

Confessions of a
Wee Poison PGA Golf Pro

JOHN GROSHELL



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DEDICATION

Dedicated to our loyal members at Snoqualmie Falls Golf Course who brought their own rakes and shovels to help us recover from the five disastrous floods. Their help made the course recover physically, but bigger than that, it helped me hang in there mentally, knowing they would always help save me and their home-away-from-home.

I would also like to dedicate this book to my former students—both high school and eighth grade—who have made me believe that I was instrumental in preparing them for success in life.

And, of course, to my wife Liz, sons Willie and Jeff and their families. And to our dear puppies who remind us that life is about love, kindness, belonging, and sharing joy.

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Introduction

My name is John Groshell but I have gone by at least 10 different names during my life. As my story goes on many of them along with their origins will be mentioned. A few were Jumbo, Dairy Queen, Cassius, Punkin, Captain G Spot, Tiny Wood and Cupcake. Once I became a golf pro Johnny G has been used more than any. At Snoqualmie Falls Golf Course there has been a tournament for over 30 years named “The Johnny G.” There is another tournament where you get one foot of string per stroke in handicap. That one is called “The Johnny G. String.” A horse named Johnny G also kept me from starving on a College Team golf trip.

My favorite is Cupcake, I pinned that on myself the first year I was teaching school in 1967. I was trying to be funny while lecturing my class of 8th graders. A year ago, I went to the 50th reunion of one of my classes I taught at Tolt High and was greeted by all with a “*Hi, Cupcake!*” The name had followed me from Snoqualmie Middle School to Tolt High School. Cupcake travels well. Three years ago, in 2019, a new neighbor of ours here at Ocean Shores yelled, “*Hi, Cupcake,*” to me as I was walking my dog. A guy he knew was married to one of my ex-students.



THIS BOOK IS SIMPLY THE story of my life as I experienced it; it is way more happy than sad. Many of my problems were self-inflicted but no matter the source I have fortunately been able to survive and thrive through them all. In this introductory chapter, I’ll give you a hint of the tales to come in this memoir....



MY MOTHER (THE BEST ONE of those that ever was) gave me caring and love for others and a love for dogs. She was an author of nine books and a graduate from Wellesley College. You will be reading more about her in this story. Her name was Charlotte Groshell.

My father (Ed) gave me a work ethic and a drive to succeed. He also helped give me a twisted sense of humor that I have used continually, sometimes to my detriment but more often positively. He also introduced me to betting. Most of the bets have been in regard to things taking place around me. In one of them I rigged a bet concerning which fly strip in the kitchen of my golf course would capture the most flies. Once the bet was made, I pointed a fan at that fly strip.

Both Mom and Dad tried to make me understand that okay was not good enough, that average didn't cut it. But I didn't care about school. I only cared about sports. If the activity didn't include a ball to hit, throw, shoot or catch, I didn't care. I came close to failing 5th and 7th grades. I hated Thanksgiving because it came just after the first report cards came out. We always went to Mom's parents' place for Thanksgiving and the topic was always, "*What are we going to do with Johnny?*"

We were never poor, and I never wanted for anything. If I did want something Dad made me earn it. When "Rock 'n' Roll" jackets came out I had to earn mine by pulling ferns. Dad paid me 1 cent each and I came up with \$20 worth.



MY FIRST CHALLENGE IN LIFE was following my brother in school by one year. Hiram had two fabulous talents. The first was getting Dad pissed off, the second was to make teachers look stupid. Almost every year I would have the same teacher he would have had the year before. It would take several months for them to realize this Groshell was not a threat. Goofball yes, threat no. The worst was when he alienated the high school baseball coach who was also his biology teacher. That ru-

ined my freshman baseball year. Thankfully that coach left before my sophomore year.

The next challenge I have had is being short. When I entered high school, I was 4'8" tall and looked like I was 12 years old. Most every coach eliminates the really short kids without even giving them a chance. Sadly, sports were the only thing I cared about. I actually made the freshman basketball team and did finally play in several varsity baseball games my freshman year in spite of my brother.



MY BROTHER GOT INTERESTED IN politics and was a page in the Washington State Senate in Olympia in 1959. I followed and was a page in the House in Olympia in 1961. At election time, we worked at door-belling and putting up posters for candidates. We also attended the Washington State Democratic Convention in 1960. There I met JFK and Lyndon Johnson.

There was no big challenge to being a page. In Olympia I even figured out how to smuggle the occasional piece of pie out of the legislators' personal cafeteria.

We did have a much bigger challenge surviving in Washington, DC. Hiram was there for six months before I arrived. I took over his Senate page position and he went to work in the office of a representative from Illinois.

The challenge was living! We were in a four-storey apartment building. Each floor had ten rooms on it. There was one bathroom for all ten rooms. The basement had a kitchen that nobody used. I would sit there because it was cooler and polish my brown shoes black. Pages were required to wear black shoes and I couldn't afford to buy a pair. I did have a daily assignment (off the record) to steal a *New York Times* and a *Wall Street Journal* from the Senate library and put them on Senator Henry Jackson's desk in his office. At the end of the summer his office threw me a sendoff party.



SPEAKING OF CHALLENGES AND BETS, there was a swimming hole in the

Snoqualmie River about one mile out of North Bend. It was called the “Blue Hole.” That is where high school kids went swimming in the summer.

You had to get across the river to get to it as it was at the base of Mount Si. It was upstream from the trail to the river so one had to swim across, while being swept downstream, to the other side. Then walk over rocks and some brush to get to it.

I bet anyone there that I could swim straight to it. Read on to see how that went.



ON FATHER’S DAY JUST AFTER high school graduation, when I was 17, an event happened that changed my life. Hiram was traveling to Europe but Mom, Dad and I had Father’s Day dinner then I went off to water the greens at Mount Si Golf course.

I knew Mom was returning to an apartment she had in Olympia. At that time, she was on the State Parole Board.

When I came home at about midnight, I found Dad in the driveway with a shotgun beside him and part of his face blown away. He did live through it—so did I—but it made me realize that I was the only one in this world that would always take care of me. The next day I found out that Mom and Dad were getting divorced.



THAT FALL WHEN I REGISTERED at WSU, my instructor told me I was going to fail, then he signed me up for 21½ hours. He explained that I would fail because I couldn’t read. It was based on his interpretation of my SAT test results.

Since I couldn’t read, I didn’t buy books but never missed a class. I showed him when I got a 2.6 grade point average that semester. My sophomore year I bought books and dropped to a 2.2 GPA. Go figure.

My reading comprehension is fine, but I have always been a slow reader. I did best when I took excellent notes in class and used them for studying purposes.



MORE CHALLENGES CAME WHEN I turned out for the WSU golf team. I hadn't gotten serious about golf until my junior year in high school. I had also missed playing golf the summer before when I was a page in the U.S. Senate. I had only played in one junior golf tournament. In spite of competing with others who had played for years, I was the top player for WSU my freshman year and for all three varsity years. In my junior year I finished second place individually in the Pac 8 Northern Division Championship, then took the state car without permission and my two team buddies to Portland Meadows racetrack where we almost lost all our meal money. You will get to read the happy ending to that fiasco later.

I managed to keep from getting kicked out of WSU even though I made social probation. Had I been booted I would have been drafted and sent to Vietnam. Looking back, I think most of the dumb stuff I did was in rebellion to finding Dad that night.

When the dean of men, the head resident, and some other officials were meeting to discuss my future at WSU I threw a snowball that went through the exhaust fan and sprayed them. My room was next to the conference room and on the 9th floor. I had explained to them that I was too short to have torn down a loudspeaker across from my room. I also explained that I had to stand on a chair to brush my teeth daily.



MY FIRST TEACHING JOB WAS challenging but I even made it more challenging. After the first semester I got the principal to let me switch classes with the lady in the next room over. She was having a tough time handling them. There were six classes ability grouped 1 through 6. She had #1 in the morning and #6 in the afternoon. I had #3 and #4, the so-called average kids.

The #1 group was easily bored and had the ability to think up ways to be a problem once bored. I spoiled them by saying, "Let's learn together and have fun." The #6 group was 90% boys who didn't want to be in school, let alone learn. It was basically a classroom of Johnnys.

The fourth quarter I inspired them by giving them a chance to give me swats. I had them for English, Reading, Spelling and History and whoever got the best grade in each got to give me a swat on the front lawn of the school on the final day of school. Two of them wanted to give their rights to bigger, stronger kids. I said NO!!

Going to teach at Tolt High School two years later was a challenge with 35 to 42 students in every class and not even half enough books. I printed out material daily and the kids appreciated it. Those two years were absolutely fabulous. I left due to politics, it's all in this book.



MY LAST YEAR AT MOUNT Si High really sucked—you will read why.



MY FIRST JOB AS A golf pro at the Yakima Elks was fun but I went from making about \$16,000 a year to \$5,400. Thankfully part of the deal included a one-room apartment at the clubhouse but it had no A.C. and eastern Washington is hot!!

That year was a real challenge to Liz as she was pregnant with #1 son, Jeff.

Fortunately, at the end of the year I got the opportunity to buy in at Snoqualmie Falls golf course. I had the chance to buy 20% for \$20,000. I only had to borrow \$19,900 to pull it off. Over the next 25 years I bought my partner's shares, but at a significantly higher amount.

The opportunity came thanks to Jan Sorenson. She was the secretary at the middle school who I played jokes on and tormented for years following with prank phone calls. Each one of them ending in "John, you son of a bitch!" when she realized it was me.

I didn't know what a challenge was until I went there. I did get a raise in pay to \$10,000 a year but to start with we lived in a small apartment in Fall City. We only had one car which Liz needed, so I walked back and forth to work daily rain or shine. It was a one-mile walk each way. After several months of that I bought a car for \$70.

The golf course had been poorly maintained, had rubber mats for

tee areas, no sand traps, and virtually no trees. The water system was only for the greens and required plugging in hoses at each one and moving the sprinkler head around. The place was a goat ranch. I only went there because we couldn't survive on what I made in Yakima.

My work was from opening to close six days a week. On Sundays I started mowing greens at 3:30 AM and would still be there at 10 PM cleaning the grill. I cooked, gave lessons, mowed, took greens fees, etc.

The biggest challenge came with floods. We had devastating floods in 1990, 1995, 1996, 2006 and 2009. Each shut us down for over two months and took close to a year for full recovery.

If it weren't for our loyal members who came out with their own shovels and rakes, we never could have made it. Their physical labor helped the golf course. The mental lift and emotional support from them got me through it. With my goofball style and friendly manner, I built a following that looked at Sno Falls golf course as being theirs.

Speaking of bets, one busy Sunday I bet I could hit a golf ball from one side of the clubhouse through it and out the door opening toward the river. Picture about 25 hollering men, all peering over the lunch counter and from behind turned over tables watching as I swung away with my 3 iron. Read on to see how that turned out.



ANOTHER INCIDENT TOOK PLACE WHEN a sea plane got hung up on the rocks in the river by our clubhouse. My partner Chris and I had to wade in and push him off. Read on, like Paul Harvey used to say, "And that's the rest of the story."



THERE IS A CAST OF characters, many of whom became sons to me. Amongst them are Spanky, Mutt, Pruggy and Side Show. Fortunately, I still see them all. Pruggy and our son Jeff (*aka* Radar) are both PGA professionals and are operating the golf course. There are also accounts of those who taught me lessons along the way. Some were verbal, others were through my observation.

I could keep rambling on but it's all in here. There are many goofy

bets, the struggle to get a permit to build a new maintenance building, and my failure to prevent the “fugitive particulate matter” from being airborne. FYI—that is dust.

I managed, along with the help of many, to turn a cow pasture into a beautiful and busy public golf course. More importantly Liz and I have raised two great sons and now have four wonderful grandchildren.

On top of everything, I now have Dani Girl. She is the rescue pup I got almost 11 years ago from People United for Pets (PUP) in Issaquah. Without her my life would not be the same!



HOPE YOU ENJOY THE STORIES!

Pre-School Pain

My father and mother both worked for *The Chicago Times*. Dad was an editor, Mom worked as a writer, columnist and correspondent. When it merged with the *Chicago Sun* to become the *Chicago Sun Times*, my father, along with many others, was let go. My mother, who grew up in Washington State, wanted to go west where her father and stepmother lived in Seattle. So, at age 4, I packed up my older brother, mother and father who bought a weekly newspaper in Snoqualmie, Washington. We headed across country in 1949 to take over *The Snoqualmie Valley Record* and Falls Printing Company.

When we arrived in Snoqualmie Valley our first residence was a motel room in a small motel in North Bend. It must have been winter because it was cold, even in the room. I only have one memory from staying there. My mother had given me a bath and I was cold and shivering. I backed up by the heater to get warm. Before I realized it, I got a burn on my rear end about the size of a baseball. I did learn to be more careful with where I put my bare rear end from then on. I don't remember how long we stayed there but it couldn't have been very long.

Next, we rented a big old house only about a quarter-mile east of that motel. At that time Highway 90 went right through the middle of North Bend. It was the main road in North Bend and most all of the businesses were along both sides of it. At the time it was said that the one traffic light in North Bend was the only one on all of I-90 from Seattle to New York. The house was situated next to the real estate office of the realtor that we rented from. His office had a good-sized window facing our rental house.

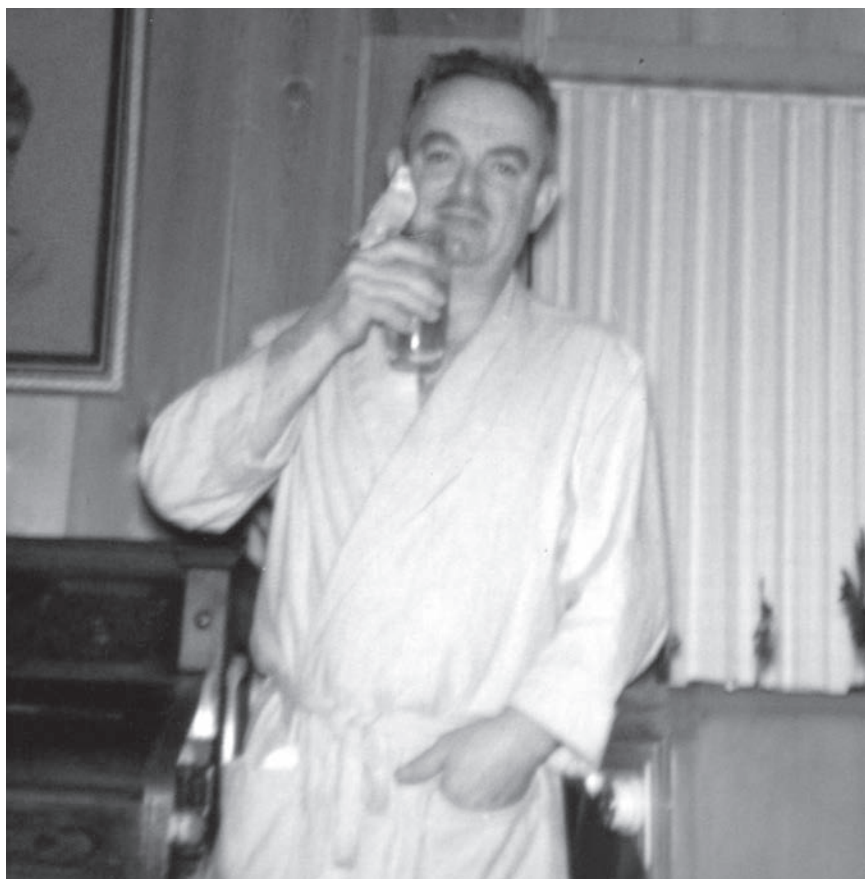
One day my brother Hiram and I came up with a great game. Around this window the side of the office was like stucco, or cement. We started throwing rocks to hit the cement under the window. I am sure there was very little thought put into the creation of this



Beautiful Mom who taught me kindness.

activity—for instance, the inevitable conclusion thereof. Without a doubt the number of throws before the sound of breaking glass would have been a single digit. At that time, I wasn't familiar with the wager called an over/under. Had I been, I would have set the number at probably $2\frac{1}{2}$. We took off running and hid in a small barn/big shed behind our house. Finally, when we hoped we were safe from blame, maybe 15 minutes later, we went into the house. Mom and the realtor were there waiting—what a surprise.

I don't remember the punishment, so Dad must not have been told about it. Dad's policy, at least once we got into school, was always, "*Whatever you get in school, you will get twice that when you get home.*"



Dad sharing his McNaughtons and water with my parakeet.

So I NEVER ran home and said, “My teacher gave me two swats today”—I only said, “I had a great day at school today.”

I only have two other memories from our stay in that house. We had a dog named “Teddy.” Teddy looked a lot like a collie but was a mix of some kind. He was the first dog of my life—we had an Airedale in Illinois, but he wasn’t a pet. He had been used in the military and wasn’t really friendly. He never hurt anyone, but I was afraid of him. Anyways, one day Teddy wandered too close to I-90 and got clipped by a car. He survived but had a broken leg or hip. From then on Teddy mainly used three legs—but for at least the next 10 years Teddy was my best friend. I could hug him and sit on the back porch with him

and tell him all my troubles. Teddy always took my side and told me I deserved better. Teddy also went fishing with me all the time.

The only other memory involved me, Hiram, a hammer, rocks and a concrete sidewalk. I was instructed to put rocks on the concrete that Hiram would then smash with the hammer. This was going along just fine until the index finger on my left hand got caught between the hammer and a rock and/or the concrete. Fortunately, all the damage was below the knuckle. The area between the knuckle and the end of the finger basically became hamburger—no nail—very little bone remaining. Apparently, Hiram thought he was a faith healer because he forced me out to the shed/barn and wouldn't let me go into the house. I guess he believed it would heal itself in under an hour. I did manage to get away after a while—Mom took me to the doctor—and I did eventually end up with a finger with a nail and the ability to grip a golf club.

So, this sums up the highlights of my pre-kindergarten years. Within a year my parents, Ed and Charlotte Groshell, would have a house built about one mile out of North Bend on the North Fork Road. That is where we lived for 12 or 13 years until the family went KABOOM!!

Grade School Adventures

The house is a modest sized one with one medium-sized and two small bedrooms. It has a living/dining room, one bathroom, and a kitchen. It faces Mount Si but has virtually no windows facing the beautiful view of a mountain that isn't more than a half mile away. Within a couple years Mom and Dad have a huge front room with huge windows facing Mount Si added on. The windows were at least 5 foot x 8 foot and were thermo pane (two pieces). Also, there was a big bedroom (theirs), a nice bathroom (theirs), a small workshop, and a main entryway to the house that had a slate floor that was thermally heated.

The design was engineered so that their bedroom was at one end of the house and our bedrooms were as far away as possible while still being under the same roof. Mom and Dad were no dummies—proven to me by this separation in space more than by their accomplishments or education.

Dad had several degrees and had been the night editor at the *Chicago Times*. Mom graduated from Wellesley and at this point, had several magazine articles published and one book published. She went on to have eight more books published. As my efforts at writing go on, I will be mentioning the books and her other accomplishments. Most of all, her literary success paled to her success in raising Hiram and me. On top of everything she cared about people and spent her life trying to help others.

I really lucked out in the “Mom” department. That doesn't mean I couldn't work her over by saying, “Other kids' moms do -----.” I even used that to get her to bake cookies and mail them to me at Washington State University. At the time she was living in Arlington, Virginia. How could such a nice mother have raised such a manipulating kid?

Anyways, back to the house. Being located one mile out of North

Bend (pop. 600+) there were few other houses. On one side of us was a dairy farm of several hundred acres. The farmhouse and barn were at the far end of the property. They couldn't even be seen from our house and were probably close to a mile away "as the crow flies". We had 2½ acres and on the other side was a house that was situated on about 5 acres. There were a few houses across the street (the North Fork Road) but they were mainly older couples with no kids to play with. Consequently, my brother would mainly read books and I would stay outside kicking a football, shooting a basketball, shooting my BB gun, or fishing. Mom tried to get me to read but I said I couldn't because reading made me dizzy. But I am getting ahead of myself now. Let's go back to my beginning in school.

When it was finally time for "Little Johnny" to go to school, apparently he wasn't up to it. I do remember my first couple of days at kindergarten. Actually, it was only close to kindergarten. I cried and bawled and screamed to be with my brother who was in first grade. I was absolutely terrified to be placed in a room with no one I knew. Why did I insist that I be with the guy who bullied me, smashed my finger, and consistently treated me poorly? As I remember, I finally succumbed to attending kindergarten on the second day. Basically, I was a shy little guy who was afraid to be without anyone I knew. Even at home when Mom and Dad had guests, Hiram would visit with everyone, and I would stay in my bedroom. As time went on though, I actually had lots of friends in school, on sports teams, at summer camp, and any activities involving other kids.

I guess our family was a bit old fashioned. Maybe we were more like other families at that time but looking back I'm thinking old fashioned. Nonetheless we always sat down for dinner together. In the first grade I made friends and there was one girl who would walk home with me occasionally. She lived about a half-mile from North Bend while I had to go one mile, but it was in the same direction. Nowadays I'm sure parents don't let first graders walk one mile alone to get home, but that was in 1951 in North Bend, WA. We would, of course, go to her house first then after playing for a while I would go on home. On one occasion she had me go into the bathroom with her while she peed. (She said we were playing "F**k"—it was the first time I ever heard that word). As a first grader I was kind of shocked or surprised or who

knows what I was—but not really alarmed. I wasn't particularly interested in the different plumbing, but I would rather have been playing in the dirt outside, or digging worms to fish, or just about anything else. Eventually I headed home.

That night at dinner Dad asked, "Johnny, how was your day at school?"

I said "Fine, and when Carol and I walked home, she wanted to show me 'F**k' but I didn't look."

Dad rarely had a hard time thinking of something to say, I guess this was a tough one to answer because all he could come up with was, "That's nice."

I didn't walk home every day, although I wasn't told I couldn't. Mom and Dad also didn't tell me that I had to stay away from Carol or to not play that game anymore. I guess they could sense that even at age 6 I had high moral standards. Sometimes one of them would pick me up after school, or I would ride the school bus home, or I would ride a school bus to Snoqualmie. Snoqualmie was about four miles away and that is where the print shop was. Being only six, there wasn't much I could do to help, but sometimes I cleaned up ink off the floor or sorted leads and slugs (spacers used to make up a form for printing). If there wasn't something I could help with, I would just hang out or draw pictures or visit with employees. Just watching the presses running was fun.

On one of these school bus rides to Snoqualmie I was pushed into one of the back seats by an older boy who was probably a seventh or eighth grader. Back then the Snoqualmie Valley was almost entirely Caucasian. The only exception was a couple Native American families, then referred to as Indians. The boy who forced me into the corner of this back seat happened to be one of them. Once the bus was in motion, he took out his jack knife and threatened to cut my throat if I yelled or said anything. He also said that if I told my parents or anybody about this that he would kill me later.

Needless to say, I was quite shaken. By the time I got to the shop I was crying but I wouldn't tell Mom or Dad why. Finally, I gave in and told them. I know Dad did something about it but I have no idea what. After that I refused to take the bus to Snoqualmie again; I don't remember if I ever gave in and rode again.



A happy time with brother Hiram and the basset hounds. Image from my 70th birthday slide show.

Back to work at the print shop, once I became a seventh grader, I handled jobs that would be considered as dangerous nowadays. Both Hiram and I would cast pigs for the Linotype machine. This meant pouring molten metal into molds that were about 3 feet long. The ingots that were formed must have weighed at least 30 pounds. Picture a 12-year-old working with molten metal.

We also operated the press that was called a “hand snapper.” This press was used to print smaller items like business cards or small invoices or other items not bigger than 4 inches by 6 inches. The paper was placed on one side, the press would close over it and print. It would then open up so the operator would remove the printed copy with one hand and put a new blank piece into the press to get printed. The press was like a big clam that would slam shut, then open, then slam shut again. It didn’t care if your hand was still there or not. What you learned quickly was if you failed to grab the paper, get your hand out anyway. If you failed to put the new piece in properly, get your hand out anyway. These presses are the reason that many old-time printers were missing fingers. Hiram and I survived, and both still have eight fingers and two thumbs each, not total between us.

I liked school because that’s where I could play with other kids. I never equated school with learning, it was just something I had to do. It wasn’t until I was in my sophomore year at Washington State University that I figured out that school was for learning—maybe even to prepare for one’s future.

Our neighbors on the 5-acre section to our south were Joe and Bonnie Lewis. They had two sons, Larry who was in his early 20’s and Jim who was slightly younger. Larry worked rodeos as a trick rider, calf roper, and bronco rider. He had various calves to practice roping. He had a big coral and a chute for the calves to come out of. Joe owned the movie theater in Meadowbrook. Meadowbrook was a thriving community bordering Snoqualmie and close to the Weyerhaeuser Mill homes. Once the mill shut down, the houses were moved to another part of Snoqualmie and Meadowbrook became a ghost town. Before then the theater thrived.

As often as I thought I could get away with it I would fake that I was sick. This was during first, second and third grade. Since both Mom and Dad worked at the paper, they would send me next door to

Joe and Bonnie's. They would usually dress me up with chaps, cowboy boots— sometimes spurs added, and a cowboy hat. I would bring my own cap gun and holster. If son Larry was out of town, Joe and I would head out to put up movie posters or go to the theater where I would help clean up things. Sometimes Joe would even run a cartoon or more for me. As a kid it is fun to do work, like sweep or mow grass or whatever if it is not at home.

If Larry was home, he would take me to the coral where I would watch him practice trick riding. One of the tricks involved him going all the way under the horse and back up in the saddle from the other side while the horse was at a gallop. When it came time to practice calf roping, I got to help. When he signaled, I would open the chute with one hand and twist the calf's tail with the other. That would make them take off faster. It was amazing that a day next door always seemed to cure my illness.

Mom insisted that Hiram and I needed to have musical skills. Hiram took right to it by playing the accordion then the clarinet and then onto a saxophone. It actually was cool when he would play the accordion outside and the cows from the neighboring farm would gather along the fence to listen. They obviously enjoyed music more than I did.

But little Johnny was another story. Mom started me off with singing lessons (private) when I was in first grade. The lessons, including standing with hands cupped together in front, lasted into my second grade year. At that point my teacher, Mrs. Shanihan, recommended that they end. Both Mrs. Shanihan and I felt joy when Mom agreed.

The next step was piano lessons from Mrs. Gardner. I would walk to her house at least once a week for a one-hour session. These lessons lasted about two years, my third and fourth grade, until Mrs. Gardner came to the same conclusion that Mrs. Shanihan had. Mom accepted this decision but still insisted that I do something musical.

Because I wanted to please Mom I joined the school band in the fifth grade and chose drums. This lasted one year until Dad decided that was enough. Even though I didn't have a drum I had tables, chair backs and counters to practice on at home.

I give Mom credit for sticking to her guns. So, sixth grade year I took up the cornet. I hate to admit but I almost liked it. I played my



My buddy Roger Baker and me. He didn't seem thrilled to be in the picture.

sixth, seventh and eighth grade years. I wasn't wild about it since I preferred sports to music. I wanted to run, kick, throw, bat, or anything athletic over playing an instrument. Mom still insisted that I join the high school band as I entered my freshman year. The band just so happened to be without a tuba player, my lucky day! I thought that was nifty as the tuba was almost bigger than me and played just like a cornet. I even had my picture in both the *Seattle Times* and *Seattle PI* when we marched and played in the annual Santa Claus parade in Seattle. Even though I'll admit I liked playing the tuba, I really wanted to concentrate on golf, basketball and baseball. Mom finally folded and said OK.

Mom and Dad either thought Hiram and I were responsible and able to take care of ourselves or were training us to become so. The

summer between my third and fourth grade years we were put on a train in Seattle to go to Chicago. We were in a “Pullman car” that had bunk beds that a curtain was drawn across. Dad gave a porter some money to keep an eye on us. We made it to Chicago without Hiram beating me up or throwing me off the train. We stayed with our old neighbors, Hugo and Agnes, out on their small farm. Over the two months I kept busy milking their two cows twice a day and feeding chickens. It’s too bad that I didn’t have a cow back in North Bend to milk, it would have added at least 25 yards to my drives once I started playing golf.

We also spent a few days with Dad’s old friend, Nick Raft. He arranged for us to go to a Cubs game where another old friend of Dad’s, who was a sportswriter, took us into the dugout before the game to meet players. From Chicago we were put on a train to San Francisco where Mom’s sisters lived. After spending a week with them we were then railroaded up to Seattle. We did have a private cabin at least for both the Chicago to San Fran and San Fran to Seattle legs of the journey. Somehow, I can’t picture parents sending kids on a similar venture today. I’m glad we did it, no doubt it helped both of us grow up.

I think it was the winter of my fifth grade year when Mom and Dad went to Panama for two weeks. Hiram and I were left at home alone. However, every two or three days Minnie Stevens (Mom’s house cleaner) would come by to make sure we were OK. She would check to see that we had food, clean clothes, had made it to school and that Hiram hadn’t injured or killed me.

There was only one bad thing about the trip. We had home delivery by a milkman. Before the trip an offer came out that was for cottage cheese in fancy looking containers (bowls). This called for weekly delivery for one month. Unfortunately, Mom liked the bowls. “Boys, just eat the cottage cheese with canned peaches. I don’t want it to spoil, and we have lots of cans of peaches.”

Well, true to form Hiram refused to eat any, so Johnny did his best to please Mom. To this day I still can’t eat cottage cheese with fruit and that was over 60 years ago. As far as their trip went, they had a good time. The one thing I remember about it was that they went to a bullfight. The best part of that was that they paid almost double in

order to be seated on the shady side of the arena, and the bullfight was at night!!

During my fifth and sixth grade years living out on the North Fork Road my best friend was Roger Baker. He lived about a quarter mile towards North Bend from our house. He had three brothers and one sister and a mom and dad. His dad worked for Weyerhaeuser, as did most of the dads in the Snoqualmie Valley at that time. They lived in a big old house located on a 90-degree corner called “Bakers Corner”—go figure.

Roger was two years older than me, was athletic and unlike me was of normal height. We played catch together with baseballs or footballs and shot hoops together. I spent as much time around his house as I could. Mrs. Baker in spite of being up to her ears in kids and housework, was always kind and understanding to me. She also made what she called Indian bread—deep fried dough that would be kind of like “elephant ears” that you get now at county fairs.

Anyways being around Roger made me better athletically and stronger physically. He was the pitcher, and I was the catcher on a King County parks baseball team for two summers. He and I peeled cascara bark and sold it. We picked strawberries at Bybee’s farm together for \$0.25 a flat.

So, one day Hiram and his friend Paul wanted to find Jack’s Mine. Roger and I agreed to go along. All we knew was that Jack’s Mine was located about half the way up on the front side of Mount Si. It was not near the trail up the mountain. After a couple hours of climbing and going through lots of trees and shrubs and downed logs we did find it. It was a vertical mine that was about 6 feet in diameter. There was a partially rotten wooden ladder going down it. There was also a rusty old cable lying beside it. Of course, Hiram wanted to go down into the mine. I begged him not to but I guess he just had to show off. He held onto the cable and started to climb down the ladder while we held the cable as well. He only went a few feet before he realized it wasn’t a good idea and quit.

We started back down the mountain and somehow got separated. Roger and I were together, Hiram and Paul were together. I was with a guy who could do things, could handle himself, and had spent time in the woods hunting with his dad. It took quite a while, but Roger and

I made it down the mountain. When I got home Mom and Dad were in a panic. They had called Paul's mom and found out that we had headed up Mount Si in search of Jack's Mine. After several hours they had called mountain rescue and the search was on. I don't remember whether Hiram and Paul got down on their own, but it was a long few days around the Groshell house after that.

Life with Hiram could be tough. He had a paper route for the *Seattle Times*. It took a couple hours a day. I learned the route so I could sub for him once in a while. One day he and Paul were hiding along the route and threw rocks at me as I went by. Thankfully neither one could throw worth a darn or I might have been hurt. If Roger and I had been throwing at him he would have been injured. That was the last time I did his route for him.

One day Hiram and I went inner tubing down the Middle Fork. The river close to the mountain is swift and rough in many places. Of course, as kids it was no big deal, or so we thought. At one point Hiram fell off his tube and it went floating down the river. I didn't jump in and go after it. Hiram became outraged that I didn't and knocked me down on the riverbank and kicked me in the ribs. I was fearful he was going to hit me with a boulder, but he backed off. That was my last rafting the river with him.

I'd say it's quite evident why I liked to hang out at the Baker's house. It wasn't like Hiram and I never got along. We had different interests and different friends. When I was in the eighth grade Hiram was a page in the Washington State Senate. I don't really remember missing him, but it turns out I did. I rode a bus to Olympia, the state capital, to spend a weekend with him. We got along fine and when I climbed on the bus to go home, he gave me a present. It was a small rocket that was propelled by baking soda and vinegar. When I sat on the bus and looked out and waved goodbye I started crying. I really did love him and was really going to miss him.

By the way, that rocket really would take off, especially when loaded with twice the recommended amount of baking soda.