

SKIDDING DOWN MEMORY LANE  
(OLD SHOWS AND MODERN MEMORY)

by

Coles Trapnell

to  
Jane Roxburgh  
and  
Sally Valentine

Three summers ago I ~~just~~ journeyed from Westwood near UCLA to Occidental College in Eagle Rock near Pasadena to see a student production of Gilbert and Sullivan's Ruddigore. It was pretty good considering the demands (elaborate choreography, relatively sophisticated music, a chorus of portraits coming to life and stepping onto the stage from their ancestral frames, etc.) made on the young players. It recalled many Ruddigores of the past, most conspicuously the bright and shining one of the D'Oyly Carte Company in its long-gone prime c. 1935. But for your writer it recalled even more poignantly the first one he ever saw when he was about eight years old.

It was in New York City right after or perhaps towards the close of the First World War. An American repertory company scheduled a season of the Savoy operas, each of them to run for two or three weeks. H.M.S. Pinafore, Patience, The Mikaddo drew mildly profitable audiences as each production gave way to the next. Then came something of an experiment, a burlesque of nineteenth century melodrama, rpplete with accursed baronets, maidens innocent to the point of foolishness, a chorus of specters, and other delightful absurdities of the early Victorian popular theater. This of course was Ruddigore, never as successful as the other operettas and not seen in the U.S. for decades, not since its lusterless premiere in 1887 (except for a non-professional performance, perhaps, once or twice. Unfamiliar to the 1918 audiences, Ruddigore surprisingly was greeted with the kind of enthusiasm, loud and lunatic, that kept the English extravaganza, CHU CHIN CHOW, running for years in London during that wartime. Critics

approved, long lines formed before the box office and the schedule of the repertory was shattered. The Gilbert and Sullivan season was transformed into one long hit show which filled the theater for months and months.

Such success for a single Savoy production would not be seen again in Manhattan until the Spring of 1926 when Winthrop Ames lavished exquisite taste, meticulous attention to detail and lots and lots of money on IGLANTHE which was as unfamiliar to the playgoers of 1926 as RUDDIGORE had been to those of 1918 and was also greeted by stunning commercial success....

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We will now skip for no reason except my whim to the movies of the 1920s, when the vanished art form of the ~~1~~ silent film was alive and prospering. (Any of my readers who want structure and form should apply to Lewis Jacobs. My ideal is Edward Wagenknecht and his total recall in THE MOVIES IN THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.)

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James Cruze directed "Hollywood" for Paramount within a few months of directing "The Covered Wagon" for the same studio. Both were remarkable pictures, "The Covered Wagon" the more financially successful, the most elaborate western ever seen on the silent screen, but "Hollywood" was perhaps more unusual.

"Hollywood" was a case of the movies making a movie about the movies. It was shot on the Paramount lot, the leading characters were played by virtually unknown actors, but the film was crowded with studio big names of the time (1923), Gloria Swanson, Thomas Meighan, Valentino, hosts of others. The plot was little more than a gimmick, but an agreeable one. A pretty Iowa blonde, accompanied by her entire family, including Ma, Pa, her husband and the twins come to California because she wants to break into the movies. She doesn't make it, but everybody else does, Pa as character actor, Ma as wardrobe mistress, even the twins are signed up and the family parrot is engaged for a couple of days' work.

Midway in the picture Cruze inserts a startling sequence, as startling as anything in Caligari or The Golem, giving us a taste of the kind of surrealist fantasy Bunuel and Dali would create almost a decade later. It's a dream scene and the hero finds himself clad in his underwear, shaving brush and razor in his hands, pushing his way through the Times Square subway station and desperately trying to shave before one of those gum machine mirrors common at the time. The subway mob -- weirdly costumed and all resembling people we have seen in the picture proper -- are definitely hostile and the Man is facing extinction before he mercifully wakes up. The scene, which is fairly long, is both hilarious and terrifying, the kind of thing Harold Pinter introduced us to many years afterwards. In such pieces as

Two years later Cruze's curious gift for portraying the uncanny and exotic (he was generally regarded as a master of melodrama and big, gutsy spectacles like "Old Ironsides") was given full rein in "Beggar on Horseback", the film adaptation of Kauffman and Connolly's stage adaptation of the German satire, Hans Sonnenstoesser's Hohlenfahrt, complete with outsize monsters of the American business world and a ballet to the music of Deems Taylor, danced by the exquisite Greta Nissen, soon to be a film star.

I wish I could remember where I saw thid picture. There's little hope of seeing it again, ~~since~~ since it is generally accepted to be one of those "lost films" of which no prints exist. (Occasionally a print <sup>of a "lost" film</sup> turns up in somebody's garage. For years Griffith's "A Romance of Happy Valley", made in the late 'teens with Lillian Gish was thought to be lost but it turned up in a film library in Moscow and was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art Film Library. I saw it when it was shown in a Griffith retrospective at UCLA with sub-titles in Russian.)

Anyway, "Hollywood" was to be seen in New York in the late summer of ~~1922~~ 1923. I was on summer vacation from boarding school and I probably saw it just before I went back to school. At Loew's RIO on Broadway in Washington Heights.

From 1917 to 1922 (when I was sent to Friends' Academy in Locust Valley, Long Island) I lived with my mother, Edna Valentine Trapnell, a minor poet and short story writer, in a modest flat at ~~601~~ 601 West 169th Street in upper Manhattan. My world consisted of a few streets in Washington Heights which contained several movie houses; the ones I was most familiar with were the above mentioned

Loew's Rio, the Fox Audubon, a large theater which showed vaudeville as well as second-run moving pictures, and the Palace, a small house that showed films considerably later than the Rio or Audubon. Admission to the Palace was a dime. When we first moved to Washington Heights during the First World War, and the Palace was showing an endless serial <sup>episode</sup> each week called "The Son of Democracy" <sup>a</sup> about Abraham Lincoln and I was encouraged to see it because it was thought to be both educational and inspiring, it only cost a nickel to get in. The original species Nickelodeon.

The Audubon was a family favorite. In later years its orchestra leader was the Audubon's chief claim to fame (nobody had heard his name, then). He was Max Steiner who, in the 1930's and forties was Hollywood's juiciest composer, responsible for the lush score of "Gone With the Wind" and the sentimental strains of "The Informer", its plummy <sup>Irish</sup> themes utilizing everything except Mother Machree.

I was seven years old when I was taken to the Audubon to see Theda Bara and Fritz Leiber in "Cleopatra". Mme. Bara's costumes left little to the imagination and when she bared her <sup>boobs to the strip</sup> ~~boobs~~ (in an insert shot) I rose eighteen inches in the air. I'm afraid that's all I remember about this earliest Cleopatra. Today, the damn thing probably wouldn't deserve more than a G rating. PG? Oh, come on.

. My father, rarely on speaking terms with my mother, would sometimes take me to the movies just, I think, to get out of the house, since he was not much of a movie fan.

I remember vividly, with him as my companion, seeing William Farnum in "A Tale of Two Cities." How impressed I was by the

storming of the Bastille! And the plump Farnum filling the screen not once but twice. As Carton and then as Darnay and -- magic of all magic -- together with himself, talking with himself!

This was an occasion that could be equaled only (a year later) by my father taking me to see "Carmen" with Geraldine Farrar and directed by Cecil B. De Mille who for some curious reason had cast the pale and wobby Wallace Reid as dashing Don José. Not that it mattered at the time. It was a glorious experience. And Tom and Edna were on good terms, <sup>OR 30</sup> ~~sp~~ seem to remember. We were living in Bluefield, West Virginia. In the shadow of the mountains, where my father had taken us to start a New Life -- a law practice of his own which blew up in his face less than a year after his arrival in West Virginia, state of his birth. From age's viewpoint, it seems as though we lived in Bluefield for a long, long time, but actually we went there in 1915 and were home -- New York or Long Island -- by the end of 1916.

It was in Bluefield, however, that I became snared, or hooked or enslaved by the motion picture. My parents were liberal: they took me, <sup>OR on</sup> ~~on~~ occasion, let me go by myself to any movie that wasn't blatantly unsuitable for a six year old. They believed (at that period at least) that my education should include exposing me to any of the new inventions that would further my ~~education~~ <sup>learning</sup>. And hadn't Saint-Saens, as far back as 1907 composed a score to accompany the French film, "The Assassination of the Duc de Guise"? From Bluefield, West Virginia, this kind of thing looked like CULTURE. Incidentally, the only reason my mother wasn't with us at Geraldine Farrar's Carmen was because she had taken me, less than a month before to see the William Fox production with Theda Bara <sup>who kept her breasts covered</sup> ~~Theda Bara~~



"The Birth of a Nation" hit Bluefield in the late Spring of 1916. So much has been written about D.W. Griffith's epic of the Confederacy and Reconstruction days that there seems no point in discussing it here. Suffice it to say that <sup>Southern</sup> audiences greeted it with literal riots of enthusiasm. They cheered the Little Colonel when he thrust the Stars and Bars into the <sup>mouth</sup> ~~muscle~~ of a Yankee cannon and they literally stood up on their seats and shrieked when the Klan rode. It was, as you have often been told a very racist picture and it just suited this West Virginian audience.....

An unwarned reader (I can't imagine who), reaching this point in my manuscript could have an uneasy feeling that something is wrong. What is it? a critique of the silent film in America or a letter to the dear ones back home? Well --

It's my memoirs told in terms of my lifelong obsession -- the movies. It's a private autobiography, intended primarily for my daughters, Sally and Jane, and any descendants interested in family history or the movies or both. I recently sent a movie buff friend of mine, Yale Harrison, a list of 101 films, many of which he did not know and which he is trying to track down. With this list as a basis (Trapnell's 101 or 2, we call it), I shall pattern what follows in this fashion: there will be a few words about the movie, when and where I saw it, what life was like in those days and anything else I feel like putting in. It is intended as a work of dedicated, devout self-indulgence: an unbuttoned (more or less) memoir and an informal history of the movies at one and the same time. Thus do I express a dual obsession that has been with me all my life: the Movies and My Ego.

ALL FOR A WOMAN was the American title for the German film DANTON starring Emil Jannings. I saw it at the Rio in 1922 and was en-

thrilled by its grotesqueries and still more by the music which accompanied the film, played by the Rio's small (eight or nine piece) orchestra. Gluck, Mozart, Haydn and other Baroque masters figured prominently in the music the conductor had put together.

At this time I was living at 169th Street with my mother (she and Tom had been divorced three years before. He had stayed in the Army after the end of the war in November, 1918. A lawyer in civil life, he continued his career as a Judge Advocate in the service and prospered, partly by failing to pay alimony to my mother or, in the earlier years, paying it irregularly).

New York was a far different city then than it is now. Crime was confined to a few remote areas, it was perfectly safe for an 11-year-old <sup>to ride</sup> ~~under~~ the subways (or open air topped buses or trolley cars) and I enjoyed a degree of freedom remarkable by today's standards.

I was a choir boy in the Chapel of the Intercession at Broadway and 155th Street. Belying its name, it was a huge church with a magnificent choir under the direction of Dr. Frank Harratt. It was a part of Trinity Parish, the wealthy Episcopal complex whose mother church, Trinity, with its frail steeple, appropriately decorates the ~~top~~ top of Wall Street.

I was accepted as a boy soprano before I was eight years old, and was rewarded by my delighted mother and father (still uneasily together in 1918, my father being stationed at Governor's Island) by being taken to a production of "H.M.S. Pinafore." This was my formal introduction to Gilbert and Sullivan. I had long been entranced by two phonograph records, "Gems From The Mikado" and "Gems From H.M.S. Pinafore", and played them ceaselessly, but an entire opera was a revelation. and I became a Savoy fanatic from that night on.

Not that it was a particularly good presentation. The sisters and the cousins and the aunts were costumed in the dresses of World War One and the gallant ship, a matter of paint and canvases, was a dreadnought of the period with a phoney battery of guns pointing at the audience. No matter. I was enchanted.

The Chapel of the Intercession was a medium church, neither high nor low, but patterned closely on Church of England ritual because, I suppose, its vicar, Dr. Milo Gates, was an Englishman. We had matins, evensong, Holy Communion only once a month, (always after morning prayer and with half or more of the less devout members of the congregation exiting before the Kyrie.)

A few things stand out in the cluttered memories of my choir days (1917 to 1922). We had two services in the morning and one at night plus two rehearsals a week, one on Tuesday for the boys and one Thursday night for the full choir. At stated occasions there would be a Masonic service Sunday night, with <sup>the</sup> Masons in their blue uniforms (twenty or so Captain Corcorans, as I visualize them 66 years later) crossing swords to form an arch under which we marched down the aisle singing some suitable processional hymn; I seem to recall "Jerusalem the Golden."

I remember the Spring Treat when the boys were taken to Madison Square Garden to see the Barnum and Bailey Circus. I was sick for a week afterwards, having as a child a weak stomach and being subject to what Dr. Moorman termed "bilious attacks." I never had any trouble with them after 1922 when I left home. Family feeling causes me to regard this as a coincidence rather than escape from Mother.

My uneasy, or rather unpredictable, stomach resulted in one of the high embarrassments of my entire life. Sunday night. Vespers. Dr. Gates was sonorously holding forth in the pulpit. With impeccable timing I chose a brief pause in his sermon to emit (quite involuntarily) the loudest

part I have ever heard. Dr. Gates stuttered slightly but quickly recovered and continued as muffled snickers swept through the little boys in Decanti and Cantorus. I had the chutzpah to whisper to the boy next to me, "Who did that?" He was so stunned by the ghastly explosion that he whispered back, "I don't know."

It was a black night that night. Only a few moments after the flatulent outburst, and before Dr. Gates had finished his sermon, I caught my foot in the wooden rack that held the choir stall prayer books and hymnals. In attempting to extricate it, I snapped one of the frail wooden bars in two, and it broke with the sound of a pistol shot. Dr. Gates really faltered this time, the choir master rose from behind the organ and glared fiercely at me and ripples of horror and hilarity swept the choir stalls. I had unwittingly provided my usually bored colleagues with their most entertaining Sunday night this side of Septuagesima.

Nothing was ever said to me about the breaking of the wind. But plenty was said about the broken book stand. The experience taught me a valuable lesson: among us Anglicans the destruction of property is a far more serious affair than blasphemous explosions.

I was confirmed at the Chapel by the late, austere Bishop Manning when I was ten years old. I can remember practically busting a gut trying to geel spirituality when the episcopal hands were laid on my head. No dice. I felt no different. Later, the (largely) silent gatherings at the Quaker Meeting House at Friends' Academy didn't turn me on, either. Not until middle life, when a series of horrifying anxiety attacks were accompanied by "the feeling of impending dissolution" did I turn to religion for comfort. I found it not in the Scriptures but with characteristic devious indirection in the popular

broadcast talks delivered during WWII by C. S. Lewis, the eminent Ox-bridge scholar and Christian apologist, author of "The Screwtape Letters" which I had read in 1943 purely for entertainment. The broadcast talks published in toto as "Mere Christianity" halfway convinced me that there was an After Life and that if I were suddenly to drop dead in the office (one of two things happens to you in the grip of an anxiety attack, sometimes both at the same time: either you'll fall dead instantly or after breaking down and screaming and making a public spectacle of yourself) it didn't necessarily mean utter extinction. Liquor also helped to soothe the awful fears, and I think at this date (some thirty to forty years later) I would have had what used to be called a nervous breakdown if it had not been for my therapy of sipping large amounts of bourbon and reading Lewis's interpretation of what Jesus really expected of me.

Another vivid memory of the Chapel of the Intercession. My mother and I were walking on Broadway towards the Church one Sunday evening to attend the vesper service (me to participate in it, of course). Suddenly, right in front of us, a car out of control plunged up on to the sidewalk and hit an elderly man, throwing him high into the air. He hit the pavement with a sickening crunch and I saw blood all over the place before he was obscured by a crowd of the curious and horrified. My singing was not up even to its usual rather low standard that evening. In the morning a paragraph in the Times reported that the elderly man had been instantly killed.

This was not the first fatal accident I saw in those relatively early days of the combustion engine. At Brookhaven, my grandfather's home on Long Island, in the early fall of 1916, I had seen a convertible roaring down the highway that passed our place. There was a sharp curve

unbanked of course in those days of primitive road engineering, and the driver failed to make it and his car turned over and crashed into a little wooden bridge that traversed a brook. The driver and his passenger both ended on their backs in the brook. The crash brought people running from all over, and foremost in the hysterical crowd was yours truly, his six year old eyes popping at thw sight of the two broken bodies, their white shirts scarlet with soaking blood. The next minute Uncle George Miller (no relation to me but like all close family friends called Uncle or Aunt as the case might be) who lived next door to us had grabbed me and hustled me across the street, saying that the horror was no sight for a small boy. I didn't protest. I felt like I was going to throw up.)

The Chapel of the Intercession had a large graveyard attached<sup>h</sup> to it, one of the illustrious in<sup>h</sup>habitants of which was the minor 19th century poet, Clement Moore, who wrote "The Night Before Christmas". Tradition-ally, every Christmas Eve the choirboys (I dont think the male tenors and basses or the lad<sup>y</sup> soloists took part) would proceed from the rehearsal room in the Church to Moore's grave, carrying lighted candles, and sing Christmas carols. I remember one night when it was snowing, not too heavily, the soft roar of traffic coming from Broadway down below the graveyard on the hill. Nothing special about it -- just one of the scenes from the distant past that can be summoned at will.

<sup>b</sup>THE AFFAIRS OF LADY HAMILTON. Another German film that derived from Luit<sup>h</sup>sch's mighty historical cine-dramas about figures in European history. (When "Passion", about the dissolute Louis and DuBarry was closely followed by "Deception",~~h~~ about the dissolute and murderous Henry VIII, became popular in the USA certain circles began to worry that the Germanic film purpose was to portray a gallery of all the dis-reputable celebrities among their late enemies in the Great War. LADY

HAMILTON, and her licentious affair with Lord Nelson, while the film didn't get much distribution in this country, added to the legend. Its chief interest to me was the performance of Conrad Veidt as Admiral Nelson. He had previously been seen as the somnambulist in THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI and was one of the favorites of my adolescence. Well -- if there had ever been any validity in the theory of a conspiracy against the Allies, it was forgotten as the flood of German movies on every subject under the sun -- Othello, Pharaoh, life in modern Berlin, Siegfried and the revenge of Kriemhilde -- reached our shores.)

In 1925 I met an artist named Emil Schnellock, a guest at the Greenbrier Inn in Wading River, where I was waiting on tables during the summer months (and enjoying it thoroughly). He was genuinely a kinspirit, sharing my enthusiasm for Gilbert and Sullivan and for German films. He and a fellow artist were spending a traditional two weeks at this old-fashioned summer hotel (MacDougall was the other fellow's name) and they seemed genuinely to enjoy the company of a precocious 15-year old boy. In retrospect, that summer of 1925 was the best I ever spent at Wading River. My mother and I had been coming regularly since 1922 when my maternal grandfather, Jake Valentine, finished having the cottage on the beach built. Wading River will probably keep creeping in and out of these memoirs. It was an important part of my childhood and continued to be so until, after marriage and parenthood, I left the East Coast for good and came to Hollywood. Shortly after we left for good, the little house which my whimsical mother named Quawk's Nest (a Quawk being a crane whose numbers by the score lived in the meadowy marshes behind our house which fronted on Long Island Sound), was almost completely destroyed in a hurricane some time in the mid-1940's.

CHAPAYEV was a Russian film, shown in New York in 1935 at the

Cameo Theater on 42nd Street west of 6th Avenue, home of the Sovkino Agitprop boys and girls. Run-of-the-mill Soviet propaganda movies were shown here, punctuated occasionally by the truly remarkable. One of these, "Chapayev", about a courageous Red semi-guerrilla leader of the Civil War when the Lenin-Trotsky forces (not that you ever heard Trotsky mentioned) were battling the White armies. "Chapayev" was a good picture, but it contained one sequence that makes it memorable: the aristocratic White regiment that charged into battle at a smart parade-ground pace, rifles held formally and every member of the elitist corps smoking a cigar, puffing out contempt for their worker-peasant adversaries. Unfortunately for the Imperial forces, the worker-peasants were entrenched behind batteries of machine guns which mowed down the cigar-puffing Whites. On they came, closing ranks, no retreat, until, as I recall the long sequence, they were all destroyed. It was a remarkable expression of idea and emotion, a sincere if reluctant tribute to the lunatic gallantry of the Imperial Infantry at the same time it brutally portrayed the inevitable extinction of all those who opposed the Revolution.

When I saw this <sup>my wife</sup> Jean (teaching school in Brooklyn) and I were living in Brooklyn Heights on Orange Street next to the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher's Plymouth Church, scene of the auction of a black girl in the previous century, a dramatization by Beecher's Abolitionists of the horrors of slavery, itself an effective piece of Agitprop.

In those days we saw movies at strange times with only ourselves to please. A few years earlier Jean and I, living on Horatio Street in Greenwich Village, went way up to 141st Street to have dinner with the Bruces, Sharlie and Alfred. We played bridge until close to midnight, then returned home on the 7th Avenue subway, deciding en route to Times Square to get off there and go see the midnight screening (it being Saturday night) of "Rasputin and the Empress", starring the three Barrymores



playing together for the first time (each had appeared separately in movies since the early days of the medium, and John and Lionel had been co-starred by MGM just a year earlier in ARSENE LUPIN, with John as the romantic thief who stole the Mona Lisa from the Louvre and Lionel as his detective nemesis). Lionel was Rasputin, John was the Prince who killed him, thus terminating his evil ascendancy over the Imperial family, and Ethel of course was the Czarina. The Czar, in much lower billing, was Ralph Morgan, brother of the better-known Frank.

"Rasputin" was and is pure kitsch but what wonderful kitsch. The spectacle of Moscow before and during the early years of the Great War was enhanced by the judicious use of actual newsreel footage of Parades, mob scenes, etc. etc.

"Rasputin and the Empress" made a lot of money for MGM but the company had to shell a lot of it out to Fanny Holtzman and her client, the exiled Prince Chogodieff, who was depicted, under a different name, by John Barrymore and credited with the slaying of the wicked monk. Fanny charged libel, invasion of privacy and everything else except barratry, a British court found for the plaintiff and the fact that two previous pictures, European-made by small companies, had depicted the Prince under his own name killing Rasputin was ignored except by the unsuccessful defense -- Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer was where the loot was. *The little company wasn't worth suing.*

Another queer time for movie-going was on New Year's Night, 1932. Jean and I, Jean's brother, George, and two close friends of ours, Vera and Bernie Yarrow (whose son, Peter, born some time later, grew up to prominence in the company of Paul and Mary) had spent an incredible 24 hours, first driving up to Woodstock, far north of New York City, through a heavy snow storm in an ancient Buick whose windshield wiper had to be worked by hand, then spending the night in a frigid cottage,

huddled together for warmth. Before we could light the fire in the fireplace George and I had to find a ladder, climb up to the roof, and removed a stone slab from the chimney mouth over which it had been placed to keep out the rain.

What the hell the purpose of this trip over half a century ago was I have forgotten. It had stopped snowing on New Year's Day but we had to drive back to Manhattan over road sleek with ice. Were we bone-weary? Were we ready to collapse? Indeed no. We were in our twenties, Mamoulian's DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE had just opened to largely rapturous reviews, it was New Year's, so we all went to see Frederic March in what is undoubtedly the best version of Stevenson's story ever put on the screen. John Barrymore's DR. JEKYLL of 1920, a silent film directed by John Robertson (a noted silent film director) is still a fascinating curiosity but it is crude in comparison with Mamoulian's sophisticated treatment. Whether we were tired or not after the picture I don't remember. I do recall that Bernie Yarrow was ~~the~~ only member of the party who didn't like it. He had no background in Stevenson's allegory and the man who kept turning into the devil, as he expressed it, baffled him. He brooded throughout our ~~fix~~ table d'hôte dinner at the Champlain.

To return for a moment to the Cameo. I remember seeing a picture on a summer afternoon in the 1930's which had attracted little critical attention. Indeed, it was because I had nothing better to do, nor anybody to do it with, that I dropped in to see "Lieutenant Kije". I remember thinking it was mildly amusing, this fable about the mythical subaltern invented by the Czar's officers to have somebody to blame when mistakes were made and investigated. A gold star to me, though, for ~~for~~taking notice of the musical accompaniment, a real zinger of a score composed by

Prokofieff. I sat through "Lieutenant Kije" twice that <sup>h0J</sup>afternoon<sup>00</sup> to hear the music, and some years later was delighted to hear it in the concert hall in somewhat expanded and <sup>structured</sup>~~re-structured~~ form to fit the requirements of the symphonic repertoire. Another of Prokofieff's masterpieces that began as the dramatic accompaniment for a film (by Eisenstein) is the cantata, "Alexander Nevsky".

In the summer of 1933 Jean and I went abroad -- thanks to her bank account and a \$500 legacy from the mother of her best friend. It was in the depths of the Great Depression, Roosevelt had just taken office, Hitler likewise, the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo was playing at the Alhambra on Leicester Square, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company was commencing its season in Brighton and some curious pictures (curious to Americans) were playing at various theaters around the country. We went to all of them, and to a number of plays including Gordon Daviot's (Josephine Tey when she wrote mystery novels) RICHARD OF BORDEAUX with a youthful John Gielgud in the title role.

Pabst's DON QUIXOTE (we're back talking about movies after that short scene-setting digression) was playing at an exclusive little theater. It starred the great Chaliapin paired with the stage and music hall clown star, George Robey, as Sancho Panza, it had some marvelous shots, particularly the windmills under attack, it included a few songs by a forgotten composer for Chaliapin whose voice was in sorrowful decline, and on the whole it wasn't very good. Or so I thought then, and I doubt if another view would change the impressions of 1933 except for the worse.

There were great virtues, however, in a film called WALTZ TIME, music by Johan Strauss, English words by Sir Alan Herbert, then plain A.P. Herbert the brilliant writer and parliamentary fighter for more sensible divorce laws, author in both roles of ~~the~~ brilliant HOLY DEADLOCK. His English

libretto for DIE FLEDERMAUS (for that's what WALTZ TIME turned out to be and it was my introduction to the great operetta) is the best one I have ever heard and since 1933 I have listened to half a dozen different versions including CHAMPAGNE SEC with the splendid actress Peggy Wood somewhat improbably cast as Rosalinde and Kitty Carlisle (Later Mrs. Moss Hart) making a dazzling debut as Prince Orlofsky.

The movie WALTZ TIME was beautifully sung by Evelyn Laye, then at the height of her British stage and screen career, and a cast of largely unfamiliar European actors and singers. A minor mystery was the presence in the score of a lilting waltz tune, sung by a <sup>C</sup>coachman as he drove through the twilight streets, the first words of which were "Come out, Vienna, and mix with your neighbors." The lovely tune has haunted me for over fifty years but it is not to be found in the score of "Fledermaus" and I have never heard it in any other production.

WALTZ TIME came to the United States in the fall of 1933, playing at the Little Carnegie on 57th Street in Manhattan, and attracting little attention, possibly because twenty to thirty minutes had been butchered out of the running time -- "butchered out", not "edited out."

It was in the Scottish town of Greenock on the banks of the Clyde that Jean, her aunts and I saw THE BLUE LIGHT, first of the magnificent German mountain films directed by Leni Riefenstahl, soon to become Hitler's notorious mistress of the movies in Germany. THE BLUE LIGHT enthralled me, it was such a marvelous piece of movie-making. But then, I have to admit that all through the Nazi years before and during World War II I continued to admire the magnificent work of Riefenstahl -- specifically her coverage of the 1936 Olympics and the perversely stirring TRIUMPH OF THE WILL with its glorification of the burgeoning military machine of Deutschland, Deutschland.....

## DAYTIME WIVES

~~daytime wives~~ (I think that was its name) was one of the shreds of trivia that Darryl Zanuck turned out for 20th Century-Fox in the prosperous days of the big studios when he <sup>wasn't</sup> ~~wasn't~~ making Carmen Miranda musicals or threatening <sup>to</sup> ~~the~~ bankrupt the company by starring an Englishman named Alexander Knox as Thomas Woodrow Wilson. DAYTIME WIVES, shortly after its release, became the target for a plagiarism suit. An <sup>N</sup> ~~unknown~~ <sup>A</sup> writer charged that we had stolen for our picture a large segment of plot from a screenplay he had indeed submitted to the New York Story Department of which I was a member in the 1930's and forties.

20th had swiped the story all right but not from this jerk. I had recognized it the minute I saw the film as a story that Alexander Woollcott had used in his column in the New Yorker years before as an example of the modern folk story -- the tale that pops up all over the country, always told as something that had happened to the narrator's best friend or uncle or some other intimate. Woollcott got a lot of mileage for his column from these yarns.

As an assistant story editor I was given the job of handling the preparation of the case for our legal department as I had gone around shooting off my mouth about where the story had come from.

It would be a cinch, I knew, to go through the New Yorker files and find that column. It was not. I had two helpers, all of us pouring through the old magazines. No trace of it was to be found, and I had a bad time stalling off the legal department, baying for the evidence which was going to save the company a fortune.

There seemed only one thing to do -- get hold of Woollcott and ~~get~~ <sup>get</sup> ~~him~~ <sup>him</sup> substantiate what I knew he had written. Of course, given the

streak of luck I was having, Woollcott turned out to be missing. The New Yorker hadn't a clue as to his whereabouts and refused to give me the private number of his East Side apartment. I then got my first break. A friend called my attention to an item on the society page of that morning's paper: Alexander Woollcott is the house guest of ~~Max~~ President and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt."

In desperation I put in a call to the White House. Several secretaries later Woollcott, still in bed, I gathered, picked up the phone and said hello to the Executive Editorial Director of 20th Century-Fox (I had elevated myself several positions in a naive effort to make an impression). I told him of my dilemma. As soon as he heard the opening situation Woollcott broke in with such a flood of Billingsgate as would not be heard again in the White House until 1973.

"The a.l.c.s.m.f. son of a bitch is a plain crook. That story has been printed a dozen times. I said so in my story and I'll be glad to testify for you. Why couldn't you find it in the New Yorker? Because it didn't appear there. You read it in the New York Times in 1935. Ross felt my column had been running the folk tale racket a bit too heavily so I sold that one elsewhere. I also told it on the radio." and with an epicene giggle he hung up, leaving me in a state of rapture. Justified rapture, too. Within the week our suing writer withdrew all charges after a brief, private talk between his attorney and ours.

I see I have neglected to tell you what the plot that caused all the stress was about. Here it is:

The daytime wife spends her afternoons being unfaithful to her husband in the penthouse of her millionaire lover. One day, to show his

appreciation for her splendid servicing he gifts her with a magnificent mink coat. On the verge of swooning over the gorgeous pelt, she realizes that she will never be able to explain it to her husband. Not to worry, says her lover. Here's what you do. Take it and pawn it, then give the ticket to your husband, explaining that you found it, that it probably won't redeem anything much, but it would be fun to find out. Perhaps he'd stop in on his way home from the office the next night and see what he gets. That way he'll be presenting you with my present. And who's to know? Woman does as suggested, spends the next day impatiently waiting the arrival of her husband.

When he comes in, he goes directly to their bedroom. Later, she asks him about the pawn ticket. "Oh, yeah" and he exits to the bedroom and returns, handing her a ratty neck piece, undoubtedly made of rabbit. "You were right," he says. "It certainly wasn't much."

Moral - two can play at afternoon assignations.

My personal life at New York's 20th offices on the forty-fourth floor of the RCA building ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> not unpleasant, in dreadful contrast to what was going on in the rest of the world: the Hitler atrocities, Mussolini's war in Ethiopia, the Spanish Civil War and other assorted horrors. The view from my office faced south and west. I watched the Queen Mary on her maiden voyage steaming up the Hudson, I saw the great zeppelin Hindenburg circle the Empire State Building on her last flight, headed for flaming destruction in an hour or so at Lakehurst, and I watched the French liner, Normandie, burn at her pier shortly after the outbreak of the 1939-45 war, pitifully spewing smoke before keeling over on her side.

I saw THE PRISONER OF ZENDA at some theater in Washington Heights, on Locust 181st Street on the eve of my departure for ~~East~~ Valley and four years going to boarding school, Friends' Academy.

This version was directed by Rex Ingram, a handsome Irish actor, <sup>Turned director</sup> who came to Hollywood and the year before had sprung to ~~international~~ fame, along with his virtually unknown star, Rudolph Valentino by making "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse".

I am inclined to <sup>think</sup> think that Ingram's Zenda was the best of the four films derived in the first half of the twentieth century from Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins's cornucopia of a romance about the English commoner who impersonated the King of Ruritania who had been kidnapped by his evil cousin, Black Michael. I know David Selznick's 1937 version, brilliantly made with tongue in cheek and a sophistication that would ~~have~~ puzzled Anthony Hope is regarded as the best of the lot, but Ingram took the preposterous yarn as seriously as its creator, thereby <sup>Producing</sup> ~~creating~~ the most splendid of pure late 19th century melodrama. I was 12 at the time and a veteran movie fan, but never had I been more thrilled than <sup>And</sup> ~~that~~ was by the moment when the camera was full on Black Michael in the cathedral where the King was to be crowned, secure in the knowledge that his rival (Michael wanted the throne for himself) was a prisoner in a distant dungeon. We of course know that the King's English lookalike has been substituted for the ermine-robed monarch-to-be. We gleefully anticipate Michael's first glimpse of Rudolf Rassendyll and it is sheer delight to see his initial incredulity turn to ~~pure~~ horror at the awful impossibility. His spiked helmet slips from his hands and rolls across the aisle in front of the royal procession sweeping towards the altar. And what is the music accompanying this glorious razzmatazz? What else but the Land of Hope and Glory theme from the most popular of Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance marches. Selznick tried to ~~gild~~ ~~that~~ that lily years later by putting a huge choir and symphony orchestra on



his sound track blaring See the Conquering Hero Comes but Handel's fabulous strains somehow didn't suit. Pomp and Circumstance somehow did.

I believe that whatever you do with "The Prisoner of Zenda" it is essentially a silent ~~Movie~~, the stuff that dreams are made of.

Selznick's Prisoner, in radiant Technicolor, cast with the greatest of names, Ronald Colman, C. Aubrey Smith, Madeleine Carroll, David Niven, Raymond Massey, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., possessed of brilliant mechanical techniques unknown to 1922, sounds as if it should be the better of the two. Perhaps the time was wrong, perhaps Selznick's picture was so clever it outsmarted itself, perhaps your author is talking through his hat, recalling Alice Terry and Lewis Stone and Barbara LaMarr through the twelve year old mind of 60-some years ago.

Rex Ingram proved in ZENDA that lightning does too sometimes strike <sup>TWK</sup> in the same place. In The Four Horseman he had "discovered" Valentino. In Zenda he had cast as his leading villain, the likable viper, Rupert of Hentzau, a young South American named Ramon Samonyeggos who, attaining stardom overnight as Rupert, prudently allowed "them" to change his name to Ramon Novarro.

Friends' Academy, after one or two nights of home-sick sobbing to sleep proved tolerable enough. I got into trouble occasionally but this was my pattern and nothing happened during this first year as horrendous as whatever it was I did the year before at Horace Mann at 242nd Street in New York City which impelled the gentle history teacher, Mr. Gerow, to seize me by the back of my neck and literally throw me out of the classroom into the hall.

Friends' Academy -- F.A, from now on -- was coeducational and conservative, and a sharp eye was kept on the boys and girls who were boarders, and whose mingling was confined to the classroom, the dining room, the Saturday night dances in the gym, and attendance every Sunday morning at the Friends' Meetings

House across Duck Pond Road. The Matinecock Meeting House was an austere yet somehow mellow building dating back to 1750. It stands there today, looking as it did in 1922 (I presume there have been some coats of paint and some reshingling in between.

Headmaster of Friends' Academy was S. Archibald Smith, a lantern-jawed, middleaged New Englander, a man of charm and authority, whom I liked very much and whose memory I honor. I was never able to make up my mind whether <sup>he</sup> ~~was~~ the admirable scholar-gentleman he seemed, or a bit of a rogue and scoundrel with a touch of the Vicar of Bray. Of his scholarship there is no doubt; ~~he~~ he taught Latin (Virgil) brilliantly and Greek. Greek wasn't on the curriculum but he assembled a handful of young boys (nobody in 1922 thought of including girls) and taught them three nights a week in his spare time.

On the other hand.

Everybody on the administrative staff of F.A. was a relative: The assistant headmaster was S. Archibald's brother-in-law. His Wife was the Academy house mother, paid handsomely, and his sister-in-law was a history teacher -- and one of the best I ever had. That's what's so confusing: the ethics of the arrangement invite the raised eyebrow but they were all such thoroughly nice people -- and damned good educators in a period when there were damned few.

As for "The Vicar of Bray" ("For whatsoever king may reign I'll still be the Vicar of Bray, sir.") I happen to know (in later years the Smiths were friends of my mother and her second husband, Alfred Bruce born near Worcester, Mass.) that S. Archibald Smith was ~~born~~ born a New England Presbyterian. When he obtained a post at an Episcopal school in New Jersey attended by several of my first cousins he and his entire family, in-laws and two daughters, had themselves baptized and confirmed and turned devout Anglicans.

Some years along the road, when S. Archibald got the more lucrative job at F.A. he and the rest of the gang all joined the Society of Friends.

I have always admired the way Dr. Smith embarrassed a boy who was trying to embarrass him. One ~~early~~<sup>Monday</sup> Sunday morning I was looking through the encyclopedias at the back of the study hall. S. Archibald wandered in, searching for something, greeted me pleasantly, and was asked the ~~same~~ following question to which the mischievous inquisitor knew the answer perfectly well: "Mr. Smith, why did they ~~send~~<sup>send</sup> Oscar Wilde to prison?" S.A.S fixed me with a speculative eye, stared for a moment, then replied: "He was a sexual pervert." His manner said, "Go ahead, ask me what a sexual pervert is." But my courage failed. This was not a conversation I wished to continue. With a mutter, "Thank you, sir" I turned away.

During my four years at F.A. I bullied, was bullied, stole money from other boys, smoked, drank (hard cider) and was caught with my hand under a small girl's dress. (Child molestation, I suppose.) Smith never expelled me. He was stern, he meted out harsh (but sensible) punishments, lectured me wisely, and when the occasion indicated it was appropriate showed understanding and compassion.

In the vernacular of today S. Archibald Smith took a lot of shit from me. I shall always be grateful to him.

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Fritz Lang's titanic SIEGFRIED opened at the Century Theater on Columbus Circle in early September, 1925, the end of that delicious summer at Wading River when I worked waiting on table at the Greenbrier Inn. I returned with several hundred dollars in loot; my salary was nine dollars a week but the guests tipped generously at the end of their two weeks and I took care to make myself agreeable to everyone. My indulgent mother allowed me to spend the money any way I wanted to. I bought two longed-for garments -- Oxford bags, soon to be the envy of F.A. and a pair of those bizarre golf pants known as plus fours -- the complete recordings by the D'Oyly Carte of Pinafore and

The Mikado. I took Edna to the opening night of "The Vagabond King" with Denis King bringing down the first <sup>act</sup> ~~night~~ curtain with "Sons of toil and danger, would you serve a stranger and bow down to Burgundy." And finally Fritz Lang's SIEGFRIED, the UFA version of the first half of Niebelungenlied, debatably <sup>1</sup> the greatest silent film spectacle ever made anywhere. Every inch of the epic was filmed inside the UFA studio: giant sets costing millions of marks, fabricated forests, castles with monster drawbridges over which rode armored knights in full regalia, the bottom of the Rhine and the lair of the dragon. Even my intensely anti-German mother (her views of "the Hun" had been shaped by a diligent reading during the war years of the books of that extraordinarily clever propogandist for Great Britain, Sir Philip Gibbs) was stirred.

Viewers of the picture today, in the carefully preserved but undeniably flawed prints in the Museum of Modern Art Film Library or the Eastman complex of old films in ~~Manhattan~~ Rochester, N.Y., simply can't begin to understand the effect made at the old Century Theatre on Columbus Circle ~~in 1913~~ by the skillfully tinted picture as it unspooled to the accompaniment of a large orchestra playing a score compiled from Wagner's RING. As the End titles came into view the screen receded, live figures in heroic poses appeared on a rainbow bridge on the stage as the orchestra segued into The Entrance of the Gods into Valhalla. I have often had chills up and down my spine at great moments on both stage and screen; this is the only time I can remember that they continued for at least fifteen minutes until we were on our way home on the subway headed uptown to 168th Street. (We lived at 169th street, as I have said; the subway stop was at 168th.)

So you can see I fairly squandered ~~my~~ summer's earnings (I salved my conscience somewhat by putting a few bucks in a savings account.)

After sixty years, nevertheless, I look back on that orgy and regret nothing that I bought or spent. Well, maybe the Oxford bags: the wearing of them led to a monstrous<sup>s</sup> double<sup>d</sup> over-reaction -- double because the above-mentioned S. Archibald Smith let it go too far and I took it absurdly farther.

Oxford bags, to those of you~~s~~ who were not up-to-the-minute youngsters in 1925, were grey flannel trousers, cut so wide north and south that when they reached the cuffs one's feet were completely invisible under the grey drapes which lightly brushed the ground. You can get an idea of what they looked like from some of the old pictures of John Held Jr, about flappers and hipflask-carrying males. The cats and finale-hoppers who aren'T wearing plus fours probsbly are draped in Oxford bags. Actually, their vogue was not long. I think they had left the scene by 1926. They were a bit too silly even for the tumultous twenties.

One evening, in my room at the senior house (presided over by Mr. and Mrs. Blackburn), in response to some comment about the fact that you couldn't see my feet when I had the bags on, I found myself making a sucker bet. I undertook to go to dinner that night, the most elaborate and austere meal of the day, in bare feet and not be detected because of my Oxford bags. The stakes were high (for us) Ten dollars.

I was completely successful. I walked in, took my seat, and left the dining room with the other students and teachers without anybody suspecting a thing. And then<sup>a</sup> younger and smaller asshole, whom I had probably been hazing or otherwise mistreating, took a hideous and treacherous revenge. He blabbed. Not to anybody in authority, of course, just to a pal. The word raced round the Academy: "Trapnell went to dinner in his bare feet." Within the hour I was summoned to the headmaster's study. He sternly asked me if the outrageous thing he had heard was true. I manfully (as I like to

remember it) admitted that it was. Mr. Smith let me have it. Boy, did he ever! I was a disgrace to the school, I was a disgrace to him, I was a disgrace to my poor mother, I was a disgrace to everybody except maybe the League of Nations. I took it all silently. But I couldn't take the next. "There will be no more talk of your graduating next June." This referred to a consent to my graduating a few months before I was sixteen years old, a consent he had ~~made~~ given with some reluctance. The alternative was a post graduate year, 1926-27, during which I would make up certain rather important subjects, which I had flunked or never taken, including physics, Latin and plane geometry. I never did pass plane geometry. I could not understand what they were talking about in those theorems. I still don't. Q.E.D. S. Archibald delivered the whanger: "I shall personally see to it that you don't graduate."

I said nothing. I turned on my heel and strode to the door. Even this gesture was denied me. "Go to your room, sir" bawled the headmaster at my retreating back, an instant before I disappeared. Never before or after did I hear the principal of Friends' Academy carry on the way he did. Possibly something had gone wrong that day to put him in such a humor. Maybe he had something about bare feet, a fetish which my stupid action had somehow exposed and violated.

I chose to top him. Announcing that I had been treated like a dog, I collected my winnings (everyone agreed that although I had been caught I had first won my bet), and ran away from school. My companions watched me in awe as I packed a bag and set off on the two mile walk down Duck Pond Road to the Glen Cove railway station. ~~at~~

At midnight I was in Grand Central Station, getting the bad news that there would be no train to Brewster, near where my mother was working at the Gypsy Trail Country Club in Carmel, until the next day. My ardor had cooled considerably. I began to feel queasy, depressed and frightened as it dawned on me that I might be in quite a pickle. The mad defiance of a

few hours before had given way to the remorse of a large child who knows he has Gone Too Far.

I did the only thing I could think of, called the Bruces, Sharlie and Alfred, and sought sanctuary. An hour later in their apartment I was listening to Sharlie clucking distractedly. The reaction of Alfred, of whom I stood in some awe, surprised me. He seemed quietly amused by the whole thing, asked all the necessary questions and made a few important phone calls. The man who would become my stepfather many years later in some way made me feel that everything would be all right.

So it would. I became the Prodigal Son. Next morning I was met in Locust Valley by Mr. Prinz, the headmaster's son-in-law, later was clasped to the soft bosom of Mrs. Smith ("Thank goodness you're all right!") and talked to gently by S. Archibald who suggested that we let by-gones be by-gones. I was a nine day wonder in the eyes of my classmates and otherwise we were back to normalcy, to use that misuse of the word made popular by our late President Harding.

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When you went to see Emil Jannings in PETER THE GREAT in its first run in New York, an usher escorted you to your seat in the Rialto Theater in elegant, tasteful surroundings, no popcorn around you, although refreshments could be purchased (and consumed) in the lobby lounge, and the presentation began with a stirring rendition of Tschaikevsky's March Slav. As the music reached its climactic finish, the curtains swept aside to reveal the opening titles: "Peter the Warrior....Peter the Intriguer.... Peter THE GREAT" A spell-binder of a melodrama then unfolded as Peter, opposed by the wily Menshikov, swept all before him and opened the windows of the West on Mother Russia. I emerged from this Germanic razzmatazz onto the stifling summer streets of 1923 streets of New York in a blissful daze, made my way uptown to the

Bruces' apartment on 141st Street (my home away from home) and consumed for dinner a pint of strawberry ice cream brooding the while over Peter and his battle against the Swedes at Poltowa.

Sharlie and Alfred returned shortly afterwards and were full of questions about my trip to Charlestown. Mother was at Wading River but there were no trains on Sunday so what else could I possibly do when we arrived in New York from the South than make directly for the Rialto and "Peter the Great"? I had gone to Charlestown for a week's visit to Grandma (almost totally blind now from her cataracts) and our beloved aunt, Babbie, or Becca or, still more formally Aunt Rebecca. Uncle White and my cousin, Betty, shepherded me down and back and it had been a delightful week.

We went to bed, and my dreams were of Peter and Menshikov. It was three hours by train to Wading River and Sharlie had provided me with a box lunch consisting of a fried egg sandwich and a baked beans sandwich. Eaten cold, they were delicious. The homeliest food you can imagine and yet Sharlie's magic touch with food transformed them.

In those days Wading River was a far different place from the relatively comfortable resort (even though we never did get an indoor toilet) that my daughters, Jane and Sally, knew and loved years later. Life was real and very earnest for those few cottage dwellers in the sand dunes in 1923. For one thing water had not been "laid on." The only supply of water came from a spring on the other side of the creek that meandered through the marshy meadows behind our bungalow. Twice a week my mother and I loaded our row-boat with pails, jugs, bottles, anything that would hold water and row up the creek at low tide to our spring. Several other families on the beach did similarly. The spring bubbled out of white sand at the bottom of a barrel sunk in the earth. The time to go was at low tide: at high the spring



tended to be brackish from the creek's salt water only a few feet away.

Occasionally there would be a horrid prolongation of this, at best, onerous task. I'd walk over to the spring and find a dead rat floating on the surface. I'd pull it out by the tail, hurl it far into the bushes, and set to work with a pail to bail out the contaminated water. This would take about fifteen minutes. The spring continued to bubble up through the clean white sand, but all too slowly. My mother and I would sit back, matter-of-factly slapping at the mosquitoes which swarmed and attacked viciously. This was another of the delights of Wading River in 1922; not for five or six years would the Mosquito Commission come in to existence and spray the meadows each year, effectively ridding us of the pests which, when the wind was blowing from the southeast, literally made it impossible to go out doors at night -- except for a necessary dash to the privy, flailing one's arms madly.

When the spring was full again, and presumably pure, we would load all the utensils into the row boat and row back to Quawk's Nest against a strong current as the tide turned and was rapidly filling up the creek. This rowboat was a beauty, a present to us from Jake Valentine, my grandfather. My only criticism of it was that it had been built in the old-fashioned way with a sloping stern instead of a vertical one to which one could attach an Evinrude motor that, I felt, would have made life considerably easier. So wherever we went I rowed, taking a certain pride after a while in such things as feathering the oars properly and keeping the boat on a steady course in choppy water. Anyway, from twelve years old to nineteen (when some son of a bitch stole it in the dead of night, I had muscles such as I've never had since.

Did I find this early period at Wading River tough? I adored it. The swimming was magnificent (diving from the stern of the boat), fishing was splendid -- blue fish, black fish and kingfish among others.

And there were eel pots to be set in the eel grass. I loved to go clammin in the black mud of the creek at low tide. The soft shell clams would be steamed within an hour of digging them out of the mud, yielding the most delicious broth as an extra treat to go with the succulent clams. It was fun, too, to go after mussels in the flats off the mouth of the creek at low tide. Wear sneakers, though. Without them the beds of mussel shells would cut even well calloused bare feet to ribbons.

It was a healthy life and a very happy one.....

THE GOLD RUSH with Charlie Chaplin.

And once again we come to a great film classic, so well-known and so thoroughly analyzed over the years that it seems fatuous to discuss it. I'll content myself with one perhaps unorthodox opinion: I have seen it, I suppose, a score of times since its release in the summer of 1925 and, while it contains five or six sequences of the most wonderful things ever recorded on film it strikes me as an uneven movie with parts, particularly the sentiment ones, that tend to be dull.

However, some things happened during the evening I saw its Long Island debut at Patchogue over on the South Shore some twenty miles from WR, that I find, well, memorable.

This was the summer I worked at Greenbrier Inn. Four of us drove in Laura's car across the Island to Patchogue. Laura, herself, was the boss of those of us adolescents who waited on table at the Inn. She was about thirty, I believe, and weighed three hundred pounds. In spite of her bulk she was pretty. She was also one of the kindest, jolliest, friendliest, niciest human beings I have ever known. I sat up in front with Laura with Ernie and Evelyn on the back seat. I mean on the seat. Ernie was on top and the two were going at it hot and heavy. We called it necking or petting but it was as close to intercourse as you could get with your clothes on.