WHEN CAPITALISM CAME TO HACKMATACK STREET

by

J. E. Ofiara

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A Journal of the 1930s, By Sylvian E. Ofiara

Preface: Sylvian E. (Sinch) Ofiara was born in Manchester, Connecticut in 1926 and passed away in 2012. He attended Manchester High School, and he served in the Army Air Force during WWII. He worked for 20 years as a photographer at *The Manchester Evening Herald*, and for 20 years as a professor of photography at Manchester Community Collage. He freelanced throughout his photographic career, serving as the official photographer of the Connecticut Opera. In later years, Sinch volunteered as a photo teacher at the Senior Center.

He wrote this memoir over several years, and incorporated photos he had taken. More photos by Sinch and from Sinch's collection in the *Image Collections* section of the website of the Manchester Historical Society: www.manchesterhistory.org

Regarding the picture on the cover of this booklet, Sinch said:

This is what the contents of the pockets of my corduroy knickers might look like in the 1930s on a good day. Most days there would be only some copper and match covers that we collected because they were free as were current used postage stamps. If I lost a button I would have to produce one for my mother, who would sew it back on. I was always on the look-out for buttons to be used in this kind of emergency.

I was born in 1926, and grew up on Hackmatack Street, Manchester, Connecticut. I became aware of the world about 1931 or so, just in time for the market crash and the Depression that followed. It didn't matter to me that we didn't have much of anything but love. We didn't own stock. Our indoor plumbing consisted of a cold water tap in the kitchen. The old iron stove burned wood that was mostly free for the labor. Electricity consisted of bulbs in glass shades. In the living room there were three hanging down from the ceiling and two were shut off. They were seldom used so as to keep the light bill under $1.50 a month. Everything was scarce. Outdoor lighting, when necessary, was a kerosene lamp. Storm windows were unheard of.

Even if there was an ice box we could not afford the ice, so we didn't keep many perishables. Meat when we could afford it was bought for the day, except in winter when it could be stored in the pantry between the window and the screen. On a cold night my father would put bricks in the oven, and wrap them in cloth when they were hot and put them at the foot of the bed. My brother got scolded once for bringing a glass of water to his bedroom, where it froze on the nightstand.

I don't know what 'ism we were living under unless maybe poverty-ism.

For us, a good week was when we had time to go "upstreet," as we came to call it. Manchester had a nice Main Street, about a mile long, with lots of stores. It was about two miles from home, a nice walk on a nice day.

In the spring or summer, when time permitted we would take the walk through Miss Mary Cheney's gardens. The public was welcome. There were twin walks, separated by a fence and then a brick wall. One side was a formal flower garden; on the other side it was a rustic flower garden. On the formal side there was a fountain, roses, and polished marble benches. On the other side there were cedar benches and rough stone benches. It also had a babbling brook with wild flowers. Starting on Hackmatack Street and ending on South Main Street near Gould's Pond, this path was always a joy and I miss it. It was the best secret in town. It was replaced by Interstate-384.

On Thursday night all stores were open 'til nine. Everybody was there promenading. Many times we had nothing to buy or no money and we would window-shop and meet friends. I said in the past and I'll say it now – there is no place in the wide world I would rather be on Thursday night than Main Street, Manchester, Connecticut USA! You could buy almost anything you wanted. Everybody paid cash, if you didn't have the money you *saved* up for it, if you really needed it. Hales was our department store. They had everything from Santa Claus to yard goods to the first self-serve grocery store around, a butcher shop. Electric bills could be paid there too. C.E. House was next door, a men's clothing store. Manchester Plumbing Supply was our anchor hardware store. Weldon Drug, Quinn's, F.W. Woolworth's, Montgomery Ward, Keith's Furniture, Dewey-Richman, Triple X, Glenney's, Silbro's, Grants, and of course Marlows. The State Theatre and the Circle Theatre. The Rialto had closed up in my day. Silk City Diner, Tea

Room, Murphy's Restaurant and Bowling Alley, Davis Bakery, Everybody's Market, The Public Market, that moved out into the sidewalk in good weather. The Tiger Market, Popular Market, Magnell Drug, and Mary's Soda Shop, Peter's Chocolate Shop, Bergren Dairy, Watkins. Most doctors and dentists were on Main Street. It was the center of life in Manchester. The trolley ran down the middle of the street. When I was a little older and went upstreet alone things were best when I had some pocket money. Magnell made some of the best ice cream around and you could get a big scoop for five cents with six or seven flavors to choose from.

The Depression was quiet. Most sound cost money. There were few cars; radios were off most of the time. Gramophones needed attention to play them. There were no electric clocks, so you could hear a reassuring tick tock telling you the clock didn't need winding. No chain saws, no power lawn mowers, and no power anything! Piano practice could be heard, and slamming of screen doors and a dog bark, were about it. People did sing, whistle, or play the harmonica – you could buy one for a buck. On a quiet winter night you might hear sleigh bells. A car with a broken tire chain could be heard slapping the fender for miles until it got louder and passed the house. In the spring you could hear the peep frogs, and the whippoorwills. The rooster crowed and the cows mooed. On Main Street, the Salvation Army Band played. We had band concerts and parades with many full bands. Most people whistled a lot – they made their own music. Fourth of July was noisy. Fireworks were allowed but you couldn't buy them in town. Bolton however had road-side stands selling fireworks, or you could get them by mail order. The firecrackers could be heard at dawn on the Fourth. Then there was a fireworks show on the night of Fourth at the old golf lots, now the high school.

I was witness to a lot of firsts in our house. Our first radio – a used Montgomery Ward table radio – that was a hit. Pa would sit by the radio and look at his pocket Waltham watch, when it said six o'clock he would turn on the radio for the news and off when it was over. Later in the evening was different. Saturday night was Beetle and Baker, Lum and Abner, and Joe Penner. On Sunday nights was Jack Benny, Eddy Cantor, Fred Allen and during the week at supper time it was Jack Armstrong, Tom Mix, and the soaps: Oxydol Presents Ma Perkins America's mother of the air. And so on. At lunch it was Kate Smith. Right at that time, an American Airlines DC-3 flew over the house, low, going to Brainard Field. At first we would go outside to look at it. And then there was Vic and Sade, one of Mom's approved programs for young people. I think fondly of that little "Monkey Wards" radio, only one foot by seven inches by six inches, made of stained wood with cloth over the speaker. Boy did it change our lives! And it would still be playing except replacement tubes were hard to find.

It must have been sometime in 1936 that capitalism started to trickle in or did it start some time ago? New Deal? One history book says the peak of the Depression was 1937. Pa now had a steady job at Hamilton. In a year my brother and sister would graduate high school and find work.

I was ten now and began to become productive, the first step to being a capitalist. I was picking strawberries in season, two cents a basket, which soon became seven cents, then

ten, and so forth. I picked everything that Connecticut farmers grew. I found wild black raspberries in back of the old cart barn, easy “picken” and I could get twenty-five cents a quart.

When I was twelve I picked broad-leaf tobacco for two dollars a day. I shoveled snow, made and sold Christmas wreaths, I sold seeds door to door, also Christmas seals and *Liberty Magazine* or at least I tried to. There are still some of those Christmas seals around the house. Ma was my best customer.

There was a local entrepreneur named Ken. Over the years I think I bought everything he ever sold. But now it was *Liberty Magazine.* He would drive up to us kids on the street and start a conversation with us. In the back seat of his car he had new baseball gloves, new bats, footballs, books, model airplane kits and all sorts of stuff that young boys would like. "Do you see anything you like?" he would say to the bug-eyed kids who were looking into the back seat with wonder. “All you have to do is sell some of the world’s best magazines to your neighbors and friends, and you will earn points for anything that you like in the back seat, plus one cent for each and every magazine you sell.” Well, too good to be true, I sure would like one of those baseball gloves. I got ten magazines to sell. Sell to your neighbors or friends? I could not think of anybody who had five cents to spend so I walked all over town and got a lot of doors slammed in my face. By day’s end I sold one. That would make it one penny and one point. Next week he gave me a *Liberty* bag! Now I am a bag-carrying, official *Liberty Magazine* Boy! This week I sold three. The next week I sold one. I’m through! I can't sell! I quit. I made five cents and my father had to repair my shoes. I don’t know of anyone who ever got a baseball glove – probably why none of us made to the big leagues.

Working on tobacco was hard work, but two dollars a day! The broad-leaf tobacco was raised on smaller farms and they didn't check your working papers. You had to be 13. I was 12, but mostly you had to show you could do the work, and then they asked you to come back tomorrow. After the plants were suckered, we chopped the whole plant and it was speared on to a lath and hung on a wagon and brought to the shed. There the laths were poled up to fill the whole shed. The harvest took a couple of weeks. Shade-grown was more steady, five and a half days a week. The harvest took longer because you picked only the bottom three leaves and gently put them in a basket. When the basket was full, a dragger came with a hook and dragged the basket to a wagon, and it was tractored to the shed where the leaves were sewn on a lath and hung up to dry.

One day someone said two dollars a day was not enough so we decided to ask for more, or we would strike. We waited till mid day when lots of tobacco was picked and would wilt if not hung soon. We decided that those whose work was needed to help their families need not join us in the strike. We walked en masse and then Roy spoke up and said what we wanted. The straw boss pleaded with us to go back to work and he would try to get more money for us. We said, "NO", he pointed to Roy "You seem to be the leader of this, *YOU’RE FIRED!"* Roy walked down the road we all followed, *"COME BACK!"* the boss said. We went to work, the Cadillacs came from Hartford and soon we

were notified that we would get two dollars and twenty cents a day. Sometimes, I think this started the inflation spiral that continues to this day.

About the hardest money I ever earned was when Warren and I were at a really big carnival at Dougherty Lots on a Saturday night. About 10:30 or so someone asked us if we wanted to earn some money. Sure, we said, since we had none. “Come back at midnight to the Ferris wheels.” There were three. At midnight we were put to work. We were a gang and we took down one and a half Ferris wheels. Another gang took the rest down. When we were done, we were paid three dollars and asked if we wanted to join another gang. Sure. With that we started to dismantle the dodge-em cars. You may not realize that the cars ride on steel plates, about ten by fifteen feet by about an inch thick. They got about ten of us, kids and roustabouts, on either side and piled them on the truck. “One, two, three, yup,” and put the first plate on the truck. The pile got higher and higher so we ran up the planks to get the job done. Another three bucks. Now most of the carnival was loaded on trucks, some already had left for the next town. We got on our bikes and started for home richer but oh so tired. The sun started to come up, we barely spoke as we started for home almost falling asleep as we pedaled along. BOY! SIX BUCKS!

At harvest time, Pa made arrangements with a farmer to obtain potatoes for the winter. We, (Ma, Pa, Sister, Brother and Me) would pick a certain amount of potatoes to earn fifteen bushels to take home. The next week or so a horse and wagon would deliver fifteen bags of spuds. They were dumped into a bin in the cellar and the bags returned to the farmer. We were set potato-wise for the winter.

Then there was the Royal Ice Cream Factory! What a neat job for a couple of thirteen year olds, working in an ice cream factory! The war was on and all the sons of the owner of Royal were in the service. I was thirteen and Warren was younger. The stuff was mixed before we got there. The order was sixty dozen orange, fifty dozen grape, fifty dozen lime, twin pops sixty dozen choco pops, seventy dozen fudgicles. When we made Neapolitan pints it took everybody – Mrs. and Mr. Orfitelli, the young daughter, Warren, and me: One to open the box, one to hold the box under the multi-hopper, push the foot pedal down to fill the box, and one to close the box. Mr. Orfitelli would stack and tape six or twelve together and bring them to the freezer. He also kept the hoppers full.

On a summer day when the paperboy came down our street, my father or mother would send me over to the Newmans to pick up yesterday’s paper. Everyone was reading the *Manchester Herald,* except we were reading yesterday’s edition. At only two cents each, we could save the two cents.

In the summer on a clear evening you could hear the train whistle as the trains went through the Depot about five miles away. In 1933, the “Bullet,” a steam-powered freight train went off the track near the Depot. Since we lived so far away, my father didn't get any good salvage stuff. All the shoes were gone first. He did get enough toothpicks and wooden file handles to last for years. There are still some of those around. All this stuff was made in Maine.

My father always had a vegetable garden and sold all the surplus door to door. He raised more tomatoes than we could eat so as to raise some cash. Our table was full of vegetables all summer. He also made a superb basket which he also sold in all sizes and some to order. They were made of ribboned pine roots, willow sticks, and maple roots too. I still have two.

I remember Pa's cigarette machine; lick the sticky end of the paper, place it on the machine, sprinkle some Bugler tobacco in the indentation, push the roller, and like magic out came a cigarette. Then I would snip the ends to make it trim. Bugler was five cents a pack, enough to make thirty or more cigarettes, depending on how tight you filled them. We kids made corn-silk cigarettes, put a red dot on them with my sister's nail polish, called them "Red Dots," put them in old cigarette packs, and sold them. Our best customer was the paperboy.

Ma could patch any clothes we wore out or got torn. She had a collection of bits of cloth of all kinds and colors. The cloth she couldn't use she saved for the junk man. She made all her own clothes and made stuff for us, too. Pa could mend shoes; he had pieces of leather, an awl, and lots of those tiny nails. He made a pair of shoes once. When Ma would buy me a pair of shoes he would look them over as to their construction and would be able to fix them.

We raised rabbits for food. Most people had chickens, but Ma thought they were too noisy and the coop always had an odor. I must have been twelve or so before I had tasted chicken. Well, I hadn't eaten spaghetti or macaroni, as we called it, until then either. Ma would make noodles from scratch using surplus dough when she made pierogis. Then they were covered with melted salt pork – Yum! Ma would boil a ham that would last a long time, good for sandwiches. She made soup from a soup bone and different things were added to it all week, mostly leftovers, so it tasted a little different each day. Campbell's tomato soup was the only one bought in a can, that was her favorite.

Pa and his cronies talked about beer in a can and what a bad idea that was. He always drank beer from a bottle or draft. Stews were popular – one pot would make many meals; Ma added to it as she did with the soups. When she bought hamburger, she chose the meat only if it looked good and had the butcher grind it in front of her. She would make patties with egg and onion, etc. – more like a meatloaf.

We always had round, sour rye bread from a local Polish baker who delivered. My brother and I would fight for the first piece with butter; that was the best. All bread and milk was delivered. We sold junk to a Junk Man, "Cash Pay for Rex" [Cash Paid for Rags]. He came with a horse and wagon, like the fish man did. The only fish we ate was when I caught some pumpkin seeds. There even was a FRO-JOY ice cream man who came on occasion with a red and white horse-drawn wagon – a Mr. H, who on occasion had a few at Forest Tavern and would be put in his wagon and the horse would walk him home. Designated motor! And Mr. L. had a smart horse and a sulky and rode it around town on Sundays.

Of course, all the farmers plowed the fields with teams of horses. Hay was cut and raked and baled and delivered to the hay barn with horses. It was nice to smell the new mowed hay as it dried in the fields.

There was a watering trough at the terminus and at the center for horses. My uncle had two horses, Dick and Jack. On a summer's day he would go to the auction market on Charter Oak Street. On his way home he would stop at our house and, give me a banana, and sometimes I was allowed to ride to the farm, and then my mother would come later. On Keeney Street it is mostly up hill so Jack would go slowly, at about the Keeney Street School, there is a little more hill so Jack would go slower still. My Uncle John would hand me the reins and I would be in control – we all knew Jack was going to behave on the hill.

There were still some horses in town in the 1930s. There was Archie's livery stable at the end of Purnell Place in back of Main Street. Some days you could smell them – the smell of horse urine on the street and always the horse doughnuts in the street. We would watch the back and forth of the Rogers Paper Mill team of horses that carried pressed paper board from their mill on Charter Oak Street to their mill on the corner of Prospect Street and Hartford Road, about two miles. Cheney Brothers had their farm in back of us on Farm Drive, with cows, bulls, chickens, ducks, but no horses in my day. We lived in an R.O. Cheney house. R.O. Cheney was a loner who had his own farm and a cluster of buildings – a hay barn, a wagon shed, another shed and a horse barn, a farm house, and a two-family house. That's where we lived for twelve dollars a month. There were two horses, too.

My first school was the South School, grades one through six, about two miles away and a nice walk on a nice day. Walking to and from school was the best part of my day. I guess that's why I still like the outdoors to this day. I feel sorry for the kids of today who have to go to school in a big ugly yellow school bus, just so we in cars can go faster. If we all drove 15 miles per hour even a six-year-old could walk safely to school. But who would go for that? We are already late for work.

The site committee for the South School must have been inspired, a three-room school with a large pond called the "Resie" (reservoir) on one side and the pine woods in back in a neighborhood of some of the smartest houses in town and the golf links across the pond. We would fish in the pond with sticks, string, and a safety pin for a hook. We would catch pumpkin seeds and bullheads and perch. We, as older students, swam in back of the woods, boys only. We called it "B A B" [bare-ass beach]. In the winter we would ice skate on the pond, only after the older boys would cut a hole and verify the ice was six inches or more thick. We would put our skates on in class, thinking the teacher would not see. When the bell rang it was clunk, clunk, clunk! Down the hall, out the door, down the bank and on to the ice. On weekends ice boats would glide back and forth, sometimes as many as six or seven. Across the road on Ice Pond, where ice was once harvested, people would fish through the ice for pickerel. On a nice Sunday a couple of small airplanes would circle the neighborhood making a lot of noise and land on the

"Resie," on the ice, $2.00 a ride. Everyone came, but few took the ride. Most came to look and to talk to one another – it was a public gathering. On a nice Sunday afternoon everyone skated, young and old. There were warming fires at different parts of the pond, each for a different age group. We skated anywhere there was ice – large frozen puddles, frozen swamps, homemade ice rinks. I do not remember anyone ever getting hurt there. Wet maybe, and tired? Yes. Happy? YES! Too much snow to remove from the ice would send us to Sunset Hill for sliding or skiing. None of this cost any money, which was good because we had none. We got along without a snack. Lots of fresh air and exercise and friendship. You should see the old skates, some c1amp-ons. None were sharp. No one complained. We were never mistaken for a fashion show or the Olympics.

South School, from an old post card, 1930

There was always nice scenery in all seasons out every window at South School. Class would stop to look at a deer or pheasant in the meadow across the way. Now, they boarded up the windows. I thought it was the best school in the world, and as I have traveled around I still think so. Walking to school sometimes, I would hear the wind whistling through the spokes of Miss Mary Cheney's chauffeured electric car. She would wave at us. Mrs. Walsh, on a nice day would drive their wicker two wheeler cart pulled by Bonny, their pony. She would be bringing Mary Lu to school, and if I was alone she would pick me up for the ride too.

In the fall it was hard to walk past Turner's Orchard when the Macs were ripe. Or Bucks Store with Mr. Buck's superb variety of penny candy, but you had to have a penny. A penny could do so much. It gave me power, I felt rich. Then, there were the walks across Sunset Hill, a pasture for Cheney Brothers, and there were built-in step ladders to make an easy crossing of the hurdle fence without having to open a gate. That was Cheney Brothers, first class.

I could tell you little stories about the South School, three rooms, two grades to a room. For my second year they moved the classes to two rooms, now three classes to a room,

and only two teachers. You heard the fourth-grade lecture, then the fifth-grade lecture, then the sixth-grade lecture. So you did each class three times.

After school and weekends and in the summer it was touch football on the tea greens across from Bucks Store. I have seen a lot of good football games; Yale, Army, Navy, Syracuse, Penn State, but the best games of all were the games on the tea green when Gordon T. come out to play; he was the fastest human that I ever encountered. We would make a strategy and gang up on him and could never touch him. He was killed in World War II. I always said the bullet had to have got him in the back, because if he saw it, he could have outrun it.

Our gang on Hackmatack Street about 1936

I have my arms around two brothers from the Bronx who spent their summers in town.

One day Pa found a six foot plank, 6' x 12" x 2." After much thought, he figured he could make a nice bench up against the house. He got some 2 x 6's and went to work – solid as a rock. Remember, there were no lawn chairs then. When people sat outside, they brought out wooden kitchen chairs. The neighborhood men came to look the bench over, all agreed, a fine piece of work. These men I'm sure didn't have fifteen cents between them. Pa asked me to get everyone some water. This I did with enthusiasm, four glasses of cool water from the tap. None of the glasses matched, a jelly jar, a cheese jar, and two glasses of different shapes. These men all told me what good water it was – you would think it was vintage wine.

The root cellar was a common thing. Most homes in this part of the country had earthen cellar floors. Water in the cellar was also a common thing. In our home on Wetherell Street we had a room in the cellar that was insulated with heavy pressed cardboard. Harry Bowers who built and lived in the house was an innovative man. In this cold storage root cellar there were seven bins with adjustable walls. Here, my father kept all kinds of roots vegetables: turnips, carrots, beets, potatoes, horseradish, parsnips, and russet apples. My mother would send me down to the cellar to get six potatoes or five carrots. I didn't know

you could get the same at a store. Dad also made pickles and his favorite sauerkraut. Onions and dill were hung on the wall. In this cold storage room there was a window that was open to keep the temperature as close to forty degrees as possible.

There were few or no fat people during the 30's and 40's. Who could afford that much food? And we walked everywhere; I figured I walked about 35 miles a week. I ate lots of vegetables, and very little meat. This I call the Depression Diet. You had to go to a circus to see a fat person, we were all skinny.

Pets were not like today. Dogs were guard dogs chained outside and made a lot of noise when strangers came around; they were usually mongrels. They were not lap dogs, they were never allowed in the house. They kept the foxes out of the chicken coop and other animals off the property. They kept woodchucks out of the garden, deer away from the shrubs, and kept skunks away too. Some dogs were kept for hunting. Cats were good mousers or you got rid of them. They were put in the cellar to keep rodents out of the root cellar. Cats, like dogs, were fed scraps. Who could afford another mouth to feed? They, like us, were skinny. Chickens and rabbits were for food. Pigeons were the exception, some people kept them for racing and homing. Some were eaten – squab. Kittens or puppies were pets until they grew up. Horses were for plowing or wagon-pulling not much for riding. Everyone came to see the new calf at my uncle's farm. There were people like Allie or Babe who always had a squirrel, baby skunk, or a crow as a pet. Others hunted squirrel for food. There was no dog or cat food aisle in the supermarkets.

We kids collected all sorts of bugs, lightning bugs and butterflies were most popular, but we tried everything: frogs, snakes, tadpoles; frog eggs were great – you could watch them hatch. Ant farms were always attracting lookers. You could get a chameleon at the circus or a small turtle at Woolworth's. We collected most everything that didn't cost money; rocks, stones, shells, wild flowers (that were pressed into books), match covers, bubble-gum cards one-cent each; and buttons – we had a jar of found buttons, good for repair when you lost one. Stamps were big time, you could go world wide and learn geography, or go rare. Coins were mostly spent, not collected.

Then there was saving. You saved everything, everything had a second use. Paper bags, string, boxes, and jars. You could make a garden watering can by punching holes in the bottom of a tin can with a nail. Oh, yes, you saved used nails, straightened them out and used them again. Not much was thrown out by anyone; town trash collection was only twice a year. And most barrels on the curb were only half full.

Summer was a fun time. The weather was nice and the woods were not far. Our woods had wild high-bush blueberries and we picked them. On an early morning we would all go down to pick. By noon we had a fair amount and went home for lunch. Ma would start cooking the blueberries on all burners of the wood stove which had been started earlier. After lunch my dad and brother and I went back to the woods to pick more. My mother and sister stayed home and started the canning. When we came back with more berries the first batch was already canned and cooling. So the second batch was started. The cooked berries were put in quart size Ball jars. It was some time before I saw jam in cute

little store jars. Come late summer my mother would ask me to go down the cellar and get two jars of blueberries, we were going for a walk to Mrs. White's house. She would present Mrs. White with the blueberries and receive two jars of peaches. She had two Hale Haven peach trees in her yard. By winter time our pantry was stocked with all varieties of stuff.

Soda was as rare as ice cream. We would get a couple of bottles of homemade root beer from Mrs. H. Soda cost a nickel, my nickel was best spent on ice cream, candy was the second choice. Water or milk was the drink. Water was free and good. Cool too, especially if you pumped it from a well or got spring water. There were bubble fountains here and there, later coolers. A favorite place for me was the boiler room in back of Cheney Brothers' office. This was a big boiler that made heat for all the mills and offices south of Hartford Road. You went in there through an open door where it was HOT! I was welcome; Mr. S. was a friend of my father. They had an ice cooler and a super drink. When you were working at a farm they would have a bucket of well water and a dipper. I got a bottle of soda at a wedding or when Al would bring me in the back door of the dance hall where we could mooch a bottle. Coke was mixed at a fountain in the drug store – five cents for a six-ounce glass. That went too fast for me. Then came Pepsi, twelve-ounce bottle for a nickel. That was a lot to drink, but it got a lot of us started on the soda, which is sugar water. Juices came later. In the summer Ma would make a large pitcher of lemonade, fresh squeezed, it didn't always have ice.

Transportation was mostly by foot. Most everyone walked everywhere. Bikes were used a lot too. My first and only bike was second-hand and cost two dollars. It was old but sound. Bikes were considered transportation, not toys. I rode to Hartford once, an eighteen-mile trip. And Columbia Lake once, a forty-something-mile trip. Those long hauls were best done hitchhiking. As a kid you could easily get a ride. When you were older you were expected to have the coin to take a bus or trolley, if it was going where you were going – or you walked. Cars were not that common in our neighborhood in the thirties, although I knew someone who owned one.

My cousin Vic could make any old junk run. Gas was nine cents a gallon. During WWII, you got an "A" sticker good for three gallons a week; "B" and "C" stickers were hard to get unless you were a doctor or something. Automobiles were not that reliable especially the old used cars that were in my neighborhood. Maintenance was an expense. They were noisy, dirty, cold in the winter and hard to keep going. You needed a tool kit and some knowledge of how it runs. A tire kit and a jack to fix flats were good, too. Cars could get stuck in mud or snow. You needed some chains for snow a blanket to keep warm in winter and be prepared to walk the rest of the way. In winter they were hard to start, batteries lost there charge, and anti freeze would boil over or leak. The gas stations were full of cars to be unfrozen or their batteries charged. Tomorrow you might have to do the same thing over again. Even with good conditions it gave you a bumpy ride. Some people put their car up for the winter. My sister put her car on blocks in the barn till spring. You could travel by train to New Haven. I never took a train from Manchester Depot. When my brother was drafted into the service the draftees left by train from that Depot for Fort

Devens. We would go to Hartford and take the excursion to New York, two dollars and fifty cents round trip. In 1939, we went to the World's Fair in New York City. We went by foot, to the bus, to Hartford by train, to Bridgeport, by boat to New York then by subway to the Fair. The Fair had its own motorized train that played a happy tune, "East side west side all around the town," but mostly we walked.

Cheney Brothers

Cheney Brothers made Manchester a "City of Village Charm." It was hard to hear something bad about Cheneys. They built the High School, Fire Department, Police Department – the list goes on and on. They had their own farm, in my day they raised cows, chickens, and ducks. They had their own railroad albeit, the shortest in the country. We would see it run on the south end, it crossed Hartford Road and blocked traffic until it unhooked the car by the dye house. Cheneys owned many nice houses that were rented to their workers. They built a country club, eighteen holes and had many acres of woods, now watershed. And their mills were like a campus – always neat and clean. There was a man with a broom and a barrel on wheels who swept the streets and sidewalk all day long. There was never a gum wrapper anywhere. I'd walk Pine Street at noon when the whistle blew and all the workers emptied out into the street and walked home for lunch, maybe two bikes and one car. Cheney Brothers had a one-armed messenger who went from building to building on a bike delivering messages like a mailman. You could go into each building if you had business there, like seeing your dad. On weekends, it was all quiet on Hartford Road from Main Street to the main office. There were gas lamps and you could see the lamp-lighter light each one at dusk. Cheneys also had a greenhouse and a patch about fifty by fifty feet of new grass mowed like a golf green. This was used to patch any bad spots in their lawns.

I used the Great Lawn as a short cut on Sundays to get to the movies and there were Mary Cheney's gardens as I mentioned above – open to the public.

During World War II, parachutes were made in Manchester at Pioneer Parachute, affiliated with Cheney Brothers. You had to be sixteen to work there, so on my sixteenth birthday, I walked into Cheneys' main office looking for work. I filled out the applications and was told to go downstairs to take a physical. The nurse told me Dr. Knap was not in today. I saw RED! I waited sixteen years and he took the day off? I whirled out of the building, got on my bike pedaled the six miles to Hamilton Standard Propellers and I started work that night, second shift badge and all, now I was a defense plant worker.

Cheney Hall was set up as a retail fabric outlet. The State Theater became the entertainment center. We would make a detour to make sure we went by Cheney Hall to see the limousines with the far away license plates like New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, or Rhode Island. Sometimes you could see the chauffeur out dusting the Lincoln or LaSalle. They came to buy silk. Downstairs there were remnants for sale and cravats that were seconds, with flaws, for a buck or fifty cents or a quarter. Many a father in Manchester wore a twenty-five-cent-er as a Fathers day gift. There were those very

colorful Japanese labels, from silk worm and raw silk bales that kids had in scrap books. They were collectible.

Silk was quickly being replaced by synthetics like nylon or rayon and there are all kinds of stories why Cheney Brothers did not convert. The mills were sold and resold and then shut down. They are now apartments.

I met Frank Cheney, Jr., Miss Mary, Mabel and others were pointed out to me as they walked around town or hiked Sunset Hill. The Cheneys were never flamboyant they were more conservative and proper in their manner. Their moral fiber was as strong as their silk fiber. The Cheneys dominated town politics for a long time, their influence was beginning to wane in the 40's, maybe sooner.

Play Ball!

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, in the summer, weather permitting it was twilight baseball at the Four Acres on the West Side – the PA's, BA's, West Side, Bluefields. Seven innings of good ball. We kids would go to the games, right after supper and if we were lucky we would be picked by Nick, who also ran the concession stand, to hold the box while he sold tickets for the drawing of "five bucks." The box was to hold the stubs, ten cents a chance, three for a quarter. Our pay would be anything at the stand that cost five cents. The kids would shag foul balls, too. There were only two balls for each game and the foul balls had to be thrown in quickly. Most people walked to the games; some drove and parked in the outfield and tooted their horns instead of cheering or clapping. The games were of good quality.

Childhood pursuits

Learning to whistle with your fingers was an accomplishment. The bigger boys could do it and showed their manhood often. I would try and try when I was alone, until I got a headache. With no success for the longest time, then once it happened! But could I do it again? Not at first, but later I could. Now I could show off!

When the iceman saw a red card in the window of a customer, he would stop his red truck and note the number that appeared on the top of the card; this number indicated the size of the piece of ice the customer wanted. Soon all the kids who were within eyesight of the parked truck gathered around to catch any flying piece of ice as the ice man chopped blocks apart with his ice pick. These pieces of ice were a delight to suck on – a cool refreshing treat. Sometimes the ice man would make some small pieces for us kids.

Carnivals came to town often, at the lot on Main Street where the old library was and where the Webster Bank is now, or at the lot where the 7- 11 is on Main Street. They were mostly small carnivals, sponsored by the local American Legion or the K. of C. They usually had one Ferris wheel, one merry-go-round and swings. There were games of chance, mostly with numbered wheels, where you could win a stuffed animal (Teddy bear) or a gilded and painted plaster figurine, or a walking stick with a porcelain knob handle or some kind of trinket. They also had a bingo tent and a snack tent, with refreshments like hot dogs, coffee, soda, cotton candy, ice cream, candied apples and

popcorn. These tented shows lasted a week. Occasionally a larger carnival came to Dougherty Lots: They had more rides and an act at nine p.m. – a high-wire act or a high diver act, touted as "60 feet in the air into a 6 foot tank of water." Once I saw the Tex Zeke Motorcycle Act. Two or more motorcycles went loop-the-loop in a steel ribboned globe, narrowly missing each other, with a loud roar and lots of smoke.

The biggest carnivals came to East Hartford, like the Coleman Brothers shows or Streit Brothers shows from Middletown. They had sideshows like "Vanitease" or the half-man half-woman – no one under sixteen admitted.

Circuses came to Dougherty Lots on Center Street, too. Hunt Brothers circus had three rings plus a Wild West show. Sometimes there was a circus parade on Main Street, starting at the terminus (Charter Oak and Main Streets) going north to Center Street, then to Dougherty Lots. We would watch it on Main Street, jump on our bikes, go up Forest Street to Pine Street, down to Center Street and watch the parade again. One year they had Tim McCoy riding on a palomino. He was a western movie star.

Neighbors

We knew so little of our neighbors' and friends' personal lives that we thought of them as ideal. No one pried. We had respect for one another. We had trust for one another. We had no crime. We almost never locked the door; even if we did, you could use a hairpin to open it. We lived in a mixed neighborhood – eight houses away the W's lived with a three-car garage with three cars: a LaSalle at the top and a pony! Some didn't have an indoor toilet. But there was harmony in the neighborhood. There were state ward kids. There were Polish, Hungarian, German, French, English, Irish, Italian, and Yankees.

You could mail a letter for two cents if you didn't seal it, second class, always a red stamp. First class was a purple stamp and green was a penny stamp. Brown was a cent and a half, that was third class mail (junk), blue was five. We didn't see many high value stamps.

Dwaine came from New York to spend a week with relatives in Manchester. He, like most of us, was a little sweet on Jean. He asked her for a kiss and after a while she agreed, but not in front of her house. So they went behind some spruce trees, when they were finished I asked, "What was it like?" He answered, "Like a chocolate milkshake." Well, I didn't care for chocolate milk shakes; at 12 that did it for me and girls for some time. I never did acquire a taste for chocolate milkshakes.

In wintertime runny noses were always running. Boys sometimes used their sleeve to wipe their nose. Miss Washburn said "Rudy, don't you have a handkerchief?" Everyone in class winced and turned away; they did not want to see that frayed rag that had not been washed in some time. It had everything from fish scales to mustard to blood to human mucus of varying colors plus fishhooks, dirt, string, and some unidentified pieces of stuff.

The whole outdoors was our playground. We had a brook, with trout and marsh marigolds, two ponds within walking distance and the "Resie" and ice pond by the school. These were good for fishing, swimming, boating, ice skating, ice fishing, and general adventure and exploring. I thought every kid should have the same. There was Gould's pond, but it was polluted and good only for skipping stones when it didn't stink. Tar brook was also polluted. It had suckers that were good for spearing. Spearing was not that popular. The W farm had a small pond fed by spring water and too cold for swimming. You could get frogs there until farmer W. saw you, but the farm house was some distance away so you could get into the woods before he got there.

Darling farm had some nice hills for sliding or tobogganing. There was also a good stand of hickory trees that produced some nice pig nuts, we built "gigs," a plank six feet or more, two axles, four wheels, with a rope for steering, and we were in business. We needed a hill like Spring Street and we were off. Six to twelve of us would run along side and jump on like a bobsled team, and we had a merry ride. In the winter we put runners on it, and slid down the street. Car traffic in the evening was nonexistent. Every neighborhood had at least one empty lot – that would be our ball field. There were pick-up games going most of the time. We played hide and seek and scattered all over the neighborhood.

Robert asked, "Do you have a peach basket?" He got on my shoulders and nailed the bottomless basket to a telephone pole and we were introduced to basketball. Any ball would do.

At the pond we hung a rope from a tree so we could swing out and splash into the water. Camping out in the woods would take a rope tied between two trees and a blanket thrown over it and rocks to hold the ends down. If it rained we got wet. Swiping some potatoes from the potato field, we put them into a hot wood fire and left them to be roasted while we played games or told ghost stories. The potatoes were hot, but good eating, when we could wait until they were done.

Bike riding was a sport and fast transportation. We didn't know you needed special clothes to bike ride. Roller-skating was popular. And when you were walking, kicking a tin can kept you occupied. If you found a pair of beer cans that were opened with a key, you could stomp on the center hard so as to collapse the center and the edges would clamp on your shoes and you could *clunk, clunk* as you walked.

All of this we did unsupervised and I don't remember anyone that got badly hurt. Then we were exposed to the "Iron Playground" at the Four Acres on the West Side – we had never seen anything like it! Steel swings, steel and wood seesaws – a kid could get hurt there! And they did. We went to the Four Acres mostly to see the ball games in the Twi-Light League, the track meets, and the band concerts.

We didn't have Lotto; we had pinball machines, no prizes. This was extra money for small lunch counters, etc. Some places had punch boards – you would have to ask and if they had one they would bring it up from under the counter and let you punch one. A

little pleated piece of paper would appear underneath, when you unfolded it; it would reveal what you won. A piece of candy, some money, or most likely nothing, some boards would cost more to play to win bigger prizes, I never got hooked on either. Money was too hard to come by; I wasn't much of a money gambler.

During my freshman year at Manchester High School we had an hour for lunch. Those who lived close by, or could use the trolley or bus to get home for lunch, did so, the rest of us brown-bagged it. On the occasion when me and five cents were a couple I would go to Mary's Soda Shop and buy a bottle of Pepsi, 12 oz., five cents. At about a quarter of one, students began to gather, walking, by trolley or by bus. This was the biggest informal gathering of the whole student body. The upper classmen were our role models. Magnell Drug was mobbed especially when the weather was bad. From there you could hear the first bell from across the street at five minutes of. The "bad boys" sat on the pipe fence next to Keith's Furniture store and smoked cigarettes. Some played catch on the lawn in front of the Franklin Building. What fun and exciting times! Sometimes we would linger in the Education Quadrangle and listen to Nate Gatchel, a teacher, talk about most anything. Other times we would go to Mary Cheney's gardens and eat our lunch by the brook. This all changed when they made a cafeteria and the one-hour lunches were gone forever. Part of the war effort.

Ice cream cones, from our perspective, started at Magnell Drug store right here in Manchester. To get a good ice cream cone you needed a ride to Dutchland Farms in East Hartford; they had many flavors. Howard Johnson had 28 flavors but the drive was even further. Not every family had a car in the thirties. When we took a ride in the country you could run into the Good Humor man in his little truck parked by the side of the road. Back home, Magnell started to make their own ice cream. They also got the new scoop that rolled the confection and it would appear that you were getting a super-big scoop. What a hit for only 5 cents. Soon Mary's Soda Shop made ice cream too, and the flavor war was on. Maple walnut, orange-pineapple, Bing cherry. Then Bergren Dairy opened a store on Main Street. Kids were walking and licking, up and down Main Street. Later, in the 1940s, Shady Glen opened near the Bolton line. They had a big parking lot, because people started to buy cars.

We had few appliances. This made for cost-free low maintenance. Power failures were no big deal. Electricity replaced the candle or kerosene lamp.

It was 1938, I think, that we went on the great picnic. United Aircraft invited all of its employees to a day at Lake Compounce in Bristol. It was a Saturday when we got on a Connecticut Company bus in Manchester for the 30-mile ride to the amusement park. Each worker got two strips of five-cent tickets, amounting to two dollars for each member of his family. Some people couldn't go, so they passed on their tickets to a fellow worker. I was allowed to invite my friend Buddy to come. The buses stretched for what seemed like miles, toward our destination. I never saw so many busses. The tickets were good for anything at the park. Ice cream five cents; merry-go-round ride five cents; soda five cents; beer five cents, you get the idea. What a day. Roller coaster, speed boats, swimming, penny arcade, I had never seen such a place. Orchestras playing, dancing,

contests, shows – never a dull moment – and all free. We did it again the next year, and then the War came with gas rationing and the picnic was no more.

Colors

Bright colors were scarce in the 30s. Nature had the franchise, like in the red of blood or the vibrant color of blooming flowers. We were muted where color is concerned, even our complexions were pale except when Mother Nature brought the temperature below freezing and we were out walking somewhere, and she turned our cheeks apple red. When autumn came and the leaves of all deciduous growth needed to fall, she had chosen the bright colors of the spectrum to tell us the seasons are changing and winter is coming. A brief sighting of a rainbow, that was talked about for some time. I haven't seen an aurora borealis since the 30s. Before television and air conditioners we would sit on the warm concrete steps that faced the west, to watch the colorful setting sun. There were the new greens at spring and the blues of the sky. The edible delights like carrots, tomatoes blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, cherries, apples, all had their spectacular color. Can you beat the color of a ripe peach? Nature had all the bright colors in their season. Man was dirt poor and our attire was of earthen hues, not to form a graven image. Dyes were unstable even more then, than now, and quick to fade and unable to withstand the harsh soaps. Men's sweaters were brown, black, forest green, maroon, and navy blue. Cars were about the same, mostly black. Young girls wore a little more color, but not lipstick – that was truly a sign of a "fallen woman." Houses were, white, brown, some barn red or natural colors like red cedar, or brick red. Mail trucks were olive green as were mailboxes. The phone company – SNET (Southern New England Telephone), had deep green trucks too. Phones were black and radios were brown. Movies were black and white; so were newspapers and snapshots. TV too, when it finely came, was black and white. Magazines had some hand-painted colors. Not many things you bought came in a package, only brown paper bags. Christmas wrappings were white, no ribbons, only red or green string instead of the usual white. We had no traffic lights; they did string up colored lights across Main Street at Christmas. People would go upstreet just to see the lights. Colored lights on Christmas trees were few and only blue, green, yellow, and red. We wouldn't be caught dead in a bright color anyway. We must have been dull to look at, but everyone had a cheery "hello."

Summer

On a nice summer Saturday Mr. P. would start to polish his 1932 Chrysler. His son and daughter would help. Soon all the neighborhood kids, about four or five, were helping, too. It took lots of rubbing and it came out sparkling. Our pay was a ride to Uncle Matt's garage for some gas – ten gallons for $1.00, Atlantic White Flash Plus! And some ice cream for the polishers. I do remember gas for 9.9 cents, but no one bought more than a dollar's worth.

Water was good, the drink of the day. There were bubbler fountains everywhere – in schools, on the street, playgrounds, parks, gas stations, and the boiler room at Cheney Brothers, on ice. On the farm there was a well with a pump and we all knew where the springs were. Working on tobacco there was a water wagon. On the small tobacco farms, there was a jug of water or a pail with a dipper. Lemonade was the second drink in

summer, made fresh by the pitcher, and with ice, if you had it. Soda was very rare – twice or three times a year – maybe a bottle of homemade root beer, and then back to water.

Apples and other fruit

I never heard of anyone buying apples, at least not in my circles. Everyone had a fruit tree in their yard and you would share. We had a big old apple tree of unknown variety and poor yield, it was good for climbing and it had a crotch you could sit in, like on a horse. The tree was big enough for a swing, made of two ropes and a two foot by six inch board. Our neighbor had two Seckel pear trees. At harvest time everyone was eating them. Some were canned. Our old tree's apples were good for applesauce, fritters, or apple pie.

The 1938 hurricane knocked over our old apple tree and a lot others in the local orchards. The popular apple had been Baldwin, but it was a late apple, although the best for cooking. When the orchards were replanted after the hurricane it was the sweeter, shinier Macs (Macintosh), that were planted and I guess a favorite right up to the present time – a great snack food.

When we moved to our own house it came with five acres and two "Banana Apple" trees, a Northern Spy, and a Russet. Russets were a winter apple; they kept well. We also had a German Plum tree, that with some care yielded bumper crops. My father and brother planted the latest thing: dwarf fruit trees. Cherry, pear, peach, and at least five different apple trees. Pruning and spraying increased the yield and quality; we gave a lot of windfalls away. Pa would sell the good looking Banana Apples.

Now we got visitors –Japanese Beetles, thousands of them, they ate all ripe fruit. And my mother's flowers, we picked the beetles off by hand and put them in a jar half filled with gas or kerosene. A good thing they didn't bite. Along came DDT to the rescue –it killed them quick. We were also "knocking lots of other things dead," the researchers told us after a couple of years. Almost killed all the bluebirds. So it was soon banned. Fruit trees in the yard have been replaced by low-maintenance, clean decorative trees.

On the way to school going past Turners orchard, six trees or so, we could see the apples ripening each day, in the fall. When they were red, they looked like Christmas candy hanging on the tree, and when no one was around we climbed the fence and picked a few. Once we got caught. Some kids couldn't wait and ate them green and got sick. There was a larger orchard that we could get to by the woods. Here there was everything from plums to peaches. This was a planned raid. Years later, talking to the owner of this orchard, I told him I was one of the raiders. He said they knew we raided; they didn't want anyone to get hurt. We were welcome to the fruit.

Grapes were another popular snack food that was grown in the back yard. Grape arbors were common – mostly Concord grapes.

Candy and capitalism

Another experience that made me a capitalist was my first sight of the candy counter at Woolworth's. Here I was to walk by the biggest display of candy I ever encountered! Under glass was the most beautiful assortment of colored sweet delights I had ever seen. Prior to this, my source was Bucks store and his assortment of penny candy. For one cent, you got a choice of a piece or two of candy. At our Five-and-Dime, you could select from jelly beans to caramels, licorice, chocolate-covered peanuts to nuggets to Boston Beans, etc., etc. All you needed was a nickel, then point to your choice and say "five cents' worth" and she, usually a girl, would scoop them up and pour them onto a bowl on the scale until it balanced, and then pour them into a bag and take your money to a cash register and ring it up. Now you were set, with a bag of delights. That's how easy it worked! All you needed was the nickel. The mighty nickel. I became a regular; it was like getting the stuff wholesale. You could eat until you got sick.

Zippers

What was this thing called a zipper, Talon by trade-mark? It sure made an impact on our lives in Manchester. Everybody was talking about it. My Webster dictionary says it came out in 1925; World Book says 1917; Label 1914. Well, it was in the thirties when it came to replace the overworked and tired buttons in Manchester. You need to understand, zippers didn't always work at first. Sometimes they would jam open, sometimes jam closed. Sometimes open up in the middle when they were closed. Sometimes you couldn't move them at all. The buttons it replaced on the male garment were in a strategic place, the fly. On women's garments, zippers were on the hip of the skirt. Buttons were a problem, they would break or fall off, and the buttonhole would tear and lie in a bulky pucker at best. Sometimes it would unbutton itself. The zipper stories were prevalent. You had to keep debris away from its teeth. You couldn't force them, except when they jammed – then you risked the chance of breaking it for good. You learned techniques for un-jamming them. A safety pin was always a good in emergencies. But which boy carried safety pins? I guess most new complicated things started out at first with lots of problems. Look at the automobile or the TV. They didn't always work as smooth as they do now, even in Manchester. Some say, it was the zipper most responsible for the decline in the size of the family in the thirties. It did take some patients to keep it working well. The name Zipper came from the Goodyear Co. who replaced the infamous arctics (buckled snow boots). It had zippers on the side and would make a "ZZZIPP!" sound when you zipped them up. Good riddance to the arctics of my youth.

Flowers

Flower gardens were popular. When my mother went to visit, a tour of the current blossoms was a highlight. When my mother admired a certain plant, she would be asked if she had any. When she said no, the shovel was fetched and a plant was dug up with plenty of dirt and wrapped in newspaper – this my mother would take home to plant in her garden. If seeds were more appropriate, that's what would be shared. No one bought flower plants or seeds. This I found out when I tried to sell seed packets, door to door.

Swimming

Swimming was mostly at Globe Hollow, although we tried every pond around and dammed up some brooks to make a little pond. We did not smell good in the thirties, especially on a hot day in the summer when we exerted ourselves. We worked hard and played hard. There was no AC and lots of houses did not have a bathtub. We had an orange soap with a slogan "Lifebuoy really stops BO." Not all soaps smelled good. Swimming was popular. When I worked on tobacco, I kept a bar of soap in a tin can by a stump near Case Pond where I could wash up on the way home. You could go to the Rec. and get a shower for ten cents and a membership card. You could swim in the indoor pool there, too. There we had some great water polo games. We had nothing like Right Guard, and everyone had a wet stain in their shirt armpits when it was hot. Lots of people had dandruff showing on their shoulders. Everyone did not have summer-weight cloths. We kids went barefoot all summer unless we were going some place and got dressed up. You had to be rich to have a washing machine. Most people washed cloths by hand with a washboard. When you were on the bus and it stopped to pick up the workers at the Silver Lane Pickle Co., you could sure smell the pickle brine. In the spring you could smell the manure being spread, or the hen-house that was being cleaned out.

Boards

My father would save most pieces of board. Those that were split or too small were used for kindling. The better pieces of lumber were saved and put under cover to keep them from rotting. These pieces were used for repair and to construct items that were needed. One day he figured he was going to build a rabbit hutch. He was sure he had enough used lumber to do the job. I was his gopher. With used nails that were all straightened out we started. By the end of the day we were done. Used shingles, old rusty hinges, an old window – where he needed a small hinge, he used a piece of leather nailed into the door and the frame. It worked. The next day we went to buy a pair of rabbits.

Crime

Crime was a big thing in the 1930s – mostly in the newspapers, magazines, movies, and radio. The radio had dramatizations of stories of the legendary gangsters of the day like John Dillinger, Bonnie and Clyde, etc. These shows – like "Gangbusters" and "G-Man" scared me half to death. At the end of the show were the "10 Most Wanted." These descriptions were chilling – "Wanted! Lester Gillis, alias Babyface Nelson, 5''11," 145 pounds, light brown hair, brown eyes. Wanted for armed robbery. Considered armed and dangerous. If you see him, notify your local police or the FBI." I saw something move by the darkened window; I was sure it was a gangster's face.

Most crime in the 30s was to do with prohibition or bank robberies. But there was little crime against the average citizen. There is more crime and violence in the affluent society of today. We almost never locked our doors then. You could unlock our door with a hairpin anyway. And if you got in what would you steal? No TV! no jewels! no cash, maybe my mothers prized incomplete set of colored glass tea service, she got from the Grand Union Tea Man. We were more afraid that someone might steal our warm coat, so you never hung it in a public place. Most of us didn't have watches, save my father's

dollar Waltham. Any cash, silver, was kept in a pocket book or put in the bank. More common crime was shoplifting or apple orchard raiding in our neck of the woods. But the gangster scare kept most of us home listening to "Gangbusters" or maybe Jack Benny.

Wristwatches and clocks

Not everybody had a watch. What for? If you were out of work you didn't need to know what time it was. But everybody had time. Men's trousers had watch pockets, usually used for change. Some pocket watches were cheap, 98¢. They didn't last long and took no abuse. If you did have a watch, it spent a lot of time in the repair shop. When people started to go back to work, a watch was almost necessary. A whistle could be heard, on the end of town at Case Brothers paper mill at seven a.m., and you could hear the Cheney Brothers whistle all over town at noon. That whistle was also used for fire alarms. Mom did have a cheap alarm clock that worked sometimes, if you remembered to wind it up. We do have a clock inside of us and you could get good at guessing what time it was.

More stories

Next, I can tell about runs in ladies' stockings, arctics (footwear)… This is not a story of how bad I had it, but how it was mostly good. Was the best thing that we had our youth? I wish I could answer that, I cannot. This question has been asked for centuries. This is WIP, work in progress, I am adding all the time. It's like saving certain pieces of a puzzle and putting it together years later and it looks different because some pieces are missing Always looking for corrections and suggestions for improvements.
I have more stories and I'm working on others. I have an old friend, Mark, a retired junior high school principal, who helps me with the editing, and with Ed Wilson making my iMac behave and with spell-check, I look pretty good.

It is brought to my attention that Burtons, was not there at the time I talk about the stores on Main Street. I stand corrected. My memory doesn't know about Burtons or Rubinows either. My mother and sister mostly made their own clothes or were given hand-me-downs. Store-bought clothes were left over from pre-Depression times or on the rare occasion purchased from Hales or Grants where the prices were kind to our budget.

Editors' notes: This is where Sinch's memoir ends, although he continued to email and post occasional vintage photos with descriptions of the old days. We were fortunate to receive these old pictures, many of which are posted on the Manchester Historical Society's website. In editing this work, we have been careful to preserve Sinch's words and style, while reversing some of the effects of the vigorous spell-check that changed pedaling to peddling, and their to there. The wreck of The Bullet took place in 1933, which we changed, along with names of some stores that we can look up online in old directories. *– Sinch's friends, Susan Barlow and Dick Jenkins, May 2016.*

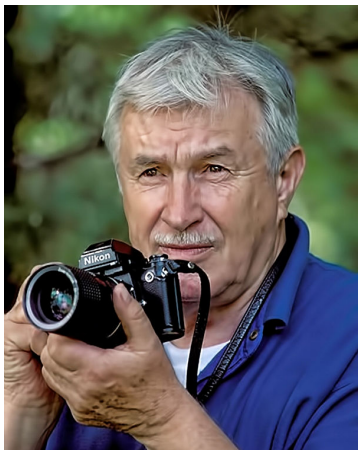
Photos sent to Dick Jenkins and Susan Barlow via email, after Sinch wrote the memoir:

Sinch and his father at Globe Hollow, about 1929

Sinch and other photographers sitting on his first automobile, a 1939 Oldsmobile. Photo at Camp Edwards, Army Summer Camp, 1950s.

Hunt Brothers' circus, Dougherty Lots, 1947

Portrait of Sinch



Memorabilia. Collage by Sinch

City View Dance Hall, 1950s

City View Dance Hall *Keeney street, Manchester*

Our Keeney street gang

Al, Julia, Me, Peggy

Photos that Sinch took for *The Manchester Evening Herald* and one for *Life* magazine:

President Dwight D. Eisenhower at Trinity College.

President Lyndon B. Johnson's arrival at Rentschler Airport on P&W grounds, 1964. Abe Ribicoff and Senator Tom Dodd in vehicle.

Presidential candidate John F. Kennedy, 1960, in Hartford. Possibly at the *Hartford Times* building.

Governor Abe Ribicoff, President Harry S. Truman, Democratic Nat'l Committee Chair John Bailey.

Square Dance, 1960, published in Life magazine.

Circus, 1950s.