

# KOREA

## Traces of a Forgotten War

**JAMES N. BUTCHER**

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KOREA: TRACES OF A FORGOTTEN WAR

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*To the memory of all my friends in the 17th Infantry  
who did not come home. Your sacrifices for the greater  
good are not forgotten by those who survived.*

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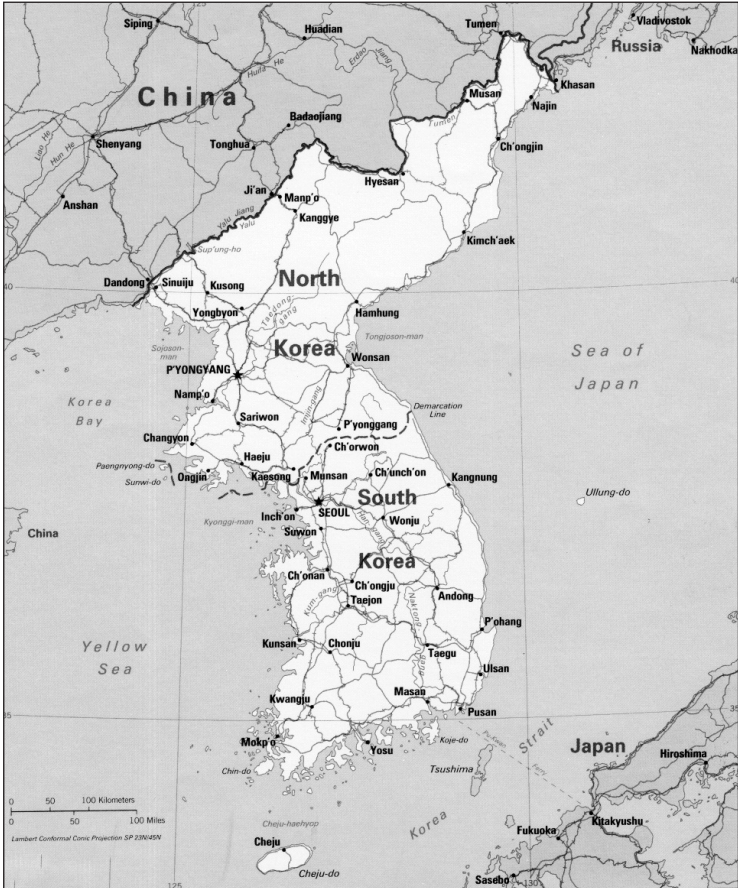
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## Preface & Acknowledgments

IT HAS TAKEN MANY YEARS FOR ME TO FINALLY DECIDE to put these experiences from the Korean War in a book. Although I began this project in the 1960s, my professional life took over, and limited my attention to it. In addition, I tend to keep the Korea of 1952-1953 to myself, perhaps because my life is so different since the war ended. Many of the people that I have come to know quite well over my professional career have no knowledge of this earlier life and will, in all likelihood, have some difficulty seeing the person that they have known as a professor or colleague as having experienced these events. All that aside, I decided that it is due time to share these wartime experiences. Events in Korea had a powerful impact, not only on me, but on countless others as well, and relatively little first hand accounts are available.

This book is a description of one infantryman's experiences during the final year of that war and, obviously, not an objective history of the Korean War. The experiences recounted here are highly personal and subjective. If one of my buddies had written of these situations they might have taken a different emphasis or focus. On the other hand, my experiences may be representative of what a lot of other soldiers went through during the later months of the Korean War. The events we were caught up in during the war were accompanied by powerful fears and uncertainties that have left indelible marks on those of us who were there—some veterans have tried to

forget these things; others have simply set them aside to go on with the rest of life.

For me, and likely other veterans, our wartime experiences remain quite vivid. Not a day has gone by since I left Korea that I have not replayed some of these scenes in my own consciousness—they are always ready for instant replay, and often do so even when I do not actively seek them out. These images are like those wagon trails that you can see while flying over western mountains—trails that were worn into the rock and clay by the early pioneers as they moved West in the middle of the 19th century or like the deep wheel grooves that were cut into the stone pavement of the ancient city Ephesus by countless Roman chariots as they made their way through them thousands of years ago.

For various reasons, the Korean War has become known as the “Forgotten War.” Many Americans know nothing of the battles and conditions described here, one of the primary reasons for writing this book. I feel compelled to keep alive the memories of some of the great guys with whom I served during the Korean War, especially those who died so young. Relatively few Korean War vets have written first person accounts. Others have interviewed some of us. Bill McWilliams’ excellent 2004 book, *On Hallowed Ground*, includes descriptions of the battles for Pork Chop Hill based on interviews from people who were there, like me. Anthony Sobieski included in his book a description of a two-man patrol that Bill Estes and I conducted to direct artillery fire against Chinese forces in the Yokkokechon Valley in his valuable 2005 account, *Fire For Effect*, about artillery in the Korean War.

I contributed a few brief articles about my experiences in published sources. A special issue of *Stars and Stripes*, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War, described the eerie last night of the war on the front (Butcher, 2000). Two articles appeared in the *Buffalo Bugle* describing events in the Battle for Pork Chop Hill (Butcher, 2000) and an ambush patrol action (Butcher, 2001). Finally,



## Preface

some material included in this book appeared in an invited autobiographical article for the *Journal of Personality Assessment* (Butcher, 2003).

Affirmation of my strong positive feelings toward the South Korean people is another powerful motivator. Many Koreans—both civilians and fellow combatants—showed compassion and thoughtfulness in difficult times. Civilians gave me food when I needed it and they had little. One third of our company was Republic of Korea (ROK) soldiers sharing the horrors of the war on dark nights when we were so alone. Even though we did not share a common language, we supported one another and survived together. I appreciated their efforts at the time as I do now.

This book is a departure from my usual professional publications in psychology journals and books. Although there are themes in this book that are explored by clinical psychologists in academic writings—like the influence of severe stress on human memory or the long term consequences of terrifying events on adult development—they are presented here in a personal context, not intended as psychological observations. Furthermore, my experiences in the Army and Korea cannot be lumped together as all traumatic or stressful. There were many good times; perhaps more good times and close bonds with friends than there were horrific ones. Boredom during the quiet times along the front should also be mentioned.

I have a word of caution and apology for some of the language used in this book. It is my first publication that includes offensive language like “fuck” and racial epithets like “Japs,” “Gooks,” “Chinks,” and “Darkies.” I would be inaccurately portraying the words used during this era if I cleaned up the language. In the 1940-50s racial epithets were commonly used to describe the enemy, and served the purpose of dehumanizing them. I grew up reading newspapers and listening to the radio about “Japs” and “Krauts.” Derogatory terms for African-Americans were less commonly used where I grew up in West Virginia. But, as you will see in Chapter 2, I encountered them once

joining the Army. My buddies and I never used such terms, but we heard them all too often in 1950s civilian America.

Well after the Korean War, and in “another life,” I have had the occasion to work extensively and collaboratively with many Chinese people. I traveled to China on three occasions for lecture tours and have developed close friendships with several colleagues there. I met a Chinese psychologist who had been in the army at the same time as me—but on the other side. Given the fact that I spent almost an entire year fighting the Chinese Peoples Army I had some initial difficulty managing the visits to China. They turned out to be, in our new spirit of cooperation and peace, wonderful experiences. I hope that my experiences and descriptions included in this book will be taken in the perspective of bygone times and will not be considered offensive by my Chinese colleagues.

Sixty years is a long time in the evolution of social and cultural values. My attitudes towards my time in Japan on R&R have changed dramatically, as you will see in Chapter 9. The events described in that chapter took place when I was nineteen years old and had barely made it through high school. I grew up with a mother whose education was cut short when she married at thirteen. I was not prepared to understand the underlying human rights issues regarding my activities during R&R. The military leadership of the time facilitated those activities. My changed perspective was aided through writings by several other scholars and human rights advocates, as well as many discussions with my wife about her work with refugee women in Asia (Williams, 1991; Williams & Berry, 1991).

All of the things described herein occurred as they remain in my memory, which was aided by notes I began shortly after the war ended. I also had the benefit of notes and dated keepsakes that I had sent home to my sister, Joan, during the war. In addition, I have had the benefit of some valuable memory jogs by several friends from the war or relatives of buddies long departed that I met later. These

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friends and their relatives encouraged me to document our shared experiences. It has been my pleasure to renew those acquaintances. I would like to thank Ray Daggett (Rhode Island), Don Schoen (Pennsylvania), and Frank “Vito” Field (Virginia) for providing information that was valuable in drafting this book. I would also like to thank the family of Robert Huggins (West Virginia) for talking with me about Bob (who was, at the time, in a nursing home).

I would like to express special appreciation to my West Virginia buddies, Carlos Coleman and the late Bill Estes. Each provided extensive and key information, including photographs, company rosters, and materials captured from the Chinese. I would also like to thank Regina Millsap, the wife of Ray Millsap (Illinois), for sharing information from Ray’s letters that were sent to her from Korea. I owe them a great deal for specific information that helped in dating some of the memories of those times long ago. I would like to thank Dale Moss’ niece, Kathy Moss, who contacted me by the Internet and sent me pictures that Dale had sent home to Missouri.

I sent copies of a draft of the book to my two brothers, Jerry and Richard (Dickie) Butcher, for comments on the information provided on our early days. Dickie assembled an early manuscript into a book—complete with a cover he designed—to my surprise and delight. His efforts and Jerry’s strong encouragement spurred me to finish the book.

My son, Janus (Jay) Dale Butcher (physician and colonel, Air Force Reserves), has also provided strong encouragement to publish this book. Jay was named for two of my closest friends who died on the front, Janus Krumins and Dale Moss. Not only that, both Jay and his son Benjamin Butcher (warrant officer and Army helicopter pilot) served together in Iraq, and his daughter Sarah Butcher was just commissioned a lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve. Both Janus Krumins and Dale Moss would be shocked that their namesake and his offspring outrank us all!

I am equally proud of the rest of my family and wish to acknowledge their love and support: daughters Sherry Butcher Wickstrom and Holly Krista Butcher; daughter-in-law Cindi Butcher; and grandchildren Bryce Thompson, Nicholas Youngmans, and Neal Youngmans. Holly, with her MA in Journalism, provided valuable editorial suggestions. Although my son Neal Butcher is no longer with us, his memory should also be acknowledged here.

Finally, this book would never have been completed without the extensive assistance of my wife, Carolyn L. Williams. She urged me on a number of occasions to write about my Korean War experiences and even signed me up for a workshop on writing memoirs! Without her encouragement over the years I would not have been able to complete the task. Not only is she a strong advocate for human rights, but also a very thorough researcher. She provided meticulous reviews of several versions of this memoir and our subsequent discussions greatly improved my work. I, of course, take full responsibility for any faults that remain.

## Permissions

THE AUTHOR WISHES TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR permission to reproduce or adapt material included in this book: The University of Texas at El Paso Library for reproducing materials from S. L. A. Marshall's *Pork Chop Hill* (1986); Taylor & Francis for adapting material from Butcher, J. N. (2003), "Discontinuities, side steps, and finding a proper place: An autobiographical account," *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 80, 223-236; and Tannen Music to cite the lyrics of "Rotation Blues."



# The People

## **FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

- Lionel Glen Butcher*: Father (Chapter 1)
- Georgia Neal Butcher*: Mother (Chapter 1)
- Delbert Butcher (Bub)*: Uncle (Chapter 1)
- Jerome Butcher (Jerry)*: Brother (Chapter 1)
- Richard Butcher (Dickie)*: Brother (Chapter 1)
- Gloria Butcher Chandler Brannon*: Sister (Chapter 1)
- Joan Butcher Hissom*: Sister (Chapter 1)
- George Hissom (Corky)*: Brother-in-law (Chapter 1)
- Russell Chandler*: Brother-in-law (Chapter 1)
- Mark Neal*: Uncle and guardian (Chapter 1)
- Jay Tilley*: Uncle (Chapter 1)
- Carolyn Williams*: Spouse (Chapters 14)
- Nicholas Younghans (Nic)*: Grandson (Chapter 14)
- Robert Baker (Bob)*: High school friend (Chapters 1, 5)
- Gordon Bostick*: Middle school friend (Chapter 1)
- Thomas Hill*: High school teacher (Chapters 1, 7)
- Fanny Cheung*: International colleague (Chapter 4)
- Kyunghee Han*: Graduate student from Minnesota (Chapter 14)
- Jee Young Lim*: Graduate student from Minnesota (Chapter 14)

## **BASIC TRAINING**

- Gary Baker*: Buddy from West Virginia (Chapter 2)
- Sergeant Scarface\**: NCO (Chapter 2,10)

## **STATESIDE DUTY WITH 82ND AIRBORNE**

- James Jude (Jim)*: Buddy from West Virginia (Chapter 2)
- Sergeant Swedish\*\**: First sergeant (Chapter 2)
- Sergeant Wolf\*\**: Platoon sergeant (Chapter 2)
- Taras Zacharco*: Buddy from Ohio (Chapter 2)

## **FAR EAST COMMAND: MILITARY AND CIVILIANS**

- Lieutenant Ferdinand Barger*: Fox Company Executive Officer (Chapters 6-7)  
*Kon Do Baull (Moosemaid)*: ROK buddy, rifleman, KIA (Chapters 5, 10, 14)  
*Dale Barnhardt (Ziggy)*: Buddy from Wisconsin, ammunition carrier, KIA (Chapters 5-6, 10, 14)  
*Sergeant Bill \*\*\**: 2nd Division soldier on R & R (Chapter 9)  
*Corporal Buckley \*\**: Medic on Jane Russell Hill (Chapter 4)  
*Lieutenant John Brandenburg*: Fox Company CO (Chapters 6-7)  
*Sergeant Henry Casper*: Fox Company platoon sergeant (Chapters 3-4)  
*Carlos Coleman*: Buddy from West Virginia, machine gunner (Chapters 4-5, 9)  
*Raymond Daggett (Ray)*: Buddy from Rhode Island, radio man (Chapters 4, 8)  
*William Estes (Bill)*: Buddy from West Virginia, rifleman (Chapters 6, 8, 10, 12)  
*Lieutenant Robert Feiner*: Fox Company Platoon leader (Chapter 6)  
*Frank Field (Vito)*: Buddy from Virginia, point man (Chapters 4-9, 12)  
*Clark Gable\**: ROK buddy, rifleman (Chapters 5, 6, 10)  
*Ronald Grasshold (Ron)*: Buddy from Wisconsin, radio man, KIA (Chapters 6, 12, 14)  
*Colonel William Hardick*: Commander, 17th Infantry (Chapter 3)  
*Robert Huggins (Bob)*: Buddy from West Virginia, truck driver (Chapter 6)  
*Delbert Kenway (Del)*: Buddy from Texas, BAR\*\*\*\* man (Chapters 4, 6-8)  
*Private Kim\*\**: ROK buddy on Jane Russell Hill, rifleman, KIA (Chapter 4)  
*Captain King\*\**: Fox Company CO on Pork Chop (Chapter 7, 10)  
*Colonel Dong Koo Lee*: ROK officer (Chapter 14)  
*Janis Krumins*: Buddy from Wisconsin, BAR\*\*\*\* man, KIA (Chapter 11, 14)  
*Private Lee\*\**: ROK buddy from Koje-do, KIA (Chapter 6)  
*Jerry Manning*: Buddy, rifleman (Chapter 12)  
*Emmett Dale Moss*: Buddy from Missouri, machine gunner, KIA (Chapters 5, 6-10, 12, 14)  
*William Marshall (Billy)*: Buddy from Virginia, rifleman (Chapters 5, 6, 10)  
*General S. L. A. Marshall*: Author, historian who interviewed soldiers and wrote about Pork Chop Hill (Chapter 10)  
*Raymond Millsap (Ray)*: Buddy from Missouri, rifleman (Chapters 5-7)  
*Sepulveda Munoz*: Buddy from Puerto Rico, rifleman Chapters 6, 10)  
*Myon-Hee\*\*\**: Civilian on Koje-Do (Chapter 6)



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*Major Noble\*\**: Battalion Executive Officer (Chapter 7)  
*Charles Otto*: Buddy from South Dakota, BAR\*\*\*\* man (Chapter 6)  
*Lee Rogers*: Fox Company platoon sergeant (Chapter 10)  
*Donald Schoen (Don)*: Buddy from Pennsylvania, rifleman (Chapters 4, 12)  
*Stanley Stinson (Stan)*: Buddy from Florida, platoon sergeant (Chapters 3, 8)  
*James Sullivan (Sully)*: Buddy, rifleman, KIA (Chapter 3-4)  
*Sumiko\*\*\**: Civilian in Japan (Chapter 9)  
*Captain Vaughn\*\**: Fox Company CO on Jane Russell Hill (Chapters 3-4, 7)  
*Michael Yancik (Mike)*: Buddy, rifleman (Chapters 3-4)  
*Yoshiko\**: Civilian in Japan (Chapter 9)  
*Donald Zimdahl (Zimmy)*: Buddy from New York, rifleman, KIA  
(Chapters 6, 10, 14)

\* Pseudonym

\*\* First name unknown

\*\*\* Last name unknown

\*\*\*\* Browning Automatic Rifle



# 1

## A Search for a Place in Life

WAR IS THE PROVINCE OF THE YOUNG, FOR IT IS in the youth that nations find the necessary impetuosity and careless abandon to pursue their military goals. At perilous times in the history of most civilizations young men are pressed into military service though they might prefer otherwise. Former President Herbert Hoover, in a speech to the Republican National Convention in Chicago in 1944, observed, "Older men declare war. But it is youth who must fight and die. And it is youth who must inherit the tribulation, the sorrow, and the triumphs that are the aftermath of war." In every era and culture some young men, perhaps buoyed by their youthful feelings of invulnerability, voluntarily reach out for such experiences. This book is a recounting of the events and circumstances of one who voluntarily and actively pursued a dream of hazardous military service.

Why would a young person willingly and knowingly volunteer for such things?

Why would anyone actively seek to experience the horrors of war when other options might be available to them? The answers to this question are likely complex and probably reside in the early life ex-

periences of such volunteers. Clausewitz, the noted 19th Century Prussian military strategist, considered war to be “continuation of policy” and thereby provided insight into the reasons nations seek warlike aims. But what of individuals? National policies are made by the elders—the politicians and diplomats—but it is youth who bear the brunt, make the personal sacrifices, and reap the personal tragedies of those policies. It is also quite likely that these circumstances underlying volunteerism, in part, results from the youth of society being shaped to think a particular way, by being formed by society to accept those motives as their own.

My life circumstances that lead me to join the Army and seek combat provide a context for what is described in the later chapters. The place where I was born and grew up, West Virginia during the 1930s, was harsh and depressing, at least from the perspective of coal mining families like mine. My father, being a coal miner, appeared to have relatively few options in life and possessed very little in the way of resources with which to deal with the harsh circumstances that the day-to-day living offered in those times during the Great Depression. With only a second grade education there was no such thing as upward mobility—only downward—down into the coal mines—an occupation that took his life at a very early age.

Life was very difficult as well as highly dangerous for the coal miner. The violent coal mining strikes of the 1930s “harshened” further the already bleak existence that coal mining families like ours experienced. Most miners were paid very low wages for their hazardous and backbreaking work and many with large families were forced to purchase the necessities of life from the stores owned by the coal mining company. Interestingly, coal miners were often not paid in American money but in mining company script; it was good only for purchase of goods in the company store. Needless to say that coal-mining families often became fully dependent upon the coal company, and as the amount of money they owed to the company

mounted many families found themselves stuck in the mining towns. Tennessee Ernie Ford's popular ballad of the '50s about the lives of coal miners rang true about our family owing their "soul to the company store" and was certainly true about most of the miners in those circumstances.

The coal mining strikes of the 1930s were vicious and unsettling events in the lives of these families. Some of my earliest childhood memories centered around the long picket lines of rough and rowdy miners with their pick axes and shovels walking and rousting about the picket lines. I also remember the meager food parcels that were doled out by the Miners Union once a month to tide the miners until the strike ended. Food baskets containing the necessary staples for living were provided by the miner's strike fund and were meager indeed—with dried apricots, rice, some fat meat, flour, corn meal, and potatoes. When I was a small child my father, Glen Butcher, told me that I should never become a coal miner. He said to me one night, "This coal mining is a bad life!"

It was equally difficult for women. Georgia Neal Butcher, my mother, was only thirteen years old when she married my dad (he was seventeen.) My memory is that she left school after the 4th grade. The men in her family also worked in the coal mines, as well as in the lumber industry. My oldest surviving sister, Gloria Brannon, was born when my mom was sixteen years old. She had two other children before Gloria. A daughter, disabled at birth, died at two and a half years and another died within days of his birth. By age twenty-two, she had me, her fifth child, and two more followed me.

My mother's days were consumed with laborious tasks: childcare, cooking, cleaning, and gardening. We had no running water in the house. Coal mining is a dirty occupation and the company did not provide showers for men at the end of their shifts. Every day my mother would drag a large tin tub into the living room, draw water from the well, heat it on the stove, and carry it to the living room for

my father's return from work. The stove was coal burning and required wood and coal to be carried into the house.

One Sunday afternoon, I had just turned eight, the daily routine of our town, Winifrede, West Virginia, was shaken by the announcement on the radio that America was at war—the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Almost everyone who was alive at the time remembers what they were doing when they heard the news flash. It was one of those vivid shared memories that accompany tragedies of that magnitude, like the Kennedy assassination or the terrorist attacks on 9/11. My brother Jerry and I were playing with our toy cars on the back porch. The rest of the family was listening to the radio. I remember hearing yelling about “the Japs” and being “bombed.” Everybody gathered near the company store and talked about what would happen next. My dad, like many of the other men, wanted to join the Army right away. However, when he tried to enlist, he was deferred because of his large family and his essential occupation—the country needed coal to operate its steel mills.

\*\*\*\*

One day, not long after the Second World War began (January, 1942), as I was returning from school, the little town was again alerted by the mournful whistle of the mining company's siren signaling—this time there was a serious problem at the coal mine. As I ran down the dusty road away from the school I encountered my Uncle Bub (Delbert Butcher, my father's younger brother) who also worked in the mine. He told me to go home because there had been a terrible accident and that my father was badly hurt and was being taken to the hospital. Later, I learned that my dad had died as he lay in the hallway of Charleston General Hospital. For some reason that I was not told about he was not admitted into the hospital for treatment.

A few months later we left the mining town and moved to Charleston, the capital city of West Virginia, which was about thirty

miles away, because my mother could get work in one of the growing number of war production plants in the area. This enabled her to supplement the less than adequate work compensation payments. We received a total of \$36.00 per month for the family plus \$18.00 per month for each minor child. There were five children at the time. My mother and the five of us moved into a three-room house on the Westside of Charleston and she began working in a glass plant that produced military materials. Consequently, due to the “around the clock” production schedules of the plant, she could work as much overtime as she could handle, enabling her to make a down payment on a small house.

The house we lived in wasn't much of a structure; it was quite old and in a general state of disrepair. We always worried about it being somewhat of a fire trap, but this house was actually a cut above the homes in which we lived in the coal company towns where my dad had worked at Bergoo, Clifftop, or Winifrede. The little house had one bedroom, where my mother slept, and a living room where my two sisters slept. There was a small glassed-in sun porch on the side that served as a bedroom for the three boys. The room was at first unheated, and then we were able to get a small natural gas stove that provided some warmth in the winter. For a long time there was a broken pane of glass that allowed cold air to creep into the room.

I was in the second grade when we moved to Charleston. The living situation in the city was different—we actually had an indoor bathroom! I liked living in town better and I enjoyed the lower grade school (Littlepage) I attended near home. I liked the teachers and the school had several rooms, unlike the two-room school that I attended at Winifrede, where one room held grades one through three and the other held grades four through six. The war intruded into our lives when we learned an uncle, Jay Tilley, was killed at Cherbourg, France in 1944 leaving a widow and several children.

When I was in the 5th grade my mother became quite ill. We thought it was the flu, but it did not clear up. Her doctor began a treat-

ment for pleurisy that involved putting a very tight binding around her chest. This caused a great deal of pain. After a few days of this misery she went to see the doctor to have the binding removed. Shortly after he removed the binding, while she was still in the doctor's waiting room, she had a massive coronary and died. She was only thirty-two. My mom did not see the end of WW II and left behind four minor children: Dickie, age seven; Jerry, age nine; me, age eleven; and Joan, age fifteen.

The four of us lived in our house with our older sister Gloria, who was eighteen years old. Our grief was overwhelming and we lived in the almost constant fear that we would end up in an orphanage. Within a few months of our mother's death, Gloria married a recently discharged Navy sailor, Russell Chandler. They lived with us for a few months, but our house proved to be too small and the arguments too loud, so they left. We were four children living alone. Although we were underage we were determined to continue our lives as we had been living. We did not want to be separated. My fifteen-year-old sister Joan was a very determined person and provided the glue to make this arrangement work. We prepared our own meals, got ourselves off to school, paid the bills (when we could), and tended to our own business.

The fact that we were without adult supervision did not mean that my sister, my two brothers, and I lived as feral children such as the Wild Boy of Avignon—not by any means. We tried to maintain a home life of sorts: we went to school, stayed at home most nights, maintained reasonable hours (every one of our friends had to go in at night so we didn't have any one to play with), and cooked our own meals—and did everything we could to avoid being separated as a family. We were well aware that if we failed at these tasks or called attention to our unusual situation we might wind up living in an orphanage, which to us was unacceptable. We formed a very close unit; it was us against the rest of the world.



Growing up without parents or any adults in our home was filled with many uncertainties and voids. There were times when we felt isolated from society and alone. It would have been valuable to have some adult advice and perspective. It would have been comforting to have a parent's touch in times of troubles or uncertainty, not to mention having help with creature comforts. There were many nights that we went to bed with empty stomachs and more nights in which we went to bed with an emptiness in our souls. Although children living alone can do a lot to support each other, there are many things that they cannot do.

In some respects, however, we fared pretty well. The closest thing to adult supervision that my brothers and I ever had was our older sister, Joan, who tried to provide guidance; but she asserted little in the way of control over our activities, especially as we grew older and she had her own worries to contend with. We had a guardian, my Uncle Mark, who was a bachelor and had his own life to lead. His duties as guardian were few and he was seldom bothered because we wanted to be left alone.

At first we needed Mark just to sign papers but when we learned to reproduce his signature, for example, to sign our report cards, we didn't need to call on him at all. (I can still do a pretty good job of signing his name even after all of these years). Mark lived a few miles away and we rarely saw him, although he was handy a few times that we needed to thaw our pipes when they froze. In a pinch we could get a bit of advice from our maternal grandmother who lived a few miles away (with Mark). She was in poor health (diabetes) and could not provide much help except occasionally taking my baby brother Dickie in for a meal and a bit of temporary company.

The absence of adult role models was not something that we were particularly concerned about. We thought we were getting along just fine without them. An interested outsider, if there had been such a person, would likely have disputed this. Our department suffered

somewhat from not having a proper model to follow. We didn't always have clean clothes to wear or particularly good table manners, but we pretty much avoided major problems.

We did have some "adult" influence, however, because we went to every movie that we could. Movie characters were the people from whom we learned adult roles and adult behavior. There were times that we spent the entire day on Saturday and Sunday in the movies watching and re-watching whatever was playing; these were most often western movies with Gene Autry and Roy Rogers, and we especially liked the war movies that appeared to be plentiful at the time. I think the times we "imitated" movie characters, such as the Three Stooges, our behavior problems might have been more evident.

The movies were essentially free for us. Jerry and I would usually take an extra job of passing out fliers, show bills as they were called, in return for free passes. If we had one free pass my brothers and I could get everyone into the show quite easily. We soon got to know the people that took up tickets who might let us pass through the line. Or, if that did not work, then one of us would go into the theater on a pass and then, in a few minutes, open the fire exit to let the others, including friends, inside. We watched movies and ate popcorn and candy for lunch and supper. It never bothered us that sometimes when we left the theater we had splitting headaches. Movies were a great escape for us; and besides, we had nothing else to do with our time. I remember one time that we simply stayed all night in the theater after the last show played and hung out until the next morning when we went home.

Some Sundays, when we were short of money, we had a way of getting a little change. The three of us would go to Sunday school at a small church near home. At the end of the lesson the teacher would draw names from a hat and the winner would get a quarter. Since there was only one other boy in the class and we were three we had pretty good odds of winning the quarter. We would take our quarter

and go to a local drug store where there was a pinball machine. Getting five nickels change we would use one nickel in the pinball game and spend the rest on treats. One nickel usually sufficed for the pinball because we were pretty adept (my brother Jerry being most facile) at putting our toes under the front legs of the pinball machine to slow down the ball so that we had better control over it. We were able to run up a lot of games. When we tired of playing the pinball machine we would sell the remaining games at a discount to anyone who was interested and we'd wind up with a few extra quarters to spend. We managed to have fun and earn a little extra cash in the process.

We also devised another way to have some extra coins to play the pinball games. One day we found a few broken records in a garbage can at a store. The records were made of a plastic-like substance (wax) that was quite shapeable. We broke the records into smaller pieces and sat on the pavement rubbing them to the size and shape of various coins. Not realizing, or at least not caring, that what we were doing was actually illegal counterfeiting, we found that these slugs worked well for a while. Our little project ended not too long afterwards, however, when the machine owners realized what they were getting and fixed the machines not to accept slugs. By then, however, we were on to other things.

The four of us stuck together quite closely in order to maintain a family. We really asked nothing of anyone and kept a pretty low profile. This living situation may be very difficult for anyone to comprehend from today's perspective. How could the social system allow four minor children to live alone, essentially by their own wits, without adult guidance? Without some welfare assistance? Perhaps this situation could not happen today with the social welfare system that we have now; however, in West Virginia in the 1940s there was no such system. What about other family members? One relative or another indicated that they would take one of us (usually my brother