

Stories My Father Told Me

My father, Gordon Paul, was on the Blair Academy faculty from 1955 until his retirement in 1974. He taught mathematics, a field that matched his objective side, but he could as easily have taught history, political science, or literature. I think of my father as having been mildly eccentric and his mannerism were widely imitated by the student body. But he earned a measure of respect by being an excellent teacher and the school's conservative conscience in an age when liberalism was popular.

Teaching came both early and late to my father. Graduating from college in the middle twenties, he was a history teacher and athletic director at a fashionable Midwest private school. Then in 1929 he entered business and struggled through the depression and World War II in marketing and sales positions. At age 49, he returned to teaching, a profession for which he had the utmost regard and subsequently made Blair and the Blair student the focus of his life.



Gordon Paul was an athlete of some note. At Butler College, a small school in Indianapolis, Indiana with a big-time sports schedule, he starred in football and basketball. One of my favorite mementos is an article from *The Butler Collegian* in October of 1926 describing the 16 to 13 loss to the University of Illinois, led by the "flashy half back, Red Grange". The article notes that "The first score came when Gordon Paul, Butler full back, scooped up a fumble when Grange became confused in the backfield and ran fifty five yards for a touchdown". My father took an embarrassed delight in recounting that in 1926, after a 42-6 loss to Notre Dame, Knut Rockne came over to the sidelines to consoled the Butler team. "Good job, Paul" he said. "Go to hell" was the reply.

One of my father's college friends, now a gracious lady in her nineties, said "Gordon would have made the perfect river boat gambler. He was charming and the smartest person I ever knew". It is true, my father was a skilled card player and, in his classroom, often illustrated the principles of probability with examples from the poker table or racetrack. Whether or not this has spawned a generation of Blair card sharks, is unclear.

But most significantly, my father was a consummate story teller. He had that special gift for recounting stores that fascinated the listener, lean and sinewy stories, that he delivered with a delicate cadence. When he started to talk his voice brought an attentive hush to his audience. He worked the story skillfully till it reached it's usual hilarious conclusion. Mostly they were tales with some moral and were often based on his observations as a boy growing up in Indiana in the early part of this century. Politics, the television of that era, was a common thread. The experiences of his grandfather and father, working men, formed the foundation of his repertoire.

All the stories that follow were part of talks delivered to the student body of Blair. As such, they were written down and thereby preserved. These are worthwhile stories whose only flaw may be that the facts are often twisted and exaggerated, a small sacrifice, my father believed, for the sake of a good punch line. I have edited them, but it is the voice of my father speaking. Gordon Paul died in 1976.

The White County Republican Committee

Grandfather Paul was a dirt farmer in White County, Indiana. He raised four boys and two girls on a quarter section in White County Indiana. The years between eighteen seventy and the turn of the century were tough times. There never was enough cash money with wheat 32 cents and corn 23 cents a bushel.

There was just enough money for one pair of boots a year. Grandfather got the new boots. Uncle Bill got Grandfather's. Uncle Dan got Uncle Bill's. Uncle Jim got Uncle Dan's. And what was left of Uncle Jim's came to Pop. About the crops, Pop said, "We sold what we could. What we couldn't sell we fed to the pigs. What the pigs wouldn't eat, we ate."

Certainly things were pretty tough, but come hell or high water, on the first of October of each year, Grandfather would scratch up a \$5 bill to give to the White County Republican Committee.

Swearing

I never knew my grandfather. He evidently was a decent sort. He was a deacon in the church and was a God-fearing man. But according to the "old timers" who had known him, he was also a two fist cussed. I've heard from thirty different people that Grandfather swore.

This story happened back in August of 1883. Grandfather had a quarter section of good Indiana bottom land and had about 60 acres of it in wheat. It was all cut and shocked and waiting for the thresher. In those days, before the modern combine, a big steam driven threshing machine would follow the harvest north and would hire out to a circle of neighbors. The neighbors would then pitch in and help each other with the threshing, till the entire harvest was finished. Part of the deal was that each farm would play host for a noon day meal. And feeding 25 or more hungry threshers was no light chore. It entailed great quantities of food, and a great deal of help from the neighboring women folk.

From the moment the machine pulled into Grandfather's farm, the trouble started. Everything went wrong. The first day it rained. On the second day the belt on the steam engine broke beyond repair and all of daylight was wasted while a man went to Lafayette for a replacement. Meanwhile, the problem of feeding these people was becoming increasingly difficult. The first day Grandmother had prepared 18 old hens with the appropriate dumplings and trimmings. The second day had required the use of the last five hams hanging in the smoke house. On the evening of the second day Grandmother decided that they would have to butcher a sheep for the third dinner; so late that night Grandfather killed the sheep, dressed out the hind quarters and loins, trussed them up with wire and hung them in the well.

The next day dawned clear and bright. By eight o'clock the dew was sufficiently gone from the shocks and the loading started. The steam engine huffed and puffed. The blower on the thresher came to life and work began. Just then Grandfather saw Grandmother walking toward him across the field. With determination and great singleness of purpose she marched right up to Grandfather and said "Judson, the mutton fell in the well."

Grandfather replied, "Oh Hell." On this single outburst was born a life long reputation as a swearer.

Uncle Cloyd

When I was a kid in our little town in Indiana, Great-uncle Cloyd was the only one in our family who had any money. He was a big man with a red face and white handle bar mustache. When he spoke, Mother curtsied and Pop listened. He was chairman of the White County Republican Committee, deeply involved in state politics. Uncle Cloyd was widely credited with having brought the Indiana delegation to his friend Mark Hanna, and William McKinley in the convention of '96. Uncle Cloyd believed in two things, "God and the Republican Party."

One August afternoon in 1912, a team of matched chestnuts, followed by a trail of dust, came to a sliding stop in front of our house. Great-uncle Cloyd jumped out.

He charged up the front walk and with a "Where's your father?" slammed into the house. For fifteen minutes, shouts and swear words were all I heard. Then Uncle Cloyd slammed out of the house, jumped into the buggy, lashed up the chestnuts, and disappeared in another cloud of dust.

This is my first memory of a political discussion. I was seven years old. It seemed that Uncle Cloyd had just heard that Pop was going to vote for Teddy Roosevelt, and he had just been giving him hell.

You may doubt that a seven year old could have understood the significance of this scene. I can only assure you that I did. Kids in those days had no television. There were no cars or movies or radios. Kids were included in family conversations. Our porch in the evening always had a neighbor or two, and I was allowed to sit and listen. Certainly much

of it went over my head. But I think that I did understand why Pop decided to throw over the tradition of a lifetime, bolt the Republican Party, and be an aggressive supporter of the Bull Moose Movement.

You see, my father was a laboring man. He was an engineer on the Pennsylvania Rail Road and ran freight trains between Chicago and Columbus, Ohio. He belonged to the Union, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and in 1910 he was elected president of Local Twenty. Pop was very active in union affairs and the home was filled with stories of the union. One project fostered by the Union was the automatic coupling. At the time, all the freight trains had to be coupled by hand. A brakeman would enter between the cars and slip in a pin to couple the train. It was dangerous work and many brakemen were killed and injured coupling and uncoupling the cars.

Westinghouse had developed an automatic coupling, an adjunct to their air brake and wanted to sell it. The Pennsylvania Railroad was reticent to endorse the automatic coupling because of the enormous cost. So Pop, a member of a committee, went to Washington to try to get some legislation on the matter. They called in Jim Watson, Senator from Indiana who brought in a Senator from Wisconsin, Bob La Folette to help. La Folette initiated and fought for specific legislation on the automatic coupling. The bill was killed in committee by stand-pat Republicans who were in control.

So when Jim Watson, La Folette, Hiram Johnson from California, Borah from Idaho, and others joined Teddy Roosevelt and bolted the party in 1912, Pop went down the line with them. It was a Quixotic gesture because in November the Democrats with about 40% of the popular vote waltzed into the White House. Uncle Cloyd never forgave Pop.

The Road

Pop worked as an engineer on the Pennsylvania Railroad. He would take a freight train from the big switching center in Logansport north to Chicago or east to Columbus, Ohio. It was hard work that often required twenty four hours in the open cab of a big 4-6-4 locomotive. At the end of the line he would eat a hot meal in the company of his mates and then collapse in a bunk for a few hours rest before he started the return trip. He always enjoyed the company of railroad men and he later became active in union politics and was known as the "root cutter" for reasons long since forgotten.

One didn't start out in the lofty position of engineer. As a farm boy he followed in the footsteps of his friend and neighbor Pierpont Edwards, five years older, to a job as a fireman on the railroad. Now that was hard work but no harder than working on the family farm. It took a strong back and a thick skin. He stuck to it for five years lost 30 of his 175 pounds on his six foot frame. In 1902 Pop was promoted to engineer.

Pop became something of a sentimental hero in the family when on a spring day in 1915 he suddenly stopped his freight train on the spur line near the town of Brookston, Indiana. He set the air brakes and jumped from the cab and bounded across the road to a farm house set back in a grove of trees. The engine clanked and hissed behind him as he

knocked on the door. The startled woman who answered was his younger sister Edna, but the reason for his visit was his five year old niece, Anna, in bed with a broken collar bone. He brought her flowers and they visited for a few minutes in spite of the hoots and hollers of the train crew.

Uncle Jim

Of all my relatives, the one who made the biggest impression on me was Uncle Jim, Pop's older brother. Right after he mustered out of the Spanish-American War, he worked his way down to Arkansas, and bought a section of swamp land in the southern part of the state. He took in ten mules and 200 goats, cleared up and dredged the land, and in a few years Uncle Jim had the prettiest 640 acres of alfalfa and corn you ever saw. He fattened up Texas steers and was well on his way to challenging Uncle Cloyd as the money bags in the family. Uncle Jim never married.

He came north to visit us in 1913. Mother was mortified. Uncle Jim had ridden the day coach all the way from Arkansas in overalls. "Trains is hard on britches" he announced by way of explanation. As I remember them, they were clean, but he never got out of them while he visited us. Uncle Jim was lean and lank and leathery, he had two wonderful gold teeth, and he could laugh louder than anyone I ever heard.

Uncle Jim talked Mother into letting him take me into Chicago for the day. We started out early, overalls and all by catching the milk train before the sun was up. We took in Marshall Fields department store, Comminisky Ball Park, and in the evening the Star and Garter Burlesque Show. He brought back some perfume for Mother, and swore me to secrecy about the burlesque. But within an hour after we got up the next morning, the story was out. Mother was in tears. Even Pop wanted to know how he got an eight year old boy into the Star and Garter. It seemed that Uncle Jim had given the ticket taker a \$5.00 gold piece. He explained that he thought what the boy didn't know, wouldn't hurt him. Of course, his visit was cut short, but his parting advice to Pop and me was, "Damn the women, and damn the Democrats."

Incidentally when Uncle Jim died in 1945, he was still a bachelor. But he owned two sections of black Arkansas bottom land, and he left it all to a little widow woman down by the river, except for \$1,000 that went to the Nevada County Arkansas Republican Party.

The Sportin' House

In the fall of 1919, Pop was appointed police commissioner of our town by the newly elected mayor. Our police department consisted of eleven men and a captain. The commissioner's job was a part time affair, but Pop took his duties seriously, and spent much of his free time down at the station.

Now, Effie Schildt ran the "Sportin' House" in our town. It was down by the river, below the railroad tracks, and was the center of much rioting and brawling. The police, and Pop

in his capacity as commissioner, had numerous opportunities to quell disturbances. Effie and her brood regularly appeared Monday mornings before the judge, paid their fines, and quietly returned to the house by the river. Now Effie had her own set of standards. One of her beliefs was that no kid of high school age should be admitted to her palace of delights. She knew every boy in town, and it was well known that you couldn't get in till you had graduated from high school.

Now, our neighbor, Mr. Hochhalter was against sin in every form. Particularly was he against Effie. He spearheaded a campaign against her, first through letters to the editor, and finally at town mass meeting. He insisted that Effie be run out of town, her place closed, and eternal vigilance be practiced against her return. He even suggested that police collusion might be going on, and proposed a citizen's committee to take charge of the police department.

Now, I like to think that Pop was against sin too, but he had an unusual realism for those years and that locality. He seemed to think that he and his big-footed cohorts down at the police station could handle the situation better than Mr. Hochhalter. He even went so far as to suggest that our town could do a lot worse than Effie, indeed, that she might even be an asset to the place. The issue subsided with no official action.

Pop won that argument with Mr. Hochhalter, but he never lived it down with Mother. I remember Christmas morning that year. A little wicker basket with a red ribbon showed up on the back porch. There was no card inside - just four bottles of "Golden Wedding Whiskey." Pop always insisted that he had no idea where they came from. But Mother did!

Uncle Charlie Breckinridge

And then there was Great, Great Uncle Charlie Breckinridge. Scottish born, he came with his large family to America as a child in the 1840's. He was awfully old when I knew him. He must have been near 90. He always sat in a chair alongside a pot-bellied stove, a blanket in his lap and a cane in his hand. I think he bored my father and mother and the rest of my relatives, but he could tell wonderful stories, and I loved to listen to him. He had been an aide to General Lou Wallace in the Civil War, and he took me with him from Island Number 10, on to Fort Donaldson, to Shiloh, to Chattanooga and Missionary Ridge, to Kings Mountain, to Atlanta and finally to the sea. But in Uncle Charlie's mind the Rebels and the Democrats were all mixed up. I can hear him now, waving his cane, "By durn" he said, "We chased them cursed Democrats from Shiloh to Chicamagua."

He Kept Us Out of War

The 1916 Presidential campaign really began for us in the summer of '15 when Pop took me down to the big Chautauqua tent, to hear William Jennings Bryan. He led us in some hymns, read a passage from the bible, and then launched into a violent attack on Woodrow Wilson and his foreign policy. You remember from your history books that Bryan had been Wilson's first secretary of state, but that Wilson had fired him after a

couple of years, because of a disagreement over foreign policy. He accused Wilson of a personal ambition to assure a position of world leadership. He gave us example after example of Wilson's attempt to involve us in the foreign dispute. He called upon us to follow a course of neutrality, and not allow ourselves to be involved.

When the conventions rolled around the next summer, the Bull Moose staggered back into the Republican party, and were reunited behind their candidate Charles Evans Hughes, an ex New York governor, and member of the Supreme court,

The Democrats in their convention obviously put their finger on Wilson. He was determined to take his position to the people. He was riled at Bryan but insisted on pursuing his course. In a surprise keynote speech that left Wilson flabbergasted, one of the cleverest and most effective phrases of all time was coined. "He kept us out of war". Sensing the temper of the country, the Democrats put wraps on Wilson, and flooded the country with their orators who shouted again and again one thing - "He kept us out of war."

The Tariff

The politicians mostly played down the foreign situation, and hammered away at domestic economic problems. And these issues were important to us. What were the domestic issues? Primarily the tariff. In my eight year old mind, this was the difference between Democrats and Republicans. Democrats believed in free trade - and Republicans in a protective tariff. It may be difficult for you to realize that the laboring man was almost 100% behind this principle of protect American industry. The slogan "Full Dinner Pail" inferred that as industry prospered, so would labor, or the common people. "Buy American" was the Republican catch phrase. It was difficult for me to swallow, however.

When Herbert Hochhalter, my best friend from across the street, and I argued about the tariff, he always brought up our pocket knives. Every boy carried a pocket knife. I had a dandy, a Keen Katter. It had two blades and a cork screw, was made in Connecticut, and cost me 40 cents. But Herbert had an even better one; bone handle, wonderful steel, beautiful workmanship. His uncle had brought it to him from Montreal. It was made in Germany and only cost 30 cents.

This tariff business touched me in another way. In those days kids our age all wore short pants and long black stockings. The dye industry in America was non existent, All dyes came from Germany. DuPont and Union Carbide started experimenting and eventually a dye of inferior quality appeared on the market. All good Republicans carefully bought stocking made with these new dyes, and they looked wonderful till they were washed. After each washing they became a sicker and sicker green. But in every bunch of kids you could always pick out the Republicans and Democrats.

Orations

Woodrow Wilson's vice-president was a man named Thomas Marshall. He had been the Democratic governor of Indiana, but was as nearly a goon as America has ever put into high office. His enduring claim to fame rests on his studied observation that "What America needs most is a good five cent cigar."

In the summer of 1920 he agreed to come to our town to dedicate a new library that had been willed to us by the local brewer, recently died. I remember that Marshall arrived a half hour late, and there were several thousand people gathered on the steps of the new building. The vice-president was introduced with great fanfare and, so help me, his talk went something like this . . .

"My friends, we are gathered here to honor one of the eminent citizens of this flourishing community, (takes surreptitious peek inside his pocket) Henry C. Mulcahy. (another peek). Henry C. Mulcahy in his generosity and his wisdom, is following in the footsteps of that renowned philanthropist (peek) Andrew W. Carnegie, and has endowed this garden city with this splendid library, filled with books by that bard of Avon (peek), William Shakespeare. I am sure that in these hallowed halls you will find many tomes regarding the life and works of that great emancipator (peek) Abraham Lincoln. And do, good friends, revere the name of your benefactor, (peek) Henry C. Mulcahy, and I bid you now to go in peace with the blessing of our lord and savior, (peek) Jesus Christ."

The Convention

I remember vividly the Democratic Convention held during the presidential campaign of 1924. For over two weeks during the hottest July on record the convention was deadlocked. The convention marked the first appearance of the radio in political history. Each ballot was laboriously presented over the air. We didn't have a radio in our house, but Mr. Westerman, the grocer, had a little crystal set on a chair by the front door. I can hear that roll call yet. "Alabama casts 24 votes for Underwood." For over a hundred ballots they were hopelessly deadlocked until they finally came up with an unknown West Virginia lawyer, John W. Davis. The country was still in an uproar over the Teapot Dome scandal, fed up with politics in general, and Republican Calvin Coolidge won with a bid yawn.

I do remember a daily column that Will Rogers carried in the newspapers that summer. He told a great many stories about his friend Calvin Coolidge. One that I remember: It seems that the president was an exceedingly taciturn man. Rogers tells that one day he came home from church, and Mrs. Coolidge in trying to start a conversation, asked what the sermon was about. "Sin," says the president. After moments of some silence Mrs. Coolidge asked, "What did the minister say about it?" "He was against it," answered Calvin.

The Poker Game

I have been for many years a teacher of algebra and geometry. My friends have a right to suspect that I translate many mathematical teachings and principles into my philosophy of life. Perhaps, you might suspect that I attach significant importance to the arithmetic approach - that I lose sight of the subjective, the finer things, esthetics.

I must admit that for many years I was convinced that all of life's problems could be solved by the "one and one makes two" method. I was pleased with the symmetry of the straight line, the simplicity of arranging facts categorically and marching straight to a positive conclusion. I was certain that we cluttered our reasoning with "extraneous roots" and that the wise man could see clearly that right was right and that wrong was wrong. There was no doubt that white was white, that black was black, and that grey only resulted from disorderly thinking.

As I grow older, I am not so sure. Although I still cling to the arithmetic approach, I believe that there are extraneous roots, unpredictable events, in daily living. It is clear to me that often facts do not arrange themselves categorically, that there are parts to every problem that Euclid or Descartes hadn't considered.

When I was in college, I encountered nickel and dime poker. The game fascinated me from the start. Here was arithmetic in its most enticing form. Here was "one and one makes two" at its very best. I soon discovered the relationship between drawing to an inside straight and going broke. I learned that I had nine chances out of 47 of improving a four flush, and that if it cost more me more than a dime to get into a 40-cent pot, I was a sucker to stay. I became familiar with the odds for filling an open-ended straight, and computed the chances of winning against any opener. I learned to fold any hand that couldn't open in a six hand or less jackpot game. I discerned the mathematical fallacy of keeping a "kicker." I even coined an axiom, "If you can't raise, get out." All this was straight from a sixth grade math text book.

I became a consistent winner. My own fraternity brothers got sick of my winning and I was barred from the Sigma Chi house, the locale of the most active poker game. The word got around and I was poison all over the campus. I was turning a game of chance into a mathematical certainty. I was better at arithmetic than my cohorts and I convinced them and myself that I knew all there was to know about poker.

One of the highlights of my college life was a semi annual invitation to the Columbia Club in downtown Indianapolis for lunch. An established businessman, John Spiegel, would tender these invitations to students, and afterwards he always went to the card room for an hour or two of table stakes poker. Of course I kibitzed the game, and though my eyes almost popped out of my head at the size of the bets, I followed the game closely and soon became convinced that these bankers and lawyers didn't play too hot a game of poker. Some of the arithmetic I saw was terrible. Basic theory was ignored. I saw a man spend \$20 in a \$60 pot to draw to the 10-Jack-Queen of clubs. A couple of times a year all through college, I kibitzed this game and longed no end to get into it. I knew I could

win. Of course the size of the stake made it out of the question. But I dreamed of the time when I could sit in it, and planned carefully that someday I would.

It was the Christmas after I graduated that I came back to Indianapolis for a vacation and I received an invitation from John to lunch at the Columbia Club. Over coffee, I got around to the suggestion that I'd like to sit in with him at the game in the back room.

"No, I don't think so," he said. "This game is a little too rich for your blood."

"But look," I answered. "I've got a pocket full of money," and I pulled out my ninety dollars that I had carefully accumulated for this killing.

"Put your money in your pocket, son. I don't want you in this game. You'll get hurt."

"But John, you've sat in games with us at the house. You know I can play as well as these people."

But plead with him as I would, he wouldn't listen, so I assumed my usual kibitzer's seat, completely crestfallen. The game had gone on for ten or fifteen minutes when a porter came up to John and whispered in his ear that he was wanted on the telephone. John excused himself and asked to be dealt out for a few hands. He'd no sooner left the room than I took a deep breath and slid into his seat. I moved his money over, and placed my ninety bucks nonchalantly in front of me. There was a moment's hesitation, a grin or two, and then the cards were dealt, and I was in. The game was straight stud and how I loved it. The first few hands there was no action and I folded worthless cards, and nothing seemed to materialize. Then on the fourth hand, just as I sensed John return and quietly sit in the kibitzer's seat, I was dealt the high card. There were seven men in the game and my king was high.

"The king bets two dollars" I said with a catch in my throat. Three men stayed in and the cards were dealt. No one was helped till it came around to me when a great big gorgeous king of Spades took its place beside the one-eyed diamond king. There was a slight quiver in my voice when I placed a five-dollar bill in the center with the announcement, "The pair bets five dollars." The next two men folded and it was up to the fat judge across the table whose last card was an ace. He looked at his hole card again, deliberately took a tighter grip on his cigar, and through a cloud of smoke said, "Young fellah, how much money have you got in front of you?"

What was he up to, I wondered? I answered "Oh around eighty dollars."

"Then I'll call your five dollars bet, but if you want to see another card, it'll cost you eighty dollars." He lackadaisically counted out a five and four twenty-dollar bills and tossed them in the center of the table.

There was a dead silence around the table. Everyone was looking at me except John who was looking between his knees at the floor. Sweat popped out on my forehead. My hands got wet. My tongue went dry. It was up to me.

The thing that happened to me in those few seconds, I never want to have happen to me again. Here was a situation that I had never encountered before. Here was something I didn't understand. Nothing that I had ever found in an arithmetic book would tell me whether that pompous judge with the thick lips had an ace in the hole or not. Whether I called the judge or picked up my money and stumbled out of my seat is not important. The important fact is that I learned the hard way that there was another side of poker besides arithmetic. Though the years since then, I have been wary of concluding I know all the answers. Life is many-faceted. Sometimes it is not black or white. Sometimes it is shades of grey.

Al Smith

I blush when I remember the election of '28. This was my first crack at the ballot box and it should be memorable. I was 23 years old, full of vim and vigor, and was teaching at a fashionable private school just outside of Chicago. Somehow I became acquainted with a young lady whose father was an associate professor at the University of Chicago. She introduced me to a group of young intellectuals at the University, called the "Dill Pickle Club." They talked knowingly and very convincingly about almost everything. I was soon reading Karl Marx, H. L. Menken, the American Mercury and talking as knowingly as the rest of them. I might even have been known in some circles as a "parlor pink."

Small wonder that when that gay caballero from New York's East side, Al Smith, was nominated by the Democrats, all my years of training as a loyal Republican fell to one side and I became an avid supporter. Besides, Marjorie suggested quite strongly that if I wanted to continue in her good graces I'd better lose my stodgy Republican background. Then too, Al Smith was an easy guy to go all out for, the happy warrior. He advocated abolition of the 18th Amendment, and believed in "personal liberty" in all forms.

Looking back on this aberration, I can't say that I regret it. As Uncle Cloyd reminded me. "Everybody's entitled to one mistake."

Roosevelt and Cricket

Late one afternoon in June 1932, my wife, my two year old daughter Anne, and my six month old Scotch Terrier puppy Cricket went for a picnic. We found a lovely spot at Indian Ladder about half way between Schenectady and Albany, in upstate New York. Now Cricket was a well-behaved little pup - inclined to mind her own business and almost never barked. But then she wandered off after a bit, and we didn't miss her till we heard this furious barking and carrying on in the spot adjacent to ours. I pushed through the bushes and found a man seated on a blanket beside a black Cadillac. There was a state trooper and a chauffeur with him. The man had braces on his legs and was using a folded up newspaper to ward off this furious barking growling monster, Cricket. She was

charging this way and that and seemed determined to annihilate this strange man on the blanket. I quickly gathered up the dog and apologized for her behavior. The governor of New York, Franklin Roosevelt, (for it was he) said, "Feisty little bitch, isn't she?"

We later figured out that Cricket who had been housebroken by repeated whacking with a rolled up newspaper was resentful of FDR's newspaper. On investigation we discovered that this dog who had never barked, nearly went out of her mind whenever you approached her with a newspaper. The next step was quite simple, hand a newspaper containing a picture of Roosevelt to a friend and ask him to show it to Cricket. All hell would break loose. I became known all over town as the man who owned the dog that couldn't stand Roosevelt. Cricket lived about as long as FDR, and she never failed to give a perfect demonstration to my anti Roosevelt friends. It's about all we had to laugh about during the depression.

The Great Lie

Those of us who feared Roosevelt's galloping socialism felt sure that he himself would not be a candidate, that his own party would not buck the third term tradition. That if he became a candidate, the American people would not accept this evidence of the desire to be king.

But where to find a candidate to lead America into some middle ground? A political phenomenon occurred. Wendell Willkie, a man unknown to the country at large in 1939 - a man with no political affiliation - with absolutely no votes at the beginning of the convention - stormed through and received the nomination on the fourth ballot.

Willkie was an Indiana boy - graduate of Purdue and Indiana Law School - worked his way up to be president of Common Wealth and Southern, a huge utility combine. He was famous for his handling of labor problems - had become the voice of the opposition to that huge government grab, the Tennessee Valley Authority. He was a tireless campaigner - lost his voice in October and finished the campaign in a hoarse whisper.

Willkie excited me because he sold a proposition that made sense. For three years the country had been told that we "can't compete with Germany" We were losing our market in South America. Germany was selling tractors to the Argentines cheaper than we could produce them. Roosevelt filled us with conversation about Hitler's slave labor, obviously they could undersell us. He continued, "we must fight against this marauder - this enslaver of people", etc., etc.

But Willkie said, "Listen to me - we can beat Hitler at his own game. The German nation is working 8-10-12 hours a day. We can outsell them in the Argentine with our American ingenuity, our great untapped resources, if we'll go to work. Let's roll up our sleeves and remember how to sweat. Let's forget the WPA and cradle to the grave paternalism. Let's forget the dole and weekends from Thursday to Monday. Let's go to work. It will take guts, but in this direction lies our salvation."

Roosevelt sneered, and made wise cracks about the bare foot boy from Wall Street. Republican confidence rose, and the Democrats were worried. Republican orators lost no opportunity to point the long line of Roosevelt attempts at intervention in the foreign war. Willkie himself avoided this charge, but the country was aware of the situation. Ten days before the election the polls showed a probable Republican victory. The New York Times in an editorial conceded the probability.

And then on the Saturday night before the election, Roosevelt spoke from Boston to a nation wide radio hookup. The greatest radio voice of all time outdid himself. It probably was the best speech I ever heard.

"Mothers, sisters, wives, sweethearts of America, I say to you again and again and again, that your American men will never fight on foreign soil."

It was the great lie. Roosevelt knew that it was the great lie. It had to be made to win the election, and it did.

Number Thirty

When I first came to Blair Academy, I was the coach of the lightweight football team. What a team that was! You'd have thought that our defensive line had on roller skates. I'll never forget our first home game. We played it on the Varsity field, and the cheering section was overflowing with a half dozen wise cracking Sophomores.

My vision with these bifocals was just good enough to spot this one boy, who on three successive plays found himself flat on his back 15 yards behind the line of scrimmage. To no one in particular I demanded "Who the hell is number 30". Well the sophomoric hooligans in the bleachers seemed to think this was very funny. They took up the chant and in unison wanted to know "WHO-THE-HELL-IS-NUMBER-THIRTY". I thought they never let go of it. And it was only then that I noticed, at the far end of the field, the head master. He didn't seem to think it was very hilarious.

Even when the team on the field called a timeout, they continued until the object of their attention, the overweight boy with the big thirty on his back, came over and inquired "Did you want me, Coach?"

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