

The Story of My Life by Edward F. "Mickey" Ford

I was prompted to write this story because of the interest shown by both of our children, Nancy and Dick, whenever we discussed certain events which occurred in our lives before their time. Much of my background with Sears, and before that with Whirlpool Corp, should be of particular interest to them since they both chose a career with Sears. It is about time that I do this because to quote a couple of lines from one of my favorite songs (September Song), "the days grow short when you reach September" and later on "The days dwindle down to a precious few".

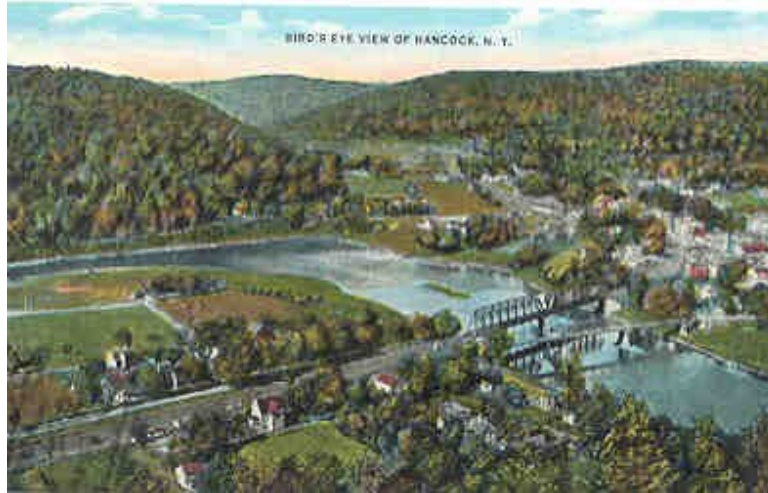
Family History: My father, Michael H. Ford, was born on September 15, 1860 in Cocheton, NY not far from Hancock, NY where I was born. My mother's maiden name was Theresa Kille and she was born on July 7, 1875 in Mileses, NY also not far from Hancock. My father had one brother Bartley and a sister Mary. My mother also had one brother Joseph and one sister, Anna. Her parents came from Germany.

My parents were married in St Paul's Roman Catholic Church in Hancock, NY



on March 2, 1897. I was born on August 18, 1899 followed in 3 to 5 year intervals by John, Joseph and Catherine. Elizabeth was born when Catherine was around 12 just two months before my mother died. She died on April 21, 1921 at the age of 44. My Aunt Mary who had been living in Honesdale, Pa with her cousin Kate McGranaghan and her husband who owned a hotel there moved in with our family. She practically raised my two sisters until she passed away in 1940.

My Early Years in Hancock: Hancock was and still is a small village of about 1200 population. It is located in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains on the Delaware River which separates the states of New York and Pennsylvania at that point.



In addition to the farms in the area, there was a junction of the Scranton division and the main line of the New York Ontario and Western Railroad located just a few miles from Hancock at Cadosia, NY.



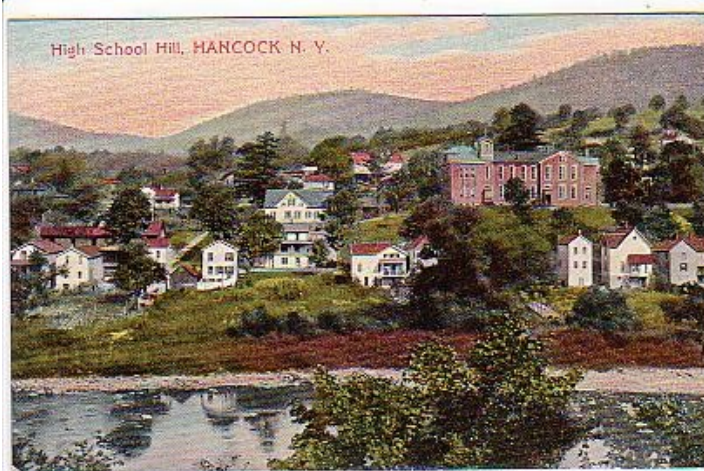
Coal was hauled from Scranton and stored there for transfer to points on the main line which runs from Oswego, NY to Hoboken, NJ. This operation, together with the railroad station and track maintenance, employed quite a few people. The Erie RR which ran from Chicago to New York City also had a station in Hancock



Erie RR Station in Hancock, NY

and also employed a number of section hands. The only industry I recall was a small lumber mill. I believe one of the big customers was in Louisville which made the famous "Louisville Slugger" baseball bat. At one time there was also a tannery which supplied finished hides for the Endicott-Johnson Shoe Factory in Binghamton.

There were a couple grocery stores, two hardware stores, a couple of drug stores, bank, post office and two hotels (the Hancock House and Delaware Inn). I must not forget the undertaking and funeral parlor about which I have a story to tell later on. The Catholic Church and the Old Red Schoolhouse



were located at the top of very steep hills on opposite ends of the village.

There were other stores such as McGranaghan's Department Store, Lipp's Meat Market, Searles' Mens Clothing store, Smith's cigar store, a poolroom and Winne's restaurant. In addition to the Catholic Church there was also a Methodist and Baptist



church as I remember. Another place that was well used was the Odd Fellows Hall which was also used as a movie house on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Basketball games were played on Friday nights and several of us kids stored the chairs after the movies on Wednesday night and were allowed to play and/or practice basketball for this work. This practice developed some pretty good talent for the High School teams and also eventually the town team known as the "Big 5".

I have many pleasant memories and a few anecdotes about my early jobs. Since my father did not earn much money as a laborer on the railroad. I earned money for my books and clothes from about the 8th grade.

One of the jobs was running errand and doing odd jobs for Fanny Lord's woman's wear.



She was assisted by an elderly relative who I believe was a spinster. She lived in an apartment over the store. One of my duties was to carry coal up the stairs for her stoves and empty the ashes. One day I cut my hand which bled rather profusely and she started to put on a bandage. The sight of blood made her faint and cut her forehead so I ended up taking care of her!

My next job was at Busfield's furniture which also had an undertaking and funeral parlor. I was hired to sweep out the store, polish the furniture, etc. On the very first day on the job I opened up the store and went to the back room to get a broom. Lo

and behold there on the table was the body of a man with the top of his head removed. The man had been murdered during the night and the coroner had removed the bullet. It sure was quite a shock to me! A few days later I went to the room where the caskets were stored to look for a yardstick. The curtain was drawn to prevent fading of the merchandise. Just as I found the yardstick in a corner, a shade suddenly shot up and scared the daylight out of me! I decided then to seek other employment in less spooky surroundings!

I was soon hired by Hoag's Grocery Store. One of my duties in addition to waiting on customers was to deliver orders of groceries by horse and wagon. I was afraid of the horse and it seemed to sense it. He had a nasty habit of bumping me against the side when I had to saddle him up. One day it was very slippery and as we were going down the steep hill west of the Catholic Church the horse skidded and fell on its side dumping me and the load of groceries in the street and I jumped out rather quickly to save my neck. The horse lost quite a sizable patch of hide, however, and Lew Hoag was quite naturally quite perturbed about incident. He did not fire me as I really expected and as I recall I stayed on the job for a year or so.

My longest stint was Wheelock's Drug Store. Mr Wheelock was really a great merchant and although he was very demanding I learned for the first time to take my work seriously. Mr. Wheelock saw to it that I always had something to do, sweeping out the store, and dusting the first thing each morning, unpacking merchandise and straightening out the display shelves, carrying ice from the ice house in back of the store and grinding it up for the soda fountain, pickup up bundles of newspapers at the post office each day. All this in addition to waiting on customers and tending to the soda fountain patrons. I really earned my five dollars a week!



Wheelock's is second awning on the left

One day Mr Wheelock gave me a lecture being so generous with the amount of ice cream I put in sodas and sundaes. He showed me how to dip the scoop in the can and then level it out with a spatula which is flat thin and very flexible knife used for the mixing of prescription powders in a bowl. One day I inadvertently mentioned this to "Fat" Hyatt who worked across the street in the clothing store. Shortly thereafter Fat came in one morning for his "soda break", looked up in the office on a sort of mezzanine in the rear of the store, made certain that Mr Wheelock was at his desk and in a very loud voice said "Mick I want a chocolate soda and be sure to use that sharp knife to cut down on the ice cream. I wouldn't want to have you cheat Old Man Wheelock for me." Naturally I nearly fell through the floor. I expected the worst all morning but just before Mr Wheelock went to lunch he dropped by the fountain and said to amazement "Edward, I hope you aren't cutting down on the ice cream too much as a result of our recent discussion. We want to be fair but not too generous. We don't want to offend the customers." So you see, in retrospect, both Mr Wheelock and myself learned a lesson from Fat Hyatt's so-called humorous remark.

I recall another incident which had nothing to do with my work. One night near closing time I was standing on the sidewalk where it as cooler. It was a very hot and humid night in August of 1917. There was a unit of the 71st Regiment New York National Guard guarding the Erie railroad against possible sabotage of troop and supply movements. The unit was comprised mostly of New York City ex clerks, etc. many of whom had never been outside of NYC before. They had patronized the soda fountain all summer and I enjoyed hearing about the life in the big city and they were sort of heroes to me being in the service. While I was outside on the night mentioned, someone stopped and said that there had been some shots fired at someone trying to blow up the bridge. I was interested because our home was very close to the river and near the bridge.



In fact I had fished for bass many times from a pier holding up the bridge. Well, shortly after I heard the news, my father, a short rather cocky little man came walking up the street. I asked him about the incident and he said “I haven’t heard anything about it”. It developed later that he had been the culprit, dumping garbage in the river as he been doing for years (there was not talk of pollution in those days) when trigger-happy guards heard the sound and after the saw a man running fired away. Out next-door neighbor Charley Stephens, a shoemaker, told us later that he saw my dad running like a competitor in the Olympics in the dark with his garbage container. My father never did like Stephens (who admitted deserting the German Army as a youth) and really disliked him after he squealed. Nothing was said to the soldiers, however and I presume to this day that any of the guards still living are telling their grandchildren how they prevented the bridge from being blown up that night!

Other Activities During High School Days: Although I worked a lot during my years in school I did manage to indulge in the various sports activities and as is the case with most kids I some special friends. Probably the first close was “Deac” Whitaker. We lived close together and I remember our parents spending some of their hard earned money on baseball suits, gloves, bat and ball when we were real young. I even remember that the equipment was ordered by mail from the Belles Hess Catalog. The first day we tried out the bat and ball dressed in our identical big league suits. I hit a liner to Deac and hit him squarely in the mouth loosening two of his front teeth! Other close friends were Cliff Anderson, Russell Keery, Eric Faigle, Don Guild and Jerome (Jaggy) McGranaghan. I frequently was invited to stay all night at the McGranaghan's and looked forward to doing it. They had a large family and a big house. Mr McGranaghan owned the department store. They were devout Catholics and attended daily mass so

Jiggs and I were routed out of bed at 7 am and went to Mass, not always voluntarily I am afraid. Jiggs became a dentist after finishing high school and practiced in Olean, NY until he died a few years ago. Eric Faigle eventually became Dean of Men at Syracuse University from which he graduated and was a star on the football and track teams at Syracuse. Cliff Anderson's father operated a bus line from Hancock to Cadosia but they later moved to some town near Buffalo and opened up a road side restaurant. The last I knew Cliff was still running it. Don Guild stayed in Hancock working in various jobs and I understand he also died several years ago. I don't know what happened to Russell Keery.

We used to skate at Busfield's Pond in the winter and play hockey. I already mentioned the basketball teams I played on. This was the game I liked best and played first on a "midget" team which played as preliminaries before the main games of either the high school or town teams. The crowd seemed to enjoy our spirit and aggressive play and it developed some good players. I played for four years on the High School team. We also used to have bobsleds which held about six riders. We iced a path after school on the hill in Back Street which ran from the school down hill to the point where it



Backstreet in 1909

flattened out. There was a real sharp turn by the Hancock Herald building at the foot of the hill. The sleds reached maximum speed at this point and many did not always negotiate it and ended up overturned in a ditch. As I look back, I really feel that kids brought up in a rural community have more varied and wholesome fun than those in cities, especially large ones.

World War I Years: I was graduated from High School in 1917 and although I was only average in my studies was elected President of the Class. There were only about twelve members in the graduating class as I recall. World War I was on and several of the boys had enlisted who would have graduated. I became 18 years of age on August 18th and thus became eligible for the draft. I applied for the Student Army Training Corps (SATC) at Pratt Institute a small college in Brooklyn, NY. It was a two-year school with a good course in chemical engineering in which I was interested having done so well in chemistry at Hancock High. Cliff Anderson, Russell Keery, Bill Schultz and my cousin Leo Ford also applied. We had to pass the school entrance exam first then the army physical which we all did and were inducted into the army.

There was confusion right from the start. The military commander (a 60 day wonder from Officers Training Corp and a dentist in civilian life) insisted on more military exercise and of course the professors insisted on more study. I was majoring in chemistry and our work in the lab was constantly interrupted by bugles blasting out mustering everyone out for drills. It just about drove the Dean and his staff crazy but it was actually a military post as far as the Captain was concerned and he really enjoyed wielding his power.

We were in regular rooming houses on campus for several weeks and just before Thanksgiving a severe flu epidemic hit the students. I was unlucky enough to get it bad and ran a very high temperature for several days. It left me very weak so I was given a 10-day leave to go home to recuperate. It was amazing how quickly I improved once I was home! While I was on leave, uniforms were finally issued and members of the SATC were finally issued and members of the SATC were transferred to an old marine barracks near the Brooklyn Navy Yard but still fairly close to the college. I did not know this, arrived in Brooklyn about 11 pm on my return and of course went directly to my room a couple girls had already moved in and let out a scream when I opened the door and turned on the lights. The landlady came rushing out in her nightgown and informed me what had happened during my absence. When I arrived at the barracks I was challenged by the guard and after identifying myself was taken to the section where the squad I had been assigned to was located. I undressed and crawled into my army cot completely confused and also very tired. It seemed like I had barely gotten to sleep when the bugles sounded for reveille. I was told to get into to formation for the roll call and my civilian attire cause quite a commotion and need for further explanation. Things were finally straightened out and I was issued one of the most ill fitting uniforms imaginable. It took a couple weeks to get half decent outfit.

The war ended on November 11, 1818 and having actually learned nothing about chemistry. I decided to leave after the spring semester and back to look for a job.

At Home After the War: I loafed around for quite a while after returning to Hancock and the got a job as oiler for the unloading and reloading machinery at the O&W facility in Cadosia.



The engineer who ran the operation was a character by the name of Bill Davis. He had a stump for a left arm and was quite a heavy drinker. He would frequently regale me with stories of brawls he had had in barrooms. It seems he would get into a fight and when the opponent was looking for his right, he would ram the stump of his left arm into his stomach and knock the wind out of him.

My job was to oil certain parts of the equipment every hour and between times I would frequently run the machinery which was a large chain of buckets on a conveyor which could be bought up to a huge pile of coal and dumped it into the coal cars when loading. One day the coal pile was slightly frozen and one of the laborers was up on the high side to loosen it up. I was running the conveyor while Bill was snoozing at the time and I saw the man lose his footing and slide down the pile towards the moving buckets just in time to manipulate the levers and draw the conveyor back so the man was not caught in it. It scared me and from then on I stuck to what I was paid to do, oil the machinery.

As I noted above, Bill Davis was a typical small town character. I just recalled another anecdote about him which bears this out.

Bill played a bass horn in the local band. I also played the clarinet in the band. We rehearsed every Monday night in Fireman's Hall and snacks and beer were served after the rehearsal. Bill always told stories and used very profane language a large part of the time.

One night a local minister who played a trumpet asked to sit in a rehearsal. When the snacks and beer appeared he stuck around for quite a while until he seemed to sense that his presence caused some tension and after thanking the leader and the band for the privilege of sitting in he left. Poor Bill, who did not dare to open his mouth,

The place where I worked was about 5 miles from Hancock so I had quite a walk. I had to be there at 7 am to blow the whistle to start the men which meant getting up at 5:30am every day except Sunday. It was also tough walking in snow and subzero temperature in the winter. So, although the pay was good I finally gave it up and got my old job back at Wheelock's Drug Store. In time, however, as I was now 20 years old I yearned for an opportunity to get out into the world.

One day a friend of mine, Lewis Taylor, drove the company car (an Oakland touring car)



for which he was working in Binghamton down to Hancock for a weekend. He was several years older than I but had played basketball as center on the high school, Big 5 (town team) and also the American Legion team. I was on the latter team with him. He told me that the company he was with in Binghamton was the "1900 Washer Co" and had a team in the Industrial League. He had played on the team the previous season and told me that I could make the team easily and that he would arrange an interview if I was interested in coming to Binghamton. I took him up on his offer and got a job in the cost department. So I was finally on my own and away from Hancock and home. This was in June 1920 and I was 21 in August.

My Years in Binghamton: Binghamton NY does not seem to be very well known by many in the Midwest. It is a city of about 75,000 population. Together with Johnson City and Endicott there must be a population of well over 100,000. The three cities are referred to as the Triple Cities. It is located in the southern part of the state is about 75 miles from Syracuse and about the same distance from Scranton, Pa. The Susquehanna and Chemung rivers converge near the city and frequently flood certain areas. My brother John's house as flooded one year. It was a mess.

One of the principle industries there is the Endicott-Johnson Shoe Company with plants in Johnson City and Endicott. The company was founded by George F Johnson who was ahead of his time in helping the workers finance homes which were built by the

company, instituted one of the earliest bonus systems, created a huge park, swimming pool and auditorium for dances and concerts. He also built a baseball park in Johnson City called Johnson Field and eventually became a NY Yankee farm club called the "Triplets". The park was beautifully lighted for night games. One of his greatest contributions to encourage the loyalty of his employees was the building of a complete hospital for free medical care for all employees.

Other manufacturing plants along with the "1900 Washer Co" were the International Time Recording Co (now International Business Machines Co) at Endicott, Dunn-McCarthy Shoe Co, Ansco Film Co, Kroehler Manufacturing, Fairbanks-Morse Co and many lesser-known firms. Almost all of these concerns had basketball teams in the Industrial League. I was leading scorer for the first half of the season and we won the championship that year- 1920-1921 season!

Before I get in to my personal career with the company, I would like to cover its history as I remember it. The firm was founded by TB Crary who came originally from Hancock where his father owned a tannery, which furnished hides to the Endicott & Johnson Co. My father worked in the tannery years before he was married. Mr. Crary had a man named "Doc" Christian who was quite old and not very active when I came with the company in 1920 but apparently was a major shareholder. Mr Crary had a son, Gifford, who was a real playboy and married to a society girl. He thought more about expensive and flashy automobiles than work. The company was organized in 1899 to manufacture a washing machine called the "Gravity Washer". It was a crude affair, hand operated by rotating the wooden tub back and forth. The washing action was created by an agitator attached to the hinged tub. It looked like an inverted milk stool and contrary to modern washers the tub moved and the "agitator" remained stationary. It was really quite efficient and was the first step away from the conventional washtub and scrub board. It also had a hand-operated wringer with hard rubber rolls attached. It sold mostly by mail orders for \$1.00 down and retailed as I recall for around \$20.00. Despite the low deposit I understand that 98% were paid for on easy terms. I remember an article appeared in the "American" magazine citing the fact that from the "1900 Washer" experience 98% of the people were honest!

The "dolly" type agitator design was discontinued on later models which were operated electrically when fractional horsepower motors were developed in about 1910. This model superseded about the time of World War I by the famous "Cataract" washer which had a large copper tub, nickel plated on the inside and rocked back and forth in an oscillating motion. The tub had step like ribs formed in the bottom which caused the clothes to be thrown about vigorously in a figure 8 motion as the tub moved back and forth on rocker arms attached to the cast iron frame. The ribs in the bottom also caused a gently "scrub board" effect. This model was in production in 1920 along with a smaller capacity model called the "Junior Cataract". The dealers were supplied with an animated window display showing a woman sitting in a chair sewing while the Cataract rocked back and forth. A card had the slogan "She sits and sews while the washer goes". It was really an effective display.

It was superseded in the late '20's by a new design with a round copper tub with a single vane (blade) agitator in a recessed area in the bottom of the tub and a metal wringer. This model was very well received by the dealers. One large distributor of Maytag Washers and Eureka Vacuum Cleaners, the Cass Appliance Co of Schenectady, NY contracted for the model to carry their own brand name. It was called the "Cass Washer". The company expanded all through the state in all the major cities and

eventually bought at the rate of 200 units per day. Another distributor took on the machine in Wilkes Barre, Pa. known as the "Whitenight Washer" (the name of the company) and a third distributor in Boston (the Graham Co) contracted for the machine under their name also. All of these companies expanded too fast, could not finance the paper and went broke in the late '20's. "1900" then established their own retail stores in Syracuse, Buffalo, Elmira, Pittsburgh, Pa, Cleveland, Ohio and Detroit, Michigan to maintain sufficient volume to keep the plant operating efficiently. Their stories were liquidated later on when new dealers and distributors were established but the volume of sales did not equal what it was in the days of Cass, Whitenight and Graham.

I believe the next development was around 1930. The newly designed model had a porcelain enamel tub, three vane agitator with agitator post to overcome seal leaks which showed up in the single vane design in the raised the seals and bearings above the water level and eliminated the leaky seal problem immediately. This was basically the model in production when the merger with the Upton Machine Co took place in 1930. It was therefore the design for the Sears model made at the Binghamton Plant.

Mr Crary died before I had been with the company more than three months. I remember when I was first on the job. I was at my typewriter when Mr Crary walked in and said "you must be "Whitehead" Ford's boy. He remembered my dad as having worked in his father's tannery in Hancock. My father had a cousin whose name was also Michael Ford and he had black hair. So to keep them properly identified my dad was called "Whitehead" and the other Mike as called "Blackhead". My hair was very blonde in my youth. Mr Crary told my new boss, Joe Tessier, to make a good businessman out of me. Too bad he could not have lived longer to see how I made out but he contracted pneumonia on a business trip and died suddenly.

Mr Crary's death soon brought about a drastic change in management of "1900". After his death, the Crary interests were taken over by Maynard Murch, Co an investment house in Cleveland, Ohio and First National Bank of Binghamton headed by Ray Gaffney. A new management team of Tom Behen and Bob Quinn from the General Electric Co Fort Wayne, Indiana were brought in as President and Vice-President. Mr Quinn was in charge of sales. Fred Fink was hired as chief accountant from I believe the Massey Harris Tractor Co in Fergus, Ont, Canada which were licensed to manufacture "1900" products in Canada. Joe Tessier, who was my first boss was brought in to develop an up to date cost department from the General Electric Co in Schenectady. Other executives and men who I remember were W G Trowbridge, Secy and Treasurer, Charles Truesdale, Credit Manager, Geo Col, Morris Meckenford (and my next door neighbor) Charley Hayden were on the books and payroll, Geo Davis was the factory Supt, Les Wilson production manager, Herman Doughty, Chief Engineer, Tom McManus machine shop foreman, Carl Lockwood (also a former GE man) Tool Shop Foreman and Clair (Pinky) Guild from Hancock, foreman of Final Assembly and Testing. My good friend Louis Taylor ran the Receiving Dept and Fred Corey was the shipping clerk. This last probably means nothing except a test of my memory.

As mentioned I was hired to assist Joe Tessier as a cost clerk. It was a tremendous experience as background for acquiring knowledge of cost structuring when I later became a buyer at Sears. After a few years of this job I was transferred to the sales department as assistant to Ed Ruth. I handled acknowledgement of orders and correspondence with the dealers and salesmen. I also worked on the monthly, weekly, and daily product schedules with the factory and checked daily on shipments to make sure the promised shipping dates were met. I held that position when the merger with the

Upton Machine Co, St Joseph, Michigan took place. It immediately complicated the scheduling with the addition of Sears models.

There is an interesting story concerning the time before and after the merger mentioned. The Upton Machine Co in St Joseph was founded in 1915. I believe by Louis C Upton and his brother Frederick. The Uptons were raised in LaGrange and lived for years at the corner of Goodman and Waiola. Mr Upton was a salesman for the old Federal Electric Co (now Commonwealth Edison) in Chicago and became interested in a working machine invented I believe by a relative. Lou and Fred decided to put it on the market and set up operations at St. Joseph, Mich in a plant which also made air rifles. Mr Upton took over the sales responsibilities and Fred handled the manufacturing and also the financial end of the enterprise. When the product was ready for the market, Lou approached Sears Roebuck & Co and persuaded them to list it in the catalog. I understand the initial order was for 500 units and as is so frequently the case in any mechanical product serious defects showed up and returns were quite heavy. The problem was taken care of quickly enough to keep the customers satisfied and Upton Machine Co (now Whirlpool Corp) has been the sole supplier of washing machines for Sears ever since.

When Sears started to open up retail stores in 1925 the demand increased fast and the need for additional manufacturing facilities became quite evident. By this time the 1900 Washer Co was supplying the Upton firm with wringers and through this connection Mr Upton and Tom Behan of "1900" started negotiations which resulted in the two companies merging in 1930. The name of the corporation was changed to Nineteen Hundred Corporation for some reason I do not recall.

I became very fond of the personnel from the St Joseph Plant and also the Sears people who gradually started coming to visit the Binghamton plant. My main contact at St Joseph was Les Newman on the scheduling of Sears orders. Their Chief Engineer, Ed Geldhof who had come to the Upton Machine Co from Easy Washing Machine Co at Syracuse, NY and who I was destined to work with very closely when I became the buyer at Sears when he developed the automatic washer particularly was always cordial and friendly and I had instant respect for his engineering talent. Both Lou and Fred Upton always spent some time with me on their visits as well as John Hurley who was working closely with the Sears stores on sales training, advertising, displays, etc. Little did I know then that he would become the supervisor of Dept 626 and that I would be working for him a few years later. I was also very impressed with the buyer from Sears a former Virginia gentleman named Charles Ross whom I was also destined to succeed years hence. All these men sold me completely on Sears and their method of working closely with factories the bought from.

On the other side of the coin, the Binghamton top executive, particularly Behan and Quinn never did get to understand or like Sears's methods. They also insisted on my giving preference to the dealer's orders when a large backlog developed. To put it mildly things got pretty sticky. This situation in addition to other top management problems of which I am not fully aware, caused the Upton and Sears interests to garner enough stockholders support to force the Binghamton top management out and Lou Upton took over management of the company. This occurred as I remember in about 1935. I remember that John Hurley was in Binghamton on the day of the momentous directors meeting and told me at lunch what was going to happen.

He also told me that Mr Upton was fond of me personally and the cooperation I had always given both the St Joseph Plant and Sears. Lou called me in Behan's old

office the very next day and confirmed what John had said. Naturally I was relieved and very happy after although there was naturally a lot of concern among many employees as to where they stood. As I recall, however, there actually were not too many changes made outside of Behan and Quinn. Behan never came back to his office and Quinn resigned a short time later. John Hurley took over as sales manager of both Sears and outside dealer sales. I was actually his assistant as I took over the contact with some of the distributors and the contact with some of the distributors and made occasional visits in the field. I also initiated a deal with the American Steel Export Co of NYC to handle "1900" Washers for export. This account had given us a lot of business and was the start of the present important export division of Whirlpool.

It was not long before a man by the name of Dick Sullivan was hired to look after management affairs at Binghamton. He had previously been manager of the Chicago Stadium which was in receivership at the time. His wife had her mother with them at their home in Benton Harbor, Mich so Dick rented an apartment and a housekeeper on the south side near where we lived. It was a nice set up for other people who came from Binghamton occasionally from the St Joseph Division. I believe this was in 1935.

I was accustomed to driving home to lunch occasionally and Sullivan would also lunch in his apartment from time to time. One day we were on the way home in my car when he started to choke violently and then slumped forward in a dead faint. I rushed him to the nearest doctor I could think of about 7 blocks away and got him to come out and see what was wrong. The doctor said "this man is dead" but then Sullivan let out a weird sounding gasp and we carried him into the office. That had been his last gasp however and he was dead when we got him inside. It really shook me up terribly and when I arrived at our apartment Betty remarked that I looked like a ghost. I called Mr Upton and received instructions to bring the body to St Joseph after it was taken care of by the undertaker. The plant superintendent, Geo Davis went along with me and he was a nervous wreck so we were both in nearly as bad shape as the man in the coffin. It was a sad journey and particularly difficult when I had to relate the complete story to the widow. I told her that Dr Bloom said that he had a massive coronary blockage and that he could not have saved him even had he been in the car with him. He also wrote Mrs Sullivan to confirm my story at my request when I got home. It was very ironic that he had been to St Luke's Hospital in Chicago for a complete checkup the previous month. It was also ironic that he remarked to me one day when we were discussing a death that he hoped he would go at the height of his career. He was 49 years old and probably had a brilliant future with the company so he got his wish a little prematurely! Mr Sullivan was not replaced because I am sure that plans were already under way to eventually close the Binghamton Plant and concentrate all production at an expanded modern facility at St Joseph.

My Marriage and Social Life in Binghamton: When I first started on my job in the cost department I was very soon favorably impressed by an attractive and extremely pleasant young girl whose name was Betty Thatcher. She was working on the factory payroll and everyone seemed to like her. Lou Taylor who I have already mentioned was the one who was instrumental in getting me at "1900" was always coming into the office and talking with Betty a lot so I assumed they had something going. One day he asked me to double date with Betty and a friend. I assumed that the friend would be my date and was quite concerned as to what she would be like. Lou had the company Oakland car that night and we picked up Betty and her friend Bea Smith at Betty's brother Lynn's

house where she was staying since her parents had bought a farm and moved there a year or so before. Now comes the big surprise. Betty was my date instead of Lou's so I was delighted. We drove out to the country to visit her folks and this was the beginning of two years of regular dating and Betty was the only girl I ever did date in Binghamton. We both liked to dance, go to movies regularly and have ice cream sodas or sundaes afterwards. She was a loyal fan of our basketball team and never missed a game which I am sure helped bring out the best me.

We became engaged by the end of the first year but decided to save enough for at least the down payment on furniture before we married. We were finally married on June 14, 1923 in the rectory of St Mary's Catholic Church in Binghamton. It was not easy in those days to get the blessing of the church to marry outside the faith but I did it. We decided on my cousin Leo Ford with whom I was rooming at the YMCA as best man and Betty's best girl friend, Gertrude Meyer (who was Mr Behan's private secretary at the time) to stand for us with none of the family present since it was not a real church wedding. We had a wedding breakfast at the Hans Jones Restaurant, the best in town, and left by train in the afternoon for a week's honeymoon at Syracuse, NY about 75 miles from Binghamton. We then set up housekeeping at an apartment at 2 Dickinson St which was within walking distance from the factory or we could take a street car only a block away if we wished. My brother John came to Binghamton shortly afterwards and roomed with us for several months. He worked as office manager of Cloverdale Farms Milk Co, married Tess Hansmann a year later and ended up with IBM at Endicott. He later transferred to Elmira, NY with Sperry Rand Corp as a computer programmer and office manager until he retired six years ago.

Betty worked at "1900" for five years before our first child, a girl who we planned to name Janice was born but to our great sorrow she was still born. After a few months Betty went to back to work at "1900" this time on the books in the front office. It was 5 more years before Nancy was born on October 19, 1932. We were very happy that she was a healthy child until she had a serious mastoid infection when she was about 2 ½ years old. They operated behind both ears and she nearly died since there were no antibiotics in those days. It took nearly two years for the wound to really heal and it was quite a worry for both of us.

When Nancy was born we were living in her brother Harry's apartment; a two bedroom flat and also had her father with us. Her mother had passed away the year before. When Nancy was a little over a year old, Betty's dad had a stroke so Harry who was a bachelor moved to the Elk's Club. She three other brothers all older than she; Roy who was Sheriff of Broome County, Roy who was a locomotive engineer and Lynn who was a cigar maker in a local cigar factory until he opened a grocery store a few years later only a few blocks from where we lived. Arly and Roy had no children and Lynn and his wife had two girls, Rita and Helen Gene. All the sons visited them visited their father faithfully until he died a couple years later. We then settled down to a much more normal life after two hectic years, until of course Nancy had her illness less than a year later. I forgot to mention that Betty's father had been a baggage agent on the Lackawanna Railroad for Binghamton, NY for about 35 years and for a few years at the "1900" factory after he retired from the railroad. He was working when I started with the company in 1920 welding the copper tubes.

Our Friends in Binghamton:

When we were first married our closest friends were Walter and Helen Forse. Betty and Helen had been friends since childhood. Walter was the football coach at Binghamton Central High School for several years before he became a field executive for the Boy Scouts. They moved first to Norwich, NY then to Poughkeepsie and finally to Montclair, NJ when he ended up in National Headquarters in New York City. We spent many pleasant weekends visiting them at their various homes and always left them with a sort of homesick feeling. They both died within the last 10 years.

As time went by our closest friends were Dr Earl Allen and his wife Florence (Doc was a dentist and also came from Hancock where his father had been a medical doctor and brought me into the world.) Dr Charles Marshall, an obstetrician and his wife Mildred, Frank and Marie Clark (he was a school teacher) Jack and Mildred Bloomer (he ran a business college founded by his father) and my brother John and his wife Tess. We used to play bridge a lot, went to dances at "The Monday Afternoon Club" to which the Allen's belonged and in the summer we drove down to Oquaga Lake about 30 miles from Binghamton on Saturday nights to dance at Scott's Casino. They always had a good dance band from New York City and it was a real fine summer resort in the mountains.

We also had fun with Jim and Mary Corbett and Roger and Clare Tyne with whom we had pot luck dinners and played penny ante poker a lot. They had a lot of Irish wit and there were lots of laughs. I played golf with Roger and Jim after 7 o'clock mass on Sundays in the summer at the municipal course called Ely Park a beautiful hilly course on the top of a mountain. Incidentally I also played there Saturday mornings in the season with a foursome from the office. It was at this time that I got hooked on the game which was been such an important part of my life ever since.

It is sad to realize that all of the above men except my brother John and Jim Corbett have passed away. Doc Allen and Doc Marshall died in their early 50's. Frank Clark about 5 years ago and Jack Bloomer and Roger Tyne this past year. Their wives are still around except Marie Clark and Florence Allen but a few of them are in pretty bad shape physically. All of Betty's brothers are also gone so she is the only one left. Since Harry, Arly and Roy had no children and Lynee had daughters only, the Thatcher name is no longer carried on.

Our Move to LaGrange:

I was very satisfied with my work and home life in Binghamton but this suddenly changed one day in the Spring of 1930 by a phone call from John Hurley. He informed me that the Binghamton plant was going to be closed in a couple of years and suggested that I transfer to St Joseph where I would be his assistant. He was the sales manager at the time of the outside line which was called the Cataract Washer. "1900" Washer Company's old brand name revived, and sold to distributors or in the case of the Allied Stores; the "Allied" washer. I told John that the only reservation I had was losing with contact with Sears but he convinced me that it was really all one company and that I would really have a better and more interesting job. I decided to give it a try and took a trip out to St Joseph to look for a house. I made arrangements with a St Joseph bank to finance it and had an option to buy the home of the former plant manager Gus Keil who died recently and the widow wanted to sell. It was a beautiful brick ranch house just outside of the city and quite near Lake Michigan. Betty liked the idea of moving to St Joe if we had to move anywhere because several of our friends, the Woosters, Guilds, Lockwoods, Pankeys, Kings and Morgansterns had already been transferred there.

We gave up our apartment as of July 1 as I recall and had our furniture placed in storage until we could finalize the purchase of the house in St Joe. The day before we scheduled to leave we went back to the apartment to make a final check and while there the phone rang. It was Bud Gray informing me that there had been a change in plans. Sears was going to start an inventory control system which meant quitting monthly reports of sales and inventories by models from all the stores and controlling the scheduling of production and releasing of all orders through Chicago. Bud said that Sears had suggested me for the job in view of my experience in factory scheduling and contact with the Sears stores. He also said that Lou Upton wanted me to take the position.

Both Betty and I were sick at the thought of moving to Chicago instead of St Joe and I disliked starting with a new company after being with Whirlpool for 19 years. After a long discussion on the phone Bud suggested that we leave our furniture in storage and drive out to St Joe to talk it over. After two weeks of soul searching while staying at the old Whitcomb Hotel and being assured by Mr Upton personally that if it did not work out in six months I would be given an equally good job at the factory, I decided to give it a try. Whirlpool paid part of my salary for several months of 1939 to assure me of a small pension at age 65 for 20 years of service. Mr Upton suggested LaGrange for a residence because of his knowledge of the community having spent his boyhood and youth there. We rented a house from a widow Mrs Marshall at 11 Brewster Ave in LeGrange Park. It was a four bedroom house with a coal burning furnace and very comfortable. The rent was \$75 a month which was \$40 more than we paid in Binghamton so there went half of my \$75 raise. Someone recommended coke as cleaner than soft coal and I burned out a set of grates before I found out how to regulate the heat since coke gives out much more heat than coal and the dampers have to be used more frequently. I believe the move took place July 1, 1939. There was not much activity in the churches, Emmanuel Episcopal on St Francis where we registered Nancy for the second grade until the schools opened up in September. It was very lonesome for us especially Betty who was home all alone all day and we became very homesick and little dissatisfied about the whole move. The situation improved when Betty met some great people at Emmanuel through her circle. The first couple we socialized with was Tat and Newell Anson. They had moved from a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio to Western Springs about the same time. Newell was warehouse manager for BG Goodrich in Chicago. We enjoyed bridge and golf which we played at the old Acacia Country Club. We took out a family membership for \$100 per season. Tat and Betty played with us occasionally for twilight golf and we had lots of fun. They had a daughter Molly who was Nancy's age and the kids became fast friends also. Their son John was about four years older and an excellent student. Other couples we saw a lot of were Earl and Alice Kruse, Alma and Leo Swenson, Clair and Florence Goodsell, Dorothy and Leo DeNoot and as the years passed many others in the Friday Nighters social group at Emmanuel Church.

My work at Sears also became more interesting as I became more adjusted there. I had to spend a couple of days at the factory each week to review orders and schedules which broke up the monotony of driving into Chicago every day. During the summer I would plan to drive over on Thursday and take Betty and Nancy along so we could also stay there for the weekend. We of course had some of our friends from Binghamton there to visit and we used to have picnics on the beach. This arrangement really helped us get adjusted the first summer before we knew anybody in LaGrange.

At the time I came with Sears Washing Machines, Refrigerators and Stoves were in Dept 622. Herman C Price, a real merchant and wonderful person was the Supervisor. CC Dick Choyce was the Retail Sales Manager with a couple of assistants. Bob Upton, son of Lou Upton was recently graduated from the University of Chicago was also in the department. He was there to learn the Sears operation before joining the factory organization. I had met Bob before in Binghamton while he was still in college. He was a big help to me and we saw a lot of each other. One night he brought his fiancée Mary Letty Greene of Chicago out to the house and another night former All American football star Jay Berwanger and Ernie Dix who was a salesman in Berwanger's business- Public Products out to our home. They were all in the same class at the University. When Bob was married in the Bond Chapel on the campus, Betty and I attended the wedding and reception. I believe this was in 1940. I don't remember all the buyers names but Charley Ross as the washing machine buyer. Ed Tullis (General Woods' son in law) bought the refrigerators and an old timer Tim Callans a real character was one of the stove buyers. JC Lotus who was to become a real friend through thick and thin was the merchandise controller. His assistant was Art Hammond. Jerry Lotus was a great help to me not only in getting to know Sears operation but also helping me design the inventory and sales reports and inventory record cards by store and mart order houses. He also gave me some very interesting information about the early days of the department and the people involved. It occurs to me that Hugh Plumber who was eventually to become Quality Control Manager in Dept 626 was also transferred to Dept 622 from retail in 1938.

I will never forget my first office Christmas Party that year. It was a tradition that each new member would have to give a speech and Lotus gave me a big buildup about its importance in make a good impression. It was also a tradition for one person to be singled out for unmerciful heckling. It turned out to be Art Lovell that year. He had just succeeded Tullis as refrigerator buyer and had prepared a masterful speech. He started out with "when I was a little boy" and then all the telephones in the offices began to ring as planned and he was interrupted while each person went to his purportedly to answer the calls. When he finally started again right from the beginning people started dropping waste baskets, shuffling chairs, etc so he stopped until they quieted down. When he finally started again, Dick Choyce go up and again and said "I've heard enough of this" and walked out of the room followed by the rest of those in on the act. Art was furious and when they cam back and sat down he told them emphatically that he had spent hours on this speech and was going to give it even if everybody left the room. He was then allowed to continue and gave a real good talk. Jerry told me afterwards that I was to be the goat if Lowell did not show up for some reason.

The day after this party we left for Binghamton for the holidays with a good feeling about LaGrange and Sears people. When we returned we were no longer homesick for Binghamton.

The more I worked on the project the more interesting it became. Bud Troy worked out a mathematical formula for projecting future sales by models for three months ahead I can remember now what it was but it worked and with the sales and inventory figures by stores available our plans synchronizing production and sales began to work quite efficiently. This made me feel I had done my part successfully. Our social life in LaGrange was greatly enhanced by steadily increasing our circle of friends. Nancy was doing well at St Francis School and she too had made many friends including the Kueba girls Jackie and Janice. The family lived directly behind us and Tony and Val became friends as I will cover later.

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