MEMOIRS OF

CHARLES G. SELLERS, JR.

DECEMBER

2016

Memoirs of Charles Grier Sellers, Jr.

Chapter One

My Boyhood and Family

FIRST YEARS

I was born around midnight on September 9, 1923, in the Presbyterian Hospital, which still, as a more modern and handsome building, looks down Elizabeth Avenue to Sugar Creek, in Charlotte, North Carolina. My father Charles Grier Sellers (1889-1975) was the third of eight siblings born on a small farm in what is now Cleveland County. Here, along a little stream (the "branch" we called it) that flowed into the Muddy Fork of Buffalo Creek, my Scotch-Irish forbears had been growing corn, hogs, and cotton for subsistence since the early eighteenth century. Exactly when they got there will never be known. The "Irish" of those days were Protestant Scots whom the English had settled in Ulster, but whose descendants had not yet devised the label "Scotch-Irish" to distinguish them from the flood of maligned Catholic Irish immigrants. The Scotch-Irish came down the Great Wagon Road from Philadelphia. After three generations of intermarriage with their closest neighbors, especially the Oates and the Adams, my family had developed a satisfying subsistence culture of Calvinist piety, family loyalty, and inter-family sociability and cooperation.

The Sellers were not just Scotch-Irish. They were devoted to the most sternly Calvinist denomination on both sides of the Atlantic. They derived from two branches of "Covenanters", who required church members, by solemn public oath, to swear allegiance to saving the purity of their Scottish national church from corruption by the hated English. The Associate Presbyterians and the Reformed Presbyterians finally reconciled their slight differences and united as the Associate Reformed Presbyterians (ARP's). The great Scottish Ulster migrations of the eighteenth century carried many ARP's to America. There they were best known for raising their congregational voice in musical renditions of King David's divinely inspired verses and the stately cadences of the

Bible's book of Psalms, rather than the sentimental and doleful hymns written by mere men. The ARP's survived least corrupted in the more culturally isolated regions of the small-farm upper South. Nowhere else, even today, is severe Calvinism so scrupulously and intransigently preached.

My father Charles Grier Sellers (1889-1975) was a remarkable man. As a boy he astonished the neighbors by his ability to calculate the square feet and value of the lumber sawed each day by his Grandfather Felix's traveling lumber mill. He took delight in visiting his mother's birthplace, a quarter-mile up the road, to be spoiled by Aunt Mary Oates and Grandmother Adams. The Sellers had long intermarried with the Oates and Adams families, and the building my father always called "Aunt Mary's house" was a fine example of a rare vernacular style in frontier architecture. Built back in 1807 by the first John Oates of square-hewn logs, it was intermediate, in size and pretension, between the crowded log cabins of the early white settlers and the airy plantation houses that arose on richer soils than those drained by the Muddy Fork. The marvels of the Oates/Adams house included a shady porch, an imposing second story reached by a winding stair, a tall chimney, and portholes in the gable ends of the second floor, apparently for defense. Years later Dad delighted his children by telling them about the boogers and varmints that frightened him when he walked home at night. I remember seeing this important relic of a vanished life. But it was burned completely to the ground, perhaps by lightning strike, and is now completely forgotten.

The house where my Dad was born and grew up was more up to date than the Oates/Adams house. It was built of thin-cut and painted planks, and I still remember seeing across the dirt road a large two-story barn with stalls for two mules on the ground floor and a second floor for hay, but it no longer exists. Still visible at that time was an attractive walkway of flat rocks between two rows of boxwoods to connect the road with the front steps. On the back porch near the kitchen was a pump for fresh water. The house also had a "front parlor" on the other side of the central hall that was opened only for rare visits by a preacher. I was told it had a foot-pumped organ to accompany singing lyrical versions of the divinely inspired and poetic verses in the Bible's book of Psalms. Behind the house one can still see the decaying timbers

of a two story smokehouse for curing hams and a tiny one-hole outhouse, which still had a Sears Roebuck catalog for toilet paper when I first saw it.

My father lived in this house until he left for Charlotte. When I first saw it as a child, it was occupied by the family of my Uncle Giles (Giles Clennen Sellers (1892-1960) and Aunt Grace (Virginia Grace Harmon Sellers (born Aug. 1, 1905 in Cleveland County). Uncle Giles and Aunt Grace married on Aug, 1, 1927. Their daughter Mary Grace married Gary Beam Sr. Today Gary Clennen Beam, Jr., Giles's grandson and his wife Vicki occupy a home next door to the old Giles Sellers homeplace.

MY FATHER AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

When the First World War broke out in 1914, Dad volunteered at age 25 for the Army. On the last day before he left the farm, he had a comradely stroll with "Pa" across the branch and up the big hill, to be proudly shown off to the neighborhood's wealthiest, family the Plonk's, whose daughter Lily Plonk had given him an excellent grammar school education in a one-room log school on the Plonk plantation. Only two days later my stricken father was summoned back home to bury his father in the Bethel church graveyard. Sixty-five-old David Sellers had died without warning, at 11 P. M., of "Paralysis or Apoplexy." Abruptly my father was left on his own, and henceforth his youngest brother Giles would anchor the family farm as the western arm of the kinship axis. My father served throughout the First World War as an expert on poison gas. (His war diary, as edited by me in 81 pages, is available on the internet at http://www.leftcoastlife.com).

MY FATHER GOES TO CHARLOTTE

By a remarkable coincidence, this same road crossed this same branch along the same route that my father took in a quest that profoundly transformed the life of my family. He had probably followed this route before to the Kings Mountain ARP church and our Goforth relatives. But his most important use of the road was when he was trudging up and down it daily (perhaps barefooted in summer, as children were still doing in my childhood) to attend Miss Lily Plonk's one-room log schoolhouse.

If my father had not discovered Miss Lily when he did, he could never have moved to Charlotte and capitalist success so soon. This generous and gifted young lady was the best educated woman in the upcountry. She had gotten an excellent education at Queens College in Charlotte, and she had decided to share her knowledge with the children of her neighbors, charging only a minimal fee, and occasionally, perhaps, no fee in the cash poor upcountry. Probably, in turn, Miss Plonk recognized the unusual smartness and ambition of this young Charles Sellers, and made a special effort to push him as far as she could in such fundamental skills as reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and especially advanced arithmetic. Until she taught him all she could, Charles trudged daily up and down the steep road to her school, several miles each way, Miss Lily Plonk won his lasting gratitude and affection, and he was still talking about her years later when I was a young child in Charlotte.

MY FATHER'S LIFE IN CHARLOTTE

In a classic instance of "chain migration" my father's adjustment to urban life was facilitated by interlocking structures of kinship and faith. Cousin John Sellers had established himself in Charlotte several years before, and now provided lodging and tutelage for the kinsman following in his footsteps. From Cousin John's overcrowded apartment, Dad moved to the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), where exercise, low wages, and cheap bedrooms shielded pious newcomers from urban vice. Church was the major socializing force for mobile young men.

My parents, who had not yet met, were probably already devoted to the tiny Associate Reformed Presbyterian denomination. Dad had probably had access to the ARP Church in Kings Mountain, not far south of the family farm. When he went to Crowders Mounain, the Pisgah ARP congregation was a valuable asset close by. Church was the major socializing medium for mobile young men, and Cousin John had probably introduced Charles as soon as possible to the brethren at the Charlotte ARP Church on North Tryon Street. But already such newfangled luxuries as pipe organs were creeping into the denomination's more prosperous congregations, most egregiously in

the Charlotte church. For many rural brethren, all this smacked of idolatrous "graven images," and foreshadowed the schism over hymns that years later complicated Sellers' lives.

Dad was already aggressively pursuing urban opportunities. As soon as he earned enough at the YMCA to afford the tuition fee, he enrolled at the Kings Business College. His teachers there were so impressed that they recommended him for the most promising job available, a clerkship in the Charlotte headquarters of the mighty Standard Oil Company (now Exxon).

Soon Dad's conspicuously efficient work got him promoted to Chief Clerk, responsible for hiring, training, and supervising all the office clerks. Suddenly the clerical output increased so fast that the Division boss Charlie Byers decided that Charlie Sellers should be the Office Manager. Soon after he was promoted to Business Manager, responsible for all the company's operations and financial activities in the two Carolinas. In this capacity he rushed by train to the headquarters of IBM (International Business Machines) in Binghamton, New York when he learned that a new contraption called a "computer" had been invented that could revolutionize financial accounting by punching holes in cards. He came back home with one of these miracles and soon demonstrated that they were effective.

Now executives at Standard Oil's headquarters in New York City, especially the Comptroller, heard about this remarkable Charlie Sellers down in North Carolina, and Dad began to get suggestions that he should move to the New York headquarters. He instantly said he would not. He was now getting a munificent salary, and he had fallen in love.

MY MOTHER

Until my mother (Cora Irene Templeton (1897–1982) went off to school, she lived in Mooresville, a good many miles north of Charlotte and a good many miles south of the ARP church and her kin in Statesville.

Irene Sellers was not only a constantly loving mother, but an unusually well educated and fiercely independent woman. Like my

father she had a special aptitude for mathematics, which she honed at the North Carolina College for Women (the first public university in North Carolina, founded in 1891, for the purpose of educating women). It is now the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. There she pushed her understanding of mathematics to its then existing limits, under the tutelage of a brilliant female mathematician. One summer she traveled by train to New York for an advanced mathematics course at New York University.

No wonder my father had fallen in love when he met her at church and proposed an immediate marriage. They were married, as announced by my Grandfather Victor Templeton and my Grandmother Roberta Templeton on Saturday, June 19, 1922. The *Charlotte Observer* reported their wedding, as follows:

> Miss Irene Templeton and Mr. Charles G. Sellers were married Saturday at First A. R. P. church. Rev. W.B. Lindsay pastor, Miss Rachel Morrison, of Statesville was the only attendant of the bride, who was accompanied to the altar by Fred Morrison of Raleigh. Fred Sellers, brother of the bridegroom, was the best man.
>
> The bride wore a navy poiret, a twill suit, a hat with beaver trimming, and a corsage of Ophelia roses and Swansonian lilies of the valley,
>
> Palms were used in decorating the church.
>
> Before the ceremony Miss Eula Meade Traywick played Roget's "Bridal Song" and the "Bridal Chorus" from Lohengrin as a processional. MacDowell's "To a Wild Rose" was rendered during the service and Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" as a recessional.
>
> Following the ceremony, Mr. and Mrs. Sellers left for a ten-day trip by motor through western North Carolina. Returning they will live at 205 West Tenth Ave.
>
> Mrs. Sellers is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Templeton of this city. She was educated at the North Carolina College for Women and later taught there. She has a strong mentality and personality.
>
> The bridegroom is a son of Mr. D. W. Sellers of Kings Mountain. He is associated with the Standard Oil company in Charlotte and has splendid business ability.

Mother had a progressive streak. In the privacy of the voting booth, she could desert the Republicans when an issue she cared about was at stake. She was always deeply religious, but her piety required support for what was ethically right and necessary, in the face of all opposition. In the secrecy of the ballot box, she could desert the Republicans if such an issue was at stake. When the racial equality movement reached the South, she joined Charlotte's most progressive women (mostly wealthy and college educated) in hosting bi-racial luncheons in the dining room of Efird's, Charlotte's most progressive department store.

The ARP's headquarters and their Erskine College and Theological Seminary were in the tiny village of Due West, South Carolina. The only role for women that the ARP leadership could tolerate was the Woman's Synodical Missionary Society, which supported the church's missionaries in various ways. When my mother was elected President of the W. S. M. C. she was so enraged by the General Synod's refusal to print or even consider her society's annual report that she boldly challenged the misogynist General Synod on its own ground. She presented a report: "To the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in Session at Bonclarken [NC—west of Hendersonville] June 1-4, 1949." As the Synod's minutes reported:

> The President of the Woman's Synodical Missionary Society, Mrs. C. G. Sellers of Charlotte, was presented to the Synod by Dr. W. W. Boyce [who had been the pastor of our Charlotte church], the chairman of the Committee on Woman's work. Mrs. Sellers, by referring to the statistical report of the W. S. M. U. showed gratifying progress made during the year. The work done compares favorably with that of women's organizations in larger church bodies. She said that the body which she represents regards itself as part of the General Synod and suggested that a representation on the boards of the Synod would make cooperation between the two bodies more effective. On motion the report of Mrs. Sellers was referred to the Committee on Woman's Work. The appreciation of the Synod was extended to Mrs. Sellers for her splendid report.

She was not surprised, of course, when the misogynist Synod never even considered her suggestions.

When I was twelve rears old, mother presented to me a handsome little leather bound book entitled

HOLY BIBLE
Illustrated

[and a beautiful inscription in her own handwriting]

Charles Grier Sellers, Jr.
6ll Clement Ave,.
Charlotte, N,. C.

Rec'd Oct., 1935

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light un-
to my path. Ps (Psalm) 119

FAMILY PIETY AND LIFE IN CHARLOTTE

My family and all our numerous relatives were devoted to the ARP's, and this singular Protestant sect affected my life profoundly. On Sundays we would go to Sunday School, and then hear sermons and worship God in the pews of the great church hall. At night we would kneel beside our beds, close our eyes, and deliver an original prayer to God before going to sleep. At every meal we delivered prayerful thanks to God for our food, and at every breakfast, after we ate, we listened to my father reading every word of a chapter from the Bible down to the last "begat." As this continued day by day for many years, we must have covered the Bible three or four times. Now, at age 93 and no longer a believer, I still know the Bible pretty well, and I still enjoy the eloquent prose of the King James version.

Like most pious families we tithed without even thinking about it. Every Sunday we put 10% of the money received that week into individual envelopes provided by the church, and then at the service in the great worship hall, dropped them into the collection plates circulated through the pews by the deacons, The amount for kids was

pennies but for my parents substantial checks. This process was devised and overseen by my Dad, who was elected church Treasurer for a one year term by the Session every year until failing health forced him to bow out. When we got home from church, Dad opened the envelopes, recorded the amount donated in each envelope and drove to the bank and deposited the money in the bank's deposit box. Only then could we eat our especially sumptuous Sunday dinner. Once a year Dad organized the Session (elders and deacons) to discuss and pray with each family member, one by one, about the maximum amount they could promise, which differed greatly according to individual circumstances.

Mother was a splendid cook. Several times a week she would make three-level cakes, chocolate or caramel. For special occasions like birthdays or guests she produced her masterpiece, pineapple upside down cake. For me her most important culinary accomplishment was biscuits that even today are far lighter and more delicious than can be found in stores or restaurants. I often make them myself, and enjoy them especially as a sandwich with a small slice of fried ham. Any reader can do the same by using mother's recipe:

Biscuits Irene Sellers

2 cups plain flour
3/4 teaspoon salt (level)
3 " baking powder (level)
Sift above together into mixing bowl
Add 1/3 cup shortening (solid not liquid)
And mix until mixture is like coarse meal using fork or pastry blender
Add 2/3 cup milk and mix to make soft dough. Roll out and cut.
Bake 6-8 min at 400-450^0) till brown. Convection: 425^0
A good way to measure shortening is to put the 2/3 cup of milk in a 1-cup measure and add enough shortening to fill the cup.

MY EARLY YEARS IN CHARLOTTE

My family lived in a modest home on Crescent Street in the southern outskirts of Charlotte. I still remember the awful stink that pervaded the house when my Aunt Gladys left a red hot curling iron on my mother's

dressing table, not realizing it hadn't turned off when she clicked it. Even worse was the my mother's furious face when she found me at age three "playing doctor" with Betty Deal from next door, in an abandoned chicken coop.

But mainly I had a happy childhood, exploring a new found world with childish delight and blessed by loving parents. I liked being spoiled by a neighboring single and childless young woman next door. One winter I was astonished by an unusually large snowstorm, and my father helped me build a snowman in our front yard. There were gifts at Christmas, and I loved playing with Oliver Thorpe, a neighbor up the street about my age, who was continually whirling around on his roller skates.

One childhood discovery initiated what would be a major concern for the rest of my life. Every few days an Afro-American woman trudged into our back yard. Amazing! All people were not white like me! Gradually I learned more. She had walked more than a mile from the Afro-American ghetto along McDowell Street because she couldn't use public transit buses. She had come to launder our clothing and bed linens, and to perform other menial tasks at low wages. Laundering was hard and dangerous work. It meant building a hot fire under a big iron pot, then boiling the laundry in hot water while stirring it with a broomstick, running it through a wringer, hanging it on wires to dry, and finally taking it down and folding it for storage. The tough life of this lady became even plainer one day when I rode with my mother to find out why she failed to arrive at the scheduled time. There I observed briefly the misery of scores of black people, barely maintaining themselves in a waterless and fetid swamp of hunger and desperation. I doubt that I was told that such people had once been enslaved. But our family papers contain the will of one ancestor James Morrison, who bequeathed to "my son James . . . a large number of laborers . . . with the labour of the aforesaid Negroes." Morrison was apparently affluent, for he refers to a plantation of over 1,000 acres and "my Mansion House."

OUR CLEMENT AVENUE HOME

My father's rapid promotions at the Standard Oil Co. and his astute investments in corporate stocks had enabled us to move from Crescent

Street to a much larger and more imposing home on Clement Avenue, which my father bought from the Ridgeway family. On the ground floor this house had an immense living room with a large fireplace on the left, and a spacious dining room on the right, with a dining table that could seat eight people. We only ate there on Sundays, or when we had guests.

Back of the dining room was a fully equipped kitchen and a comfortable breakfast room. On the front of the house at its far left end was a sun room that had floor to ceiling glass walls on three sides. Here my mother sewed most of her own clothing on an electric sewing machine. A spacious covered front porch extended from the sun room rightward to a roofed *porte cochere,* where our car could always be parked protected from rain. Farther down the driveway was a garage which we used for storage. Beyond the garage a deep backyard stretched to a distant fence. This area contained a beautiful weeping willow and a fig tree that furnished endless sweet figs in the spring.

An impressive stairway wound up to the second floor. On the street side were two enormous bedrooms with big closets. One of them was used by our parents. The other front bedroom was reserved for my sister Ruth (Ruth Irene Sellers, born in 1927), on the supposition that our only girl would need room for dresses, a dressing table with a mirror and cosmetics as she grew older. Regularly my other siblings slept as babies in a crib in my parent's bedroom until they needed a bedroom of their own. Brother Ed (Edward Graham Sellers, 1926-2015) joined me in a little sleeping porch tucked in a far corner where we could be neither seen nor heard. Brother Phil (Philip Allen Sellers, born 1931) was assigned the small bedroom at the head of the stairs.

From our lofty observation post in the sleeping porch Ed and I could see the Independent Trust building rising high above Charlotte's most important intersection, where Tryon Street meets Trade Street to form Independence Square. This was where local patriots, led by James K, Polk's Uncle Thomas Polk, met in a one-room log courthouse to unanimously adopt the famous Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. The exact congruence of Mecklenburg's log courthouse with the soaring headquarters of Charlotte's then largest bank is a dramatic symbol of profound historic change over three centuries. This

indeed seemed “I T ” as the immense and glowing red letters atop the bank proclaimed.

Our neighborhood on Clement Avenue was pretty upper-class. Next door was the enormous estate of the Wilkinson clan. Harvey Wilkinson was about my age and we became everyday playmates. His grandfather had designed North Carolina’s first four lane predecessor of the modern freeway, Wilkinson Boulevard, which enabled us to visit Uncle Giles and our Kings Mountain kin much faster and more safely. His older sister had gone to Smith College in Massachusetts with a normal southern accent but came back sporting a greatly exaggerated drawl, sweetly crooning “you all.” Harvey’s older brother was educated at Harvard, and this was the first I heard of this oddly celebrated institution. Beyond the Wilkinson estate was the equally imposing estate of the Wanamakers, whose son “Toppy” rode around with his own horse, groom, and stable, whom I saw only occasionally. On the other side of Clement Avenue, one came first to the home of Thad Adams, the chairman of the Republican party which had dominated North Carolina politics unchallenged since Woodrow Wilson.

Farther along was the mansion of a Mrs. Haygood, chairwoman of the state WCTY (Women’s Christian Temperance Union), which fought Demon Rum by persuading teen-age boys to memorize and preach texts provided by the WCTU to their Sunday School classes. Their performance was graded by bestowal of tiny badges of increasingly bejeweled grades. I earned a badge with a tiny round piece of ivory, which delighted my mother.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

All seemed happy and right on Clement Avenue, but impressions are not always reliable. Suddenly on August 29, 1929, a terrible truth had forced its way through, and everything was turned upside down. The stock market crashed, ushering in a severe and prolonged depression. Manufacturing was halved and building nearly stopped. Farm income, already low, was cut in half, and, worst of all, unemployment grew steadily. By 1932 it was estimated as amounting to seventeen million unemployed and wageless workers, and they faced the threat of actual starvation. The impact of the great depression on those who lived

through it is hard to exaggerate. Apple selling and breadlines became common sights, shanty towns sprang up on the edge of cities, women and men were sometimes seen pawing through restaurant garbage. In the large, previously contented middle class, people unused to disaster lost savings, houses, and hope.

In politics the depression touched off a revolution, and a desperate electorate sent Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the White House with an overwhelming majority. Roosevelt was a country squire on the upper Hudson River in the state of New York. He was a distant cousin of Theodore Roosevelt, a Secretary of Navy under the last Democratic President, Woodrow Wilson, and had been a moderately successful Governor of New York. But he had no special knowledge of economics.

Yet millions of fearful Americans who heard him on the radio were thrilled to hear him say "Let me assert my belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself," and his promise to give all Americans a New Deal.

I knew nothing about this at the time because my father was a rock-ribbed Republican and I had no other source of information. But I slowly learned over the next years some unwelcome truths about my family's experience of the great depression.

First, we secured our wonderful new home from the Ridgeways because they were members of that "large and previously contented middle class, who lost hope, house, and savings."

Second, Dad was able to buy it at a rock-bottom price because real estate in general had fallen to a rock-bottom value, and because the Ridgeways were so desperate. Dad was able to afford this fantastic deal because of his rapidly rising salary at the Standard Oil Co., which suffered only negligible loss from its investments of capital, mainly already built refineries and pipelines, and also because its only major products, motor oil and gasoline, were still in considerable demand. In addition Dad had been aided by his canny decision to invest most of his capital in the stock of this mighty and only slightly affected corporation.

Third, some of the tragedies and disappointments of so many of our kin were caused by the depression.

Fourth, The glowing red "I T" on the top of the Independence Trust Co. was not an "it" at all, but the opposite. Eventually we learned that the I T Trust Co. was among the first banks to collapse, leaving its investors and depositors to bear all the costs. Among the depositors were all of Charlotte's school children, who had been depositing their pennies and nickels in the I T bank every Friday at school, and recording the slowly growing balances in their individual I T bank books.

I mainly learned all this in the late 1920's when I began to read the newspaper every day, while I worked for several years on a newspaper route for the *Charlotte Observer.* Every morning I rose at 4 AM, in order to be at our neighborhood's newspaper hut when a truck brought our copies. After the morning delivery I went home, but after dinner I went out again to cover my entire route, collecting fees from subscribers, soliciting subscriptions from every unsubscribed dwelling that had a light on, and leaving a printed advertisement at every address that was unlighted. In those days my father always got up in the morning as soon as our *Charlotte Observer* arrived, to keep up with the news, and especially to read the daily column of his favorite writer, the hard-core conservative Julian Miller. Then we had breakfast.

OUR FAMILY

As children of Charles and Irene Sellers, we grew up in circumstances that enabled us all to prosper. Each of us was able to obtain excellent educations and meet wonderful life partners. By her early teens, my sister Ruth would meet her future husband Bill Boyce (later the Rev. William J. Boyce, Jr., 1928-2016), whose father had first ministered to our rural kin in Kings Mountain, and was then called to our church in Charlotte. Ruth and Bill recently compiled a wonderful collection of family records and pictures. It contains a photograph of them, apparently in their early teens, gazing lovingly at each other. They were high school sweethearts from the time the Boyce family came to town. The handwritten label attached to this photograph was:

Ruth and Bill

Young love that lasted

Ruth was another smart Sellers. In 1945 she graduated from Central High School and enrolled at the Women's College where our mother had studied (now UNC, Greensboro). She graduated in 1949 and taught one year at Elizabeth Elementary School (which I had attended) and another year at Cotswold Elementary School in Charlotte. In 1950 Ruth and Bill married under the ministry of Bill's father at our First ARP church, and Ruth joined Bill in Princeton, where he was a second year student at the Princeton Theological Seminary. I was then teaching at Princeton, and I was walking down the sidewalk to visit them when I was astonished to see Albert Einstein pass me going the other way. In 1952 Bill graduated from the Seminary and enlisted in the Army. While Bill attended Chaplain's School, the Boyces moved to Sturgis, Kentucky and Camp Breckenridge.

After Bill completed his ministerial training, he and Ruth moved to Richmond, Virginia where Bill ministered to the First Presbyterian Church in Portsmouth VA and the Lakeside Presbyterian Church in Richmond VA until he retired in 1992. They had many happy years together. Bill was an always loving and generous brother-in-law to me until his recent death in 2016. Bill and Ruth's son David Alan Boyce was born on Dec. 31, 1952, their son Richard Nelson Boyce was born in 1955, and their daughter Barbara Moore Boyce Whitesides was born in 1960. David and wife Beth live in Huntersville, NC where David works in Charlotte as a medical equipment manager for Memorial Hospital. Richard, a pastor and former mayor of Belmont, NC, married Kathleen Golding; they are parents of four children. Barbara married urologist Edward Whitesides and they live in Wilmington NC. where they parented four children. My wife Carolyn and I recently visited Ruth at the splendid Pines rest home in Davidson, and were delighted to find her as smart as ever and loved by many new friends.

My brother Ed (Edward Graham Sellers (1926-1926) was himself an agent of change. Ed was also smart. He quickly made Eagle Scout while I only made Life. My Uncle Frank Templeton was also smart, as he demonstrated when he chose Ed, before he had any formal engineering training, to design Harris Foods (later Harris Teeter), the first supermarket in Charlotte, and probably in North Carolina. Ed quickly

enrolled in the best engineering school in the state, the North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering in Raleigh (now N.C. State,), graduating with high grades in 1947. He then spent several years with the Humble Oil and Refining Oil Co. (later part of Exxon) in Houston, Texas, where the company had several major refineries and pipelines. Ed returned to Charlotte when he had acquired all the expertise in these areas that he needed. There he worked for Exxon and then later mainly with the B & B Contracting Co.

Ed's engineering abilities were exceeded only by his love for his family, both immediate and extended. He enjoyed nothing more than spending time laughing with them, talking with them and sharing life with them. His devotion to his two wives and his children was almost unbelievable. He married his first wife Nell Casner (born 1925), who passed away in 1997. He had known his second wife Doris Phifer Anthony (when they were high school sweethearts, and danced together at their graduation ball). Doris married another husband, but after his death and the tragic and unexpected death of her granddaughter, she became increasingly sad and lonely. Her financial adviser Bill Kelleher of Merrill Lynch noticed this and one day when they were discussing investments, he said something like, "Doris, isn't there some way I can help you feel better?" She answered, "I don't think so," and then, after a pause, she added, "But you could help me get back in touch with Ed Sellers." Bill replied, "He's my client too! Let's get in touch with him!" Meanwhile Nell's death in 1997 had left Ed sad and lonely also. Ed and Doris were married in 1999 and enjoyed great happiness together until Doris died in 2007. Ed's children Tim and Steve live and work in the Charlotte area where Tim is a lawyer and Steve works for Sockwell Partners, an industrial consulting firm. Tim's wife Charlene is a supportive home partner and Steve's wife Crystal is a buyer for Belks Department Store.

My youngest brother Phil (Philip Allen Sellers, born 1931) was eight years my junior and I did not know much about his younger years because I was away at college. He enjoyed the educational riches of Central High and entered Davidson College in 1949. He had found his professional direction by the time he graduated from Davidson in 1952, and enrolled that fall to study internal medicine at the Wake Forest School of Medicine in Winston-Salem. In 1955 Phil married a smart,

lovely, and lively lady, Julia Camlin (born 1932) in rural Florence County, South Carolina. After graduation from medical school, Phil enlisted in the military for his rotating internship at the Air Flight School in San Antonio, Texas, and two years later at the Army Flight Surgeon School at Fort Rucker in Monmouth, New Jersey. Following his military service, he returned to Wake Forest Medical School for his residency.

With this awesome preparation, Phil developed a splendid practice of internal medicine in the Blue Ridge Mountain town of Hendersonville, North Carolina. He and Julia acquired a spacious home in a beautiful neighborhood, with a lovely little lake nearby. There they parented four gifted sons. The eldest two were twins Jeff and Chris. Jeff married Laura Scott who is an animal caregiver where they live in Pasadena and Jeff holds an academic position in Political Science and Public Policy at the University of Southern California. Chris, a historian of medicine, author of several books including *Hazards of the Job* (1997) and *Crabgrass Crucible* (2012) married Nancy Tomes, also an historian of medicine and author of *The Gospel of Germs* (1999) among other works. Both are professors at the University of New York at Stony Brook. Randy, a psychiatrist in Chapel Hill and Durham NC, married the intellectual and lively Laura Terry who works with the Cary Academy, a college preparatory school in Cary, NC. Patrick, a professor and a vice president at Davidson College, married Kathryn Firmin who works with a women's shelter in Charlotte. Both Pat and Kathryn graduated in Political Science from Duke University.

Once these impressive sons had embarked on their careers, Julia was able to concentrate more on some of her own serious intellectual and political concerns. Since then Carolyn and I have had ever closer and warmer relations with them. When I had an accident a few years ago, Phil called me frequently to give me medical advice. In retirement, he still wields a wicked tennis racquet, and Julia has been able to devote more time to her interests in poverty, racial equality, and the Westminster Presbyterian Church.

PROSPEROUS TIMES ON CLEMENT AVENUE

During our years on Clement Avenue, my father bought his first big fast Dodge car (throughout his life Dad bought Dodges, and always thought they were the best brand) and my family began a routine of constantly traveling, almost every weekend, northwest from Charlotte to visit our Sellers and Goforth kin in Kings Mountain and the family farm, or northeast to Mooresville and Statesville to visit our Templeton and Morrison kin. My mother's love for natural beauty took us often to the Blue Ridge Mountains, where we enjoyed the multi-colored rhododendron gardens in the spring and the brilliant aspen leaves in the autumn. In the summer we sometimes drove all the way to Myrtle Beach or Wrightsville Beach, to splash in the Atlantic surf, as Brown Boobies soared overhead and wedges of grotesque Brown Pelicans sailed up and down with the waves a little farther offshore.

The first year after my family moved to Clement Avenue, my father planted in the back yard a corn field like those he had known on the old family farm. But the next year and every year thereafter, he developed a lovely rose garden displaying the most spectacularly beautiful species. He had already built, under our beautiful weeping willow, a rough lumber table for cutting watermelons. Now, on his way to the office, he began stopping at Charlotte's public icehouse to drop off a couple of watermelons for freezing, and as he drove home in the late afternoon he would pick them up. When he got home, he would start cutting off slices of watermelon for a happy family feast. Frequently there was enough watermelon for another feast the next day. Dad often expressed his affection for all of his kids by crossing his legs and grabbing us, one after another, and bouncing us up and down on his ankles. Sometimes he would sing happy songs to enhance our pleasure.

Our mother was an affectionate and loving parent. She bought a six-volume set of children's games, songs and activities to enhance our fun with her. She also always included more serious matters by reading Bible stories. And with my Dad's newest large, speedy, and powerful Dodge we were all seated comfortabl, for trips to visit our kin in Mooresville and Statesville.

<u>MY MULTINUDINOUS KIN</u>

The Goforths in Kings Mountain were the smallest branch of our family. My father's oldest sister, Aunt Ada, had married Marvin Goforth, a shrewd and jolly businessman-farmer, who was always smiling and flashing his gold tooth. He earned the family a pretty good income by raising hogs, curing them in his smokehouse for sale, along with hams he bought from other farmers. At various points, Uncle Marvin managed to sell his hams at higher prices. Now and then he found another source of income. I remember him winding a rope around a cow's horn, then running the rope through a block and tackle to lift the cow off the ground, cutting its throat, draining its blood into buckets, and selling the carcass to the local slaughterhouse at a very good price. Another project was selling watermelons to stores. He would plant a very large watermelon patch, and when the watermelons matured in the spring, Uncle Marvin would load them into his truck and sell them to stores all around the neighborhood. Everybody loved watermelon in those days, and the Goforth patch provided a large surplus for the family. My cousin Garrison Goforth was about my age, and when the watermelons ripened, we feasted in Uncle Marvin's patch.

Other members of the Goforth family were Aunt Martha Sellers, my father's youngest sister, who followed Aunt Ada to the Goforth family, and lived with them while she worked at the local cotton mill. Uncle Marvin's daughter, May Sue Goforth, was a warm and generous lady, who married the owner of the same cotton mill, only to have her husband fall into a fatal disease and die, leaving her to live a saddened life with the Goforth family. Even sadder was the fate of Robert Lee Goforth, a likeable and ambitious young man, who went to Detroit hoping to earn high wages in the automobile factories. When his hopes were frustrated, he then served a stint in the army and finally returned home. Here he worked in a tiny store and single-pump gas station on the heavily traveled highway just off the Goforth farm (another of Uncle Marvin's profitable projects). But tragically he soon died through some unknown cause.

OUR TEMPLETON AND MORRISON KIN IN MOORESVILLE AND STATESVILLE

In Mooresville village my Aunt Sally Templeton had married the owner of a local mill, now deceased, and Aunt Sally with her daughter

Cora lived in a handsome house on the village's main street. My mother's first given name, Cora Irene Templeton (1897-1932), reflected her intimacy with them. My mother had lived in Mooresville until she went off to college. On our trips to Statesville, we usually stopped there for a brief visit with Aunt Sally and Cousin Cora, and were always warmly received. There I was told that after a rare winter snowstorm, my Grandfather Victor Templeton had easily crossed the wide Catawba River on ice with a two-mule wagon.

One winter day we stayed a little longer to visit our only other relative there, Uncle John Templeton, at his farmhouse at the northern end of town. It was very cold, and I crouched down on the hearth to get warm. Suddenly I fell into the fire, cracking my forehead on a red hot andiron. I was immediately pulled out, but the scar on my forehead lasted two or three years.

In Statesville the clan headquarters was the enormous house that my Great Grandfather David Augustus Morrison (born in 1852) and my Great Grandmother Salome Gulnarah Conner Morrison (born in 1859) inhabited after they were married in 1876. It was Grandpa Morrison who carried my Statesville kin to wealth and mixed fortunes through his bold Star flour mill. Years later when I visited my Statesville kin, the first thing I saw in the front parlor was my aged, speechless, and possibly blind and deaf Great Grandmother Morrison, slumped on a pillowed chair beside the stove and dipping snuff.

My rather severe Aunt May ran the household. (All my many Statesville aunts were great aunts but called aunts.) My favorite aunt was Rachel Morrison, longtime secretary of her beloved Mr. (I've forgotten his given name), owner of the local furniture factory. Whenever possible Aunt Rachel, always gay and adventurous, would go speeding down the street in her fast little car with a couple of us kids crouched down enthralled in an unusual open hatchway. The beloved favorite of the Morrison women was Uncle Fred Morrison, whom I never met. But I was constantly hearing about him for many things. He graduated from an engineering program at the University of North Carolina with good grades (at that time the only college-educated Morrison). He seems to have been unusually affable, handsome, and enthusiastic. He never married and lived in the state capital Raleigh

where, as a senior engineer of the state Highway Department, he supervised the rapidly increasing construction of well paved and graded highways. The most despised villain of the Morrison clan, however, was Aunt Beulah's husband who died of alcoholism, leaving Aunt Beulah so distraught that she never recovered. An older daughter Helen mourned ever more tearfully over this family tragedy to an early death.

But younger daughter Ivy Lee Morrison (Aunt Beulah's daughter) was so constantly so gay and so enthusiastic that she became my favorite female cousin, and I enjoyed her company on every visit with the Morrisons. Soon Ivy Lee married, but her husband immediately deserted her for another woman, and Ivy Lee died so quickly that people wondered whether it was suicide. For years after all this suffering, the acreage around the central home place was almost totally occupied by Morrison families employed wholly or in part by Morrison enterprises. They lived in homes of every size, style, and degree of opulence, many financed wholly or in part, by Morrison funds. All of them were devoted to Statesville's thriving ARP church..

In Charlotte I often walked a mile or so to visit my Grandmother Roberta Hybernia Morrison Templeton (1876-1971). She always welcomed me warmly and, in the absence of my mother, conspiratorially served me a cup of coffee. My Grandpa Templeton (Victor Graham Templeton,1872-1940) was equally cordial, and several times took me to distant and beautiful creek sides, where, assisted by my Uncle Frank Templeton, he sucked up sand with his gasoline powered "Barber Green" (the name of the company that manufactured this machine), deposited it in dump trucks and carried it to highway construction sites, where it was converted into cement for paving smooth modern roads. When Grandpa Templeton died, his remains were prepared for burial rites and I was taken in to see his face. It was the only dead body I had ever seen.

FROM FARM TO MARKET

My family experiences visiting the Sellers, Goforths, Morrisons, and Templetons gave me my understanding of American History. Especially transformative are memories of my visits to "Uncle Giles's Place" (around 10 miles north of Kings Mountain). One of my most vivid

memories was sitting on Uncle Giles Sellers's front porch while Dad was urging him, in a rather condescending tone, to find more profitable ways to manage the farm. Instead of raising ordinary chickens for family subsistence, Dad suggested, Giles should build a better chicken house and stock it with the far more popular and expensive White Leghorns for sale. Giles decided that this was good advice from such a smart brother. But there was only one country store in the area, and it was too far away. I fear that Uncle Giles lost a good bit of money from this expensive investment, perhaps compensated by my well paid and generous father.

A second venture, located where the road crossed the branch and climbed steeply toward Kings Mountain turned out better. Investing several years of hard labor and the hydraulic power of nature's pure water instead of cash, Uncle Giles devised an ingenious system for greatly increasing and enhancing his family's subsistence. I remember the thrill of seeing the result. A rock lined little canal conveyed the total flow of the branch to a great wooden waterwheel, which powered two sets of horizontal grindstones in a little rock millhouse. This enabled Giles to grind corn into corn meal for making cornbread on one grindstone, and grinding sugarcane for molasses or syrup on the other. The only cash required was what the closest blacksmith charged him for the iron device that connected the wheel power to the grindstones. Sadly not a hint of this remarkable feat can now be seen. Probably it had to be destroyed when a new bridge was built to carry a modern paved highway up this steep ascent. If so, the Giles Sellers family enjoyed many years of enhanced diet and life.

Aside from my interest in my host of interesting and attractive relatives, what is most important for me about these early years is how greatly my historical understanding has been shaped by my family experiences of the transition from a subsistence culture to a market culture. This is clearest in the contrast between Uncle Giles's stubborn loyalty to the subsistence culture and my father's headlong and astonishing rush to capitalist success in the market culture. But also there are the personal tragedies and the disruption of the enormous stem family that accompanied my Great Grandfather Morrison's rush to success with the Star flour milling company.

Also important are the human costs of being caught halfway between the two clashing cultures, as were my Goforth relatives. The Goforth family seems to me, in my historian guise, a classic example of the stresses and sorrows of people caught halfway between the familial culture of subsistence farming and the increasing stresses of competitive capitalism.

Finally there is the occasional enormous effect of unpredictable and almost unbelievable events. If the fabulous Lily Plonk had not appeared exactly when she did, could my remarkable father have gotten to Charlotte so soon? And would he have been plunged into the market culture with the great success that accrued to him and to our family?

With this outcome, there are the ethical questions of social consequence and justice. Here I have always sided solidly with Uncle Giles and the rural brethren of the ARP church. That's why I inscribed my best scholarly book *The Market Revolution*: *Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (Oxford University Press, 1991):

In Memory of

Giles Sellers
1892-1960

two-mule farmer
christian
democrat
southern gentle man

DISCOVERING BIRDWATCHING

When I was 12 or 13 years old at our new home on Clement Avenue, I began to notice birds, first Purple Grackles gliding and cackling around the tall short leafed pine trees just outside our sleeping porch. Then one spring I was really excited to see, just beyond our lot, in the beautifully wooded and professionally maintained shrubbery of the Wilkinson estate, a host of brightly and differently colored species that kept coming and going. This I presently learned, was typical migration. So I joined the Boy Scouts to get a merit badge in Bird Study. It required

submitting a list of forty correctly identified common species such as crows, robins, English sparrows, chicken hawks, whip-poor-wills, hoot owls, quail, and chickadees. Dad helped me with names of some species as they were called on the farm. Finally I completed a list of 40.

Now the problem was finding an expert to approve my list. Someone, probably a Scout official, had heard of a lady who lived several miles across town on the edge of Charlotte's most elite neighborhood, Myers Park. I immediately bicycled to her house. She turned out to be Mrs. Elizabeth Clarkson, a Texas lady who had married Francis Clarkson, a well known progressive lawyer, who was soon appointed as a Justice of the state Supreme Court, and then was promoted to Chief Justice. Mrs. Clarkson had recently found another lady, a neighbor Mrs. Beatrice Potter, who had gotten interested in the birds she saw on the bird feeder outside her kitchen window. The Clarksons and Mrs. Potter not only approved my list, but invited me, at age 13 or 14 to join them in trying to identify more species. Soon I was bicycling almost every day to this rare mecca of birding pleasure.

Now our biggest problem was how to identify similar species. Up north there were a few professional ornithologists who identified birds by shooting them, and then listing their identifying characteristics. But they were competing within their little groups for scientific prestige as measured by the number of species they had correctly described. Therefore they kept their skins and descriptions from being seen by anybody else. My family had subscribed to the *National Geographic* magazine, and I had enjoyed it most for its interesting articles about natural habitats all over the world, and the vividly colored pictures that were included in each article. When reading this fine magazine one day, I suddenly leaped from the couch in ecstasy. I had found a full page of bird photographs. crisply and colorfully showing the identifying characters of each species. Moreover the magazine announced that they would present in each number a similar page for each taxonomic family until they covered every known species in the United States. When the series was complete, I somehow managed to bind the pages between two cloth covered covers and held them together by a stiff spine. Hooray! I miraculously had my own birding guide!

Today the Clarkson garden, where I met with the Clarksons and Mrs. Potter, stands open to the public as a radically expanded and enhanced Wing Haven Garden and Bird Sanctuary. It is where I discovered and enjoyed birding as the most thrilling non-academic activity of my life. A paragraph in the Sanctuary's brochure deepens my understanding of Elizabeth Clarkson.

> When Mrs. Clarkson came to Charlotte in 1927 a garden with hedges and borders and trees was her all-consuming desire—the birds were just a lovely background. During a lengthy illness that forced her to spend many days in bed or, when weather permitted, on a cot in the garden, she became passionate about the birds. In an article in Audubon in 1945 she wrote: "Up to that time all plants and shrubs and trees had been selected for their contribution to the garden picture, but from that moment I suddenly became interested in birds, each addition was weighed also from the "bird's point of view," and bird baths, feeding stations, suet baskets, and hummingbird feeders became garden necessities.

As we identified ever more species, more people heard about us and joined our group, One day I said to Mrs. Clarkson and Mrs. Potter, "Why don't we start a birding club?' I had heard about George Bird Grinnell's short-lived "Audubon Society for the Protection of Birds," which saved the Snowy Egret from extinction by persuading women to reject bird feathers and heron heads on their hats. So I added, "We could call it the "Mecklenburg Audubon Club." They agreed enthusiastically, and soon it was done.

My most exciting field trip was when I was invited by one of our members to accompany him about two hundred miles east to the Lake Mattumuskeet Wildlife Refuge on the shore of Pamlico Sound. He probably chose me because I was now regarded as our club's best identifier of species. An awesome variety of birds can be seen here:

> Canada Geese, various common Ducks, Snow Geese, Tundra Swans, White-headed and Brown-headed Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, Pine Warblers, Eastern Towhees, Song and White-throated Sparrows, Northern Cardinals, Juncos, Gray Catbirds,

> Great Blue Herons, Pied-billed Grebes, Double-crested Cormorants, Turkey Vultures, Ruddy and Ring-necked Ducks, Green Herons, Night Herons, Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers, and Bald Eagles.

Gradually, back in Charlotte, our little club discovered that birding activities and knowledge about birds was far more widespread. than we had known. There was already an excellent book on *The Birds of North Carolina* published in 1919 and a revised and updated edition was published in 1942. Both editions, as well the first statewide birding organization (the North Carolina Bird Club, later renamed the North Carolina Audubon Society) were initiated by the gifted T. Gilbert Pearson. For professional ornithological expertise Pearson relied on two remarkable bachelor English brothers, Thomas Gilbert Brimley and Clement Samuel Brimley. They had moved to North Carolina for the sheer pleasure of pushing to the limit their understanding of a new bird population that was far more interesting than the English birds. So they eagerly joined Pearson's venture. This remarkable team and its activities were mainly financed by various state agencies and the North Carolina Audubon Society.

Both editions of their superb *Birds of North Carolina* included pictures showing clearly the identifying marks of all known species and beautiful colored pictures of many species. This work far outclassed any birding manual in the country. The first volume included a remarkable "Ornithological Historical Sketch" by T. Gilbert Pearson. His account goes back to 1584, and exhaustively reports every known mention of North Carolina birds since then. He reports that in 1902 the "Audubon Society of North Carolina" was founded (he modestly does not say that it was founded by him) in Greensboro. He concludes his essay with a passionate warning about the imminent threat of mass extinction of bird species by wholesale commercial shooting of birds, his hope that the growing community of birders might convince the public that conservation of birds and their habitats was desperately needed, and the laws that would be required. A year after his essay was published, Pearson was selected to lead the National Audubon Society from its headquarters in New York.

The growing quantity and increasing quality of all this birding activity thus derived mainly from Peterson and the two Brimley brothers. As soon as our little Mecklenburg Bird Club understood this, we knew we had to establish a connection with the Brimley brothers, and I was sent off to Raleigh. I found them at their office in the State Library and they welcomed me warmly. Thereafter the Mecklenburg birders joined the Brimley team in supporting various bird and habitat conservation laws and regulations.

MY SCHOOLING IN CHARLOTTE

During the late 1920's and the early 1930's, I got an excellent education. I had to walk a mile or so each way to the Elizabeth grammar school, where I had very good teachers, especially a Miss Bell. Our principal, Miss Hattie Alexander, was a descendent of the colonial clan of Alexanders, who constituted many of early Mecklenburg County's Scotch-Irish Presbyterian families.

At Piedmont Junior High School, my best teacher was Miss Mary Randolph who taught a course on biology that enhanced my knowledge about and love for nature in many ways. She introduced students to a variety of common but interesting life forms—dogwood trees, butterflies, hummingbirds, raccoons, skunks, and snakes. Most important, perhaps, she invited me and my Boy Scout troop to take a hike to the large farm where she lived just beyond Charlotte and experience nature at its best, by camping overnight in a forest on her farm. That night started with hot dogs and marshmallows around a carefully guarded fire. After eating, we went to bed under a full moon, with owl hoots and whip-poor-will calls delighting us. A similar experience about this time was going to the Boy Scout's campground on the Catawba River, where I was thrilled, on a canoe paddle down the river, to see a couple of the besieged and diminishing local Catawba Indians. While there I also helped put out a brushfire, which was a dramatic demonstration of nature's fragility.

One other thing I remember from Piedmont was a brief turn as a cheerleader when our football team faced our most feared rival AG (Alexander Graham Junior High School) which served the children of much wealthier families in a more elite neighborhood. Our school had a

lot of pupils from impoverished families who supplied the labor for nearby cotton mills. This was my first glimpse of the class injustice and exploitation that accompanied the transition from the subsistence farming culture to the capitalist exploitation culture of urban life.

CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

I got my last pre-college schooling at Charlotte's Central High School, on the bank of Sugar Creek. At that time Central was the most celebrated high school in North Carolina. Strangely, however, I quickly discovered that the teacher of my favorite subject, history, was an idiot so stupid that she could not even see that she had problems. In self-defense I spent my time in her class reading good history books, and she was so afraid of any question I might ask that she suffered my rudeness as she babbled on. My best teacher was John Norman, an earnest young man who sang beautifully in the choir at my family's church. He taught an exciting course on chemistry and physics in a laboratory amply supplied with all the facilities (slides, tweezers, Bunsen burners, microscopes, thermometers, refrigerators, and chemicals) that students might need to learn through their own experiments the fundamental truths of science.

All my other classes were excellent. I studied Spanish under the lanky and reserved Mr. Allred—"Senor Totorojo" we students called him—and I learned enough Spanish to communicate comfortably with Mexicans and with graduate students and restaurant waiters when I later spent six months teaching a graduate seminar on Mexico-U. S. relations at El Collegio de Mexico in Mexico City and even later on many birding trips through Mexico to Belize.

At Central High, I also studied literature with the lovely but extremely shy Miss Markham. On several occasions, she was so dismayed by a couple of handsome "lady's man" jerks who marched up to her desk while she was teaching and flirted with her so impudently that she fled from the classroom in tears. She always had to wait a long time outside in the hall until she could recompose herself and resume the lesson of the day. She never complained to anyone about it.

In addition to splendid courses, Central High maintained an Oratorical and Debating Society, where I and other students, especially, perhaps, aspiring politicians, professors, evangelists, and progressive reformers, could debate serious subjects. High Schools then were fielding competing debate teams to debate each other, rather like the far more popular football teams. My ever generous father volunteered to take me and my fellow debaters across the Blue Ridge crest and pretty far down the other side to face the debate team of the Johnson City High School in Tennessee. Our eloquence smashed then brutally and completely.

One event during my high school years profoundly transformed the rest of my life. A friend introduced to two ladies who ran a settlement house in the Afro-American ghetto along McDowell Street. They took me to a NAACP meeting in a black church, which was packed with three or four hundred people. An imposing gentleman, who was introduced as Bishop Gordon of the AME (African Methodist Episcopal) Zion Church, got up and preached the most powerful sermon I had ever heard. I was one of only two or three white people in this enormous congregation and I guess this was a "scales falling from my eyes" kind of experience that I never got over. I was in dissent with my society from that time on.

My best friend at the time was Carlisle Adams, the only child of the wealthy director of the Southern Railway System, which connected Washington with New Orleans by way of Charlotte and various southwestern cities. Carlisle's mother was an accomplished pianist, who generously invited me to visit their opulent home and hear the great music of Beethoven and Mozart as she played it on her piano and also by listening to orchestral recordings. In addition Carlisle and I spent a lot of time reading and discussing the works of the ancient philosophers, especially the clashing perspectives of Plato and Aristotle.

My favorite novelist was fellow Tar Heel Thomas Wolfe from Asheville. He studied at the same universities I did, the University of North Carolina and Harvard. He was admitted to the University of North Carolina at age 15, and studied drama as a graduate student at Harvard. I read all four of his best novels, *Look Homeward*, *Angel*, *Of Time and the River*, *You Can't Go Home Again*, and *The Web and the Rock*. One of my

heroes, W. J. Cash, who greeted my Aunt Gladys daily at the *Charlotte News*, listed Wolfe as the ablest writer of their generation. The beat generation writer Jack Kerouac idolized Wolfe. William Faulkner said that Wolfe may have had the best talent of their generation, and historian David Donald wrote his biography.

My lifelong interest in history originated with a book that my insightful mother gave me as a birthday gift. It was Hendrick Van Loon's *The History of Mankind.* Van Loon, a Dutch historian, coupled an eloquent and resonant text with rough and arresting images of key moments in the long, slow, and often lethal, emergence of a potential human being from the swamp of primordial reality.

The book opens with a typical Van Loon drawing of a great craggy rock with this text below it:

> High up in the North in the land called Svithjod, there stands a rock. It is a hundred miles high and a hundred miles wide. Once every thousand years, a little bird comes to this rock to sharpen its beak.
> When this rock has thus been worn away, then a single day of eternity will have gone by.

Van Loon proceeds, with the same resonant eloquence, through the slow emergence of the human species to minimal civilization, and through all the ancient civilizations to modern society. I was transfixed. I knew at once that I would enroll at the best university I could find, perhaps at Chapel Hill, hoping that it would prepare me for a lifelong effort to flesh out Van Loon's history of mankind as far as I could. This was for me a great and exciting plunge into cultural sophistication and intellectual knowledge and excellence.

These experiences were all the result of Charlotte's Central High School, whose excellence stemmed mainly from the leadership of our remarkable Principal, Dr. Walter Garinger. Word of his brilliant leadership had reached the halls of Harvard University, and their Admissions Office had promised to accept anyone he proposed. That is how I got admitted to our country's oldest and greatest university.

Nothing could have prepared me better to take full advantage of the great professors I eventually would find at Harvard.

Carlisle Adams went with me to Harvard, also on the recommendation of Dr. Garinger. Once there Carlisle and I seldom met, however, because we were both so intensely involved in preparation for different careers, he in medical sciences, and I in history. When Carlisle graduated, he returned to Charlotte and became an excellent family physician. I never saw Carlisle again, but I still remember him with great appreciation and affection.

Chapter Two

Harvard and My "Great Awakening"

DISCOVERING ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP

Harvard's great professors lured me into pursuit of intellectual knowledge and sophistication. In my freshman year I heard some splendid lecturers. I remember particularly the eloquence of Professor Michael Karpovich on early modern history. He would usually start by announcing some routine information about the time or classroom of section meetings, in his intensely Slavic accent that sounded like*"Meester* Saaaver (the head tutor) saays that . . ." I was less impressed by Professor Hooten, whose lectures on anthropology were mediocre, and who was notorious for naming his son (a member of my class) Newton Hooten. My greatest contempt was reserved for Provost Paul H. Buck, who ran the University while its distinguished President James Conant Bryant was overseeing the invention of the atom bomb. Buck claimed academic respectability on the basis of his only book, *The Road to Reunion*, which lauded extravagantly the reunion of northern and southern elites after Reconstruction, without even mentioning that this meant extending until the end of the nineteenth century the reign of the Ku Klux Klan and the supremacy of the most reactionary and racist politicians.

At this time I was working in the Eliot House dining room, in order to pay my tuition fee, an astonishing $400 per semester I think. As I took orders and delivered meals to wealthy and condescending young Boston Brahmins, I developed a deeper understanding of the class struggle I had glimpsed first at Piedmont Junior High School.

But these negative impressions were infinitely outweighed by the intellectual riches showered on me by two of Harvard's most distinguished professors, Perry Miller and Francis O. Mathiessen. Mathiessen enabled me to understand the complex ambivalence of Yankee transcendentalism. I had read, with Carlisle Adams, some writings of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, and I particularly appreciated Mathiessen for confirming my suspicion of

Emerson's insistence that the commodification of nature and humanity was essential. Under Mathiessen's tutelage I also learned to appreciate the unique moral integrity of Henry David Thoreau and the beauty of his spare but eloquent prose.

Perry Miller opened for me the complexity and intellectual brilliance of New England's Puritan clergy and its followers. Most importantly, he helped me understand Northampton's Reverend Jonathan Edwards, and the internationally acclaimed brilliance of the tension he posited between the spirituality of Christianity and the mundane realism of John Locke. Miller invited me to join his graduate seminar. He had a wonderful teaching technique. He would sit at a table with a pile of notes in his hand. These notes contained the passages he had just copied from the sources. Then he asked and solicited questions, emphasizing those that he was asking himself as he wrote his current book (*The Puritans* or *Nature's Nation).* What a splendid system he had devised for combining intellectual brilliance for his book with spectacular learning for his students. Later Miller guided me, day by day and page by page, in writing my 135-page Senior Research Essay on "The Great Awakening in North Carolina." It qualified me to graduate from Harvard *magna cum laude*.

Sadly, both of my great mentors came to personally bad ends. Throughout my intellectual intimacy with Matthiessen I was still a naïve young man from the culturally backward South, where no one knew that male homosexuality existed. and he meticulously avoided anything that might suggest it did. Clearly something suddenly happened that wrecked him so completely that he jumped from the window of a Boston hotel to his death. Later when, I was teaching at Princeton University, Perry Miller came to Princeton for some reason, and called me on the telephone as soon as he arrived, My wife and I invited him to dinner at our humble house on Murray Place. When he arrived with his wife, he was so drunk that we barely got through dinner, and Mrs. Miller tactfully ushered him out. I never saw him again, and learned shortly after that he had died of acute alcoholism.

While I was at Harvard, the *Charlotte Observer* ran this note:

Charlottean is Chosen Phi Beta Kappa Member

David G Gill, secretary of the undergraduate Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard University, has announced that Charles G. Sellers, Jr., of 611 Clement Avenue, Charlotte, and a graduate of Central High School, was one of fourteen men elected to membership in the national honorary scholastic fraternity at Harvard. The new members Gill added, "would be initiated at the forthcoming Spring meeting of Phi Beta Kappa."

MILITARY INTERLUDE

Before my senior year at Harvard, the Second World War had broken out, and the Army promised volunteers assignment to any unit for which they were qualified. I had once gone to Dartmouth, N. H. with a classmate, and experienced the thrill of gliding down a snowy hill in the clumsy, pre-Nordic skiing fashion of that period. So I volunteered for the ski troops, and was apparently deemed qualified by some overworked clerk, for I was immediately assigned to the Tenth Mountain Division at Camp Hale on top of the Rockies, just beyond Leadville, Colorado.

The ski troops were created when President Franklin D. Roosevelt met with the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the French General Charles de Gaulle to plan an overall strategy for the war. They had no trouble agreeing that the Nazis had to be prevented from crossing or going around the Alps to reinforce Benito Mussolini in Italy. The task was assigned to the Americans, and the Army spared no expense in building a modern military base of barracks, rifle ranges, a hospital, and a library on a flat valley just over the crest. Stables were constructed and mules were supplied to haul artillery over the rugged terrain, and tractor-treaded, light snowmobiles (usually called "weasels") were devised to carry troops, ammunition, and supplies through the snow. A crew of the best Nordic skiers, who were just emerging in the Alps, were sent to teach the Americans this vastly improved style of skiing.

The grandeur of the Camp Hale site was breathtaking. To the east the headwaters of the Arkansas River flowed down toward the Mississippi River valley, lined on the south by Mount Elbert (14,439'), then thought to be the highest American peak, and Mount Massive (14,429'), the second highest. On weekends, I climbed both of these majestic peaks.

And years later I climbed Mount Whitney in California's Sierra Nevada range, which turned out to be the highest American peak at 14,505', 65' higher than Elbert. These elevations presented rare birds, three species of Ptarmigans and the Himalayan Snowcock.

To the west the turbulent little Eagle River flowed down to join the Colorado River at Grand Junction, and then through the Grand Canyon to swamps where the United States border can hardly be distinguished from the Mexican border, and finally through the Gulf of California to the Pacific Ocean. One exciting hike took me down the Eagle River and then up a tributary to a meadow where I could gaze in awe at the snow filled cross of the Mountain of the Holy Cross 14,009' directly above me, and the immense craggy cliff in which it is embedded. On the way back down, I was really frightened by a mountain lion, which I frequently saw sitting on rocks and yowling ever more fiercely. I wondered whether I looked good to eat. But it vanished when I passed the boundary of its comfort zone.

Along the same stretch of the Eagle River, one could climb a moderate ridge and look down northward into a deep wooded and snowy valley where the Colorado Freeway would pass through the Moffat Tunnel to connect western Colorado with Denver. This whole wild country around Camp Hale was still completely roadless and unpopulated. Miraculously the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad climbed over the high divide just above Camp Hale. At Tennessee Pass it stopped to refill its water from a water tank on high legs with a small sign, which had on it the mysterious word "Pando." Then the train would rattle noisily down the track just above Camp Hale toward Grand Junction. We used to say, "I've just come down from Pando, that hellhole in the sky, where winter begins on Labor Day and ends on the Fourth of July."

Despite the grandeur, conditions in the mountains were challenging and often brutal. The pamphlet, "The Invisible Men on Skis" by Rene L. Coquez (1970) describes the environment:

> Many times during maneuvers, for days at a time, the troops slept in the mountain peaks with snows as deep as 15 feet where strong winds blew. Temperatures at nights went as low as 35 to 50 below. Many of the high peaks were more than 13,000' elevation.

> The mules were trained to carry heavy artillery up the high slopes. The ski troops, dressed in white army uniforms, were at times invisible to the eye. They traveled at high speeds down the mountains, and at times there were accidents. In the evenings, the troops made shelters from tree limbs. Whenever possible, or dug shelters under large rocks or any other place they could find. Precautions, of course, had to be taken to keep from freezing to death while asleep as the temperatures would drop to such a bitter cold. (p. 27)

My best friend at Camp Hale was Harold Kirker, later a Professor of Art and Architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara. When I turned 90, I had a birthday party where Harold recalled those happy days as follows:

> It's early in the spring of 1943 at Camp Hale, and Charlie and I are struggling with US Army Basic Training. This intensive program is everywhere long, hard—and boring. Hurry up and Wait. But here at 10,000 feet in the Rocky Mountains it's even tougher. Here there are problems of altitude, acclimatization, respiratory ailments, isolation, and disappointment. For lovers of the natural world such as Charlie and I, Birders from our youth, the great compensation is being in the mountains, especially in the summer, when after Saturday morning parade and inspection until Sunday evening Taps, we were free to camp and climb about on our own in that wonderful wilderness of peaks and parks and flowering meadows.

There was only one disaster in these happy days, and it probably saved my life. When Camp Hale opened, it needed a crew of Non Coms (Noncommissioned Officers—Corporals and several grades of Sergeants), as well as commissioned Officers (Lieutenants and Captains) to train the flood of athletically exceptional skiers. The only crew that was available was from a New York National Guard unit that had been lazing and drinking beer in coastal fortifications ever since the first indications of an imminent war. Almost at once wholesale firings began, because they just could not keep up with their vigorous and impatient tutees. Soon nothing was left but mess sergeants and some really exceptional soldiers.

Our leadership realized at once that it had to recruit and train as quickly as possible the most promising skiers. Soon I was promoted to Staff Sergeant and designated Reconnaissance Sergeant for our battalion. We engaged in mock warfare, matching battalion against battalion in the peaks and forests that loomed above the Vail valley.

I remember vividly the night when our commander asked me to ski far enough down to radio back to him whether our "enemy battalion" was coming up the valley on the left side of our ridge or the right side. I don't remember which side or how this sham battle turned out. What I do remember is one of the most thrilling episodes of my life—whizzing down through moonlit snow into the forest, then slaloming between black shadow and moon lit snow, around tree after tree, until I could draw up on a knoll where I could see the "enemy" coming.

Unfortunately there were a few traps that the best skier could not avoid, especially where a thin slice of ice hides a pool of melted snow. Late one afternoon when I was slowly and cautiously sliding down a slope, overloaded with a heavy backpack, an M1 rifle, and an awkward radio transmitter, my right ski suddenly plunged into the muck and pitched me head over heels into the ground. Within seconds two medical monitors were needling some medical substance into my bloodstream that left me with no memory of pain. Then, I was told, they propelled me, riding on their parallel skis, until they met a weasel that took me to the camp hospital. The accident had twisted my right leg almost 45 degrees around. When I woke up the next morning still painless, my leg was encased in a cast from my hip to my ankle. Thank God for the miracles of modern medicine—and for the military leaders who had spared no expense in building the best possible hospital at Camp Hale. After a long time in bed and a lot of exercise, I made a seemingly complete recovery.

Then my officers sent me to the Officer Training School at Fort Benning, Georgia, expecting that I would return to the Tenth Mountain Division as a First Lieutenant. But my leg was collapsed by its first serious challenge, a tall climbing board. After minimal medical treatment, the Fort Benning authorities did not send me back to Camp Hale. Instead they sent me to an army training unit at Fort Gordon in

nearby Augusta, Georgia where I was assigned to training new recruits. The Germans had just burst through the same Ardennes Forest, where my father's artillery regiment had so brilliantly paved the way for Allied victory in the First World War. By now the Germans had slaughtered so many Allied soldiers that the Army was desperate to dig up as many replacements as possible and send them to Fort Gordon and train them as fast as possible.

These recruits were almost impossible to train. They were mainly guys who were in the army because they had criminal records or physical disabilities, or psychotic problems, or were simply draft dodgers. They did not understand that military training was the only thing that might save their lives. They were scared and resentful, and some were so angry that I felt endangered. One of them was the only person I ever knocked down with a fist to the chin. They were soon shipped off to the Ardennes Forest virtually untrained and unfortunately were killed in droves.

However disappointing the events of my last years in the army were, they probably saved my life. In Italy the heroic ski troopers of the Tenth Mountain Division slowly but persistently pushed the Nazis back up the central mountain range, with the world's most lethal artillery firing down and killing 990 of our troops. Once again the patriotic bravery of American soldiers in the Ardennes Forest made possible an Allied victory. No wonder returning to Harvard felt like going to heaven.

After I got back to Harvard, I was excited to learn that I could go birding with the father of modern bird watching, Ludlow Griscom the most brilliant field birder that the Western Hemisphere has ever known. On weekend mornings, anyone who turned up at 4 AM, in the all-night cafeteria just across Harvard Square, could crowd into one of the cars owned by wealthy students for an exciting birding day, most often to Essex County, Plum Island, and the Parker River. Griscom had carefully planned each trip, according to tides, season, weather, and migration patterns, in order to maximize sightings. Griscom helped Roger Tory Peterson develop the best birding guide of the time. Birding has been the light of my non-academic life, and I much of it to one gifted and generous gentleman. Thank you Mr. Griscom!

Back at Harvard I graduated in 1947, and this news traveled all the way to Charlotte, where the *Observer* reported that

> C. G. Sellers, Jr. Makes Fine Record at Harvard
>
> Charles G. Sellers, Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. C. G. Sellers of 611 Clement Ave., has just graduated from Harvard after making an excellent scholastic record. Young Sellers, who received his degree, Magna Cum Laude, was graduated from Central High School in 1941.

MARRIAGE TO EVELYN

During my last years at Harvard, I had the great good fortune to meet and marry Evelyn Smart. At that time Harvard could tolerate women only in its completely segregated Radcliffe College just across Harvard Square. I met Evelyn at a Radcliffe 'Jolly-up" party. I immediately found her exceptionally attractive and also exceptionally smart.

Soon I was taken out to meet her parents in an upper-class neighborhood of nearby Belmont. Her father Harold Smart answered the doorbell. Opening the door about a foot, he looked out as Evelyn introduced me, and then said, "I understand you're from the South. Are you a Democrat?" When I confessed I was, he replied after an awkward pause, "Well, there's Harry Byrd (an ultra-reactionary Democratic Senator from Virginia)." Only then did he open the door and usher us in.

Despite this ambiguous beginning, I quickly discovered that Harold Smart was a genial and generous man. He made a lot of money as the New England agent for a lumber yard in Brooklyn, New York. He was constantly driving around and lavishing large gifts at Christmas or on birthdays to purchasing agents for the region's many furniture factories, who then decided, for some reason, to get the best maple wood for their furniture mills from the Brooklyn firm. He bought a new Cadillac every year or two because it enhanced his prestige and profits. For the same reason he was proud to sit beside the motel mogul Howard Johnson at meetings of the Rotary Club in Boston.

Mr. Smart had met Evelyn's mother during the First World War when he was a soldier in Scotland, and Mrs. Smart had a hard time finding friends in the strange new American culture. The Smarts were extremely generous to me and Evelyn. They financed our elaborate wedding on June 14, 1948, at a congregational church in Belmont, and gave us two expensive wedding presents, one a large and speedy Buick automobile, and the other a large maple dining table with four handsome chairs.

After our wedding, Evelyn moved with me to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where I was pursuing my Ph.D. But every summer for several years our speedy new Buick took us to the Smart's vacation home at Rye Beach, New Hampshire and the delights of the Atlantic surf and feasts of fried shrimp and boiled lobster.

Chapter Three

Entering the Academic World

MY DOCTORAL DEGREE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

After graduating from Harvard with honors, I could have, with support from my great professors, gotten admitted for graduate study at Harvard or anywhere else. Instead I made one of the smartest decisions of my life. when I returned home and enrolled at the University of North Carolina. There I studied under Professor Fletcher Green, who was recruiting and training a whole new generation of historians for an anti-racist and more critical history of the South.

Chapel Hill was a perfect place for me because I was researching and writing a dissertation on "The Early Life of James K. Polk," in preparation for the two volume biography of Polk that I later published. Polk, like me, was a native of Mecklenburg County. Polk's uncle Thomas Polk was the chief promoter of the radical Mecklenburg Resolves (known popularly and somewhat misleadingly as the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence). Polk got his college education at the University of North Carolina, where he lodged in East Hall, the oldest building on campus. Polk visited the University while President, and helped dedicate a monument to its founders, which still stands on campus, proclaiming in large letters "Erected by the President of the United States and other Alumni." And this was the only place where I could study the most important evidence of Polk's youthful experience at the University, including, in his own hand, texts of addresses he made here to the student Philanthropic Society in preparation for a political life.

Chapel Hill was also a perfect place for my wife Evelyn. She had been studying the etymology of the French language, as it developed from Old French through Middle French to modern French, for several years at Radcliffe and for six months in Paris The leading American expert on this subject was the University of North Carolina's Professor Urban T. Holmes, and his studies had made him one of the University's most distinguished scholars.

While Evelyn was studying with Professor Holmes, I was researching and writing my dissertation under the excellent tutelage of Fletcher Green. On political subjects Professor Green was more conservative about subjects like populism and labor unions, but he was always open to colloquy. Almost immediately I and the whole seminar noticed that the student sitting next to me would jump in on my side. Then I noticed that when he raised such an issue, I always agreed with him. When I asked his name he told me he was Junius Scales, and that his grandfather had been a notoriously racist and reactionary governor of North Carolina. All too soon Junius was arrested and accused of being a Communist, which he surely was, and jailed for an indefinite term., which meant for life. He was the only Communist ever punished so harshly.

Long before Junius was exposed and arrested, I was deeply shocked on another front. I had been attending the Presbyterian church in Chapel Hill where its liberal minister Charlie Jones was holding meetings with me and other liberal students about egalitarian and anti-racial issues. Chapel Hill was in Orange County, and the church belonged to the Orange Presbytery. At Harvard I had written my senior research paper on "The Great Awakening in North Carolina," and therefore I knew that Chapel Hill's Orange Presbytery had been in colonial times the most radical hotbed of covenanter piety and egalitarianism in both church and state. But by the twentieth century, the Presbytery had become ultra conservative, especially with regard to matters of race. So when the Presbytery got wind of all these radical goings-on in Chapel Hill, they defrocked minister Charlie Jones by an almost unanimous vote for his liberal stance on race. Although Junius Scales was eventually pardoned by President John F. Kennedy, both of my Chapel Hill heroes were left to rebuild their shattered lives as best they could.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

My first paid academic job was at the University of Maryland during the reign of H.C. (Curly) Bird, and I spent a couple of highly productive years there in the early 1950's. My hero there was the wonderful professor of American history, Wesley M. Gewehr, author of an admirable book entitled "The Great Awakening in Virginia." Our

intermingling interests were strikingly indicated by the title of my much less ambitious senior research paper at Harvard, "The Great Awakening in North Carolina." Gewehr had an amazing ability to perceive academic promise in young people who had just gotten PhD's and were anxious to complete research for their first books. American intellectual historian Richard Hofstadter was the star of my generation.

Curly Bird had come to the University as its football coach and gotten promoted to President, aided by the pragmatic or venal politicians he had cultivated on the Eastern Shore. Professor Gewehr's best story told what happened when Curly made a bizarre and ridiculous bid for academic respectability. Summoning Wesley to his office and feigning affability, he jumped up from his chair and patting Wesley's back, he almost shouted "Professor Gewehr, I've decided that you and I are going to build the world's greatest program in American history! And I'm going to provide you with the world's greatest library of books on American history! I don't care if it costs ten thousand dollars!"

Actually and amazingly it was Wesley Gewehr who was already providing the University with the world's greatest proving ground for talented young historians, with the exception of a few immensely wealthy Ivy League institutions. Cannily he pushed to their farthest limits the everyday decisions that could be made only at the departmental level. These were the routine decisions of academic life—who would teach which course in which available hours in which available classrooms, aided by which and how many graduate assistants were available on which available days.

Gewehr's brilliant strategy had great advantages for everybody involved. Students got better teaching from the best academic prospects. The department got a better national reputation while paying less for lower wages than those of ordinary professors. And we instructors got the biggest advantage by being able to do all our teaching on Monday and Tuesday, while on the remaining four days we could be researching and writing our first books in the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress. It could be reached quickly by cheap public buses and streetcars. While we were at work, the amazing Allan Nevins often bustled in, having traveled from New York by train to Union Station, and walked up to the Library as fast as possible, where

the librarians were already waiting to trundle out to his reserved desk a cart straining under the mountain of materials he had already ordered. We usually dined, as anyone could in those days, in the nearby dining room of the Supreme Court, surrounded by judicial aides, lawyers, Senators, lobbyists, and often some of the Justices.

My most vivid memory of the Curly Bird wars happened on a Saturday when the Maryland football team faced their most hated rival. The entire faculty was ordered to arrive on the campus by 9 AM, dressed in their most elaborate academic garb, from mortarboard hats to elegant gowns with glowing colors varying according to the sources of their PhD's. Then, as campus police forced us into a narrow path between parallel rows of ROTC soldiers with their army rifles and sharp bayonets almost meeting over our heads, the faculty were led to a back door and made to climb by way of an obscure stairway into an unlighted, crowded corner of the vast arena. Here we were invisible to a host of roaring fans excited by dancing cheerleaders below. The vengeful H.C Curly Bird, enraged by Gewehr's refusal to endorse his quixotic fantasy of the world's greatest history program, had humiliated the entire faculty. There was a brief moment of near silence, while a local preacher, in a semblance of prayer, invoked divine intervention to insure a Maryland victory. Then when everyone departed for the stadium to view the game, we escaped.

TEACHING AT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

In 1951, I moved from the University of Maryland to Princeton University at Princeton's lowest faculty rank, instructor, but with an additional appointment as a Bicentennial Preceptor. Bicentennial Preceptorships were established at Princeton in 1949. They were considered to be equivalent at the assistant professor level to endowed chairs at the full professor level. They were valuable to the faculty for enabling the appointee's academic quality and teaching ability to be assessed before a decision about tenure had to be made. They were valuable to me and other applicants because it gave us a whole sabbatical year to research and write our critical first academic books, on which our whole academic careers might depend.

My sojourn in Princeton was both personally delightful and academically productive. I and my wife Evelyn rented a modest house on Murray Place. Our first two children were born in the Princeton Hospital. Our eldest child Grier (Charles Grier Sellers III !) was born Sept. 25, 1952 and our second child Janet Smart Sellers (who took her middle name Smart from Evelyn's family name) was born Dec. 31, 1955. So we enjoyed the delight of two very young smart, curious, and lively children. I built for them a big square sandbox with benches all around, a big square canvas cover on a square wooden frame to protect it from rain. When the kids were using it, the cover could be pushed up and attached to nail on our neighbor's garage wall. We drove to the New Jersey shore to get a lot sand to fill this big sandbox. While Evelyn and the children splashed in the surf, I shoveled sand into burlap bags in the trunk. When I finally got enough sand, I joined them in the ocean adventures until we had to go back to Princeton.

As both children grew older they developed their own exciting new interests. Grier attended the University of California at Santa Cruz and then received his undergraduate degree at Central Washington University at Ellensburg. He later went on to earn a PhD at Temple University (Philadelphia) in Biology with a doctoral dissertation on Antarctic single-celled organisms called dinoflagellates and published a article on the topic. Janet attended the University of California at Davis where she specialized in clothing design and production. While working in San Francisco at Sharper Image she met Mark Jones (b. 1950) whom she married in 1996. Over the years, Janet has worked for several clothing firms in product development where, as an apparel technical designer she supervises production and fittings, entailing numerous visits to many countries in Asia and Central America. When I later moved to Berkeley, I married my second wife Nancy Snow Sellers and adopted her son Steen (b. 1962). Steen attended California State, San Francisco where he met and then married Glee Harris (b. 1964). He has achieved great success in supervising restaurant startups in southern California. He and Glee have two daughters Aleen (b. 1996) who is now in college at the University of Wyoming and Taree (b. 2003) who is in junior high school and has become an excellent ballerina. My third wife, Carolyn Merchant (b. 1936) has two children, David (b. 1962) who produces and edits a monthly magazine called *Cycling Utah* and John (b.

1964) who works for REI in Minneapolis. (More details about my family and children will be revealed in volume II of my memoirs).

Back in Princeton, I abjured the fashionable First Presbyterian Church and the impressive sermons of the Rev, John Bodo (whom I later knew personally and admired in California), probably because I would have been uncomfortable in such an upper class bastion. Instead I joined the Second Presbyterian Church, whose pastor was the modest and generous Rev. William Tucker. Soon I was elected by the Session to be the youngest Elder (what an odd and ambiguous locution !) they had ever had. At once I was involved in raising enough funds to build a larger and more modern Sunday School annex on the back end of the church.

POLITICS AT PRINCETON

On the non-academic side, my most exciting and instructive experience at Princeton was a brief period of deep involvement in the realities and contradictions of progressive Democratic politics. When I arrived with Evelyn in Princeton, it took us several weeks to rent and furnish our house. Meanwhile we lodged in a small park of cheap and Spartan little apartments, which were built back in the First World War for military purposes, and were now occupied mainly by graduate students.

Here we were welcomed warmly by our next door neighbor Mort Darrow, who told me he was working with the local leader of progressive Democrats Thorn Lord (1906-1965). When Mort saw how excited I was at this news, he said he would be happy to introduce me to Lord. Thorn Lord was educated, like me, at the University of North Carolina, and his mother came from Asheville. Probably our Tar Heel affinities influenced his acceptance of my role in supporting his activities.

I quickly perceived that Thorn Lord was an unusual politician. He was committed to politics in order to further progressive policies, rather than for political advancement or reputation.

Lord was an incredibly skillful leader of the Democratic party. His fundamental strategy was turning out the maximum vote in our strongest precincts. Suddenly it became clear that anybody who hoped to be elected or accommodated by the Democratic party had better show up on election day and follow Thorn's instructions to the letter. I remember vividly an election when he stood in the street facing the polling place all day, executing a host of tasks at a furious pace—checking off voters as they voted, recruiting cars and campaign workers to bring to the polls voters who had not yet voted. He was always accompanied by his "bagman" William H. Falsey, Sr. A bagman, I learned, was in New Jersey political parlance a close henchman who was always at hand, carrying a leather suitcase stuffed with enough cash to insure a maximum Democratic vote turnout, through persuasion, intimidation, or bribery.

Thorn Lord was always, as his bagman indicates, an unapologetic pragmatist. The vast, Irish clan of Falseys made up almost all the inhabitants of our strongest voting precinct. Much of the bagman's cash came from Mercer County's governing body, the Board of Chosen Freeholders, usually called for short "the Freeholders." New Jersey has always been notorious for political corruption, and the Freeholders, entitling themselves individually as Director of Taxes, Licenses, or whatever other source of income, had regularly dipped into the county treasury to subsidize whichever party was in power, usually the Republicans.

This system went on smoothly, unseen and generally unsuspected by the public, until the Falsey clan produced a son, William H. Falsey, Jr., who graduated from Princeton University and presented himself as the senior Falsey and therefore, as usual, the Democratic party's candidate for a seat on the Board of Chosen Freeholders. The Freeholders erupted in fiery rebellion, because they feared that young Falsey would expose their peculations and wreck the whole system. In panic they reorganized the whole county government to place all bureaus involving money in their hands, leaving Falsey only the bridges and culverts to manage. Falsey not only exposed their peculations but he also got the last word. Soon motorists began to notice that every bridge or culvert in Mercer County had a large sign announcing:

Maintained by William H. Falsey, Jr.
Director of Bridges and Culverts

As soon as Thorn Lord's political troops began winning elections by large majorities, he became a powerful force in state politics. The state politics of the Democratic party were far more complex and ambiguous than Mercer County's. The party was ruled by the bosses of the most Democratic counties. Hudson County in the northeast corner of the state, across the Hudson River from New York City. But the Hudson County machine was for years the most notoriously corrupt political organization in the country. The Camden County machine, south of Mercer County and across the Delaware River from Philadelphia, was only slightly less corrupt. Only in Middlesex County just north of Mercer County, was there a more progressive Democratic electorate, stemming from Rutgers University and the county's reliance on the state to maintain steamboat access to the world on the Raritan River.

Thorn Lord's pragmatism was not outrageous enough for him to even meet with the bosses of Hudson and Camden Counties, and certainly not to negotiate with them. He shrewdly decided that the best he could do was to run candidates who impressed voters as ethical. His first venture in this direction was very successful. In 1953 Lord chose a little known but genuinely progressive member of the legislature from the prim and small-farming Warren County far up the Delaware River to run for Governor. Robert Meyner won by a large majority, ending a decade of Republican rule. Even more daring was Thorn's decision to appoint a popular and well known Republican woman with slightly liberal proclivities from the Republican bastion up north in Essex County, to administer the New Jersey Turnpike. She did a good job, and this decision was widely praised. Finally he chose to run for Congress from Mercer County, a war hero who had received three combat decorations for distinguished service at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Frank Thompson not only won handily, but was reelected regularly to Congress, where he was considered "a powerful liberal voice" until 1980. Suddenly his sins were exposed, and he was imprisoned three years for bribery and conspiracy. What is it about the New Jersey water—hello Chris Christie!

Thorn Lord continued to play the role of Democratic kingmaker, helping his former law partner Richard J. Hughes win the gubernatorial

election of 1961. In 1965 Thorn Lord and his wife divorced. Sadly, like so many great heroes of my life, Thorn's life ended tragically. Distraught over the estrangement, he committed suicide.

On the academic side at Princeton, I was warmly welcomed by one of the country's most distinguished history faculties, and Chairman Joe Strayer processed me through the Preceptor progress to the sabbatical year where I completed my first serious academic book, *James K. Polk*, *Jacksonian, 1795-1843*, which was published in 1957 by the Princeton University Press. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. called it "resourceful in its research, solid in its research, and objective in its Judgment." As the first volume of my two-volume Polk biography, it is still the standard work on the subject.

After my sabbatical year, I was promoted to associate professor and given a lecture course of my own. Because Princeton did not yet have a course in American political history, I was assigned a course in American cultural and intellectual history, for which, mercifully, I had been extraordinarily prepared by my Harvard mentors, Francis O. Mathiessen and Perry Miller. In this course, I seized the opportunity to develop a more coherent and stimulating lecture style, but I remained far behind Princeton's two stars in this respect, Roger Craig and Eric Goldman.

Also while I was at Princeton, I met Dr. John Hope Franklin. the most brilliant modern historian of the Afro-Americans and an Afro-American himself. He was then Chair of the History department at Brooklyn College and would soon be Chair of the History department at the University of Chicago. He encouraged me to pursue a project I had been considering, a book on *The Southerner as American* (published in 1960). I was originally attracted to this topic through my Aunt Gladys Templeton. She was long the switchboard operator inside the entrance to the *Charlotte News,* our afternoon newspaper. For years Aunt Gladys exchanged daily greetings with the paper's famed writer Wilbur J. Cash, whose brilliant book on *The Mind of the South* (1941) first inspired my interest in bridging the chasm between the racist South and the anti-racist North.

As I finally designed this book, it was wholly composed of essays on the subject by historians of the South. Many of them had been graduate students with me at the University of North Carolina under the tutelage of Professor Fletcher M. Green. Professor Green was recruiting and training a whole new generation of scholars dedicated to producing a new southern history of bi-racial equality to replace the old southern history of racist ideology.

Dr. Franklin's essay opened the book with a brilliant analysis of how a racist history had driven the white South to tragic destruction in the Civil War. He concluded with his hope that the new southern history of my generation might enable the South "to know itself well enough to value and preserve the valuable in both its Southernism and its Americanism." My essay on "The Travail of Slavery" explained how the white South, caught between its anti-slavery doubts and its practical fears and necessities, was driven into suicidal Civil War. "Only the transaction at Appomatox," I concluded, "could have freed the South's people—both Negro and white—to move again toward the realization of their essential natures as Southerners, liberals, Christians, and Americans."

CALIFORNIA, HERE I COME

The most profound change in my life was foreshadowed when I was invited to visit the University of California, Berkeley, in the summer of 1958. The invitation was flattering because Cal was renowned for its distinguished faculty, especially for the physicists mainly responsible for producing the atom bomb. This was obviously an opportunity for the University and me to assess each other regarding a possible invitation to join its faculty at a senior level.

This was also an exciting opportunity to drive across the continent, cross the Sierra Nevada range, fully equivalent to the Rockies I had enjoyed so much, and then down into the fabled delights of California's Bay area. So without hesitation my wife Evelyn and our children Grier and Janet set out.

The freeway system did not yet exist, and we rode on endless and often bumpy two-lane roads. The most memorable event was in wicked Las Vegas. Leaving Evelyn and the kids in the motel, I went out to view the nearest gambling casino. I opened the door and entered a volcano of loud music, flashing bright lights, and scores of people frantically putting coins in slots, and pulling slot machine handles. The only coin I had in my pocket was a dime, and it took me some time to find a machine that accepted dimes. When I impulsively stuck my dime in the slot, strange blotches started circling around the screen until a loud bell rang. Almost immediately a young lady with bare legs up to her hips came over and slapped $20 into my hand. Fortunately I put the money in my pocket and returned to the motel. Our costs for gas, motels, and meals had been so high, it turned out, that we couldn't have made it to Berkeley without that $20.

In Berkeley we rented a modest house high up on Euclid Avenue where we could see San Francisco skyscrapers, the Golden Gate Bridge, and Mount Tamalpais. As soon as we moved in, Grier ran off. After I rushed around the neighborhood without seeing him, we called the cops. Almost immediately a police car drove up, the officer stopped long enough to learn what kind of child was lost, and roared on up the street. Within ten minutes he was back with Grier. "How did you find him so fast?" I asked. "They always go uphill." he replied.

I was quickly invited by the History faculty to join them as a tenured professor with my own lecture course, graduate seminar, graduate assistants, and a nearby parking lot. Hurrah !

(Further developments must await the last half of these Memoirs)