

CHAPTER
TWO

MY MATERNAL GRANDFATHER,

VICTOR COLONVAL

AND

HIS VERY UNIQUE STORIES

AND

MY LOVE OF MUSIC

2

In November of 1959, shortly after I was promoted to "District Manager" of Midwest Canada, for the Upjohn Company of Canada, I visited Montreal to attend a District Manager's meeting. While in Montreal I contacted Nanny Guarino's older sister, my Auntie Nellie. Aunt Nellie had left the old Colonval homestead at St. Lupicin, Manitoba in her early twenties, either shortly before or during World War I. She was married to Gaston Oublet, a widower from St. Lupicin. Gaston had three children by a previous marriage, and since my Auntie Nellie could not have children she adopted them and raised them as her own.

She and Gaston had moved to Montreal in the 1920's and had adopted three children. One of her children was Clementine (my cousin), who was married to Joseph Imbault, a Montreal policeman. Just prior to my visit to he had been promoted to a sergeant in the Montreal Police Department. I spent several wonderful evenings with them in their home in Montreal, and visited my Auntie Nellie and Gaston, who lived above a small hardware a hardware store that their son Emile operated. I had a wonderful visit with them. Joe took me downtown to the main Police station and showed me the "tank" where all the people picked up by the police were detained until their court appearances before a judge. He showed me how people that were arrested were "finger-printed" and "mugged" (their picture taken). I had a wonderful visit with them. We took home movies and I had the opportunity to meet many of my

Montreal relatives. Finally, my cousin Clementine gave the priceless gift of the notebook in which my grandfather had written his short stories many years previously.

The notebook was a very simple black covered five cent black notebook that children of that era used at school. It contained about twenty lined pages. Imagine my surprise when I learned that it contained two short stories that my grandfather Victor Colonval had written many years previously, while he was "wintering" on his homestead at St. Lupicin, Manitoba.

Grandpa Colonval had used an ink "dip" pen. I can visualize how he wrote his stories. He would have to dip his pen into an inkwell prior to each word or small group of two or three words. It must have been a tedious and labourious task for him. Also, considering that electricity was not available for my grandparents, he must have written a great deal of his "manuscript" with the aid of coal oil or "kerosene" lamps. It appears that he wrote his short stories in the early "thirties", during the peak of the Great Depression. This is evident because of the remarks that he made in his story about Mars.

On the inside of the front cover of the old black notebook, Grandpa Colonval had written the following, in beautiful script-like handwriting.

From Victor Colonval

St. Lupicin, Manitoba, Canada

On the first page of the small black student notebook, approximately eight and a half by eleven inches was the following title:

NOTE:

I have inserted Grandpa Colonval's stories at this point in my autobiography, and have attempted to retain the "exact" and "original" language that my he used. The apparent inaccuracies in spelling and grammar throughout the stories ARE NOT ACCIDENTAL (This rendition is EXACTLY as my grandfather wrote it.)

Wedding with Two Grooms

Short-Short, By V. Colonval

The other day I meet an old comarade of College of the name of Jack Graham, an Irishman. He was walking ahead of me on the sidewalk and he was looking and acting like a drunken man and his clothes, dirty. I Hallo to him is that You, Jack. He turned around and stopped and sorrowfully come and shake hands with me.

Where are you going so early I asked him.

I don't know he said.

Where are you coming from

The Police Station

What have you be doing my dear Jack to have some trouble with the police and have to pass the night at the station.

Well that a long story to tell you right here in the middle of the street if we stop to some place and have a glass of something I will tell you everything.

After we are sitting at the table Jack told me, "I am now a minor clerk at the government house my wish always was to marry a young girl in mourning, as I am a little dumb and bashful to save me all the ceremony that come with the wedding as the formality at the church, then a taxi ride to the park, and dinner at the restaurant and after the dance at the ball room to way far in the middle of the night, and you know, I can't make a step only when I am walking. Contrary to that I was in love with a nice blond girl, an orphan and alone in the world. She is cashier in a department store and the marriage was fixed for the 25th. of August. So I told Elise that her name, that it was too hard for me to goes through all those formalities, so she

said if all those things make you afraid we could arrange to have Emile with me in your place as the groom. Emile is the son of the lady that keep the boarding house where she live. Emile will be dressed as the groom, he will take me to the church, and to the park and after to dinner and to the dance in your place and you will be my husband just the same. Nobody never will know what you said.

I don't think Emile will lend himself to such combination if it is ever discovered he would be convicted for false.

Nobody never will know and to night I am going to ask him.

The next day I find her all joie. Emile has consented and he was very glad and happy to fill the role of groom in your place my dear Jake and you will see if he don't play his part right up to the very end.

So the day of our marriage arrived that was yesterday. I saw Elise take a taxi with Emile for the church, I followed in another taxi, after that they went to the park, and to the restaurant, and to the dance, I

keep away from those places but at eleven o'clock I thought that was about the time to show myself and claim my bride from Emile.

I asked one of the boys where was the bride at the same time giving him a silver tip.

The bride he said, but she is gone with her husband about half an hour ago.

And you see them going away I asked the boy giving him another tip.

As I see you now he said I even helped them to the taxi with a couple of small grips and some packages probably some wedding presents from their friends and I hear the groom direct the driver to the terminus Room 18.

After this revelation I began to see red. I went down four steps at the time the stairs of the dance hall and taking a taxi ten minutes after I was at the Terminus. I run up the stairs without asking nothing to nobody and standing before the door of room 18, I knock, no answer. I called them Elise, Emile, no

answer so I make so much noise that somebody of the hotel called the police and I was collared by two strong fellows and taken to the police station to cool down.

Now everything is over I can't claim Elise as my wife and I can't tell on the other fellow

now what I am to do.

Well Jack if you listen to me I will tell you what I

think of this affair, the two together are playing a grand joke on you and bet anything that Emile married Elise for himself and have been in love with the girl for quite a while and as Elise preferred Emile to you she was keeping you in the reserve and at the date you had fixed for your marriage Emile for some reason only know by himself was not quite ready and you speed him up and give him the best chance of the world to take her off your hands.

"THE END"

Note:

Grandpa Colonval spent most of his spare time during one winter writing his short stories. When my Auntie Nellie and her husband Gaston

Oublet left St. Lupicin for Montreal during "The Great Depression", my grandfather gave them his little black scribbler with the two stories that he had written. The following is the second story that he had written. Again, I have "reproduced" it EXACTLY as he had written it.) P.S. I added the illustration of the planetary system (below) to head up his title.

On Planet Mars in a Dream

By V. Colonval

(The diagram above was inserted into this document)

It is wonderful how fast a dream travel. a few days ago I went to bed at the ordinary time about eleven o'clock after having read some matters about astronomy, in less than half an hour I had a dream that carry me to planet Mars. when I set foot in a brilliant sunshine the first think I saw was a bunch of mens busy at rolling and pushing toward the river a big canoe made out of a big tree, I keep under cover of

some brush till I was near them and I had the biggest surprise in my life, as the men were all covered with hair like monkeys and from the neck to half way down the chest and back they had a mane of hair like a male lion. All tall men over six feet and well built and fine specimens of the human race. I was very much afraid and embarrassed. One man was busy to push a round stick on the front of the canoe and two were prying it up so to give the other fella chance to have his roller well under and all went back to the rear and one of them yelled (Pusha Achaine) that is old french and mean push all together, the language spoken in this part of mass is still spoken in France in places among the peasants and is called (Patois) so understanding this language well I showed myself to them and said (Bonjourney Certout) that mean good day everybody, they were as much surprised as I was no hair on myself like them but my underwear on, I asked them to be taken to their chief so I could show him my presence on his domain, one of the men come with me and I was introduced to an old man nearly Seven Feet tall with his hair and mane white as Snow.

You are very welcome he said and I am very pleased with your visit with us in mars. I presume you are coming from some other world as I see you do not have much hair and are covered with some strange things.

Well mister I come from a place called the earth and is very far away and I don't even know how I got here at all.

I began to ask the old fellow questions.

Well mister as far as I can see there is no cultivation of the soil in this world all trees, nothing but trees all loaded with nuts of all kinds from coconuts to hazel nuts, what are you people eating here

Well the old mand said we eat nothing else than nuts, every season each family pick his own supply of nuts for the year and store them in a building back of his house, we actualy have enough nuts stored to last us three years and pretty soon we will have another crop of nuts to pick up, I am afraid everybody here will be short of room to store them, we also have the soft fruits of all kinds, Apples, pears, Grapes, cherries, Plums, Raspberries, Strawberries and

all kinds of berries that we eat for three or four months of the year.

In Mars the huts or houses are build round shape about eighteen to twenty feets diameter build like basket work a row of sticks three inches and two feets a part and some small poles and creepers interlacing between them, it is after plastered inside and outside with clay, the roof is build with poles and thatched with long stiff grass there is a hole left on the top for the smoke to come out the fireplace is build in the Centre also round shape with long flat stones buried half way down in the ground and come up about two feets above the floor level There is a hole left for door and a few little holes to allow a little light.

Behind each hut there is another building about the same size and sometimes larger for the storage of nuts.

In this village there is a row of about a hundred huts in a straight line on the river bank and at this place the river is splitting and between the two forks there is an island with a high shining mountain in the

centre we went across the river with the old man and four other men that paddled us to the other side, Figure my surprise to find that the most part of this shining mountain is of solid gold.

Enough gold in this place alone to satisfy the greed of all the gold diggers of the earth and thousand times more than needed for putting back all the nations of the world on the gold standard and of no value to the martians as they do not have any use for money and do not need it.

After exploring the island where there is lots of trees all well loaded with nuts we come back to the old man place on this side of the river and I asked him about taxes and if people have to pay any taxes on Mars.

Well he said I don't know nothing about what you call taxes and I like you to explain it to me.

Well mister if you was living on the earth you would have to give away a part of your nuts for taxes on the land your trees grow on and after that you will have to give another part of nuts in the time they are

ripe to have the right to pick them and the most of the time you will barely have enough nuts left for yourself and your family

I understand and is very interesting

How is about religion I suppose you know nothing about that neither

No I don't know what that is

Well my old friend on the earth we have lots of religion and there is more than half of the people that believe in it and some smart fellows will tell you that the human race is made of two part the body and the soul when the body died the soul that is still living is going to another world in haven or in Hell, those fellows say that haven is a very fine place where it is very soft to live you don't even have to pick up any nuts there, and you are there for the eternity.

Those that goes to that place are people having made a Straight live on the earth and never hurt theirs neighbors and as I am thinking now Seeing you so Spotless white that when you died you will be among

those elected to live on that fine place you people here on mars never have any chance to run astray of the straight live.

Well, Well I never thought after I am dead I will still be as happy as that.

now I will tell you about this place that is called hell it is directly right across the large Highway from haven, and it is said that it is a gigantic furnace heated at a high temperature and is where all the bad ones goes after dead, to explain it more clearly to you as those stealing the nuts of somebody else and each one goes through the first examination gate where he could not possibly hide a quantite of large black spots on his hide and he is directed to hell and so he keep on walking and his mind is very busy and before he is aware of it the devil waiting for him with his traditonal pitch fork get him in the middle of the big blaze for the eternity

This is very monstroux to do to people.

and The Catholicisme have another place they call it the purgatory it is a kind of dry cleaning shop

where anybody, that was not really bad but has a few little black spots on the skin of his soul have to come through this place to have them removed so he can present himself spotless to the gate of Haven.

now the old man said I am going to explain you how everything work here in mars, our young people generally get married the boys when they are sixteen and the girls are fourteen, the parents on both sides and some friends all helping to put up the Hut and the Storage building for the young couple and start working for themselves, each year every head of a family is planting fifty trees a few years back it was a hundred trees, but as this is going on for some thousands of years back we have now over production and very little land to spare for planting trees on a big scale.

Every family have a boat as we have to cross the river to bring wood for fuel and some fruits home, to make a boat here is not a small job we take a large tree and work with fire and our stone axe for about a week to bring the tree down, and after it will take a month to carve it and make it to shape, our tools, axes,

knives are made out of hard flint Stones and we shape and make a sharp edge to them by rubbing them on a sand stone we make drinking cups from coconut shells and we carry water in goat skins pails.

We have here some horses, cows, goats sheep but we do not have much use for them, they are very tame we just milk a few goats to have some milk for the small childrens and for the old people that have lost their teeth and are unable to chew nuts.

As I can see the boat is your only way of transportation here on mars.

yes and we only use it to bring our fruits and some wood from across the river.

now Mister I will tell you on the earth they have all kinds of ways to transport things from one place to the other sometimes very far away, we have the Railroad operated by Steam Engines that move several thousands of tons at one load at the speed of twenty to twenty five miles an hour, we have big steam ships on the water that carry several thousands tons in one load at a very good speed, in the air we have the airplane

that flighs some of them at more than a hundred miles and hour, now we have the Automobile that travel very fast too when on good roads, we even have some boats that are running under water like a fish. now we have the telephone, the Radio some kind of instruments that people are using every day to talk to some other people far away to the end of the earth.

Well, Well all those things you tell me are very strange and hard to believe and I think you are kidding me.

Certainly not my old friend, I know it is too much for you to swallow all this information all at once but I swear by all the gods of the universe that all those things are really existing and are in use every day by the people living on the earth.

I read in a paper recently that one fellow on the earth a Smart man in the wireless was trying to signal and communicate with the people of this planet mars but as I see it myself there is no equipement here no Electric power, no nothing for Such an enterprise so I think that fellow is losing his time and if he want very

much to communicate with your people here on mars he will have to do like myself and come here in his dream.

Very interesting indeed the old man said

What contrasting ways in the two worlds you people here on mars are born with a fine fur of hairs on yourself that protect you from the cold and keep you warm in the Cool night without the trouble of getting a lot of Clothes that cost quite a bit of money through the live of a person, differently on the earth without clothes people are just as helpless as a common worm, but they know something is missing with them, so they artificialy are wearing especialy the womens some nice furs Coats made from the skin of Some animal that is trapped or killed in the prime when his fur is at the best.

on the earth the law force you to have some clothes on yourself when you are outside of your house, a few years ago in Canada where I come from a religious Sect of fanatics called the nudistes, set out all naked on a pilgrimage through the country to meet their high lord but they didn't goes very far before they all got arrested

by the police and forced to wear some clothes, and the leaders were taken to jail.

Now we will talk of the different ways of living, you people here on Mars are living on nuts that your trees are bearing every year and are really satisfied and are every year planting some more trees in fear to be short. on the earth they root out every tree to have the space occupied by the stump to cultivate and sow wheat that make bread and is the main article of food

This wheat is trashed by a machine and after it goes through to another machine called flour mill where it is crushed to fine dust and the woman of the house make a paste with it and cook it in the oven of her stove and is called bread.

I see the old man said it is very hard work and lots of trouble to make a living on earth.

What kind of Government have you on Mars

Well we have no Government at all you see here I am the Head man for six villages and I am an old man I am supposed to have the experience of a life

time and can give good advice to the young people that sometimes have some foolish notions, it is the same all over Mars and for my services every body bring me a few baskets of nuts So I get my supply of nuts without do any picking myself.

now my old friend I will tell you that on the earth we have now too many fellows that the people are picking a Supply of nuts for them, now since what is called the Depression we have the relief most some people out of work to explain it more clearly to you, Some people that there is no nuts for them to pick.

How is about war I don't Suppose you even had any wars on Mars.

No here on Mars we never had any wars and every body is friendly with his neighbors Sometimes we have some private little fight between some of our Young mens and it generally happen when two of them are in love with the Same Girl, but they never hurt themselves very much.

Now my old friend I will tell you that on the earth they always had wars Since the creation, that

first Started between the two Sons of the first man and his wife Adams and Eve that recording to the Scriptures were the first people on the earth at that time. I am Sure they did fight about a Girl as the only woman living was their mother anyway

Cain killed his brother Abel, now they are killing themselves by millions, not about womens but the most of the time for this Gold that you have so much of it and is of no use to your people, but over there they always Short of it and by any means are trying to Get Some more, in the last war about twenty years ago and it lasted over four years several millions of their young mens were killed and several millions were maimed for life.

That very Strange those things happen on earth you might like to remain with us on Mars asked the old fellow.

Yes certainly I like this place well and it is so easy to live here just work a few days in the time of nuts picking.

In that case we all are going to help with your

house and your Storage Room and also find a wife for you we have several nice young Girls and two a little older about thirty years of age to choice from that would be a good match for you one is Elisabeth and the other Josephine.

We had a Queen in England a Couple centuries ago of the name of Elisabeth I hear She was a very bad woman, we had also a Queen of France of the name of Josephine and was the wife of the best warrior at that time called Napoleon. he divorced her to marry a younger woman so he could have a Son to Succeed him to the trone of France She was a very Good woman.

Excuse me for a minute my old friend Said I am going to Send Some Young boy to tell her to come here

I then asked the old man how old he was

I don't know exactly but I have it nitched down one

nitch for every barvest of nuts and he took a nice

straight little pole about six feet long and we counted ninety three notches so his age was ninety three years old.

I asked him if he had a wife and childrens

My wife is death he Said for over ten Years I still have a daughter she is living with her family next village so I am here all alone.

Then Josephine come in and She already know there was a strange man in the village having hear it from the mens that I first meet with the boat.

I send for you Josephine Said the old man as I wanted to introduce you to this man a stranger that just come here from another world and as he is going to live with us so I thought you would like to have him for your man we have been talking of the earth the world from where he Come and he told me some astonishing things

So extending my right hand to her I said I am very happy to meet you my good girl You look fine and you have a very soft fur on Yourself as I was

petting her on the back and Shoulders.

My dear Josephine, you will excuse me in the position I am, having only my underwear on, I know I would be looking very much better to you if I had my Dress Suit on, but circumstances that I couldn't control bring me here the way you see me. What bother me now is that all my clothes are left there on the earth and the little that I have on myself won't last me very long. I suppose I will have to do like Robinson Crusoe when he run out of Clothes on his island he have to tailor himself a Suit of Goat Skins.

We have at home Josephine Said about a dozen of nice goat Skins already tanned for our water pails, I am going to cut you a Suit from them and I will do all the sewing myself.

As it was getting late in the evening and I was feeling very tired I asked my old friend if he has a bed to Spare for me that night so I took leave of Josephine after having her promise to meet again the next morning to discuss our future plans and get married so she left wishing me Good night and giving me a

couple of hearty Kisses.

I after asked the old man if it was much of a ceremony when two people get married.

Oh no he said that very Simple the man and woman come here and are willing to live together and I just join both right hands together wishing them all Happiness we don't keep any records and if they want to remember the dates of anything that happen in their life and their age they have to get a family pole and cut notches on it so we went to bed wishing each other a good restful night.

My grand Surprise waking up late in the morning in my own bed all broke up and very tired after such a long return trip so I turn Round for another four or five hours of dreamless Sleep but I am still thinking of Josephine on Mars and who knows she might have already a feverish good Start on my Suit of Goat Skins.

"THE END"

NOTE:

Grandpa Colonval not only fancied himself as a writer, but also as a philosopher. From his two short stories, it appears that also attempted to be a “satirist”. He had another unusual hobby. It involved his life-long determination to build a machine that incorporated the principle of "Perpetual motion" (i.e. an apparatus or machine that would run by itself). He was obsessed with this principal, and produced a large variety of what he termed "Perpetual motion" machines. In most instances, they centered around a wheel with an assortment of weights which would shift according to the position of the wheel and thus cause the wheel to turn, (i.e. in his mind producing "perpetual motion."). He was obsessed with this idea all of his life. He also argued that if the power of "gravity" could be utilized, he would have discovered "Perpetual Motion". Of course scientists would readily refute that assertion, by referring to the predicted life span of our universe at approximately ten billion years. The life of our universe is “limited”. Concomitantly, he felt that if he could “discover” a way of doing creating his “perpetual motion machine”, that he would become a successful “inventor”, and become a “millionaire”.

While we were still home, Vic and I discovered one of his "machines" in some old things that Grandpa Colonval had stored in the unfinished attic of our home. It was a bicycle wheel, which had about a dozen small metal tubes approximately 1/4 inch by two inches in length which were attached to the outer rim of the wheel. No matter what Vic and I attempted to do in respect to shifting and replacing those tubes with a half dozen or so ball bearings in each of them, we could not get the wheel to turn by itself.

Many years later, I discussed my grandfather's experiments with my University Physics professor. He chuckled and simply remarked

"Perpetual motion has been proven impossible.

"Because of friction and wear, no machine can exist into perpetuity, even if during its life span it can operate on its own."

He also added:

"Even our universe will eventually self destruct, and the energy of our sun is exhausted".

Reflecting back now to my grandfather's experiments, even if his machine had worked, it would have required such a gigantic wheel of fantastic proportions to produce a very small amount of energy that for all practical purposes, it could be considered as being absolutely "useless".

He and my father "Papa Joe" had great difficulty in "accepting" each other. I remember many evenings when Grandpa Colonval visited our home. He would leave his own home on Waller Avenue in Fort Garry to work in the Locomotive Supply House at the Fort Rouge Roundhouse. Invariably he would question Papa Joe or make innuendoes that Papa Joe was "slow" and "ignorant" and wasn't aware of what was going on in the world. On a few occasions Papa Joe told him to get his "butt" out of our house. In turn, this annoyed my mother "Nanny Guarino". Thus, for a few weeks the atmosphere around our home was very "touchy".

At the time, Warsaw Avenue had not been completely developed as a street. It was only a graded mud road with gentle sloping ditches on

either side. All the children in the neighborhood used this street as a large playground. In the summer we played softball, baseball, football, hide and seek, and even English "Rugger" on this mud road. In the winter we played field hockey wearing only moccasins instead of skates. Later, with the help of all the neighborhood parents, due to the efforts of our parents, we were able to persuade the city of Winnipeg to flood some of the vacant lots that were located around the neighborhood. We built shacks close to the rinks using old discarded grain doors from railway box cars. Thus, we could put on our skates, in the warmth of the shed, and periodically during our skating come in to get warm. Usually someone would have an old wood stove of some sort that we could use as a heater in the shack. Often, one was fashioned out of an empty oil drum, and suspended on large concrete blocks on the mud floor, with a stove pipe through a hole in the roof. All the families in the two block area of Jessie Avenue and Warsaw Avenue east of Pembina Highway were deeply involved in community activities, and were very friendly and communicative with each other.

The "Prior" family lived next to my grandparents on the east side. My grandparents address was 473 Jessie and the Priors lived at 471. Mr. Prior was a streetcar conductor for the Winnipeg Street Railway, the forerunner of our present Transit system. He worked very erratic hours. He had to report to work three or four times each day. Basically at the peak hours that the travelling public used the street car service. There were few automobiles, and most people had to travel by streetcar to get to work. The Priors had a large family. The older children were boys and girls in their late teens, or perhaps even their early twenties. As a little boy I better remember the younger girls, Irene, and Dora. Irene was about my

age, and Dora was slightly younger than Vic.

The Huggins family lived next to the Priors on their east side. family. Mr. Huggins was a blacksmith in the C.N.R. shops. Their home was a gray, two storey structure, as was the Prior home. I believe the old Huggin's home is still intact on the corner of Warsaw Avenue and the lane running north to Jessie Avenue. The Huggins also had a large family, and while I recall the older girls, I never did get to know them well. However, Joey, Vic and I knew the younger boys, Jed, Walter and Teddy very well and were good boyhood friends.

The Marshall family lived next to my grandparents home, on the west side. My grandparents liked them very much, especially their two older girls, Tommy and Queenie. My grandparents had two younger daughters "Anna" and "Eva", who still lived with them. Both Anna and Eva were great friends of the Marshall girls. The Marshalls also had an older girl "Minnie", who later married George Harley, a young man who also worked in the CNR shops. After they married, they lived in an old home at the corner of Ainlie and Warsaw avenue, about two blocks west of Pembina Highway.

The "Sharp" family lived at 477 Warsaw Avenue, which was two doors west of my grandparents, or immediately west of the Marshall home. The neighborhood referred to Mr. Sharp, as "Old Joe Sharp", because he was so ill-tempered, ill-mannered, and grumpy, as well as being grossly overweight. His wife "Nellie" was constantly abused both verbally and physically by "Old Joe", who seemed to enjoy berating and browbeating her in the presence of all the neighbours. The "Pelletier" Brewery, which

was nearby on the east side of the Osborne Subway, delivered at least four or five "twenty-fours" of beer each week to the Sharp home. No doubt this contributed greatly to "Old Joe's" disposition and obesity. He was an upholsterer in the C.N.R. passenger coach yard of the Fort Rouge Shops, and his work mainly involved the maintenance and repair of the seats of the passenger coaches on the Railway. The Sharp's had a little boy, "Frankie" who one year older than me. Later, we became very close childhood and teenage friends.

I have vivid recollections of Mrs. Marshall and her nice daughters, Tommy and Queenie, who still lived at home with her. My recollections of Mrs Marshall and her home are still very vivid, because of the evening that my little brother "Joey" was born.

I remember that both my brother Victor and I were sent to Mrs. Marshall's home where we were given a very nice supper. I also recall that we stayed there because my grandmother was spending the evening with our mother. Both Queenie and Tommy were home and they talked and played with us. However, later in the evening when we expected to return to our home, they advised us that we would be spending the night with them. I don't remember where or how we slept, (maybe Vic might) but I do remember returning home around five or six o'clock the next evening. Both Vic and I were introduced to a newborn baby, (Our little brother "Joey"). Naturally, we were very surprised and also very intrigued in learning that we had a anew baby in our family.

Now in looking back at those years, I am always amazed at how our little family survived in that little four room home, that was so terribly

inadequate and primitive by today's standards. I don't recall my mother having a crib for little "Joey", and I can only presume that he slept with my Mother and Father. A few years later, my mother placed a Toronto couch in our living room, and Joey spent the next ten or twelve years sleeping in there until my father built an additional two bedrooms and a bathroom in our attic. As Joey became older (in his young teens), he used to look forward to the coming of summer, because then he could move out into the "unheated" verandah and sleep there until late fall.

Papa Joe could not play a musical instrument but he loved music, especially the Classics. As a five year old, I remember going to an Opera with him. I believe it was IL Trovatore, because the beautiful scene in which the Anvil Chorus was performed is still very vivid in my mind. Later, while attending Earl Grey Junior High School, I was greatly surprised when I heard the "School Song" played, because it was set to the music of Il Trovatore's "Anvil Chorus". We attended this Opera at the old "Orpheum" theatre which was located on east side of Fort Street, about a half block south of Portage Ave.

Around this period in my life, both Nanny Guarino and Papa Joe felt that I should learn to play a musical instrument, and because I had previously given some indication or preference for the violin, they planned to start me on it. I was given a lovely three quarter size violin, and arrangements were made for me to take lessons.

One evening, my father and I went downtown by streetcar, for my first lesson. We visited a young, small statured, curly haired, thin, mustached, Italian gentleman named Charlie Mazzoni. His studio was

located on the second floor of the Birks building, situated on the south-east corner of Portage Avenue and Smith Street. It was my first and also my last lesson with him, because he was terribly impatient, and totally inexperienced in teaching young children. I came away from this lesson with the feeling that learning to play the violin was likely going to become an agonizing task, and as far as I was concerned I wanted no part of it. Mr. Mazzoni was very demanding, and totally lacked patience, and expected too much, far too quickly from a young student. I thoroughly did not like or care for him and I suppose he too, felt the same way towards me.

One episode that occurred prior to my taking the music lesson with Charlie Mazzoni, and which still stands out in my memory is when Papa Joe stopped by a newsstand just prior to my lesson and bought a musical book or rather a magazine for me. It featured some of the great composers of all time, such as Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Verdi, Brahms, and others. I treasured that magazine and still have it today as part of "MY MEMORABILIA". Later in my life, my musical career placed me in direct contact again with Charlie Mazzoni, however it was in an employer-employee relationship. I played lead trumpet in his orchestra, at the supper dance at the Marlborough Hotel in downtown Winnipeg on Saturday evenings. Charlie had now become known as "Don Carlos". That is another story that I will relate to in a later section of this book.

It was rather fortunate that Mrs. Wilson, our informal neighborhood leader, and self-appointed representative for the area, had a daughter "Ruby", who was about six or seven years older than me. She

had been very successful in learning to play the violin. On several occasions, Mrs. Wilson had raved to my mother about Ruby's wonderful teacher. Nanny Guarino learned that Ruby's teacher was a Mr. Eddy Walker, who lived about a mile south of us, in the first block of Morley Avenue east of Osborne Street. Mr. Walker turned out to be a young, handsome, newly-married young Englishman, who was slight of build, dark, handsome, mustached, and extremely good natured. In contrast to Charlie Mazzoni, he was a very gentle, good-humoured and patient teacher, whose students loved him. In turn, he was able to not only get his students to deeply love their instrument, but he was also able to bring out the very best efforts of each student to perform to the very best of their abilities. Because of Eddy Walker's teaching and influence, I learned to play the violin very quickly. My studying with him, became a very enjoyable growth experience.

Each year Eddy Walker held a concert for his students, so their parents and friends could see the progress each one was making. It was the gala event of the year, and as students we practiced whatever musical selections that we would play at the concert for many months in advance of the concert.

I remember the very first concert in which I participated as one of Eddy Walker's neophyte students. For at least six months, I had practiced a very simplified, first level version of "Adeste Fidelis" for my first concert. I was to play it as a solo, illustrating the progress that a new student of five years of age could make after seven or eight months of studying. I am certain that my mother remembers "Adeste Fidelis", as well as I did, because I practiced it for at least half an hour a day for at

least six months, prior to the concert. Nanny Guarino, who at this writing is ninety-one years old, still gets quite a chuckle when we reminisce about how much I practiced that one musical selection over and over again. She certainly must have wanted me to learn to play the violin so very much, to have suffered the listening of my practicing one musical constantly for over six months.

Finally, the day of the concert arrived. Eddy Walker had arranged for the use of the church hall at Rosedale United Church, on Beresford Avenue, one block west of Osborne Street. My mother was very proud of me and had saved very diligently so that she could buy a lovely pair of white flannel trousers, and a navy blue jacket for me. She wanted me to look very good when I played my violin on concert stage. We left our home on Jessie Avenue allowing ample time, so that we would be relaxed, and hopeful that all would go well during my solo performance. When I took my violin from its case, and prepared to put rosin on my bow, I discovered that I had forgotten the rosin at home. Without it, my bow would not properly contact the strings and it would greatly affect the quality of the sound from the violin. Thus I made a critical decision (all on my own). Reasoning that we had approximately three quarters of an hour prior to the beginning of the concert, I decided to return home to get my rosin.

Without my mother knowing, I left for our home, which was about a mile away. (Looking back at this decision now, I realize that I should have simply borrowed some rosin from one of the other students who were performing at the concert.) I had another great surprise when I did arrive home. Our home was locked, and I did not have a key. Being young, and

resourceful, I easily overcame this problem. I remembered that I could get into the house by opening the coal chute doors from our back landing, and by going down the coal chute get into the coal bin in the basement. From there I was to get up to the main floor where I could get my rosin. This procedure worked fine, and I soon had my rosin and started back to the concert in ample time to take my place with all of Eddy Walker's students for the opening number. Usually he started the concert with all his students taking part, and similarly when the finale was played, all students were involved. After the opening selection, Eddy usually allowed the younger students to play their solos first. Being one of his youngest students, I was scheduled to perform my long practiced solo "Adeste Fidelis", as the second performer on the program.

Imagine my mother's horrendous surprise, when she saw me come on stage wearing very badly soiled white flannel trousers. I had badly soiled them by going down the coal chute of our home to get my rosin. All her frugal saving to purchase my fine white flannels had been in vain. However, there was a redeeming feature to the incident, because I did perform exceptionally well, in spite of wearing badly soiled white flannels. My dishevelled appearance caused a ripple of amusement and laughter from the audience.

It had been worthwhile for my mother to have heard the same piece of music rehearsed daily and repeated over and over, for the previous six or eight months prior to the concert. I performed exceptionally well for a little guy of six or seven and the audience applauded me, in spite of my comedic appearance with soiled white flannels. Thus today, a conversation with "Nanny", relating to my first violin concert and my

"new" white flannel trousers invariably brings back humorous, yet joyful memories of almost sixty years ago.

I progressed very well on the violin and it wasn't very long before my father arranged for me to audition with the Kelvin High School Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Padwick, the Conductor carefully listened to my audition and immediately placed me in the first violin section. The orchestra rehearsed in the old Kelvin High School Auditorium once a week, and Papa Joe always took me for these rehearsals. We took the Cordon Avenue Street car to Stafford Street, and transferred to an Academy Road streetcar, which brought us to Kelvin High School. Papa Joe loved to sit in the auditorium while the orchestra rehearsed, which sometimes lasted two and half to three hours.

He loved classical music. Once a month on a Saturday morning, our orchestra performed on CBC radio. The station as I remember was CKY, and it was located on the east side of Sherbrook Street, in the Manitoba Telephone System building, just south of Portage Avenue. Again, Papa Joe was intrigued with seeing the radio station in action. We performed in a studio which was sound proofed against any exterior noises. The announcer would advise Mr. Padwick as to when and how he should take his cue to start the orchestra. There was an "green" light signal that indicated when the station was "off" the air. Most importantly, when we went "on the air", the green signal light changed to "red".

The highlight of the year was the performance of the Manitoba High School Symphony Orchestra in the old "Walker Theatre" which later became the Odeon Theatre. It was located on Notre Dame Avenue

and Smith Street. It was a beautiful old theatre and I remember that it had three levels of seating, much like the Centennial Concert Hall of today. In one of the first concerts, Papa Joe took me to the theatre by streetcar, and we first visited one of his old Italian buddies that ran a restaurant on Portage Avenue, called the Venice Cafe. It was then, that I met my God Father, Mr. Gus Badali, who owned the Cafe and was one of Papa Joe's best friends. He and my auntie Dora were my Godparents when I was baptized. Today, the famous hockey play "Wayne Gretsky", has an agent named Gus Badali living in Toronto, who is a son of my father's old Winnipeg friend Gus Badali. Of Course my father "bragged" about his "gifted" son, who was going to perform in the fine old Walker Theatre, with a High School Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Badali was very nice, and along with treating me to an ice cream soda, encouraged me to play well and to continue to study.

I can very vividly recall that first performance with the symphony because I ended up watching the orchestra perform sitting in the third balcony with my father. Just as I had seated on the stage and had "tuned" my violin, I placed it horizontally under my right arm, and inadvertently disturbed the bridge, causing it to tip, and unfortunately break. I didn't have a spare, and with a broken bridge on my violin, I was totally inactivated. My father however, took this in his stride, and treated it accordingly as an "accident". Later, when I was to perform on subsequent concerts he always advised me to take care not to "break" my violin bridge.

Nanny Guarino loved to play the violin, and her repertoire consisted of jigs, quadrilles, schottisches, and assorted old time fiddling music. She

had learned these as a child playing the violin with her brothers, Joe, George, and Charlie, and her sister Jenny, as little children on the farm. Nanny was born in Altamont, Manitoba and spent her youth in the little village or town of St. Lupicin which was close to Altamont. Being a farm setting, at the turn of the century, farm people had to provide their own entertainment and amusement. The favourite musical instrument was the violin, and few if any of the youngsters had the opportunity to take lessons, so they learned to play "by ear", listening to and copying each other. I had learned a few basic chords on the piano, thus at the very early age of seven or eight I used to accompany Nanny on the piano when she played her "old time music". Papa Joe dearly loved music, and had an excellent voice. However, he did not have the patience, inclination or persistence to actually learn an instrument.

One evening he returned from downtown Winnipeg, and after an afternoon of shopping he unwrapped a large parcel which contained a Spanish guitar. (He couldn't afford to buy the case for it.) It wasn't an inexpensive instrument, yet he was very proud of it. The very next time Nanny and I started to play together, my father picked up his guitar and without tuning it simply strummed across the strings of the untuned guitar. He simply placed his fingers anywhere on the fingerboard and pretended that he had really mastered the instrument and was chording for us. Then he joined Nanny and me, as a rhythm guitar. The resulting "noise", was horrendous. In addition, he could not keep proper time and his joining us was terribly disconcerting and disheartening. Fortunately for Nanny and me, his ambition to play the guitar waned very quickly.

Over the next few years, he played it less and less, and finally he

only picked it up when we had company. He wanted to impress our company that he too could play an instrument. Some years later, when he had almost quit joining us, and his guitar was lying unused in his clothes closet, I started playing hockey on our neighborhood rinks, and I badly needed shin pads to protect the front of my legs and my knees. Another older friend of mine, Art Peake, who lived on Cordon Avenue, advised me that he had shin pads that would fit me. He was anxious to learn to play a guitar, and badly needed an instrument. Without my father knowing, I made a trade with Art; my father's guitar for a pair of hockey shin pads. It was several years later that my father learned of my trade. He thought it was "funny", because by that time, he had entirely lost his desire to play the guitar. He was much more content to just watch and listen to Nanny and I play.

During this period of my life, I had the opportunity to meet my great grandmother, my grandmother Michella's mother. The only name that I ever heard concerning her was "Nunna Calutza". She was very old and frail, and wore typical "peasant" clothes. I first met her when she lived in an old home on a central street Notre Dame avenue, close to where I was born (488 Notre Dame). She had married for a second time to a Frank Grano, who worked in the back shops of the CNR at Don Avenue and Osborne Street (site of the Winnipeg Transit Buses, today). Later she and Frank had moved into an old dilapidated house on Don Avenue, which Papa Joe had found for them. I vividly remember visiting them in their old run-down home and felt very ill at ease, because of the terrible condition of their home. It seemed to consist of only a living room which was also used as a kitchen, and a small bedroom, and a one piece

bathroom (consisting of only a toilet).

What I remember most of Nunna Calutza was her funeral. When she died, Papa Charlie and Nunna Michella (my father "Papa Joe's mother and father) had a "wake" for her in their home. I don't remember why or the cause of Nunna Calutza's death, but I do vividly remember her funeral. The tradition of Italian families at that time, was to have a "wake" in the deceased family's home. My grandparents lived in a run-down row housing development on Edmonton Street just south of York Avenue (near the present day convention centre), in the downtown section of Winnipeg. It was the slum area of that day, in the downtown section of Winnipeg.

After her death, Nunna Calutza's body was sent to Barker's funeral home on Donald Street, near Broadway for preparation. As soon as her body was prepared (embalmed, etc.) Barker's Funeral Home returned her body in a coffin to the Guarino residence on Edmonton Street (on the present site of the Sheraton Motor Hotel). The funeral directors found that they could not get the coffin through the front door and the small hall and negotiate it into the front living room. My father "Papa Joe" solved the problem. The living room had a large bay window overlooking the front street, so Papa Joe simply took out one of the large centre windows, and the funeral directors passed the coffin containing Nunna Calutza's body through it, into the living room. As soon as the Undertakers left, my three aunts, (Aunties Julia, Dora, and Lena) began their "mourning". Their mourning consisted of a hysterical wailing, and crying. This went on for three days and nights. Of course, other Italian families paid their respects, and on those occasions, the trio of my aunts's augmented their

wailing to "shrieking and yelling" as well as crying. It seemed that they were showing how much they cared for my grandmother by the intensity of their weeping, and wailing.

The burial was scheduled to take place in St. Mary's cemetery on South Osborne Street. The process of getting the coffin out of the home through the front room was repeated in reverse, and then the body was taken to the Church for a funeral mass. At that time, the Holy Rosary (The Italian church) was located on the corner of Sherbrook St. and Emily Ave (on the present site of the Re-hab Hospital). Of course, throughout the mass there was a tremendous amount of crying and wailing. Everyone (especially the women, and mainly my aunties were completely dressed in black, with black net veils covering their faces. The mass seemed to last forever, in actuality over two hours.

The funeral procession to the cemetery came next. Italian tradition called for the procession to "PASS BY THE DECEASED'S RESIDENCE" before going on the cemetery, at which point the procession stopped for a minute or so with the hearse stationed directly in front of the old residence. This was done as a gesture of "A LAST FAREWELL". My aunties continued with their crying and wailing during the entire church service and again were "uncontrollable" in the funeral car on its way to the cemetery. At the cemetery, it reached a climax, especially as the casket was lowered slightly into the grave. At that point my aunties wanted to have a last look at Nunna Calutza, and begged and badgered the undertaker to open the casket once more. When he did so, they began to lean over the casket, and kiss and caress my grandmother. They screamed that they wanted to be buried with her. Both my father and

my Uncle Gus had to forcibly pry them from the casket and return them to their waiting car in the funeral procession.

Italian custom also called for all of the immediate family to mourn for one full year. The women dressed entirely in black, and the men wore a black tie and black armband about three inches wide on their left arm for the full year. As a youngster, I found all this very confusing, especially when comparing it with the funerals held for the predominantly Anglo-saxon culture of Winnipeg at that time.

Many years later, when I was in my teens, and attended Grade XI at Kelvin Technical High School, the entire process was repeated again, when my grandmother "Nunna Michella" died. My grandfather "Papa Charlie", and my two aunts "Dora" and "Lena", along with my two uncles lived at 468 Spence Street. Nunna Michella had been sick and confined to bed for several years. She suffered from a congestive heart condition. My two aunts had made a bedroom of the living room, at the front of the house, and they did give here a wonderful amount of love and care. My uncle Gus was still a "single" man, and my other "adopted" uncle "Noel", who was one year older than me, also lived with them.

Eventually, my Grandmother Michella died in her bed in the front room of my grandparent's home at 458 Spence Street. Of course, the whole procedure of the "wake", funeral mass and cortege was repeated as with my great grandmother Nunna Calutza. But because it was their immediate mother, rather than a grandmother, the wailing and crying and even screaming was even more vociferous and intense. Even the events at the grave site were repeated. For Vic and myself and because we were

now very young men, we experienced terrible difficulties with the whole process. Papa Joe was adamant that we both wore dark clothes, and because I wore a tie and shirt while attending Kelvin, had to wear a "BLACK TIE" for at least a year. It was terribly embarrassing to constantly wear a black tie and a black armband. Both Vic and I solved that quickly, because as soon as we left home and were on our way to school, we would stop (we used bicycles) and take off our black ties, and change them for a normal tie.

Because my aunties were so deeply into their mourning, and at their request, Papa Joe persuaded one of the tinsmiths in the back shops of the CNR, to make a lantern, which had RED glass windows. Inside it, he placed an oil well and wick system used that was used on the tail-lights of cabooses, using coal oil (kerosene) as a fuel. This type of lamp could stay light for at least a week. Then he rigged a stand which held the lamp about two feet off the ground, and placed this on Nunna Michella's grave, in St. Mary's Cemetery on Osborne Street south. Her grave was only fifty or sixty feet from Osborne street, thus the lamp and its red light could be readily seen from Osborne street.

One evening after Mom and I became Boy and Girl friends, while Mom and I were walking by St. Mary's cemetery, Mom remarked about the "weird, red light" that could always be seen coming from the Cemetery as one passed by it along Osborne Street. It seems that many people felt that the Cemetery was "spooky" and "haunted" and that caused the red light. Mom had wondered about the spooky "red" light on many occasions herself. When I told her how the "Red light" came to be, she had a hard time believing me. We had many laughs together about the

silly antics of the traditions that were held and maintained by most of the Italian populace of Winnipeg during that era.

The mystery of the eerie, "weird ghostly red light" seen at night in St. Mary's Cemetery, which confused so many Fort Rouge and Riverview area residents for years, was finally solved for Mom.
