

Mark Alan Kandel

These are the voyages of Mark Kandel through the ages up until about 10 or 12 years. I'm not exactly sure how to do this, so it is listed according to areas. As I think of those areas I am writing down the memories that I can associate with them during my early childhood.

Areas: Chicago, Tomahawk, Florida, California.

Archer Avenue

One of my earliest memories of Chicago begins on Archer Avenue. I think of going next door to Auntie Pulkos and having my morning coffee (9 parts milk to 1 part coffee) with her. I remember the phrase, "Open the door, Richard," but I don't know why I used it, other than to announce that I was outside wanting to get inside.



Living at Pakulskis'

I remember living with the Pakulskis in their basement while our house in Elmhurst was being built. I went to school nearby for the first time. It was an old building and I remember buying milk. I remember playing in the basement and discovering Uncle Casey's banjo in a case.

I also remember that he worked for Sunbeam and was always bringing home some neat appliance from the factory like an electric skillet. He used to be a barber and had this neatly trimmed mustache on his upper lip.

Elmhurst

We moved there in the winter, I think. I remember trudging through the snow to Lincoln School, placing my jacket on a coat rack, napping on a towel and drinking milk and cookies. I met Craig Talbot in school. He turned out to be a friend that I had throughout school with the unique distinction of having the same classes together throughout school until High School. By then I think I had seen enough of him in my life not to really care whether I'd see him anymore.

Christmas in Elmhurst was often white and cold. Dad liked trees that were "flocked" or sprayed with something that clung to the branches to look like snow. I'm sure that I got plenty of toys for Christmas, but I remember little army soldiers, a Prince Valiant castle, an erector set, gadgets and gizmos. Dad made a humungous TV set from spare parts. It had a 27" screen, big for its day and a conversation piece with all my friends.

My friends included Kippy Johnson, Johnny Cioper, Bernie Stuckie, Chucky Blanchard and Tom Wordell. Nancy Jones lived next door, but I wasn't that interested in girls at the time and we didn't get along very well...unless the guys were all busy doing something else.

Tom Rago was a number of blocks away and while we did have a few classes in school together, we never played much together. Yet Tom Rago is one of the only people I ever met after my high school years. That came in San Diego when I was working for Gilbert Rice as a salesman. Tom Rago was into graphic arts for a company I visited.

I remember painting a white picket fence for Mr. Anderson, our neighbor. The fence stretched all around his back yard. Slowly, but surely I worked on it only to find out when I finished, that he wasn't going to pay me. I was not a happy little boy with that announcement! Somehow he thought that giving Mom and Dad a tree to plant in the back yard would make up the difference. I'm glad the tree lived to be tall for Mom and Dad, but I cannot remember anything else about Mr. Anderson that ever pleased me.

I remember always having Brethren over for some reason or other. Either they came over for an adult gathering or young people for a teenage meeting. Tom Hack was probably my best friend during those years. If he didn't stay over on the weekend, then I might stay over at his house.

I remember watching "professional" wrestling late at night on the 27" TV. I guess it was convenient to have a den by daytime become my bedroom by night...especially since the TV was in the den. I remember watching TV late at night while eating blueberries from a bowl. Apparently one had fallen out of the bowl, so I picked it up to eat it. I noticed that the blueberry had moving legs as I picked it up. It wasn't a blueberry. It was a water beetle! After that, I watched TV with another light on in the room.

In the kitchen, attached to the inside door of a cupboard, were the instructions. The survival list included the instructions on how to make pancakes. Since Mom and Dad worked, Mom thought that we should have the information on how to make a meal. Most moms would probably make sure there was bread and peanut butter. Mom went beyond that. I'm not fond of peanut butter, but I still like pancakes. I appreciated learning how to take care of myself. There was a saying I heard once...

“Give a child a fish and they'll learn how to eat...show a child how to fish and he'll never go hungry.” I never was a fisherman, but I knew how to make pancakes!

At one adult gathering the food was all placed on the dining room table. We were waiting for the opening prayer before digging in. There was silence as I listened for the name of someone to be selected to offer a blessing on the meal. What a shock when I heard my name! No one ever called on me to pray at these meetings, but there was this long pause and I was too embarrassed to say no. So, I did my best. I found out later that they had asked Uncle Dan, Bro. Morehouse, to pray. I had been somehow distracted by something else and mistook his name for mine. It turned out OK, I guess, because I was told it was a nice prayer.

I tried cutting my hair. I didn't like having curly hair. All my friends had crew cuts. It must have been a desperate time, because I actually began to cut off curls. I forgot that I was right handed and could not cut the left side of my head with my left hand while looking in the mirror. I am fortunate that my ears didn't get in the way. I eventually got part of my

wish. Mom took me to get a crew cut. It was the only way to even out the mess. The teasing I received after that was miserable. I wore a stocking cap to hide my shame, but it only called more attention to the problem. I have blocked further details of that part of my life.

Alys

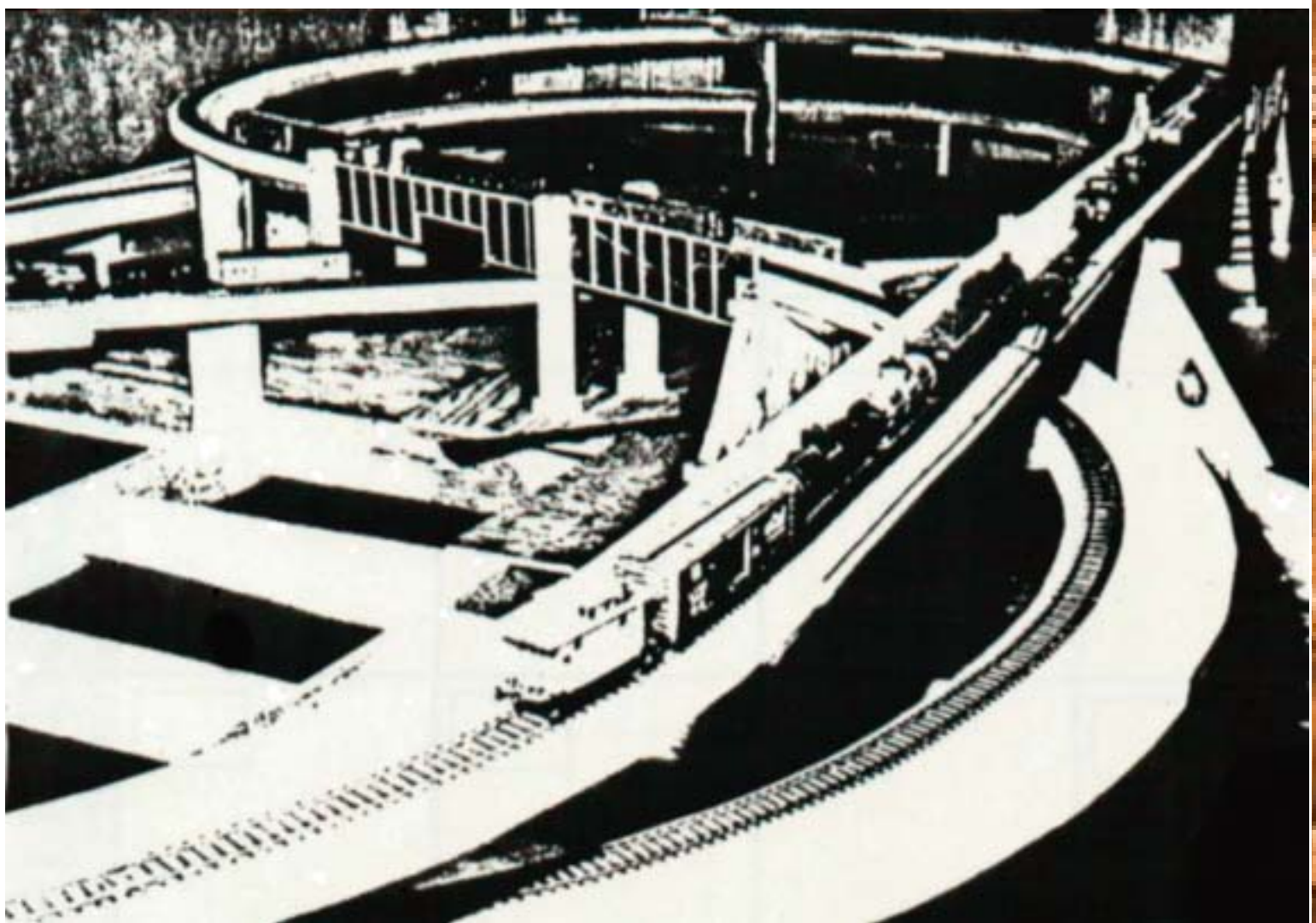
Alys once asked me a question: What do I want to be? I remember telling her with a certain amount of pride that I wanted to be in the “great company.” It was an enlightening moment, because I had thought the Great Company was great like in “good” or “fantastic,” not great as in “large.”



Dad

I never was very good with electronics. Dad was. I'm sure that he wished I was more interested, but I was just a little boy who wanted to play with trains, not design sophisticated model railroads in the basement. We accumulated a number of trains from a special deal that was offered on the back of Kix cereal boxes. To take advantage of the offer, Dad bought a case of Kix. I wasn't fond of Kix then and I am still not too crazy about it today. In fact, we ended up storing most of the case (sans box tops) in the attic.

I remember Dad experimenting with painting the trains. He took a coffee can and filled it with water. On the surface of the water he placed drops of paint of different colors. Then



he dipped the plastic train into the coffee can slowly, twisting it one way and then another. When he removed the train it was a pretty marble effect or camouflaged look. It was neat.

Dad also wanted to encourage me to be an amateur radio operator. So he enrolled me in a class at Allied Radio with him, Uncle Wally and Russell Pakulski. Russell really grasped it well and later would get his license. Dad got his novice license, but never went further, because I wasn't into it. I look back and feel bad that I let Dad down by not having more interest in what Dad had to offer. Today I work with electrical components and wish Dad was around to ask him questions.



Grandma Rybacki

On Fridays we used to go to Grandma Rybacki's for dinner. There was a playground across the street. It was common for the Pakulskis to be there. Russell and I would play together. As the evening would come, we would play with trucks on the linoleum floor in the kitchen.

Grandma Rybacki would give us cookies and milk or sometimes her "punksis" (kind of a fried donut without any holes). This was a good treat, except for one thing... Grandma wouldn't give us the milk right from the refrigerator. She'd keep it on the counter until it reached room temperature! Ugh! I also liked her cucumbers in sour cream salad. To this day it is one of my favorites.

I don't remember much of Grandpa Rybacki, except that he died. I don't remember the day any other relative died, but I remember that he died on Thanksgiving at 8:45 a.m. I remember Grandma saying that Thanksgiving would never be the same. I guess she was right, because I ALWAYS think of that day as the day Grandpa Rybacki died.

Nortens

We went to Nortens' apartment at times, but I only remember Rusty the dog and the back porch. What was strange about the back porch was the fishhead that was nailed to one of the pillars...unusual, but definitely a memory.

Copelands

When the Copelands lived in Chicago, we had Thanksgiving there. I remember Tante Marine wearing black and being old. I remember pumpkin pie...I always had enough room for pumpkin pie!



Chappells

Later we had Thanksgiving at Uncle Tom and Aunt Hazel's. That was a nice time. I "helped" Uncle Tom check out the turkey as he was cutting it. His low raspy voice with his sarcastic wit reminded me of W. C. Fields' humor. I don't know what he liked to drink, but he also made me a special drink of 7-Up with half a dozen Maraschino cherries and red coloring. I felt special.

Aunt Hazel was always fun to be with. Her stories were good and she seemed to be sincerely interested in children. She often spoke of Wendy from upstairs, a little girl she had a liking towards. Probably the most memorable tradition with Aunt Hazel was going to the Shriners' circus.



I don't remember going to many circuses, but I also don't remember going to the circus with anyone other than Aunt Hazel. Even in Tomahawk, it was Aunt Hazel that would play games with us or show us how to play cards. She must have been patient.

Uncle Wally

I don't know if Dad had a closer friend than Uncle Wally. At times they seemed like brothers. They were both interested in applying their trades to the service of the brethren, so often we would spend a Saturday together working on Uncle Dan's front steps, making a sign for the meeting, printing tracts, going down to Alfred Burns' farm to build his farm house, fixing the PA system at the meeting, or something else. Those were the good ol' days.



Tomahawk

Tomahawk was in northern Wisconsin. It was always a nice vacation. The day long drive was just long enough to make me glad we got there when we did.

The Nortens had a huge house. It was probably one of the biggest homes I can remember when I was growing up. The view of the water was neat. I enjoyed seeing deer walking across the lawn. It was rare, but not unusual to see them.

Uncle Otto had a strong accent. “Vel-um-ya” seemed to be an expression that he used between sentences. He was cute. I liked his style. The knotty pine walls, the organ in the basement, the slot machine that ended up taking all the nickels back, the room behind the garage that had a huge selection of fishing rods and equipment stored, the big bell outside the front door to call us in off the lake. The long dirt road leading to the house was lined with berries and we’d pick them...one for me, one for the bucket, one for me, one for the bucket...

Each year we’d start by clearing the area around the pier for swimming purposes. I hated the feel of mushy mud between my toes, but the water was cool. Rowing around was fun. We made little hideaways along the shore, played pirates, went fishing, swatted mosquitoes. Chris made a flag that we stuck on the boat.

We caught a dog fish one day. I was surprised that there were so many rows of teeth in its mouth. It eats baby fish along the shore and has no meat worth eating, so Uncle Charlie said to bury it next to a tree as fertilizer. I didn’t like the idea of a dog fish in the same water that I was.

Uncle Charlie was my idea of a fisherman. He seemed to be really into the sport and knew everything about it. I remember catching sun fish or blue gill off the pier in front of his house. Was it a stuffed dog he had in the living room of his house?

His house was smaller, but it has a warmer feeling to me than the Nortens'. The kitchen had a feature I never noticed in other homes: a hidden staircase was in the ceiling. You pulled it down and the stairs would unfold leading to a storage in the attic.

They had a neighbor named Axel. I have no idea who he was, but I remember the strange name.



Florida

Florida was hot and humid and buggy. Grandma Rybacki moved there from Chicago after Grandpa Rybacki died. Her brother lived next door to her down there. There was a motel at the end of the block and she arranged for us to go swimming there in their pool. That was fun.

Grandma's house had wooden floors and a porch. I can still remember the ants that would form a long chain from the front door near the porch, winding their way to the kitchen in the back. They didn't bother me, but they were sure going a long way to pick up some miniscule of food that they found.

One vacation the Pakulskis went down there with us. Uncle Casey, Russell, Dad and I went out to the bay to go fishing. We got onto a boat

along with 50 other people. I had never been deep sea fishing, so this was a new experience. (Mercy! Was it!)

This boat had everything...bathrooms, fishing gear, refreshments. The passengers sat around the railings on benches. We four sat in the back. The water was calm and we motored off out of the bay.

Once we left the bay things changed. There was a barrier that separated the bay from the ocean. The difference was like day and night. The waves were REALLY waves. The boat would ride high on a wave one moment and then ride on the low part.

One moment you could see the horizon all around you, the next there were walls of water around the boat and the only blue sky was directly above. Looking out the back of the boat, I could look straight down for what looked like 15-20 feet at a mountain of water.

I don't know what the others were thinking, but as much as I wanted to go to the bathroom, I felt just as content to stay attached to the bench.

One lady up near the front had other ideas. She went to the snack bar to get something to eat. We didn't really notice what happened until after she returned to her seat. While reaching for the railing for support the boat must have pitched a little and this lady did a perfect swan dive out over the edge.

What really called it to our attention was when her friend went berserk yelling, "Lily, hold on!" We watched Lily splashing by...I think she let go of her hot dog, because I didn't see anything in her hand. "Lily, hold on!" her friend kept screaming. Finally some man jumped after her with a ring or life jacket. The boat had to make a large (and I MEAN large) circle, rather than risk sucking her into the propellers.

A nearby boat actually picked her and the man out of the water. We ended up returning to the calm waters of the bay and getting a refund. Never did we get to dip the poles into the water, but we sure had an entertaining day!

One Christmas vacation, Dad drove to Florida with Tommy Hack and me. We went to the ocean and there met the Larsons. It was one of the first times I met them. They had relatives in the Fort Lauderdale area they were visiting.

I didn't know how to swim, so Dad held on to me as we went out to dance in the waves. Then it happened. A huge wave hit us and we lost grip of one another. I tumbled around in the surf not knowing which way was up. I thought I was going to drown when I popped up and Dad grabbed me. It was a close call and we just sat in the sun and took it easy....

Bloomington

At Bloomington one year, I went swimming with the Sunday school group. Victor Jurek was with us. I didn't know how to swim then either. I looked around the pool and noticed that the depth of the water was marked on the tile along the edge. I saw 3' and 4' markings and felt safe. I saw others jumping off the diving board and their heads were above the water, so figured that the water was shallow enough for them to stand. I jumped off the board and was unpleasantly surprised to find the bottom of the pool considerably out of reach. There was so much activity in the pool that no one missed me. No one missed me but one person...Victor Jurek. He dove in and pulled me out. He saved my life that day.

California

California was far away. We drove there in a '51 Chevy one winter. We got stuck on the road in the snow. In the distance Dad saw a light. That sounded like good news. The light was moving towards us. That was bad news, because it was a train and we were actually on a railroad crossing! Mom got out of the car with us as Dad tried to get the car off the tracks. Apparently...we made it, because the car rested in our backyard for a number of years afterward.

The Santa Fe Railroad was our most common form of transportation to California. Looking back I am amazed we are here today. I seemed to be restless then, walking around the train, getting off at different depots to check out the souvenir stands, etc.

Somehow I managed to get back on the train before it would leave. The High Level cars were the neatest. I always found someone to pal around with on the train. I think I found friends for Al, too, whether she liked it or not. When the trip began, Dad would race from the depot to various places along the way in Chicago, and we'd see him waving. At the other end of 36 hours it was good to see Bruces and Fosses waiting.

Elmwood Drive has a nice sound to it. Grandpa and Grandma had a house on a hillside. I remember the fixtures in the bathroom were porcelain and the toaster in the kitchen had sides that swung away to insert slices.

Bruces lived in a couple of houses on that street. The second house was more memorable, because it had a little house over the garage at the bottom of a steep driveway. Grandma Bell lived there for awhile. Across the street was the "gully." Chris played there among the poison ivy, but it was Aunt Shirley that would be sick from the plant as she would handle his jeans when washing them.

The house on Avenue 64 was the one I liked the most. It was what I have come to think of when I think of California: the swimming pool, shake roof, the ping pong table in the garage. Aunt Shirley made the best fudge balls. Chris' room had the huge safe in it. I like unusual things like that. Chris had the talent to draw what he imagined, whereas other people imagine they can do what they can't. When I think of craftsmanship, I think of Dad. When I think of talent, I think of Chris.

Judy Hill, Sharon Rice, David Galvey, Brad Nail, Joel Brown, Rodney Rice...names of people that I remember from early days in California.

What vacation to California would be complete without Disneyland, Knotts Berry Farm, Coragaville, and the ocean?

Three cars stand out: Uncle David's '55 Chevy, Aunt Shirley's '57 Chevy station wagon and an older 2-door coupe. I think it was a Ford. What was unique about it was the kids rode in the trunk that had an access from behind the passengers' seat.

Faircourt Lane was the place I think of when I think of Grandpa and Grandma. The front yard was small, but the concrete wash was something you don't see very often. I don't know if I ever saw a red sidewalk before, but the walk leading to the front door was colored. I liked the kitchen with the yellow tile counter tops.

The wall in the back patio added to our imaginations when we'd play. It could be a wall of a castle or a fort. There always seemed enough games in the closet to occupy our time. And then there was the park down the street. When at 744 Faircourt Lane he was known as Mark, but something magical happened when he entered the park. He became known as Timmy. Looking back I have absolutely NO idea how that name came about or why. But, when a friend from the park came by the house and asked for Timmy, the secret life was exposed!

Grandpa had an interesting humor and play with words that made me laugh at times. Other times, when I didn't catch the meaning, I thought it was just strange. He paraded around the house one day in his underwear and said that as soon as he put on his hat he'd be ready to go to meeting! Of course, he didn't plan on putting on his hat until he finished dressing, but a little boy doesn't think of that!

Grandpa liked to sing with a toothpick in his mouth while he played with two fingers on the baby grand piano. I liked his singing. He said that he could tell time by playing the piano. Late at night, neighbors would hear him playing and call him up saying, "Don't you know it's 10:00 pm?" I don't know if they ever did that, but that's the kind of humor I liked.

From Grandma I remember, "You can order all the food you want, as long as you eat it." I'm sure that was from experience of dealing with children who had eyes bigger than their stomach. Her version of Grandpa's singing was reflected in her reference to him as "Foghorn Foss." Whenever I hear a tape of a convention hymn I can pick out certain voices...Merrily Wesol...Richard Doctor...and Grandpa. When I was immersed at Bloomington, IN, in 1963, Br. Norman Woodworth spoke, Uncle Dan opened with prayer (I think) and Grandpa led the singing....

Many years later at a General Convention vesper service, Alys, Larry, Rhoda and I sang together...along with Grandpa. I don't remember the hymn, but I remember the criticism later for using a guitar as the only accompaniment. It was Grandpa that added the dignity to the moment and it didn't bother him. He enjoyed it.

Ginger was like “one of the guys.” If I ever think of the term “tomboy,” Ginger will come to mind. During my early years my chief recollection was that what she lacked in size and age she made up with determination and energy. She swam like a fish and was a good little cousin.

Uncle David seemed stern and yet funny at the same time. Being a businessman, I guess that came home with him. I think of the terms competent and quality when I think of him.

Aunt Shirley sees the good. Her cherry disposition and romantic touch make her stories interesting. I also liked her taste in decorating her homes. Whether it is in antiques or balance or color or plaque themes...it just seems to fit well.

Mark