pine logs! One warms up quickly at that.

Then they'd take me to a streetcar for a ride home, a hot bath, a big standing rib roast dinner and a date! How wonderful to be young and not know fatigue. That was repeated frequently.

I was not idle in the summer when school was out. I put my time to good use. The first summer a gang of fellow teachers purchased an old Nash sedan and we headed 1,500 miles down to summer school at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, to further educate ourselves. The trip meant driving south from Fort William and crossing the border into the United States. We continued driving east around the Great Lakes, through the tunnel under the Detroit River, then back into Canada and on to Kingston.

I was the "experienced" driver in the big cities by declaration. In Detroit we were driving along a huge six-lane main road. I stopped at a stop sign when a beautiful limo pulled up beside us.

One guy exclaimed, "Did you see the beautiful blond in the limo?"

I said, "No, let's take another look."

We both pulled out, the limo and our old Nash. I drove beside the limo and got a glimpse of the blond. Just then, the light up ahead turned red. I slammed on the brakes, which were badly worn. Our car was destined for the car in front of us. I pulled on the emergency brake, and the car shuddered to a stop, just inches from the other car.

"Here comes the traffic cop on a motorcycle," one lad shouted.

“Hey, lay off. I’m scared enough. No funny stuff,” I exclaimed.

Sure enough, a police officer stopped beside the car and put his foot on the running board.

He looked tough. “Boys,” he said, “Where are you from?”

“Fort William,” we chorused as one.

“Well, well. I am from St. Thomas, Ontario, just across the Canadian border. Go ahead, fellows, but drive more carefully.”

Whew! We agreed to drive carefully. Upon entering the tunnel, the sign read “No lights on.” I turned my lights off! I passed some slow moving cars, and the sign read “No Passing.” I complied and we finally arrived safely at Queen’s University.

The second summer I attended a new university just constructed in my home town of Ft. William. One day sitting in the class, another classmate from Teachers College, James Crawley, scanned the financial sheets of the morning paper, then remarked, “Well, I made \$200 today.”

Next day, “Well, I made \$150.00 today.”

I said, “Jim, what’s this money business all about?”

His reply, “Alan, I teach in a town called Red Lake. It’s a gold mining town, and they have traced the vein of gold to the other side of the lake. They figure the gold is of better quality there. They named it West Red Lake. I have seen the borings and I am investing all I can in West Red Lake stock. That is how I am making money.”

I became vitally interested. Upon getting home, I told Mother all about it.

My Scottish Mother’s replay was “Alan, it is fine if the stock goes up. However, suppose it goes down. If you put money into that venture and it succeeds, fine. However, if it doesn’t, there goes college. Why don’t you just invest \$100.00 and see what happens?”

I followed her advice and bought \$100 worth of stock. I swear the stock commenced to go down the day I purchased it. In ten days it was off the board, not quoted at all. Oh, she was a canny Scot! I guess I would still be a country school teacher if it were not for my mother’s good advice.

I went home each summer after school. My sister, Helen, and I were great pals and still are. When she was a cute little 14-year-old, she suddenly developed Bell’s Palsy, or Tri-Facial Neuritis. One side of her face became paralyzed and very painful.

We took her to doctors who were of no help. The only relief from pain was from manipulation. No osteopathic physicians were available, so we took her to a chiropractor. He relieved the dreadful pain. I became interested and observed each time Helen had a manipulation. The seed was planted in my mind.

On the occasional weekend, my former high school English teacher, Jean Cameron, would drive out with a carload of people and pick me up. We stayed at her camp in a tiny resort on a peninsula jutting into Lake Superior, called Silver Islet. It was started as a silver mine. The vein of silver dipped into the lake. The shaft followed it, but an underground spring opened up. The shaft flooded, and they abandoned the mine.

On these week-ends, we had fireside bull sessions. One topic was “What are you going to do when you finish your three-year teaching obligation?”

My reply was, “When I was nine years old, during a full year of sickness, I spent many days and nights in a hospital. It was then I daydreamed and designed ‘my hospital.’ This is still my ambition: to own a hospital. My brother, Gordon, and my sister, Helen, have also had serious health problems and I’ve seen what good medical care has to offer. I would like to be part of the health care profession. To do this, I have decided the logical next step for me is to become a physician.”

I never dreamed it would not be possible, and no one called it crazy! Jean Cameron, another Scot, said, “If you will go to medical college now, I’ll lend you \$1,000.” Well, this was a lot of money! I earned \$950 each year as a teacher and had saved \$1,000 in the three years. Great! It would mean I had Jean’s \$1,000 plus my \$1,000. I was rich. Also, my mother said she would send me any money she could save from household funds. During my four years of medical school, she sent me \$1,600. (I did not have a source of additional money!) Medical college here I come!

Ten miles through the woods from my school was another school district where a classmate from Teachers’ College took the position as their teacher with a salary the same as mine. Occasionally we would get together to talk and compare notes on our cooking. You see, we both lived alone and as a result, did all our housework, including the cooking.

His name was Ed Messinger. We enjoyed our time together. On the occasion of a weekend at his place, I would leave my school after class on Friday, tidy up both the schoolroom and my home, being sure that I had adequate kindling for both the school heater and my home.

I would then get on my skis and head out across country. We were teachers for the nine month school year, but winter was six of those nine months, so snow skiing and cold became a way of life.

I headed through the woods at dusk. Most days it would be great. So quiet. The spruce trees were loaded with snow, and at times I would come across an area as if someone had stepped there. At first, being a novice, I would get off my skis and step into that tiny indentation. There would be a loud whirring sound and a partridge would erupt. I found out that the birds would plunge into the light snow, bury themselves to stay warm for the night. The only problem, if there was a light rain and then a freeze, the little fellows were entombed. They could not get out and died.

On arriving at Ed Messinger's school, we would sit and talk, downing quarts of coffee, as neither one of us drank any alcoholic drinks.

After I got rested from my ten mile trek, we would combine our talents and prepare supper. He was a great one for partridges and would have three or four plucked, stuffed with dressing and ready to be oven-baked.

The next day, being Saturday, we would go skiing. Then Sunday after breakfast, we split up and I would head back through the woods to my responsibilities. Life was simple, but very healthful and quite enjoyable.

One of my pleasures was to enroll in Queen's University for extra courses. The university sent out the books to study, along with a series of questions to be answered. I was qualifying myself for that entrance into medical school. I used oil lamps throughout, as I did not have electricity. I did not buy a gasoline lamp. I was frugal, saving for the hospital.

On one of those weekends with Ed Messinger, we sat around before his fireplace and talked about our futures.

"Well," Ed said, "I intend to apply for a teaching position in a larger school, one where there was a university."

"Why the university?" I inquired.

"I'll go for my master's degree and maybe even a PhD in teaching. That will make it possible to make good money and concentrate on just the teaching of a few subjects. This business that we have as solitary teachers in a single room is for the birds. What about you, A.J.?"

"Well, first I will become an osteopathic physician, one who can manipulate. I'll work for a few years, then quit and take a four year residency to become a surgeon. Then I can realize my ambition."

"And what's that?" he inquired.

"To have a hospital of my own," I said.

“A.J., how are you going to finance any of those grandiose projects? Certainly not on the salary that you’re getting here.”

“I don’t know how I can achieve those ambitions, but you asked me my plans, and with singleness of purpose and hard work, the lord willing I’ll succeed.”

“A.J.,” he said, “that is an utter impossibility. I’ve never heard anything so far-fetched. Talk about champagne tastes and beer pockets, this is it to the extreme.”

“Maybe so,” I replied. “Most people I talk with would agree with you, but as you know, I am a stubborn Scot and very optimistic.”

“Let’s get together in about twenty years and see who attains his goals.”

We met twenty-five years later. Ed had married another classmate, a beautiful fellow teacher. He’d achieved his master’s degree, was principal of a school, had a family of two children, and was retired on a school pension.

“What about your education?” Ed inquired.

“I have my medical degree, and I am a surgeon,” I told him.

“Gosh,” he remarked, “I guess we both achieved our goals!”

After the third year of teaching, I had paid my debt to the Ontario government and tendered my resignation. “We don’t know how much our children learned,” the parents told me, “but for the first time, they enjoyed coming to school.” I cleared my possessions out of Pass Lake School and make-shift teacherage. I was perfectly contented during those three years of teaching, but it was time to think about becoming a doctor. I took my check and headed off for home.

The third summer I needed to find employment. Without wheels, I walked into town and dropped in on all the storekeepers, the hotels and, of course, his Honor the Mayor. (Remember, because of college and the hospital, I chose not to have a car.) I loved to chat, you know.

On one of these visits to my home city of Fort William, I visited with the merchants along Main Street. I dropped in on an establishment called Tip Top Tailors, a clothing store with fabulous woolen fabrics. Customers buying a suit, jacket or topcoat would pick out one of hundreds of samples of gorgeous material, have their body style determined, and measurements taken. I met with Mr. Miller, the Manager, and told him, “Well, I am no longer teaching. I am going to try to get into medical school and right now I’m looking for a summer job.”

Mr. Miller said, “I need a two week vacation. Suppose I teach you how to measure a man for a suit or a sport jacket or an overcoat. Would you like to do that?”

“Why, sure, then the tailor and I will run the shop?”

“That’s right.” He started right in and gave me a crash course in measuring. “Our suits are all tailor-made and will cost \$27, sport coats and overcoats the same.”

Mr. Miller left on his vacation. I became the manager and was assisted by the tailor.

On his return, the tailor said, “I need a vacation too. Think you could do the pressing and any other stuff I could teach you?”

“Sure, I can. Have a nice vacation.”

On the tailor’s return, Mr. Miller suggested that I take his car, some samples of suiting material and try to sell suits to the lads working in the C.C.C. camps. During the depression around the 30’s, youth were largely unemployed. The Civilian Conservation Corps or C.C.C. was formed. Lads were transported out of cities and towns, given minimum wage, room and board, and put to work building the roads, bridges and culverts of the trans-Canada highway. I thought it was a wonderful thing. The lads had gainful employment, received a decent wage, and were disciplined to produce and behave. And what a monument to Canada’s youth – a highway that extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific, plus keeping its youth off the street corners!

I agreed to sell suits at the C.C.C. camps. I took the samples, a tape measure, the forms to fill out and, with the boss’s car, headed out for the trans-Canada highway. Now, that was an experience. I would drive up to a huge tar-papered barracks-type building out in the woods, park the boss’s car, take my samples of cloth, lay out my goods and chat with the lads who had been on picks, shovels and axes all day. (I made sure I was there at mealtime where they fed me, ending up with apple pie.) If I could lure one lad over to my table of suit materials so that I could pitch my routine, which was a tailor-made suit with the very best of materials and craftsmanship, then I had it made.

The lads would let me measure them, determine their type of body – sloping shoulders, square shoulders, etc. -- then the choice of materials. Can you imagine lads wearing heavy woolen shirts and mackinaw jackets touching and practically drooling over those delightful woolen fabrics?

Then they signed the form. If I was fortunate enough to collect the \$3.00 deposit on the suit that cost \$27, I could keep it as my commission, and send in the form for the suit to be made. If I did not collect the \$3.00, the form that they had signed was held by Mr. Millar at the shop until payment was made, and I collected no commission on that transaction, ever. But I had fun.

11 – My Big Decision

I must tell you of the big decision in my life for my future. My sister Helen had, at 14 years of age, developed a paralysis of one side of her face called tri-facial neuritis or Bell's Palsy. The only relief she could get for the dreadful pain was to go to an osteopath or a chiropractor and have manipulation.

I had decided to be the typical physician that included manipulation in his training. I had written to a friend in Detroit, Norval Thompson, Archie's age and our neighbor, telling him of my decision. His letter arrived while I was along the Trans-Canada highway. Mother, bless her, had forwarded it to me. The letter changed my life and gave it direction.

“If you want manipulation as part of your study, take the osteopathic professional route. The chiropractor is restricted to mainly manipulation, whereas the osteopathic physician is trained the full range of medicine, like an M.D., plus the added dimension of manipulation.

Well, that did it. I called my faithful Mother again and asked her to call the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, give them my credentials, and request that I be enrolled as a freshman. She called me back and said the college would like me to enroll, but since I had only a teacher's college diploma and I was weak on biology and chemistry, the medical degree would take 5 years instead of 4 years.

I thought this over, then called Mother again. I asked her to telephone the college again and tell them the course must be 4 years, not 5, and that I would study biology and chemistry after the freshman year and, upon passing, I would be a sophomore.”

She called the college back and they agreed. Imagine having the nerve to dictate to a medical school!

I must backtrack. Upon getting this information from the college, I packed up my samples, the forms I had filled out, and started home to Fort William where I turned in the boss's car.

Several items had to be attended to. First, my Dad needed to apply for a free pass on the railroads across Canada and the United States to Philadelphia.

Next, to collect that promised \$1,000.00 from my senior English teacher, Miss Jean Cameron, an amount to be paid back at my leisure.

12 - Medical School

Living in Philadelphia my freshman year was going to be extremely different from the inclement weather of Pass Lake, Ontario, where the snow came and stayed for 6 months!

I packed all my belongings into two big Gladstone bags. Here my brother, Archie, surprised me. Remember I said he was built like an Adonis? Well, he had done some fashion modeling for men's clothing. On one occasion, he wore a fine woolen great coat with a huge fur collar. Arch said, "Here, take this coat. I'm a little tired of it." I took it gladly.

Upon my arrival to Philadelphia, I felt extravagant and took a cab from the train station to the main entrance of the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. I wore the "great coat" with a fur collar in the steamy September heat, with all my belongings in the two black Gladstone bags.

All the students were in a long line being enrolled – freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors. Because of my clothing and my suitcases, I really stood out. When they found out I had newly arrived from Canada, I was dubbed "the foreigner" and called that from then on. Actually, I was the only student from outside the U.S.A.

I got a great break that day. One of the students in the lineup, a tall, good-looking junior, saw that I was a stranger and sort of took me under his wing. Lunchtime arrived, and he asked if I would like to join his gang and have lunch at a nearby cafeteria. I gladly accepted. His name was Dave Young, a Mennonite from Elizabeth, Pennsylvania. We occasionally went there for the week-end, and did we eat on the farm! The Dutch may have been plain people, but they surely knew how to cook.

Dave had not located a room for sleeping and study, so after lunch, he and I took off in his big old Packard sedan and began to cruise about for a suitable room. We found a nice room, 2 single beds, 2 desks, 2 shelves for books, 2 sets of drawers, bathroom down the hall and kitchen privileges (we could cook our meals!) We settled in and classes began the next day at 8 a.m.

Dave was #1 in his class, had aced all his studies, and was someone who could help me over the rough spots, particularly if I found that the transition from life in Pass Lake prepared me poorly for the academics of medical school. Dave was a big help.

At bed time about 11 p.m., we found a startling thing. The house we had chosen to live in was at a stoplight for traffic leaving downtown Philadelphia. The cars came to a screeching stop right below our window, which we had to leave open because there was no air conditioning.

I couldn't handle the noise. "Dave, look at those hundreds of cars outside our window. I left a quiet farm settlement where I lived for three years as a teacher. I saw about one car a week. I can't tolerate this noise."

"Right on," said Dave. "Tomorrow we'll find something more suitable. Now that you mentioned it, it is noisy!"

The next day after class, we walked the streets near the college. We saw a delightful old house in back of some large oak trees. I said, "Dave, there's our future home!"

We rapped on the front door. An old couple opened it. We inquired, "We are two medical college students and would like to rent a room from you. Neither of us smoke, drink or carouse. We would just study and sleep in the room."

One looked at the other and said, "Well, we have never done this before, but we are willing to give it a try." We were delighted. A quiet neighborhood, quiet older couple – we were all set and moved in.

I found that I could adjust to medical school studies, but they were voluminous. At 8 a.m., the first professor showed a 1,500 page textbook and said, "You are to learn the contents of this book on my subject, and also every word I say in my lectures."

Wow! That little speech was repeated every hour by the professors until 5:00 p.m. (One hour off for lunch). That part of the medical school education seemed very, very difficult! No wonder doctors write so poorly. They spend four years scribbling!

It became apparent soon after Dave and I became roommates that Dave was an excellent student, but a lousy cook. One day when it was his turn to cook, I was in the third-floor room and smelled food burning. I ran downstairs. He had a book open and was studying. In his other hand was the frying pan, held over the gas jet. He burned the food to a crisp and had not even noticed. From that day on, he got the food from his family farm and I became the house cook.

In late spring, I bought two college cram books in chemistry and biology. I memorized them and two weeks later took the State of Pennsylvania examinations. I passed and was ready for the sophomore year at medical school.

Toward the end of my freshman year, I was at my desk studying Gray's Anatomy. Dave was at his desk studying and he exclaimed, "Alan, I have an offer of a job in Ocean City, New Jersey. I could make \$500.00 but I have to refuse it."

"How come, Dave?" I inquired.

“I’m lined up to extern in the hospital for the entire summer.”

“That’s too bad,” I said.

Then, looking down at my Gray’s Anatomy, all I could see was that \$500 bill flying around. “Dave,” I said, “You know I’m flat broke. Why can’t I take that job?” I did not realize that as a foreigner without a green card, I was not allowed to work in the states.

“No reason why you can’t. It’s driving a laundry truck as a laundry salesman. There’s only one problem. You’ll have to get down to Ocean City by this Saturday to apply.”

I contacted a classmate who wore glasses about ½ an inch thick. He was a farm boy with an old beat-up Chevy truck.

“Sure, I’ll drive you down to Ocean City,” he said. “Only thing you will have to supply is the gas and the hamburgers!”

Saturday morning, we set off. My, what a driver. We took the Black Horse Pike and arrived safely in Ocean City, located the office of the Forrest Laundry and met the manager, a tough fellow of German extraction named Mr. Rickley. I applied for the job.

He remarked, “Well, Snider, a classmate of yours applied last week, but I have your name and address and I will let you know.”

The next Saturday, I was cooking our breakfast in the kitchen and heard the doorbell ring. Frying pan in hand, I answered the door. There was Mr. Rickley.

“Now don’t get excited, Snider, I just came to obtain the address of the fellow who applied before you,” said Mr. Rickley. Well, now I had a problem – one that involved \$500. I invited him into the living room, left him to return the frying pan to the kitchen and thought, now for a job of selling Snider to Mr. Rickley.

I told him of my education, my experience as a schoolteacher in Canada, that I was a hard worker and that I needed that job if I was ever to become a physician. After a few minutes, Mr. Rickley threw up his hands and said, “You’ve got the job. Get down to Ocean City in one week prepared to work all summer. You get 10 percent on all laundry and dry cleaning that you collect. No collection, no commission. You should net about \$500. But will you contact Brown and tell him you have the job?” I said I would and thanked him, having no idea what a tough taskmaster he would be. It would not have made any difference. I was broke and had nowhere to turn for the next three years of medical school.

I arrived on the job, was shown my truck with the words “Forrest Laundry” on the sides, and began the toughest three months of my career. Ocean City, a summer vacation spot, grew from 10,000 people to 100,000 in a matter of days. My job was to cruise a section of Ocean City and look for business. The people that came down to the seashore

would leave their bundles outside their doors. On seeing a bundle, I would park my truck, run up the stairs, sell my services to the ladies, fill out a form with their names and addresses, dash back downstairs, jumping the last three or four steps, toss the laundry in the truck and take off! When I picked up the soiled garments, I delivered clean garments to other customers and collected the money. We did that 6 days a week and quickly got used to it. We lived out in the sun all day. This was a demanding job physically. I constantly ran up and down stairs, climbed in and out of the truck all day long. My back finally gave out. With the help of a local osteopathic physician, I kept going.

There were three “route men” and at the end of the day, we all emptied our trucks, filling a huge trailer truck that took the soiled garments to Philadelphia. We went to our rooms, ate a sandwich that we picked up along the way, drank a pint of milk, took a hot bath and went to bed at 9:00.

At the end of the three months of summer, I received my check, exactly \$500. All and all, it was quite a healthy one. I had two weeks before medical school commenced, so with another of Dad’s passes in my pocket, I hitched a ride on the turnpike and was dropped off at the railroad station in Philadelphia. The trip home was free, due to Dad’s pass and I was once again rich, a check for \$500 in my wallet.

It was great to see the family. They were full of questions about medical school. Dad inquired, “Are you really going to become a doctor?”

“Yes,” I said, “in three more years.” Mother was concerned about the finances until I showed her the \$500 check.

“My heavens, Alan, you are rich,” she said.

“No, Mother, it will take this check each summer (I had the job for next year) and then some.

After two weeks of Mother’s cooking, visiting my old pals, visiting the Collegiate Institute to chat with my old teachers, I took another of Dad’s passes and set out for my sophomore year at medical school. What a thrill!

My sophomore year was equally as hard as the freshman year. Long lectures, big textbooks, but we were getting into the study of the body, had a year of dissection, year of histology lab, physiology lab and my old friend, chemistry lab. We had in-depth studies of the heart, lungs, gastrointestinal tracts and so on, including the signs and symptoms of diseases. As medical students, we kept the student health department busy checking out our assumed diseases.

When summer came around, I reported for work to Mr. Rickley at the Forrest Laundry in Ocean City, New Jersey. Now I was an experienced laundry salesman, knew the routine, knew the route, my back was bothering some but I tolerated it. At the end of the summer session, Mr. Rickley gave me a check for \$700, patted me on the back and said, “Good job, well done, we’ll see you next summer.”

I again took one of Dad's passes and went home to Fort William. How wonderful to have two weeks' vacation, feeling like I'd earned it, and being indulged by my family.

Then back to school in September. We all lined up and received our white uniforms. Now we felt like real doctors!

We did rotations in the college hospital, treated patients in clinic offices, and became acquainted with the mysteries of heart sounds, gastro-intestinal diseases, lung diseases and others. What an exciting year!

13 – Meeting Frances

During the year, I had gone broke. The \$700 did not go far enough and although Mother sent me all she could of her housekeeping money, I needed more money. I began to tend the hospital switchboard. It turned out to be a bad idea as I was always too tired. At first, I substituted for a fellow student, Dewey Barnard, at the hospital switchboard evenings. Later I had my own job on the switchboard and worked from 1:00 a.m. until 7:00 a.m. They paid me one dollar. I received a meal at midnight and again at breakfast, the most important meal of the day. That money plus the food helped.

Dewey began to talk about a someone he was dating, a New England lass of English descent named Frances Bunting. She was a cute blonde, a dietitian in Philadelphia High School. She had no discernable bad habits, did not smoke and just a rare glass of wine. When Dewey had a date, I took his shift as well, which meant I worked from 7:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m.! He gave me the money he would have earned. I stopped doing this after one year, as my job at the Forrest Laundry had created sufficient finances.

Frances' brother, Arthur, was a fellow medical student at the same college and chairman of the Junior Prom. One day he asked me, "Could you kindly take care of my sister Frances at the prom?"

"My pleasure," I reassured him.

Her date was Dewey. When she came up for the prom, she had a room in our boarding house. While she was ironing her party dress, the ironing board collapsed. I heard a scream and ran to help. That was how we met. I was quite taken with her. I guess the chemistry was established. I danced as many dances as I could with her.

Shortly after the prom, Dewey said to me, "I am breaking up with Frances. Her moral standards are too high for me. She likes you, why don't you date her?" So I did.

Each Wednesday afternoon, my half-day off, Frances and I ran up to the local movie. If we made it in time for the matinee prices, I had enough to buy a 10-cent dish of ice cream for each of us: chocolate with orange sherbet. Such romance! I fell in love with Frances and she with me.

Summertime came around. Frances had not trouble getting a job in a tearoom on the Ocean City boardwalk. We had it made. The trouble was, we worked from before dawn to well after dark and we were exhausted. Our schedule made dating almost impossible. So Sunday, we spent the day on the beach. Even then, I slept a lot of the time!

As a mighty senior, I wore the traditional doc's "whites" all the time, served in the hospital, treated sick people, and of course attended class. I had the honor of being elected to serve as president of a medical fraternity, Phi Sigma Gamma.

I was part of the fraternity swimming team. In one of our meets at the local Y.M.C.A., our team was in the lead in a four-man relay. At the last moment, our final swimmer faltered. We came in last but felt we could have easily won. Afterward, the last swimmer said, "The reason I hesitated was that I lost my trunks!" Image a medical student letting that bother him. We lost the gold.

During Christmas break of my senior year, I took Frances home to meet my family. It was a memorable time. Archie, my robust, fun-loving brother, met us at the train station in sub-zero weather, with a team of horses and a sleigh. We used real bear skins and buffalo hides for blankets. Arch, dressed like an Eskimo, in a bearskin cap, big fur jacket, etc., drove the horses. Mother tried to talk Archie into driving a car, thinking for sure that Frances would freeze to death in a sleigh. Nevertheless, Archie felt this would properly indoctrinate her as a "future member of the family." He took us to a cabin away back in the woods.

As he drove up he said, "This is Alan's home, you know!"

We got out and opened the door of the log cabin. A fire blazed in the fireplace. We all sat down and had sandwiches that Arch said was buffalo meat!

After about an hour of this, Arch began to laugh and laugh and laugh. He took us outside and there was his beautiful Chrysler sedan. We all climbed in and he drove us to my old home in the city of Fort William. This was a two floor brick home.

"Surprise, this is really Alan's home." said Arch.

The next day was Christmas, and we had a custom of visiting the family from house to house. When we visited Arch and Bea's and their three beautiful daughters, Archie continued to indoctrinate Frances.

"Come join me in the back yard, Frances, I want to show you something," Archie said as he picked up a double barreled 12-gauge shotgun and took Frances out to his backyard. With about 4 feet of snow on the ground, he put a five-gallon tin can on a pile of snow then handed Frances the shotgun. "Now, Frances, just imagine that tin can is a partridge. Aim for it and pull both triggers at the same time," he said.

Frances did as she was told and was immediately thrown backwards into a snow drift. The roar of the gun was deafening on the quiet Christmas morning. Archie and

Frances laughed until their sides ached. Doors were flung open and the neighbors saw Archie. “Oh, it’s only Arch up to his old tricks!”

It was a wonderful Christmas vacation. My family all fell in love with Frances and she with them. Things had progressed nicely.

Arch said, “Don’t let that one get away. She’s special!”

My sister Helen said, “For an American girl, she’s pretty good!”

I answered, “I think I am a very lucky fellow and I agree with you. I’ll keep you informed of our progress!”

Back to school for the last semester, I became the editor of the college yearbook. This was a fascinating position. As editor, I took trips into the Philadelphia business district, interviewed printers, photographers and lithographers, etc. However, I always had difficulty getting a firm price on their work.

Finally I realized they were accustomed to kickbacks. My response was, “Hey, I am a square Canadian. Neither my subeditors nor I want any kickbacks. All of the money goes into the yearbook.” Our yearbook went to print and was quite impressive. It read and looked good, had a leather padded cover with all the extras we could afford.

Near the end of the term, there was an announcement on the loud speaker during a class. “Interviews will be conducted in the dean’s office starting at 1 P.M. Anyone applying for an internship should be on hand.”

Now to intern in one’s college hospital was special. You got to work with all the professors who had lectured to you for 4 years. You got to deliver babies, assist at surgery – it was a real plum!

In fear and trembling, I submitted my name and waited to be called for the interview. On entering the dean’s office – there were about a dozen professors – I was expecting some deep didactic questions about diagnosis and treatment. Instead, they began to quiz me about hunting and fishing in Canada!

It was a most relaxing interview and I suddenly realized that the choices had already been made. And true enough, I became an intern in our college hospital.

We had a few days off, so Frances and I drove her little Plymouth Coupe up to Lynn, Massachusetts to meet her folks, the Buntings. All went well. Her parents approved. We drove back to Philadelphia where she resumed her work as a dietitian in high school, and I began my intern year. I moved into the intern quarters on the top floor of the hospital. For the first time finances were no problem. I received a uniform, laundry services and \$10 a week spending money.

The internship year was great. I assisted in surgery, delivered babies, served on the floors, kept up patients’ charts and served in the Emergency Room. The ER was one

of my favorite shifts. Most of the residential staff socialized Friday evenings and didn't wake up early Saturday mornings. As a result, I booked any minor surgery for Saturday mornings and had the entire area to myself with no hindrances from the residents.

During the internship something was said that changed my whole life. I had assisted in surgery, and after it was finished, the operating room nurse said to me, "Everything went well, except one thing."

"What was that?" I asked.

"You should have been doing it!"

That was it – an idea was born and I decided to become a surgeon.

I was broke, so I started to see a few patients in the clinic offices, which they did not allow. The authorities suspected I had a private practice. They were right. The girls at the hospital switchboard would call me when someone required a doctor. I would meet them in the Emergency Room after hours.

After Frances drove back from Lynn, she was stiff and sore. She asked if I could give her a manipulation, a special pain-relieving technique of osteopathic physicians.

We went to the tiny clinic office. Just as I was treating her, the door was thrust open. Two clinic professors came in. They felt they had me. I introduced them to my fiancé, Frances Bunting. They were embarrassed and apologized.

Later that year, other authorities were suspicious of me. I received a very irate telephone call. "Is your name Alan James Snider?"

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"I am a United States immigration officer. You are here illegally and must leave the country immediately."

I asked, "What can I do? I am a medical intern here at the college."

"You must go to the police station and have your fingerprints checked. If you are not a felon, you must get a letter from a U.S. citizen saying that you will be supported for two years, if you cannot support yourself. You must go back to Canada and have them check your record. If you pass these mandates, we may let you back in the country. Still, you must have a legitimate visa."

I immediately telephoned Dr. E.G. Drew, chief of surgery at the college hospital. I told him I needed a letter verifying a promise of support for the next two years. He laughed. "Anyone who thinks you will need outside support is crazy. Of course, I will give you such a letter."

He asked me to meet him at the very exclusive Poor Richard's Club at noon in downtown Philadelphia. I arrived and he said, "We are having a Father & Son luncheon. Slip off your overcoat and join us." Underneath I was wearing the standard white coat of an intern and felt very conspicuous sitting in the elegant, low-ceiling banquet hall.

After lunch we went to Dr. Drew's office. I received the letter and returned to my hospital duties.

The United States police checked me and I was okay. I then crossed the border into Niagara Falls, Ontario, to be checked there. The Canadian police fingerprinted me and I checked out okay again. I obtained the necessary letters from a Canadian minister and was allowed back into the United States, where I resumed my medical internship and hospital duties.

Toward the end of the Intern year, those who desired a surgical residency were requested to meet in the dean's office and apply. By this time, Frances and I were engaged, and since she was already working in Boston, I applied for my surgical residency at the Massachusetts Osteopathic Hospital in Boston and was accepted as the first surgical resident in the hospital's thirty-five year history.

On the basis of Frances' position as a dietitian in Boston and my approval to be a four-year surgical resident at the hospital, we decided to become man and wife.

During the first year of my surgical residency in Boston, Frances and I got married. The wedding was held in the Buntings' beautiful St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Lynn, Massachusetts. Frances was a charming bride, and I, a newly graduated doctor!

Six of my classmates from medical school, all practicing physicians, drove up from Philadelphia in Dave Young's old Packard. They stayed in a hotel in Lynn and readied themselves for my wedding. My best man and ushers, hecklers all, told me they had written "I AM CAUGHT" across the soles of my shoes, so all could see when I knelt at the altar. I'm not sure if they really did or not. I am sure the old conservative hotel took a while to get back to normal after their visit. They carried on so, the manager had to caution them to be a little less noisy.

After our three-day honeymoon in Derry, New Hampshire, we settled into a tiny Boston apartment and pooled our income. Frances was now a dietitian in the River Country Day School in Brookline, Massachusetts. I was making a \$50 monthly salary as a surgical resident. We were busy but very happy. Life was good. Imagine eating food prepared by my wife, a dietitian, after the years of Pass Lake then student cooking.

14 - Surgical Residency

The surgical residency did not work out due to some bad personality problems. The Chief Surgeon, Dr. Orel Martin, had an assistant, Dr. Karnig Tomajan, who relegated me to second assistant, akin to holding a retractor and not really participating in the technique of surgery.

In those days, the surgical resident brought the patient to and from the operating room, did histories and physicals on all surgical patients, did after-hours laboratory procedures, and assisted on surgeries.

However, when assisting on surgeries, I only gave exposure with retractors, and was not allowed to do the actual surgery itself. Another surgeon was given the position of first assistant. So it wasn't a hands-on residency. It was a case of learning by watching. A year and a half went by without any change in my status. I became unhappy for the first time in my life, and discouraged.

It is so different now. Today in a modern residency program, the surgical resident does much of the surgery under a physician mentor, and upon completion of his or her four-year residency, is a competent, confident surgeon!

In 1941, at the end of six months of my surgical residency, the world was at war. The government requested all able-bodied males to volunteer for one year of active military service. Frances and I talked it over. The residency was disappointing, so I decided to get the year of military service over. I saw John Murphy, M.D., for a physical and passed.

When I returned home the same day, Frances said, "I'm pregnant!" I reported back Dr. Murphy. He said, "Get a positive pregnancy test on Frances and I will get you out of your military commitment. Really, Snider, you should not have enlisted anyway. As an osteopathic resident, you would rate lower than one of your nurses!" Fortunately, all that has changed. Now the osteopathic physician rates exactly the same as an M.D.

I got a positive pregnancy test from Frances, gave it to Dr. Murphy and was freed from the army! I had given up the surgical residency on the basis of military commitment, and a Dr. Butler had taken my position. I was not unhappy to be freed from my residency contract.

We decided that I should become a family practitioner. I was quite fond of Frances' parents, Margaret and Herbert Bunting, and I liked the city of Lynn where they lived. It was a city of 100,000 people, a suburb of Boston. So we decided to move, and found an apartment in Lynn just blocks from the ocean. We used the two small rooms in the front as an office and exam room. The rest of the apartment was our living quarters, which included a living room, dining room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom and a small unheated shed off the kitchen. We moved in, set up practice.

My early success as a physician was partially due to my mother and father-in-law. Mr. Bunting, Frances's father, was born in England, a rather positive fellow and what I would label a poor-man philanthropist. He gave himself to all civic affairs and was very well known in the city of Lynn, where he was the manager of a coal and oil company, treasurer of the big Episcopal church, sang in the choir, was president of Rotary and president of the Y.M.C.A.

Mrs. Bunting was a gentle and delightful English woman and was president of the women's society of her church.

I tied myself onto their apron strings. I had them introduce me around, joined Rotary, joined the Y, and found plenty of patients. We made expenses at the end of the first month, and had Frances' salary besides!

Once settled, our babies began to arrive. Joan was born one year almost to the day of our wedding. What to do with the little unheated shed attached to our kitchen? When Frances was in the hospital, I painted the shed soft pink, purchased a crib, painted a small table and put a lamp on it. When Frances and Joan arrived from the hospital, surprise! We had a new, beautiful unheated nursery, six feet by eight feet. Joan got a tiny frostbite on her nose that winter.

Before the birth of Betty, our second child, Frances and I bought and moved into a four-bedroom house in Swampscott, a suburb of Lynn. Again, the medical practice thrived. I bought a new car and became an American citizen.

Life was good, but I became disenchanted with family practice. I had always felt surgery was so stimulating, I also thought being a surgeon would make the founding of the hospital easier.

I had maintained good relations back at the Massachusetts Osteopathic Hospital in Boston and commenced sending my hospital patients there. One morning, I assisted the senior surgeon on a hysterectomy on one of my patients.

After the surgery, the private nurse, watching from the balcony, remarked, "The surgery progressed wonderfully. The only thing is, you should have been the surgeon."

It hit me again. I had always wanted to be a surgeon. On the way home from Boston to Lynn, Massachusetts, about forty miles, all I could think of was "How to become what I had always wanted to be, a surgeon."

I got home around 7 PM. Our four children were all asleep. As I ate supper with Frances, I said, "Do you know, I don't feel completely satisfied in my life as a family practitioner. I would like to complete my four years as a surgical resident to qualify as a surgeon." We talked it over. "The salary would be \$50.00 a month."

We had just purchased a delightful six-bedroom house at the edge of a park, one block from the Atlantic Ocean. We were sitting well and had two more daughters, Gail and Barbara. A week later when I sat down with Frances for supper, she put a paper in front of me filled with figures. By selling our house at a profit, selling one car, and selling our insurance, we could take that \$50.00 a month and get by. By now she had retired to become a loving wife and a good full-time mother.

I re-applied to the Massachusetts Osteopathic Hospital in Boston to complete the four year surgical residency, and was accepted. We sold our home in lovely Swampscott for an ample profit and moved to Boston.

We took an apartment near the hospital, up 28 steps and over a real estate office on a streetcar line. It took awhile to get used to the apartment shaking a night each time a streetcar passed.

We concentrated on finding a home in a nice neighborhood. We found a lot in Jamaica Plain, a suburb of Boston, on a hill above the home of the infamous Boston Mayor Curley. We hired a contractor, a graduate of M.I.T., and planned a completely modern ranch house. It was to have a master bedroom on one end and two bedrooms on the other, a utility room, a kitchen and a living room. In addition, it would include 13 floor-to-ceiling thermapane windows and a "coil" heating system built into the concrete floor. The contractor agreed to build the superb house for \$11,000.

We cleared the lot and I developed a bad case of poison ivy on my hands and arms. (Imagine scrubbing this for ten minutes at a time before each surgery!)

No amount of hard work saved us from the bad news: the contractor went broke while building the house. We now owned a framed structure with a concrete floor, walls, roof and thermapane windows.

After we refinanced the mortgage, we finished the house and moved in. Shortly after that, we realized we could not afford the house on my salary. Frances had her hands full with four girls in less than six years, so going back to work was out of the question.

The realtors assured us the house would sell quickly, as it was one of the most modern houses in Boston. We put it on the market. Trusting the realtors, we went ahead and purchased a lot in the same area. We signed two contracts to the house, financed 100 percent, and proceeded to build a second house.

All was still not well because the second house was completed and the first house had not yet sold. We now had two big mortgage payments on a \$50 monthly salary!

We took the first house off the market and put out a “for sale” sign. Two days later, a couple noticed the sign, drove into our driveway and asked if they could see the house. It was night time and the children were asleep.

They toured the house and both seemed interested. I whispered to Frances, “Let’s put on the coffee and serve some cookies. This is a good prospect.” The four of us sat and chatted. I then said, “You are obviously interested in the house.”

“Yes, we are,” they agreed.

“Well, it will take a check for five to take the house off the market. We have some other folks coming to see it tomorrow.” He took out his checkbook and promptly wrote a check for \$500. I looked at the check and told him, “It will take another zero to close the deal.” He took the check back, added the zero and gave me a check for \$5,000.

I went to a telephone and called my lawyer. “Richard, please dictate a statement of sale for my house.” He did.

I wrote a second copy and took it to the couple. “If you sign here and here, I will do the same, and you will own the house.” It was done. We sold at a profit!

I asked Frances to deposit this first thing in the morning. The next day Frances called me at 9:15 a.m. to tell me she had deposited the check. At 10:00 a.m., a very irate lawyer called me at the hospital. “What do you mean selling my client a house without me in attendance?”

I replied, “I did not know you wanted to be there. What questions may I answer?”

“Is the heating system in? Are the thermapane windows to stay?” he asked.

I answered, “Yes, the 13 floor-to-ceiling windows, the dishwasher, washer and dryer, wall-to-wall carpets are all part of the sale.” I imagined him writing all of this down. “You see, they got a bargain.” After talking it over, he agreed.

We moved across to the second house and then took a week’s vacation. We sold at a nice profit and for a while we were secure financially.

We eventually could not afford the second house either. Still, I had the real estate bug for a beautiful, big lot next to the first house. I called my attorney and said, “The lot next to my first house is filled with rats, brambles, poison ivy, and I would like to buy it and clear it out. I would like to offer the owner \$3,200.”

He called me back. “It’s a deal.”

We bought the lot and cleared it after hours and on weekends. I contracted poison-ivy again.

We again signed two contracts with a contractor, receiving 100 percent financing, and commenced building the third house in my four-year surgical residency. We sold the second house handily. Just as the third house was completed, we moved in and relaxed.

Life was good for us and our children in Jamaica Plain. Church, school, playmates – it seemed all we needed from the community was here. When I came home for lunch, Frances had the four girls seated on the kitchen counter. Joan was 6, Betty 5, Gail 4, and Barbara 2. They were all giggling at something as Frances gave them a glass of juice and a homemade cookie. Oh, how we loved those children!

We were quite poor, of course, with no money for shows. Some things we could not do without, so we built a small 4' x 20' swimming pool at the first house. All the children learned to swim there. At the third house, we built a 6' x 20' swimming pool. We did the hard, manual labor ourselves including digging the hole, mixing the concrete, cementing the walls and the floor. It was our pleasure at home, for we could not afford anything else.

The second part of my surgical residency was much better than the first. The senior surgeon had retired and their junior surgeon had filled his position. I became a legitimate first surgical assistant.

Only one problem remained. Another young surgeon joined the staff, and the senior surgeon got the board of the hospital to pass a law:

1. Junior surgeons must do 25 cases a year or lose their surgical privileges,
2. A junior surgeon could not take any surgery referred by a physician who referred to the senior surgeon.

I set about to lick these restrictions and still get cases. I told the telephone operators to call me if they needed an emergency room physician. I informed the emergency room nurses that I would cover the E.R. for 24 hours a day for the last six months of my surgical residency.

During these six months, I got to know poor children in the immediate neighborhood. Eventually the children or their families came to the E.R. first, to be patched up then went home, always with a note from me.

Six months went by. The neighbors had found me an office and I set up practice. The next day, I did four surgeries! And by the time nine months had passed, I was rolling as a surgeon!

15 – A Surgeon at Last

At home in late November, shortly after I completed my surgical residency, the telephone rang. “This is Arvid Lundin of South Burwick, Maine. We have a small 50 bed hospital in York Harbor, Maine and need a surgeon. Our present surgeon became addicted on narcotics due to the pain of jungle rot on both feet, a carry-over from the war in the Pacific. We had to withdraw his privileges. Do you want his position?”

I asked a few questions and found they had thirteen physicians on staff.

“I am interested,” I answered. “Tomorrow is Wednesday. Why don’t you come down to the hospital in Boston and we can talk it over. We’ll have coffee at 8:00 a.m.”

The next morning the entire staff of thirteen physicians showed up in the Boston hospital and we chatted. They seemed to be honest, frank and really good people. There were no specialists on staff, however. They offered me the job as surgeon. I explained that I could not decide so swiftly, I was married and had four children. However, I agreed to drive the 100 miles to York Harbor and to do any surgery they wanted done on Saturdays. I would do this for six weeks and decide after that time. They were pleased and agreed with the arrangement.

I went home to Frances, told her, “Do you know, I liked these guys. I am truly interested. How do you feel about it?”

Frances was quite practical about family decisions, and she knew how long and difficult a surgeon’s training was. She knew how much my profession meant to me.

She answered, “I know a little about York Harbor, Maine. It is a tiny town, less than 1,000 people, I’m sure. It is a seashore town, with good sandy beaches, some huge rocky beach areas, a very picturesque town. I think we could be happy there. But would the schools be adequate for our four little darlings?”

“Fair enough,” I said. “Let me tell you what commitments I have agreed to. I said I would be in their operating room at 9:00 a.m. this coming Saturday and be prepared to do any surgery they needed done. They are to call us each evening to request booking a case so I will have a little control of the day’s work.”

“Fine,” said Frances, “then I will accompany you with the four girls. While you are working in the operating room, I’ll canvas the town, visit the schools, the churches

and meet as many of their wives as possible. By the time we leave, I'll know how we'll fit in."

So each evening, Dr. Lundin called from Maine and asked permission to book a case. In each instance, the referring doctor had agreed to be my first assistant and they had not booked any cases that required equipment they might not have. Actually, it sounded like a wonderful thing. I hoped the schools and churches were adequate, because I had no concerns about the hospital. After all, one O.R. was quite the same as the next.

At 7:00 a.m., the Snider family sat down to breakfast all excited about a trip to Maine!

In the meantime, I sort of challenged Frances. We had just moved into a new house. My surgical practice was establishing itself very well in Boston. The children were all established in good schools. Everybody but me sang in the choir of a nice little Episcopal church. We had it made. Did she really think a move was wise?

"Let's keep an open mind" said Frances. "We've not made any decisions yet. This is just exploring, it could be fun."

"O.K.," I said, "but just remember, I'll not make a permanent decision without your complete agreement."

The drive to Maine was exciting. It was December, the snow got deeper as we drove, but the turnpike was clear of snow. It was piled four to five feet deep on the edges.

Arrival into York Harbor was nice. The main street, the only commercial street in town, was clean, with good trees lining the street. We drove on until we located the Harbor Hospital.

The physicians had been expecting us. They all came out to welcome us in the parking lot, and the hospital looked nice, like a large, two-floor clapboard mansion.

We went inside and convened in the little lobby, had coffee and doughnuts (home-made) for the adults, milk and doughnuts for the girls.

Then I said good-bye to my little family, and we doctors prepared ourselves for the day's work.

"Well, Dr. Lundin, where do we stand?" I asked.

"Let's go into the x-ray department and review the films on the first case, a possible caesarean section."

We followed Dr. Lundin downstairs into the basement and saw the films with the radiologist, Dr. George Draper. We agreed there was a disproportion between the head of the fetus and the pelvis from which it must exit.

Then, up a flight of stairs to patient rooms. I met the little woman who was to be operated upon by a stranger, a big, Boston surgeon! I felt anything but a big, Boston surgeon, but staff and patient were impressed!

I met the scrub nurse and we chatted for a moment. Then we scrubbed up, gowned up, and went into the O.R. Dr. Sandy MacFarland, the anesthetist, started a spinal I.V. just in case a little sedation would be needed.

We draped the patient and proceeded to operate. All went well. We delivered a big, healthy nine and on-half pound baby boy. I found out after the surgery that the scrub nurse, due to her nervous tension, plus a little deafness on her part, didn't hear a word I spoke during the surgery (I have a normally soft voice anyway).

We all, then, convened in the small staff dining room, had coffee and sandwiches, and discussed the next case, which was to be a hysterectomy. The hysterectomy was followed by a gall bladder case then a colle's fracture on a wrist of a fourteen-year-old boy. (As the only resident-trained specialist on staff, I would be responsible for general surgery, but also trauma, tonsillectomies, simple fractures and any obstetric cases where the family practitioners might need help.)

Dr. Lundin expressed his thanks, said he was pleased, then said he would get back before we left town, to discuss future plans. I said, "Let's get our discussion over, then Frances and our tired little girls could head for Boston."

The entire staff of thirteen physicians met with Frances and me. Coffee was passed around. I inquired, "Where are the girls?"

The reply was, "One of the nurses has 10-year-old twins. She just added your four to her family until you are ready to go."

Dr. Lundin was the spokesman. "We have all scrubbed with you and observed your surgery. We would like you to stay here and become our surgeon."

"Frances and I appreciate the offer – however, she is not entirely certain of the school situation. I'll consent to be here every Friday night, Saturday and Sunday for the next six weeks. During that time, I can keep up your surgical responsibilities and we all can be sure of our compatibility."

That six week trial idea clicked. We said our goodbyes. On the way out of the parking lot of the hospital, we drove by a little cottage right on the beach. This was to be our weekend retreat.

On the way back to Boston, the girls were very quiet. They were tired. In fact, they slept most of the way.

Frances and I had a chance to talk it over. She was delighted with the wives and the other people she had met. Everybody seemed so friendly. She felt the schools were adequate, but I used them as a delaying tactic so we would have time to think it over.

As far as I was concerned, it would be ideal. I would be in complete charge of the surgery department, with no senior man to criticize my actions. In fact, I was the only resident-trained physician on staff. After his internship, the anesthesiologist had taken short courses in anesthesiology, and was really good. The radiologist also just had an internship, but had gained some expertise in attending clinics. I did all the rest. I would make the decisions about whether a case should be done in the little Harbor Hospital, by me, or transferred out.

The next Friday, I closed my office in Boston about 4:00 p.m. went home, had an early supper and a few hours with the family, then took off, all alone this time, for the state of Maine. Remember, this was all done in December. Some of those trips were with clean turnpikes, as this one was, and sometimes there was snow.

Usually I stopped for a full meal along the way. It was midnight or thereabouts when I arrived at Harbor Hospital and picked up the surgical schedule. I reviewed it and acclimated myself to the responsibilities in the operating room the next day. Then I drove to the little cottage on the beach, went to bed and slept soundly until the telephone rang at 6:00 a.m. It was the call from the hospital switchboard. I had requested this, just in case!

Saturday morning, I got up early, visited patients, and ate breakfast with the doctors who were to assist me on their surgical cases. The second day of surgery was even smoother than the week before. All the tension of strangeness had left. We were busy, not only in the O.R., but I had a few office patients. To the nurses at the tiny hospital, I was a "Boston surgeon." I considered myself just a raw graduate from a four-year surgical residency.

I slept well again Saturday night, had breakfast in the hospital, made rounds, chatted with the nursing staff, and then took off for Boston and home.

This routine was carried out each Friday and Saturday. Frances and the girls came along on alternate trips. During these trips, I began to formulate some rather positive ideas. One was that I would have sufficient referred surgery and consultations to make a living.

Back to Maine on New Year's Eve, Dr. Lundin and his charming wife, Sheila, had a staff party. The entire group of physicians attended. I tapped a glass with a spoon and all conversation stopped. With my wife by my side, I made this announcement, "Frances and I have had a wonderful few weeks with you and your families. We have decided to join you on the staff of the Harbor Hospital."

We were congratulated all around. The evening became quite boisterous and happy. We had a good feeling about our decision. "Now beware of these Maine people, if they don't like you ..." we were cautioned.

“Fellows,” I said, “I will not put on airs. I shall just be myself. If that satisfies you, then you have a surgeon. If we don’t jell, then we’ll just take a walk.”

I had wrapped up all my responsibilities in Boston except about fifteen surgical cases that I had booked. I called a fellow physician on staff in Boston, and asked if he would assist me on the fifteen cases and do all the post-operative follow-ups. He consented.

On one case we worked together, a big goiter, he must have sensed that I needed some help with thyroid surgery. He suggested that when I got these fifteen cases successfully done, I should come into Boston and attend the surgical cases at the Lahey Clinic.

“Just arrive at one of the Lahey Clinic Hospitals before 8:00 a.m., sign in, and change into surgical gowns,” he said. “Then you’ll be free to stand on stools behind the operating surgeon, keep your mouth shut and observe.”

I thought it was an excellent idea, and from that day on, for the six years I was at the York Harbor Hospital, every Wednesday I was capped, gowned, masked, and standing behind the operating surgeon at 8:00 a.m. with my mouth shut.

Can you imagine what observing probably the best surgeons in the world could do for a recent four year surgical resident? Not only was I learning by observing many surgeons on a vast variety of cases, but I could compare that with what I had learned by assisting my mentor, Dr. Karnig Tomajan at the Massachusetts Osteopathic Hospital. I am sure my surgical technique benefited greatly.

16 - Settling Down in York

We settled into a routine at the Harbor Hospital. I was the only surgeon, on call 24 hours a day. The staff never called me unless they needed help, and I tried to always be available. We all grew up to our responsibilities at the tiny 50-bed hospital. The hospital staff formerly had sent most of their surgical patients north to a hospital in Portland, Maine. Upon my arrival, the transfers stopped. We did all the general surgery and only transferred the most difficult orthopedic patients to the neighboring hospital in Portland.

I well remember my first visit to the surgical floor of the hospital. All the shades were drawn and the nurses talked in whispers. I asked why, and they told me there had been a difficult operation the prior day, a gastric resection (removal of part of a man's stomach because of a bleeding ulcer.)

After a few months at the hospital, I was operating a full surgical schedule and the nurses handled their difficult cases routinely. As chief surgeon, I watched the physician and nursing staff gain confidence and experience together. The referring physicians were always available to assist on their cases, or one of their friends on staff would assist in their place. As a medical care facility, our results were great and the surgical volume from the 13 family practitioners increased substantially. We became a top notch, acute care surgical hospital.

Frances and I found a delightful Cape Cod house on the tidal river, the York River, on five acres of land, and purchased five more across the street. I had a difficult time getting a mortgage, as I was an osteopathic surgeon and not wholeheartedly accepted in conservative New England. Finally, I called my insurance company, The Phoenix, and we received the mortgage we needed.

Truly, it was an ideal situation for a young surgeon. It was also ideal for our young family. Life in Maine was good. The children were healthy and vigorous and did well in school. We attended a small Episcopal church. Our four daughters and Frances sang in the choir. Barbara, the youngest, could not yet read, but she memorized well and sang like a trooper.

The three oldest children had ponies and became good riders. Joan's pony, Princess, was the most spirited. Betty's pony, Queenie, was the easiest to ride. Gail's pony, Prince, would move at a good jerky speed, then stop short and lower his head, forcing her to slide down his neck every time she rode!

The ponies came by way of happenstance, as part payment for medical treatment from an accident victim who was also a severely traumatized young marine. The young man, Jim Thompson, drove off the highway, struck a huge oak tree and sustained multiple fractures. Upon leaving the hospital, he offered the ponies as payment for his surgical fee. I agreed, but since he was just out of the service and broke, I paid him \$150.00 for the ponies!

Our home life was terrific. We lived two miles up from the Atlantic Ocean on a tidal bore. When the tide went out, the flow to the Atlantic was heavy. When the tide came in, it backed up the flow of water. Also, those delicious Maine lobsters frequented the river, and it was a simple task to catch a few. We ate well! Also, there was a lobster pound one mile away. They sold a lobster dinner, French fries, coffee or soda for \$1.50. We ate there often!

Our oldest daughter Joan was a teenager and had inherited a farmer's gene somehow. (My Dad was a farm lad.) Joan asked if she could go to a farm next door and work around the cattle, clear out the barn. I called the farmer and asked if Joan could be a daily addition to his crew. Payment was not important. That's where I made a mistake, for Joan became a capable, hard-working daily farm hand. The first thing we heard about 6:00 a.m. was the clop, clop of Joan's Tennessee Walker horse on the way to the farm next door.

One day after the evening meal, I headed over to the hospital for evening clinic hours. (You know, in Maine in those days, nobody took time off from work to see a doctor, so all doctors worked evenings.) Well, this particular day, I arrived at the hospital and everybody was talking about "that darling boy that had just been delivered." I inquired "What's so unusual about this particular boy?" Answer was: "He's available for adoption."

I went up to the nursery and examined him. He truly was special. I inquired, "Is he ready to be adopted?"

Answer from a nurse, "Sure is, do you want him?"

"Yes, I do." Frances thought that we should have a boy to carry on the Snider name. My reaction to that was "Surely four children are enough for you to manage, plus me." But she was insistent. So this seemed like just the opportunity we were looking for. The only thing was, he was to be taken out of the hospital now. I said, "I definitely want to take him, let me call my wife."

"Frances," I said, "Were you serious about wanting a son?"

"Yes, I was never more serious about anything," she answered. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, come and look at him. He is a beautiful little fellow!" The next day we brought him home to four very excited girls. A baby brother, at last! It was an emotional and happy event. Well, now, that was a happy time. The girls adored him. To Frances,

he could do no wrong, and I loved him too! Alan became a wonderful addition to our family.

We had a new and different lifestyle in York. We lived in the country and had plenty of land. We enclosed a pasture on our lot and Joan became a farmer. She raised two piglets, two calves, and two sheep. She cared for them and agreed they would be butchered at the first snow. Later, she had the beautiful Tennessee Walker riding horse that she rode to the neighboring farm where she cleaned up the barn, helped the farmer milk the cows, and even helped butcher the cows for market.

One Sunday, the children decided we should all go to church in our horse-drawn wagon. They hitched up the horse and we piled into the wagon wearing our Sunday best. We rode through town to church, waving, laughing, and stopping traffic all the way.

The Harbor Hospital prospered, my practice grew, and my surgical volume increased. I was the only surgeon, and I felt my responsibility keenly. Although I had a four-year surgical residency before going to Maine, I felt the need for greater experience.

During that six-year period, I had quite a heavy volume of surgery. I was the only residency-trained physician on staff. But I was just a general surgeon, and I might be called upon to do cases outside of my normal surgical residency. Since Boston was a great medical source of knowledge, with their world-famous colleges, hospitals, clinics and physicians, and I would be living and practicing less than one hundred miles away at York Harbor, Maine, why not tap into this vast medical knowledge.

My staff in Maine was quite agreeable that I should take one day each week away and were pleased that I wanted to augment my training and ability.

Thus, I spent each Wednesday in the operating rooms of the famous old hospitals in Boston. What a splendid day off that was. My Wednesday routine was one and the same. I awoke very early, at 5:00 or 6:00 a.m., and called Harbor Hospital. If all was well, I drove the 100 miles to Boston and observed some very fine surgery. (Only once was I called back for an emergency surgery after arriving in Boston.) Initially, I left York, Maine, quite early, checked in at the Lahey Clinic or New England Baptist Hospital, or others, signed the register, changed into a surgical gown and stood on the operating floor, on stools, behind the surgeons.

Visibility was excellent. Their techniques, of course, were outstanding. On the trip back to Maine, I redid the surgeries. I am sure I was a menace on the highway.

This routine started during the first winter I spent in Maine and as a result, driving through the snow added to the challenge. But my surgical techniques definitely benefited.

I did not feel qualified to do tonsillectomies, so I spent a few Wednesdays in the operating rooms of the world-famous Children's Hospital observing their techniques on tonsillectomies.

In fact, I asked one of their surgeons if he would drive up to our hospital in Maine to perform a tonsillectomy on each of my four daughters. He obliged me, and we served him a lobster dinner with lobster bisque, lobster salad and lobster. He was delighted!

Urology became a separate problem, and it was not included in my surgical residency. One morning I called Boston City Hospital, talked with a urologist on call, and told him I had a calculus in a patient's bladder and could he retrieve it for me?

"Put the patient in your car, drive down to my office and I'll do it immediately," said the surgeon.

I drove the patient down to Boston and took him to the doctor's office. He slid in a cystoscope and removed the stone. Afterwards I informed him that I was a Boston-trained surgeon but felt the need for urologic experience.

"Doctor," he said, "Telephone my office Tuesday afternoon, and I'll tell you where I'll be operating Wednesday at 8 a.m. You be there and be my first assistant on all cases I do on Wednesday." He was on the staff of 17 hospitals in Boston. I spent several months assisting this fine urologic surgeon and became qualified on what I call basic urologic surgery.

I operated with greater confidence from having watched many of the best surgeons in the world. They were so disciplined. All incisions were the same, the retractors in the same position, the exposure of the pathology the same.

We had a fine radiologist, Dr. George Draper. He had very little formal training, just the year of internship, during which time he spent as often as possible in the x-ray department. I developed the habit of checking all x-rays, and I was appalled that he was missing some cancers of the colon. I had confirmed my diagnosis by doing surgery on the cases that I felt he missed.

We had a conversation. "George, something must be done about your department."

"What's the problem?" he asked.

"You are missing the diagnosis on some of your bowel cases. Look at these x-rays from your department." When I pointed the cancers out and told him I had operated on them, he was disturbed.

"Now, George," I said, "you know I have had a four year surgical residency, but I still feel the need to further my education. You must do something, or I'll leave the staff."

He began taking Wednesdays off to study at the Osteopathic Hospital in Portland, and eventually took a full three-year residency in radiology and became a fine radiologist.

Orthopedics was something else again. We set and cast the simple fractures, but transferred complicated fracture cases to an osteopathic hospital elsewhere in Maine.

I prepared for the examination to become certified as an accomplished surgeon. Back then, there were three requirements for certification in the osteopathic profession. First, I had an oral examination by my peers at a surgical convention. Upon passing the orals, I took a written examination, also at a professional convention. The final exam was a practical examination by two senior surgeons, which took place in my own operating room at Harbor Hospital.

A particular Saturday in February at 8:00 a.m., I was to have the practical exam in our operating room. The nurses had the entire hospital spic and span. I lined up three cases, and the staff physicians were standing by to assist.

It has snowed ten inches during the night. The two examining surgeons had not yet arrived. One was from Detroit, Dr. Don Raney, and one was from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Dr. Fry.

I waited until 8:30 a.m. and still no sign of either. Both were friends of Dr. Tomajan, who had trained me, and I wondered if they had stayed with him in Boston and perhaps overslept. I called Dr. Tomajan, asked if the two surgeons were there. Indeed, they were and fast asleep. One came to the phone, apologized, asked how long it would take to drive the 100 miles from Boston to York Harbor. I told them and awaited their arrival.

The whole hospital was tense! I called the State Police, nervous the two doctors would miss the exit off the highway to the hospital. Sure enough, the Cadillac breezed past the turn-off. The State Police stopped them. They were doing 80 miles an hour and felt they were in severe trouble. The Sheriff said, "Are you looking for Dr. Snider's hospital?"

"Yes, we are, Officer."

"Follow me, you missed the turn-off."

Upon arrival at the hospital, they did the customary examination. One came into the operating room and observed my surgical skills while the other examined charts of former patients to see if my conduct was adequate.

At the end of the exam, we all enjoyed a typical New England lobster dinner. After dinner, they needed to get back to Boston. My family had taken off for Florida two days before. I was to catch up with them by plane. The two physicians kindly consented to take me to the Boston airport.

Several weeks later I received official notice: my team and I had been successful, and they certified me in general surgery.

17 - Invited to St. Pete

I still had the dream of having my own hospital. As much as we enjoyed Maine, I still was not fulfilled. So during those six years at the Harbor Hospital, Frances and I traveled the country searching for the site for our hospital. She, being a dietitian, reviewed kitchens and dining rooms of the hospitals we visited, and I visited the O.R. suites. We had great fun exploring possible sites in Washington, Oregon, California, Colorado and Texas.

At a national surgical convention in Dallas, I spoke to all and sundry about wanting to start a hospital. A physician from St. Petersburg, Florida asked, "Have you ever thought of Florida?"

"Frankly, I never have," I said. "Why do you ask?"

"Well," said Dr. Keig, "I have a hospital in St. Petersburg. How would you like to spend a week with me, do some surgery and in the process, see Florida?"

We agreed that we should give it a try sometime during the winter.

Sure enough, in early November we got a telephone call from Dr. Keig. "How would you like to spend next week in Florida? I have some surgery lined up, you and your wife can stay in my house, I'll loan you a car. What do you say?"

We were in bed, it was 10:00 p.m.! I turned to Frances and asked, "Do you want to take a trip to Florida as Dr. Keig has suggested?"

"Yes, of course," she said.

We left Maine on November 8, snow four feet deep, wearing galoshes, great coats, scarves, hats and flew down to St. Petersburg, Florida. We divested ourselves of all the heavy stuff and arrived, looking like Floridians, in short sleeves and not even a jacket! We thought we had gone to heaven, truly. The shock of leaving Maine in a snow storm, drifts all over, and arriving in Florida with the sun shining and a warm day was breathtaking!

Dr. Keig was waiting for us with a white station wagon. We piled in and saw the beauties of Florida for the first time. The week with Dr. Keig was rather uneventful. His staff responded by sending in surgical cases that Dr. Keig, being an obstetrical-gynecological specialist, was not qualified to do.

We did some bowel, stomach and gall bladder cases, then after hours we toured the glamorous state of Florida and became really sold on it. I knew this was to be the state for my own new hospital.

Our search for a hospital had taken us all over the country, and now we zeroed in on Florida to find the perfect spot. Frances also had fallen in love with Florida. She was, as usual, very supportive.

Upon arriving back in Maine, we knew we were going to live in Florida, but where? We did not know.

Florida is a large state and in fact, we toured the state six times, including both coasts, inland areas, north and south, looking for a site for our hospital. Finally we discovered just the spot to found a hospital and raise our five little children – Largo, a suburb of Clearwater and near St. Petersburg, on the western Gulf Coast. We felt it was in the garden spot of Florida, and we still think so. In 1956, Clearwater and Largo were still small towns. Both had attractive homes and neighborhoods, good schools, colleges, churches and good people. We agreed Largo would be a good place to raise our five children. Most important of all – Largo did not have a hospital. It was time for us to become Floridians!

Leaving Maine was tough. The small, intimate hospital staff was shocked and unhappy. In fact, some of the doctors cried. To cover the surgical responsibility in Maine, we found a young surgeon, Dr. Tom Allen, who just completed his residency sixty miles away in Portland, Maine. He consented to move down to York Harbor.

We had a big going-away party, a New England lobster feed. (The cost of a two-pound lobster then was only about \$1.50!)

We put our beautiful Cape Cod house on the market. It did not sell right away and I had given up our surgical staff privileges. Finally we got a “for sale” sign, tacked it on a pine tree and the same day two men showed up. The older was a philanthropist and the younger man was to be stationed here and needed a home. The older man looked it over and wrote us a check paid in full! We were free to go, and moved out the next day.

We packed all our possessions into a large U-Haul trailer. Frances’ mother and father had followed us to Maine, and they came with us to Florida. It was quite a safari – two cars, two trailers, four adults and five small children. Florida, here we come!

18 - The Birth of Sun Coast Hospital

Largo, Florida. We arrived in September of 1956 and just seemed to fit right in. The trip down to Florida was uneventful, no flat tires, nothing like that. And the five children enjoyed it, too.

We pulled into the parking lot of the Motel Ann in Clearwater, and took two adjoining rooms for our family, the Buntings took a room for themselves. Fortunately, it had a swimming pool. Mr. and Mrs. Bunting looked after the children, taking them to school, picking them up after school and supervising them in the pool.

In the meantime, Frances and I scoured the Clearwater-Largo area for a site for our hospital. We also needed to find a house big enough for our family. We began to call realtors. One picked us up and drove us to see a four-bedroom house, a rare thing in Florida at that time. We saw the house, dismissed the realtor and sat down to chat, just Frances and me.

“Did you see that beautiful nursing home we passed as we headed out of Largo?”

“No, think we can find it again?” Frances asked.

It took some research to find it. Suddenly there it was, sitting on a little hill surrounded by pine trees, overlooking the intercoastal waterway. We parked and knocked on the door. The nursing home was quite new, owned and operated by two nurses from New Jersey. We introduced ourselves and said I was a surgeon, my wife was a dietitian, and that we were looking for a piece of land on which to build a hospital.

They were very candid and immediately remarked, “Buy this nursing home, it has a capacity for 14 people, and every bed is full.” They gave us a tour and we liked it. They made arrangements to meet with their attorney, Mr. Tweed MacMullen, to sign the contract.

We all sat around his conference table and reviewed the agreement. We agreed to pay \$73,000.00. I passed him a check for \$500.00. He scanned it and said, “Dr. Snider, in Florida, an agreement to purchase must have 10% of the purchase price, which would be \$7,300.00.”

I reached for my \$500.00 check and said, “Mr. MacMullen, I want very much to buy the nursing home, but I cannot gamble with my finances. \$500.00 is all I can afford.”

One of the nurses exclaimed, "Mr. MacMullen, please take that check. We believe in him. We think Dr. Snider is an honest man and that he really wants to buy." (An honest face carried the day!) The deal was consummated and we owned a nursing home that was to become a hospital!

We were given a set of blueprints, said our good-byes and left to see how we could convert a 14 bed facility into an acute care surgical and obstetrical hospital. We had thirty days to design a hospital out of the 14-bed nursing home.

We began attending the Clearwater Episcopal Church and met a very fine family there, the John Jenkins family, and became friends. He was a banker and a member of the Largo Chamber of Commerce.

One day John said, "There is a Chamber luncheon at noon, would you like to say a few words about your hospital?"

"Yes, John, I surely would," I answered.

At the Chamber luncheon, the handful of members sat around one large table in the Swan Restaurant. I ate and then was asked to speak. I gave a factual account that I was a trained, certified general surgeon, and wanted to start an acute care hospital in their city. A young attorney kept asking me questions, one being, "Are you going to allow M.D.'s in your hospital?"

My reply was, "I am an osteopathic surgeon. It will be an osteopathic hospital. But yes, I will admit M.D.'s when they admit me to their hospital."

Other members asked questions. I answered them truthfully.

As I spoke, I noticed a white-haired pleasant-looking fellow taking notes. I later found out that he owned the Largo Sentinel, the weekly Largo newspaper. The next day he published my speech, every word of it, about a Dr. Snider who was going to start an osteopathic hospital in Largo.

All the papers picked up the article, the Clearwater Sun, the St. Petersburg Inquirer and the Tampa Tribune. That was probably the greatest break I ever had.

Two days later, I got a telephone call. "This is Sam Moore. I work for the Tampa Anderson Surgical Company. I see where you want to start a hospital in Largo. I would like to offer my services and equipment, need any help?"

He drove over from Tampa to the motel and sat with Frances and me, and we began to plan the Sun Coast Hospital, sometimes until four in the morning. We decided that by closing the nursing home, making a few changes and outfitting it properly, we could have an acute care 24-bed hospital. The original owners were appalled that I would send home fourteen good nursing home patients. My reply was always, "This is to be an acute care hospital, remember?"

Sam Moore was extremely helpful. He supplied all the hospital equipment including beds, mattresses, bedside tables, X-ray equipment, operating room lights, obstetric equipment, anesthetic equipment and stainless steel medical instruments.

We decided to transform a lovely Florida room into an operating room and build a small room next to it as central supply and scrub room. The three-car garage at the other end became the radiology and laboratory departments. We built a small addition for obstetrics with a delivery room and a bedroom with three beds.

To set up an operating room, I was astonished to learn that I would have to document all the equipment I would need for each surgery. It seemed an impossible task. For six years at Harbor Hospital, I had worked with an operating room nurse, Kay Walsh, who placed the appropriate instrument, needle, types of sutures, etc. in my hand.

I telephoned Kay Walsh in York Harbor and told her of my problem. She said, "Employ me and my husband for two weeks and I'll set you up while my husband works as your 'gopher' doing any yard work needed.

What a relief! Kay came down and put together a notebook of all possible surgeries I would be doing, and we purchased the needed equipment from Sam Moore.

We hired a contractor to do the work and immediately got busy hiring the employees. We received a second benefit from the local newspaper article. A young retired attorney from Chicago, Mr. Paycheck, called to apply for the position of administrator. Upon interviewing him, I learned he had established small hospitals for the U.S. in Korea. He was very bright and we hired him.

Mr. Paycheck and I canvassed all the osteopathic physician's offices within a radius of 50 miles. We told them we were going to open a new hospital in Largo. Only five osteopathic physicians were within a radius of five miles of the hospital: Dr. James Nichols and Dr. Luther Rockhold in Largo, Dr. Warren Mulholland in Clearwater, Dr. Chester Janis in Indian Rocks Beach, and Dr. Gordon Fisher in Pinellas Park. We recruited many from St. Petersburg, New Port Richey and Tampa.

On one of our trips, we dropped in on a small 12-bed hospital in Tampa operated by an osteopathic surgeon, Dr. Richard Mayer. An important part of the visit was meeting their anesthesiologist, Dr. George Evans. I was tremendously impressed with him. He was a competent cardiologist and skilled obstetrician. My, my, could I use him, but he was not available.

Our contractor was a fine man and a veteran flier named Hamp Horn. He worked diligently with Frances, Sam and me on the plans. One day he asked, "Would you like to fly in my plane to see a Hill-Burton Hospital in Brooksville, Florida?"

I replied, "Of course, anytime."

We flew up the next afternoon from Clearwater Executive Airport, circled Brooksville, saw someone wave to us, and landed in a pasture, cows all around. We climbed over a barbed wire fence and the administrator greeted us.

He took us in his station wagon to the hospital. It was a beautiful, functional 35-bed hospital. I was envious for the first time in my life.

During a hectic six-week period, Sun Coast Hospital was constructed, renovated and furnished. The administrator set up an office in a patient room and advertised for hospital personnel. When he found someone suitable for a position we needed, he notified me and we would consult.

Frances and I traveled extensively to recruit the rest of the original staff of physicians. Each has a story. One of our early contacts was extremely interesting. "Are you Dr. Lou Somers, formerly from the state of Maine? Well, I am Dr. Alan J. Snider and I am going to start an osteopathic hospital in Largo. What do you think of the idea?"

Dr. Somers was very enthusiastic, closed his office, picked up his wife and drove to the facility. I have never seen such enthusiasm. He had been on the staff of a good hospital in Portland, Maine, and felt no such facility existed in Florida.

Dr. Somers, his wife Adeline, Frances and I would walk through our facility, mentally placing beds, kitchen, the operating room, and the obstetrics and pediatric department.

We needed a radiologist. One such doctor was in St. Petersburg, a good Irishman, a really brilliant man named Dr. John Callahan. "Would you like to be the radiologist at the new Sun Coast Hospital?"

His reply was, "Yes, I'll come over and help you select the radiology equipment and cover for you." He did this, night and day, seven days a week, if needed. He originally had no idea of the demands of the hospital on his time. It absorbed him. His wife Frances, a clever bookkeeper and a real lady, helped in patient admitting.

Dr. Callahan ran a one-man department for many years. The X-ray room was so small, he said he never sat for two years. There was no room for a chair, let alone an office! He would arrive at the hospital at 5:00 a.m., read all films taken during the night, and be ready at 7:00 a.m. for the new cases. Dr. Callahan was invaluable and a great stabilizing influence on the staff.

He, with his Irish wit, was a great disciplinarian. One day he said to me, "Obviously you are going to be the nice guy. You need a tough S.O.B. to keep the staff in line, and that will be me." Dr. Callahan had the unique ability to communicate. He could bawl out a physician and make the person like him at the same time. This is a quality I did not have and to this day do not have.

We needed a cardiologist. In the early days, two of the family practitioners took some additional courses in EKG interpretation. They asked if they could cover the

department and interpret the EKGs. I agreed they could and would also see they got paid for their work. However, upon the arrival of a fully trained cardiologist-internist, I explained they must stop their work, as the new specialist would do it.

They agreed and I said, "Sign this paper to that effect." One year later Dr. Sam Calise arrived, a qualified cardiologist. I called the two physicians in, handed them the paper they had signed, and said, "You have read your last EKG as we agree. They requested the right to read their own patients' EKGs. I replied, "You can read your own, and any others, but Dr. Calise's interpretation goes on the chart and he will receive the fee."

Frances was invaluable. With her education as a dietitian, her administrative skills, and her love of humanity, she endeared herself to doctors, employees and citizens in the community. One day Frances went to St. Petersburg to purchase the kitchen equipment, refrigerators, stoves, china, etc. for the cafeteria. When I saw the big truck being emptied, I knew we were in business and must succeed. She took much of the pressure off me and kept things moving smoothly. This was another very happy time in our lives.

I had sunk all my money into the hospital and I was running out of money. I contacted a good friend, John Jenkins, owner and manager of the local Pinellas Bank. Mr. Jenkins believed in me, wanted his community to grow, and let me have the needed money. I was very grateful.

What a busy, bustling period this was. We had completed the renovation of the nursing home into an acute care hospital in just six weeks. The staff was complete, doctors and nurses staffed in all departments and all the equipment was new and installed. This included X-ray, laboratory, an operating room, obstetric department, pediatric department, emergency room and 24 beds.

We notified the newspapers the hospital would open in two weeks. On a beautiful, sunny Sunday in January 1957 we had our first Open House. We admitted more than 1,100 people to see the Sun Coast Hospital. The enthusiasm was terrific. The osteopathic physicians now had a hospital of their own.

After the celebration, we cleaned up and put patients to bed. The next day, Monday, we did four surgical cases. By the weekend, we were all filled up. We were in business.

What a grand group of physicians and employees we had! The nurses felt free to discuss any cases with the doctors, and the doctors felt free, if they were in the hospital, to see and minister to other doctors' patients. It was a very relaxed, friendly and healthful atmosphere, and the patients reacted favorably to it.

When Mr. Paycheck, the Administrator, was interviewing people for staff positions, a woman showed up one day and said she was a certified nurse anesthetist. Would I hire her? We did. She was on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as was I. At the end of six months, I noticed that she had developed a peculiarity. We would put

the patient on the O.R. table, she looked at the chart then disappeared. She returned to the O.R. in a few minutes, gave the anesthetic, and at the termination of the surgery, she disappeared again.

I asked Mary Fortney, the supervisor, "What's going on here?"

"Oh, she's developed a nervous colitis and has frequent bowel movements."

Obviously the strain of 24-hours on call got to her. She could no longer function as the nurse anesthetist.

I called Dr. Evans. "Dr. Evans, how are things going?"

"Not good," he said. "I don't do enough cases, and many of those that I do, I don't get paid for. I guess I'll leave Florida."

"George," I explained, "don't leave Florida until you see what we have here in Largo. We could use your expertise. In fact, our well qualified nurse anesthetist is near the end of the road with a nervous colitis. We could use you any time. You might be surprised and pleased at what we've accomplished in six months!"

Dr. Evans came over from Tampa, spent hours on reviewing charts, operating schedules, admission sheets, and came to the conclusion that we were running a good hospital and that there was a position worthy of his talents.

He came to Largo and we put him to work, but to be sure he could make a living, he set up an office in downtown Largo. He rarely got to his office, we kept him so busy. And of course, obstetrics requires an anesthetist, so he was called many times during the night. He was an excellent physician and we owe much to his input on staff.

The payroll at the end of the first two weeks was \$5,000, and we met it, thanks to an enthusiastic staff and the help of Madge Gilbert. We hired her as an Assistant Administrator, which was the position she held up north.

Upon admitting a patient, Madge would say, "Your name is William, may I call you Bill? My name is Madge, and since you are to have surgery, I'll drop in to see you every day." Bill and other patients became fond of Madge.

Upon discharge, Madge would say, "Bill, why don't you pay your account with us? I will send in your forms to the insurance company and the money will go directly to you." By this time, the patients were Madge's friends. So, they paid her and it gave us the cash flow we needed.

Sam Moore dropped in frequently, and made his company available for anything we might need, even in an emergency. For example, we had one oxygen tent, and in the middle of the night, we admitted a patient with a decompensated heart with pulmonary congestion. I called Sam. "I'll put an oxygen tank in my van and be there in less than one hour." He was invaluable.

19 - Family Life

Our family life was exciting. I needed to live near the hospital in case of any crisis. We found a tiny new two-bedroom home with a large carport. We converted the carport into a dormitory for the four girls, placed a bed in our bedroom for Alan, and had a second bedroom for my wife's Aunt Emma. Emma arrived from New England to be a "house mother" since Frances was spending almost full time at the hospital.

As busy as I was, I made it a point to always have breakfast and the evening meal at home. Frances was a good cook. She knew I had a hefty appetite and we raised the five children to be good eaters, too. They still are!

We felt we were "camping out," but the entire family seemed to share in a sense of achievement in creating Sun Coast Hospital.

Our daughters were loving and gracious even at an early age. They are quite different around the house than an active son.

Joan expanded her love of animals, and raised steers for the 4-H club, showing them at the Largo County Fair and often winning blue ribbons.

Betty, at an early age, became the second mother. The younger children would turn to her all the time for help. She was also a born athlete. She could ride superbly, swim and dive with the best of them.

At graduation from Florida State University, I called her and said, "Betty, I have a job for you."

"Doing what, Dad?" she asked.

"Teaching school, of course. Isn't that what your education was?"

"No, Dad, I studied education, but I don't want to be a teacher." She became an airline stewardess for TWA.

Gail, our third daughter, came along shortly after Betty. She was always an intent listener and a good conversationalist. Gail was never anything but a joy growing up. After two years at Florida State, she became an exchange student at the University of Massachusetts and transferred there where she graduated. "The skiing is great," she said.

Regrettably, she tore up a knee on a slope her junior year, which postponed her skiing for a few years, but she took it up again when she was healthy.

Barbara was our fourth daughter to be born in six years. She was a dynamo. She always had the happy faculty and discipline to do her chores or studies first, then go on to her extra curricular activities. She became the “favorite girl” of the basketball team at Clearwater High. The players congregated in our living room, ate snacks, drank milk and replayed the last game.

On Barbara’s 17th birthday, the players came to the house and presented her with a bouquet of roses. Then they all played touch football in our yard. Barbara dashed into the house to bury her nose in the beautiful roses, but hadn’t realized Alan had coiled a live grass snake around one stem! A loud shriek from Barbara attracted the gang into the house. Here was a frightened girl staring at a live snake. Alan promised he would never plague her again.

Alan Herbert was named after me, of course, and his maternal grandfather. He blended into our family and made a fine contribution. I never realized the zest for living, the impact, the drive a son could give a family. Alan had a circle of friends when quite young. They explored swamps for snakes, baby alligators, fish and crabs. We never knew what we might find in the bathtub.

A book could be written about Alan’s early life. He could do no wrong in Frances’ eyes. She was indulgent of Alan and enjoyed his exploits. Frances loved him deeply and he reciprocated.

One day we were chatting, I believe he was about 12 years old. “I have organized an Indian tribe, Dad, and I am the Chief,” he said.

“That’s great,” I replied. “Do you have an initiation to become a tribesman?”

Well, imagine my horror when I learned one feat of courage was to crawl through a 100-foot culvert – imagine the snake potential!

I always had a good boat for Alan, as he had an interest in boating from the time he was a young child. He was a natural both in and on the water. He always took good care of the boat, cleaned it out and kept it scrubbed. On weekends, Alan and a few pals would take off and go by boat to an uninhabited island to camp out. Why so far away? The water was deeper and cleaner, and the sharks more plentiful!

Our family pleasures were simple. We had fun together. Occasionally on Saturdays, we all piled into our Volkswagen van and, along with our children’s friends, went to a movie.

Joan attended Colorado State University for one year. They had a veterinary hospital on campus, and she spent all her spare time there. One day she called home, “I have a chance to work at a dude ranch this summer. May I?”

“Joan, let me talk with the owners and I will call you back,” I said.

I called them, a young couple, the Millers. It was a dude ranch in the Rockies, called The UT Bar Ranch. I told the Millers that I had four daughters practically the same size and all good workers. My idea was for the Millers to hire all four. I explained that their mother was a dietitian and would work for free. Alan, our 8-year-old son, would baby-sit their son. They agreed.

The family drove to Colorado in our Volkswagen bus, Frances doing all the driving, a total of 2300 miles, to the foothills of the Rockies.

The bus was fitted up to have 2 of the children sitting up front with the driver, they were officially labeled the navigators, the map readers. That left two to be in the back of the bus – a mattress was set down, there was a food locker. This was the kitchen crew. They prepared food snacks, mixed up fruit drinks, opened carbonated cans, then, in time off, they played cards and other games or took naps.

Off they went, scheduled to pick up Joan at Colorado State University on the way. That was accomplished, and the happy crew continued on to Wyoming then further west into the Rocky Mountains.

The three months at the UT Bar Dude Ranch were truly one fantastic experience after another. We had always had ponies, or horses, both in Maine and in Clearwater. As a result, the girls and Alan were accomplished riders. But this was riding open range with horses that were used to rugged cowboys. Before long the Millers saw that even though they were Easterners, they could ride and handle these big, strong range animals.

The daily routine was up at 6:30 a.m., and into the kitchen and dining room, set up for breakfast, cook with the chef, and serve, clear the tables, about 75 stayed at the ranch, wash the dishes and set up for lunch at noon.

Part of the family went to the cabins and made the beds, swept up, started the washing machine for the soiled linens, then joined the other crew to serve lunch. Then clear off the tables, wash the mound of dishes and set up for the evening meal. A problem occurred here. The chef (why do they always have to be a problem) quit. Frances was asked to take over the chef's responsibilities. Being a dietitian, this could be accomplished, but cooking for 75 people was quite a chore.

After the evening meal was taken care of, dishes washed, pots and pans cared for, and the tables set up for breakfast, it was 8 p.m. – the family was allowed to join the guests to play poker, dance or sing. This they did until bedtime.

Another problem occurred. The girls had been promised two or three hours of riding in mid-afternoon. Their responsibilities were so time-consuming, their free time disappeared.

Frances had a meeting with the Millers. “It is very important that my daughters have some fun time each day, and on a ranch, that seems like riding. How can we

accomplish that? Somehow it was accomplished. I suspect that Frances helped the girls get the job done. At any rate, at 2 p.m. each day, the four girls and Alan rode out into the hills along with a guide.

There was a delightful stream that flowed by the ranch house. It was loaded with speckled trout. The clients were encouraged to fly rod along this stream. The Millers provided the rods and lures to all who desired to learn how to fly fish. And they caught good numbers of fish. The fish were cleaned by the wranglers and refrigerated until Friday evening. We all rode horses (except for a few older people who rode our faithful old bus) to a campsite where we had a fish fry of the week's catch. Now that was fun for us all – campfire, smoke, crisp fried trout, pan fried potatoes, pie and cakes.

After a few days, the wranglers became aware of the fact that there were four young ladies who were not only attractive, but could ride their horses.

A plan was evolved to head out at 4 a.m. two of the four girls with the wranglers to round up the horses for the day's riding. This became a very exciting adventure each morning. The two who rode out would return to their room, shower, change clothes and then help in the kitchen.

I stayed home, had surgical responsibilities at the hospital, but I did fly out twice to check on things. On one occasion, they set me upon an old stallion named Scaramoose. He was an old plug of a horse, but one I could easily manage. I was riding along on the open prairie, holding on to all available structures, and who should fly by me on a spirited painted pony but my 8 year old son Alan.

“Hi Dad!” he shouted. “See you at the ranch house.”

I had no fears about him, he could handle a horse.

All in all, it was a splendid summer for the children. They have many fond memories of their experiences.

I believe, however, it was a summer of hard work for Frances. It must have been tough to be a mother. She took over the chef's responsibility when he pulled out, and organized the kitchen, dining room and the housekeeping in order that the girls could have time to ride each afternoon, and have time at the end of the day to dance, sing and play poker.

Oh, it was a memorable summer they have never forgotten. I am sure that our family housework became very tame when compared with covering for the guests in the UT Bar Ranch.

20 - Sun Coast Expands

*T*he hospital progressed rapidly. We put patient beds in the corridor and kept on buying more equipment from Sam Moore. Within one year, we became recognized as a successful hospital. As a result, we obtained more money for expansion. Frances and I traveled extensively to learn how to expand the hospital departments. Most administrators were kind and helpful and as a result the new departments were large and utilitarian. We all were optimistic.

The 24-bed hospital was full from day one. Meanwhile, physicians of all kinds began to apply for staff privileges. After just 12 months, the physicians told me we needed more beds. At this time we incorporated the hospital, let the doctors buy some stock, and added sixteen beds to make Sun Coast a 40-bed hospital.

We kept the contractor, Hamp Horn, busy. No sooner would he have one small wing completed then we were planning another. For years, the sound of hammers and saws were almost constant. Then we began to run out of land. We could not do more first floor construction.

When we needed more equipment, we called Sam Moore and he delivered it. After eighteen months of operation, Sam showed up one day. “Dr. Snider, your hospital is obviously going to be a success. Do you think you could start paying for all this equipment?”

“Sam, you’ve been a jewel and a terrific help to us,” I replied, and agreed that we could. Just imagine – Mr. Moore fully equipped a 40 bed hospital and never asked for a dime until our second year of operation! This was another good break, of course. Sun Coast Hospital was meant to be.

The citizens of the Clearwater and Largo areas who were treated at osteopathic hospitals up north easily accepted Sun Coast Hospital and were very supportive. Others followed. The number of osteopathic physicians grew rapidly, the demand for more beds, larger obstetrics and surgical areas increased.

Sun Coast Hospital’s growth was gradual and steady, but as we grew we continued to need more physician specialists to round out the departments. We recruited and they readily came to us.

I was in search of an orthopedist, so I called an old friend at my medical college, Dr. James Madison Eaton. "I just finished training Dr. Richard Couch. He can do anything in orthopedics you will need. I recommend him highly," said Dr. Eaton. Richard and his wife Cathy came down, reviewed us, and joined the staff. He helped me in general surgery and I helped him on his cases. What assets they were to the community.

Frances and I went to a convention in California and sought out a well-trained general surgeon who was also qualified in thoracic surgery. Dr. Walter Reagan was recommended. He was serving on the staff of a large Los Angeles County Hospital. Colleagues introduced us to Walter and his talented wife, Margo. We told them about the philosophy of our hospital, how our surgeons did all the surgery, orthopedists did all the fracture work, etc. It amazed them that a doctor could make a good living just in his or her specialty, so they came out to see us and moved in. We became partners and never argued. Walter and Margo were valuable members of Sun Coast and the community.

Dr. George Kotsch came on from Columbus, Ohio, as a cardiologist. He put a solid medical group together. They were internists with sub-specialties in rheumatology, nuclear medicine, pulmonary disease, endoscopy and oncology. The medical group soon had ten specialists and was a strong force, diagnostically and therapeutically.

Dr. Harold Ward joined the staff, qualified as an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist. He later concentrated on just the eyes. Dr. Michael Riley came on from Texas, certified in ear, nose and throat and plastic surgery of the face.

A well-qualified neurosurgeon arrived from Detroit, Dr. James Tyler. He had a general surgery residency, then went to study neurosurgery in Japan. I spent the afternoon with Dr. Tyler. We drove to a house Frances and I owned in Hudson, Florida, on the water. On the way to Hudson he said, "If I join the staff, I will need a great deal of equipment." On the return trip he said, "WHEN I join the staff..." James Tyler was a valued member of the staff for many years.

Soon after Sun Coast Hospital opened, Dr. Morris Osattin, a pathologist, dropped by. I had known him from my residency days. He was a former professor of Pathology at the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine. He offered to drive from Orlando, where his base hospital was located, and cover our Pathology department. This he did. I tried to convince him to give up the Orlando hospital and join us full time. He refused and said he had a five-year commitment in Orlando, but would join us permanently following this time. I promised Dr. Osattin I would build a department of Pathology around him. This was done. He was such a valuable asset to the hospital, a good man in all respects, academically and morally. Dr. Osattin trained several residents. One was Dr. Robert Lewis who stayed on with us as a staff pathologist and a partner of Dr. Osattin. They were a good team.

I could go on and on. We had some of the finest family practitioners. They formed the backbone of Sun Coast Hospital, were dedicated to their patients, to the

profession and to the hospital. One such doctor is Dr. James Wallace, who joined the staff in July 1960. He has been an active member of the hospital's Board of Trustees for more than 30 years and served as Chairman of the Board many of those years.

The medical staff took an interest in training a resident staff. Our first surgical resident was Dr. Charles Carr, who graduated from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. After his four-year surgical residency at Sun Coast Hospital, he joined the staff. His wife, Carolyn, has worked closely with him and continues to be a strong advocate of the osteopathic profession.

A later surgical resident was Dr. David Lowery. His fine wife, Lisa, is an anesthesiologist and both are valuable staff members.

In 1964, our first medical interns were Dr. Philip Shettle and Dr. Donald Patterson. Sun Coast Hospital has expanded its medical education programs and currently we train more than 70 young physicians as medical students, externs, interns and residents.

Various well-qualified physicians from all over the country have joined the staff, both in family practice and specialty practices, in the hospital's 50 years of operation.

21 – A Tragedy and a Blessing

In 1971 we experienced a family tragedy. Frances and I left home on a Saturday night to attend a cocktail party and dinner at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Charles Carr. On our way to their house, a car driven by two young fellows crossed the double yellow lines, straight toward us, and struck our car head on.

I was dazed. I remember Frances saying, “Alan, I hurt.” When I came to, they were escorting me to the ambulance. I kept asking, “How is my wife? How is Frances?” When I arrived at Sun Coast Hospital, they gave me a hypodermic and knocked me out. I awoke at 10 o’clock the same evening. Dr. Reagan was there. He had operated on Frances. She died on the operating table of multiple injuries. My minister was also at my bedside.

Frances was a woman who devoted her entire life to others and was so instrumental in the founding and philosophy of the hospital. She was tireless in her devotion to her family, church and Sun Coast Hospital. I am sure I would have been unable to accomplish my dream without her unselfish and competent help. We all miss her deeply.

When Frances died, all my children came home: Joan from Largo, Betty from Denver, Gail (now called Anna-Lisa) from California, Barbara from North Carolina, and Alan from college. It was a sad time. They divided up their dearly loved mother’s possessions at my request.

I was somewhat cracked up physically. My ribs were broken, my heart bruised, I suffered a collapsed lung and a fractured foot. After a few days at the hospital, I went back to work. It was a difficult time for the family, the hospital personnel, and many who knew Frances in the community. All my patients cried and I joined them. I was emotionally incapable of seeing patients without sharing my grief with them.

When the pressure got to be too much, I called Barb and Tom in Durham, North Carolina, and flew up for a few days. I developed a rapid heart rate, but was told it was just stress and it would go away, which it did.

My children all agreed I should not go it alone and I should marry again when I found a suitable partner.

About six months later, I began to feel the need for female companionship in my life. I remembered Charlotte Bailey, whom I had met at an American Field Service party. She had a Danish exchange student living with her family for a year when our family had a female exchange student from Switzerland. Charlotte's husband had died some years before. She had three grown children, Sharron Parker, Brant Bailey and Randi Bailey. I drove by her home on the way to the hospital in the mornings and again after work. I never saw her outside and did not dare approach her without a reintroduction.

One day Jean Stewart, whose husband was on our hospital board, called and invited me to dinner at their home. I told her she knew everybody in the Clearwater/Largo area, and asked if she could get me a date for the night. Jean called me back and said, "Alan, I have a date for you with a friend of yours, Charlotte Bailey. It is all set up for tomorrow evening at six o'clock." I felt it was prophetic.

We dated, saw each other practically every day. About a year later we made wedding plans. My second daughter, Betty, planned to marry Don Gray the same day. So, we set up a large tent in our backyard and erected an arbor of roses for the altar. A Methodist minister married Betty and Don.

Shortly after Betty and Don's reception, we held our wedding ceremony. The family reconvened and went to a lovely Episcopal church on the property just next to my home. It was an intimate, quiet wedding ceremony. Charlotte's Presbyterian minister and my Episcopal minister joined us together in matrimony. Both families were united, including Charlotte's three children and my five children. Several other family members from out of town also attended. We had two fine family weddings in one day.

After the reception, Betty and Don took off for Hawaii. Charlotte and I left for a hotel on the beach, then flew to Hawaii with a stop-off in California to visit my daughter, Gail. Betty and Don met us at the airport in Hawaii, gave us two leis, then disappeared and we never saw them in Hawaii again!

Two weeks after the wedding, we had a circus-style tent set up in our backyard for a post-marriage reception. The hospital hosted a fabulous buffet and a lively band entertained. It was truly grand. All our friends were there.

Charlotte and I sold my home, sold her home, and built a new home near the hospital on the intercoastal waterway. Charlotte has quite a flair in home planning. She designed and decorated many houses for her first husband, who was a building contractor. She worked closely with our contractor and they designed a beautiful home situated picturesquely about 30 feet from the intercoastal waterway.

Charlotte's orientation had been with the medical profession before our marriage. Her father was a dentist, her brother was an orthodontist, and she attended Iowa University and graduated from Northwestern University as a dental hygienist. However, upon becoming my wife, she dropped her connections with her medical doctors. As a

loyal supporter of the osteopathic profession and Sun Coast, she served as president of the district and state auxiliaries and worked with the hospital guild for 24 years.

Charlotte is also a trained musician, performing as a church vocal soloist for many years, and lately playing organ and piano in our churches in Florida and North Carolina, and for many hospital functions.

22 – Our Children and Their Lives

Charlotte and I have settled down, although our lives are still very busy. My five children and her three children are grown and most of them are married with children of their own. We have all remained close and involved as a family.

Joan, my oldest daughter, married E. Jay Searle, who retired as a postman. They have two sons, Karl and Keith, and a beautiful daughter, Jennifer, who is married to Jamie Stanley, and they have two darling children named Zoe and Kiley. Joan is a talented chef, nurse and seamstress, and still loves her animals. Joan and Jay, and Jennifer and her family live in the mountains of eastern North Carolina in a city called Franklin.

My second daughter, Betty, became an airline stewardess with TWA for about 13 years after graduating from college. During this time, she met and married a fine engineer, T. Don Gray. They lived in Colorado and raised a fine son, Michael, now a marine biologist in St. Petersburg, Florida and a delightful daughter, Lori, headed for her doctorate in music. Betty died suddenly of a ruptured brain aneurism – a real tragedy, affecting us all. Don, after some years, married Mary Grace whom we all like and approve. Betty was a good student, disciplined, and was a pleasure to have around. One could see at an early age a reincarnation of her mother.

Gail, now called Anna-Lisa Nilsson, her Hollywood name, became disillusioned about becoming an actress and is now passionate about her work in the movie-making business. She also works part-time as an author of children's stories and screenplays for television and film. She married Bill Huch, a media and marketing man who collaborates with her in developing screenplays and reality television shows. Gail was always a happy child. I swore she had champagne in her veins, as she was so bubbly and optimistic. She loved her mom and dad and got along well with everyone. At an early age she was a vibrant speaker, and a good, sensitive listener. A graduate of the University of Massachusetts, we always knew Gail would go far and do well in her chosen work.

Barbara, my fourth daughter, attained her Master's degree in French and minored in Computers, and was a member of Phi Beta Kappa at the University of North Carolina. She married Tom Graham, an attorney, and they adopted two beautiful babies, Frances and Hope, who became the light of their lives. Frances just became the mother of a

darling boy, Isaiah. They all live in the Denver area where Barb and Tom run a very successful Primerica business.

Alan, the youngest of the Snider crew, graduated from college with a pre-med degree. He went on to graduate from the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, then completed an internship and a four-year residency in orthopedic surgery. He married Rebecca Poetschke, who became a neurologist. They have a son, Adam Paul, and a daughter, Emily Grace. Alan and Becky have a medical practice together and are doing very well in Tecumseh, Michigan.

Charlotte's children are all grown with their own tales to tell. Sharron, with a Master's degree in interior design, has become a specialist in decorative felt wall-hangings and fiber art. Her work has been shown on television, in numerous art museums, and the Smithsonian Museum in D.C. Sharron and her husband, Ken Parker, who was a statistical consultant to the governor of North Carolina, live in Raleigh, NC.

Brant, a former world tennis professional, is now a tax attorney in St. Petersburg. He and his wife, Annie, who teaches voice and piano in the schools, are the proud parents of two sons, Ben and Barrett, both outstanding athletes in basketball and tennis, and two daughters, Tirzah and Brianne, who excel in music. A family in their church had family problems, so Brant and Annie took over the responsibility of raising their five children for five years.

Randi Beth, her youngest daughter, graduated from Florida State University and earned a master's degree in library science and computers. She resided in Tallahassee, where she was a librarian for the state of Florida's Historical Library there. She has recently moved near us in Largo where she became employed as a teacher and the school librarian, with emphasis on computer science.

We are very proud of the whole family!

23 – Time to Retire

When looking back on retirement, I must admit it wasn't easy. Retirement, that mystical term that we think of for many years, and suddenly the time is here.

Retiring from surgery was the most difficult thing I have ever done. Surgery meant so much to me. I had worked hard for so many years to become a qualified surgeon. My life as a doctor and surgeon had taken me to Massachusetts, Maine and Florida. Nevertheless, time marches on.

In 1976, I was 65 years old, had no malpractice problems, felt good, and believed one should retire while still healthy.

Dr. Walter Reagan, Dr. Charles Carr and I talked over who should be my successor. We contacted the American College of Osteopathic Surgeons and they recommended Dr. C.W. Elliot. Dr. Reagan flew to Dayton, spent a day with him at his hospital, and was satisfied he was the man to take my place. I retired knowing the surgical department was in good hands.

Dr. Elliott was an excellent replacement, both as a skilled surgeon and instructor of surgical residents.

I retired from the Operating Room, but I found that I was still dropping into the hospital daily, not doing much, but enjoying the association with other physicians, employees and patients.

Then why not be productive? Why not have patients, but refer the surgery to my former partners, Dr. Walt Reagan and Dr. Charles Carr?

Thus, I rented space in my old office, hired a delightful lady, Mrs. Sawyer, and began family practice. Now that was a joy! My finances were all taken care of – I did not need to make a large profit, I could take as long as I wanted with a patient. My practice became partly social and partly therapeutic.

Many days I just broke even, but my association with the patients was very satisfying.

I still felt the pull of the aura of the operating room, but I never set foot in the O.R. after retiring, not even to assist on my cases.

Finally, in 1994, at age 82, I felt I should retire from medicine completely, and did.

Now, what to do, for I felt healthy and somewhat alert. Charlotte and I put our heads together. The hospital did not need me. It was governed by a Board of Directors. I asked for Board privileges, but I would not be compelled to attend all Board meetings. I could do so when it was convenient, like when I was in town.

Our eight children, Charlotte's three and my five, have all left home, were all educated and set up their own lifestyles.

At this point our hospital attorney, Steve Hughes, who attended all Board meetings – to keep us out of trouble – dashed into a Board meeting short of breath. He said, “You should see what I saw on my way back from Atlanta in my plane. A resort called Wolf Laurel in the mountains of western North Carolina. It was so pristine, so beautiful. The area was surrounded by mountain peaks, and I parked my plane in Asheville, rented a car and drove to it. A realtor took me by the hand, showed me the 5,000 acres, I was so impressed I bought two lots.”

Now, I had always thought that Steve Hughes was as tight as the bark on a tree, so if he bought two lots, that must be spectacular.

Charlotte and I drove up -- 700 miles – the next week and had the same feeling. We bought a lot.

There was an inn and restaurant on the property, and we came up to the mountains several times, but decided to not build on the lot, just sell it.

We notified the realtor of our decision, and he said, “Don't leave until I show you a house.” He showed us a new comfortable house and we bought it, turning in the lot as part payment.

This was the smartest thing Charlotte and I ever did. We decided to divide our time almost evenly between our home in Largo in the winter and this new mountain home in the summer.

We have had over 20 years of complete enjoyment by this decision, and our whole family seems to enjoy the lifestyle too, since they all spend some time with us each summer.

In the meantime, Sun Coast Hospital is chugging along without me. I receive monthly reports from the Board and other happenings, but no longer am I under the strain of the hospital operation. I am satisfied.

24 – Sun Coast Undergoes Major Renovations

All was going well at Sun Coast Hospital. By 1989, we had reached 300-bed capacity. We had become a comprehensive health care center caring for more than 32,000 patients each year. My fondest dreams and wishes had been granted.

We were rolling along in good shape, took Medicare and Medicaid in our stride.

Progress, however, is not always without its challenges. During this time, the federal government set new building code standards. All hospital structures with lumber and asbestos had to be removed, all corridors fire-walled. The Board of Directors tackled the asbestos problem along our corridors. In fact, eliminating the asbestos cost one million dollars.

Although the hospital had undergone five construction programs in 30 years, it was still in need of major renovation and expansion. Inpatient and outpatient areas needed consolidation and reorganization. We needed entirely new emergency, imaging and surgical areas to maximize patient convenience and staff efficiency.

The major renovation and expansion project totaled \$12 million. At a Board of Trustees meeting, I suggested we bulldoze the shopping center we owned next to the hospital, to build and modernize all new departments. The Board agreed.

We called a veteran administrator from Columbus, Ohio, Bill Conold, told him we needed to expand but were running out of land. He flew down to Largo at once and came up with the solution. “Put down a pad of concrete four feet thick. Set it in a pad of steel, attach “H” beams to this, build two floors but know that this foundation will support a ten story building.”

Although a bond issue provided the major portion of financing for the project, the hospital needed an additional \$1.75 million to complete the overall project. For the first time in its history, Sun Coast Hospital launched a community-wide capital campaign to secure the necessary philanthropic support. This campaign reinforced the partnership that had facilitated its growth and development since day one between the hospital and the community.

We contracted with an architectural firm and a construction firm. The terms of agreement included one important component. The firms agreed to complete all of the work without Sun Coast Hospital losing one day of operation.

The project, the hospital's most significant to date, got underway. They tore out the small shopping center next door. In its place they built six new operating rooms, a new obstetrics department, X-ray department, emergency room, lobby, gift shop, admitting and discharge departments, and day surgery area.

Our new Pavilion, completed in 1992, has six large beautifully-equipped operating rooms. These are divided according to specialty needs including general surgery, thoracic and vascular surgery, eye, ear, nose, and throat surgery, plastic surgery, neurologic, orthopedic, urologic and gynecologic surgery.

By 1993, with this phase completed, we moved out of the old building into the new annex. True to their word, the construction occurred without a day of lost time.

We still had another expensive remodeling of the old hospital structure to complete. The original nursing home, its four operating rooms, recovery rooms, central supply, all had to go.

Upon construction of the new hospital areas and renovation of the old building, we finally had a completely new and very modern hospital. By 1995, Sun Coast Hospital met all building codes.

Since we are a teaching hospital, our operating rooms are quite large to fit young physicians who assist or observe surgery. All of our surgeons are teachers and take great pride in educating as they operate or make rounds.

After six years of hard work, all departments of Sun Coast Hospital are complete and sized for the 1990s and the next century. And adding floor after floor, by 2003 we had a five story building.

Then came the designing and the construction of the invasive cardiac department. We were truly moving ahead.

Finances became tight with HMO'S, PPO'S, Medicare and Medicaid. The Board of Directors decided that we could no longer go it alone. A decision was reached to affiliate with three local hospitals – two in Tampa: University Community Hospital, University Community Hospital at Carrollwood, and Helen Ellis Memorial Hospital in Tarpon Springs.

With a new, dedicated CEO, Larry Archbell and leadership from Norm Stein, President of University Community Health - the four-hospital system, plus the addition of many knowledgeable staff people from Tampa, we did better.

Probably there is no time in the history of our nation when expanding a hospital has been so very, very difficult. Many hospitals across this great country have had to close their hospitals, due to fiscal restraints. Fortunately, with the expertise of the combined forces of the four hospitals, we did quite well.

We are now a combined staff hospital – the medical doctors (M.D.'s) and the osteopathic medical doctors (D.O.'s) having equal prestige.

25 – *Sun Coast Today*

Sun Coast Hospital now employs 800 highly talented physicians, nurses, technicians and other health personnel. They are gracious, responsible, and deeply respected by Sun Coast's patients.

The Board of Directors is composed of dedicated civic leaders and physicians who serve without financial reward. Their zeal is to serve Sun Coast Hospital and to constantly strive to make it better. Their efforts, combined with those of our fine physicians, have successfully geared Sun Coast Hospital for the highly technical medicine of the future.

The physical plant is new, modern, and up-to-date. We have seven new large operating rooms, pre-anesthetic and post-operative recovery rooms, a better staff lounge and dressing rooms. The x-ray rooms, all brand-new are large and colorful. The CAT scan, the MRI and the bone density labs make up the large and sophisticated nuclear medicine departments, plus a new large lobby and gift shop. We were, in many respects, a new and systemic organization, all departments where they belonged in relation to one another.

The physicians are residency-trained and keep up with the medicine of today. Upon opening the doors in 1957, I told the staff that any equipment would be obtained if needed to properly care for their patients. We have adhered to this policy.

Sun Coast Hospital continues to be a medical teaching hospital. Today, we train interns and residents in family medicine, internal medicine, surgery, anesthesiology, urologic surgery and dermatology. These young physicians are remarkable. The medical specialists eventually go on for board certification in their specialty.

Today the resident staff of young physicians that we train number about 75, divided among interns, externs and residents. Our medical students, interns and residents arrive from any of the 27 osteopathic medical schools throughout the United States.

We have much to be proud of. Sun Coast Hospital has evolved into the largest osteopathic teaching hospital in the southeastern United States. Sun Coast Hospital is the official medical teaching hospital for Nova Southeastern University, which is the second largest university in the state of Florida.

In so many ways, medicine has been transformed in the 50 years since Sun Coast Hospital was founded. Physicians no longer act alone. We back them up with specialty-trained physicians. They require a modern hospital with the most sophisticated equipment available. This is the Sun Coast Hospital of today. We are on the forefront of great medicine, with medical advances never dreamed of 50 years ago.

26 – Largo Today

Sun Coast Hospital is located in the beautiful city of Largo – a city that has grown by 50,000 people since the founding of the hospital. The delightful city of Largo is situated on the Gulf of Mexico and is blessed in many ways. It has twenty-seven miles of the finest sandy beaches, and an intercoastal waterway that is a paradise to boaters and fishermen.

Our elected city government is far-sighted. It has, through the years, developed gorgeous parks to the point that Largo has probably more acreage diverted to city parks than any other city in the United States of comparable size. We are truly blessed.

Our churches and schools are fine and we have several colleges, not only in our city but several large, nationally known colleges on our periphery that are within easy driving distance.

There are a number of hospitals in the area, of which Sun Coast is one, taking care of our elderly or sick. Also there are many nursing homes and retirement homes. Truly, our city is a healthy one.

Our youth is not being neglected. We have two large recreation areas with swimming pools, numerous soccer, football and baseball fields and easy access to stadiums for all sports, both amateur and professional.

Our close proximity to amateur and professional sporting events such as hockey, soccer, football, baseball, swimming and diving, gives our citizens the recreational facilities for the good life.

I am sure we live longer, healthier and happier because of the benevolence of our climate, appreciated as it is by the great number of visitors we have during the winter months. Truly, overcoats, scarves, hats and galoshes are not needed here.

You see, Sun Coast Hospital is ideally situated to grow, which it has, to care for the ill and the elderly, which it does and to prosper, which is apparent, for it has grown phenomenally during the 50 years of its existence.

Our growth is shown by the fact that we have become one of the largest industries, with over 250 well-trained physicians, a training hospital for 54 interns and

residents, over 200 beds and 800 skilled employees – plus the best hospital equipment that money can buy!

The city of Largo has been good to the Sun Coast Hospital – and I hope the Sun Coast Hospital has reciprocated in giving excellent health care to its people.

27 – Dreams Do, Indeed, Come True

I have been an active member of the Board of Trustees of the Sun Coast Hospital Foundation, the fund-raising arm of the hospital, since its inception in 1984. The Foundation has had singular success. The employees, the patients, the Guild, the volunteers, the staff of physicians, the business community and residents are the hospital's main supporters.

What does Sun Coast Hospital of today mean to the community other than patient care?

We are, of course, an acute care, nonprofit hospital. All departments function 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The staff is dedicated to its responsibilities to patients and the community.

What further impact does the hospital have on the community?

We have an active speaker's bureau. These physicians lecture to local groups on health promotion and disease prevention topics at the hospital and at community sites. They are indeed creating a healthier community.

The financial impact of Sun Coast Hospital on the local area is considerable. Our salaries for 800 employees, our pension plan, the staff of 200 physicians' offices, and hospital equipment amounts to several million dollars monthly.

I sometimes marvel at how many homes and cars are purchased and how many families are educated, clothed and fed because of Sun Coast Hospital. We are one of Largo's largest businesses.

Sun Coast Hospital of today is very different from the small 24-bed hospital founded in 1957, 50 years ago. It is an even grander dream than the one created in the mind of sick nine-year-old boy in a hospital bed in Canada. This dream has not only come true for me, but as it has unfolded, it has made others' dreams come true.

Today the dream continues. The dream is for Sun Coast Hospital to continue to meet the current and future health care needs of all those in the area.

Naturally, I feel my life has been grand. At age 95, my life continues to be grand. Charlotte and I have a nice “shack” in the mountains of western North Carolina in a settlement called Wolf Laurel near the town of Mars Hill. Here we spend six months, from May through October, gardening and relaxing. The other six winter months we spend at home in Largo. We still enjoy the Florida climate.

One of our greatest blessings is that we both retain good health. Our children (although spread across this land from California to Michigan to Colorado to North Carolina to Florida) are still attentive and loving to us and each other.

So in the year 2007, we look back to our dream – to have a hospital and to become a physician. Both have been realized.

The Sun Coast Hospital has been completely renovated – the 300 bed capacity has been reduced to 200 beds by converting the two bed rooms to single bed rooms.

Halls, walls, floors are newly done. We look fresh, clean and modern.

On October 28, 2006, the new and sophisticated emergency rooms were completed, preparing us to better care for the emergencies. This is particularly valuable and appropriate where we are in Florida since we have such a transient population during the “cold months of the north.”

Medicine, or at least the practice of medicine, has changed through the years. Patients formerly called “their doctor” if they had a nighttime illness. Now their first impulse is to call the E.R., where they will get immediate and qualified care.

We are ready at the Sun Coast Hospital for our responsibilities.

The founding of Sun Coast has truly been a dream and an honor. With the help and support of others, I attained the lifelong goal of building a hospital for the good of a community. It has been an honor to be associated with so many families, friends and medical colleagues that help and continue to hold the same enthusiasm for Sun Coast Hospital.

My greatest joy is watching our family expand. We now have seven great grandchildren. Life has been good.

And dreams do, indeed, come true!

