Chapter 3A: Early Childhood (1945-1955)

We cannot even recollect the actions of our infancy; our childhood is like something written on a slate and rubbed off.

Vinoba Bhave, *Discourses on Gita*[1]

Childhood is measured out by sounds and smells and sights, before the dark hour of reason grows.

John Betjeman, "Summoned by Bells" (1960)

Note: Originally Chapters 3A, 3B and 3C were one huge Chapter 3 (Childhood), but I divided them to make the text more manageable. That's why there is this variation in the chapter numbering, and why the subsections in these three chapters are numbered continuously, and with numbers rather than the letters used for the other chapters.

Because this chapter deals with a time when I was very young, it is fragmentary and lacks narrative coherence. Reader, proceed (if you do) patiently and indulgently.

I lived with my family in 1136 Fifth Avenue, Apartment 6-C, on the corner of 95th Street, from 1945 until 1955, when I was 11. That year, when the twins Adam and Victoria were born, we moved to a brownstone house at 112 East 70th Street, between Park and Lexington Avenues. I lived there until 1960, and again from 1961-63. It remained the "family home" until some time after my mother died in 1980. The picture at right was taken in December 1948, when I was four.

1. Apartment 6-C

1136 Fifth Avenue was an old-style New York Apartment building – pre-war, of course, as the war was still on when we moved in. The windows overlooked 95th Street, but we could see a slice of Fifth Avenue (useful for watching parades). The lobby had black and white marble tiles which I used to slide on, and polished brass doorways and fittings, and several doormen indulgent of a young boy, and a small room under the stairs, with a

[1] Vinoba Bhave (1985-1982) was a colleague of Gandhi's in the Indian independence movement. His discourses on the *Bhagavad Gita* were delivered to fellow political prisoners in the 1930s.

fascinating curving sloped ceiling, which they allowed me to visit. Elevators were run by elevator men – none of your new-fangled buttons.

Apartment 6-C was a seven-room apartment. I attach as Document 3A-1 a plan of Apartment 7-C, from the Internet – it was directly upstairs, and while not *exactly* the same as 6-C was in the 1950s, it is close enough. The vestibule, which served our apartment only, opened onto a foyer. The foyer in turn opened onto a living room, larger

than the other rooms, with two window-seats looking out onto 95th Street. The wallpaper was a green-and-white pattern copied from the wallpaper at Mount Vernon – do I remember that my parents ordered this from Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia? Its quasi-armorial forms were almost abstract and suitable for making *Gestalts* with. It went with the room's 18th century American furniture – I remember a settee, a wing chair, a "Martha Washington" chair, a sofa, a folding card table with niches for gambling chips (we never used it for gambling), a large round pedestal table, some tall wooden candle-holders reworked as lamps, and other items. There was a fireplace with a brass fire screen and andirons in a peculiar reddish brass called *bell metal*. I don't remember it ever being used for a fire.

- I don't recall much about the room shown on the floor plan as a library. We didn't use it as a library – I think I remember it being used for the buffet at parties. Christopher remembers it not there at all, and I could be wrong. But I think it must have been there in our apartment or the rooms would not have added up to seven.

The kitchen was an irregular polygon, ending at a sink by a window looking onto a sunken courtyard set below street level seven floors below. This courtyard was all cement, but it was accessible to me as a protected open space under the control of the building staff, with whom I was on good terms. The kitchen itself was somewhat cramped and awkward, I realize now, but it seemed large enough to me then. I ate meals in there when I was very young, served first by Rachel McCourty, from Jamaica, and later by Mary Fletcher, as she then was (now Lindsay). Menus included spaghetti, lamb chops, French toast, hamburgers, Campbell's tomato soup, and other traditional American children's dishes. One of Mary's specialties was a Western sandwich, which was an omelette with bacon and onions between slices of white bread – yum!

Leading off the kitchen was a back door to a service corridor. The back stairs were here, with their dizzying view down six floors, and the service elevators which the kindly building workers would sometimes let me run (under their close supervision). Trash was left here to be picked up by the staff. I liked this area; with its spareness and basic paint job it contrasted intriguingly with the ambitious decoration of our apartment. The back doors of the other two apartments on our side of the sixth floor were also in this corridor. One was for the Baumgartners, Harry and Estelle and their children. They were observant Jews and we thought of them as "Orthodox," which they probably weren't really except by our completely secular standards. The other was for the Pathés, of the Cinema Pathé family – the only one of them I knew was their beautiful daughter Nicky Pathé, who was too old to be interested in me.[2]

Leading off the kitchen was a corridor fitted out as a pantry, with two small rooms attached. One of these was used as a maid's room and the other was a storage room until Christopher occupied it as an infant in December 1950. The old Scott radio set had been moved in there; it occupied a large hardwood cabinet and was quite fancy for its day.[3] I remember being fascinated by the green Electric Eye used for tuning.[4] Back runs of *Antiques* magazine and of the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, with paste-in labels of famous artworks, were kept in this room, and an upright folding cot held shut with a bar, and boxes of Christmas tree ornaments, and other intriguing things.

Beyond this pantry was the dining room, also furnished with antiques – I remember especially a dining table and chairs and a sideboard.[5] A swinging half-door my parents had cut into the north wall opened onto the living room. My bedroom was next to the dining room, and looked out onto the courtyard. From there a corridor led past a bathroom tiled in small white hexagons to my parents' bedroom. Their bedroom was also furnished with antiques, including a tall secretary and a large four-poster bed. The bed had posts for a canopy, but no canopy. There was a second door on this corridor, leaving a space of a few inches between the doors – the purpose of the second door, which my parents added specially, was to make their bedroom soundproof so my father

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2 It is strange to think that Nicky Pathé, if she survives, is probably in her seventies now. It is strange to think that I am in my sixties.

3 The Scott had been out, I think in the foyer, where I remember listening to it. It went into the storage room when it was superseded by a "modern" hi-fi system with a tuner.

4 The Electric Eye was a green circle with a wedge at the bottom. As you turned the tuning knob, the closer you got to the signal the smaller the wedge became, until the sides of the wedge overlapped at the bottom in a deeper green – this meant perfection had been attained.

5 This beautiful sideboard is shown in Document 3A-2. The mirror was ours also.

could study there while he was at NYU, first as an undergraduate and then as a medical student. See Chapter 2.

After Christopher arrived in 1950, the apartment was too small for us. He could not have stayed in that storage room past infancy. Eventually (as I remember it 60 years later) he got my room, I moved to the much larger dining room, and a section of the living room was used as a dining area. This arrangement was always unsatisfactory and only lasted a few years. We moved to the house at 112 East 70th Street on October 3, 1955, just in time for the arrival home of the twins (born September 24, but kept in incubation for a while), for whom there would have been no room at all at 1136.

The antique furniture was almost all American, dated about 1750, bought from Ginsburg & Levy, a dealer on Madison Avenue. My parents followed the liberal policy of allowing us to treat all this furniture like actual furniture – be careful of it, but it's there to be used, the apartment is not a museum. Most of it was very beautiful and superbly made, and even though I never developed an enthusiasm for 18th century furniture, living with this collection set an early benchmark for the acquisition of taste. Much of this furniture is illustrated in the catalogue of a show at the American wing of the Metropolitan Museum in which a few of our pieces were shown, and in the Sotheby's catalogues prepared for the sale which disposed of most of it (as of 2010 Christopher and Victoria still have some). Both these catalogues are in the Phillips Family Papers at Yale, and perhaps in Christopher's papers also. Document 3A-2 is the cover from the Sotheby's catalogue – it gives an idea of just how beautiful this furniture was. There was also silver and pottery, a framed sampler, and other such items from the period – I remember especially a tall wooden wall barometer and a silver scissor-style candle-snuffer on a spindly silver stand.

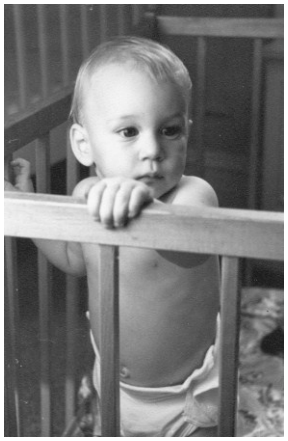
- There was a lot of interest in American antiques at about the time my parents started to collect, soon after the war. Ginsburg & Levy on Madison Avenue (later Bernard & S. Dean Levy Inc., on East 84th Street) was a reputable dealer and our parents became close friends with the owner, Bernard Levy, and his wife Laura (we didn't deal with Ginsburg). Levy was a loud and jovial man with a good supply of jokes. He had been to Yale and in the Navy, both of which seemed sort of exotic to me. They came to our house a lot.

Rachel McCourty, from Jamaica, was our main – what? We never used the word *servant*. *Maid* was the word we used in those days, but Rachel and later Mary weren't exactly maids – they were cooks and child-minders and housekeepers also. Around 1948, when I was four, Mary joined Rachel – she was originally from Virginia, and had worked first in my grandmother's apartment house at 140 West 57th Street, and later for my grandmother herself on an occasional basis. She came to us as temporary help, during a summer I think, but became permanent and in time succeeded Rachel.

- I knew Mary's husband Napoleon Fletcher well – he was a bricklayer and an alcoholic, and a nice guy when he wasn't drinking. He took me fishing one time on the banks of the Hudson near the George Washington Bridge – I caught an eel which Mary cooked for me later. Today of course I would not eat a fish caught in the Hudson River, even though the river is probably a lot cleaner now than it was then. I liked Napoleon a lot, although he caused Mary a lot of trouble and she ended up divorcing him.

Other staff:

- A laundress, Jean Fauntleroy, came on a part-time basis, and there were lots of other women (always black, often Caribbean) who appeared from time to time but never lasted long. One of them called me *Mr. David*, which thrilled me.
- Andrew Headen, a black student from Columbia, helped out for a while too, and cared for Christopher. I loved his graceful manner and beautiful diction, which were unlike anything I had encountered before – I now realize he was gay, a category unknown to me then.
    - Later, at 112, Olof Einersdottir, from Iceland, came on as a minder for the twins. She was not quite a governess – perhaps today she would be called a *nanny* or an *au pair*.
- There was a Swedish window-washer who came by from time to time, climbed through the windows, attached his belt to hooks set in the brick outside the window-frames, and polished the outsides of the windows. I think he was engaged by the building rather than by our family.
- Mr. Marshall, the housepainter, was an old (to my childish eyes) Englishman who looked and sounded just like Stan Laurel. He would come from time to time to lay dropcloths and paint the rooms, or hang wallpaper, *very* slowly, and took tea every day at four o'clock.
- Not exactly staff, but also remembered, was Ernie at the gas station, down 95th Street beyond Third Avenue. He did whatever work was needed on our cars.



2. What I remember from the 1940s

I was only six when the 1940s gave way to the 1950s, so my memories of that time are necessarily fragmentary, but to help the 24th- and 34th-century researchers who as noted in the preface are the intended audience of this memoir, I will put down here some of what I remember. The 1940s are so long ago as I

write this that I might as well be describing the 1840s.[6] There is not much about my interior life, I'm afraid – my memories of the time are stronger for things.

My very earliest memory is of escaping from my crib. It was one of those patented cribs which keep babies in by requiring an adult to lift the gates on both sides at once. I figured out very early that I could lie on my back and lift one side with my hands and the other side with my feet. I know this is a real memory and not something I was told later, because when I mentioned it to my mother in the 1970s she was surprised to learn how I had done it. She said she couldn't figure out how I got out and tried to tell Macy's the crib was defective. I think it is significant that my earliest memory is of (1) escaping from restraint, and (2) figuring out an angle to beat the system.[7]

In December 1947 New York had what we called The Big Snow. I remember it, and its bigness, distinctly even though I was only three. It snowed heavily every winter, though – I was stuffed into snowsuits and even had a sled, which I used on small hillocks in Central Park. I remember playing in the snow in the park and elsewhere, sometimes alone and sometimes with other children. I probably enjoyed snow as a child, and did not develop my present loathing for it until I grew at least into adolescence. Now it is one of the reasons I live on the California coast, and never go where it snows.[8]

The apartment house, being on Fifth Avenue, was of course directly across the street from Central Park. There was a playground in the Park between 95th and 96th Streets where I was often

6 Some of these recollections extend into the 1950s, still pretty long ago.

7 The noted basketball player and madman Dennis Rodman once said "I spent my whole childhood looking for an escape." So did I.

8 When I first wrote this in 2006 it had been 14 years since I was last in snow – for my brother Adam's wedding in New York in February 1992 – and I said I hoped I never had to walk in it again. Since then I did encounter a light dusting of snow on an unexpected trip to the Grand Canyon – I didn't know about the snow when I started out, intending to go to Tucson, and still hope never to have to walk in it again.

taken by my parents or a household worker. I spent a lot of time there and still remember it vividly. The picture shown above right was taken there in November 1945, when I was 14 months old.

I remember a lot of details of New York in the late 40s. I can see the double-decker buses on Fifth Avenue, the Mercury finials on the traffic lights, and Third Avenue beneath the El (as we called the elevated railway) – it came down in 1955, although a part survives way uptown. The picture above left shows Third Avenue El in 1948, looking just as I remember it. There were still streetcars in Brooklyn.

Until the early 1960s New York phone numbers had exchange names such as CIrcle 7, REgent 4, BUtterfield 8 and MUrray Hill 3.[9] There was much anguish at the changeover. There were no area codes then – long distance calls were placed through an operator. You called 211 and an operator answered "Long Distance." A call from a phone booth cost a nickel (a bus ride was a dime). Before zip codes, New York, NY 10021 would have been New York 21, New York – there was much anguish at this changeover too.

I remember when my father called England on the phone – that was an event (it was in the early 50s, as we were still at 1136). He had to book the call and then stand ready at the appointed time many hours later for the call to go through. Who was he speaking with, Aunt Louise? I forget. But everyone got to say and hear a few words. Mary came to watch. A trans-Atlantic phone call was a marvel in those days.

We used the heavy Model 302 telephone (left), made as they all were in those days by Western Electric – at least some were the pre-war metal ones, which must have been in our apartment when we moved in. I remember an old Model 50AL candlestick telephone (right) in my pediatrician's office. He was Dr. Reuben Turner, who had a practice on the Upper East Side and an office in an elegant building in 80s off Fifth Avenue. He had had polio and walked with a peculiar swinging gait, with two canes, and of course made house calls.[10]

I remember an itinerant knife-sharpener, with a portable grindstone. He came into our courtyard and shouted that he was there, and housewives and cooks came down with knives and scissors for him to sharpen. There was also a hurdy-gurdy man who came to

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9 Ours was SAcramento 2-5580. John O'Hara wrote a novel called *BUtterfield 8* (1935). Before the exchanges were numbered (1930 in New York), phone numbers took the form BUtterfield 1234. The capitalized second letter meant you were to dial the first two letters and then the numbers.

10 For more about these old phones see *www.arctos.com/dial* .

the courtyard, and we threw coins down to him. Or was he on 95th Street? These street workers were the last remnant (except for food vendors) of a long New York tradition.

We skipped my birthday party in – was it 1948? – because it was the polio season and it was dangerous to get bunches of children together. There was a lot of fear about polio every summer. One year about this time I got very sick – temperature around 105°, chills, cool compresses – and when it was over some thought it might have been a touch of polio, which would have been a good thing in those pre-vaccine days as it would have immunized me.

I learned this leftover war-era ditty in the playground.

> Whistle while you work.
> Hitler is a jerk.
> Mussolini broke his weenie,
> Now it doesn't work.

I remember sometimes getting Indian Head pennies (right; last minted 1909), Liberty nickels (1913), and Barber dimes (1916) in change. Buffalo nickels (minted until 1938), Mercury dimes (1945), Standing Liberty quarters (1930), and Walking Liberty half dollars (1947) were current coins and not unusual. The dimes, quarters and halves were made with real silver. Two-dollar bills with red seals (United States notes) would turn up occasionally. Once my father got a silver 3-cent piece (last minted 1873) in change, mistaken for a dime.

In my childhood there were eight general circulation daily newspapers in New York City. These were the *Times*, the *Herald-Tribune*, the *Daily News*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Post*, the *World-Telegram*, the *Journal-American*, and the *Sun*.[11] We took the *Times* and the *Trib*, but got some others on Sundays, and I used to spread out on the living room floor reading through the funnies (as we called the comic strips) from these newspapers. I developed a fascination with newspaper comics which I retain to this day, not only for current ones but for old ones as well, even ones before my time, back to the Yellow Kid.[12] See Chapter 31.J.

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[11] This doesn't include the *Brooklyn Eagle* or specialized papers like the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Daily Telegraph* (a racing paper) or the Communist *Daily Worker*.

[12] The Yellow Kid was the lead character in *Hogan's Alley*, by Richard F. Outcault, the first real newspaper comic, dating back to 1894.

The *Herald-Tribune* was my favorite paper, right up until it folded in 1966. My father wanted me to read the sports page so I would have something to talk about with my schoolmates. This strategy did not work, but I remember liking Red Barber, the Trib's lead sportswriter and one of the all-time greats. I also liked Art Buchwald's reporting from Paris and John Crosby's television column. In those days the *Post* was a respectable liberal newspaper, but the tabloid *Daily News* was distinctly non-U, and the *Mirror* was more scandalously lower-class even than that.

For formal occasions I wore Eton jackets (no lapels) with short pants, and Eton caps, and white shirts worn with the collar outside the jacket. Photographs of me in this archaic rig still survive in the Phillips Family Papers. The illustration at left comes close, except I did not wear the bow tie.

I was brought to Best & Co. to buy clothes (they did children's haircuts too), and De Pinna's boys' department, and sometimes Altman's or Lord & Taylor or Saks. I remember going with my father for a fitting, I think at De Pinna's, when they were making him a suit – it amazed me to see them rip the arms off the suit in its early stages. I got shoes at Garrard's orthopedic shoe store in the West 30s – I don't know why I wore orthopedic shoes – and later regular shoes at Indian Walk on Madison Avenue at 74th Street. Much later, as a teenager, I got my clothes by myself, at Brooks Brothers – my father paid for them. There was a portrait studio cunningly placed right in Best's – I think the picture of me on the preceding page was taken there.

I remember President Truman and Mayor Vincent Impellitteri.[13] I went with my father when he went to vote for Truman in the armory on 93rd Street and Madison Avenue in November 1948 (see Chapter 13). The armory is just a façade now, as is the Democratic Party my father voted for. I sometimes ate at the Automat on West 57th Street – food was displayed behind little glass doors which sprang open when the right coins were inserted, and other coins made coffee and chocolate flow from ornate dolphin-head spouts. I saw a vaudeville show (!) at the Palace Theatre on Broadway, and watched the Guggenheim Museum being built (1958-9). I remember going on board the *S.S. United States* to see my grandmother off to Europe, and then watching from the dock on the West Side as the ship sailed away, ribbons streaming from her decks.

Fifties, not forties, but I remember the Korean War; although I didn't follow it very closely I did included war news in a hectographed newspaper I published in my

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[13] Vincent R. Impellitteri (1890-1964) became Mayor of New York on August 31, 1950, when Mayor William O'Dwyer resigned under a cloud of scandal. He served until December 31, 1953, finishing the rest of O'Dwyer's term.

childhood.[14] I asked my father what it was about, and he told me it was a dispute over whether the capital of Korea would be in the north or the south, which while technically true was the narrowest possible way to explain the war. At six, I accepted that explanation – I should probably have probed a little deeper. I was present at the ticker-tape parade for General MacArthur, on April 22, 1951, and watched parts of the Army-McCarthy Hearings on television (my mother was very interested in these). I saw John Foster Dulles one day when he was in office, coming out of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.[15]

I recall very well the day King George VI died (February 6, 1952). He was an important figure to me – his picture was on the stamps I collected, and I thought he was the handsomest man in the world. Also he stood for the English flavor in our house – for example my father had brought his 1937 coronation crown (a commemorative five-shilling coin) back from England in a leather case. I felt his death keenly, and still miss him. Also a big deal was the coronation the next year, on June 2, 1953, of his daughter and successor Queen Elizabeth II. The coronation was televised and attracted a lot of attention; also there was a folk belief in the family, encouraged by my grandmother, that my mother, in her younger days, had looked like Princess Elizabeth (who was 9 years younger).

I remember the civil defense drills in public school in 1953-55, where we had to shelter under our desks or in the corridor so we would be ready for the atomic bomb that was half-expected in those days. Not of course that our desks would have done us much good on 83rd Street if an atomic bomb had hit Manhattan. Anti-Communism was a sort of secular religion then, which most people either believed in or pretended to – McCarthy was active, and heresy was dangerous. I used to buy the *Daily Worker* at the newsstand, and would sometimes read it, or a paperback copy of the *Communist Manifesto*, ostentatiously on the bus. I had no understanding at all of the politics involved, but it felt good to flaunt a symbol of defiance.

"Conformity" was the hot issue of the day. That was an important word in the 1950s, used as a shorthand for what we then understood about the rigidity of postwar society. The advertising men of Madison Avenue in their famous gray flannel suits were the symbols of Conformity, ridiculed by *Mad* magazine.

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[14] A hectograph was a gelatin duplicator, a primitive reproduction method. An original prepared with special garish purple hectograph ink was laid on a tray full of gelatin, and then fresh paper was pressed gently on the gelatin, which transferred the image.

[15] John Foster Dulles (1888-1959) was a Wall Street lawyer, Presbyterian churchman and notable stuffed shirt who served as President Eisenhower's Secretary of State from 1953 to 1959.

- Scholars of the future! To understand the 1950s, find a run of *Mad* magazine. Yale librarians: buy one while you still can. The era is better encoded in *Mad* than in *Time*.

I remember when Einstein died (April 18, 1955), and Stalin too (March 5, 1953). There was a deathwatch for Stalin – Mary came into my room one morning and told me it was over. Also Fred Allen (a radio comedian), who dropped dead of a heart attack on my grandmother's block of West 57th Street on March 17, 1956. And the marriage between Grace Kelly and Rainier III (a huge deal, on April 19, 1956).

3. My world on Fifth Avenue

Map I (at the beginning of this book) is a map of Manhattan, showing places relevant to my life at various times. My local world in the 1940s ran between Fifth and Madison Avenues, and from 90th to 96th Streets, with a few extensions into Central Park and elsewhere.

The apartment house itself had a green awning supported by polished brass poles, which were fun to twirl around. A private entrance to the side (but still on Fifth Avenue) had three stone steps with a stone cube on either side which made a pleasant niche (no flowerpots then). See left. I used to read there on nice days.

As noted, the playground was directly across Fifth Avenue. I went there a lot, with my parents or Mary or Rachel or with my Emerson School class (Emerson was a private primary school in a converted mansion on 96th Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues). I remember the swings and the jungle gym and the sandbox, and the trash barrel where I once found a dead pigeon, and the mysterious wooden gardener's shed at one end. There was a cement water fountain with a concrete block in front of it for small children to stand on, and of course the typical New York City park benches (cement with green wooden slats) and black-painted iron grillwork. It was on a hill, and an iron fence stood between the bottom of the hill and the 96th Street Transverse Road through the park, because without it kids would certainly have zoomed down the hill on skates or bikes and ended up in the road. I banged into this fence painfully myself once on roller skates. The overgrown land in the park between the path to the playground and the stone wall

separating the park from the Fifth Avenue sidewalk was kind of a no-man's land, difficult for me to navigate as a small child. It was probably made that way intentionally, because there was a dangerous drop down to the street.

The blocks of Fifth Avenue between 90th and 96th Streets were interesting too. There were bronze plaques on the park wall – I could read these and found them of great interest. The Park opened up at 90th Street – there was an automobile entrance and a bridle path, and on the other side of that was the Reservoir. There was an especially fine plaque here, commemorating Mayor John Purroy Mitchel (preceding page).[16] Across the avenue on the south corner of 90th Street was the (Episcopal) Church of the Heavenly Rest (above) – I was fascinated by the mock-Gothic tracery and a mysterious blind entrance which I had been told was the crypt.

Nearby was the red brick and granite Carnegie mansion and its park-like grounds (now the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum). I used to walk along the stone pedestals of the iron fence (shown left with pop-art additions not present in my day) because they were low enough to reach easily. There were other apartment houses and private mansions along the avenue, some quite magnificent and some with *portes-cochères* which it was fun to drive into with my bike, once I was allowed off my home block.

Ninety-sixth Street was the official boundary of civilized life, beyond which (supposedly) lay wildness and danger. Even after I was allowed to go across streets by myself, I was told never to go above 96th Street alone. This made those parts interesting, and I enjoyed going with my father to Lipschitz' old-style candy store at 97th and Madison (we used some other local merchants on this block also, including a dry cleaner and a liquor store). This block of Madison Avenue, with its tenements, awnings and narrow storefronts, was an ordinary New York city block, quite unlike the blocks of grand apartment houses and city mansions I was used to. It seemed like a strange island – now I know that *my* part of

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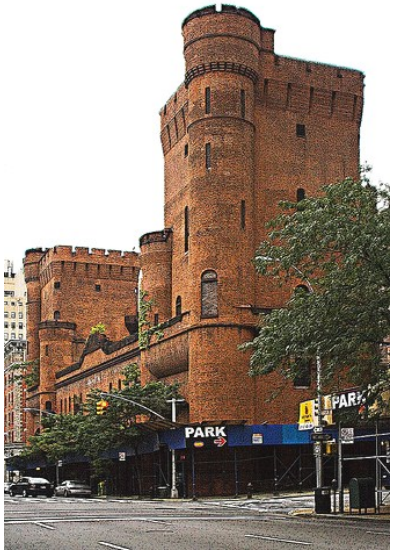
16 John Purroy Mitchel (1879-1918) was mayor from 1914 to 1917, the youngest mayor ever in New York (34). After failing re-election in 1917, during World War I, he joined the U. S. Army Air Service and was killed in a training accident. There is another memorial plaque to him on the Columbia campus (he was a member of the Class of 1899).

the city was really the island. We would sometimes also go to 97th and Park, where the railroad tracks come out from beneath the avenue, watch the northbound trains emerge from under our feet and the southbound ones approach us from the distance. We would bet (not for money) about which direction the next one would come from, and on what track, and how long it would be. These were very pleasant visits.



The enormous red brick Squadron A Armory took up a whole block on Madison Avenue at 94th Street. As noted, it is only a façade now (left), but in those days there were events inside besides voting, and of course horses. I remember going to a polo match in the Armory. It was big enough to hold a polo field with lots of room to spare.

Later my local world expanded to include P.S. 6 Manhattan (New York public schools were numbered by borough). I was put there in the third grade, after having been bounced out of private school at Dalton (see Chapter 3C.9). It was in an old brick building at 86th and Madison, and I remember (perhaps incorrectly) a notched gable in the Dutch manner. The next year we were the pioneers who marched out of that building and into the new modern building at 83rd and Madison. I can't find an adequate picture of either building on the Internet.

I was first allowed to ride buses by myself to get to P.S. 6, in the 3rd grade in 1952. Sometimes I walked instead and got to know the stores and landmarks on Madison Avenue between 82nd and 95th streets pretty well, bookstores and newsagents and some coffee shops, as well as other places of less interest. My parents used Novick's grocery store on 92nd and Madison – Mary called in our order and they delivered whatever we needed. The small Trans-Lux movie theatre, of course long since closed, was at 85th and Madison – they had children's programs with cartoons and similar attractions on Saturday mornings, and I was a regular there.

I knew other places in New York at this time – for example, I had lots of favorite spots in Central Park besides the 95th Street playground. The Central Park Zoo, at 64th Street and Fifth Avenue (right) was one of most the intensely observed spots of my childhood. I knew all the animals well – the sea lions were among my favorites. It was a dingy,

cramped, cruel zoo by modern standards, but modern standards had not been developed in 1948. The Delacorte Clock was not yet thought of. I knew the Reservoir and many of the lawns and greenswards, and promenades and such places as the Bandshell and the old Casino and the lake. The Bethesda Fountain was dry in those days, not restored until 1980.

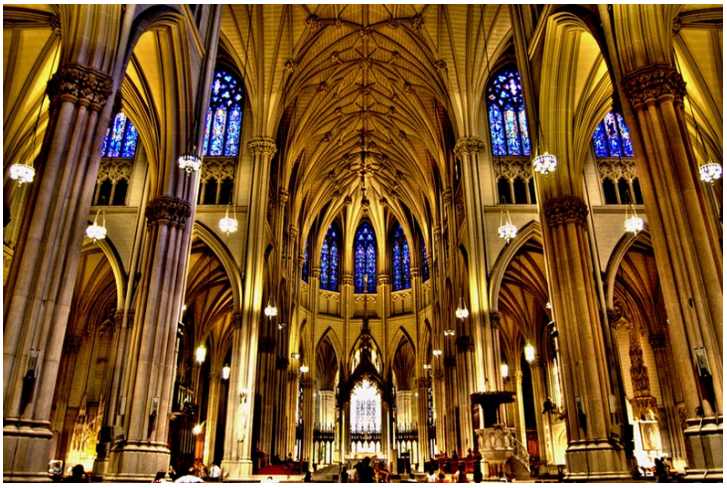
I was often taken to the American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (see Chapter 3B.7), and also to The Cloisters (the Rockefeller-funded medieval art museum in Fort Tryon Park at the northern end of Manhattan). I went with my grandmother occasionally to Temple Emanu-El at 65th and Fifth (left) – an astonishing (to me) building with an intricate half-Deco half-Gothic stone façade, ornamental bronze doors and a highly decorated interior. They had a Sunday School I attended briefly in the 1950s (see Chapter 18.A). I visited my grandmother on West 57th Street and got to know that neighborhood too – she took me to Bruno Walter's Young People's Concerts up the street at Carnegie Hall. I heard many great musicians there over the years, including Arthur Rubinstein, Vladimir Horowitz, and Pablo Casals. I visited the United Nations with my grandmother, and returned many times afterward. In my childhood I loved riding the subway, and she used to take me there as a treat.

Schrafft's restaurant at 88th and Madison was a favorite establishment when we lived at 1136 Fifth Avenue. They had ice cream sodas and sundaes in lots of flavors, including butterscotch and marshmallow. They also had a chicken and vegetable salad on a sort of hot dog roll which was my favorite non-dessert item. We spent a lot of time in Schrafft's, a local chain now long defunct – I can see it now in my mind's eye,

with its bar-like art deco fountain area and its dining room and small niches for coats and telephones. In a famous incident, I once threw up explosively in the main dining room – too much marshmallow syrup, maybe?

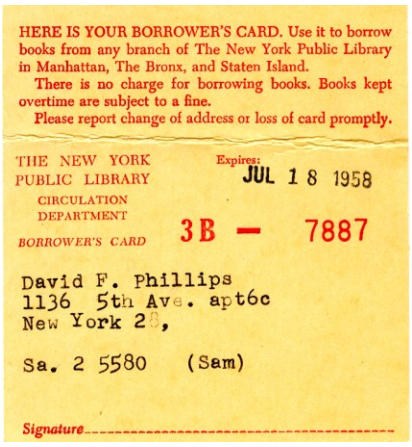
I knew the Plaza Hotel, too (left) from a young age – later when I was able to wander the city at will it became a kind of focus for me. Also St. Patrick's Cathedral at 50th Street and Fifth Avenue – more Gothic tracery and sculpted bronze doors (below).[17]

Rockefeller Center was across the street from the cathedral; every national flag in the world (even Communist flags) flew there, each on its own flagpole. I remember the Rockefeller Center skating rink, not only the ice but the shoe-changing rooms, the café, the statute of Prometheus above the sunken plaza, the statue of Atlas on Fifth Avenue, and the magnificent art deco ornamentation on the surrounding buildings Later I used to visit the Rockefeller Center lobbies after hours to look at the murals and sculptures. See images at the top of the next page.



[17] The woman shown next to the interior of the cathedral is Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680), known as the Lily of the Mohawks – she is one of my favorite figures from the cathedral's magnificent bronze doors.

I was a regular at the 96th Street branch of the New York Public Library, near Third Avenue, and later at the Donnell Library (now closed) on 53rd Street across from the Museum of Modern Art. See Chapter 20.A. My library card is shown below – I wonder why I kept using this library and this address and phone number in 1958, almost three years after we moved (maybe I just renewed my old card).



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The penny arcade at 52nd and Broadway, full of mechanical games of all kinds, was a special treat – I couldn't go here by myself as a child because it was out of my neighborhood and required money. I was very good at rifle games – there were of course no video games in those days.

I spent a lot of time at my grandmother's apartment at 140 West 57th Street. It was a tiny apartment, with a small bedroom for her, and another for her son, my Uncle Roy, who lived with her into his 40s. There was a fascinating ingenious kitchenette set into an alcove – it was a novelty that everything was so small and cleverly built in. Her living room was full of sacred objects – a terra cotta head of a boy, a mirror in an elaborate frame, a bronze picture-frame with an onyx cover, some majolica urns, some paintings including one of a bearded Jewish elder, a picture of my grandfather David Lazarus Rubinstein, and a television set. Christopher and Adam have most of these items now. I watched the 1956 Democratic Convention there, and maybe the 1952 convention also (all the way with Adlai!).

Occasionally I spent the night with my grandmother (a night off for my parents). Sometimes she had her friends over for canasta, and I got to know some of them also – I'm thinking of Lee Schwartz, Betty Slote, Ida Zakin, and Ida Rubinsohn. They were a jolly crew. My grandmother taught me to play canasta, but I never made the team. Her neighborhood was interesting too. In addition to Carnegie Hall, 57th Street had arty movie theatres, fancy stores, the Ritz Thrift Shop stocked with second-hand furpieces, an Automat, the Steinway Piano showroom, Calvary Church with its bold inscription ("we teach Christ crucified"), and bookstores of various kinds, including some which dealt in

remainders, a new concept to me. I still remember going with my Uncle Roy when he got a haircut at the Dawn Patrol Barber Shop on Eighth Avenue near 58th Street.

I almost never left Manhattan, except occasionally in a car to visit relatives in Brooklyn (see Chapter 2), or with an afternoon group called Leo Mayer's Champions, which took us in station wagons to climb rocks in Inwood (still Manhattan) and play games in Van Cortlandt Park (Bronx) and on Randall's Island. I liked the rocks but I never cared for the games. Even after we moved to 70th Street and I could have roamed into the other boroughs, I didn't – and why should I have? What might I have found in Queens of more interest than what I had in Manhattan? Here I am at nine, in February 1954 – note the jacket and tie.

People talk about moving to the suburbs for the sake of the children. I think this is nonsense. What could be a better place to grow up than Manhattan? Talk about enrichment! Almost everything you could want to learn about in the whole world is right there. I can see growing up deep in the country – it might be boring compared to Manhattan, but it would offer some compensations and teach some lessons. But the suburbs are the worst of both worlds. Fortunately my parents felt the same way – I recall my father saying this very thing. Growing up in Manhattan did more than anything else (except books and LSD) to equip me for life in the world. Nothing is overwhelming after Manhattan.

It took me a long time to realize how atypical my childhood environment was. "Over the river and through the woods, to grandmother's house we go …" Except grandmother's house was an apartment building on one of the most magnificent and sophisticated streets in the world, a few doors from Carnegie Hall. The view up 57th Street toward my grandmother's house was just normal to me growing up – now I see how unusual it really was. Likewise Fifth Avenue.

I can't remember much about who my friends were before the fifth grade. I was friendly with a girl called Nancy Fisher – she was, I think, a daughter of Avery Fisher, of the Fisher Radio audio company, who later endowed Avery Fisher Hall. I went back to see her years later but we had nothing much to say to each other. I remember a disastrous sledding party at which I was victimized by a virago of a girl called Kathy Misch – after all these years I still remember her with loathing. At 1136 I founded a "club" – the only other member was a boy from the neighborhood named Philip Worcester. I remember his freckles and the fact that my parents disapproved of him – as I remember my mother summing it up, the problem was that he was "common" – that is, not quite of our social class, whatever they might have thought that was.

My parents' social life as I remember it was not extensive. Except for occasional tame parties, the usual guests consisted of family and certain friends. I have already mentioned the family members who came to our house (see Chapter 2). Non-related friends included the antique dealer Bernard Levy and his wife Laura, and Janet Lieberman and her husband Dr. Jerrold Lieberman. We also saw my mother's doctor Herbert Chasis and his wife Barbara, also a doctor (*that* seemed weird in 1949), and their daughters, one of whom was named Joel and with whom I was often put together in the hope that we would become friends, which we never did.

My mother's old friend Bill Davis, who had tried unsuccessfully to be an actor and made a precarious living selling theatre tickets at a midtown hotel, used to come around sometimes. Why he came around I'm not sure, but I liked him a lot. He was poor and a Catholic. I found that interesting, as most of my parents' friends, and of course all their relatives, were Jewish. Another rare visitor was my mother's childhood friend Maxine Greene, who became a distinguished professor at Teacher's College.

Around the time of the move to 70th Street in 1955, Bill Garson (the contractor on the renovation) and his wife Toby were added to the mix. I was introduced to her son Lee Oestreicher, who became and still is a close friend. I spent a lot of time with Lee in Bill and Toby's apartment at 441 West End Avenue, and stayed in touch with them until they died many years later. These were the only ones of my parents' friends I grew personally close to – they were about the only adults anywhere who treated me like a *mensch*.[18] Also from the later period was T. Margaret Jamer, called Jimmy – a woman of some accomplishment but not my idea of a good time. She was my parents' intimate friend – they traveled together, and she brought them into the Unitarian Fellowship. Christopher has set up a file for her in the Phillips Family Papers, even though she was not strictly speaking a member of our family.

In a typical social evening one or maybe two of these couples (or a couple among our relatives) would come for drinks and stay for dinner and some conversation afterwards. I was allowed but not required to socialize with them. Alcohol was always offered and usually accepted but never an important element in the evening – I can't remember ever seeing anyone drunk at our house. But people smoked up a storm – it was customary in those days to set out containers with cigarettes before a party. (Much later, when I gave parties as a teenager, it was not considered out of line for me to set out cigarettes for my guests too.) Parties were larger versions of the same thing, usually without dinner. There was a modest gathering each New Year's Eve – I was awakened at about 11:30 and allowed to join the festivities. Piper-Heidsieck champagne, caviar *hors d'oeuvres*, and light refreshments at midnight.

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[18] *Mensch* is a Yiddish word, meaning *person* more than *man* – but a person with dignity and worthy of respect.

Reviewing these reminiscences and those that follow in the next section, I am struck by how external they are. There is lots on events and conditions, but very little on my inner life. I remember General Macarthur's parade but not my own thoughts. This contrasts sharply with other memoirs I have read, which focus more on emotions, perceptions, ideas and development. But as Vinoba Bhave says in the epigraph to this chapter, "childhood is like something written on a slate and rubbed off." Most of what I was thinking and feeling has fallen out of my reach now, beyond recall.

I know I had an active, inquiring mind as a child. I spoke fluently and was intensely verbal. I read widely from an early age, and studied maps and newspapers and the stamp catalogue and my father's books. I was deeply involved in exploring the world, and learning more about whatever I came across. I was very confident (perhaps excessively so) in my own judgment, inclined toward extremes, and reluctant to accept restraints on my activities or frustration of my desires. In all these things I was very similar to the man I later became. But beyond that I can see only through a glass, darkly, with no way to judge the accuracy of what I think I am remembering. Am I really recalling my childhood, or just generalizing from old pictures and shreds of memory, or am I unknowingly making things up? I wish I knew.

4. Playthings

Going through my notebooks for 1997, I found a list of toys and other items I remembered from childhood. Here's the list, in roughly the order I wrote it down. As with so much else in this book, it is mainly intended for researchers of the distant future. Contemporary readers, if they have even gotten this far, may wish to skip it

- Wooden truck. This was a sturdy toy of the 40s or earlier.
- Doll's house, complete with furniture. An odd toy for a boy, but I was fascinated by miniatures of all kinds and got a lot of use out of it. I hope I didn't freak my parents out too much with it – a doll's house for a boy in the 1940s meant you-know-what. I never had any dolls or any interest in them – it was the house and miniature furniture that interested me.
- Another item I remember was a sort of three-dimensional diorama of a rustic interior scene, in a picture frame cleverly canted outward so it appeared to expand toward the edges from a central point.
- Bozo the Clown (right). An inflated plastic figure about the size of a child or maybe a bit bigger, weighted so you could knock it

down and it would come back up again. The example shown is a later model than the one I had.

- Baseball glove, bat, ball. Not my favorite activity, but I liked playing catch with my father, fielding easy tosses, throwing the ball up and hitting it.
- Goldfish in an aquarium. These did not end well – I broke the aquarium with a bat to see the spectacle.
- Erector set. This was a kind of construction set with small metal girders, plates, nuts and bolts, &c. I spent a lot of time with this and built some of the things described in the instructions. But I think it was the *setness* of the set, all the parts and the fitted case they came in, rather than what I could do with it, that was the main draw for me.

- Mr. Potato Head (left). Plastic eyes, noses, ears, hats, limbs, used to make a comic figure out of a potato. Fun, but I never used a potato; I kept to the styrofoam head that came in the original box.
- A kind of book with images of people, but split into three horizontal panels, so you could combine the head of one figure, the torso of another, and the legs of a third. Childish, but I was a child. Very similar toys exist from earlier centuries.
- Revell models. These were intricate plastic models (mostly of warships and warplanes) which came in prefabricated parts but had to be painstakingly assembled and glued together. I made a lot of these in the early 50s, although I never went to the final stage of painting them.

- Bill Ding. A set of wooden men with pointed shoulders and notched hands (right), designed so they could be stacked together in complicated assemblages. They were of different colors, and only one was white: he had a logo and the name *Bill Ding*.
- Pick-up sticks. Long thin sticks to drop in a heap and then pick up one at a time, not moving the others. If you moved another stick it became the other player's turn. As I said, this was *long* before video games. There were also jacks – not a great hit.
- Board games. My father taught me checkers and later chess. I took chess seriously for a brief period, but not for long. I had a chess set in a dovetailed wooden box with a dividing partition. He taught me backgammon, too, using an old wicker set he had from the days when he used to play on ocean liners. I had a set of *Chinese* checkers, a game

sort of like *go*, played with marbles (board shown above). Also parcheesi, which I did not much like, and some other games – I remember Chutes and Ladders, and Sorry! (both based on advancing counters), Clue (based on solving mysteries by process of elimination), Monopoly, and Boom or Bust.[19]

- There were also cards (to play War), and Authors, a card game much like rummy but with authors on the cards, four books to an author, 13 authors to a pack. My mother taught me solitaire, which I now play on the computer.
- A gyroscope. Fun for a while – wind a string around the shaft and pull it off – the gyroscope spins, stands upright, and so on. Also a top – same idea.
- Mumblety-peg. This involved flipping a pocket knife so it landed blade-down in the ground. My father had played this game as a boy at Mill Hill School and taught it to me. I'm sure I can still do it with a properly balanced knife. Some advanced refinements would have made it a more interesting game.
- Dinky toys (right) and Matchbook toys. These were small model cars and trucks made of metal, with rubber wheels – I had quite a lot of these and remember playing with them. There were also plastic and metal soldiers. I spent some time with these too.

- A set of Lionel electric trains, considered by those in the know much better than the competing American Flyer trains. I remember assembling the tracks and dropping the little pellets into the locomotive smokestack to make smoke. There was a movable hill with a tunnel going through it. These were fun for a while, but my main interest in model trains was running them so fast they derailed, and staging head-on collisions. They were cumbersome to set up, took up a lot of space, and their possibilities were soon exhausted – they went around, and you could crash them, and then what?

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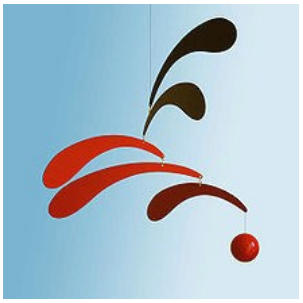
[19] Sorry! was based on parcheesi, and focused on advancing counters faster than the competition. Unlike parcheesi it was copyrighted, and used cards instead of dice. Chutes and Ladders was also a counter-advancing game – you could move ahead of the path by climbing a ladder, but you could fall back on a chute, both of which were keyed to the morality of actions noted on the path. Clue was based on solving a murder in a large house – the victim, room and miniature murder weapon changed with each round and the game was based on a process of elimination. Monopoly was played with Monopoly money – the path was divided into properties which you could buy or sell, and other players had to pay rent when their counters landed on your property. Wikipedia has detailed articles on all these games. Boom or Bust is more obscure now – it was also a property game, but certain events switched the game from Boom to Bust mode and all the values changed.

- A fishing rod. Used maybe once, with Napoleon Fletcher. I was no outdoorsman. Where was I going to fish, anyway, in Manhattan – off the piers? Not our style.
- Sparkler wheel (right). Keep pushing the plunger, and the wheel rotates. At the back of the wheel was a flint, which struck steel and gave off sparks. The wheel had windows with red and blue plastic so the spark would appear red, white and blue. Around the Fourth of July there were also real magnesium sparklers, which you lit and held in your hand. No fireworks though.

- I had a Gilbert chemistry set, in a red metal box, with lots of fascinating bottles. The most interesting thing I found to do with it was explode magnesium, which made a very satisfying flash. But like the erector set, it was the setness that was the main appeal – all those identical bottles and their niches in the case. I also had a small Gilbert microscope, and when during medical school my father upgraded his professional microscope he let me use his old one. I used it a few times, but I was limited by the slides I had, plus the light source was a mirror, which made it hard to use. This never clicked with me as an avocation.



- A mobile (left) and a Slinky (right).[20]

- My dentist in those carefree days used to give capsules of mercury to his child patients to take home and play with. I was much amused by shattering globules of mercury into smaller, equally perfect globules, and then bringing them back together with my hands. Of course it was very dangerous even to touch mercury, but back then when even doctors smoked cigarettes, who knew from danger?
- Discussed elsewhere: wall maps of the world and of the United States (see Chapter 5), a stamp album (see Chapters 3B.7 and 29.A), trading cards (see Chapter 3B.7) and lots of books, including comic books (see Chapter 4).

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20 A mobile is a kind of sculpture made of many parts, hung in equilibrium from a balance point. The parts move independently but respect the balance of the larger composition. Alexander Calder created many brilliant ones. The Slinky was one of the most successful of the newly invented toys of my childhood (first marketed 1945). It was a simple coil of flattened steel, but not wound like a spring. You could make it walk down stairs and do other cool things. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slinky.

5. Domestic sidelights

One thing I remember clearly from 1136 Fifth Avenue was being given a typewriter. It was my father's old Royal portable, and so this might have been when my mother bought an electric IBM Executive with a blue carbon film ribbon and proportional spacing – the *dernier cri* at the time. I was probably around six or seven. I'm not sure whether I was given the typewriter because it was now surplus due to the IBM, or whether my father just thought I was ready for it.

I was certainly ready. I took to it at once and became so adept at the hunt-and-peck system that years later I was able to work as a typist in a government office (see Chapter 16). By now, after 60 years at the keyboard, I am good enough at it that I can type without looking at the keys, even though I never did learn touch typing. I used that typewriter for everything (except occasionally I typed school papers on the IBM). It was a superb machine, with the patented Magic Margins and a nifty carrying case.[21] I used this Royal portable until college, when I replaced it with a Smith-Corona electric portable, which in turn lasted me (as a model – I replaced stolen instruments a few times) until 1988, when I switched to a word processor.

At 1136 I was given a small transistor radio – this was a brand-new novelty in those days. Mine was made by Hitachi and had an earphone you could plug into your ear. I listened to it a lot at night, secretly because this was forbidden, but using the earphone no one could hear but me. I listened to Jean Shepherd and a lot of other late night personalities. The image at right may not show my exact model, but it is close enough. It was a little bigger than a pack of king-size cigarettes, far larger and bulkier than today's slim elegant iPod.

I had two dogs at 1136 (at different times) – one called Astro and one called Friday. I named them both. I forget why I named the first dog Astro – the first astronaut was not selected until 1959,

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21 Magic Margins: you set the carriage where you want the margin, push the lever, and a spring-loaded metal part shoots forward inside the carriage and sets the margin. There is a lever on each side of the carriage, for left and right margins. This sounds strange now that we have nearly forgotten the feel of mechanical systems, but then it was the cat's meow.

years afterward. Friday was named after the detective on *Dragnet*.[22] Astro was a charming puppy, but it turned out he was a combination of big dogs and grew (I was told) too large for our apartment. So he was taken away and sent (I was told) to live in the country. Whether he was really sent to the country or just snuffed, I have no way to know for certain. My mother did know people at the Bide-a-Wee Home at Tarrytown, N.Y., so maybe Astro survived.

Friday was a basset hound and I was very attached to him. I developed a kind of schematic drawing of a basset hound which I reproduced over and over in various media. Friday too was taken away, for some transgression of mine. I forget what it was but I will never forget the devastating sorrow of having him taken away, or forgive my parents' pitiless disregard of my grief and anguished pleading. On 70th Street my parents got an Airedale, Bruce, but he wasn't my dog and I never got much involved with him or his successors Young Bruce or George the pouli.

When I was quite young, at 1136, my parents engaged a French lady to give me French lessons. She was improbably named Madame Tagawa – I guess she had married a *Japonais*. All I remember about her was that she had a complicated system of gummed labels to serve as rewards – red, silver and gold stars, and as a grand prize a gummed label of the Statue of Liberty. I don't think I learned very much French from her – *quel dommage*.

I also took piano lessons. My father, who had learned to play the piano, sort of, in his youth, taught me to sight-read notes and play single notes on the treble staff well enough to pick out a melody. Then an attempt was made to have me learn the piano for real, from a Jewish man to whose apartment I went to take lessons. I had no enthusiasm and no aptitude, much less any talent, and when he got to the part where I had not only to work both hands at the same time, but to give different values to the printed notes when they were on the bass rather than the treble staff and read both staves at once, it became definitively and absolutely too much for me, and I was allowed to stop. Some years later I was again sent for lessons from Mrs. Woodbridge, an alcoholic lady who taught my siblings in her East Side studio. But I still had no interest or aptitude.

At Thanksgiving I often went to the elegant Central Park West apartment of Teddy Schrifte, who was high up in Viking Press. I assume without actually knowing that she was a contact of my Aunt Louise, who was an illustrator and had published children's

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[22] *Dragnet*, starring Jack Webb as the taciturn Los Angeles police detective sergeant Joe Friday, was a television show wildly popular in my youth. "My name is Friday," Webb began each episode, "I'm a cop." Whenever people got too voluble he would stop them by saying "All we want are the facts." This was poor police practice but good television.

books. Every year she gave a children's party to coincide with the Thanksgiving Day Parade, sponsored by Macy's department store (colloquially called in New York the "Macy's Day Parade"). This was a famous event (still staged each year) and had enormous helium-filled balloons in the shape of comic characters and others – I remember especially one of Mighty Mouse (right). We watched the parade from Schrifte's windows and (I think) balcony. Ludwig Bemelmans (1898-1962), a famous illustrator and author of *Madeline* (1934) and other children's books published by Viking, appeared at these parties and drew pictures for the children.

I loved a parade (I still do) and the St. Patrick's Day Parade, right down Fifth Avenue in front of our apartment house, was one of the highlights of my year. They painted the line down the center of the avenue green for that parade (now the avenue is one way downtown, but back then it was still two-way, except on parade days). Later other groups demanded their own painted lines – blue, for example, for the Greeks, and for the Germans on Von Steuben Day.

We celebrated Christmas with a substantial Christmas tree, presents, Santa Claus, and the whole works. I remember going with my father to pick out the tree at an open-air city lot, and decorating it with the ornaments kept in the storeroom. Christmas was an occasion of great excitement for me, like most American kids, because of the huge haul of presents. Presents were left under the tree and distributed on Christmas morning – there were also stockings hung by the fireplace for smaller, less elaborate gifts. I never believed in Santa Claus, but as some presents from my parents came with cards nominally signed by him I didn't object. I had my own Christmas list and remember methodically going through it, buying the usual colognes and other unsuitable gifts for people on the list. My parents sent out Christmas cards, usually photos of their children – these pictures taken with a Polaroid each year. Examples are preserved in the Phillips Family Papers – I reprint one at left, at about ⅓ size. Note the Eton jacket on Adam.

Later I sent out my own Christmas cards. We were not Christians, of course, but the prevailing assimilationist view was that Jewish kids should not be deprived of Christmas just because they were Jewish. I never challenged this view – it would have been crazy for me to question this annual cornucopia. Today this all seems very weird for a Jewish family.

Hanukah was added at 112 – it was thought seemly to do this despite a complete absence of religious feeling – but Christmas remained. The result was two sets of presents – no problem! If we could have added a Moslem holiday I would have been for that too. Kwanzaa (not invented until 1966) – bring it on! I remember lighting the candles and reading the Hebrew (in transliteration), but it always seemed a very perfunctory and half-hearted event as none of us were believers. We did Easter too when I was young – we were given Easter baskets full of candy, and colored eggs (which I remember dyeing) were hidden around the apartment. Very *goyish*.

We had a movie projector and a roll-up screen and sometimes watched home movies on it – we had color movies taken at various times, including one of me rolling a hoop in the Tuileries in Paris in 1952. There were also a few older ones in black and white from my grandmother's generation. Christopher is transferring these films onto a compact disk, a more durable medium than crumbling old nitrate film stock, and they should be lodged in the Phillips Family Papers.

Sometimes, when I had a birthday party or something similar, we rented cartoons and comic shorts – they were Castle Films, as I remember, and the cartoons were mostly Walter Lantz productions, including Woody Woodpecker (right), Oswald Rabbit and Andy Panda.[23] I also had a Viewmaster, a sort of modern stereopticon, which took a paper disk filmstrip (see left, although they were black in those days). Later my mother bought a reproduction stereopticon, along with some slides for it. Neither of these was used much. My father did have a modern (for the time) stereo camera.

Once while we still lived at 1136 Fifth Avenue, my parents went to an antique show and promised to bring me back the oldest thing there. They came back with a prehistoric stone hand ax, which fascinated me and which I treasured. I can see it now, with its pasted-on typed label. What happened to that ax? I never threw it away.

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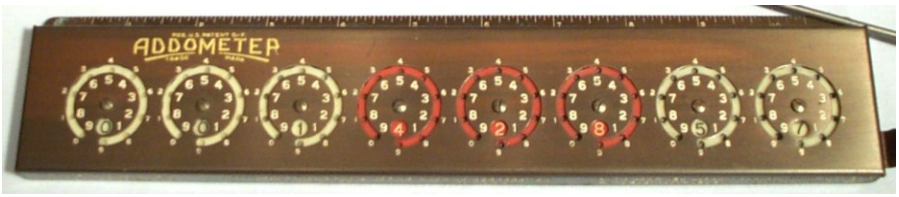
[23] Lantz was a kind of poor relation to the leaders in the field: Warner Brothers (who had Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig and Daffy Duck) and Disney. Later, when I discovered "eastern" religions, I reserved for myself (but never used) the name *Andipandananda*.

I remember at 1136 being allowed to stay up late to watch (with binoculars) an eclipse of the moon from the window seat in the living room. It was quite a show.



My mother had an Addometer – this was a mechanical calculating machine, about the size of a ruler and operated with a stylus. For more on these see *www.vintagecalculators.com/html/addometer.html*. We later got a proper adding machine with a keyboard and a tape, operated with a side handle like a slot machine. Ours had a small keyboard – one key for each number and one for each operation. I remember at some office being allowed to play with an earlier Burroughs machine, with a full keyboard, and the even more fascinating Monroe calculator, with the accumulator register at the top – I never fully understood how that one worked.

A comedian and local TV personality named Herb Sheldon (*né* Sussman) was a cousin of my mother's. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herb_Sheldon. We didn't see him often, but he had *entrée* into NBC, and I went to their TV studios one time and met Arlene Francis and Hugh Downs and some other people. It was the first time I ever saw color TV.[24]

My parents had back runs of *Antiques Magazine* – I remember putting them in order, repairing some worn parts, and making a list of the missing numbers. I did the same thing for a series of saddle-bound albums of art reproductions (the pictures were on gummed labels), each on a different subject, published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art on a subscription basis as a members' benefit. I put them in order, finished pasting in the labels, and so on. I did the same with my father's collection of sheet music for popular songs of the 30s and 40s, from the days when he played the piano. These were in terrible shape and never used. I repaired them all (using Scotch Tape – I didn't know any better then). This was proto-librarian work, although I didn't know it yet. I also had a collection of travel folders which I got from tourist offices and consulates – we lived in the consulate district and I used to go from one to the other asking for them. My favorites were a set of folders in a uniform style for various English cities and districts. All these were examples of my still active fondness for collecting (see Chapter 30) and of the interests which led me to become a librarian.

In my early teens I developed ingrown toenails on both sides of both great toes – these were very painful. For a while I kept clipping them myself, which was also very painful,

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[24] Future historians – NBC, the National Broadcasting Company, was a television network, one of three major networks at that time, and a very big deal for any entertainer.

usually in the tub under running water to dull the pain. But finally I had to ask for help. I was brought down to Dr. Davis, who rented our ground floor doctor's office on 70th Street, and he injected anesthetic into my toes so he could operate. But the anesthetic didn't work, as I still remember the agony of the knife cutting into my toes. Finally I had to have them operated on under general anesthetic in New York Hospital. I still have all four scars.

I was sent to day camps in the summertime, and one year even to a "sleepaway" camp. I did not enjoy these experiences, heavy as they were with nature walks, compulsory games, mosquitoes, horrible food and dreary afternoons making useless lanyards. But as usual I was not consulted, merely sent. I liked the swimming, though, even though the bottom of a pond felt yuckily unlike the bottom of a swimming pool.

We spent the summers in rented houses, first in suburban Westchester County NY (Mamaroneck, Rye, Scarsdale) and later in Cape Cod. Christopher has a better memory than I do of these places, or at least better records. In Westchester we used to go to Jewish country clubs – my "aunt" Viola Altman was a member of one of them, and used to buy me peach ice cream. I swam a lot at these places – in later years I also hung around the pool trying to look down the fronts of women's bathing suits, sometimes with success. We sometimes also went to Playland, an amusement park in Rye – this was the greatest treat imaginable.

Here's an extract from a reminiscing e-mail to a friend, July 4, 2008:

> When I was a kid the Fourth of July was a big deal. We were always at a summer house, usually in Westchester although later on Cape Cod, and we always went to see the fireworks. This was thrilling, and still is when I get to see them, although in San Francisco the fireworks are often lost in the fog and all you can see is a vague pinkness inside a cloud. When I was small it was also a treat to get to stay up and out so late. We had sparklers too, but those always seemed kind of lame to me. No bottle rockets or home explosives were permitted.

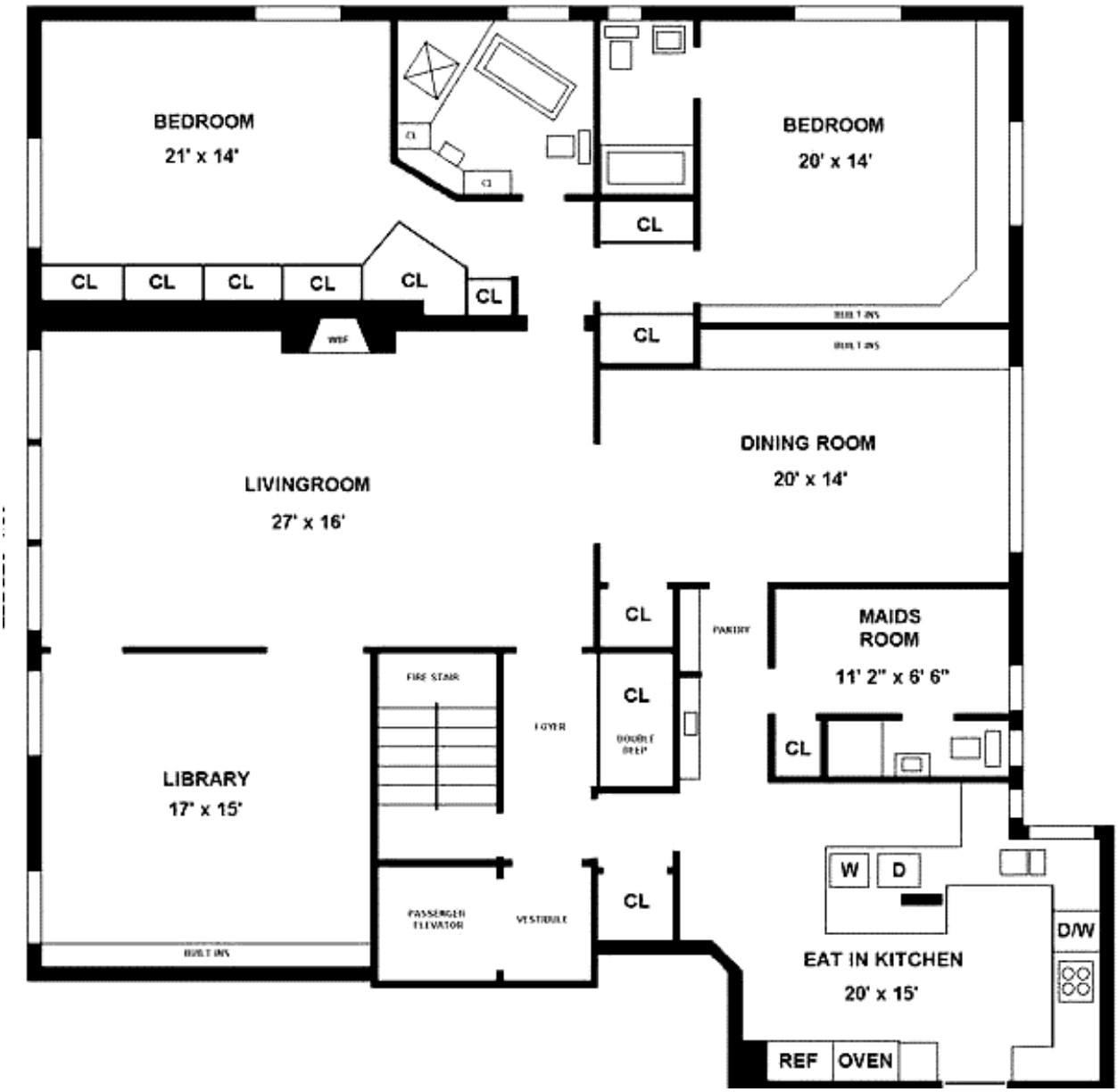
Later we went to Truro on Cape Cod for summers. Some reminiscences of those times appear in Chapter 25.A.

Tailpiece: *City Buildings, New York*
by Joseph Stella (1917)

Document 3A-1: Floor plan of apartment 7-C, 1136 Fifth Avenue

This a plan of the apartment above ours, taken from the Internet in 2008. Some modifications have been made – our apartment wasn't exactly like this.

East is at the top in this plan. Ninety-fifth Street is to the left of the page.



Document 3A-2: Sotheby's catalogue from furniture auction

These two pieces were among many others of the same period in Apartment 6-C.