

Written by Willis Barshied Jr. as a gift to Jackson William Findling's sons, Michael and Jack, these are some of the memories of Jackson's and his young lives as they were growing up in and around Marshville, New York.

It is with Michael's and Jack's permission that this is shared.

March 20, 1998

Michael and Jack,

I started writing this soon after the auction at the old Findling house. Just how long ago this was I cannot remember. The very first part was done then. I also made a list of things I wanted to include. So now I have finished. It seems that I always put things off but I take great pleasure in getting it finished now. I have kept a Xerox copy in case it gets lost. I never learned to type except with one finger. There may be words that you cannot read because of my bad writing. If you ever do type it, send me a copy and I will fill in any blanks for words you can't make out and return it to you.

When I saw you both at the auction it may have been the only time we met. I believe it was Jack whom I asked to touch his hair. It was stiff, just like his father's. Michael: I enjoyed the picture of your nice family. I hope your two families and I can meet sometime again.

I've tried to do a small map of the Marshville area as it was when Jack and I were boys. There are also copies of several photos you might like. What they are is written on the back.

Sincerely,

Skip Barshied

P.S. Don't feel bad to tell me you can't read some of my writing. I can't read it myself sometimes. I do want to get across right.

I would like to give Mike and Jack a gift. A time in Jack's and my lives which was once a reality is no more and yet cannot be quite gone. For this is a gift of recollections which linger for me but a thought away. My grandfather Garlock repeatedly said as I was growing up, upon being asked to fix or make something, that he would do it "when the spirit moves". You may not understand what he meant now, as I did not then, but one day as time rolls ever forward, you will. You will then reach backward with your mind as my "spirit moves" me to do now. The task will at times be sad and at other times a pleasure. However, as we lived it, you must in turn read it.

The We of this narrative are Jackson (Jack) William Findling (May 30, 1931 - May 8, 1961) and Willis (Skip) Barshied, Jr. (June 3, 1930- ), two boys who were much like brothers since, at that time, neither of us had a brother or sister. My brother, Bob, was born eighteen years after I was and after I had left home.

A Place Called Marshville

About four miles south of Canajoharie, New York lies a small cluster of houses, a church, and a country store. It had been named Marshville after an early resident named Marsh many years before my mother's father was born near there in 1877. When we came onto the scene in the early 1930's, it consisted of some dozen dwellings much the same as it had when our county directory was published in 1869-70. The sketch I have appended may help to clarify the location of our nearest neighbors. As I first remember the community, the store was owned by Bayard T. Garlock and his son, Bill. Bayard's father had gone to the gold rush in California in the early 1850's - a most impressive thing in my young mind. Not far from the store there was a small sawmill that was run with an old, large (to us anyway) gas engine. Its put-put-put-put could be heard over most of Marshville. As we continue toward Canajoharie from the store there lived a man, Charlie Cazy or Cassie. The house was of a reasonable size but I remember going there on an errand one day in the winter and finding that he lived in a rear room only six or eight feet square. Before Jack and I were very old, my uncle and aunt had bought this house. Next came the cow barn of Joseph Retalick. He had two granddaughters and a grandson who were several years older than Jack and me. Their house was next and very close to the church, which was the last building on the east side of the road in the village proper.

If we now return to the store and cross the road toward the west, we see a large house on a terrace and a shop and small barns on a lower level. Uncle Elmer and Aunt Mary Countryman owned this place. It was here that I stayed when I was in Marshville. My home was about a quarter mile up the road toward Ames. If we now proceed toward Canajoharie on the west side of the road, we found the Byrd family. Charles Byrd was about the same age as Jack and I. That family moved away by the late 1930s or early 40's, making what I remember as the first separation from our close friends. There were only two remaining buildings. The first was a small gas station where Jack and I sometimes got soda and candy and next, nearly across from the church, a small frame building that was used many years before as the village blacksmith shop. The road we called the back road ran parallel to the main route 10 and to the west of it. To get to the back road, you could go around to the south side of Aunt Mary's house, go by Aunt Ann Retalick's house, and turn toward the north. When Jack and I were young, there were only four families living on the back road between its south end and the turn that brought us back toward our old school and Route 10. The first toward the south was the Mitchell family then came the Findlings. Next were the dwellings of Leon Fredericks and the Waffle family in that order.

Several families, the Scotts, the McEwans, and Monk families, who all had children in our old school, lived farther from the main village on the side roads.

This, then, was our limited world when I did not get to town much and Jack got there even less.

#### Our Families

It would be difficult to say just when Jack and I first met. Doubtless we were both too young to make much note of the meeting. Our families and households were vastly different. How different it was to put into perspective then and how differently I've come to look at it now. Some of the difference probably arose because of the age variance of our parents. As I first remember Jack's father, he seemed to be, at least, nearer the age of my grandfather than my father. My earliest recollections of Mrs. Findling was of a fiercely proud, hard working woman whose world was little larger than her kitchen. She told how she had worked as a maid for a wealthy family in Palatine Bridge years before. Her everyday contact with the outside world was limited but I cannot remember ever feeling as we were growing up that she was in any way dissatisfied with her lot in life. Jack's father was strict and the use of

the strap was not unknown. I do not remember feeling threatened while there except by being sent home if I got out of line.

Jack and I usually got along well but I do remember one time when we got into a disagreement shortly after World War II started. There was a long mud puddle in front of the gas station about where Jack had to turn to go toward home. I do not know which of us pushed the other into the mud first but we were finally both in it. Then we sat down to figure out what to tell our parents had happened. As I remember, Mrs. Findling blamed me. My mother asked me how Mrs. Findling got the details and I told her that "she has her ways, just like the Gestapo".

The Findling home was heated by a large, round oak stove in the north room and a wood and coal kitchen stove. Our family had a coal burning furnace but we did burn some wood in a kitchen stove in addition

Jack's house had oil lamps long after the other local families had electricity. I do not believe anyone except the family was ever allowed into any rooms except the three downstairs rooms. So you see that all of this and no indoor bathroom to boot seemed strange and backward to me but it afforded an opportunity to view firsthand a way of life that had served the preceding generations but was fast drawing to an end. It would be difficult to drift back to the days of our youth without thinking of the wonderful baked goods that Mrs. Findling made. I particularly remember the homemade rolls and bread. We seldom had homemade bread and Jack had nothing else. We often traded sandwiches when we went to country school. So you might say we had the best of both worlds. Both of us were pleased with the change. As I now look back, I know we grew up in the days of the Great Depression but I do not think it made much of an impression on us boys at the time. With my interests in older days and ways developing more as I grew older, I now realize that my association with the Findling family gave me much of my firsthand experience with a more self-reliant American way of life. Mr. Findling worked at carpenter work and my father was a foreman of the printing department in the Beech-Nut. My people certainly were conservative but not as much as the Findlings. I really doubt that Jack's folks bought much to survive. They grew and made much of that which was necessary to survive everyday life.

Our family had a modern automobile. I seem to remember going to get a new Ford about 1936 when I was six years old. Mr. Findling had a Model T Ford and Jack took a ribbing from the other kids in country school. I do not believe any of the other kids could remember when Model T's were used. We called it a Tin Lizzie. A few years later, the Findlings bought a later model car but I do not believe they ever had a new one. I only remember once going anywhere with Jack and his people. After they got a better car, I went along to Utica where a relative of Mrs. Findling lived. We also went to a stockbroker's office and I saw a ticker tape for the first and only time. We started on that trip quite early in the morning. There were no cars on the street at Canajoharie. When we came to the stoplight it was just turning red and Mr. Findling said, "I'll beat that SOB".

## School

I believe Jack and I both started at Marshville school at the same time even though there was a difference in our ages. The school was built in 1875. Both my grandfather and my mother had gone there before me. The building was one story high with a door to the east. The door opened into a small hall which ran to the one main room. Hanging down from the hall ceiling was the rope that was used to ring the bell that was high up in the belfry. The bell was rung in the morning and also to call the students

in from recess and noon lunch. All of us wanted the job of ringing the bell. When you went from the hall into the main room you could turn left and find a door that went first into what we called the cloak room where our coats and hats were hung. A door lead from the cloak room to the boys' toilet. The same arrangement existed on the right side of the entry hall for the girls. The teacher's desk was just to the left of the door and faced into the room. The student seats were wood with fancy cast iron ends and frames. They were fastened to the floor and faced the teacher. The smallest seats were in the front and larger ones toward the rear of the room. In the back right of the room was a large cast iron wood and coal furnace. The furnace was surrounded by a tin jacket to help protect from burns. This jacket had a door that could be opened to gain access to the stove door so that fuel could be put in and ashes out. We sometimes, when wet or cold, opened that tin outer door to get more heat. The fuel for the furnace was stored in an outside woodhouse. Students helped carry the fuel in. They also brought pails of water from the Shults farm well just across the road that ran beside the school. There was no well on the school grounds. The teacher was often paid more to do the janitor work at the school. I remember various maps on the walls and at least two pictures, one of Lindberg standing by his plane and another of George Washington. In the back corner opposite the stove was a cupboard containing some fifty or so books we called the library. In each book was written District #10 Town of Canajoharie. I still have one of them. The residents of the district met once a year to elect a trustee to oversee the school business. We all knew when the meeting was and went to bed that night wondering whose father would be trustee the next morning. I never knew of a woman being elected trustee. The cost of operating the school was not great. The teacher's salary, fuel, a large bottle of ink, and a few repairs were the greatest expenses. Some of the books belonged to the school but some were purchased by the students. When you finished one grade and went to the next, the used books could be sold to a student moving up to the next grade. All grades from one to seven were in the one room. Individual classes came to a recitation bench in the front of the room.

For recess, we played ball and other games. We also bounced a rubber ball over the tin roof and called it something like Killey-KilleyOver. I do not remember what it meant. At Christmas time we made paper decorations for a tree. We did learn recitations and parts for plays at Christmas time. The school was too small to have our Christmas entertainment. That was held in the Marshville church. I can still remember how grown up we felt when we could sit up in the small church balcony.

I do not believe there were ever over about twenty students in the school at once. It was just about like a large family. When a family moved away and we lost favorite schoolmates, it was a sad time. The Monk family moved to California when World War II started. We lost Virgil Monk, his younger brother, Clark, and sister, Norma. Virgil was about a year older and Norma nearly the same age as I. They moved back a year or so after the War. Norma graduated in the same class as Jack and I did fifty years ago. The whole family then went to Idaho.

One incident that happened while we were in country school made a considerable impression on me. One day a member of the Shults family from the closest farm to the school came in and asked the teacher to come to the farm right away. Mr. Shults' team of horses had run away with him. The teacher left one of the older students (Ruth Scott) in charge. Our teacher returned some time later and told us that Mr. Shults had been killed. We usually attended the country school until we reached the eighth grade then went on the bus to Canajoharie High School for grades eight to twelve. I had so far to walk to school that my parents sent me to village school for grade seven. The school bus from Ames ran past my home, taking me to the village. It was like going from the dark into the day. I left Jack and my other close

friends who didn't come to Canajoharie until the year after I went. It was a hard time and I have always regretted it. So by the fall of 1942 I was at Canajoharie school and Jack followed by fall 1943. The war was on and some teachers and older students left for the military. There were air raid drills when the students were supposed to go home. The country kids, being too far from home, were sent home with someone from the village. To a great extent, a country kid felt like an outcast unless he was an outstanding athlete, which neither Jack nor I was. It was here that we began to realize just how sheltered our lives had been. I will not write a great amount about our high school years since it was not so different from today.

Even though Jack and I were alike in numerous ways, there was a considerable difference. Jack was a better student and I believe he tried harder than I did. Even though this may not belong quite here in the story, I will never forget Jack's father saying that he was not going to spend money to send Jack to college when the government would do it for nothing. I did not go on to school after high school although both my parents had and they wanted that for me also.

When I was approaching sixteen, my mother and I went to look for and bought an old 1929 Model A Ford. We did the many repairs that it needed and I often drove it to school rather than ride the bus. Most days I went around by the back road and picked up Jack too. We then drove on some days to the higher hills overlooking the valley and had our lunch or could go somewhere else. It is truly strange what trivial things now come to mind. Jack and I were both in the senior play. On one night after school we were to practice the play in the auditorium. I had gone a few miles and bought a bullet mold and cartridge re-loader. Jack was on earlier so he stayed at school. When I returned, Jack and several other kids were sitting in the audience area watching the practice. It was absolutely quiet in that big room except for the play going on. When I went up to the stage, Jack was looking over the loading tool. It probably weighed three or four pounds. He dropped it, making a loud noise. I looked down from the stage and said, "I thought I told you to put that damned thing down". The English teacher did not approve of my choice of words. I told her that was "the only language he understood". She looked down at Jack and found him still playing with the heavy loading tool. She said, "It does not look as if he understands that one too well either".

At this point, I am going to skip school and return to my prepared format. As I near the end of our school days, I do want to tell you about our senior trip however.

#### Our Senior Trip in 1948

We had a large senior class. I would say that Jack and I were really not in the in crowd. We went to New York by a bus owned by a local man. Jack had never been that far from home in his life. Of course, I was a world traveler. I'd gone to NY City with my parents by train for a day several years before. That was the extent of our travels. As I remember it, we stayed at (I thought) a second rate hotel called the Plymouth. Several other senior classes from other schools were staying there also. By today's standards, I suppose it was not a wild time but I do believe it was wilder than two country boys were used to. So, as usual, Jack and I did not mingle much. We just went by ourselves to see what we wanted to. I remember riding on the subway after studying a city map. We walked alone through Chinatown and other areas where now it would be very dangerous to go. My big event was to go to the Francis Bannerman store at 501 Broadway. Bannerman had been in the military surplus business since 1865. It was a dingy, rickety old place filled with old guns and all types of old things that I liked. I now have before me a book I bought that day in which I wrote my name and 5/28/48\_ I also bought an original Civil War Calvary jacket that

day for \$2.50. It is now worth about \$500. Too bad I did not buy more. One of the other schools in the hotel began a feud with ours. Things began to get somewhat unpleasant and we came home. Thus ended our senior trip. If I remember correctly it also ended senior trips. I do not know if they resumed in later years. Anyway, Jack and I saw some of NY City and I don't believe caused much trouble for anyone.

#### Two Trips that Jack and I Took

As I have said, our friend Charles Byrd had left our area in the early 1940' s. Neither Jack nor I had seen him for several years. When I got my old car about 1946, we decided to visit him. They moved about fifty miles to the south. It was our first trip alone with the car. We stopped numerous places along the way. I got acquainted with an old gunsmith I had heard about. Our school Industrial Arts (it was called Shop then) teacher had moved to the same area He bought a hardware store in a small village. We wanted to see him also. I remember we parked on a corner of an intersection. When we came back to the car, I began to back up and CRASH - another car had come in behind us. There was no damage to either car but I was pretty upset. I wondered if the man would later contact me saying he had damage. I had to tell my parents when we came home. The strange thing is that we never did get to see our friend Charles. We saw his parents and I believe we stayed overnight with them and came home. I believe that was the farthest from home Jack had ever been at the time

I am not sure what year we took the second trip I want to tell you about. It may have been in 1947. My mother' s sister owned an old log cabin about a mile back in the woods on a dirt road It was near Lake George some ninety miles north of our home. It was a favorite place for me to go. In fact, it was one of the few places I did get when I was young. We decided to go there and several other places in the North Country. There were always people I knew, antique shops, and other dealers and collectors where I stopped along the way. We had had quite a lot of rain about then and one of the places I stopped was on a dirt road We went in but did not buy anything. When we turned back onto the road we were going up a considerable hill. It was muddy and the old car began to bog down. I said, "Jack, take you shoes and socks off; you're going to have to push". He did and we continued on our trip. One of our destinations was Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain. I had been there once or twice and I wanted Jack to see the fort and that part of the Adirondack Mountains. The roads in that area had some pretty steep places. When the old car climbed too many hills it would heat up. That day, we had a radiator cap in which there was a small hole. When the car got overheated, the water would spout out of the hole. We fixed that by whittling a small wooden plug and putting it in. No more trouble with that.

Our plan was to stay overnight with my aunt one night, camp out one night, stay at my aunt's another night, and return. As we went up along Lake George and neared Fort Ticonderoga, it was getting late in the afternoon We stopped by a nice mountain stream and camped on a large flat rock. I believe I could find the place yet today. After seeing the sights in that beautiful area, we stayed at my aunt's and returned home. By today' s standards, this all seems somewhat boring but it was quite an outing for two friends in that day and age.

What we did for everyday fun ...

#### Spring and Summer

My home was about a quarter mile or so up the road from Jack's. We lived at a place where the road on one side ran very near to the creek and on the other side was a steep wooded hillside. In summer there

were lots of things to do. Jack and I both liked the woods so lots of time was spent there. There were May flowers and other flowers to pick in the spring. There were grape vines to swing on like Tarzan. A large boulder was our fort where we fought off Indians (in our minds anyway). I always had a dog that sometimes went exploring with us. I do not remember that Jack ever had a dog.

The creek was an interesting thing to us also. I had lived by that creek most of my young life and known it as a small sluggish stream in summer and a raging torrent that flooded our yard and basement at other times of the year. The same creek became our swimming hole further along its course. There were lots of turtles and frogs that interested young boys.

Somewhere my grandfather got an old wooden, flat-bottomed row boat about the time we got to our teens. We looked up a pair of oars that were actually too long for the boat, that is, on the end where your hands were. It sure takes some practice to row a boat when the oars will not bypass one another. We had some interesting adventures with that boat. The creek was very shallow behind the house but further down it was six feet or so deep. I remember two funny things that happened to us. On both occasions Jack was rowing. Once I sat on the back seat trying to catch a turtle. I was not doing it to suit Jack so he moved to my end. The boat sank and we both got wet. The other time could have been more serious. We were way down the creek where the water was deeper, the bank steeper, and muddy. My mother called to come home. I knew that I could walk home quicker than have Jack row there. So I told Jack to put me ashore. I had one foot on a slippery creek bank and one on the rear seat. When the boat started to drift away from the bank, I was getting in trouble. I told Jack to get the boat closer to the bank and he gave one good tug on the oars. The boat went further out into the creek and I got a cold ducking in water that was five feet or so deep.

The swimming hole was nearer to Jack's house at Marshville than mine. We could go from the Findling house to route 10 then across the road, down through Retalick's pasture to the creek. Close to the creek was a huge willow tree. At one time we dove to the bottom of the creek to get stones and clay to build a fireplace. After it was made we decided to build a fire to bake the fireplace hard. The result was a loud explosion and pieces of hot rock flying everywhere. Luckily we were not hurt. Jack learned to swim sooner and better than I, who never became a good swimmer. I remember helping Jack home when he cut his foot badly on a broken bottle on the creek bottom. Jack had a bicycle long before I did. I was in my mid-teens before I had one. There is little I recall about bike riding except one time that Jack and I, peddling as fast as we could, coming down a small hill. A large hound dog ran in front of me. I missed it. Jack hit it and flew over the handlebars. He landed on one elbow on loose crushed stone that lay on the road. It was quite a while until that injury healed.

#### Fall and Winter

When fall came there were vegetables to take in from the garden. Both our families had reasonably large gardens. Mr. Findling took the honey from his beehives. Our people never had bees. This was the time for hunting. Jack and his father went to Moorehouseville, north of Utica, where Mrs. Findling's people had a camp. I never was up there but it was a favorite time for Jack. It was from there he came back with the Remington rifle and Starr revolver which you still have. His uncle had given them to him. Even though they are valuable now, many years ago they could have been bought reasonably from Bannerman's (same place I mentioned from our senior trip). Their 1911 catalog showed the rifle with bayonet and scabbard for \$3.85. Probably Jack's uncle bought them from the Bannerman catalog. A 22 rifle and a Winchester carbine hung on the wall of the Findling home for as many years as I can

remember. I have been interested in old guns and other ancient things for most of my life but never became much of a hunter. The part these things played in the everyday life of our ancestors and how they shaped our country interested me the most.

By the time Jack and I were in our low teens, we both trapped for muskrats along the creek. It was a rather cruel business The furs were used to line the aviators' jackets in that period when World War II was on. Probably a good substitute was found later. In fact, that brings to mind the great advances made in clothing from the time Jack and I were young until the present. I remember all too well the cold feet I almost always had when I was a kid. Insulated shoes and boots have changed that greatly. By the way, trapping was only done during the cold weather as the fur was only good then We got from \$2 to \$4 for a good muskrat skin as I remember it. It does not sound like much money now but it was not easy for a boy to get hold of much money then.

When winter came, Jack's home area had attractions it did not have in summer. It had hills close by where we could ride downhill. There was a steep little hill on the back road just south of Jack's house. It was much steeper then than now. When the road was fixed, the hill was drawn in making the incline less. We spent many hours riding there. The one drawback was that the Mitchel family lived right there. The oldest daughter, Anita, was a constant thorn in both Jack's and my sides. She was a little older than we and was always fighting us. The end result was that she usually ended up scratching our faces with her fingernails. She had claws like a wildcat. Mitchels had several kids including older boys. If we did anything back to Anita, her mother set the boys on us. Anita had a cousin who was a tough little rooster. She picked on him and he knocked her out cold. She did not bother him anymore, but I never remember her letting up on Jack or me much. The Mitchels and the Findlings had a running feud for years. I remember being inside at Jack's house when a knock came on the door. Mrs. Findling answered the door and the Mitchel kids threw a huge snowball into the house.

Jack had an old hand sleigh that was higher from the ground than most others were. He could go faster and farther than the rest of us. Sometimes we went just west of the road into the field to ride if there was crust enough to hold up the sleigh. Once my sleigh runners cut through and I believe I can still feel my face sliding along on that rough crust. About the time I was thirteen or fourteen, I received a toboggan for Christmas. Jack and I had a lot of fun with that and a lot of spills also.

There are probably other things that I would like to have told you but what I have written will give you some idea of Jack's and my young days so I will end now.

P.S. I spoke to my brother last night and told him what I was writing. He was born eighteen years after I was. He came along about the time I left home. He always lived where Uncle Elmer and Aunt Mary did when I was young so was near the Findling home all of the time. He told me he remembered that once when he was very young and got bogged down in the snow, Mrs. Findling took him into the house to get warm and dry. He also remembered the cookie he got that day. That was a long time ago. The memory was quite a legacy from a little lady from old Marshville.

Skip Barshied

March 20, 1998