

## GLENARVON MEMORIES

### I

The telephone was ringing its insistent sound, penetrating my consciousness and forcing me to swim into wakefulness. I picked up the receiver with a sleepy hello and a male voice, hesitant, almost reluctant to speak said that Pop Warren O'Brien had died. I opened my eyes with a start and realized I had been dreaming. George was sleeping quietly next to me and I hated to wake him but the dream was more than a dream. It seemed real. I poked George awake and told him I couldn't sleep so we went downstairs into our cold kitchen to warm some milk. I don't remember feeling sadness or even fear when we trudged up the stairs to bed and I went back to sleep immediately.

The next morning, children off to school and George off to work, the telephone rang. Answering, a man asked if George were home and when I answered no he, with some hesitation said that his name was O'Brien, he lived near us in Winnetka, and he had met Rennie some years ago in the Caribbean. Rennie had misplaced our number and called this O'Brien in the hopes he might know us. Mr. O'Brien offered to call us. He had sad news, he said. Pop O'Brien died the day before of a heart attack. I called George right away, we contacted Rennie and made plans to fly to Glen Arvon immediately.

I had always been nervous about flying but somehow this flight seemed so necessary, I forgot any fears. I can't remember who met us at the airport or how we got from Richmond to the farm but when we drove up the circular driveway I felt the old familiar tug at my heart as I looked up at the four large pillars. I had never seen Glen Arvon in the Winter, the enormous trees, their branches silhouetted against a cloudless

sky, the hills covered with leafless trees now showed their rounded curves. And even the house seemed different. Bigger somehow. We walked up the side stairs to the door of Pop's study. Frances came to the door as we opened it. "Oh, you came," she said. "I wouldn't not" I answered in a silly phrase we both knew, and she was able to smile.

The next day was extremely cold. We walked up the road in the morning, the dirt and left-over snow crunching. Frances had wanted the short service to be in the front room of the house. There was no casket. A minister, probably from the Episcopal Church in Bremo Bluff said a few words and we then put on our coats to drive over to the small graveyard on the hill next to the church. Pop was buried next to Rev Figg. (We all thought this was funny and wondered if the good cleric would keep Pop from his bottle). I remember the sky was very blue and a bird sang as the minister finished his homily. The bird made me cry.

We drove back to the house as the day darkened. Every room had a fire in the fireplaces and suddenly there were guests everywhere. Plates of food were passed, and everyone's glass was well filled. The conversation was not sad. It was more like a party where any moment we would see Pop, drink in hand, smiling and greeting friends, patting a man on the back and throwing back his head to laugh. There were stories. One woman said that Pop had met a woman every week at night on the edge of some woods – both on horseback, she said. I was surprised to see so many Black people there. I didn't understand the relationship between Black and White in Virginia. Some told me how Pop had worked with them, helping to birth little lambs, getting in a crop. I knew that Pop and Junius had an arrangement about buying whiskey but of course that was not brought up at the time.

So Pop was gone and Frances left to carry on for 30 years more until she too, left Glen Arvon but in the heat of August.

## II

The Glen Arvon I remember best is the farm in summer, the dusty road, trumpet vine crawling on the bushes in the driveway or honeysuckle near the guest house with its wonderful pungent scent and Frances' herbs and geraniums in the dining room windows.

Pop O'Brien came to Wilmette to see us in 1960. He had called to say he was going to visit his mother in California and that he would make a stop-over to see us in Wilmette. George was to pick him up at the train station and would recognize him by the St.Cyr beret he was wearing. Pop arrived about 5:00 in the afternoon and announced that he was taking everyone out for ice cream. My protestations went unheeded as he and the kids piled in the car to go down to Hammonds. He won their hearts, of course.

Pop told us about skiing with Edith at the ski lodge at Hus outside Mulouse in Alsace. I found some old albums I had saved (stolen?) from Theron Wright's house when Edith died and showed Pop the photos – little things with the people barely discernable. One photo with the name Andre Koechlin written at the top made him stop and point, "There he is," he said, "Oh well, she was always too much for me." I had no idea what he was saying about the figure wearing a raccoon coat leaning against a very fancy 1920's car.

I was about 6 months pregnant with our youngest at that time and Pop suggested that the child I was carrying was a boy and I could well name him Warren. Indeed, Frank Warren was born November 21<sup>st</sup> – one day before Pop's birthday (Pop asked why I hadn't pushed harder).

The Spring of 1961 he suggested that we take our week's vacation and visit him and Frances at Glen Arvon. When Edith was alive she had often urged George and me to visit Pop and Frances but somehow the time went by and we never did. Pop had contacted George from time and time and had sent us a chest for our flatware for a wedding present. Finally in the summer of 1961 we made our first of many visits to Glen Arvon.

We drove down partially on the Blue Ridge parkway we had always wanted to see, down through Winchester, Culpepper – names I loved to say – and on to Orange, (the Big T burger) Zion Crossroads, Boswell's Tavern – all exciting, exotic places with falling down gas stations, very few cars and the heat shimmering on the fields. When we got to Fork Union there was a great deal of excitement in our Volkswagon bus. There was the Fork Union Academy, the drug store across the street, small houses and then the graveyard where we were to turn left. Scrubby pines, low on each side of the road gave way to tall pines, and deciduous trees with vines of poison ivy crawling up their trunks. We saw little cabins here and there and pretended to the children one or the other was Pop's house. Entering a wood, a small graveyard on the right with bright plastic flowers, we saw the sign W.F.O'Brien. A whoop from the kids. The road went on and on it seemed and then to the left we could see through the cedar trees on each side, the outline of a brick house, the pillars white in the distance. The road was dry, dust kicked up and followed us. Cedar became boxwood as we came near the house. The center circle had spyrea and forsythia not blooming in summer but I was to see later the yellow flowers on the branches many times in early spring lining the road down to the barn. Dogs barked as we drew up to the house. Pabst, brown and white and Happy with white short fur panted

their greetings. There were always dogs to greet visitors at Glen Arvon though they changed over the 30 years we made the trip there.

That first year we had very little time – only four days, as I remember and I had the feeling I must memorize everything in the house all at once. Frances met us at the front door (later we always went to Pop’s study door) and I knew I would love her. She was slim and white haired with a generous mouth and glasses. Shrewd eyes that saw everything. She had a wardrobe of “lily” dresses – pink and yellow and blue – always with a pin at her shoulder. George and I were to sleep in the front bedroom in the large four poster that had (we soon found out) a mattress that sunk dangerously into the middle. Little Warren slept in a white crib next to us. Wendy and Robin had the twin beds in the adjoining room with Roger in a cot in the same room. Later Frances had the children in the guest house and we stayed in the main house much the initial disgruntlement of the kids!

David was in medical school in 1961 and Jon was working in Richmond. Rennie was in Cape Cod and we did not meet him until later. David and Jon came to the farm to meet us and were extremely friendly. David was a slight young man with dark hair and dark blue or brown eyes and his brother Jon was lighter skinned with brown hair and blue eyes. Both were young and healthy looking in those days. It was hardly noon the day after we arrived when Jon called up “anyone want to crack a beer?” We stayed up most of the night (this became a tradition for several years) and there was a lot of genial kidding about my nursing Warren who was about 6 months old. Rain pelted the house the 2<sup>nd</sup> day we were there and I thought as I sat in a rocker with Warren in the front bedroom that I would always remember the sound of water dripping from the eaves, the mist over the river from the upstairs bathroom.

I remember some of how the house was furnished. There was a carpet runner of maroon wool in the downstairs hallway, up the stairs and into the upper hall. There was a round table next to the curving stair that held an ashtray made of the copper plate of Frances' and Pop's wedding stationary and a lamp (the last to be turned out at night). Of course the huge mirror was there in the hall, a settee(?) for three with a carved back, a chest where the games were kept and the glass shelves at the back windows holding the colored bottles. There was a print of Lincoln and his family on one wall and close by the front door a sweet portrait of a child. Pop's study or office had book shelves along one wall as now. His knee hole desk sat between the windows. There was a braided rug on the floor. Over the bookshelves were at least two black and white drawings of industrial America popular in the 20's. They were quite well done. Pop's pride and joy were the wooden pictures – carved I think, in Alsace. We called the room that was once a dining room, the “pool room” because there was a huge pool table in the middle on an old red, Oriental rug. Frances' chair was on the left side of the fireplace. Over the fireplace for many years was a marvelous painting by Ofer (?) – two Indians meeting in a desert setting. The Kachina dolls were on the book shelves on either side of the large doors and the lovely Kachina watercolors were above on the walls. When the pool table was taken out, we always sat in this room at “cocktail hour” and watched the news at 6:00 – Frances in her chair, I sat on a small couch and George in the Morris chair. Across the hall Frances had a portrait of George Washington over the fireplace, thought to be an unfinished Gilbert Stuart and on the mantle below, a small china box (for his teeth). The rug was an oriental – mostly in blue. Frances always sat on a Victorian couch on one side of the fire – upholstered in velvet in winter and covered by a natural colored cotton cover in summer. The two “living rooms” were divided by a large Chinese screen that fit part

way across the opening. There was an upright piano on one side of the window, a corner cabinet on the other corner. A pencil portrait of Pop looking like a movie star (Frances didn't like it) was on one wall and a lovely oil of Frances about age 16 over the fireplace. Frances had two craft tables with glass tops . They held pieces of jewelry, not of any great value except each piece had a story –these earrings from one wedding – this bracelet worn at certain dance. There were many wonderful things in all these rooms, but you get an idea – lovely fabrics and antiques and the feeling of grace and elegance.

I used to run up the stairs at each visit, wondering how long I would be able to do this as the years passed. Upstairs the three large bedrooms were very comfortably furnished. The four poster in the one front bedroom had intricate carvings on the foot-board. I remember (perhaps inaccurately) that the foot-board had been found in a field where a farmer was going to use it for a fence posts). The other front room was used as a dressing room that Frances had decorated in a French mode – dressing table, day bed, some lovely pieces on the mantle. Her bedroom had twin beds and lots of family pictures (David has these). Pop and Frances also had a Fedders air conditioner. Pop used to announce rather early in the evening that he was going up to see “Mr. Fedders” and the kids thought there was a little man in his bedroom. Pop went to bed early and rose early – Frances stayed up very late. The back bedroom had twin beds, with high, delicate posters (also terrible mattresses we put on the floor sometimes), Victorian dressers and a fairly modern baby crib.

The basement was usually fairly wet in summer – the kitchen much the same as now. The dinning room held a huge table and side board and in the window wells Frances had the most delicate finger bowls from Italy – each one colored differently. We always ate in the dining room in the early days where Ethyl cooked and served. Meals were

delicious – all the vegetables were grown on the farm and Ethyl was a great cook. We had stacks of pancakes for breakfast and she always made lemonade for lunch, which we ate on the back terrace with cream cheese and olive sandwiches.

Two stories about Ethyl come to mind. One summer we stayed in the guest house and at bed time smelled the most awful odor – it was smoky and we were afraid there was a fire somewhere. We dashed down stairs to find Ethyl in her room (bottom right as you face the house) sitting outside on the bench smoking her pipe. Apparently her tobacco was called “Mickey Twist” – changed in a more enlightened age from “Nigger twist.” The other story was one Frances told about being in the house with Puss in winter when suddenly the electricity went off. Ethyl was in the elevator at the time caught half way between floors. Frances and Puss went into the basement and shouting encouragement to the unflappable Ethyl, turned the large wheel by hand slowly taking Ethyl heavenward. Apparently Ethyl continued changing sheets upstairs as though nothing had happened. I can imagine Puss and Frances laughing as they settled down for a glass of sherry after their labors. We usually drank a small glass at noon.

### III

#### GHOST STORIES:

Although Lower Bremo was supposed to have a ghost (a little lady dressed in gray), Glen Arvon was not thought to be haunted in any way. Be that as it may, it did seem we sensed some odd presence from time to time. On one of our early visits, our whole family was staying in the guest house. I believe Nicky Watts was there with daughter Emily as well as Rennie, Sandra and Greg. It had been spitting rain all day, misty and cold. Sometime during the night we both awoke feeling a clammy cold. Warren was fussing but not really awake and the next day all our children said they had



awaked from time to time. Rennie said that Greg was crying and would not settle down. The feeling was that there was something – or someone outside the guest house. A very scary night that we all agreed was not pleasant. We decided, based on nothing, that Boswell's ghost had been roaming. Jon told us that he was buried where the kitchen garden used to be but we did not know where that was. Several years later, Wendy said she was wakened in her bed in the guest house. She claimed a couple were pushing her out of her bed. Wendy and Neil's daughter Sarah said she saw a little dog in the upper hallway of the guest house running through the closed door into the bathroom. One of Jon's kids said he saw a small dog in the hallway of the big house that disappeared after a moment. Who knows??

Probably the most touching story was at the time of Frances' death. We had been down to see Frances on the advice of her doctor who was fairly sure she would die very soon. She was confined to her bed but was able to sit up and when we arrived, she was sipping sherry and looking quite elegant and her satin nightie. We were both working at the time and could not stay long so as we were leaving, I told Frances I would be back. She said, "You have never told me anything you did not do." I knew I would return. Frances Jr. (Dave's second wife) had been taking care of Frances –helping the 3 nurses but Jon and Rennie did not like her and Jon's gun by the side of his bed frightened her so she left saying she would not return. When the Dr. called about one week before Frances died, I flew down to the farm and found that the nurses taking care of Frances were warm and loving to her. David came seldom, Jon would stand at her door and greet her in the morning (he was living at the house and had the front bedroom –air conditioned. When Pussy came to be with Frances several weeks before, she told me he was not gracious enough to give her his room. The heat that August was almost unbearable.) Rennie came

every day, sat on the bed with his mother and was very sweet to her. Frances had three round-the-clock nurses, all of whom were excellent. One was Linda Powers who had a Ph.D. in psychology from Germany. She said she and Frances had some good conversations while Frances was able to stay awake much of the day. Dorothy was another woman who had lived near Glen Arvon all her life. She told me that as a child she was afraid to go into the bedroom that held “Mr. Bones.” Mr. Bones was a skeleton (kept in a wooden cabinet) that had been given to David when he was studying medicine. Frances told me Mr. Bones was a Mexican man that I believe, her father, Dr. Corbusier had purchased.

Hospice workers came from time to time and left brochures for me which were helpful. Frances slipped away gradually –sleeping more and more and finally all day and night. Her little poodle, George, was very upset and kept running in and out of the room (I had to open the door for him every time because it was air-conditioned) Frances had about 2 days of being restless although she was not at that point speaking. She held to the sides of the bed as though to stay in this world. We spoke to her often and stroked her arms. Some times Dorothy (nurse) sang to her. When Frances settled down, no longer held to the mattress, the poodle also settled next to her bed. I was sleeping in the twin bedroom and about 3:30 a.m. the night nurse came to tell me Frances had died in her sleep. I went to her, opened the window (which seemed to bother the nurse for some reason), woke Jon and he called Rennie. Jon was quite efficient –called the undertaker and called David. Rennie was very upset and tearful. Jon was not. The undertaker came almost immediately. He asked me to pick out a dress, underwear, shoes etc. which seemed bizarre to me but I found a pretty flowered dress. They asked me to take Frances’ rings from her finger which did bother me a but I was able to do this.

At about 9:30 a.m. I called George at the office so he could make plans to come down and then called Wendy who was at our house in Bernardsville. She told me that her son Ben had come downstairs just moments earlier and said that he had seen Frances. He said she was sitting in a chair in his bedroom and said nothing to him. She was wearing a flowered dress and her hair was a bit mussed which was unusual. Some moments later Wendy's daughter Sarah also came downstairs and said she had dreamed that Frances was sitting in the chair in the bedroom (the kids shared a room) and that she had said, "Well, I have to go now." And disappeared. This was all before I called Wendy and Neil to tell them of Frances' passing. That evening the undertaker called to say that the woman who had dressed Frances' hair for many years had told him she was unable to do this. Certainly Ben had seen and Sarah had heard her.

People came to the house with food and flowers. The funeral was very simple. David, Jon and Rennie asked me to read a poem written by Frances' mother. Our sons, Roger and Warren came to Glen Arvon as did David's sons and Dana and Preston, Jon's daughter and husband. I can't remember if Rennie's sons were there. Frances was buried with a short ceremony next to Pop in the Episcopal graveyard in Bremo Bluff. We had prepared a luncheon (George did most of the work, ordering cheeses and meats and he cut out an enormous water melon and filled it with fruit.) Again the house was full of people. Dorothy (the woman who had worked at Glen Arvon for years and remembered being taken there by her mother who was a maid there) had been one of Frances' nurses at the end. Guests had finished the various juices and soft drinks on the table. I was in the kitchen when Dorothy flew in and said, "We'll just have to put some bottles on the table." She then looked up at the ceiling and said, "Sorry, Mrs. O'Brien." Frances did not like bottles on the table and our children were always fascinated with the fact that she had

many silver and crystal condiment holders. (Later Jon fired Dorothy who had offered to be a cleaning woman for him at Glen Avon. I did not understand his anger at her but he was adamant that she must go)

#### IV

#### PARTIES, GAMES, FLOODS AND FIRES.

I have the feeling that Pop and Frances did entertain more when they were younger than when we knew them but there were parties from time to time. People from Fork Union came for after- dinner parties and often I played the guitar and sang for them. When we drive up to the graveyard to see Pop and Frances I always look for those from Bremono who came to the parties –Tom Forsyth who committed suicide after his attractive wife died of cancer. I can't remember her name right now but she had a lovely husky voice and they both gave me the words to "the Three Marys" an old English folk song. Various military academy people came over – Col. Perkins who sang songs of the 20's and Katherine (Montaldo(?)) she married a man from Argentina and had been brought up at Bremono I believe) she always said that Frances was able to re create the old days at Glen Arvon. Harriet Snead came always and we had often lunched at her house in Fork Union. Harriet was a very accomplished artist who dressed in pastel colors. I was fascinated by the fact that one of Harriet's nieces was named Pocahontas – Pocahontas Lipscomb, as I recall. She was nick-named Hantis. I would guess that Harriet was the closet friend Frances had in the area. Her sister Martha became part of the group when she moved to

Fork Union. Kay Armstrong was another friend who ran a farm pretty much by herself nearby. There were others through the years. I can see their faces often but their names are lost to me. Entertaining was fairly casual – no big dinner parties. I loved to go outside at night while a party was going on and see the house bright with light coming through the window and music playing. I could imagine how it must have been with the Galts in residence. One night we were listening to Herb Alpert records and Frances had gotten out the rattles and things she kept in the corner cabinet. She was a marvelous, graceful dancer and loved to dance. We would all prance around the living room having a great time. This particular night I thought I'd better check on the kids at the guest house – we had no baby sitter that year – and peering into the crib I saw it was empty. I was terrified and ran to the house calling for Warren. Pop said he would go to the pool and we spread out indoors and out calling. I was in Pop's office when I heard a little voice. Warren was hiding under the desk. He said he came over for milk and when everyone started calling he was scared and hid under the desk.

We played all sorts of games, the favorite was "Horse" in the hallway where we threw dice and bet. Another was a hockey game and then there always were card games. Wendy and Robin played with small items in the guest house, making "houses" of things. Our routine was pretty much the same most days, swimming with the children (after the pump went on – Frances insisted) in the morning. Then lunch and a rest time in the heat of the day for 1 or 2 hours. We swam all afternoon and had "Tea parties" with cookies and ginger-ale at the pool. The kids played in the barn sometimes and once Wendy and Robin got lost walking to the low grounds and Pabst brought them back. When the children were young, they ate early in the kitchen and we more formally in the dining room after cocktail hour.

The routine was such that it did not vary much over the years in terms of meals even when Pop was gone the children no longer came. Even at the time of the “big Fire” we kept a semblance of routine. One very hot afternoon a phone call informed Pop that there was a fire spreading fast into his property. He jumped into the car with George to join the fire fighters, one man being George Armstrong. The afternoon seemed to drag – we could smell smoke at the house and hear a loud speaker giving orders but could not make out the words. After some hours, Pop arrived with George Armstrong. I asked them where George Wright was and they looked blank, apparently having forgotten he was out there. At least another hour dragged by and I was getting frantic. I walked with Warren down to the tractor barn and let him play in the seat, all the time waiting to see George walking up the driveway. Finally Frances said it was cocktail hour and there was no reason not to fix drinks but that we would have them out at the pool. Finally we looked out to see George coming up the driveway every bit like a Confederate soldier coming home. He was covered with soot. He walked to the pool and jumped in – we all said there was a loud SSSS! The next day he was covered with poison ivy. We drove to the Dr. in Fork Union – a nice old guy who had worked there for years. His office had Black, White, young and old and when he saw George he said he had heard about his fire fighting. He gave him steroids – strong treatment for poison ivy but it cleared him up quickly. The people in the drug store called George a hero – apparently he was known quickly all over town for helping out. I was only happy he was home safely.

There were many stories of floods at Glen Arvon particularly in the early days. I only remember once or twice that the low grounds were flooded and by that time there were no animals.

There were a variety of folks working for Pop and Frances. One couple, the Maulks, were Mountain people who seemed to cook all day on the wood stove at Chickfield. The smell of burning wood was marvelous. They came to Glen Arvon unmarried and left, a married couple. Peter and Jeanie were Hippy kids, graduates of the University of Virginia. They also married having been at Glen Arvon. Our children were pre-teens/teens when Peter and Jeanie lived at Chickfield and they adored the couple. Jeanie wore long dresses and had a braid down her back. They picked worms and bugs from the large kitchen garden vegetables rather than spraying them and the vegetables were delicious. We all helped in that garden. They also made the best blackberry sauce and home-made ice cream! Peter had at least two very expensive horses he was training and their friend from Univ. of VA came once to shoe them. I have never seen such a handsome man and Wendy was enchanted. Then there was Mr. Polo. Mr. Polo was a very scary guy who locked the shed and barns and Frances had a heck of a time getting rid of him. He had a young man, Ben, working for him and Ben told Wendy that he was literally a prisoner. Mr. Polo had gotten Ben from a reform school somewhere. Eventually I believe Frances sued Mr. Polo and I seem to remember that Ben testified in court for her. Our children, with typical adolescent insensibility, called Mr. Polo the “faggot farmer.”

I have always found it difficult to put into words the sensations that Glen Arvon evokes in me. The most poignant memories other than those of Pop and Frances have to do with the land surrounding the house. I love the smell of boxwood and of old brick in the sun. In the Spring, Lilac bushes lined one brick wall and tiny violets were spread all over the side of the guest house. Wisteria wound its way around what was left of a larger porch outside the French doors in the living room. Frances sat at her desk in front of those doors every morning to go over correspondence. At night sometimes the moon rose red

over the river and especially in the winter, the stars were very bright. Often we sat in lawn chairs at the pool to watch falling stars and to make wishes. It was not as quiet at the farm as I had thought it would be – a dog was usually barking off and on through the night, very noisy trains rumbled past, cows would wander under the windows and Moo at unlikely times of the morning. During the early days every sheep had its own BAA. There was always birdsong. I loved to walk down the road at twilight hearing the birds before they quieted for the night. The sun was very orange in summer as it disappeared from the fields and then behind the trees.

As for the house, in my memory it is always cool. We didn't hurry ever, and there was nothing pressing for me to do. When Sally or Mary Cory ("Summer girls) came to take care of the children, there was a lot of time for reading and slow conversation. Frances and I always had something to say to one another. George would run to "State maintenance" with Roger and all the children amused themselves in various ways. Frances and I stayed up until all hours. Pop came down one night, stood in the doorway of the pool" room and ranted and raved at us – we had a laughing fit! Of course there were some changes when Pop died. Some of the help disappeared and only Ethyl was there to cook. Then she too, went somewhere – I think to work in a welfare office. I remember making breakfast and lunch and I suppose Frances and I cooked dinner – neither of us liked to cook much so it was pretty casual.

The first time I heard the song, "Amazin' Grace" was when Pop asked a woman who had come to help in the kitchen if she would sing for us. She had gotten a scholarship to Juliard as I remember, but could not afford to take advantage of this. She became a teacher. She sang the old hymn without accompaniment and we sat in the living room to listen. Somehow there was a certain irony there that I only barely felt at the time.



The town of Fork Union has changed and grown over the years. When we first arrived, the building across from the Academy was a drug store with a soda fountain. The local Doctor had his office with a separate entrance. The strip mall further down the road on the same side as the drug store may have been there in the 60's. If not, it was built shortly after we began to visit. There was a restaurant, clothing and hardware store. Later the strip mall across the street was built. The character of the town seemed to change with these new structures and the gas station on the corner was the final blow! Driving down toward West Bottom there were very few houses. Eventually small trailer homes were built and well kept. I don't remember stop signs from Glen Arvon to Fork Union and Frances tore up the road, dust flying. The little West Bottom church was very busy in August with revival meetings. One maid at Glen Arvon said to me that those revivals were what held her together throughout the year. Tables were set outside, and one could smell delicious food. There was a lot of singing.

On Sunday mornings families could be seen walking up the roads, the men in suits and ties, the women with large hats and the children always seemed dressed in white, the little girls with hats and gloves. When we drove along the road, everyone always greeted us with a wave.

Across the road from the church was George Vowel's store. Pop told us George Vowel was the mayor of West Bottom. The store was almost cool in summer and very dark. The ice in a back room was covered in straw and one wonders how clean the ice was that we used in our drinks. When George Vowel left his store or died, the structure leaned further and further to one side, the vines wound around to cover it and it finally collapsed. The yellow metal sign sank into the ground, I suppose. I always regret that I

did not take a photo of the store and sign because they would be a reminder of an earlier era.

There were several other scenes I wish I had captured on film. We did photo the old barn on the low grounds and our son-in-law did a small painting of it. Frances changed the gardens in the back from time to time but basically she grew herbs – rue and lavender. The guest house was painted white over the brick at some time but that is returning to its former self. Harriet Snead did an excellent watercolor of the guest house that George asked to have as a souvenir Very early photos of the large house show it bare of shrubbery. When Frances died, Jon had much of the shrubs and trees cut down and although it looked a neater place, sadly the scent of the wild growing things remain only in my memory.

When our son, Warren was living in Arlington, he and Jennifer brought Nick down for a weekend. They took movies with a camcorder mostly of Nick with the farm as backdrop but it is a record of sorts. We have old 25 mm movies that I had transferred to video and that too may serve as a record.

My recurring dream of a shabby Glen Arvon surrounded by apartment houses has for the most part ended with your care of the place, Bill and Sayre. The property, once the realization of the Galt's dream, remains productive and beautiful, and thanks to you, a haven for those who love it.

June, 2004