Editor's Introduction

The following chapters from Arthur J. Vidich's recollections have unique, indirect links to his original and prolific scholarly work in sociology. The reader will certainly descry these. Dr. Vidich has written extensively on American society and institutions. *Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Politics, and Religion in a Rural Community*, now in its third edition, is, perhaps, the most well-known of his books. The American middle class, ethnic communities, ethics in academia, political sociology, and religion have been several of Dr. Vidich's other chief areas of research.

In the afterword to the third edition of *Small Town in Mass Society*, Dr. Vidich recounts an early biographical and professional connection with his ancestral hometown in Slovenia. When a Fulbright scholar in London, Dr. Vidich recounts, "I had occasion to make several visits to Kropa, a small town in Slovenia's Julian Alps from which my parents had emigrated to the United States. My observations in Kropa gave me another angle on small-town life."[1]

Recalling Dr. Vidich's scholarly work on the border of anthropology and sociology, readers of *Slovene Studies* will certainly find the following memoir excerpts of exceptional interest.

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[1] Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, *Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power, and Religion in a Rural Community*, rev. ed. (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2000) 479.

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RECOLLECTIONS OF A SLOVENE BOYHOOD IN AMERICA

Arthur J. Vidich

From the Julian Alps to the Mesabi Range: Some Tales

Before my father came to America, he was a smith. He learned his craft in Kropa, a small Alpine village located in the vicinity of iron ore deposits. Then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Kropa was set in the Julian Alps in the province of Carniola, an area that historically spanned southwestern Austria and northern Slovenia. After completing his apprenticeship, he was inducted into the empire's army where he served as an orderly to a Viennese officer. Having seen the larger world, pounding iron into nails in an isolated mountain village at the end of the road was no longer to his taste. Pictures of him as a member of Kropa's brass band show that he was tall and handsome. Like other youths in the area, he was well versed in the arts of gardening, vinting wine, brewing beer, and distilling the 100-proof plum brandy known in Slovenia as *slivovica.* He was typical of the South Slav immigrant to America at the turn of the twentieth century.

His father and grandfather had been smiths before him. In the sixteenth century, their ancestors, who had been small farmers, migrated to Kropa from Srednja Dobrava, a village two miles distant from Kropa. In their day, iron working was a respectable occupation that carried with it a measure of honor in the community. Industrial workers were town dwellers, owning no land, but possessing usufruct rights to the collection of firewood on communal timberland. The house in which my father grew up with a brother and two sisters was a large three-story building with small windows and walls measuring two feet thick. I saw this building for the first time in 1951 when, as a Fulbright Scholar at the University of London, I took an opportunity to visit the town of my parents' birth. The house was then occupied by my father's younger sister, my aunt. I learned from her that as the only surviving male in my father's descent line, I could inherit the property, a right I had no wish to exercise, having no desire to establish roots in the place my parents had left. The house still stands as a symbol of a prosperity long vanished.

Before leaving for America in 1910 at the age of twenty-four, my father, Josef Vidic, made an agreement with his fiancée, Pavlina Pesjak, to have her follow him in a year. A native Kropa family, the Pesjaks were influential in the original creation of the ironworks and in its cultural history. Pavlina was a daughter of a local merchant wealthy enough to have had her educated at Klagenfurt, a city close to the Austrian border heavily influenced by German language and culture. In Klagenfurt she learned to speak German and play Strauss waltzes on the piano. When I was a school child and became aware that my parents were immigrants, I began to inquire about my ethnic roots. In response to my inquiries, my mother advised me that our family was Austrian. Since Slovenia had been integrated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire, this identification might have been technically correct in 1911, but after the Treaty of Versailles in 1918, Slovenia had become a province in the newly created Kingdom of Yugoslavia. My mother downplayed her Slovene roots, presumably because of the Slavophobia engendered by the peace treaty. She identified with Austria because Carniola, despite being peopled primarily by Slovenes, was part of Austria at the time she emigrated. The region includes Bled, Klagenfurt, and Maribor as well as settlements south of Graz in Austria. From this perspective Carniola is as much Austrian as it is Slovene, which gave her the option of choosing her nationality.

My mother's attitude toward her national identification instilled in me a feeling that Slovenia had fewer claims to cultural status in America than Austria. However, I could not fully accept her claim because it contradicted what I saw at home and experienced among my school friends. At home my mother recited the poetry of Slovenia's national poet, France Prešerem, spoke Slovene, served a Slovene cuisine, and belonged to the Slovene National Benefit Society.

The ethnicities of my school friends were, among others, Croatian, Serbian, Italian, Dalmatian, Irish, and Polish, but none were Austrian. While I bravely tried to identify myself as Austrian, I knew that this cover story was not wholly true. It left me with some ambiguities about how I should identify myself, Carniola being a term that I had heard mentioned at home, but which meant nothing to me geographically or linguistically.

Only later did I discover that my mother's ethnic claims were related to her family's status in Kropa and the difference between its

status and that of my father's family. Her father was the local merchant, and, by local standards, her family's status was above that of industrial workers. Like herself, her siblings were educated and her parents preferred to think of themselves as "Europeans" rather than Slavs.

The attraction between my mother and father transcended the social differences between their families. In her later years, after it was no longer necessary to defend her choice of marriage partner, she told me a story to illustrate this status difference. Her father had followed the practice of selling merchandise on credit (*poof* in her terms) to poor families. When a particular family's credit was overdrawn, it was her duty as an eldest child to act as a collection agent, calling on the family and demanding payment. The Vidic family was one such customer, always in arrears, capable of making only small token payments on an accumulating bill and always remaining in arrears. The complexities of their romantic relationship were intertwined with the disparity in social and economic standing. In fact, my aunt Lojzka, my mother's younger sister, told me years later that the romantic relationship between them was not sanctioned by my mother's family and would not have led to marriage if the couple had stayed in Kropa. Emigration freed the couple from the constraints of local matrimonial norms.

The violation of these norms made possible by emigration could not in the long run be without consequences for the marriage. In America, my mother aimed to achieve a status equivalent to that she had enjoyed in her past. My father had no such aims. My mother's cultural identification with Austria and my father's acquiescence to being a working immigrant in America symbolized the conflict in their married life.

Kropa had a long history of iron making. The village straddles the Kroparica, a fast moving mountain stream that provided the power for the bellows needed to achieve the high temperature necessary for producing wrought iron. Already in the fourteenth century, a smelter known as the Slovene furnace was erected in upper Kropa and later, in 1442, another was built in lower Kropa. In its day, the iron-working technology represented the state of the art. A single smelting required eighteen to twenty tip loads of charcoal and iron ore and once smelted the iron was worked under a sledge weighing 1000 pounds. Kropa once had the distinction of being one of Europe's early industrial towns.

In bondage to feudal overlords, Kropa and its iron industry were rigidly controlled by outside overseers who specified work requirements and production schedules. In 1550 Kropa and neighboring iron-working towns were freed of bondage and taxes except for payments for mining and land rights held under hereditary ownership. Over successive generations, the manufacture of pronged hooks transported by mule to Triestian shipbuilders gave way to the production of nails for hobnailed boots, railway spikes, and ornamental wrought iron products. At the end of World War II, the federal government rewarded the town with a factory in return for its role in the defense against the German invaders. Local militia held down, at great cost, units far superior to their own. In recognition of these heroic defensive efforts, central planners allocated to the town a new factory for the production of cold-pressed nuts and bolts. This factory, using electricity rather than water as a power source, imported its raw materials from the United States. Even its ornamental iron and copper products were fabricated from imported raw materials. The old smithies that now line the banks of the Kroparica are preserved as tourist attractions.

When my father left for America, the old homes, once occupied by traders, housed the citizens of an under-populated and depressed community: between 1850 and 1931 the population had dropped from 1240 to 578. New low-cost technologies of iron and steel production, especially as developed in the United States, deprived local industry of its markets and economic function. In 1894, in an attempt to revive its iron-working industry, local businessmen created a nail and hardware cooperative designed to include the manufacture of ornamental iron and copper products. However, to Catholic Church authorities the idea of a cooperative meant socialism, so the effort led to ideological friction between the church and the cooperative's organizers, one of whom was my maternal grandfather. This conflict created a lasting schism between the Pesjak family and the church. My mother suggested to me that it might also have included a threat to excommunicate my grandfather, a story I wanted to believe because I liked the word "excommunication." She carried her father's socialism with her to America. Like untold numbers of other Europeans with similar beliefs and few hopes for the future, she was the bearer of a political dream for a better world.

My father left for America in steerage via Hamburg. His point of entry was Ellis Island. It was there that his name was changed from

"Vidic" to "Vidich," with the hard "ch" sound rather than the soft Slovene "ts." Such fine linguistic distinctions were unknown to American immigration officials, who added the "h" to any name ending in "c," even if it lacked the diacritical mark.

When he reached Manhattan, Agnes met him, a person whom we always called "Aunt Agnes," although she was not his sister. She was either a distant cousin or a ward of my father's family from Jamnik, a small settlement further up the mountain. As a young woman, perhaps a teenager, she was stigmatized by the birth of an illegitimate child. Taken in by my father's family, she managed a passage to America, leaving her son behind. According to local practice, her choice was either to remain unwed for the rest of her life, carrying alone the burden of raising her child, or to leave the country. Choosing the latter, she had preceded my father to New York and had married an Austrian watchmaker, Carl Fritz. These putative relatives, my aunt and uncle, were the only relatives I had ever known until I visited Slovenia.

My father settled on East 6th Street in New York, in an area populated by immigrant Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Croatians, Serbs, Slovenes, and Russians. Peter Cooper, one of New York's early philanthropists, had already built and endowed Cooper Union in the same area. The chance juxtaposition of the names "Cooper" and "Vidich" in the same geographic area did not become meaningful until two generations later when my eldest son married a lineal descendent of Peter Cooper. Though he began as a cooper rather than as a smith in Kropa, Peter Cooper had become wealthy.

Named in honor of Slovenia's patron saint, Saint Cyril's Church, located at 62 St. Mark's Place, is the only remaining monument to the Slovene presence in the East Village. As an archeological artifact of immigrant history, it is still the religious hub of a Slovene community dispersed throughout the metropolitan area. I was surprised when I later came to live in New York, to receive an invitation to buy lottery tickets for a Saint Cyril's Church raffle. I never saw my father enter a church, except for the marriages of his daughters, but despite what my family thought to be the aggressiveness of Slovene Catholicism, he might have been a parishioner. All of my memories, however, are of my parents' anti-clericalism. My father never mentioned Saint Cyril's in his accounts of his life in the East Village.

His most salient memory was of the affluence of New York City where sausages and bread were served free of charge so long as the customer continued to drink and pay for the beer. His attitude toward life was material, not spiritual.

True to the craft into which he had been born, my father's first job in the New World was as a smith. At the time of his arrival, the municipal government had mandated the construction of fire escapes on the city's tenements. This was steady work that produced the income required to underwrite the passage of his future bride. My Aunt Lojzka, aged six at the time my mother left, remembered her departure as a day of sadness and family crisis. She left Kropa in 1911 at the age of nineteen, never to return.

In the same year, 1911, and perhaps at the same time, her brother France and my father's brother, Florjan, also left New York. Agnes, France, Florjan, and my parents were Kropa's only emigres to America in that generation. Their presence in New York is seen in pictures taken at Coney Island, posing as a group, dressed in their finest attire. These pictures are now part of a family archive and can also be seen in Kropa where they commemorate lost sons and daughters.

My mother took a job as a German-speaking governess to the children of the Ruppert Brewery family. She lived with the family on Central Park South, vacationing with them summers at Edgartown on Cape Cod. Loyal to her widowed mother in Kropa, she regularly remitted part of her earnings to her. But she considered her work as a governess beneath her status, and I remember her making only one reference to it in my lifetime, when she remarked upon the stern discipline the Rupperts imposed upon her. She had no intention of following a career as a domestic servant; her ambition was to enter business on her own.

In the years following the great industrial expansion after the Civil War and before World War I, the best opportunities for immigrants were in the industrial cities of the Northeast and in the mining regions of Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Minnesota. Slovene networks supported by newspapers already existed in Cleveland, Chicago, and Pittsburgh, and in the mining regions of Minnesota. I do not know why they chose Minnesota. Most likely they knew Slovenes who had already gone there and were attracted by the promise of good jobs and high wages offered by mining companies in need of laborers. It is also possible that

the iron working traditions of Kropa led them to believe that they could market their skills on Minnesota's Mesabi, Cayuna, and Vermillion ranges. In retrospect, their choice would seem to be a logical one. My uncles France and Florjan, and my parents left for Minnesota in 1913.

On the hope for the future offered by the mines, my parents were married in 1913 in Virginia, Minnesota. In their formal wedding picture, they are seated in front of Florjan and France who witnessed the ceremony.

In 1915 their first child, Pauline, was born. In rapid succession at intervals of two years, four more children appeared: Joseph, 1916; Olga, 1918; Elizabeth, 1920; and me, 1922. Joseph died at the age of three as a result of a household accident. He suffered fatal burns when he pulled a pot of boiling water off the stove onto himself; medical care in the remote mining region was inadequate. Not much was ever said of this family tragedy. My parents had one picture of him, taken in a photographer's studio sitting on a carriage with my sister. Throughout my youth, this picture was prominently displayed in our living room. The image of it is cut into my mind, but I never asked or was given details about this tragic episode in my parents' lives. In 1972, at the suggestion of my second wife, Mary, while on a trip through Minnesota, I visited Joseph's gravesite on the upper reaches of the Mississippi River. We found the gravestone and took a picture of it with my son, Joseph, his uncle's namesake, seated next to it. The inscription on the lifeless marker is the only concrete evidence I have of my brother's existence.

My parents' optimism, as expressed by their rapidly expanding family, was not shared by France and Florjan. France returned to Kropa before World War I began. I met him there for the first time in 1951 where he was living in the family home. Florjan left for California, where he died in a mining accident in 1933. He never fulfilled the promise he had made to the wife and child he left behind: that one day they would join him in America. His daughter, Ludmilla Umberton, settled in Carrieres Sur Seine, France. Like almost every other little town in Europe, Kropa acquired its own international extensions.

Years later, when my father learned that I had taken a teaching position in New York City, he asked me to visit and look after Aunt Agnes who by then lived in Queens. Shortly after her husband died,

when she was eighty and arthritic, she could no longer care for herself and wished to be placed in a nursing home. In collaboration with her local priest, I made arrangements for her admission to Madonna Residence in Brooklyn, located across the street from Grand Army Plaza and Prospect Park. The question arose of what to do with the money she received from the sale of her house. I advised her to give it to her son and grandchildren in Slovenia, but she would hear none of this. Though she could have been kept as a charge of the county, she preferred to give a small amount of the proceeds to her church and retain the rest to pay her keep at the Residence. She regarded the acceptance of charity as beneath her honor and wished to be a paying resident who wrote her own check for her monthly bill. In her new life, this assertion of her independent means would be her claim to self-respect. I visited her many times and the nuns always greeted me warmly, but traveling to Brooklyn was always a chore. I took every opportunity to recruit Mary, our children, and any visiting sisters to take the subway ride to Grand Army Plaza with me. Learning about Brooklyn is what I still owe to Agnes.

Conversations with Agnes focused on a ritual repetition of three subjects. She invariably began with her complaint that the Hungarian nuns were prejudiced against Slovene Catholics. Their treatment of her was not in accord with her status as a paying resident. She always asked that I report this fact to the Mother Superior. Second, she would recite the names of residents who were older than she, a list that dwindled as the years passed. Third, she announced her position in the rank order of age of her competitors; over the years she had become one of the oldest residents. Besides her faith in God, she had a powerful motivation for giving meaning to her life: outliving her oldest competitors. She lived in the Residence for fourteen years, to the age of ninety-four, not relieving me of my duties until 1975. By that time I had met her son and grandchildren in Slovenia, but did not tell them of her indifference toward them. We never talked about her son, grandchildren, Kropa, or Slovenia.

Before the beginning of World War II, I had no interest in Slovenia, nor had I any curiosity about relatives I may have had in a country far removed from my concerns as the son of immigrant parents trying to make their way in their new country. I do remember, however, the day in 1936 when my mother received word of her mother's death. This news made her cry and led me to understand for the first time that I

had had a grandmother, but it did not lead me to inquire about the possibility of surviving grandfathers. Only when the war began in Europe did I begin to hear about the fate of relatives in Slovenia. After the war, when we sent an endless flow of care packages to Kropa, I began to realize that my parents had lived in a world apart from mine. I only discovered that part of their world when I went to Slovenia myself in 1951.

Male Child is Born in Minnesota

My birth certificate lists my name as "Vidich (Male child)," born in the village of Manganese, Crow Wing County, Minnesota, to Joe Vidich born in Slovania (sic) and Polina (sic) Peszek (sic) born in Slovania (sic). After discharging me into the world, my mother fell sick and was hospitalized, leaving the registration of my arrival to my father. Apparently, no name had been chosen beforehand, so I legally remained "Male child" until later when my parents gave me the unregistered name of Arthur Joseph.

The choice of the middle name Joseph was in keeping with traditional naming practices. My older, deceased brother was named Joseph for my father, but in my case a different Christian name was required in order to avoid identification with a dead brother. Arthur is a name that cannot be found in Slovenia, nor in any other Slavic country. My sisters' names were Slovene cognates: Pauline for Paulina; Olga; and Elizabeth (or Betty) for Betka. The choice of Arthur marked a linguistic break with Old World traditions. Giving me a quintessentially English name, despite the auditory dissonance between it and the Slavic Vidich, symbolized the family's turn toward Americanization. I was to be an American, even if the last name had been changed from Vidic to Vidich, a change in spelling that forever irked my mother and for which she laid the blame on my father's ineptitude for failing to correct the clerk at Ellis Island. As a result, I acquired the name Arthur and a last name which was to be pronounced not with the "soft" Slovenian "c" (ts), but with yet another form which my mother invented. In her effort to retrieve the original pronunciation, she replaced the "hard" "ch" sound with the "k" sound, as if the name were spelled "Vidick," but the k was a poor substitute for the "ts" sound as in "Vidits." Hence, though we had the name Vidich, which was in fact a

variation on the original pronunciation, we wished others to pronounce it "Vidick." Other speakers, however, automatically gave our name the "hard" "ch" as might be expected from the ending. Whenever our name was "mispronounced" by innocent speakers, my sisters and I were required to inform them of the correct pronunciation. This has been an endless task for the immediate members of the family and also for my wives, children, their spouses and their children. Making the correction has always been such a nuisance that I stopped doing it, accepting any pronunciation unless explicitly asked how my name is pronounced. Otherwise I have learned to accept "Vidich," "Vidick," and "Vidits," secure in my appreciation of my mother's efforts to right the wrong done to our family name on Ellis Island in 1910. With an English first name and a corrupted Slovene last name, it is no wonder that my mother's efforts to make me an Austrian were not successful. I could easily add a chapter to Louis Adamic's book, *What's in a Name?*

In addition to having only a last name, there was another oddity coincident with my birth. My mother told me later that at the time, the family was estranged from the priest who cared for the Slovene flock in Manganese. His incessant demands for money—" all the church ever wanted was money, money," was a refrain I heard many times—and my mother's refusal to meet the priest's demands led to a break with the congregation. Being a daughter of an anti-clerical Kropa family had already provided her with the attitude she needed to resist the priest. The relevance of this episode for Male child Vidich is that he never made it to the baptismal font. At no time in my later life was the lack of a baptismal certificate corrected. From the point of view of the Christian church, I remain uncertified, so far without discernible negative consequences, and secure in my inalienable right that no a priori religious commitments had been made for me.

Except for one dramatic incident, I have no direct memories of my life in Minnesota. When I was no more than two years old, my father took me for an automobile ride. After a short drive, he stopped the car at the edge of a bridge where he was to do an errand. I understood that this was no ordinary errand when he told me to stand on the front seat of the car, a 1922 Overland, and to shout to him while he was gone if I should see another car coming from either direction. I was to be his lookout in an act of conspiracy which apparently frightened me enough to make the event unforgettable. He unloaded gallon jugs of whiskey from the back seat of the car and buried them under the bridge. The mission was

completed without incident and we returned home. The whiskey, made at home, was secreted away to remove it from the premises in case a federal inspector paid a call. The image of using the underside of a bridge for this unique purpose had always remained somewhere in my mind. It vividly returned to me many years later when I came across Thorstein Veblen's remark that the majestic equality of the law prohibits bankers as well as beggars from sleeping under bridges, a statement that had originated, I later discovered, with Anatole France. Despite the law, I have taken endless satisfaction for the role I played for my father in his own independent discovery of this use for the underside of a bridge.

Slovene-American Affinities: The Liquor Business

From family stories I have heard about the iron ranges, it is evident that life in Minnesota was difficult. Workers were poorly paid. To their own benefit, employers fomented ethnic tensions among the complex mix of Finnish, Hungarian, Anglo-Saxon, and Slavic miners. Workers suffering job-related injuries received no compensation or health benefits, my father being one such case. When he hurt his knee while working in the pits, the prospect for economic advancement as a wage laborer on the frontier of the mining region evaporated. There was little hope left of fulfilling the immigrant's dream of economic success. America, in myth as much as in reality, promised opportunity for those willing to work. Failure in America was not an option my parents would accept. Seeing no future for themselves in Kropa, the act of emigration was a public statement to those they left behind that they would do better elsewhere; to accept anything other than economic success would have negated the wisdom of the act of migration itself. Even more important, such economic gain as might be achieved could be used to return remittances, certifying to those left behind one's success as well as the wisdom of the choice to migrate. Considering the differences in economic and social status of my parents' families in Kropa, and my mother's defiance of her family's wishes, it was a matter of personal pride and a moral imperative to succeed. My parents quickly learned that working in the iron pits was not the way to achieve their goal.

The alternative they chose was consistent with the skills each brought to the marriage and rational with respect to market opportunities in the region. Young men in Kropa knew the art of distilling hard spirits. As a matter of course, every household owned its still and produced its own *slivovica.* To this day the still is a standard item in any Slovene hardware store. My mother's training was in the skills of marketing and bookkeeping. Combining their production and sales skills, my parents entered the liquor business in a market area where consumers for their product were hard working, frequently unmarried, iron ore miners.

From a cultural point of view, there was nothing reprehensible in immigrants like my parents producing and selling beer, wine, and whiskey. Drinking alcoholic beverages in Catholic Mediterranean countries was and still is associated with religious ceremonials and commensalism. To the Protestant asceticism of the dominant culture in America, however, the consumption of alcoholic beverages for any purpose was morally reprehensible. By force of circumstance, their venture into the business was necessarily clandestine.

Before the beginning of Prohibition in 1918, the production of hard spirits for domestic consumption was legal, protected by the constitutional right prohibiting search and seizure. Selling liquor without a license on the open market was not legal. In order to evade the law, my parents produced their product at home and used the same place as their distribution center. Theirs was a cottage industry in the great American tradition of free market entrepreneurial enterprise.

By all accounts, the business was successful. On the strength of its profits, it was possible for them to own a house and an automobile even before Prohibition began. After 1918, when the sale of all liquor became illegal, the business became even more lucrative. Since they already had a product in the pipeline, as it were, Prohibition gave my parents both a price and a marketing advantage over newcomers to production and distribution. The business was also more risky because it came under surveillance of not only the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, but also of neighbors and disgruntled customers who could become informers. Weighing the value of profits against the risks, my parents chose to remain in business despite Prohibition.

My father continued to work in the mines while he served the needs of his local clientele. Managing the business fell to my mother,

who, in spite of needing to care for a growing family, understood the critical importance of capital accumulation. Conscious of her exceptional opportunity, she serviced a growing market despite the risks it entailed. The risks included arrest and imprisonment; my father served a term of three months in jail. For my mother, the risks included overwork. I was her fifth child in eight years, and as I said earlier, she fell ill and was hospitalized at the time of my birth. Because the local doctor was unable to diagnose her condition, she nearly died and survived only because she was transferred to the Mayo Clinic, where she was diagnosed as suffering from exhaustion. During the period of my mother's convalescence, Pauline, my eldest sister, age seven, cared for Male child Vidich, and she became the surrogate mother for all of us children, a role she was not to escape until much later in her life. Even then she had been so thoroughly trained in her role, that at the age of eighty-five she continued to show a maternal concern for me, remembering my birthday, each year without fail, with a card and a twenty-dollar bill.

The immigrant's successful pursuit of economic opportunity in America was a function of finding a fit between the rules of the old culture and those of the new. It entailed learning a new language, conflicts with the law, a desire to become Americanized, and, above all, a readiness to make the sacrifices necessary to achieve a level of economic success greater than would have been possible in the Old Country. Only after I visited Kropa did I learn how significant their own parents and siblings were to my parents. It was from them rather than from their new American neighbors and friends that my parents sought to claim status and respect. Success required a display of affluence; remittances were the tangible proof of it. An illegal but prosperous business justified success and rewarded them both with elevated status in Kropa, as well as the external symbols of their affluence in Minnesota.

When my parents spoke of their Minnesota days, I heard names such as Hibbing, Crosby, Ely, and I learned about Manganese when I needed a birth certificate to apply for a passport. Hibbing was northeast of Crosby and sat squarely on the Mesabi Range. For my parents, those were days of deprivation, of moving from one town to another, of being treated with disdain by school officials, and of linguistic insecurity in their dealings with employers, the law, doctors, hospitals, and elected officials. Their success in business overcame these hardships and

provided our family with the wherewithal to leave life on the ranges behind. The Mesabi, in the area of the headwaters of the Mississippi River, was the equivalent in our family's history of Plymouth Rock.

Another Migration: To West Allis

In spring 1924, house sold, cash in hand, automobile loaded with camping equipment, the family began a one-week trek to West Allis, an industrial suburb of Milwaukee named for Allis of Allis Chalmers, a producer of turbines, tractors, and other heavy equipment. I have no memory of the trip being eventful. If anything, I remember it as my first camping trip, feeling completely secure that neither risks nor dangers were involved. Only later when reflecting on this event in conversations with my sisters, did it begin to dawn on me the enormity of this exodus. With four young children, carrying all their worldly assets in cash, my parents had pulled up stakes in order to begin life anew in parts unknown.

A Slovene community already existed in and around Milwaukee. The Slovenska Narodna Podporna Jednota (Slovene National Benefit Society, SNPJ), an ethnic benefit society, had a branch in West Allis. Slovene-language newspapers, published in Chicago and Cleveland were available. My parents preferred the secular Chicago publication, *Prosveta,* to the Catholic-oriented Cleveland newspaper. The benefit society provided a ready-made, centrally organized network for its members and the two newspapers carried information about Slovene settlements across the country. In America, regional distinctions that had existed in Slovenia collapsed into a conception of a generic Slovene. The work of literary and journalistic intellectuals preserved the language, which they used to create a Slovene national community and culture within the larger society. The culture included itinerant speakers as well as Slovene-language essayists and book authors. Louis Adamic stands out in my memory as a writer and socialistic political activist who was one of my family's exemplars.

Fifteen years of living in the United States had provided my parents with the networks and contacts they needed to prepare for the move to West Allis. In my childhood I knew none of this, nor did my parents make any effort to inform me of it. By community and culture,

they knew they were Slovenes in America, but they did not wish this to be the fate of their children. We children were taught neither to read nor speak Slovene, a language my parents used only when they wished to speak of things they did not want us to understand. The excision of the Slovene language was meant to encourage our Americanization. It meant also excising my parents' culture, something that my mother was also trying to exorcise from herself. Being suspended between two worlds took its toll on all of us. It left us children with the ability to understand but not to speak the household Slovene which my parents spoke, and, since my parents spoke English with a Slovene syntax, we frequently used that syntax when speaking and writing English, leaving us neither a proper Slovene nor a proper English. In the critical early stages of language acquisition, we were all stunted because we were on the margins between two linguistic worlds.

The worlds of parents remain impenetrable to their children and vice versa. In the immigrant family, positioned between two cultures, the barriers to any chance of mutual understanding are all the greater. I have never known the reasons that led my parents to leave Minnesota or why, of all places, they chose West Allis as a destination; nor have I ever been privy to the world of the Slovene immigrant in America.

Even before arriving in West Allis, arrangements had been made for a place to stay. It was neither a house nor a hotel, but a single-story building otherwise designed to be a small store located in the 5800 block of West National Avenue. We camped in this building for a short time before moving to a large building two doors to the east: 5808 West National Avenue, where I lived until I went to college. The building housed two commercial establishments on the ground floor, an A&P market and a butcher shop. Above the shops, one half of the building was an apartment containing four bedrooms, a small kitchen, dining room, living room, and a bath. The building sat on a lot the size of a quarter of a football field. I never heard that my parents took a mortgage on the property.

Once we were installed in this building, events began to move rapidly. My father took a job at Allis Chalmers, but remained there for only a short time. Within months, my parents entered into a business partnership with another Slovene couple in downtown Milwaukee.

They rented a building at 115 Clinton Street, now known as First Street, located north of National Avenue at a bend where Clinton Street terminates at the edge of the Milwaukee River. This was not part of the elegant downtown area on Wisconsin Avenue where Gimbels, The Boston Store, the Wisconsin Theater, the railway station, and Milwaukee's famous German restaurants were situated. Nor was it where the local elite lived along the shores of nearby Lake Michigan. It was, however, in walking distance of all these places. Clinton Street, so to speak, was on the wrong edge of the river. Its vicinity included rooming houses, small grocery stores, and restaurants, all of which served as fronts for the sale of hard spirits. The residents of the area were hard-working, single, immigrant men. They were employed as stevedores, gandydancers, and bridge snakes. The neighborhood was Milwaukee's equivalent of New York City's Bowery: what in the sociological literature has been dubbed "Skid Row" in such cities as Minneapolis, Chicago, and Kansas City. A good description appears in *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man*, by Nels Anderson, a Chicago-trained sociologist, one of Robert E. Park's students, whose work I celebrated in a paper I read at a sociology meeting in Boston in 1979. He knew of what he spoke because he had been a hobo himself like some of the local residents in the vicinity of my parents' business who were seasonal workers on the frontier. The gandydancers repaired railroad tracks. In order to transport themselves along the rail line, they used a two-man cart called a gandy which was propelled by the hand power of the two men riding it—hence the men came to be known as dancers on the gandy. Many of the residents never married, either because of unfavorable sex ratios or because they did not offer a woman a good economic prospect; others had wives and children waiting in the Old Country.

The building at 115 Clinton Street had two stories. The ground floor front was equipped with a vintage bar and barstools, that faced a mirrored wall behind the bar. It also had other accoutrements that have lately become fashionable in upscale bars that try to recreate the ambiance of the saloons of the 1920s era; it had a nickelodeon, which for ten cents would play automated music and for an additional five cents, came with violin accompaniment. The center ground floor room was the dining area with the kitchen in the rear. Behind the kitchen was a shed which housed the equipment required to make home brew, a "near beer" whose production conformed to the law; hence it could act

as a partial front to legitimate the business. Behind the shed lay the elevated tracks for the Chicago-Milwaukee rail line which ended in downtown Milwaukee at a point just short of Wisconsin Avenue. My mother did the cooking. Meals were served on a long table, home style. Charlie Smrdu, another Slovene, was her dishwasher. My father tended the bar, supervised his children in the manufacture and bottling of the beer, made sure there was always an ample inventory of liquor, and acted as a bouncer when inebriated customers grew truculent. It was a family-oriented small business.

A pair of full-size double doors marked the entry to the establishment. These were followed by half-size swinging gates like those seen in Hollywood's version of a western cow-town saloon. On either side of the exterior doors were half-size plate-glass windows that prevented a direct view into the area of the bar. On one window appeared the sign "Joe's Place," printed inconspicuously so as not to call undue attention to the building. The structure was one of a number of similar buildings on the block occupied by proprietors engaged in variations of the same business.

By evidence available to even one as innocent as myself, Joe's Place was phenomenally successful, at least by the standards of an immigrant family. Within a few years, even before 1929, the year of the famous stock market crash, my parents had remodeled the house in West Allis, added a rental apartment to the second floor, replaced the exterior stucco finish with brick, and built a four-car garage with an appendage on one end containing a chicken coop, a smokehouse, and an enclosed garbage area.

Apple, plum, and cherry trees were planted on the back half of the empty lot and space was reserved for a garden plot. The smokehouse, chicken coop, fruit trees, and garden were like those that can be found in any Slovenian village. When Henry Ford's first Model As rolled off the assembly line in Detroit, my parents replaced the Overland with a four-door model. In 1931 we became a two-car family. In the midst of the great crash, they paid $3000 cash for an eight-cylinder maroon Nash touring car, complete with running boards, exterior trunk in the rear, and a spare tire which was housed in the front fender. It was as elegant an automobile as was then mass-produced in America.

Neither the construction projects nor the cars were mortgaged. My mother believed in "cash and carry"—"neither a borrower nor a lender be"—in the same spirit as the self-sufficient individualism of the shrewd, suspicious Yankee trader. She did not trust banks and had little trouble adapting the financial practices she learned in Kropa to the prevailing norm of American business. She worked hard, saved, invested, and always hedged against the future uncertainties of the markets by holding substantial amounts of cash on hand (in a trunk in her bedroom). The Slovenes, it has been said, are the Calvinists of the former Yugoslavia.

My parents kept the business through the years of the Depression until 1936, despite high unemployment and reduced wages. Between 1933 and 1936, during the era of the Federal government's Works Progress Administration (WPA), employment opportunities for wage earners were created; money continued to circulate among the core clientele of Joe's Place. More than ever spirits were needed to lift the spirits of the victims of the debacle on Wall Street. Without America's saloon keepers, dissidence and dissatisfaction among America's deprived might have been greater than it was. That the bootleg industry helped to sustain the peace during the social crisis remains unacknowledged for the patriotic contribution it made to the political stability of the government and its ruling groups. Insufficiently acknowledged also is the wisdom of our political leaders who in lifting Prohibition rejected the idiocy of trying to legislate the cultural norms of a hard-drinking population. My parents welcomed the end of Prohibition because it made their product legal; the government welcomed it because it provided a new source of taxation, cutting into the profits of legitimate producers. However, I have no memory that my parents paid taxes on the manufacture or sale of their product. The business dried up and was sold in 1936, the worst year of the Depression, when my father was fifty. Clinton Street, which had been vital to the family fortunes and to our way of life during the critical years of our youth, came to an end.

In the booming and roaring twenties, the manufacture and sale of illegal spirits became a vastly profitable industry across the entire nation. It was commonplace in the Midwest for immigrant Jewish and Italian entrepreneurs to choose this business (known as "bootlegging") as a means to their economic Americanization. Elite patrons in the cities were the prime consumers of all that could be produced by

immigrant manufacturers, thus forging a link, usually in a speakeasy, between the respectable and the dis-respected. In Chicago Al Capone was a notorious case because he used violent means to obtain and protect his markets, thus giving the entire industry a bad name. The Bronfman family, also operating out of Chicago, was more successful. When Prohibition ended in 1933, the Bronfmans became legal purveyors of Shenley Whiskey. They later converted capital originally acquired from bootlegging into major holdings in the chemical and entertainment industries. The unspoken failure of my parents was that, when Prohibition ended in 1933, they did not convert their cottage industry into a large-scale legitimate business.

Two Worlds

Those twelve years in the saloon business left a mark on the four siblings which was to remain a badge of their identities for the rest of their lives. We were schooled in West Allis and had a second life on Clinton Street where we frequently ate our dinners and returned home with our parents when the business closed late in the evening. The two worlds contrasted sharply with each other: In West Allis the family presented an image of itself as prosperous restaurateurs in downtown Milwaukee, owners of two automobiles and a substantial property producing three rental incomes. Our economic standard was equal to that of any of West Allis's businessmen and professionals, but socially it was that of an immigrant family. While the lack of money never seemed to be a problem, parsimony was still a virtue. Investments were made in utilities. Cost was never a factor when it came to medical or dental bills; my mother had her surgeries done at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Summer months were allocated for out-of-town, lakefront vacations. We were clothed from the racks of the Boston Store or Gimbels, setting us apart from our friends whose fathers worked in factories, were railway conductors, street car trolley men, construction workers, or petty white-collar civil servants. Our comparatively better economic status was conspicuously evident in school, not only by our style of dress, but also in a measure of economic differentiation encouraged by school officials. It was the practice of school authorities to issue each student a bank savings book on behalf of a local bank. On Mondays the students brought a sum of money ranging from a penny to a

dime to class to be deposited in his/her bank account. The amount deposited was also posted on the blackboard after each student's name. Deposit of a ten-cent piece earned a gold star; lesser amounts earned a silver star; those who could not bring even a penny were given a black mark. Teachers responded favorably to gold-star students, regarding them as upholders of the virtues of saving, parsimony, and good citizenship. From the children's point of view, the rankings on the blackboard were a testimony to acceptance as a worthy. My sisters and I never failed to bring the dime, certifying that our parents cared about our education and conformed to what was then a cardinal American virtue. Unfailingly bringing in the weekly deposit meant parental concern for the child. Despite her distrust of banks, my mother never forgot to send us to school with our bank deposits, knowing that the family's social status was at stake. My mother never met any of my teachers and would have felt ill at ease speaking with them in her accented English.

The reality of our lifestyle in West Allis, however, included more than its appearances. Conducting the business was a family affair that frequently required everyone's presence on Clinton Street. Early every morning my father left home to open shop. My mother remained home in order to feed us breakfast and get us off to school. Before taking the trolley downtown to join my father, she prepared our lunch; schools did not yet have lunch programs. My eldest sister walked us to elementary school, supervised our lunch, and returned us to school. That my mother was not home to serve us lunch made me feel different from the other children whose mothers I assumed did not work. Even though no one need know that I was not normal in this respect, it was a source of embarrassment to me until, on one occasion when class reassembled after lunch, my teacher asked each of the students what we had had for lunch. When it was my turn to speak I could do no more than tell the truth: "a baked apple and a baked potato." To my surprise I received special praise for my healthful diet. Those were the days when "an apple a day kept the doctor away." The praise that I received redeemed my mother and left me with the feeling that our family was not so abnormal after all.

After school, under my oldest sister's supervision, we played with our friends in West Allis until we boarded the trolley for the trek downtown, where we ate our dinners, returning home late in the evening at whatever hour the business was shut down for the night. On

Clinton Street we played with other children whose parents had similar businesses on the street. Our associations with adults included the saloon's customers who were stevedores, railway workers, transients, drunkards, and what my mother referred to as "bums," a designation on which she was wrong. Technically, they were hobos whose honor and respectability depended upon refusing charity, rejecting begging, and insisting upon working for whatever they received. Except when drunk, these men had a strong sense of personal dignity; because they were at the bottom of the social heap, their only claim to status was the economic independence that enabled them to avoid the dole. Sober or drunk, they never molested children. When flush with money they gave us their small change, enjoying being philanthropists to grateful children. They were the immigrant labor force which helped to create America's economic and physical infrastructure, despite being treated as status inferiors by their employers and those who were already Americanized.

Every business faces the problem of timely replenishment of its inventory. Finding wholesale supplies of whiskey during Prohibition was an art form of its own, based on the skill of surreptitiousness. My parents had two sources of supply. One was a Slovene friend who manufactured his own product and delivered it in his motorcycle sidecar. His timing was always perfect. The other was whiskey distilled at our home in West Allis and delivered personally by my father.

In making safe deliveries, it helped that the police were in collusion with my father. In exchange for providing the cop on the beat with meals and drinks, the law looked the other way. Small-scale bribery was an intrinsic feature of business practice on Clinton Street. Those were the days of your friendly, Irish-Catholic cop—Pat O'Brian—made famous as a role model by Hollywood. Yet the risks were always present and threatened our claims to respectability in West Allis.

The family's appearance of affluence and respectability in West Allis could be sustained so long as the fiction concerning the nature and location of the business could be upheld. Maintaining the fiction was necessary because everyone in the family with the likely exception of my father regarded the saloon business as disreputable even while respectability in West Allis depended upon it. To uphold the fiction my mother developed a strategic plan and told us to execute it.

To explain our father's occupation to our school friends, we were instructed to say, if asked, that we owned "a restaurant downtown," but not to specify its location. Up to 1933, the end of the golden years and the beginning of the worst years of the Depression, our frequent trips to Clinton Street were a source of our West Allis school friends' curiosity. In answer to questions about where and why we were going, our response was to be limited to "downtown."

In reality, we had another set of playmates on Clinton Street, some of whom remained friends for many years. With these friends, among other things, we made and sold lemonade on the street, put pennies on the railway tracks to have them flattened by the wheels of a passing train, and went to Sunday afternoon movies on Wisconsin Avenue. Our friends in one place were not to be part of our lives in the other place despite the intensity of our associations with both groups. Sometimes the "Maginot Line" we tried to construct was penetrated, as for example, when a friend from West Allis noticed me on the street, called my name from a car and waved to me. I returned the wave, but turned away, making every effort to minimize the significance of the incident. In another case, years later when I was in high school, our football team played against opponents from a Milwaukee school. The opponent's fullback had been a Clinton Street friend. To the surprise of my schoolmates, I visited the fullback on the opposing bench, raising the query of how I had come to know him. Not knowing when these two worlds might intersect by chance induced a feeling of lightness-of-being enhanced by both the ambiguities of my ethnic identity and the ever present need for secrecy about the nature of my parents' business. Coping with life under these conditions provided me with my initial training in cultivating that essential sociological attitude of detached marginality.

The word "downtown," as used in the expression "going downtown" had a magic quality. It provided a universal explanation to account for where I was when not in West Allis. The first time I heard Petula Clark sing "Downtown" on my Volkswagen radio in the 1960s while I was commuting from Storrs, Connecticut to the New School in New York City, it cast a spell over me, evoking sharp images of my own "downtown."

This Bowery-like neighborhood of Clinton Street was where I spent some of the more memorable days of my childhood. In later years I

revisited the Milwaukee waterfront and began to appreciate that this was where I made my first sociological observations about American society. By then the old days were over and, as one might expect, the area had become gentrified. Micro-breweries had replaced the saloons; restaurants were upscale; and the gay and lesbian coalition had its headquarters on the street. The area had become a miniature version of New York's Greenwich Village. A part of my past had been obliterated.

Education of an Intractable Child

As Pauline remembers it, she was responsible for getting us to and from school and for safely delivering us to Clinton Street after school. This responsibility was not always easy to discharge as she was acting as a surrogate who had no direct recourse to parental authority. Yet, I remember only one occasion when, under duress, she reported my fractious behavior to my mother. When I was in kindergarten and on a class trip, a friend and I successfully ditched (abandoned) the group and went off on our own. However, once we had gained our freedom we then faced the problem of what to do with it. Having no objective other than the escape itself, we tardily returned to the classroom where our teacher, regarding our behavior as a major crime, punished us by making us stand face to the wall in the corner of the cloakroom. Pauline, then in sixth grade, was summoned to the kindergarten room to observe my humiliation and to report my misconduct to my parents. That was only one incident in my career as a young delinquent.

Acceptance of authority did not come easily to me. Corralling me for the trolley trip downtown was one of Pauline's constant problems. Clutching me by the collar as I resisted, she often had to forcibly pull me all the way to the trolley car. Pauline understood that she could not compromise her authority when dealing with me. Testing her limits, I once demanded that she give me a nickel, threatening to jump out of a second story window if she refused to give it to me. I went so far as to open the window and poise to make the jump. She steadfastly held her ground until I retreated in defeat.

My mother had her own problems with my youthful intractability. While still no more than five or six years old, I chanced to look into the housing of the piano located in the living room. To my

surprise, I found a bag of ten and twenty dollar gold pieces. At the time it was not illegal to hoard gold—it was after the bank moratorium in 1933. Owning gold was consistent with my parents' suspicions of banks and paper currency; it was the Old World form of insurance against political instability. Spotting the cache, I seized my opportunity and took my treasure to the garage, where I hid it in a tool chest, the place where I also kept my marbles. A few days later, when its disappearance was discovered, my parents asked, "Who took it?" Silence. No confessions. I was not prepared to reveal my secret so easily, nor was I prepared to hand over my new possession. Now realizing I had acquired something of great value, my instinct was to check immediately to assure that it was still safely hidden.

It seems that I had been the prime suspect from the beginning because my mother followed me and was standing behind me at the moment I opened the chest. Caught with the evidence and humiliated, my reaction was to run out to the yard and up the street, leaving the bag of gold behind. My mother followed me, and chased me around the block until she caught me. What followed was not a spanking but a moral lecture on the difference between right and wrong. Nothing was ever again said about this incident, and I am the only one who prefers to remember and talk about it. I have found it useful to recount the incident to my children, stepchildren, and grandchildren who have invariably identified with the thief. My hunch is that many children have similar thoughts about their parents' money and, hearing the story, they are relieved of any potential guilt they may have about harboring similar intentions.

Except for one fact, the details of my first-grade education elude me. The indication that I had problems during that year is that my teacher and the principal agreed that I should be flunked and required to repeat the year. The problem seems to have been that I did not carry out my assignments and refused to learn to read. The report card mandating my failure shocked my mother and sisters and called for immediate and drastic measures. This was the beginning of the end of the freedom I had enjoyed because of my parents' preoccupation with work.

First, if the school could not teach me to read, I would be taught at home. Therapy at home consisted of sitting me on a high stool, back to the wall and book in hand, being tutored relentlessly until I grasped the idea of reading. Second, the school, and especially the principal,

Miss Hoole, were blamed for my failure, which was not only considered a blot on the family's reputation, but would leave me one half year "behind" the class in which I should have been. Miss Hoole was blamed for committing a discriminatory act against the family whose revenge in part consisted in referring to her as "Miss Hooligan." Despite my mediocre academic performance and my continuing incorrigibility, Miss Hooligan nevertheless remained my mother's enemy. Removing the blot of my failure became for my mother something of a long-term project – a mission to have it corrected. This mission was only accomplished many years later when I was in high school where I took extra classes and extended summer school to "make up" the "lost" semester, enabling me to graduate with my rightful classmates. No matter how long it took, restoration of family honor and vindication of my talent was like a crusade. No need to recount further incidents such as fights in the school yard during recess and unruly behavior in the classroom. The school still had the primary responsibility for correcting my delinquency even while domestic pressure and surveillance intensified when I showed few signs of improvement.

Among the boyhood friends I had in elementary school it was held that any of us who did not resist conformity to the rules of classroom conduct was a sissy. My friends—Al Pinter, Al Teshnik, Art Demshar, Bob Babich, Micky Krueger, Jimmy Thompson, Alex Alexander, and Bill Mantyh—made insubordination a manly virtue. Since we denied ourselves such recognition as we might have gained from academic performance, we established our own in-group standards for making claims to self-esteem. Our criteria for the measurement of self-worth focused on sports and games. Baseball was the sport of the day; we played it, followed the rankings of the major league teams, and hoped to become professional players like Phil Cavaretta and Gabby Hartnet of the Chicago Cubs. Among the winter sports there was ice skating at the county park in West Allis where speed skating was our ideal. Our heroes were the older skaters like Al Luchini, who could take a jumping leap over ten barrels lined up in a row while skating at full speed. We were at the two-barrel stage and full of faith that practice and growing older would lead to fame. Skiing, sledding, and tobogganing were our choice of sports in the cold snowy winters of the Midwest. A few blocks to the south of 58th Street we had access to a large, park-like area established as a soldiers' home for disabled World War I veterans. It contained a

forty-five foot ski jump, a baseball diamond (later developed into a stadium for the Milwaukee Brewers), and a hill known to us as "Devil's Dive." We ski-jumped on barrel staves and regarded Devil's Dive to be the ultimate test of risk-taking courageousness. In these activities, cuts, bruises, and broken teeth—in my case, two fractured lower incisors remain as permanent testimony—were badges of fearlessness. Disregard for personal injury was a form of heroism.

In other seasons we played games: hide 'n seek, tug of war, and eeney-eeney-eyeover are some that I recall. Shooting marbles and flipping baseball cards were more businesslike ventures, where winning or losing could lead to joy or grief. In the case of marbles, the object of the competition was to win the best kind. One class of marbles was known as "mibs," small round clay-like objects about 3/8" in diameter. They were breakable and hence were played on soft ground. Two other classes were glass beads anywhere from 1/2" to 1" in diameter—if a bead was pure red in color it was known as a "Kaneely"—and "steelies," which are nothing more than ball bearings retrieved from wheel bearing casings in automobile junk yards. Steelies also come in several sizes. A large number of games can be played with this combination of marbles. For one example, a glass bead was used to knock out mibs from a circle drawn in dirt that contained a quantity of each player's stock. Each player shoots his marble (either knuckles down or from the air, depending on prior agreement) until he fails to knock a mib from the circle, thus forfeiting the turn to his opponent. The players can break even, or one can win some of the opponent's mibs. The same game can be played with steelies, or with steelies against steelies, or with combinations of glass beads and steelies. The rules for flipping baseball cards are much simpler. Like tossing two pennies simultaneously, the cards can land either odd or even. Each player alternates in making the call. If the call is even and both cards land face up or face down, the caller wins and picks up both cards—and so on and on.

The objective in playing both marbles and cards is to win those of the opposing player. It was common practice for the players to brag (boast) to each other of the number of cards or marbles in their stock. All the players in the group were expected to tell the others the correct number in their possession. It was usually the case that all players in the group would know who had how many marbles or cards. On a day-to-day basis, everyone thought they knew their relative standing in relation to the others, but, as might be expected, deception and ambiguity were part

of the game. The value of a single card could count as two or even three depending upon its rarity or the reputation of the baseball player pictured on it, leading to claims and counter-claims about the overall value of a collection. Claims could be adjudicated by third parties, but their judgments need not be accepted by the parties to the quarrel. One case that still sticks in my mind involved deception about who owned the most marbles. All except one in the group reported accurately the number of marbles he possessed. The exception reported a number less than he actually possessed, leaving the others confident of their relative standing until one day this person made an extravagant claim for the possession of a number far exceeding all others. To certify this claim required an open count of the claimant's stock. Sure enough, Bill had concealed his winnings until he had more than the others, enabling him to sandbag and defeat the rest of us. He had won , but in the losers' terms, at the price of engaging in unethical conduct. Yet, he had won, so all we could do was call him a liar. At that age, we were all incipient lawyers.

Relative standings could also be altered by new acquisitions purchased in the marketplace or by a visit to the junkyard. Since baseball cards were packaged with bubble gum, the stock of cards grew with the volume of bubble gum chewed. New acquisitions featured the pictures of new baseball players, thus stimulating the desire to flip more cards; each friend had his own favorite baseball heroes and knew who had cards he would like to win. Not all cards had equal value to all players, which introduced card trading (sometimes two for one) as a variation on the game of flipping. Those who possessed the greatest numbers of any variety, or of specific items, were sought out as premium players; diminishing their stock was something to brag about. These were engaging and ego-inflating games that we regarded as more important than the things we did in the classroom, regardless of what our teachers or parents may have had in mind for us.

In elementary school I was unreceptive to the idea of being a student. I can remember the names of friends and the games we played, but not my teachers' names or what I might have learned in the classroom. It must be said that my teachers made every effort on my behalf. Though I appeared to have learned the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic and was exposed to the higher cultural arts of music and drawing, none of the latter left an imprint on me. When I

tried to sing in a school choir, I learned that I could not carry a tune. My mother, who was musical, thought I should learn to play the violin. Encouraged by the new violin she bought for me, I took a few lessons, but lacked discipline and motivation. Despite my appreciation of the sounds produced by this instrument, my fingers were attuned to baseball, not the fingerboard. When I later learned to appreciate violin concertos, I regretted this failure, another of life's lost opportunities. I fared no better with lessons in public speaking where it consisted, in second or third grade, of standing before the class and telling a joke. For my performance, my joke was, "What's the difference between a salesman and a baby? A salesman goes from city to city and a baby goes from titty to titty." The boys laughed, the girls were embarrassed, and the teacher reprimanded me for my vulgar taste. My first experience as a public speaker gained me no academic standing and reinforced my reputation as a troublemaker. During the first five years of my elementary school career, I rejected the norms of approved conduct and refused to compete for their rewards. Instead I competed for the recognition of my friends, who in my imagination were my gang, among whom I sought to be *primus inter pares*. In order to accomplish this end I used the means available to me, including telling a risqué joke, owning the most baseball cards, or being the fastest speed skater. This was not always an easy pose to sustain successfully and the pressures imposed by school and family to desist were not only great, they became insurmountable.

I am not sure how it—my conversion—happened, but I know it took place in the sixth grade while I was in Mrs. Jerabek's class. Under Dorothy Jerabek's administration, my proven methods of getting attention and distracting teachers no longer succeeded. She had methods for ignoring my disruptive behavior and thus isolating me from the rest of the class. Or she ridiculed my efforts to focus the attention of the class on myself; even my closest boyfriends enjoyed the defeats she inflicted upon me. My negative attention-getting devices were quickly and decisively neutralized, leaving me no other option than to replace them with the terms she set. If I were to defend my honor, I would have to do so academically.

By taking me on and defeating me as a troublemaker, Mrs. Jerabek also showed that she cared for me. It helped that she was beautiful, but, even apart from that, I fell in love with her. She had a fine figure, soft and delicate facial features, English in complexion and

descent, and fulsome breasts. It is no wonder that she became my ideal, my third mother.

I read the books, did the geography lessons—one wall of the classroom was covered with a map of the world—and never failed to submit assignments on time. When I contracted scarlet fever and was quarantined for six weeks, she sent my assignments to my home, corrected them and had them returned to me by my classmates whom she appointed as couriers. By receiving this attention I was distinguished from other students and became known as teacher's pet.

Mrs. Jerabek had other pets as well. One of these was Betty Meyer, who in being my female counterpart, also became my sixth-grade girlfriend, as if I were appropriating my competitor for Mrs. Jerabek's affections. I worked to gain Mrs. Jerabek's exclusive affection and resented those who did not respect her. For example, one of her duties was to answer the telephone in Miss Hoole's office adjacent to our classroom when the principal was out of the office. Running out of the classroom to answer it, her large breasts rhythmically and conspicuously bounced, drawing the attention of the entire class of boys and girls who reacted with twitters and subdued smiles, at which I took umbrage, regarding myself as her sole defender.

Twice in the course of the sixth year, Mrs. Jerabek invited Betty and me and our closest friends, Mickey Krueger and Jean Lucas, to have Sunday afternoon tea at her home at 2350 South 58th Street; this was the first time I had ever heard of drinking tea on Sunday afternoon. These were momentous occasions not only for the special recognition they accorded us, but also because this was the first time I had been inside of what I imagined was a truly American household. My own was unconventional and certainly not American. Whatever I thought that that might have been, Mrs. Jerabek gave me my first hint of how real Americans lived.

Mrs. Jerabek was a teacher who thought of teaching as a personal relationship between teacher and student and that her classroom had no boundaries. Years later, I learned that I was not as select as I thought I had been and as I wanted to believe. When I returned to West Allis for a high school reunion, I discovered that other classmates had had similar experiences in the sixth grade. In 1980 I also learned that Mrs. Jerabek was alive and well, still living on 58th Street. I

renewed my relationship with her—and, as I learned, so did Betty Meyer. I corresponded with her and visited her, gave her copies of my books, and, apart from a moral obligation, wanted to hear the story of her career and life. Shortly after she taught my class, she became pregnant and under municipal rules then in effect, was required to resign her position. After the birth of her son she was hired to teach at Saint Rita's parochial school where she continued to teach until she was 90. She died, still beautiful, at the age of 93 in 1997.

Had it not been for her personal attention, my intellectual curiosity might never have been stimulated. When later in life I finally recognized this, I understood that learning about life cannot be separated from the moral example given by the teacher.

Some Boyhood Discoveries

In his narrowly circumscribed universe of family, playmates, and school, this child led a protected existence. The youngest sibling and only son, he was indulged by a mother who had high aspirations for his future in America. By the time the boy was born, his father, then thirty-six years of age, had already submitted to the authority of his wife, to whom he deferred in both familial and business affairs. Matters of family policy pertaining to the boy were held firmly in the hands of his mother who made her husband her administrative assistant in her son's care and training. His three older sisters treated him as their kid brother whose welfare was their responsibility. He was, after all, an only son, all the more favored because his family also projected onto him the hopes and aspirations they had held for the firstborn son and brother, now dead. In this protected and feminine universe, it was easy for the boy to believe that he was the family's center of attention in a world that existed for him. Yet, in the nature of growing up it would be inevitable that this illusion was unsustainable.

The Depression

While still only seven years old, and even before I had seen the maps of the world on Mrs. Jerabek's classroom wall, the stock market crash in the autumn of 1929 abruptly ended my shielded life.

I learned that my mother owned stocks in utilities and that what had been thought to be the American way to economic fortune proved to be illusory. Highly speculative utility stocks fell precipitously on November's Black Thursday, and continued to fall until 1933. The Chicago utilities tycoon Samuel Insull, an Englishman, had leveraged his position on the market with other people's money and finally went bankrupt, teaching the family a lesson in the practice of American business. The Crash gave me my first lesson in economics. I did not then read the *New York Times* Industrial Index, but I quickly learned that there was a stock market and that it could not be trusted. Only much later did I learn that fortunes could be made on the downside of a market. Bernard Baruch who sold heavily just before the Crash, bought back when prices were low and became, by the time I was fourteen, an economic advisor to President Roosevelt. His prescient and lucky decision to sell was enough to make him a wealthy man, and when coupled with contributions to Roosevelt's political campaign, to validate his political acumen, confirming the old American adage that "money talks." The Crash and the extended depression that followed left a permanent scar on several generations of Americans who have not forgotten that it could happen again. Its meaning for me was mostly personal.

Before the Crash I had been depositing my money in the Wisconsin Savings State Bank. I had thought that my money was securely held in the huge, impressive bank safe located where National and Greenfield Avenues intersect at 62nd Street, just a comfortable four blocks from where we lived on 58th. When the bank failed—perhaps having lent my money to Samuel Insull, enabling him to hold up his marginal positions until the bitter end—it locked its doors, sealed its accounts, and left me with my valueless bank book. As if by magic, my money had disappeared. Only later in 1933 when President Roosevelt lifted the bank moratorium was my money returned to me, but now its value was discounted, something like twenty percent of its original value. My money had not only earned no interest, it had almost disappeared. At the age of eleven, I learned the meaning of currency devaluation. The adage I had been taught at school about the virtues of "saving for a rainy day" and, moreover, that your "money would work for you," now meant that an Englishman would take your savings from you. In my lexicon, the name Insull still has pejorative connotations.

The Depression even more than the rise of Nazism and the Spanish Civil War was the critical event of my boyhood. Despite high unemployment, the lag in downward price adjustments, and an all-pervasive economic pessimism, Herbert Hoover could only offer promises for a better future, that "prosperity was just around the corner," and that there would then be a "chicken in everyone's pot for Sunday dinner." Though the national economic crisis did not jeopardize our family's economic well-being—my mother had hedged her market position with reserve cash stashed in the trunk in her bedroom—I recall a pervasive uncertainty about the future. People in the neighborhood and on Clinton Street reached for any straw that promised a better future. All eyes focused on the Federal Government waiting expectantly for Hoover's assurances reported in the press and on radio from Washington. When Hitler was appointed Germany's Chancellor in 1933 and Father Coughlin began his radio broadcasts from Detroit, my father, for the first time in my memory, took an interest in politics. Together we listened to Hitler's speeches rebroadcast in translation on Sunday afternoons. What Hitler said was usually described as propaganda, but my mother used the term more broadly to cover the speeches of our own political leaders as well as political reporting in the press. In a very short time the world had become larger, but it was a world that seemed intractable to human intervention. The depression brought the world into my life at home on 58th Street and National Avenue, where a comfortable, secure existence could no longer be taken for granted.

Religion and God

As my mother saw it, the Catholic Church was primarily business. In her words, "The priest wants your money, but gives nothing in return," an attitude, she recounted, that had been born on the iron ranges of Minnesota where the Slovenian priest had summarily dunned—perhaps even taxed—parishioners for contributions, disregarding their volition or ability to pay. It was not in my mother's nature to succumb to the priest's dictates, and regarding them unacceptable, she left the congregation. As a result, eschewing the church had become a family tradition, so that when we reached West Allis, not only was I never sent to church, I was led to believe that the priests were essentially corrupt, an opinion justified for me by a rumor

that the local priest in the Slovenian Catholic Church on 61st Street had fathered the child of one of his parishioners. The priest and by extension the Church itself was morally tainted and therefore irredeemable. I was not given a church and, in my view, I did not have a religion. When my playmates asked me if and where I went to church, it was easy for me to tell them, "I don't go to church," confident in the correctness of my mother's image of the church as an economic institution. The connection between economic ethics and religious faith meant nothing to me until much later when I read Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* In my youth I understood this nexus in much simpler terms.

When, however, my friends asked the next logical question, "Do you believe in God?" I did not have a ready answer. I had certainly heard God damned by my father and was familiar with his frequent use of the Slovenian word "hell" (*hudič*), but this knowledge did not help to answer the fundamental question. Not having an answer, I refused to answer it, taking what is now known as a Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. This position, however, still left me in doubt about whether I did or did not believe in God. Finding myself in this indeterminate position and lacking an authority that would give me an answer, I reasoned that the choice was my own. But, though the choice was left to me, I did not know how to make it.

Looking for a solution to my dilemma, I took my problem back to my parents, asking them directly, "Do we believe in God?" The answer I received was equivocal. "Yes," my mother said, "there *must* be a God, but it's not necessary to go to church." I do not remember my father saying anything, implicitly agreeing with my mother by his silence. I understood that there was no family policy with regard to God, and that the choice was truly mine. This did not, however, solve my problem; it only left me free to find my own solution.

Further questions about the meaning of my existence arose in early adolescence. The issue was not so much a belief in God, but rather how might religion provide me with something I would now call a philosophy of life: What was the meaning of life, specifically, why was I born and what would happen to me afterwards? I knew I needed help to answer these questions. Since I was already convinced that a priest in the Catholic Church would be of no help, I tried the Presbyterians.

Since they were located only a block and a half away, on the corner of National Avenue and 60th Street, where some of my friends with whom I had played basketball in the church's basement gymnasium were members, I made it my choice. Believing that one church would be as good as another and having no knowledge of the theological differences among Protestant churches, proximity made the Presbyterians a logical choice. I went to a Sunday service hoping to talk to the minister, but learned that he was a substitute who was not otherwise available. Having no luck with the Presbyterians, I turned to the Lutherans.

This determination was certified for me by my sister Olga's best friend, Dorothy Runkel, a Lutheran, whom I admired for her charm and delicate beauty. Her church was located on Layton Boulevard in Milwaukee, a few miles from home. Dorothy made the appointment for me to see her minister at the church, an imposing stone edifice, where I met a young cleric fully outfitted in vestments. This was an important occasion for both of us, but our ideas differed about why. I wanted to discuss my immediate existential problems. The minister's objective became clear when, after a short interview he presented me with a Lutheran catechism which he asked me to study before returning for a second visit. I left with the catechism and tried to read it, but my efforts only proved to me that it did not contain the answers I needed. My search was for direct answers to my immediate questions about the origin of life and why I was here. The catechism introduced me to the terms under which I could accept a faith, the dogma peculiar to Lutheranism. In asking me to accept their faith, they made me an object of their mission rather than the other way around. In any case, the biblical and theological terminologies were beyond my skills of comprehension and meant nothing to me. I never returned for a second visit and drew the conclusion that I could not expect much help from the Protestant churches, leaving me, at the age of thirteen, with no further choices within Christendom.

Later, when I was eighteen and a counselor at the YMCA Camp Manitowish at Boulder Junction in northern Wisconsin, I was thrust into a religious setting again. At the camp Catholics, Protestants, and Jews mixed together under a watered-down YMCA version of Christianity. Catholic campers had the option of attending mass in the nearby city of Woodruff; the Jews, however, had no such choice in upstate Wisconsin. Camp policy required attendance at a Sunday morning service held on the campground's outdoor chapel in an

atmosphere that evoked the supernaturalism of nature itself. I also took my turn at delivering the Sunday "sermon," which I remember as a homily on good sportsmanship, emphasizing character-building over winning, rather than the muscular spirit of the gospel. It was the practice at camp to pray before meals and at evening fireside gatherings, but these ceremonies were a multicultural version of Protestantism; as the counselor of my dining table I took my place in a rotation and had no trouble giving a prayer for our daily bread. That I was qualified to officiate in these ceremonies did not enhance my respect for Protestantism. The YMCA version of Protestantism was limited to a few prayers of thanks and a demand for good will and love toward others. It was a benign faith that made no particular demands for sacrifice on its believers and could be accepted easily. My search in the Christian church for solutions to my existential questions ended at about that time, but my encounters with Protestant cultural agencies did not.

When I was an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin, Dean of Men Rudisili, chose me to be a Danforth Fellow to attend Camp Minnewanka on Lake Michigan near Traverse City, established by the Danforth family, owners of Ralston Purina in St. Louis. Located in an exotic setting on the shores of the lake and provisioned with tennis courts, ball fields, and game rooms, the purpose of the retreat was to enhance a spirit of Christian brother and sisterhood. My only lasting memory of it is that of the coed with whom I took to playing tennis and walking the beach. It surprises me that all other images of it have vanished. My next encounter with Protestantism was in the Marine Corps at Parris Island where a fundamentalistic Southern Baptist minister addressed the platoon on the virtues of motherhood, patriotism, God, country, winning the war, but not sobriety. Because as boots we were already intimidated into the acceptance of discipline and obedience, we listened respectfully to this strange, bloodthirsty Christian message. Having acquired from these experiences the belief that Christianity was a superficial religion, I assumed that the Christians expected no more from their faith than I. Later, when I married a Congregational minister's daughter, I was to learn otherwise.

Without knowing it, I was more of a Catholic than I realized. Fragments of Catholic rituals were integrated into the family's lifestyle. My mother observed the rule of serving fish on Fridays and accepted the dietary sacrifices required by Lent. Easter, if not so much an occasion

for the observance of the Resurrection, still required special dishes and collective drinking of specially selected red wines. Easter dinner stood apart from ordinary weekly commensalism. We conformed to a Catholic calendar but did not need an affiliation with the church to do it.

Our family had its own secular theodicy, designed to explain the ways of the world to my sisters and me. I was taught to have sympathy for the poor, and that mendicancy was neither a crime nor preordained. The family dictum was that there were good and bad people in all groups and that it was wrong to have prejudices against a group as a whole. Without putting it in explicit, Catholic terms, we were all God's children, but in our case, we were taught that all were free to believe as they wished, that one religion was no better than another, nor were missionary efforts to convert others consistent with independence of mind. In its simplest terms it was the Golden Rule of "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." We never said prayers at mealtime, nor did I ever take Communion in the Catholic Church. The family culture was Catholic, but more out of habit than zeal. Our "Catholicism" had more to do with adherence to a Slovenian cultural tradition than to a faith or theology. The irksome question of the meaning of my existence—of a philosophy of life—never disappeared and has always reappeared at unexpected times, but its immediate salience in my boyhood was mitigated by my daily round of life in family, among playmates, at school, and by my ambition to be successful in America.

Family Solidarity as Religion

The success of our "restaurant" business on Clinton Street presupposed a tightly organized familial solidarity. By force of the logic of conducting a family business, my mother functioned as a chief executive who determined and executed policy, making husband and children part of a collective project larger than ourselves. Coordinating our different schedules at school and getting us to and from the school were only part of it. Each of us had our own chores: my earliest duty was to submit to the supervision of my sister Pauline. By the time I was ten years old, the task of washing dishes and cleaning the kitchen after meals had already descended from the older sisters to Betty and me, and remained with us until Betty graduated from high school, leaving me to do these chores alone when she went to college. To this day, any

member of any of my families can vouch for my skill as a busboy and dishwasher. Ordinary tasks such as weeding the garden, picking the fruit, mowing the lawn, shoveling the snow, tending to the garbage, caring for the dog, and shopping for groceries were tasks routinely assigned to me. On Sunday mornings, it was the children's duty at 115 Clinton Street to bottle the coming week's supply of near beer. Our mini-brewery was in a ramshackle, rain-proof, wooden shed located between the kitchen and the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railway tracks. Each week my father prepared the necessary ingredients for the beer and placed them in a twenty-five gallon copper vat elevated a foot off the floor. After a week of fermentation, his crew bottled the mixture. The job was simple enough, but required some care and coordination. Drawing the beer from the vat to the bottles was done with a siphon hose inserted not too deeply into the vat. Drawing on the hose caused the beer to flow and required the immediate insertion of the hose into a clean beer bottle, washed in advance by the same crew. When the bottle was full, the hose was nipped and inserted into the next bottle in line until it too was full, and so on. Each full bottle in this assembly-line process was passed to the capper, who placed the cap on the bottle and passed it to the presser who, with a hand-powered press, slammed the cork-lined cap airtight onto the bottle. This primitive industrial activity produced about eight cases of beer ready for sale to waiting customers. In its own way this Sunday morning practice was our substitute for attending church; tasting the beer as we did was a sacramental activity.

After our "service" we were permitted to attend the Sunday matinee at the Wisconsin Theater on Wisconsin Avenue in downtown Milwaukee. Working together in our micro-brewery was our equivalent of praying together in church; our reward, however, was immediate and material.

While I was still a boy, the justification for life on a day-to-day basis was implicit in the family as a collective enterprise. That we needed each other was its own justification. Situated in a kind of limbo between West Allis and Milwaukee and without an extended family, we accepted our mutual dependencies. Acting as a corporate joint holding company and living by our own rules, there seemed to be no need for outside support, let alone a church or religion. We supplied our own

rituals and justification of the ways of the family in this world rather than the next.

Boyhood Rituals and Secrets: My World in the Basement

The basement of our house in West Allis was a small universe of its own. It was large, covering the full area of the house. Above it was the butcher shop and an A & P Grocery Store, and above them were our living quarters. The ground floor entrance to our home opened to both a stairway that led to the second floor and to a hallway that led to the basement. The basement could also be entered through an external hatchway which in addition served as the sleeping quarters for my dog. It was in the basement that I learned some prosaic facts of life and where my nascent political ambitions were initially cultivated.

The basement's key areas were a butcher's area, the wine cellar, exterior hatchway, interior basement access, storage space/clubroom, and coal bin. Its installations included the butcher's hot water vat, the home heating center including the furnace, klinker bin, and the Iron Fireman, and the laundry complex including gas stove, sink, and Maytag washing machine. At least until my father retired from the saloon business in 1936, this was where I performed my household tasks and enjoyed freedom from parental scrutiny.

The house was heated with a coal-burning furnace that required regular replenishments of fuel during the long, cold Midwestern winters. Feeding anthracite coal to the furnace was accomplished by the Iron Fireman, the trade name of a machine that was then the state of the art in heating systems. Consisting of a hopper capable of containing a supply of fuel, it fed coal on thermostatic demand directly into the base of the furnace. Twice daily, its hopper had to be filled and the ashes and "klinkers" produced by the combustion needed to be removed from the base of the fire. The Fireman needed little attention, but human assistance was critical to its proper functioning. I provided this service before I went to school and when I returned in the afternoon. Shovel by shovel I transferred the anthracite from the coal bin to the hopper; the coal was delivered in a size the Fireman's rotor could digest. Klinkers that formed at the base of the fire, if not removed, impeded the automatic feeding of the fuel into the furnace. Without the removal of the klinkers and ashes the Iron

Fireman was a helpless robot. Probing the fire pit to locate the red-hot klinkers, I removed them with long-handled tongs and placed them in the klinker bin to cool. Remembering this procedure years later when I read in one of Eugene O'Neill's plays a portrait of a ship's stoker, I have always been able to identify with those, including my father in his original career as a blacksmith, who work in the intense heat of coal-fed boilers or molten steel. The easier task of removing the ashes remained after removing the klinkers. A slight shake of the furnace's grate with a crank connected to a protruding bar brought the ashes to the bottom; opening the cast iron door at the furnace's base, I could easily remove them with a shovel. But again, if not removed on schedule, their accumulation would impede the proper combustion of the coal. Even before I was brought under control by family and school, I was disciplined by the machine. When I read Thorstein Veblen's *The Instinct of Workmanship*, about the social-psychological consequences of machine discipline on the worker's mentality, I could understand what he meant when he said that the machine process induces a rational bent of mind in those who are subjected to it.

Once a week I was assistant to my mother on laundry day. An electrically powered Maytag washing machine stood on a raised platform. Adjacent to the platform sat a two-burner gas stove used to heat the water for washing—and on other occasions to provide my father the heat needed when he distilled his private reserve *slivovica*. Though electrically powered, the Maytag was not connected to a water supply. Hot water for washes and cold water for rinses were supplied manually in buckets: hot water from the stove and cold water from the sink. In those days water metered by the city was an expensive commodity to be used sparingly, not only in the laundry room but also for purposes of bathing; we took our baths once a week, on Fridays, the four siblings using only two bath waters. Managing the Maytag's water consumption required the use of several holding buckets. The hot water used for the first wash was drained and set aside in buckets while the wash was rinsed in cold water. The same hot water was then reused for the second wash. The cold rinse water was also saved and used as the rinse for the next wash. After the cold water rinse, the wash was pressed through an electrically powered wringer. Not until all water had been wrung out was the cold water removed and saved to be used for another rinse.

Four or five loads of clothing sorted in piles according to color were processed in this way. A complete change of new water, hot and cold, was done at the halfway mark, the last washes being reserved for dark garments. Only then was the water discarded. The laundry operation, like that of Friday night bathing, was premised on the parsimonious use of water. The idea of conserving water was part of a general belief in the virtue of saving that also included the sparing use of electricity and the telephone: light switches were always to be turned off when not needed and phone calls kept short and to the point. In our world waste was to be avoided and each was responsible for observing these economies. I still turn off light switches.

The butcher had his own corner of the basement. It contained a large gas-heated vat and various counters used to cut up carcasses. Shipments of live chickens were received on Fridays to be slaughtered and prepared for sale on the weekend, there being no frozen chickens then. Preparation of a dressed chicken for the market was still the work of a craftsman, a skill not yet transformed into a large-scale, scientifically orchestrated factory operation capable of slaughtering millions of chickens daily. After slitting the chicken's jugular, the butcher threw the carcass into a barrel where it remained until its blood had drained. He then dunked the bloodless but completely bloody carcass into the vat containing the hot water, withdrawing it when it was ready to be plucked. The carcass was then gutted and prepared for sale. This was an operation I saw many times and I recalled it easily when, in the early 1950s, I took a job at Cornell University that required me to live in a farmhouse and play the part of a local small-town resident. The farmhouse had a chicken coop, which gave me the idea of acting out this role by raising a flock of my own. When the time arrived to butcher them, I followed the procedure I had observed so many times, but learned that doing was not the same as watching. A live chicken does not easily submit to having its throat slit; I had difficulty holding the struggling chicken while trying to find its jugular. Every craft is an art in its own right the practice of which is best left to those who have been trained for it. In my case, a doctorate in anthropology was no help.

The wine cellar was an enclosed, windowless area which could be entered through a door that was never locked. It contained a large wine press, twice as high as I, and at least six thirty-one gallon oak-staved barrels—enough capacity for a full year's supply for domestic use. The barrels were reused from year to year, and each was cleaned when

emptied of its contents. If wine is to ferment properly, clean barrels are an absolute necessity. Wine barrels were made of wooden staves held in place with metal hoops designed to clamp the finely edged staves together. The barrel's base and top cover are tongued disks made to fit the grooved staves and are held in place by the metal hoops. After a barrel was emptied it required a thorough brushing of the inner side of the staves, base, and cover. Removing a hoop releases the cover, giving access to the inside of the barrel. One of my jobs was to clean the empty barrels and prepare them for use in the following season. In the wine cellar I was my father's assistant.

Each year in the early fall, a truckload of Concord and Muscat grapes arrived from vineyards located along the sandy eastern shores of Lake Michigan. Wine-making season began when we unloaded a shipment of boxed red and white grapes and carried them into the basement through the cellar hatchway. That same day, and late into the night, my sister Betty and I pressed grapes until the whole shipment was converted into "must," the grape juice combined with the pulp and skins. Looking back, the press seemed to be six feet tall and was capable of holding two bushels of grapes at a pressing. The press squeezed the grapes downward under the weight of a steel plate operated by a crank connected to a set of gears. The press's downward action on the grapes released the juice from the pulp and skins, allowing the liquid to drain into a tray at the base of the press. My job was to operate the crank while my father managed the operation as a whole until all the barrels were filled with the proper amounts of juice and must. Once filled and capped with a cover, the barrels were laid on their sides. At the top of the center stave a bung hole was opened and left open during the fermentation process. A wooden spigot inserted in the face of each barrel was used later to drain the wine. I do not remember any of this wine ever being bottled. Both the red and the white were decanted directly from the barrel, but only after the fermentation had been completed and the bung hole capped. The whole process required several months and marked the fall as a special season. For my father making the family's wine was the same thing he would have been doing if he were still in Kropa, following a seasonal ritual repeated year after year. For me it was a chore in which I had little interest; only later did I regret not learning the craft, another missed opportunity in my life. My father did not

instruct me perhaps thinking I would automatically learn it as he had in his youth. Another feature of Kropa's culture was lost in America.

There were, however, important rewards for this work. One of them was immediate: namely, drinking the delicious juice from the freshly pressed grapes. Even greater rewards followed as the wine matured. What my father called "young wine," whose alcohol content was still low, was a heady grape juice that could be drained and drunk directly from the spigot. Wine was an integral part of the family's cuisine: even as young children we were served small portions with dinner on Sundays and festive holidays. The real treat came on New Year's Eve when the family drank a special preparation of mulled wine served with freshly made bread. We dipped it into the warm wine in a sacramental ceremony to commemorate the new wine and the new year. Even now I dip my bread into red wine, and it still evokes for me the authentic flavor of that mulled wine, a personal ritual that transports me back to the house in West Allis where I had my first taste of it. These are the hollow remains of an ethnic-American way of life.

The wine cellar had a special meaning for me because it was there that I surreptitiously took my friends to treat them to private wine tastings of my father's best. I thought of the cellar as a perfectly respectable part of the house. You could be proud of the Iron Fireman, then an ultra-modern piece of equipment. Not all families could afford a Maytag washing machine, and to have a butchering area in the basement was a novelty. I kept my dog in the hatchway to the basement where he slept and ate. Because of my dog, my friends knew the hatchway very well, so it was almost inevitable that I should take the next step and invite them into the basement I knew so well. Serving them my father's wine directly from the spigot supported my claim to be the audacious leader of what I called my gang.

Those invited to the basement were only my most trusted friends. Including me there were four of us. Secretive as were the nature of our activities, they imbued us with a conspiratorial attitude that tightened our fraternal bond We were four little boys (German, Polish, Irish, and Slovene), who were looking for affirmation in each other. I do not remember the exact steps which led to the creation of our club, but we took to making the storage room the place where we held meetings. The first thing we learned was that there was no point in having a secret club unless others knew of its existence, raising the

question of its purpose. We engaged in no charitable work, harassed no enemies, and did not have plans to steal. Telling our friends about the club informed them of their exclusion. We had learned to appropriate a social status by the simple process of excluding some of our playmates, arousing their curiosity and desire to learn more about what we were doing: Groucho Marx rejected such notions of appropriated status when he said that any elite club that invited him to join was not good enough for him. By accepting our claim to exclusivity, our friends validated our existence, but secret meetings in our hiding place were not enough to justify ourselves as a self-selected elite. We solved this problem of purpose by creating titles for ourselves—president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Since we met in *my* basement and drank *my* father's wine, there could be only one candidate for president. When I asked, "Who should be president?" it was agreed by consensus that it should be me. That is how I became a president for the first time. The club had no purpose other than our own celebration, but that was enough to set us apart from the others and make a claim to our exclusivity.

Much later when at the University of Wisconsin at Madison I was similarly honored as president of the Student Union by being admitted to an exclusive club for campus leaders. Each spring elected by predecessors who elected their successors, five or ten junior class leaders were inducted into the Iron Cross Society: each new group had its names engraved in a large metal plaque. Late in the darkness of an evening the novitiates carried the plaque and chained it to the foot of the statue of Abraham Lincoln located at the top of the Bascom Hill. Removed later, the plaque was then installed on a wall in the Student Union Rathskeller where it remains to this day. We were a self-appointed, self-perpetuating elite that had no function other than to bestow this honor on those like ourselves. My political career, begun in the basement and successfully pursued in high school and in college, ended when I later realized that self-promotion was an essential qualification for a political career.

Exorcising the Slovene Roots

I do not remember the time when I became aware that there was a difference between being a Slovene and being an American.

More plausibly it would seem that this was not a sudden discovery but rather more like a gradual awakening that there might be a species "Americana." My immediate neighborhood and circle of friends included Italians, Croatians, Germans, Swedes, Serbs, Hungarians, Poles, Irish, Slovenes, and Scots, but there were no Jews or Negroes, as the latter were then known to us. This diversity of origins left me with the impression that my world was composed of a multitude of nationalities, each taking as his own the nation of his parents; we designated ourselves according to nation not ethnicity as is the current practice.

However, within this mix of nationalities, there was also the imputation that some nationalities were more worthy than others. Germans, with names like Meyer, Krueger, Bietzel, Rehberger, Kiefer, who were the largest group in our neighborhood, were already second generation and had parents who spoke English without an accent. In my estimation, this itself elevated the status of Germans above that of other nationalities. That my mother proudly spoke German and claimed an Austrian nationality helped to confirm this impression. When my eldest sister entered high school and was required to study a foreign language, my mother insisted that it be German, giving the Germans another increment of status. But in my scheme of things this did not mean the Germans were American. It only made them better than other nationalities. At the bottom of my ranking were the Poles. First, because my elementary school teachers had more difficulty pronouncing Polish names than those of other nationalities; a teacher's stumbling over a student's name could make a classroom at least snicker if not laugh out loud. Besides, all Polish names ended in "-ski," as if one were indistinguishable from another. Second, and even more telling, my father had worked with Poles and had learned to speak their language, but whenever he made the claim that he possessed this skill, my mother derided him not only for the worthlessness of the language, but even for the claim that he knew it. Somewhere in between on this scale of prejudices were the Italians whom I associated with both the Mafia and the discovery of America, and the Irish who were poor, noisy, and had too many children. Scandinavians were invariably blond, had high foreheads and pronounceable names like Hanson and Samuelson, and ranked next to Germans or, on the basis of appearance, even higher. Scandinavians were already second-generation immigrants, giving them a greater claim to status than latecomers such

as the Slavs, Hungarians, and Poles. Time of arrival and country of origin were the ready-made criteria I used to locate myself in my hierarchical ordering of nationalities.

Despite my mother's efforts to make me an Austrian, in practical terms this was a label that I could not appropriate. To make the claim, as I did on occasion when my friends and I discussed our parents' countries of origin, placed me in a strange category, separating me from other Slovenes whose names were similar to mine. How could I be Austrian if my name was Slovene like those of my friends Stupic, Potocnik, Teshnik, Pagocnik, Pintar, and Tratar? In the neighborhood, I not only knew I was a Slovene, but I also knew that my mother's claim to Austrian-ness made us superior. Despite the falseness of this claim to national superiority, it nevertheless had the consequences she desired: to exorcise our Slovene roots.

In the aftermath of World War I Slovenia had become a part of the newly formed kingdom of Yugoslavia, now designated as a Slavic region. In this new map of Southern and Central Europe drawn by the Allied Powers, Slovenia had lost its status as a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, posing the problems not only of how to identify Slovenia, but also of how to prove that it existed at all. It was a small territory with a small population whose emigrants when they came to this country moved to primarily in steel-producing cities and iron-mining regions. Except for the émigrés themselves, most people in the United States had no idea where Slovenia was. Austria had the double advantage of being both known and a "European country," as if that gave us a better status claim in America.

My parents took every opportunity to denigrate the country they had left. "Slovene," they said, "is a language not worth knowing." "The old country is corrupted and they are always killing each other in wars." "Slovenia is a poor, destitute country controlled by the rich and the church." "In Slovenia you couldn't get ahead," and, "In the Austro-Hungarian Army a soldier was paid only a few dollars a month." It is no wonder that my parents never returned to Kropa for a visit and had no desire to do so. By contrast, in this country, "If you study hard, you'll succeed." "Everybody who is ambitious has a chance." "In America everybody is equal—there are good and bad people in all religions and nationalities," but despite this ideology there was a slight carryover of a

traditional Old World prejudice against Croatians. We were to become Americans despite our immigrant status and despite my father's preference for reading Slovene newspapers rather than the *Milwaukee Journal.* It was implicitly understood that I was to absorb the values and norms thought to be American. On the other hand, there was no question that within the family we lived differently from others.

The way of life in our household was more typical of life in Kropa than that which I imagined to be American. I knew of no other family that produced *potica*, a holiday-season pastry (of Austrian origin) or that followed an annual fall ritual of buying halves of porkers and steers to be made into smoked sausages, hams, and *pršut* in a backyard smokehouse. Our hand-cranked sausage-making machine produced a year's supply of hearty, heavily garlicked *kranjske klobase* links. Blood sausages were made from a mixture of rice and pork blood and when made left the kitchen smelling, as I imagined, the way a kitchen in Kropa might smell. I did not wish to share any of this part of my life with my friends. Considering that I already felt stigmatized by the saloon business, the heterodox industries associated with our West Allis household added to my belief that we were not strictly speaking *bona fide* Americans. On the other hand, when facing the outside world, my parents urged me to be an American. They were carriers of the old-world culture that had been bred into them, but urged me to be American even as they bequeathed to me the Old World which they did not want me to accept. I lived a split life.

In our child's world, despite our consciousness of each other's national origins, spatial proximity rather than nationality determined our choice of friends. My childhood territory was circumscribed by a few contiguous blocks between 58th and 60th Streets on the north side of National Avenue, a commercial street and trolley car route that was also the dividing line for elementary school districts. I did not associate with children in the adjacent school district on the other side of the trolley tracks until I went to junior high school. That I was Slovene did not seem to matter to others and I reciprocated in kind. For my friends and me our neighborhood was a multi-ethnic enclave whose cultural diversity remained invisible to us because we met each other on the streets and not in each other's homes. I never saw the living rooms of any of my friends' homes, just as they never entered our apartment; possibly everyone had something to hide. Meeting on the streets, we rarely saw each other's parents. It came as a shock when a friend

suddenly announced that his mother had given birth to a baby sister; no one had known his mother was pregnant. The announcement shocked us because we could not conceive that our parents would or could have sexual relations. The baby had arrived ten years after the mother's preceding child. This event could only evoke images of the friend's mother and father having intercourse, something that parents no longer did. By our Puritanical standard the event violated our norm of respectability. When the reality had to be faced, the family's collective front was penetrated. The privacy of the home was a community norm and not something peculiar to our family. We therefore were never apprised of the national, cultural, and lifestyle differences among us. We knew the national origins of each other's parents, but on the streets, in our relations with each other, we invented an American culture of our own.

I learned a significant part of that culture because I had three elder sisters each of whom had boyfriends. As part of their approach to their girlfriends, the boyfriends indulged me with their attention, leading me in my self-centered world to believe they were my friends as well. Pauline's boyfriend Del Budde was seven years older than I, yet despite the age difference he talked to me man-to-man and treated me with respect. Al Luchini, Olga's friend, who was my idol on the baseball field also, became my speed-skating instructor. Under no circumstances, except for his interest in Olga, would he have paid any attention to me at all. That it did him little good with Olga made me the beneficiary of his efforts to win her attention. Betty's friends, who were only two years older than I, became my friends as well and incorporated me into their lives. Gordon and Howard Samuelson were cases in point. Howard helped me to organize my own Little League team and showed me how to finance the purchase of baseball equipment by buying Campbell's Soup wholesale and selling it to our friends' mothers; when we ran short of funds I was taught how to steal baseballs from the five-and dime. This was a fairly simple job involving no more than letting the contraband fall through the hole in the pocket of my knickers where it would rest invisibly at the base of the knee-high pantaloon: shoplifting, a truly American custom that I learned at an early age, is now a twenty-five billion dollar industry across the country despite all methods of electronic surveillance. We played several full seasons of self-organized Little League ball at the Soldiers' Home, an area that until recently was

the home of the Milwaukee Braves. I can remember the score of our first game, a long one, with a final tally of 54 to 57. Despite being older than I, Gordon befriended me and later when I entered the University of Wisconsin, he was already there and became my mentor. He had aspirations for making me the governor of the state and had World War II not come along I might have had a political career inspired in good measure by Gordon. Learning what it meant to be an American was a process that occurred by osmosis, and, without knowing it, one we helped to define by our own actions.

Critical examples of middle-class Americanism were provided for me by my elementary school teachers. Because they were teachers, they were by definition American. In that day they were all women and none had foreign names. They spoke English without an accent and showed a preference for students who came to school with clean fingernails and hands, hair combed and brushed, and dressed in freshly washed clothing. Never being tardy and having perfect attendance were standards which were reinforced by my sisters and my mother, but which I did not always fulfill. Nevertheless they were a standard by which I was measured. However, it was not until Mrs. Dorothy Jerabek invited Betty, Jean, Mickey, and me to her home for Sunday afternoon tea that I saw something I could imagine to be American. Mrs. Jerabek was married, had no children, and lived in a finely furnished two-story house made of brick. Her husband (whom I later learned was Czech) was a musician. He played a real instrument (not an accordion like the Slovenes) in an orchestra, and therefore was a cultivated man. He spoke with an accent, but it did not matter. It was the accent of a professional musician who had been brought to America for his musical talents. My image of who was an American was guided by the appearances and values upheld by respectable middle-class elementary school teachers.

Without a conscious awareness, I learned that there was not much to be gained by thinking of myself as a Slovene. Since I could not be an Austrian either, I came to accept my mother's advice that in America anyone who studied and worked hard could be successful. In this land of opportunity nationality did not count against you.

By the time I entered junior high school in the seventh grade, I had become a competitive student, determined to succeed on "their" terms. In order to accomplish this objective I made it my task to expand

the size of my English vocabulary. By systematically studying my dictionary, I supposed that if I learned three new words each day, I could learn all the words there were to know. My method was to look up words at random and write them along with their definitions on cards which I posted on the wall of my bedroom, replacing old ones with new ones, and including some words I might have encountered in books. I followed this practice more or less regularly until I finished high school. The dictionary was to be my admission ticket to a successful career.

My parents left Slovenia because it was too poor to give them a decent living and the kind of future promised by the New World. My mother was committed to the values of education and social and economic mobility. In her effort to achieve in America a social status relatively equivalent to that of her family in Kropa, she went to school to study English and ideologically aligned herself in action and word with American socialism. She made it clear to her children that we were to have college educations. My father appreciated his opportunities for steady work and an income that exceeded any of his earlier expectations, but his heritage did not include aspirations for social mobility: when I graduated from high school he suggested I secure a steady job at Allis Chalmers. Despite my family's lifestyle and its multiple associations with Slovene culture, it cannot be said that I suffered prejudice or discrimination in either the ethnic or Anglo world. In retrospect the problems I felt about being the son of Slovene immigrants were not projected onto me by others; I created them myself.

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