

# BAPPY KEE: A Life So Far

And a little about his ancestors, siblings, relatives, friends, and not nearly enough about his wives and descendants.

**By Mary Floyd**

**Illustrated with Family Pictures**

**An Unauthorized Biography**

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Mary, Keating and Picot Floyd, props.

## Disclaimer

Don't blame me. I haven't lived this life -- Barry has.

In the story, what I couldn't remember, I guessed. And when I couldn't guess, I got creative. When you see quotation marks, you know I'm kidding. How could anybody remember exact quotes for 60 or 70 years? Well, a few things are unforgettable, but I didn't say "cartoon" and I only said "bitch" once. And never once did I say "four spades."

When Barry argues various points, remember that my memory is bad but his is worse. I've got to give him credit for remembering his own life better than I do, though.

I had only the information I could remember -- and my brain is getting calcified. Barry and Harty and the daughters read proofs and made notes for me. Honest, folks, this is a lot like it really was. And it's as good as it's going to get.

As far as the illustrations are concerned, I can think of lots I'd like to include -- but I had only the few pictures that Betty and Harty accidentally left when they took the famous traveling suitcase full of photos. And I'd like to thank Keating and Picot for making the most of them. After the editing, Barry lent us a few more to include.

Love,

Mary



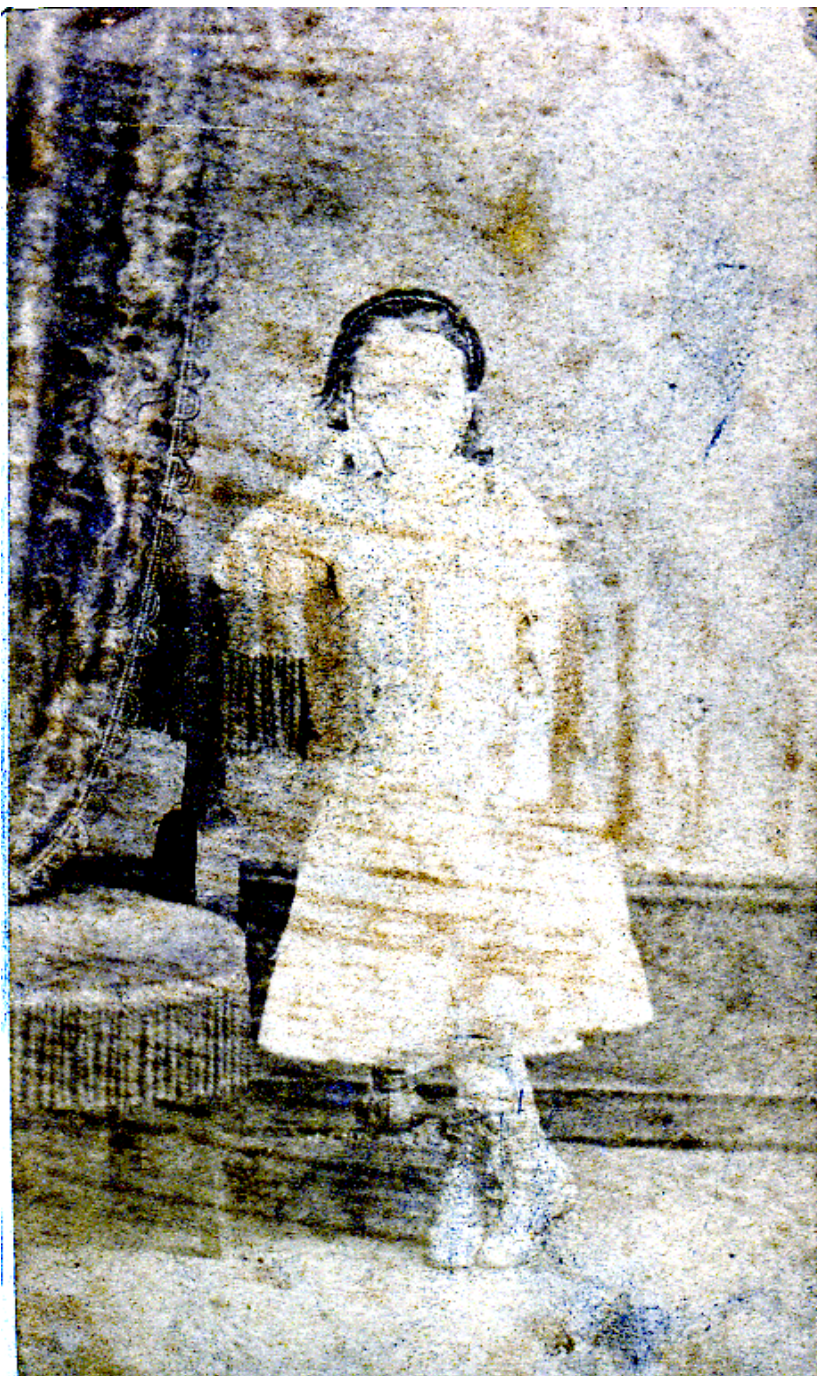
## Chapter I

### Antecedents



**Eustace Bellinger Pinckney and Martha Porcher They started it all...**

When Martha Porcher and Eustace Bellinger Pinckney were married around the time of the Civil War [*you could look it up*], they really started something. We will follow only one of their children, Julia Pinckney, and only one of Julia's sons, James Michael Keating, who married Marcella Harty on the 27th of June, 1925, James' 28<sup>th</sup> birthday. We will follow only one of Marcella and James's sons, William Barry Keating. History is like that. We find the people we're interested in and drop all the rest.



**Mary Agnes Mullarky about 1872**





**John Francis Harty, about 1900**

James could not have known that his life would be intertwined with that of the Mullarky family in Augusta, Georgia. Their darling daughter, Mary [called Mamie], had been quite spoiled. It's hard to imagine spoiling eight or nine daughters, but the Mullarky family managed it. If the house still stands, it was at 913 Green Street in Augusta. They must have doubled up in the bedrooms because it wasn't a huge house. Or is it eight daughters [six by the first wife] and three children by the second wife, who was the sister – in the Irish custom -- of the late first

wife, then two girls and a boy, Austin – Uncle Gus?, the baby. Not much baby, he was in the Spanish-American War. Mary, the first or second daughter[?], was born on 23 March 1867.

Mary married John Francis Harty in the early 1890s [you look it up] in the social event of the year, according to the Augusta papers, which also noted that her gown was from Worth in Paris. From that union, the girl that James was to marry, Marcella Harty, was born in Savannah on September 17, 1898, a little over a year after James was born on June 27, 1897. Marcella's older brother, John, introduced her on her first pram-ride in the park as "Ma Hitta Hitta MaHobbit," translated: "My Little Sister Marcella."

Again, we will follow only one line, their daughter Marcella, and only one of Marcella's sons, William Barry Keating. We go for the high-interest people in this biography.

## **Somewhere along the way**

But we will pause briefly here and there along the way to see if we can learn where Barry got many of his characteristics, including his charm and his great view of life as an adventure, his ability to plan and focus and his rollicking sense of fun.

In James' line, Julia Pinckney and her sister lived in the country, near little Bluffton, South Carolina, and were not taught to read or write as children. Their father, although he had gone to St. John's College in New York [later Fordham University], believed that education was unnecessary for women. Their job was

to have babies, cook and clean house, not to sit around reading books.

Barry's daughters adore their Daddy, but they would have killed him or at least maimed him severely if he'd tried that.

## **A man of the West**

You know the story about Olaf Keating, who left Ireland because the English “wanted to put a string around my neck,” don’t you? He brought his wife Joanna [Johanna?] and their three children, James, Mary and Padraig [Patrick] Geoffrey, from Cork in the dead of night when the British came after him.

At \$5 a person, the ship from Cork cost \$25, a fortune in poor Ireland in 1872. As one of the few Irish who could read and write English, he was made bookkeeper and paymaster for the workers who were building the railroad to the west, heading from Louisville, Kentucky, to the Golden Spike that would be driven in as east-bound and west-bound tracks met [it was hard, they almost didn’t meet] in Colorado. We will follow only one of them, of course.

The young Irish immigrant from beautiful Cahirciveen in the west of Ireland, on the Atlantic Ocean in County Kerry, Patrick Keating, came to Savannah about 1888 from Louisville, Kentucky, where he, his brother James and sister Mary had settled with their parents when they came from Ireland. Patrick wanted to seek his fortune closer to the sea. He had been doing day labor for the railroad and felt he would know more about boats and fishing than railroading.

*[If you wonder why a beautiful town has such an ungainly name, we must tell you that Cahirciveen means "Queen's Castle." Cahir for castle, Civeen for the queen – same as Siobhan, all in a language strange to our ears called Gaelic, or Celtic.. And should you wonder where the castle is, look over the edge of the cliff down into the Atlantic and you will see the huge blocks of stone in the ocean far below.]*

By chance, Patrick selected for his residence the home of the Davis family. Bachelor Arthur Davis and his spinster sisters, bossy Carrie and sweet Ella, ran a boarding house on Gordon Street with their parents. *[I think it was the same house at 115 East Gordon, which Marcella's Uncle Willie Harty later bought and where Marcella and James Keating were married, and which James' sister Julia Keating O'Brien and her husband, Thomas O'Brien, later bought.]* Now to Julia Lynch Pinckney:

Julia and her sister Lizzie went to Savannah from Bluffton occasionally for a few days to visit the Davises, family friends. Patrick, whose father had been a schoolteacher in Ireland, was dazzled by the charm and beauty of these young women visiting the house. Then he learned that the lovely Pinckney girls were virtually illiterate.

He was horrified. Patrick insisted upon setting up a school in the drawing room at the Davises on Gordon Street to teach them without their father's knowledge or consent but with the enthusiastic backing of the Davis family.

*[Barry inherited that love of teaching people. Sometimes he gets positively insistent about it, like his grandfather was.]*

Soon Patrick was crazy in love with what he said was his youngest and prettiest pupil, Julia, who was only 15 years old. Within two years, Patrick had persuaded Julia's father to let him marry her.

*[Barry also fell in love with a beautiful 15-year-old girl and never gave her up. And he must have inherited that ability to talk to the father of the girl he loves. He somehow persuaded Johnny Alberino that he could take care of Joan.]*

Julia and Patrick had six children who survived and one who did not. That baby and the oldest daughter, Kathleen Mavourneen *[ah, the Irish sentimentality comes through in the poetic, musical name of his eldest child]*, are buried at Calhoun Plantation. Julia, James and Eugene are buried in Savannah, Patrick in Charleston. One of the children, Paul, the second son, born in 1904, survived until 1993, living in Maryland with his younger daughter, Kathleen. Picot and I went to Orlando to see Paul on his 83rd birthday and found him high in a pecan tree, pruning. He wasn't high, the tree was. He told us that you have to let the sun into pecan tress so the blossoms can open. Paul is buried in Orlando. *[Paul's middle name is given incorrectly as Pinckney in Daddy's (James Michael Keating's) obituary in the Savannah Morning News. My fault. He was understandably sensitive about it because of the strange acquisition of his brother Patrick's middle name.]*

James was Julia and Patrick's oldest son. James had two older sisters, Kathleen Mavourneen Keating [Kitty] Mew, who married Alfred Mew, and Julia Pinckney Keating O'Brien, who married Thomas O'Brien, and three younger brothers, Paul Porcher *[pronounced Puh-SHAY]*, who married Evangeline

Grimm, Patrick Joseph Jr. [Pat], who married Helen Collins, and John Eugene [Gene], who married Lucy Martin. You might think it odd that Patrick Jeffrey Keating [American] or Patrick Geoffrey Keating [Irish] might have a son named Patrick Joseph Keating Jr., but that could only be because you didn't know Julia. She didn't like the name Jeffrey and liked the name Geoffrey even less. She made sure that Patrick was out of town when they went to church for Baptism. Julia told the priest the boy's name was Patrick Joseph Jr. and that was the end of it.

*[As Mother used to say, Julia had a "whim of iron."  
Does Barry have one of those?]*

## **Turkey in the crate**

Again, we are following only one member of the family, James. He and his family lived in Savannah.

When James was about 10 years old, his mother, Julia, sent him downtown to the waterfront on a special errand. Her brother deSaussure [Dessie] was sending a turkey from Bluffton for Thanksgiving dinner and it would be on the wharf at about noon Wednesday. James was to bring the turkey home as fast as he could -- and not to dawdle on the fascinating Savannah waterfront.

From Barnard and 38th streets, where they lived, James walked barefoot to Bay and East Broad streets, then walked down the steep stone steps to the river. The **Louise**, the boat from Bluffton, docked there each day, unloaded freight and passengers, re-loaded and headed back to get to Bluffton, if the tide were right, before dark. Tides and weather generally



were much more important in people's lives back then.

The boat was on time and the turkey was very much alive, boarded up in a heavy wooden crate. James tried to pick up the crate, but it was too heavy even for a strong lad of ten.

The **Louise** was already loaded and leaving while he was still trying to pick up the crate. As the **Louise** pulled away from the wharf, James heard an older black man on the stern of the boat call out to a young man who had just run up but missed the boat.

## High tide

"Hey, boy! You know that gal you seen on the oyland this spring?" The young man breathlessly answered that he did. "Well, she give birt to a foin boy baby yestiddy on the tip top a' the hoy toyd!"

The young man was thrilled that his son had such an auspicious beginning for his life. Birth at high tide meant a long and lucky life in Gullah legend. And James never forgot the scene.

## Thanksgiving's coming

But he had a practical matter to attend to. The gobbler. What to do? He didn't dare go home turkeyless -- he loved to please his mother. Julia, while dear to James's heart, was a very stern mother and would not have approved.

Take the streetcar? If he could drag this heavy thing to the top of the bluff, the Bay streetcar would take him west to Barnard, where he could transfer to a

southbound car. But he had no money. He looked around to see if there were anybody he knew who would let him borrow a nickel, but the people on the wharf were all strangers. His mother would not like him to borrow, anyway -- and might not have a nickel to pay anybody back.

Finally, James decided on the only alternative he could think of: he dragged the crate up the bluff and home. It was late afternoon before he got back to Barnard Street. "You, Jim boy, what have you been doing? I told you to bring that turkey straight home!" she greeted him.

Julia was sure that James had gotten lost in the sights and sounds of the harbor. He explained that the weight of the turkey and crate had necessitated dragging it through the sandy streets of 1907 Savannah and stopping to rest occasionally. "You should've knocked the crate off and left it on the wharf!" she answered, practically.

*[Barry would have dragged the crate home, too -- because he would have wanted to make something out of the wood. But barefoot? He once had a pair of custom-made barefoot sandals, but he usually keeps his shoes on. In fact, always.]*

## **A gentle life on Gaston Street**

Marcella was a little girl in the same town, but her life was quite different. She certainly was not allowed to go outside barefoot. Her mother, toward the end of her days, occasionally babysat Marcella's children. In trying to persuade them to wear their slippers, Mamie told the Keating children that her own feet had never

touched the floor -- and the bottoms were as white as the tops, so maybe it was true.

Marcella loved to play with dolls, or "dawls" as her mother called them in her Augusta accent. Mamie also said 'Gawd' for God. Mother had the sound of Savannah in her talk, far more so than Daddy, although he had it too. *[And 'Mamie' was our grandmother name for Mary Mullarky Harty, mother's mother. She was a darling. Have I said that before? Probably, because she really was dear. She made pets of every one of the Keating children.]*

*[Maybe Barry has an accent, but I'm not qualified to judge because my accent is the worst one in the family. Too much Athens, Atlanta, New York, Washington and Florida. Where else have I lived? Oh, shut up! This book isn't about me.]*

Marcella and her brother, John Jr., lived with their parents, John and Mary Harty, on Gaston Street just two doors west of Bull Street, on Calhoun Square. The Hartys also had lost a baby [Angela, buried in Savannah] and had only two children. Marcella is buried in Savannah and John Jr. in Chicago, where he spent most of his adult life with his wife, Marie, and son John III, called Jack. Jack has spent most of his working life in London. *[John Harty Keating (called Harty) and John Harty III (called Jack) are named for the same grandfather.]*

The Harty children lived a far more protected life than the Keating children. Mamie and Marcella got dressed for morning callers [11 a.m. to noon] and again, after midday dinner, for afternoon callers [3 to 4 p.m.] Then they dressed for supper. It was a busy day, although servants did most of the work.

## A touch of style

*[Mamie had a passion for fashion, and Marcella was another fashion victim. Barry certainly is a clothes horse himself. He looks great in his clothes and he knows just what to buy to hang on his broad shoulders.]*

In the afternoons and on weekends when they were out of school, little Marcella and John Francis Harty Jr. had to participate in the family's social activity to some extent. They went calling at least once a week, visiting relatives and friends and leaving calling cards.

Even Barry and his sibs had to go calling when they were little, going to see the patients at the Little Sisters of the Poor on the northeast corner of Abercorn and 37<sup>th</sup> streets, then the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet on the southwest corner, and to visit Aunt Marie McCarthy, Cousin Kathleen [Mrs. Raphael] Semmes, Aunt Veva [Genevieve] Harty and other elderly friends and relatives. Cousin Kathleen often had elderly relatives spending their dying days in her big house on East Charlton Street, and those, such as Cousin Batty—who was she?—were *de rigueur* visits each week.

## Short people

John Harty Jr. was so short that his mother dressed him in short pants even at Benedictine. He was the only boy in the cadet corps in uniform shorts, and his parents had to get special permission from the head priest. Poor Uncle John. There's a photo somewhere.

*[Barry had his own tribulations with shorts. He was tall and wanted long pants early, but his now-tall brother Harty was short when he was a kid and Barry had to wait for him to stretch out before he could have long pants. Both wore long pants at BC, though. Both were tall by then.]*

John Harty Sr. was busy downtown running his insurance business, and he came home every day at 1:30 or 2 o'clock for his dinner and a nap. He would go back downtown around 3:30 or 4. It was another world.

## **Bride's lace revisited**

Marcella's mother, Mamie, sometimes sat with her and helped her make new dresses for her dollies.

Marcella was eight years old along about the time that James was dragging the turkey home. One day, Mamie was upstairs getting dressed [almost a full-time job in those days] when Marcella was struck with an inspiration! She wanted a beautiful veil for her doll so it would look like a bride.

Looking around, she saw the lace curtains in the hall. With her sharp little scissors, Marcella carefully cut out a piece that her mother would never notice, right on the bottom, near the floor. Her sweet Mama never got angry, anyway. Mama and her sisters in Augusta were always smiling.

Soon Marcella heard Mama's footsteps on the stairs. As Mama got to the landing, she stopped suddenly.

"Marcella!" she called angrily. "Uh oh," thought Marcella. Not only had Mama noticed the curtain

immediately, she immediately knew just who had done it! Marcella rushed into the hall to show Mama how beautiful her doll looked, but Mama was very unhappy. Marcella was heartbroken to think she had hurt her darling Mama. She carefully sewed the piece back into the curtain under her mother's close supervision.

*[Barry would never do anything so naughty! But, as a teenager, he took "the boat," Daddy's pilot project for his great invention, and left it somewhere, so it was lost. "It's right there," he would say, "at the" Halligans or somebody's on Wilmington or Whitemarsh, or somewhere. Rotted. Gone].*

In their different neighborhoods, Marcella and James each ate ice cream cones once in a while as a great treat. They never met in childhood, but each ate watermelons from the wagons that came through the neighborhoods on summer afternoons. Mule wagons, way back then.

The cost for one whole watermelon was a nickel, but James and his brothers would never buy one unless they could get it for three or four cents, late in the day. The children would break them up right on the bricks of the squares or streets.

*[Barry likes ice cream and watermelons, too. And he's good at working prices down.]*

## **Rough times on 38th street**

Life in the Keating family wasn't quite so idyllic as life in the Harty family. Not only were the Keatings quite poor, their father had a mean streak and would beat

James unmercifully when he got angry, or perhaps drunk.

The beatings were so bad that Julia sent James to live with her friends, the Davises, when he was just a little fellow. And she took her whole brood to Bluffton where her father Eustace and her brother Dessie [deSaussure] farmed part of the family land, Calhoun Plantation. To protect him from Patrick's temper, Julia would leave James there for weeks, even months, at a time.

*[Barry used to have a temper. But he is more like the Hartys. And he received his share of spankings, too, when he was little, although he never did anything to deserve such treatment.]*

## **Life in the country**

James was spoiled and petted wonderfully in the country. He loved everything about farm life.

In the country, Grandpa never had a kind word to say to his wife Martha until after she died, when he took a chair out to her grave every day and sat with her for hours. *[Both a's in Grandpa and Grandma are pronounced, not like the letter 'a' in father, but like the 'a' in cat. The d's are elided out of existence and the n's are nasalized.]*

A Grandpa story from the Civil War came before he was captured, while he and his servant still had their horses. The South was losing the war, having been thoroughly defeated at Gettysburg, and the smart among the Rebel troops were retreating, heading back toward home. Occasionally they would stop to

rest and eat. They would set a watchman to look out for northern soldiers.

On one such occasion, they rested in a little woods, somewhere in Maryland. One of their Rebels was at the edge of the woods, serving as watchman. Grandpa's horse was put out to eat grass by his "birth slave" George, maybe already freed by Lincoln but not aware of it. George, whose horse was also eating grass, carried a spider -- a heavy black iron frying pan with three short legs that could be set into an open fire -- and was cooking bacon for Grandpa and himself. Grandpa was napping on the grass, his hat pulled down over his eyes.

Suddenly, the watchman came racing through the woods on his horse, yelling without slowing down, "The Yankees are coming! The Yankees are coming!"

Grandpa grabbed his horse and galloped away, calling back over his shoulder: "George! Bring the saddle! And don't forget the spider!"

He explained to James that, because the North was fighting the war for the slaves, they wouldn't bother George, who caught up later that day. George had been his lifelong companion, a human being, given to him as a birth present..

Later, his horse gone, Grandpa found a railroad tie, a big, heavy piece of wood, and he and George picked it up and carried it with them. When the Yankees began shooting at them, it gave them a place to hide. When fellow soldiers tried to get behind Grandpa's railroad tie, he booted them out of the shelter.

"If you wanna hide behind my railroad tie, you hafta help carry it!"



According to Grandpa, this worked so well that he and George had plenty of help carrying the tie. Not long afterward, Grandpa was captured. He was imprisoned at Point Pleasant, Maryland, and sent George home to the family with the news.

Grandpa was always solicitous of little James, although he was annoyed by the boy's finicky appetite.

In his childhood, James would almost never eat anything but biscuits and syrup. His Grandpa Eustace Bellinger Pinckney, eating everything that Grandma Martha Porcher Pinckney put on the table, would offer James morsels of meat, rice, vegetables, anything. But James would shake his head and eat biscuits and syrup. Grandpa, remembering his imprisonment in Maryland during the Civil War, would always say: "You'd have been damn glad to have it if you'd been at Point Pleasant!"

Grandma always said that Grandpa's war stories were lies, but James believed them. And so do we.

*[Barry is more like Grandpa than he is like James -- he always eats what is put before him, and asked for seconds [thirds, fourths?] when he was growing. He has also turned out to be a damn fine cook, so he probably inherited that trait from Martha, the last decent cook in the family except for Barry.]*

There's a long line of poor cooks in both sides of the family. Mamie could make only cakes, although they were wonderful. Mother could make fudge. That was it. She advised her daughters that you shouldn't learn to do too much, because then you'd have to do it. Daddy claimed to know all about cooking but

never put this great knowledge to any practical use. JuJu made biscuits like rocks.

*[Jim, you know nothing about cuisine. Shut up, Harty. Betty is a good cook, not you. Joan knows how to cook, but she hates to do it. Marcie and Mary, shut up, too. How long since you've put a real meal on the table?]*

## **Over the waves**

When things went well with the Keatings, life was wonderful. Their father, Patrick Jeffrey [Geoffrey], piloted a tug in the harbor and the boys went with him and worked on board.

The boat helped them dredge the harbor of silt and pile it up on Hutchinson Island across the river. As he went on board each day, empty-handed, James would proudly look around at other young men climbing the gangplanks to board other boats. They were all carrying lunch buckets of food. "Papa's was no 'bucket boat'!" he reported later, proudly, to his own children. "We had a cook."

*[Barry certainly inherited that pride and sense of PR.]*

The Irish cook on the boat was crazy. One day he came up from the galley with a huge knife in his hand and told Patrick, the captain: "There's bread there and there's mate [meat] there, but I can't find the knife!" Yeah, maybe more drunk than crazy.

James worked for his father during his high school years. He began working for others as soon as he graduated from Benedictine Military School in

Savannah. He worked as a painter, ran a flour mill, got jobs doing carpentry, saving for college.

*[Paul told a story about going into a store wearing Jim's old shoes, covered in flour from the flour mill. A man in the store said he knew Paul was Jim's brother, from his shoes, and Paul had to admit they were Jim's stout and floury shoes, not his.]*

After Georgia Tech, where he was trained as an engineer, Jim joined the Army in World War I and was sent to Officer Candidate School in Plattsburg, New York. The camp was on a lake and James, who loved the water, immediately bought a bathing suit. He jumped into icy Lake Saranac and came right back out as fast as his shivering blue legs and arms could move him. Because James knew he would never go back into that cold water, he gave the wool bathing suit to one of the other men.

*[Barry, too, is decisive. And he loves the water. And he prefers a warm bath to an icy lake.]*

On the other side of Barry's family tree, Marcella's Aunt Nan, her mother's sister, Miss Anne C. Mullarky, also went to war. Nan was not young -- she had been born in the 1860s so was almost 60 by 1917 when World War I began. She was sent to France as a Red Cross nurse-in-charge at a hospital for wounded American men.

*[While Barry is just into his 60s (this is being written in the 1990s), the family wouldn't be too surprised if he did something like that. He was in the Army National Guard for years and loved it for the most part. The Chatham Artillery, he would correct me firmly. He would also remind me that the famous "Chatham Artillery Punch" was made not by a recipe but*

*“whatever anybody had left over” after their two-week summer encampment with the National Guard.]*



**Aunt Nan [c] Nurse-in-Charge in France, 1917 or 1918**

Mamie and all her sisters loved fashion and always dressed at the height of whatever was the current

rage. They were sweet, smiling, gentle people. It was said that they all had beautiful names and awful nicknames. They had two mothers. When the mother of the first six died, their father married his late wife's sister and they had three more. Seven of the nine children survived into adulthood. Five of the survivors were whole sisters; Peggy, the youngest, was the daughter of their mother's sister. The only boy, Austin Mullarky [*Uncle Gus to us*] was from the younger family, too.



**Mullarky Sisters Gather on the Porch  
At 913 Greene Street in Augusta, about 1920**

[from left] Miss Margaret [Peg or Peggy] Mullarky, Miss Anne C. [Nan or Nanny] Mullarky, Mrs. John [Mary -- Mamie] Harty, Mrs. John [Louise -- Lou] Mulherin and Mrs. Joseph [Martha -- Mat or Mattie] Mullarky. Missing is Mrs. Joseph [Katherine -- Kate or Katie] Devenny, who lived in Boston. Only brother Austin [Gus] Mullarky is probably wielding the camera.

Peggy and Aunt Mat are not as dressed up as the others because they were living at 913 Greene Street.

Aunt Nan and Mamie were visitors from out of town, and Aunt Lou lived elsewhere in Augusta.

*[Have we mentioned Barry's fashion gene before?]*

## **On the Waterfront**

After World War I, James became secretary to Captain Butler on the waterfront. In those days, women did not often work and young men did the kind of office work that women do today, to the extent that today's office work is similar to the office work of the teens and twenties. James learned how to use that newfangled machine, the typewriter. He used his typing skills all through his life and loved gadgets all his life.

*[Barry and gadgets. Don't get me started. Computers by the dozen. Of course a cordless phone. Cell phones. Computers. What else? Like I said, don't get me started. He's a construction engineer, you know, so his tool collection is amazing.]*

Captain Butler owned a boat, the Marian, of which he was very proud. He shipped freight upriver on the Marian every day or so. He also owned Butler's Hardware.

From his office high above Whitaker Street, Captain Butler could see the United States Highway 17 bridge that crossed the Savannah River at Garden City, and every boat that came through to head into the harbor. The bridge had to be raised for the larger boats, which would catch Captain Butler's attention. The Houlihan Bridge, it was called, honoring a Savannah politician. *[Later, in the 1950s, as a reporter, I knew James Houlihan. He was Chatham*

*County boss, in the days when counties could have bosses. He was the father of one of Mother's best friends, and quite a nice man, at least to me.]*

Each time a boat came through that was close to the size of the Marian, Captain Butler would jump up from his chair. "Jim! Is that the Marian coming through the bridge?" he would ask James, rushing to the windows. Immediately he'd answer himself: "No," if it were not, and settle back down to work.

On the salary from that secretarial job, James put his younger brothers into college and went himself to Georgia Tech in Atlanta. It was reported in the *Savannah Evening Press* one afternoon that James was home from school early, having been exempted from exams because he had A-plus in everything.

*[Barry didn't take after his father in scholarship. But then, none of his brothers or sisters did, either. Who makes straight A plus? We all got a rational number of A's.]*

## **The Gentler Life**

Marcella's life was much easier. With her mother, she learned to play the new card game, whist or "bridge." "I bridge it," was the statement made, which later became "Pass." She enthusiastically played basketball at the Pape School, where French lessons were required from first grade through high-school graduation..

*[Barry definitely inherited that basketball talent, only more so. He even plays bridge if you threaten him with bodily harm But French?]*





**Marcella Harty [right] at Camp As You Like It, about 1915**

After graduating with top honors from Pape, Marcella was offered a job as Miss Pape's secretary for the summer. She was thrilled, and used the extra money



to buy pretty clothes for the fall, when she would go off to school at the University of Georgia's Normal School in Athens [*Normal is an old name for Education School*].

Miss Pape even gave Marcella two weeks off that summer so she could go for one last session at Camp As You Like It in the North Carolina mountains. Marcella had attended the girls' camp for several years and was now a counselor.

Marcella loved Normal School. Her housemother was Lucy Cobb, who invented "Poppy Day." This was a day of great national importance for many years, when volunteers would sell red paper poppies on the street to raise money to help veterans. The dormitory in Athens where Marcella lived was re-named Lucy Cobb Hall after the housemother's death. [*I'm wrong here. It was named earlier, maybe, for another Lucy Cobb of an earlier generation.*]

*[Barry's not selling poppies for veterans. Unless they can sell on the phone....]*

James, too, loved sports. He played football at Benedictine and again at Georgia Tech. He wore the same ferocious expression and straight-up hairdo on both teams.

*[Never mind football, Barry says. Let somebody else play. He'll just watch -- and maybe place a bet. Basketball? That's another story].*

## **Tragedy, Travel**

Marcella and James both learned tragedy at a young age. In 1907, James' father took a tugboat and a

string of barges from Savannah to Florida and up the Saint John's River, to supply the families who lived along the river. Florida was a wilderness then. James went to help his father on the trip, serving as fireman.

Unlike most rivers, the St. John's flows north, so when we say they went 'upriver,' we mean south. Like the Nile.

After they made their deliveries, they continued upriver. They turned the barge train around at a wide place in the river and headed home. The empty barges were riding high in the water and bouncing around on an incoming tide. Two of the barges became jammed against the muddy banks of the river on one particularly tortuous turn and Jim couldn't separate them, no matter how hard he tried. He was 12 years old.

So Patrick stepped down onto the barges from the tugboat and went to unjam them. He pushed the two barges apart and told Jim to get the two horses that were on board, headed to Savannah to pay off some debt, and jump with them from the higher barge to the lower one to break the jam.

The barges broke loose! But Patrick's hand was crushed, jammed between the two barges. There was so much blood that he could have bled his life out right there. Jim managed to stop the bleeding by wrapping the wrist very tightly, at his father's instructions, with his own shirt.

The two of them were in the wilderness, alone. The bleeding had stopped at last, but Patrick was very weak. Jim knew how to run the tug, but it would take days to get it back downriver and up the Atlantic to Savannah, even if they left the barges on the mud.

Patrick's own father had been murdered by thieves when Patrick was just about Jim's age, and he knew how desolated he had been. So he tried to convince Jim that the two of them could handle this crisis.

A railroad had been built through the Florida wilderness just a few years before. Patrick said, "The train. It'll be along in an hour or two. We'll have to hurry." They had come under the railroad bridge only a few miles back.

So Patrick, stumbling along, and Jim, supporting him strongly, the best he could, walked to the railroad track and waited until the northbound train came along. They waved it down.

Imagine trying to wave a train down today! Especially a bleeding man and a shirtless boy.

*[Even Barry has never stopped a train, has he?]*

The train stopped just at the Pullman cars. The Pullman porter and the conductor helped Patrick on board and settled him into a berth.

By train, Patrick had only a few more hours to Savannah. The mangled hand was amputated by Dr. Crawford, but Patrick felt the pain for the rest of his life, as if his thumb were pulled back against his hand.

Jim managed to get the barges back to Savannah. When he got home, he found he was a great hero in his family for having saved his father's life.

*[That's the kind of crisis that Barry could handle, too.]*

## A short life

Patrick died young, even so, with tuberculosis, a common disease of the time. A tubercular leg, Dr. Crawford called it. Even today, doctors say TB usually attacks the lungs but can hit elsewhere.

James was just 18, and was the "man of the family," responsible for supporting the others, his mother said. He had so much work experience that it almost seemed like nothing new to him. He also had college to work on, not an easy matter when your father has died.

Marcella's father died young, too. He had a tubercular hip, but was carried away in February 1918, during the worst month of the terrible influenza epidemic of World War I.

*[I've gotta stick in here, as an anthropologist, that "flu" and "influenza" are not the same thing. Flu is that thing that lots of people have every winter, when a bad cold combines with a case of food poisoning from our filthy national food supply. Influenza, on the other hand, is a fatal disease, or can be. They may be related germs.]*

Marcella's mother baked cakes to try to make a living, while a young man in John's office tried to run the insurance business John had built from nothing. Marcella's older brother, John Jr., was very unhappy over his father's death and the woman-run household, so he ran away to join the Navy. And there had been the short pants at BC.

Soon Mamie became impatient with cake-baking and went into the insurance office and took over. She

became a dynamite insurance salesman. Mamie never drove a car, but took the bus to people's houses to collect their premiums.

*[Barry inherited that kind of spunk.]*

## **Common Loves**

Marcella and James had many mutual friends, so it was only a matter of time before they met. They found they had many things in common. Both loved beach house parties, a heavily chaperoned event of the era.

Both loved reading aloud. Both enjoyed their jobs. And Marcella loved fancy-dress parties and James was willing to tolerate them.



**Marcella Harty [right] at a fancy-dress party, about 1921**

Marcella by then was teaching at Waters Avenue [Street, James always added] School. James was entering the construction industry, where he saw his best chance of making money. James and Marcella began talking about marriage.



**James Keating in Forsyth Park, about 1923**





**Marcella Harty in Forsyth Park, about 1923**

*[Ah, fashion! We must be beautiful or die! Easter?]*

## **House, College**

But Julia said James had to buy her a house before he married, and finish sending the young brothers through college. James made arrangements for a mortgage and began making payments on the house they lived in.

Paul said he didn't want to go to college as he saw how difficult it was going to be for James. He got a job in construction and helped with the mortgage payments. Young Pat got a scholarship to the University of Georgia to play baseball. Gene would go to Georgia Tech when he finished at BC. The payments on all this were astronomical. It would be years before Marcella and James could marry.

James felt pulled between his darling mother and his darling Marcella. He wanted to marry, but he didn't want to hurt his mother. He plugged on, though,



meeting what seemed like huge payments for schools and house.

## **Even the tough need a break**

The tension and difficulty of this life finally got to James after more than four years. He was driving one afternoon on an out-of-town trip for Neal-Blun Building Materials, where he had a job as salesman. He stopped to pick up a hitchhiker and spoke incoherently.

Luckily the hitchhiker had presence of mind, found James' address among his things, drove the car home and delivered him to his family.

Paul had to sleep in the room with James that night, because he was still incoherent. During the middle of the night, James dreamed or imagined a pack of wild dogs in the bedroom and leaped onto the floor, grabbing the imaginary dogs and snarling at them.

The next day, Paul took James to Dr. Crawford, who suggested that Paul take him to the country for a couple of weeks to see if a rest would make James better. Instead of getting better, he seemed to get worse, and saw packs of wild dogs everywhere.

## **The snake pit**

Back in Savannah after two weeks, they went again to Dr. Crawford, who issued a damning diagnosis: James was 'crazy,' and would have to go to Milledgeville, the state insane asylum.

Paul got furious! This sweet brother, who worked so hard to buy his mother a house and send his younger

brothers to college, would not be put in that snake pit! People who were sent there didn't ever come home.

Dr. Crawford told Paul there was only one alternative: a private sanatorium, very expensive, \$300 a month. In 1924, that was a fortune. Paul didn't know where the money would come from, but he would raise it somehow.

Marcella was beside herself, but there was nothing she could do with James. He was incoherent with everybody.

## **To North Carolina**

Paul and James got on the train and went to Asheville, North Carolina, where Dr. Crawford had recommended the sanatorium of Dr. Griffith. The doctor told Paul to stay in town overnight, as James was a big man and responded only to Paul. He might be too much for the sanatorium staff. But by the next day, James was already somewhat better and Dr. Griffith said he thought his new patient would be well within a month or two. So Paul could go home to work and try to raise money.

James was soon able to ramble in the woods and hike in the mountains by himself, improving daily. He had his camera with him in Asheville, and in a way he recaptured his lost youth. He wrote frequently to Marcella and told her he loved her and would be home soon. Within a few months he was back and Julia raised no more obstacles to the marriage.

## **The bells are ringing**

James and Marcella were married on James's 28th birthday, the 27th of June 1925, after a five-year engagement. Julia apparently never adjusted to the fact. Years later, she would push her two daughters and four daughters-in-law aside and say, "Take my picture with my boys!"

Neal-Blun wanted James back at work as soon as he was well and Marcella resigned her job as teacher so she could marry. In those days, women did not work after they were married. Women kept house, even if they had maids to do the work.

*[I'm not sure of this, but I believe the house at 115 or 215 East Gordon Street is the same one where the Davis family ran their boarding house, the same one where Marcella's Uncle Will Harty lived and gave her wedding, and the same one where James' sister Julia lived with her husband, Tom O'Brien, and their three children. Two doors west of Abercorn, across the street from Wesley Monumental Methodist Church.]*

## Chapter II

### Himself

On September 22, 1932, occurred an event unprecedented in the annals of history. On that day, was born William *[for one of his mother's four Jesuit-priest first cousins]* Barry *[for the handsome hero of a book his mother was reading]* Keating *[her husband's name]*!

He was the fourth child in a family that would expand six years later to five.

William Barry Keating was to prove to be a most unusual youngster. He was a beautiful, beautiful child, with a heart-lifting smile like a rainbow breaking through clouds. Everyone loved him on sight. He was also possessed of a beautiful personality, having inherited charm from both sides of the family. William Barry was like a sprite, slender, fast-moving.

He was a warm and loving child, his arms open to those who would love him. His fortunate family delighted in his presence. They decided to call him Barry. *[At Baptism, the priest congratulated Mother for naming him after Bishop Barry. Oops! She just smiled.]*

### Mother and Daddy

Let's recap the immediate ancestors.

Barry's father was James Michael Keating, by now a sales representative for Johns-Manville building

materials, who was stationed at the time in Macon, Georgia.

James was handsome, brown-sandy curly-haired, with blue eyes and ruddy skin. He was charming. He had been born in Savannah, Georgia, where his father, Irish immigrant Patrick Geoffrey [Jeffrey] Keating had settled in the 1890s. James was brought up in Savannah and in Bluffton, South Carolina, where his mother, Julia Pinckney Keating, had been born, the beautiful daughter of a long-lived family that came to America in Colonial days. One, 'Constitution Charlie,' among others, wrote the Constitution of the United States. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney also signed it.

Marcella's ancestors were Irish. The Mullarkys refugeeed out of Ireland when their father, a newspaper editor in Dublin, expressed [in print] revolutionary statements about the five-hundred-year British occupation of Ireland. The Harty family left Ireland for lack of work and bought a farm in Georgia, Cedar Grove, in Wilkes county, Georgia, near Washington, Georgia, always called Washington-Wilkes to differentiate it from the national capital.

Barry's mother was Marcella Harty Keating, a former schoolteacher at Waters Avenue School in Savannah, Georgia, who had given up her career to marry James. Marcella had black hair as only the people of County Mayo in Ireland can have it, with blue highlights. Her eyes were blue and her skin fair. Her charm was famous.

Her father was John Harty, a dashing black-haired gentleman with a red moustache. He was a member of a once-penniless Irish farming family. John Harty moved to Savannah when he married and founded an

insurance firm that thrived. Marcella's mother was Mary Agnes Mullarky, whose proud Irish heritage made her hesitate to marry into any but the most outstanding family. The Mullarky family was really something in Ireland – even the British respected them because their horse-breeding skills were so incredible that they won everybody's money at the races and were rich. But Mary was swept off of her feet by love -- and the Hartys weren't bad.

## **Jimmy, April 15, 1927 - Savannah**

Barry's oldest brother was James Pinckney Keating, named for his father and his maternal grandmother's family. Jimmy was a strong and sturdy lad of five when Barry was born. He was an outstanding if somewhat rowdy pupil at Miss Winnimae's Kindergarten in Macon.

Jimmy could skate with the biggest neighborhood boys. He was friends with everyone in the neighborhood, both up and down the street where the white people lived and down in the valley behind the street, where mostly black people lived. His excited shouts trembled the house as he came in, shaking off his skates impatiently and calling for food. Jimmy's hair was curly and brown like his father's, his 'stockings' [as Mamie called socks] forever falling down into his shoes.

Jimmy could answer any question his young sister and brothers could ask, for he knew everything: how to play Go Fish, how to run fast fast fast, even the way to kindergarten! Jimmy had also had the ultimate experience: he had crossed the street. Yes, it was forbidden to cross the street. His mother had

specifically told him, "Don't you put your foot in that street!" But Jimmy rode his trike across the street, so he put his feet only on the pedals, never in the street. Jimmy could build anything with his Erector Set and could go anywhere in his little red wagon.

Jimmy also had a Flexible Flyer and could make great speed with one knee on it and his other leg kicking it along as he laughed and waved his way past the house. The littler people at home truly believed that he was a man of the world.

## **Mary, August 19, 1929 - Atlanta**

Barry's next oldest sibling was his sister, Mary Mullarky Keating, named for her maternal grandmother, and three at the time of Barry's birth.

She, too, was a pupil at Miss Winnimae's. Mary longed to ride the horsehair rocking pony at Miss Winnimae's but was forbidden that pleasure. At three, she was deemed too big for childish things and was taught to read and write. She read and wrote carefully and loved it. She was praised for having talked and walked early, well before she was one.

Mary was rather prim, having been taught that children should speak only when spoken to, but laughter she couldn't suppress. She had blue eyes, freckles across the bridge of her nose, and soft, wavy blonde hair. She had made friends with a few of the neighbors, including Trinket [*baby talk for Crooked*], a little boy next door with a bad leg, who came through the hedge to swing on the big swing in the Keating yard, and a lady two doors up, Mrs. Williams, who had a fabulous flower garden and gave Mary flowers

occasionally when she peered longingly through the fence. But Mary was afraid to go too far.

Grandmother Harty hoped to turn her namesake into a little lady, so provided her with boxes of clothes by mail from more sophisticated Savannah to the backwater Mamie considered Macon to be. She also sent a fabulous doll, but Mary wasn't allowed to play with it. It was kept on a high shelf so it would stay beautiful until she was old enough for it. In the meantime, Mary had a dilapidated rag doll that she hugged to herself.

It was thought in the family that Mary had grown up fast to get out of the way so her next sibling, Harty, could have the crib.

## **Harty, October 23, 1930 - Macon**

The next child to be born before Barry was the amazing John Harty Keating with the dazzling hair, named for his maternal grandfather. Harty's hair was so blond that it was almost white, cut short in the style of the era, and as straight as hair can be. He was both fair and freckled, a combination of his mother's fair Mayo complexion and his father's ruddy, freckled Kerry skin.

Harty was born in 1930, so was almost a baby himself when Barry came along, as yet untried in the perils at Miss Winnimae's.

Harty was accompanied by a nurse when he went into the yard, so could not venture a great distance, but his enjoyment of the family yard was intense. He swung happily by the hour with his nurse, standing in the swing and calling to Mary, who was usually



wandering around looking at the shrubbery, her rag doll hugged in one arm.

When he escaped the nanny's clutches, Harty ran in all directions, laughing, making Mary laugh as she chased him, and usually falling down. Harty was not quite two years old when his little brother Barry was born, but he already had an enormous vocabulary and could talk a blue streak.

Although nobody paid much attention to such things in those days, Harty showed early talent with his own toys, lining the balls and blocks up in a neat row and placing the squeaking toy at the head of the line.

Harty liked best, though, the toys of his older brother, Jimmy, who had an Erector Set. In his early days, Harty's talent was more visible in knocking down Jimmy's Erector Set constructions, causing great pain to himself when Jimmy discovered the depredations. Soon, though, he was reconstructing the bent pieces into new creations.

## **Barry, September 22, 1932**

Then came William Barry, the child of the year 1932. Barry's hair was thick, dark and wavy, and he had deep dimples etched into his little rosy cheeks.

At first, like most babies, he merely lay in his crib, smiled and cooed. Just a few months after he was born, he was sitting up by himself, smiling.

Barry had an incredible smile. He charmed everyone who came near. There is nothing so charming as a baby, and Barry was a baby of exceptional charm. When you went in to see him, he bounced and

laughed with delight. He gurgled and cooed so pleasantly that he was propped up in a high chair to sit with the children at meals in the kitchen.

He loved oatmeal the most. His second favorite was hominy, which was spooned by the gallon into his smiling face by Weesy-Beesy [Louise], the cook. Hominy is what Savannah people [*even when they are in exile in Macon*] call grits.

## **The nursery**

The children's nursery in Macon was a big room with seven windows, next to the kitchen with its green-painted furniture. Each child's bed was in a separate section of the room. Barry's was the crib -- nearest the kitchen so the cook could hear him call if the nanny didn't.

The seven windows had gauzy white curtains, each colorfully embroidered by Mother with a different day of the week, Monday for washday, Thursday for baking, and so forth. It must have been instructions for the maid, because Mother certainly wasn't into that kind of housekeeping.

Barry, of course, was indifferent to embroidered letters at his oh-so-young age, but he enjoyed watching the curtains blow in the breeze. He would bat at them excitedly, with both hands, tumbling himself down to the mattress in great glee, as the curtains flew past his crib when the windows were open. Rain would fall momentarily on his face when he cracked his head against the slats of the crib, but he would soon bounce right back up and smile again.

Barry's crib was by "Saturday." He was so bright and sweet that Mary even let him hug her rag doll. He spit on it a little bit, but she didn't care.

## **Return from exile?**

Jimmy, Mary, Harty and Barry's parents had a fond hope: that someday they would go back to Savannah. Jimmy had been born there, although he hardly remembered Savannah because the family lived in Florida when he was born and left for Atlanta when he was just two.

After their marriage, Daddy and Mother had moved to Florida for a few years during "the Boom." They got caught up in the excitement and bought underwater property in Tampa Bay that was someday to be developed.

Daddy and his brother-in-law Tom O'Brien founded a firm, the Art. Marble Company, with a period after the "art" to indicate that it was an abbreviation for artificial. Their technician was an Italian worker who had a never-divulged formula to mix marble dust, concrete, dye and secret ingredients to make beautiful floors. On Davis Islands in Tampa, "art." marble may still be seen in a few of the older houses.

"We were rich -- on paper," Mother said. Daddy sold property and worked with Colonel Tom Huston, the Tom's Toasted Peanuts man, on development of Davis Islands. Mother wrote brochures to tempt tourists to come to Tampa and buy underwater land. People actually stood in line to buy the land on the bottom of Tampa Bay. It was crazy.

Somewhere in the family papers [or tossed by now] are deeds to land under Tampa Bay, land that Mother and Daddy couldn't pay taxes on during the Great Worldwide Depression, land that was later sold by the sheriff on the Hillsborough County [Fla.] Courthouse steps. Tampa General Hospital is built on it today.

Mother took the train to Savannah to her mother, Dr. Crawford and sanity when it was almost time for Jimmy to be born. It was important to be born in Savannah, but she would never try that last-minute journey again.



**James in official Johns-Manville photo, March 1928**

Before the Florida bubble burst in 1928, Daddy was able to find a sales job with Johns-Manville Sales Corporation and the family went back to Savannah.

The Johns-Manville people decided almost immediately that Daddy was a salesman of such exceptional ability that he would make a great administrator, so they transferred him from his sales territory in Savannah to regional headquarters in Atlanta. Daddy's friend Bob Ruffin took over the Savannah territory.

*[Barry is no mean salesman himself. Does this run in the family?]*

Daddy hated headquarters and the company finally agreed that he could go back to sales.

But first, Mary was born in Atlanta, where the family lived in a house on Morningside Drive. When a Johns-Manville territory opened in Macon, Daddy grabbed it to be closer to home, and he worked from there and the family lived there when Harty and Barry were born.



**James Pinckney Keating on porch in Macon, 1930**



**Mary Mullarky Keating in yard in Macon, 1930**

## Barry's early years

The Keating family lived in a house in Macon in the middle of the block. At the end of a year or so it needed interior painting. When the landlord refused to paint, the family moved over a weekend from one house *[on a street whose name I can't remember -- Hillside? I went to see the house in the 1950s and it was very small]* to another identical house just two doors away, on the corner.

The corner house had just been painted to await a new tenant and the rent was the same. The landlord knew when he had been beaten. Little Barry was born when they lived in the new house.

The Great Depression was on, and many of the people in the valley behind the Keating house were cold and hungry. Sometimes they got into drunken arguments.

Even the Keating children's own nurse, presumably quite sober, one day got into an argument with a Cracker boy who lived in the valley. He was climbing their mulberry tree and eating the berries. Probably hungry. When she told him to come down, he was afraid to do so. She threw a brick at him very accurately and cracked his head. The boy came down bleeding and ran home to get his father. Later, father and son came to the alley behind the house and shouted at the Keatings for a while, but didn't venture any closer. The nurse had a brick in her hand and Jimmy had one handy.

While many people of that era believed that all whites were superior to all blacks, to the Keating children it seemed perfectly natural that a nanny of theirs would

subdue a Cracker. The Keating children were accustomed to black people of all conditions, but they seldom saw poor white people.

In those days Daddy traveled from Monday through Friday. One night, Mother was sitting in the living room holding baby Barry when a black man with a still-smoking pistol in his hand came to the front screen door. *[Maybe it was Harty.]*

"Please ma'am," he said, and came into the house through the unlocked screen door. He laid the gun down on the heirloom piecrust mahogany table *[Marcie inherited it]* by the door and told her that he had just killed his girlfriend in the valley. With remarkable presence of mind, her baby in her arms, Mother asked, "Would you like me to call the police for you?"

"Yes, ma'am," he answered.

She never even learned his name.

## **Barry's first winter: cold**

When it got bitterly cold that winter of 1932, Barry heard rattling in the coal shed at the back of the yard and cried for Mother to come to the nursery. When Barry quieted down, Mother heard the noise, too. She brought the baby out of the nursery and told Daddy somebody was in the coal.

"They're cold," he said.

"Then you should give them some coal," she said.  
"They'll steal less than I'd have to give them," he answered.



Such were the thoughts of people who could not afford to buy coal for the whole neighborhood but didn't want their neighbors to freeze to death either. So Barry's life also began with a not-so-tidy philosophical question: is it stealing if the owner lets you take it?

That cold, cold winter, snow fell in Macon. One of the older boys in the neighborhood had a sled, and the big boys flew down the hill in front of the Keating house, skidding on the snow.

Jimmy was the family's great adventurer, and had to live up to his reputation. Daddy removed the wheels from Jimmy's Flexible Flyer and Jimmy went flying down the hill in the snow -- a lot faster than he expected, hitting rocks in the street and being bounced around thoroughly. As he passed the house, Mary, Harty and Barry cheered wildly for their beloved hero. Mother looked worried. Daddy looked proud.

After that exciting day on the sled, the cold got more intense. Jimmy was content to stay inside and play Go Fish for days with the little ones. It was like a trip to Monte Carlo for them, with Jimmy flipping cards and peeking into hands like a veteran dealer.

Even little Barry got into the fun, lying on his blanket beside the coffee table, waving his arms and shouting encouragement, while Jimmy, Mary and even Harty played cards by the hour. Mary looked at Harty's cards and helped him play. Jimmy looked at everybody's and wrote new rules by the minute. He couldn't stand to lose. The Keating children are probably still confused about Go Fish rules.

## Spring

Was spring finally coming?

Finally, the weather began to clear. Snow melted and the sun peeped out at last. Jimmy, Mary and Harty ventured onto the front porch with the nurse. She told them to stay put while she went inside to get the baby.

Jimmy was too big for such restraint, so he jumped down the steps and into the yard. Mary followed, moving carefully, feet down one step, then sitting on an icy step, then feet down another step. But she slipped and fell despite her carefulness, and cracked her forehead open. Harty was heading down the steps to help her as the nurse came out.

The nurse put Barry right down on the porch floor and pulled Harty back up to the porch while she went to get Mary. The nurse almost slipped herself, but Jimmy came up to help. Harty and Barry wailed loudly on the porch, and Mary wailed loudly on the icy cold steps. Mother heard the noise and came to the door. She was furious with the nurse for putting the baby down on the cold porch, but forgave her when she saw the blood streaming down Mary's face. And Barry, the baby, was well-wrapped in blankets.

## Outdoor play

Finally, winter was over and the grass began to thaw. It was Barry's first chance to get out into the yard. It was his turn to sit in the swing with the nanny while Mary and Harty explored the yard, wrapped in warm coats, scarves, gloves and hats.

Barry, in the nurse's lap, jumped and laughed and called to them, continually shedding his blanket like Popeye's Swee-pea and being re-wrapped by the nanny. Mary and Harty ran around excitedly, finding bits of ice among the brown leaves of grass to bring to Barry for his delight. The nurse had no coat, but she didn't seem to mind.

## **Exile at an end**

It was still winter when the telephone call came. The West Georgia territory was opening and Bob Ruffin, the Savannah area salesman and Daddy's friend, wanted to move there to be closer to his home. Daddy was to have the Savannah territory! It was time to go at once. Daddy went to Savannah and found a house.

Jimmy and Mary bade farewell forever to Miss Winnimae's Kindergarten with its big rocking horse. They all said goodbye to the yard and trees and house and neighbors. Scariest of all for Barry, a truck came to get the furniture -- even his crib.

Jimmy, Mary and Harty had moved before, Jimmy from Savannah to Tampa to Savannah to Atlanta to Macon, Mary from Atlanta to Macon and Harty from two doors away, so they were veterans. They tried to explain it to Barry. Barry had a lot of curiosity and always wanted to know everything. But he didn't understand words too well at that age, so he found it terrifying.

## **Tears all around**

As they prepared to go, Barry clung to Weesy-Beesy, who cried. Then he hung onto Hattie, who cried too. Barry began bawling. Soon Mary and Harty were

bawling sympathetically. Even big tough Jimmy was sniffing.

Mother and Daddy looked at each other and decided to hire the nurse to go with them. She was thrilled. Going to Savannah was like going to Heaven for that young girl. Mother promised the 14-year-old nanny's mother that she would send her home on the bus in a few weeks.

The whole neighborhood saw the Keatings off in Daddy's big tan Oldsmobile with the little oval rear window. Suitcases were jammed into the trunk and tied onto the luggage rack on top of the car.

The members of the Keating family were dressed in their best: Daddy wore his camel's hair coat and Homburg hat [*very fashionable*]. Mother wore a turban [*very fashionable!*] and a tan wool coat with a huge fur collar [*also very fashionable*]. The children wore their Sunday-best overcoats and hats [*some of them hand-me-down, some sent by Mamie, and all very fashionable*] as they waved goodbye. People dressed up for trips back then.

*[Barry still does that, doesn't he?]*

## **The long road home**

Jimmy sat in the front seat with Daddy. Each of the other children took a turn sitting by Mother, while Daddy drove the car to Savannah. When it was somebody else's turn, the children sat beside Hattie, the nurse/nanny.

Barry finally fell asleep in the nurse's arms so Mary and Harty settled down by Mother and went to sleep,

leaning and probably drooling on her big fur collar. But, for once, she didn't seem to mind. Mother was sleepy herself. Oh, no seat belts then.

It soon got dark and everybody but Daddy fell asleep. He was used to long hours on the road, by day and night. Savannah was a very long way and it was hours and hours before they got there.

## **The new house**

In Savannah, they moved into the house Daddy had found at 526 East 45th Street.

It was huge compared to their Macon house, two stories instead of one, but it had a smaller nursery. The boys were put in the nursery [no longer called the nursery, but called the boys' room] and Mary was put into the dressing room next to Mother and Daddy's room. Each of their old beds was already in place in their new rooms so the children felt at home right away and went to sleep.

In the morning the children found that the downstairs had a huge living room that went all the way from front to back. There was a big sunroom at one side that would be used as the children's playroom. Across the big hall, where the wide steps headed upstairs, was a dining room, with their table and chairs already set up. In the corner was a small children's table. Probably Mamie had supervised the furniture placement.

Behind the dining room was a butler's pantry with cupboards, a bathroom and closet. Next was the kitchen and next to that, instead of a nursery, was a porch.

## **Almost heaven**

Then came heaven: a big back yard!

The Keating kids set out to explore the yard. Spring had arrived overnight. Or maybe Savannah has a better climate. Or both.

Barry was in his element because he loved to explore. He was still not walking, but he crawled around and discovered everything!

By the cedar tree in the back, Daddy built a sandbox, which all the children loved. There was a coal bin in the triple garage. While it was forbidden, they also loved that but, somehow, the nurse always knew when they had been playing in it. Next to the sandbox, Daddy put a 'joggling board,' an early Savannah form of air mattress or trampoline. It was a good stout one-by-eight- inch piece of lumber, six feet long, supported by stobs and a crosspiece at each end. We bounced up and down on it and loved it. Maybe Daddy invented it--he was full of inventions.

The ping pong table was set up in one side of the garage. The car was put in the other side or just left in the driveway, unlike the garage at the back of the yard in Macon, where the car was locked in. Maybe this was a better neighborhood.

## **Roses of summer**

There was a huge hedge of roses that grew over the fence between the back yard and the driveway. As the weather warmed the hedge soon began to bloom. The rose hedge not only beautified the yard but the

house, as Mother came out to the yard almost every day to cut pink roses to put into vases inside. The hedge was so thick that it was cushiony, with its pink flowers standing out. Mother always had thorn scratches on her forearms from the rose thorns.

Barry discovered that toads and roly-poly's lived under the rose hedge. A low place in the lawn nearby provided delicious mud when the weather was wet. The lawn wasn't much but the yard had everything else.

Unfortunately, the nanny who came to Savannah with them didn't want to go back to little Macon after living in the great metropolis. When the time came to go home, she was nowhere to be found. Barry was devastated, but there was so much excitement in the new house that he soon forgot. Mother sadly had to write Hattie's mother and tell her that the child had run away.

## **Goodbye, Dick and Jane**

Jimmy and Mary were sent to Miss Griffith's kindergarten, where they furthered their educations by learning to read, not just kindergarten primers, but anything. A retarded woman who sat in the window seat was the reading teacher at Miss Griffith's and both Jimmy and Mary were soon very proficient. They came home and tried to show Harty and Barry how to read and write, but the little boys just weren't ready for it. Retarded people are perfect for teaching small children, Miss Griffith had discovered.

Jimmy would read a quick story occasionally, acting out the parts. Mary wasn't good at voices, but read

stories to Barry and Harty by the hour and soon they were learning too. At least they liked the pictures and they loved hearing the stories.

Mother sometimes read stories, too, and Daddy always read to them on the weekends when he was at home. He sat in his Morris chair with children piled all over him, Barry on his lap, Mary and Harty on each arm, Jimmy moving around, sitting sometimes on the chair back, looking over Daddy's shoulder, sometimes on the floor, looking at the cover of the book, sometimes displacing Mary or Harty for a few minutes or holding one of them on his lap, or sitting on the ottoman when Daddy moved his legs out of the way .

Daddy did different voices for each of the characters. The nurse loved it, too. So did Mother. Daddy kept everybody laughing. He would read forever if somebody would scratch his head, so the kids took turns scratching to keep him going. Billy Goat Gruff was his star turn. The new nanny, Gail Clayton from Sparta, Georgia, would stand in the door, peering in, laughing, and thoroughly enjoying the show. Barry loved it most of all. [Not hair, by the way, but head – the skin of his bald head.]

## **Learning to jump**

One of the favorite games for Jimmy at home was jumping off the garage roof. The rose hedge made a good cushion to land on. One day a boy was brought over by his mother to play with the Keating children and, when he jumped from the garage, he jumped onto the concrete driveway instead of the rosy, cushiony hedge. Johnny Griffin got a concussion and had to go home.



## **Dying to Jump**

Mary, Harty and Barry were dying to jump from the garage but Jimmy wouldn't let them. Finally, one day, he let Mary take a jump. She didn't want to try a second jump, so that was okay.

Harty and Barry were strictly forbidden this sport by Jimmy. Harty was determined and soon was jumping all the time when he wasn't zooming around on his trike. Mother and Daddy didn't know anything about it, of course.

Soon Mother had found another nurse and cook, so supervision was screwed down and the garage jumping was not allowed. But Barry never forgot it.

Jimmy tried new adventures, such as going to the store, blocks away, on his Flexible Flyer, and buying penny candy. He let the younger children look at the candy and prizes, but they could not touch them.

## **In my merry Oldsmobile**

In the meantime, Barry was launching himself on a lifelong love affair with cars. He was watching very closely as Daddy drove the car, a new Oldsmobile every year or two. There were no seatbelts in cars back then, so children hung over from the back seat to watch everything.

Barry was also all over Cousin Kathleen [Mrs. Raphael] Semmes' electric car when she and Regina came occasionally to see the Keating family. They took the children for rides in the car that was set up like a little living room, with red velvet parlor chairs, an Oriental rug and white lace curtains. It had no

speed, though, so Barry's interest reverted to Daddy's car.

Regina O'Connor, a cousin, was Cousin Kathleen's companion. Maybe Mary Flannery O'Connor's aunt. Mary Flannery became Flannery O'Connor, a famous author.

Regina had shown the children how to start the electric car and drive it with a brass handle like a streetcar, so Barry's observations were sharpened by experience. He noted that keys were necessary and that the starter had to be turned, and he began to believe that he could drive the Olds.

*[Besides his major trait of great curiosity, Barry also had an ability to plan his moves.]*

## **The adventure begins**

One morning, very early, three-year-old Barry went into 40-odd-year-old Mother and Daddy's bedroom while they were still asleep. Just as he knew he would, he found Daddy's pants on a chair, pockets still loaded with watch, money, cigarettes, matches, a slim pocketknife and keys. He slid the keys out quietly and tiptoed downstairs.

Out the side door, by the driveway, he slid without making a sound, as planned. The two silver car keys, one for the doors and one for the ignition, were in a little brown leather case. Luckily, the car doors were not locked.

Barry hopped onto the wide running board and into the car for his great adventure! By good luck, he picked the ignition key first and turned it to the right.

As he put his dimpled baby hand out to turn the starter, Barry didn't hesitate for a moment.

*Chhrrnng! Chchroom!*

The engine turned over on the second try and the car jumped forward and into the big hedge in front of the house.

*Cr-r-runch!*

Everybody in the house was instantly awake.

## **Daddy to the rescue**

Somehow Daddy got into his key-less pants on the way down the wide stairs and was decent by the time he got to Barry and the car. Fearing he would pull out a limp body, he reached into the car where Barry was just extricating himself from the steering wheel.

"I can drive!" Barry exultantly pronounced. Mother looked out the bedroom window, just above, in her nightgown.

"It's Barry!" she told the rest of the family, who clustered at the windows too. "How did he do that?" she asked.

Daddy just shrugged and sent Barry back inside while he moved the car out of the hedge. Soon all the children were downstairs in their pajamas inspecting the slight damage to the car and hedge.

"The steering wheel was pointed wrong," Barry explained to his excited sibs. He was always loaded with excuses.

Barry had always been Harty and Mary's special pet. After all, he was the baby, besides being a child of incredible charm. But after the car adventure, he was their hero.

What a brave little boy! That was a more impressive adventure than anybody in the family had ever had before, even Jimmy, who had adventures left and right all the time. Wow! Harty even let Barry ride his trike.

Barry settled down to a childhood routine for a few months after he drove the car. Often Mother and Daddy's friends, Min and John McGillicuddy and others, came over to play bridge or ping pong and drink Coca Colas or salty dogs. They always asked him for driving lessons when they came over, and he proudly told the story of his adventure, over and over.

"The car was hardly scratched at all!" he always claimed. But he didn't drive again for years.

## **Off to school**

Jimmy went to real school that fall 1933, to the sisters at Sacred Heart School. Harty joined Mary at Miss Griffith's kindergarten and began learning to read. Daddy said he wouldn't have to read stories any more, since he had three children who could read. This made Harty very proud.

Barry could always find somebody to read to him and began to take an interest in the process himself. Everybody knew that, if Barry got interested enough, he would probably pick up reading just on his own. He had another year to go before he would be sent to Miss Griffith's.

Already Barry could fake reading. He would hold a book, one of the red-bound ones like the Harvard Classics in the bookcase, usually upside down, and tell crazy, made-up stories with voices just like Daddy did. The only thing that spoiled the effect was that, when Mary and Harty started laughing, Barry couldn't suppress the laughter himself. *[Betty and Harty inherited the bookcase and those books.]*

## **Yuletide secrets**

That Christmas, Santa was especially good to the Keating kids. Somehow, Barry knew weeks before Christmas what everybody was getting. He must have been part elf.

Barry said that Jimmy would get a two-wheeler. Check. There was a new bike for Jimmy under the tree.

Barry said all the children would get just what they wanted and that there would be lots of new clothes. Check. Santa Claus brought new clothes for everybody, even the dolls.

Barry said everybody would get books. Check. There were piles and piles of new story books.

He said Mary would get a wonderful little stove whose oven cooked from the heat of a light bulb. Check. How could a child who could not read know what the stove would do? Mary and Barry spent hours making goodies, like chocolate cakes the size of cookies.

Barry said that Harty would get a chemistry set. Check. Harty concocted smelly experiments all the time in the sunroom, mixing incompatible chemicals,

while Barry and Mary tried to sniff their chocolate cakes and keep them from burning.

Barry said that he himself would get a new trike. Check. He didn't have to ride Harty's old hand-me-down red trike, which had been a hand-me-down from Jimmy and Mary -- the very one that Jimmy rode across the street back in Macon. Barry did get one surprise: a new rag doll, wearing a clown suit that had patches just like the cloth in one of Mary's doll dresses. Thrifty Santa!

## **Grass is planted**

In the spring, their new house got a new lawn with Barry's supervision. A brown man named Brown from the realty company came out and planted sprigs all over the yard while Jimmy, Mary and Harty were gone to school and kindergarten and Barry was the boss of the house all by himself with just a nurse and cook and occasionally Mother to deal with. By the time the weather warmed up there was grass all over! Underneath the grass were all the footprints that Barry made with his little brown oxfords while he helped Brown make the lawn.

Soon the rose bushes put out new leaves, too. Barry was planning a surprise for the Keating kids. He watched every day for the right time to make his move. Such a planner! He still does that, doesn't he?

## **Time for a surprise**

One day, Barry had laid his plans. He was always exploring around, so he used exploration as a cover. He and Jimmy were the last children down for

breakfast that Saturday morning. Mary and Harty were already outside playing.

Barry ate quickly. Not unusual. He went to the back porch and looked into the fireless cooker. Not unusual. Its big hot stones were heated in the oven while supper cooked and Gail put the hominy in there at night so it would be ready for breakfast in the morning. He slipped out the back door -- not unusual. Harty and Mary were in the sandbox playing as he walked past, casually strolling toward the garage -- not unusual.

Barry slid sideways through the big gate to the lane, opening it only slightly so it wouldn't squeak. Unusual! Barry was not allowed in the lane. In the lane, he went straight to the big wooden trellis that held vines growing up the back of the garage. Up he climbed, one trellis row at a time.

Finally, he reached the top and walked swiftly across the roof to the front of the garage. Barry surveyed his domain.

Mary and Harty were still playing quietly in the sandbox and hadn't noticed him. Check. Gail, the nurse, hadn't finished the breakfast dishes, because he could hear her singing and banging pots. Check. Daddy's car was not in the driveway, so he was probably out of town. Check. Mother was asleep. Check. Jimmy was still eating breakfast. Uh-oh!

Here came Jimmy out of the back door, finished with his breakfast. Jimmy looked up and saw Barry on the roof, but he hadn't yet realized what the little fellow was going to do. Barry rushed his move too much as he leaped from the roof into the still-sparse rose hedge. Crash!

Jimmy yelled and ran over toward him. Mary and Harty followed Jimmy, yelling and screaming. Gail came screaming out the back door. Mother rushed to the back window upstairs, then grabbed a housecoat and came down to the yard.

There was her baby, lying in the rose thorns, bleeding from the head and a hundred thorn scratches and screaming at the top of his lungs.

Barry had to take aspirin and lie down. All the kids went into the boys' big bedroom to visit.

"I had to jump too fast when I saw Jimmy coming," he explained. Always the big explainer.

So Barry decided to try skating. It looked easy. He strapped on Jimmy's skates, none too well, and started skating down the 45th Street sidewalk. He was amazed at how fast the wheels could turn. Crash! He hit the sidewalk on one elbow. There was a sharp pain and he began to cry, loudly. The pain didn't get any better when he tried to lean up on the elbow. The children came streaming out of the house. Jimmy was trying to pull Barry up by one arm, but it only made him scream louder. It was the wrong arm.

Mary and Harty grabbed the other arm and managed to pull Barry up. But he was hurt. He looked bad. Mother was the first to realize that Barry's arm was broken. She made him lie down while the nanny ran for the red wagon and the two adults put him aboard.

## **Off to see the doctor**

Then Mother ran inside to throw on some clothes. She telephoned Min to come get Barry and her for a



trip to the doctor, while the nurse and the children rolled Barry gently to the driveway. He felt like throwing up but he managed to contain himself. This was too great a moment for that.

When Barry got back from the doctor's office [people didn't go to emergency rooms in those days], he was wearing a splendiferous white cast from his upper arm to his wrist, bent at the elbow. What a trophy! He was still pale and shaken, but smiled that wonderful smile. He knew it was the first broken arm in the history of the family.

Barry was supposed to rest for two weeks, but he made himself sit up while the other Keating children sat around his bed admiring the cast and his stamina and stoicism. He even managed to laugh when they asked him for skating lessons.

"The city made a bad bump between two pieces of sidewalk," he explained. He was the big explainer.

## **Quick recovery?**

The next day and during the next two weeks, while the other kids were at school, Barry felt fine. He banged around the house as usual. Mother had shopping in the mornings and a bridge game every afternoon, and Gail couldn't keep him in bed, even with cookies and Coca Cola. Once he even fell down the 12 steps from the landing to the hall while he was racing down to get a toy.

Daddy and Mother took Barry back to Dr. Crawford's office when it was time to have the cast removed. Dr. Crawford took off the cast and felt the arm. It was healed, well healed.

But it was "as crooked as a corkscrew," Dr. Crawford announced. "Did you fall down again?" he asked Barry.

"Just down the steps," Barry acknowledged.

"That was probably it," said Dr. Crawford, giving Barry a book to look at while he talked privately with Mother and Daddy.

## **2nd broken arm in the family**

That afternoon, Barry was taken to the hospital for the arm to be re-set. That didn't sound too bad to the Keating children until they found out later that Barry was given general anesthesia and his arm was re-broken and re-set.

For the next few weeks, he was a lot quieter. Everybody went to his room after school and read quietly to him, just as Mother and Daddy said they should.

## **Here comes grandmother**

Mamie, who was Mother's mother, moved into the house with the Keatings along about then. She brought her big mahogany double bed and her big mahogany dresser, which were put into the boys' room, and her clothes filled the closets. Trunks and suitcases were stowed in the attic. It was not just a visit; she would be living with the Keatings forever. From now on, the kids wouldn't be able to fool the nurses and cooks as easily. If Mother were out, Mamie would still be there as final authority. And she seemed quite stern. Somehow [though nobody knew how], Barry worked his way past Mamie's stern

exterior and into her soft lap and soft heart. Before long, she was easier than the nurse!

## **Middle of the night**

Mother and Daddy began taking trips out of town, which they had never done before.

Late at night, long after dark, when the parents were out of town, Mamie would call Leopold's ice cream store. Before long, a lanky black boy would bicycle his way to the Keating house with a pint of ice cream and five cones. She would hand the boy a few coins. Then Mamie and the kids would feast fabulously!

The next year, the whole family had the mumps and the measles. Everybody was so glad when winter was over and summer finally arrived.

## Chapter III

### City and Country

That summer, Barry went to the country for the first time with his older brothers and sister. They went to Daddy's Uncle Dessie and Aunt Olive's, where 10 or 15 first cousins gathered for a barefoot, freckle-faced summer like no other.

Uncle Dessie's sister, JuJu, who was Daddy's mother, usually spent the summer there, too. She was a very stern grandmother. Charles and Mannie were no relation, but these black people were very much included in the children's summer fun.

The one rule -- often broken -- was that you had to wear your shoes. Ground-itch and ringworm would be the result if you did not. The only thing that bothered the Keating children was the stickers.

The path to the river was overrun with sandspurs -- but at the end of the path was heaven: a beach and a river! On the beach, just out of the water at high tide, was lying a huge oak that the adults said had been blown down in a hurricane. But the children knew that was impossible. The tree was too big for the wind to blow it down. JuJu, with her shoes on, would sometimes walk down to the river and sit on the big oak in the shade while they swam.

Which of her grandchildren were there? Kitty's son John Mew, who lived nearby, was busy but came over often. Julia's son Tom O'Brien was there every summer, although his older sister Martha considered herself too big for romping in the country with babies

and his younger brother Pinck was too little. James' children Jimmy, Mary, Harty and Barry were there, with their little sister Marcie not born yet. Paul's children, Mary Elizabeth, Paul Jr. and Tim were there and their baby Kathleen was still not born. Pat's oldest, Patty Jr., was in the thick of things and, while his little sisters, Claire, Yvonne and Ginger, were there, they were too little for the rough-playing older kids. Neither of Gene's children, Lucy and John, had been born yet but their parents sometimes came out from Savannah for an afternoon.

When this huge bunch of kids occasionally was taken to Camp Villa Marie, they were all called "Keating children." Although Mew and O'Brien children were in the group, they answered to the name. After all, their mothers had been Keatings before they were married. [*No – Villa Marie is in Savannah. It was Pinckneyville camp or whatever they called it, in Bluffton. Camp St. Mary's.*]

## **The good and the bad**

Stickers in the feet and JuJu in charge! That part was hell, but the children loved the rest of it. JuJu was the kind of stern that couldn't be gotten around. Being stern was her career, her ambition, her delight. She wasn't cruel, but she booked no foolishness. After all, there was a big crowd of children.

Daddy's brother, Uncle Pat, was there that summer, too, and he was tough. Barry decided early to avoid him. Pat's wife, Helen, was sweet but she was totally preoccupied with her little girls, washing and ironing their dresses, feeding them and curling their hair. The three little girls were so much younger than the rest of the children that they didn't get to play with

them much except in the evenings, after supper, when they joined in the singing. Little Yvonne always cried when the children sang "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean," thinking it was "My Vonny" and that she was somehow gone and had to be brought back. But we HAD to sing it. It was everybody's favorite – except Yvonne's.

Uncle Dessie's wife Aunt Olive was a music teacher and played the big grand piano for all those wonderful songs. She was no patsy, but she knew something about dealing with children so doled out the sweets with the sour.

Uncle Dessie was all sweetness, telling stories and letting children do actual farm work if they wanted to. He made special pets of Barry and Tim, one of the first cousins. Uncle Dessie let them pour boiling lead into little molds to make bullets, a task anybody else might think was too difficult for small children. But they managed it.

A treat for Barry that summer was another young first cousin, Pinck O'Brien [Tom's baby brother], still a kindergartener, who came to the country for a two-week visit. Barry had barely made the cut himself and Pinck was still considered too young for a full-fledged summer at Calhoun Plantation, but Barry enjoyed having his best pal among cousins out at the farm for a while.

Charles and Mannie never minded showing the children agricultural lore. They were proud that Uncle Dessie was connected to Clemson [really Clemson but all the South Carolinians call it Clemson] College and grew soy beans, an experimental Chinese crop that nobody else had ever heard of. Another thing Charles and Mannie showed

the Keating kids was the incredible way peanuts grow, under the ground, with a tiny stem reaching down into the ground to touch each one. And corn! Each tiny piece of silk is attached to one and only one kernel, and every one of them goes to the top of the ear and peeks out of the green shuck. Oh! Kudzu was another experimental crop, but it took over acres and acres.

## **Farm animals**

The animals were the greatest treat for those city kids: horses, mules, pigs, goats, dogs, cats, everything! Dot, a pure white dog with a light brown dot on her head, was the boss dog. When Uncle Dessie told her to go get the cows, she knew exactly what he was saying and ran off, calling the other dogs to come help. Within 20 or 30 minutes, she would come barking back with the herd of cows, chasing them into the barn for their evening milking.

Pinck wanted to ride Dot, so Barry would hold her head while Pinck got on board. Always gentle with children, Dot would manage to collapse herself into nothing and get out from under, to Pinck and Barry's disappointment.

The pigs were wonderful, wallowing in the mud. They produced dozens of beautiful, squirming, little pink babies. But their mothers guarded the babies jealously, as Barry and Mary learned one day when they tried to pet the little ones. Uncle Dessie came to their rescue, as Mama Pig squealed and growled her objections, loudly, terrifyingly running at them.

"The wind was wrong," Barry decided, determining that they would try again when the wind blew from

the pig to the children instead of the other way around. He was becoming an excellent explainer.

The goats were Barry's favorites. Billy liked to butt the other goats and Nanny gave milk. Uncle Dessie actually drank the milk Nanny gave, just as if it had come from a cow. Barry loved to get into the goat cart to be pulled around. Even JuJu would tolerate that kind of fun and had her picture taken one day holding the reins with Jimmy in the cart.

Mary O, Uncle Dessie and Aunt Olive's daughter and only a few years older than the Keating kids, was "camp counselor" at Calhoun Plantation. She took the children into the river on every high tide, usually twice a day. Mary O taught the older Keating kids how to swim before, and she somehow didn't realize that she hadn't taught Barry. He paddled around with the others, including Dot and her vassal dogs, but held on to Jimmy where the water was deep.

## **The pony ride**

It was always a great day when Uncle Joe's Shetland ponies, living on the next farm, made their way at low tide around the long fence into the water. They swam easily, with their sharp hooves a danger to anybody in the water with them. As the dozens of ponies made their way to shore and overran Uncle Dessie's land, the children screamed with delight.

The first time Uncle Joe came to collect his ponies, the children stared. Uncle Joe was much smaller than the other uncles. But strangest of all, he had no hands. Instead of hands, there were metal hooks at the ends of his arms.



His hands had been burned off in an accident while he was connecting electricity, the children learned. Those gasoline engines that were used in the country to produce electricity produced direct current instead of alternating current, and he was trying to convert it when he got burned, they were told. As engineers, when they were older, Jim, Harty and Barry all developed an understanding of electricity. Harty, in fact, became an Electrical Engineer. He says to stay away from the stuff – it's dangerous!

Uncle Joe could grab a pony just as well with a hook as most people could with a hand. He was quite an unusual little fellow.

Barry and Harty wanted ponies, but they were too little, Uncle Joe said.

Jimmy wanted one, and Uncle Joe amazingly said "Okay."

"Don't worry," Jimmy told Harty and Barry, "you can ride mine."

Jimmy was thrilled beyond speech and took wonderful care of the little Shetland. I think he named it "Joe," for Uncle Joe.

## **The porpoises come to play**

There was a small square dock 30 feet from the beach, where the water was just deep enough for a shallow dive. Just beyond the dock was a row of saltwater river marsh grass, which the children called sedge. It washed up on the beach and dried to become sedge. It was the May River. On the other

side of the river was a barrier island, or sea island, called Callawassee.

Sometimes, farther out beyond the dock, porpoises swam by and the kids swam as hard as they could to keep up with them. The porpoises thought it was great fun, and plunged in and out of the water to delight the children. The children loved imitating the up-and-down motion of the porpoises, and the porpoises laughed at their puny efforts.

The dried sedge was collected by Charles and Mannie and taken to the barn to be used as a coating for the cows' floor. The cows mashed it into the mud and Charles and Mannie added more sedge every week so people could walk around in the barn, too.

## **Country eating**

Charles and Mannie's mother, Anna Bailey, went out at low tide, bare feet sinking in the mud, and dug for clams. When high tide was at night, Uncle Pat netted for mullet.

Growing in the fields were tomatoes, corn, squash, watermelon, soybeans, sugar cane and many other crops. Charles and Mannie were right except for the name of the school: The soybeans had been sent to Clemson University from China and were an experimental crop, grown at Calhoun Plantation because Uncle Dessie was an outstanding farmer in the state. The kids didn't like them much. The tomatoes that the families didn't eat were piled into huge mule-drawn carts and taken away to be sold.

The sugar cane had an interesting fate: in the fall, right after the children had to go back to town for

school, it was squeezed for its sweet juice and syrup was made. A huge iron machine was near the barn, and it was put to use in the fall, with mules attached to pull it round and round. Sugar cane was put into the top and the machine captured it and squeezed the goodness out of it. This juice was cooked in a big iron pot and became cane syrup.

There was always lots of syrup in the country, and it was eaten with homemade biscuits or cornbread almost every day.

## **Barry's faves**

Barry liked the tomatoes. When hominy was served for breakfast or supper, which was almost every day, red, ripe, delicious tomatoes were sliced alongside. Barry liked butter on his hominy, too, and would eat the leftovers if butter accidentally got into Harty's hominy. Harty hated butter. The kids ate corn every day for dinner. They called it corn-on-the-cob, because back in the city the cook cut it off for them.

A lot of Barry's favorite food was eaten outside. Charles and Mannie threw nets into the river in great circles and caught millions of tiny shrimp, which were usually boiled in the big black wash kettle, then peeled and eaten outdoors. They caught crabs every day, too, and the kids sat on benches outdoors under the trees to crack and eat them. Oysters were brought from the oyster factory nearby, at Aunt Kitty and Uncle Al Mew's house, but the children didn't much care for them.

## More relatives

Aunt Kitty Mew *[her real name]* was James's sister. She was also a music teacher and taught at the Bluffton school where Uncle Pat taught, too. Uncle Al Mew was an engineer and built bridges along roads in Pinckney Colony, near Bluffton, where the family farms were. He also farmed Oak Forest, a nearby plantation, where the Mews lived.

Uncle Al and Aunt Kitty were Barry's favorites and he was their favorite. They nicknamed him Bappy Kee. Their son John stayed sometimes at Uncle Dessie and Aunt Olive's with the children.

Their farm, Oak Forest, was on the opposite side from Uncle Joe's. If John were there to lead them, the kids could hop bareback on the farm horses and ride over, holding on to the manes and falling into little creeks occasionally.

Kitty and Al would look around when the barefoot and sunburned Calhoun Plantation crowd arrived at Oak Forest, two or three to a horse.

They'd ask, "Where's Bappy?" if he weren't along.

They paid special attention to him, both because he was the personality kid and because he was so full of spunk. They liked spunky kids, like their own John.

*[Barry says Oak Forest was too far away for these rides. So either I remember wrong or we never went there. Or both.]*

## Picking fruit

The plum trees gave fruit for a few weeks and the kids ate plums as long as they could. Sometimes they picked green ones because they couldn't wait, but those were bitter. Barry and Tim climbed dangerously high in the plum trees to get ripe ones.

There were pecans available all the time. Walnuts could be picked up in the orchards and cracked in the big vise by the barn. Barry liked the cracking better than the eating. He fed his walnuts to the pigs, who gobbled them with delight. They even ate the bitter green outer shells and the woody inner shells.

Watermelons came late in the summer. Barry ate his share.

Jimmy and Tom taught all the children how to spit watermelon seeds with pinpoint accuracy.

One day Barry got JuJu in the back, right on the corset. She didn't know what hit her but all the kids were totally dissolved in laughter, literally falling off of the benches. Aunt Olive, who wore a corset only to church, was laughing, too.

## Rabbit Island

Across a tiny creek, so small that the children could wade across it, was Rabbit Island [oyland, they called it]. The children were not allowed to go to Rabbit Island when they were small, but the big children could go over. So, naturally, the little ones went over, too. Even Barry, who was just about the youngest, went to Rabbit Island sometimes, but not by himself.

The big project on Rabbit Island was to look for rabbits. Charles and Mannie said there were lots there, but the children looked and looked and never saw a one. They were beginning to lose faith when Charles and Mannie trapped one and brought it over for proof. It looked yucky, but Aunt Olive cooked it and the children thought it was chicken.

## **Fairyland**

Barry's pets, the goats, had a marvelous playing place. Between the barn and Rabbit Island, there was a grove of leaning-over trees, shady and darkish even at midday. Aunt Olive called it Fairyland. The goats could climb right up the trunks and often did. The goats had trained the trees from seeds, Mary O said.

When the goats went to Fairyland, the children would rush over to play with them. The children could walk up the trunks, too, running up after the goats and scaring them away. "Leave them alone!" Barry would call. But it was no use. Seeing the goats have to jump from the tops of the trees was too exciting for the other Keating children.

The goats were food, too, and very special food. Uncle Dessie would occasionally butcher a young goat. Aunt Olive cooked it for a long time in gravy with carrots and onions and put pastry on top. She called it "kid pie" -- and it was delicious. Barry didn't approve of killing the goats but he loved kid pie.

## **The most broken arms?**

Jimmy tried to top Barry's broken-arm record that summer. He climbed as high as he could into a huge oak tree and fell hard to the ground, fifty or more

feet. Uncle Al and John rushed him to Savannah in a pickup truck, and it was weeks before he came back to the country.

Jimmy looked different and was more subdued, but gradually grew back to his old self. His arm didn't have to be re-set, so Barry was still ahead.

## **Breaking horses**

Daddy and Uncle Pat had a horse-breaking contest that summer when a couple of horses were old enough to be ridden. It wasn't a real contest, but one night, after a few salty dogs, they got into it. All the grownups, black and white, were watching.

Pat lived in the country so he was sure he could break a horse. Barry was at the barn with Daddy and rushed to Fairyland to get the other children so everybody could see strict Pat take the fall.

The grownups wanted to see this contest so much that, instead of putting the kids in front as they usually did for a parade or when a show was being put on for the kids' sake, they made a big circle that the children could not see through. The littlest ones had to crawl through the grownups' legs to get to the front, and the bigger ones pushed their way in to see.

## **Pat tries the ride**

Charles and Mannie held the first horse so Pat could mount. The horse bucked, then bucked again, and Pat flew through the air and hit the ground. Barry hung onto Daddy's legs and watched.

Pat wasn't hurt, but he was mad. The kids were scared, because Pat was so tough that he usually fussed at them when something went wrong. But Daddy and Mother were there this time, and they were laughing, so the children laughed too. God, it felt good! [You have to realize that Pat was fairly young, had lost his job at the Bluffton school, and was living on charity at Uncle Dessie's and Aunt Olive's, so was in great difficulty. Later, he was much nicer, running his own business and doing well.]

It was getting dark. Kerosene lanterns from the barn were brought out and gave the only light.

## **Daddy's turn**

Then Daddy got on the horse while Charles and Mannie held him. The horse bucked, then bucked again. Daddy's face got very red. He yelled -- and all the men yelled, too. Suddenly, after a few bucks, the horse calmed down and Daddy rode him sedately around the big circle the people had formed in front of the barn.

Pat said that he had broken the horse before Daddy got on. Now it became a contest.

## **The other horse**

Daddy called for the other horse. Out it came, fire in its eyes, hooves kicking everything in sight. Uncle Dessie warned Daddy that this was a crazy one.

Charles and Mannie couldn't hold this wild beast, so Uncle Dessie, Uncle Pat and Uncle Al all helped hold him while Daddy got on. This horse bucked and



bucked, then bucked and bucked some more. He almost threw Daddy.

"Daddy!" The children worried, screaming, urging him on but near tears. Mother was a wreck. But Daddy held on. The circle enlarged as the horse bucked toward the people and they backed out of the way.

## **Yelling in the dark**

Then Daddy was yelling again, and all the men yelled. Then the women and children yelled, too. The horse bucked a few more times, then slowed down and walked politely around the yellow lamplit circle in front of the big barn.

Daddy lifted his right leg over the horse's head, slid off and handed the reins casually but triumphantly to Pat. Pat didn't say a word. Daddy's children were incredibly proud. Daddy was treating his 'little brother' the same way Jimmy treated them.

Barry held onto Daddy's legs and wouldn't let go, smiling that fabulous smile.

"When are you going to break a horse, Daddy?" he asked, pulling on Daddy's pants for attention.

"I already broke him," said Daddy. "He's not broken," Barry insisted.

Daddy and Mother and a few of the grownups laughed with delight as Daddy explained that it was just an expression for taming the horse for riding.

Aunt Kitty and Uncle Al spread the story around the circle. "Bappy Kee," the grownups all started calling Barry. It was great being the baby of the family.

## **The new baby**

Bappy was a great baby while it lasted. But it didn't last forever. In 1938, just before it was time to go to the country, the Keating children had the greatest excitement of their lives: their little sister, Marcella. June the eighth was the day.

Sister Marcella, who was Mary's third-grade teacher, said it was the first time a pupil had named a baby for her. The always-literal Mary didn't get the joke. She indignantly told Sister Marcella that the baby was named for her mother.

## **Marcie June 8, 1938**

Marcie was gorgeous. She had blonde hair and blue eyes, and was pink and squirmy. For a few weeks, she was almost like a baby doll. Then she began to look around as the other children leaned over her crib and adored her.

The children couldn't really remember what babies were like, because they were so young when their siblings had come along and the babies had been surrounded by so many nurses, cooks and maids. This time, there were just Gail and Rosa, so the children had a chance to learn all the ropes: diapers, pins, baby powder, baths, nursing, baby food jars. It was fabulous, although Mother was so modest with herself and the baby that the kids couldn't really see anything up close.

Marcie started developing a sweet personality right away. She was agreeable about anything, and anything was what she got. The kids dragged her all over the house and yard just as if she were a doll -- and she loved it. They even bumped her down the stairs, but gently.

Usually Marcie just smiled and laughed about everything. Sometimes she would cry for a few minutes, but Mother usually didn't hear her so she would quiet down fast.

## **Not the youngest any more**

Barry took it very well. His life was changing rapidly, anyway, as he was going back to the country for the summer and the family was moving to a new house, at 633 East 41st Street, the first house they had owned. Barry would begin school -- real school -- in the fall. But first, there would be a summer in the country. And before that, a day at Jimmy's summer camp.

Jimmy was going for a couple of weeks to Camp Villa Marie near Savannah. The sisters and priests were planning a big Fourth of July party and invited all the parents and families to come.

Daddy decided to take the boat so he could give rides. At Villa Marie, he loaded the boat to the gunwales with happy camping kids and rode up and down the Skidaway River, going very slowly. The Keatings were used to fast boating, so hardly even bothered to go along.

Near the end of the long, sunburny day, Mother was sitting on the pavilion in the shade with the new baby

and Mary was hanging out with them. The dock was full of people. Jimmy had gone in the boat with Daddy to help control the young campers.

Barry and Harty were at the side where the camp kids went swimming. A portion of the river was fenced in so the children wouldn't float away. Harty jumped into the fenced area and swam around with the older kids. Barry watched for a moment and jumped in too. After all, hadn't he swum the whole last summer at Calhoun Plantation?

## **Like a rock**

Before Daddy pulled up in his overloaded boat, a couple of the Villa Marie boys noticed that Barry had sunk. He came up, sputtered, and sank again. Harty heard yelling and turned and swam back toward Barry, fast. Two of the boys jumped in and helped Harty pull Barry up just as Jimmy jumped out of the arriving boat. They pulled him up onto the floating dock at the bottom of the stairs and squished him until the water was out of his lungs. Everybody on the dock rushed over to watch.

Mother was sitting, holding the baby, and Mary eased over to the end of the covered dock to see what the excitement was. She looked over and saw her little brother lying on the floating dock, looking like he might be dead.

Big mouth rushed back to Mother and said, "It's Barry!"

"Here!" said Mother, handing her the baby. Mother rushed toward the stairs just as Daddy was carrying

Barry up to the pavilion dock. He was fine, a little pale, but laughing.

"Must have eaten too much!" he told his circle of fans, always the big explainer..

The next week, when Daddy delivered his children to Calhoun Plantation, he took Mary O aside and gave her a ten-dollar bill.

"Be sure you teach Barry to swim!" he said.  
"Barry can swim," said Mary O.

"Yeah, in shallow water," said Daddy.

He told her about the Villa Marie incident and she promised Barry would be Olympic quality by the end of summer 1938. Mary O was happy because \$10 was exactly what she needed to buy a present from a catalog. This was in the depths of the Great Worldwide Depression, and \$10 seemed like big bucks.

## **When the wind blows**

Next summer (1940) in the country a dangerous hurricane came.

Uncle Dessie listened to the radio every morning to hear the news about that crazy fellow Hitler in Germany and to find out what the weather would be like so he would know what farm tasks needed to get done.

One morning, Uncle Dessie didn't go to the fields as he always did. He had the radio going all morning long.

The children knew something was going on but they didn't know what a hurricane was. Hurricanes didn't even have names in those days. JuJu was more serious than ever.

The gasoline pump was turned on so electricity would flow, unusual especially in the daytime, and a lot of water was pumped, filling the bathtub and all the buckets in the house and barn. People were pumping water at the well for hours.

The men were nailing shutters tight and taking everything into the house and barns. Aunt Olive and her helpers cooked massive pans of food, and the fire in the big iron cooking stove was allowed to burn out -- unusual, even on the hottest days, because there was always a meal to be prepared.

Pat kindly told Jimmy to tie his pony by the well so it could get water from the trough during the storm. Pat put his precious hunting dogs there, too, dogs so snarly that even the dog-loving Keating children never petted them. One of them had just had a huge litter of puppies and Pat was planning to sell them for big money.

## **What did they call the wind?**

The breeze was rising. The river looked especially inviting as the tide rose high, but Mary O wouldn't let the children go for a swim. Too dangerous, the grownups said. Everybody had to stay in the house, although it looked like a lovely day for playing, cool and breezy instead of the usual hot and humid summertime weather. Mary O didn't go that day to the camp, where she was a real counselor.

Even Charles and Mannie and their mother and father had to come in and stay during the storm, an

unprecedented event. The children were warned that they should not open any windows or doors.

## **A tinkling piano**

As the pressure went down, the children got so restless that Aunt Olive went to the piano, drying her hands on her apron. She usually played only in the evening after she had worked all day and taken her apron off. It seemed strange to see her sitting, wearing an apron, at the grand piano in the middle of the day.

The singing time was everybody's favorite, especially Barry and Mary's, although neither of them could carry a tune. The children sang song after song, until they had sung every song Aunt Olive had ever taught them. Then she started over again.

JuJu just sat there, although she usually sang along. She was holding Yvonne, one of Pat's little girls, on her lap. Outside the wind was rising.

## **Gazing at the wind**

Aunt Olive was finally exhausted and the children wandered around the house, looking out at the storm and listening to the wind as it rose higher and higher.

Barry and Mary were always inseparable and they roamed into the wide dogtrot hall that divided the kitchen, pantry and eating rooms from the sleeping rooms and the big parlor where the piano was. The big hall served as a dormitory during the summer, with beds for all the children except Pat and Helen's

little girls, who slept in the back bedroom with their parents.

For the moment, Barry and Mary had the hall to themselves. They went to the front door and looked out. The wind was howling. The screens were flying out in the breeze! The big trees were bent over to the ground! The smaller fig trees lay flat. Never had they seen such a wind!

Curiosity got to them and they opened the front door to step out onto the screened porch so they could see better.

## **The storm's fury**

Bang! The door was snatched right out of their hands by the wind. Slam! The two of them were pinned down to the porch by the force. They tried to move back into the house, but they couldn't make any progress. They were trapped.

Inside the house, the wind from the door broke a window and raised the alarm. Pat was sent by Uncle Dessie to find the problem. When he got to the front door, he gave Barry and Mary hell for opening the door and told them to come inside immediately.

The wind was howling. Barry and Mary tried their best to get back inside but it was impossible. It was impossible for Pat to get out the door. Pat probably thought it would be just as well to let them blow away, but too many people were watching.



## A string of people

Finally Pat had to lie down flat on the floor inside and reach an arm out to grab Mary's legs. He tried to get Barry's legs but Barry wouldn't let him. Mary grabbed Barry's legs and they worked their way back in. Uncle Dessie and Charles and Mannie's father came and the three men managed to get the door closed.

Barry and Mary were in deep trouble as they sat up in the hall and caught their breath, waiting for Pat to slap them. They were given no comfort after their terrible ordeal. Neither were Uncle Pat or Uncle Dessie or Charles and Mannie's father. All sympathy was focused on JuJu.

When a window broke as a result of the door's being suddenly opened, JuJu was sitting just under that window in the big piano room, with Yvonne on her lap. A sharp piece of glass fell onto JuJu's arm and gave her a small but bloody cut. Yvonne wasn't hurt.

Aunt Olive and Charles and Mannie's mother, Annie, ran back and forth to the kitchen pantry, bringing first a basin of water and bandages and then a little glass of brown liquid for JuJu to drink. Barry and Mary were made to sit on one of the beds in the hall with Jimmy as babysitter.

*[\* Barry is so insistent on this point that I'm including his version of the story: As he remembers it, he went out the back door, not the front door, by himself. He said he was going to the bathroom, which -- as he correctly remembers -- was off the back porch. And Pat did not help him back in -- the wind blew him back into the hall. I've changed everything else that he insisted on, but my memory is clear on the earlier version. And*

*when a door blows out on an airplane, are the people blown inside? No way -- they are sucked outward.]*

## **In the eye of the storm**

At last there was a break in the storm. Uncle Dessie listened to WSAV in Savannah on the radio and warned everybody that it wouldn't last. But he let all the children go out on the porch for an hour to stare in amazement at the ripped-out screens and flattened trees and talk in nervous excitement about all the things they had seen.

As Uncle Dessie had predicted, the wind began to kick up again. This time, it was worse. The wind pushed the water into enormous, fearsome waves. The sleepy little May river, 100 yards from the house, grew into a monster and slammed waves higher than the house against the porches and windows. Fortunately, Uncle Dessie and the other men had repaired the broken window with big pieces of wood during the lull.

## **Through the window**

Barry and Mary had no intention of opening the door again but Pat kept an eye on them just in case.

"Don't touch that door!" he said as they wandered back into the hall.

"We won't!" they promised.

They stood a foot away from the glass as they watched the wind. It was unbelievable – the fig trees were standing back up, then bending over the other way!

Within just a couple of hours, the storm was over and everything was suddenly flat calm. Jimmy ran down to the trough to check on his pony. It had drowned. Jimmy and his siblings were devastated. Pat's puppies drowned too and the Keating kids were almost glad. Not quite, but almost. The whole area had been under water and the animals were tied, so couldn't get away.

## **Daddy to the rescue**

The next day, Daddy came to Pinckney Colony to check on his family. He brought an axe with him and had to hack through tree after tree that had been blown down into the road and was too big to move.

He first went to Calhoun Plantation, where his children were staying. All were fine, although JuJu gave him a full report about the cut on her arm being caused by Mary and Barry. He kissed JuJu and made Mary and Barry apologize, which they did reluctantly. She looked off and wouldn't accept but at least they had tried.

Daddy commiserated with Jimmy about the lost pony and with his brother Pat about the lost puppies. He thanked Olive, Dessie and Mary O for keeping everybody safe. He helped his four older children pack and piled them into the car. They would go with him to check on Kitty and Al and then he would take the children home to Savannah. Mother would never believe they were okay unless she saw them for herself.

On the way to Kitty and Al's, Daddy had to move and chop more trees, but this time he had eager helpers.

## **A block in the road**

About halfway to Oak Forest, the road was blocked by a fallen tree so huge that even a big ax could not remove it without days of work. So everybody piled out of the car and walked across the wet fields toward the house. Oak Forest really is a forest of oaks.

As the group got to Uncle Al's watermelon field, Daddy plucked a watermelon and opened it with his pocket knife for everybody. The children ate with such appetite that he opened another. They began feeling so much better that they shot watermelon seeds at each other.

Soon the straggly little group came to a water pump. It was dry. Daddy pumped and pumped but nothing came out. So he assigned children to pump the handle while he brought handfuls of dirty, muddy water from the ruts in the road. Miraculously, the dry pump came back to life and clean, fresh water poured up out of the ground. Everybody drank and drank.

## **Raising the roof**

They walked past one of the field-hand houses and Daddy called in to see if anybody was there. Finally he looked inside. It was empty, dark and soggy.

At last, Daddy and the children got to the house at Oak Forest, Uncle Al and Aunt Kitty's place. Everybody was fine but they reported a terrible ordeal during the storm.

All the families on the place had to be brought into the tiny house during the storm. The little black children were put on blankets and quilts under the

piano for protection. Luckily, John was at Oak Forest that day instead of over with the other children, so he could take care of the little people under the piano and help with everything.

As at Calhoun Plantation, Aunt Kitty and the Oak Forest women cooked lots of food and put the stove out. Uncle Al, John and the men and bigger boys nailed everything down before the winds came.



**Jimmy and Marcie Keating on 41st Street, about 1939**

By the time the Keating kids got home to Savannah with Daddy, their new baby sister was starting to be an interesting little person. The family was settling into the new house at 633 East 41st Street.

After that eventful summer, Barry was ready for the relative peace of first grade. He and Harty both went to the new Blessed Sacrament School, Harty in second grade after a year at Mary and Jimmy's school, Sacred Heart, and Barry in first.

## **School was great**

Barry loved first grade. When he got home from school each day, he would get himself a snack. Afterward, he settled down for a minute with the baby and visited.

Then he would find Mother. Barry was ready to talk about school, perhaps about how much he liked reading, or about how scared he was, maybe about what he wanted to be when he grew up, all the different stuff that kids want to talk about.

"Run outside and play," Mother would say.

Barry's coloring book was all filled up. Most of the crayons were broken. It would be a while before his brothers got home, and he couldn't talk to Jimmy and Harty about being scared. Daddy was out of town, but Mary would be home soon. Marcie would grow up someday. And he promised that he'd listen if she ever wanted to talk.

Maybe Mother would talk if she knew what to say. He'd try at the dinner table, when she was usually ready for conversation.

## **Sweet teacher**

"Sister Loretta is the sweetest teacher in the world," Barry announced one day at the table, "even though she has BO."

"What's BO?" asked Mother, sure that he wouldn't know.

"Body Odor," responded the child of the radio age. "She needs some Mum. Can I take her some of yours?"

Mother was horrified at the very idea, but everybody else laughed and egged him on.

Toward the end of the summer, Barry had used up all the fun and was ready to go back to school for the second grade. In second grade, Barry and Mike Redmond, a classmate, became fast friends. When they were together, they had their own jokes and nobody else knew when to laugh.

Mike was very short and Barry was becoming very tall, so of course everybody called them Mutt and Jeff. Nobody ever seemed to know which cartoon character was Mutt and which was Jeff, so they called them Barry and Mike when addressing them individually.

## **Rug-flapping breeze**

Another storm came up while Bappy was staying that summer with Uncle Al and Aunt Kitty. Again, they brought the people into the house at Oak Forest. This time, as the wind blew up through the cracks in the floors, raising and flapping the rugs, and in through

the cracks around the windows, blowing the curtains off of their rods, the roof of the house began to lift!

After going into the attic and trying to nail it down, Uncle Al called for coat hangers. All the clothes in the house were taken off wire hangers. Barry was assigned to straighten the wires and reach them up to the attic where Uncle Al and John tied them around the rafters to fasten the roof to the beams.

The wires held! If that house is still standing, the wires are probably still there.

## **Curiosity**

Barry was curious, and always wanted to know what was going on. He could root around and find out a lot of things, but some things you can't get by rooting.

Like every kid, Barry had parents who told him he was too young to know when there were grown-up secrets. But when he messed up, they were quick to say, "Barry! You should have known!"

He got more than they knew by rooting, though. There were no secrets from him in closet or attic or outbuilding. He found out about Daddy's time in the sanatorium by finding letters Daddy had written to Mother before they were married. That deep, dark secret would never have been known by the children unless Barry had rooted. And there was no hiding Christmas from him.

## **Words and actions**

Barry always liked words to fit actions.



Because he was curious, he was sure that Mother and Daddy weren't as holy as they acted on Sunday.

"Stay clean, now!" Mother would say to Barry in his white suit. "We're going to the House of the Lord."

"It might be better to invite the Lord to our house," Barry would say to himself.

He fixed Mother, though. It was unintentional at least on the surface. Mother dragged her children to church every first Friday every year for years, because she had heard that if you went to Mass and Communion for nine first Fridays in a row, you would definitely go to Heaven. But we never made it to nine, so maybe Heaven isn't for this crowd.

One year, the ninth Friday turned out to be Good Friday, when there was no Communion in those days. Another year the children were all too sick to go. So the next year, she was all excited when they got to the ninth first Friday. All the children were well enough to go, and they walked in the morning chill over to Blessed Sacrament Church.

Barry and Harty walked a little ahead. Barry was thirsty, so he casually went over to the fountain when they got to the church and had a drink. You couldn't go to Communion in those days if you ate or drank anything after midnight the night before.

Mother screamed as she walked up. "Harty, why didn't you stop him?" she asked.

Harty was next in line for water. "I didn't think of it."

"It was like a knife through my heart," said Mother, who always took things personally. "All those

mornings, getting up, walking in the cold winter, in the dark, over to Blessed Sacrament with all those children. And then Barry drank water and ruined everything!"

She talked about it for the next thirty years. Or more.

## **Boat in the water**

One fall day when a hurricane had passed nearby, the water rose on 41st street as it did after a normal summer rainstorm until the new 40-inch 45th Street sewer was built a few years later.

As always when the water got good and high, Daddy and the boys rolled the boat trailer out into the street and down to where the water began, half a block away from the Keating house. They put the boat into the water.

Every child in the neighborhood got aboard the boat. Mike came over from the other side of the block-sized puddle, where his family lived, and hopped into the boat beside his pal Barry. All the bigger children took turns paddling.

Then Daddy took over with two oars in the oarlocks and made the boat really travel. He finally gave in, with everybody begging, and ran the engine for a few minutes. Barry thought it was the most fun ever!

## **Homework**

The bigger kids always had homework. Barry wasn't exactly jealous, but he thought it would be nice to have some schoolwork to do at home. First and second-graders always think that.

So when third grade finally arrived, Barry was excited at the idea of having homework -- but he knew he ought to complain about it. All his older sibs did.

The first day of school in third grade, Barry came home and slammed his books on the table in the hall.

"It's not fair!" he told Mother. "The first day of school and already we've got homework!"

"Better get to it," said Mother.

"I knew you'd say that!" answered Barry, heading to the kitchen for food.

## **Puppy love**

Barry wasn't very good at saving his money, but he was better than his siblings. At one point, he had life savings of 21 cents. But it went to his head. He was conned out of more than half of it by a guy who is probably sitting in prison right now or dead from a prison fight.

Frank Bruce, the bad boy across the street, had a dog who had puppies. Barry fell in love with the runt of the litter, probably because Frank pushed that one on him. Either he had read Tom Sawyer, which seems unlikely for Frank, or he was a born con man. He wouldn't let Barry hold the little creature for long...just long enough for him to fall in love.

After baiting the trap, Frank announced that the puppy was for sale -- for 21 cents. Amazingly, it was the exact amount in Barry's piggy bank. I didn't say that Frank was dumb, just that he was bad.

But Barry had conversational resources of his own. He talked Frank down to fifteen cents and the puppy was his!

He brought it across the street and announced he was its new owner.

Of course Mother said, "No."

"She's mine!" said Barry.

"We'll see what your father has to say about that," she replied.

## **Daddy and the puppy**

Barry knew he could handle this one. When Daddy pulled into the driveway, Barry was waiting in the front yard. He stepped up to the door of the car before Daddy could get it open.

"Guess what!" he said.

"What?" asked Daddy.

"We've got a puppy!" announced Barry.

"Is it a bitch?" asked Daddy, who always loved to use the word.

"Yes," said Barry triumphantly. "She'll have puppies and we can sell them!"

Barry and Daddy went to the kitchen. Daddy sat down while Barry got a pint bottle of whiskey, still in a small brown paper bag, down from Cupboard C. Barry carefully poured a little whiskey into one glass

and some water into another while Daddy watched intently.

Barry put the two glasses in front of Daddy on the kitchen table, and put the bottle back into Cupboard C, on the bottom shelf, far right. Daddy poured the whiskey into his mouth all at once, held it there and added a little of the water before swallowing.

Then Daddy drank the rest of the water and viewed Barry's acquisition. They stood the squirmy little puppy up on the kitchen table, which had green legs and a surface made of flooring wood, for inspection. The totally odd-looking little creature was wagging her tail so hard she kept falling down.

"I bought her for fifteen cents!" Barry announced.

"You paid too much," said Daddy.

Barry poured Daddy another drink of whiskey and turned to get him some water.

"Do you like her?" he asked Daddy.

"Too much whiskey," Daddy said.

Barry took the whiskey back down out of Cupboard C and poured a tiny amount back into the bottle, hardly spilling any. He handed the two glasses to Daddy.

"Here," he said.

"Put 'em on the table," said Daddy.

"Hold the dog," said Barry.

The little doggie's toenails kept slipping as she ran back and forth across the kitchen table, from Barry to Daddy and back, licking their faces and hands. Daddy held her still while Barry put the two glasses down, then Barry held her while Daddy took his drink, pouring it down fast.

"Let 'er go," Daddy said, putting the empty glasses down where Barry could get them.

Barry put the two glasses on the sink and they watched the homely little black-and-white creature cavort on the table.

"Isn't she cute?" asked Barry, wanting some commitment from Daddy.

In her excitement, the little dog knocked over a container of chocolate Bosco that was on the table.

"Put her on the floor!" said Daddy. "Look at that mess."

Barry put the puppy on the floor and she began licking up the chocolate.

"See!" said Barry. "She can help clean up, too!"

"You'll have to take care of her yourself. And keep her outside!" said Daddy. "What's her name, by the way?"

"I think I'll name her Bosco," said the proud new owner.

Daddy was always easier than Mother.

And that was that. The ungainly little black-and-white mutt with the strangely long hair launched

puppies and her daughter, Donnie [named for a saint, Don Bosco], launched some more. They were the family pets for years, even after Barry had gone off to school. Everybody loved them.

Nobody could ever figure out who the father of the puppies was because they all looked exactly like Bosco. Frank never forgave himself for giving up his best income possibility.

## **'My Summer Vacation'**

It was just a few days after school began that next year that Mother went and stood in the hall, her lips pursed, holding a school paper in her hand, as soon as she heard Daddy's car in the driveway.

"Look at this!" she said, handing him the paper.

Daddy put his stuff down and went into the kitchen, putting the paper down on the damp table. He poured himself a drink and asked Mother to join him.

"I guess I'd better," she said, sighing reluctantly. "Aren't you going to read this?" she asked, picking up the paper.

"Gimme a chance," he said, sitting down while she poured him a second drink and sat down to sip her own.

"Oohnh!" Mother said. She always made a face when she drank whiskey.

Daddy read aloud. "How I Spent My Summer Vacktion, By Barry Keating." He remarked: "He can't spell vacation."

"That's not the worst of it," said Mother. "Sister called today and I had to go over to school and get that awful paper. It's nothing but trash! I don't know where these children get their ideas. And Barry is just a little fellow! It's the older ones! I tell you it is embarrassing! All the other mothers will know all about it, you can be sure!"

"What's so awful?" asked Daddy.

"Just read it and see," said Mother.

## **Rotten spelling**

Daddy read the paper. ***"Mike and me stold some tires and made a stinky fier in the serkel. We went to the cutnry. Wen we got bact Mike and me stold some beer out of the bakt of mike's cumfecrytay and drank it and got stupd. Wen I got hom, Mother and Daddy didnt even notiss we wree drunkt."***

"The kid can't spell worth a damn," Daddy interjected.

"Can't spell?" said Mother, ready to scream and fixing herself another drink. "Oohnh! He's stealing and drinking! And that lovely summer in the country, that we sacrificed for the children to have, he hardly mentioned! I'm embarrassed to death!"

***"Harty and me smowkt a hold pact of crgittes. Mary and Jimmy browt Marcie and me a tom clonnis of jin from johnny harrises. it wuz a grate summer."***

"Well, he definitely can't spell," said Daddy.



"Jim! You've got to handle the boy! He's getting too big for his mother to spank!" said Mother.

## **Moving on**

By this time, Barry was standing behind Cupboard A eavesdropping on the discussion. "Spank!" he heard, and skeedaddled out the front door and over to Mike's house. He told Mike he was thinking of moving out. They went over to Mike's Confectionery and "stold" some more beer and went to the "serkel" and drank it and got pretty stupid.

When Barry got home, way after dark, Daddy called him into the living room, where he had dozed off in his Morris chair.

"Son, you've got to work on your spelling. Look at this paper...Sister gave you an F and you can't afford it -- spelling's going to drag your grades down."

Mother was sitting on the sofa, dozing off over the Evening Press.

She added, "All right, Barry, you're going to work on your spelling every night from now on or it's a whipping for you."

And Barry did. At least for a couple of nights until Mother and Daddy forgot about it.

But the summer vacktion paper was all true. That was Barry. Lousy speller. Tell the truth.

## **Growth requires food**

Barry began to grow very fast. He had to eat a great deal to keep up with his growth spurt. He ate more than Jimmy or Mary or Harty, the older sibs.

Barry ate even more than Richmond, the house man, who was famous for his appetite. Richmond was called a house man because he was originally hired to take care of the yard but never liked outdoor work that much. He had come by the house one day, wiped off the car that was parked at the sidewalk, came up and rang the bell and told the maid, "I cleaned the car for you." She called Mother, who hired him on the spot. He came every week for years.

The maid by then was Rosa Lee Johnson, who worked for the family until she became ill, many years later. The Keating kids loved Rosa and Gail.

Richmond waxed the floors of the Keating house at least once a week and washed the windows once a month. The floors were a little dangerous to walk on, but the windows were clean.

## **Drive and serve?**

He insisted that he could serve also as chauffeur and butler if the kids would just teach him to drive and serve, but he smelled too bad, poor fellow. Even the Keating kids, who were pretty tolerant, couldn't stand the odor. Richmond didn't have a bathtub at home, but slept on a cot in the basement of the Forsyth Apartments on Whitaker Street where he was caretaker, waxing more floors, probably washing the huge number of windows and keeping the furnace going in the winter.

Richmond dressed in awful rags. Mother gave him old clothes of Daddy's once in a while but he never wore those -- he turned them in for cash somewhere.

He smoked but couldn't afford the habit.

"Mr. Keat'n, you ain't got a cigarette, is you?" was his weekly request of Daddy, who would cough up an old bent pack with two or three cigarettes in it. Cough? Oh, yeah.

## **Chicago trip**

Barry and Richmond planned for years that, when Barry grew up, they would take a trip to Chicago and pick up 'babes' together. Barry, of course, would own a fine car and Richmond would dress up and drive it for him. It was a lovely dream that hasn't come true yet.

Richmond was a famous eater. His dinners were served at the kitchen table on a huge serving platter rather than a mere dinner plate.

## **She who laughs last**

Rosa always loved it when she got a laugh. She considered the Keatings a crazy family, but she enjoyed their sense of fun. Once she heard Mamie saying she wanted a small piece of pie and brought her a sliver. That brought the house down, because Mamie adored desserts.

Rosa got another great laugh one day when Barry was late for dinner. Everybody was always late for dinner because, for some reason nobody ever figured out, Mother had dinner served at 2 o'clock. The

children didn't usually get home until 3 o'clock and Daddy was even later. Mother dined alone.

Barry called to Rosa in the kitchen as he came in, "I'm really hungry today, Rosa!"

As he sat down at the dining room table, taking off his jacket and dropping his books on the way, Rosa brought in a serving platter piled high with food.

"Is this enough?" she asked, putting it in front of him. Everybody roared.

But Barry got the last laugh: "It's enough to start with."

## **The lawn mowing**

Richmond would cut the grass only if he were threatened with jail. So the lawn was taken over by Jimmy, who soon passed the job down to Harty, who quickly passed it down to Barry.

Barry had heard about a fabulous new phenomenon: a lawnmower with a gasoline motor. A bit of charm, a lot of smiles and a bunch of talk later, Daddy was persuaded and Barry was in charge of one of these incredible modern engines. Even Daddy cut the grass occasionally to test out the new machine. The lawn began to look fabulous, although all those five children plus all the neighbors padded around on it constantly between mowings.

Once in a while, as a great treat, Barry would let Mike mow the lawn.

Mike came around every Saturday morning during grass-growing season and begged: "Barry, can I please cut the grass today?"

"May I," Barry would answer.

"May I cut the grass today?" Mike would ask.

"Not today," Barry would say. "Maybe next week." Barry hadn't read Tom Sawyer for nothing.

After a couple of weeks of begging, Barry would relent and tiny Mike would push the lawnmower around, wearing an intent expression. Soon Barry had a lawn mowing business in the neighborhood and he let Mike handle the hedges and edges while he mowed the grass.

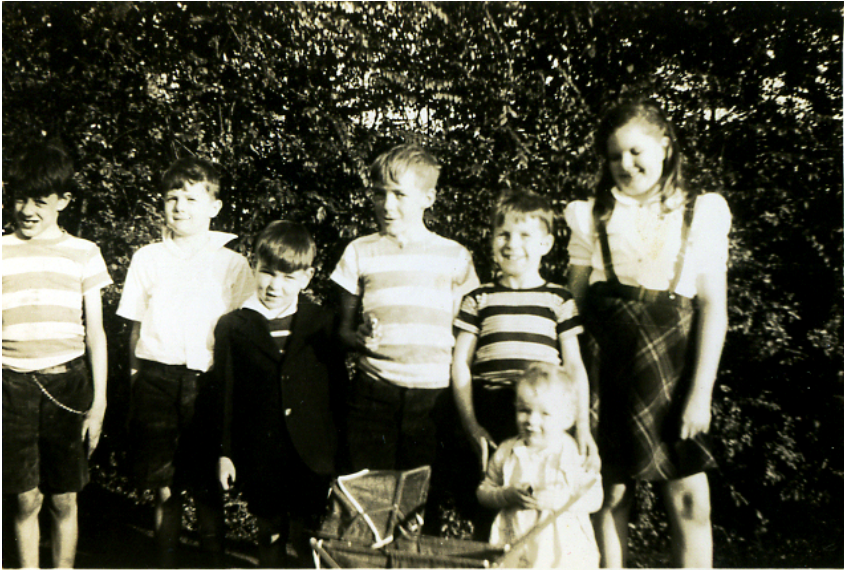


**From left, Barry Keating, Bootsy Reynolds, Harty Keating, Mary Keating and Jimmy Keating, about 1940. Mother must have taken this because the house across the street is in the background.**

## Chapter IV

### Growing Up

Barry was no longer a little kid. All the Keating children were growing like weeds. Their neighborhood friends, who often turned up in family snapshots, included Archie Myers next door, Bootsy Reynolds across the street and Roby Egan around the corner on Maupas and Reynolds streets. Their extensive set of first cousins also came over to play in the big back yard on 41st Street.



**From left, Barry Keating, Bootsy Reynolds, Pinck O'Brien, Harty Keating, Roby Egan with Marcie Keating in front, Mary Keating, about 1941. Where's Jimmy? He was handling the camera. That's why the house across the street isn't in the shot.**

Along about then, Barry invented the clock radio. He got a wooden Coca Cola six-pack and slid a clock into one side and a radio into the other. He wired the two

together and woke every morning to Windy Herrin playing happy tunes on WTOC. He should have patented it.

## **A room of his own**

It must have been pure charm that got Barry a room of his own. That's how Mary got hers. Jimmy slept on a daybed in Mamie's room and Mary had a room of her own at the other end of the hall. Marcie, the baby, slept in a crib in Mother and Daddy's room. Then Mamie took Harty, her personal favorite, into her room so Barry had a room to himself.

Barry's room was fascinating. He was always inventing something new. To keep his brothers and sisters from coming into his room and disturbing his good stuff, Barry connected an electric wire to the metal part of the glass knob that was on the door leading into the hall. Were we shocked? Only once each. Once is exactly enough for an electric shock. I bet even Benjamin Franklin and his son, William, knew that.

Besides Barry's stuff to admire, the Keating kids had to go in occasionally to get a book or to go to the attic. Both the kids' bookcase and the door to the attic stairs were in his room.

To get into Barry's room, the children finally figured out, you could walk across Jimmy's daybed and use the door that connected Barry's room to Mamie's. Or, you could just use the glass part of the doorknob, but that was harder for little hands.

When you got into Barry's room, you had to be careful, especially if it were dark, because his light

switch had no plate and no switch -- you had to cross two wires to get light. Eventually he wired the other door as well. Thus did he protect himself and his stuff.

## **Air was hard to get**

You wouldn't know it to look at him, but for such a big, tall, healthy-looking boy, Barry had severe health problems. Every now and then, in the middle of the night, Barry would begin to breathe asthmatically. Soon he would be unable to get his breath and the wheezing could be heard all over the house.

Daddy would open Barry's door so he and Mother could go in. The other children gathered around Barry's bed and watched. They thought their baby brother might be dying, his breath came with such difficulty.

Mother and Daddy lighted black 'pastilles,' which gave off a smelly smoke that seemed to help Barry get his breath a little better. Everybody would hold the Indian blanket to keep the smoke underneath so Barry could breathe. He would fall asleep at last, breathing a little better, and everybody could go back to bed.

The next day, Barry always breathed normally but was incredibly pale, with dark blue circles under his eyes, totally exhausted from his awful night. Asthma would attack him night after night. Barry missed a lot of school because of it.

Mother later blamed the illness on the beautiful mimosa tree outside Barry's window, and it was true that his asthma went away about the time a



hurricane blew the tree down. But nobody ever figured that out, or even that it was seasonal, through the years when he was having attacks. It was just desperately scary, for Barry and his whole family.



**Mother on Broughton Street, about 1940**

The height of fashion at the corner of Bull Street

## **Who knows? The rooter knows**

Barry always knew what was coming for Christmas. His curiosity got him into everything. Mother called him a "rooter."

He always knew -- but the other children still didn't believe him the year he said that everybody, every single body in the house, except Jimmy who had bought one with his newspaper earnings, and Marcie who was too little, was getting a new bicycle. It was impossible!

On Christmas Eve 1940, the Keating children went to bed when told. They were always obedient children, if a little dawdly. And it was a cold night.

At about 4 a.m., something [maybe Santa?] woke Mary up and she woke up Jimmy, Harty and Barry. The four crept quietly down the stairs so they wouldn't awaken Marcie or Mother and Daddy. When they got to the hall, Jimmy spurred ahead into the dark living room.

"Bikes!" he shouted.

## **Colorful new wheels**

And bikes it was! Each child had a different-colored bicycle. Even Jimmy's black Schwinn had been smartened up with a new seat, handlebar grips and speedometer.

At that hour of the morning, in the dark, in their pajamas and as cold as it was, the Keating children rode, screaming and shouting with glee, up and down the otherwise quiet 41st Street. They woke all the

neighbors. It was years before Mother forgave Mary, but she was finally able to laugh about it and eventually thought it was adorable.

*\*[Another point of disagreement. Barry says we all biked to Isle of Hope, but I say "no," at least not that night. Maybe he did it later.]*

Colonel Lapp across the street complained bitterly about the Christmas shenanigans by his noisy neighbors.



**Daddy at the beach, about 1940**

War was kicking up across the Atlantic

## **America goes to war**

The war came to the United States in 1941. The Keating children were deeply affected already by the sad news that was in the Savannah Morning News every morning and the Savannah Evening Press every afternoon and on the radio -- at 630 on your radio dial -- at 6:30 every night.

The kids couldn't believe it when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939. They were devastated the next year when an extra was called in the streets: France had fallen. Hitler was the worst villain they had ever heard of, worse than Attila the Hun.

So when the United States entered the war, the Keating kids became cheerleaders for the troops. All their intensity was rolled up into one big knot of hatred for Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo. They listened with Daddy to H.V. Kaltenborn on the big radio that looked like a miniature cathedral. Fairbanks Morse, amplitude modulation, frequency modulation, it said on the front. But both WSAV [630] and WTOC [1040] were strictly AM in those days.

## **Winning the war at home**

Barry saved tinfoil to win the war. After anybody finished a package of cigarettes or unwrapped a piece of chewing gum, he peeled the tin from the wrapper and added it to his heavy silver ball. Soon he had a ball of tinfoil bigger than anybody in the neighborhood.

Barry also saved string for the war effort and had a huge ball of that, but decided to use it for spool knitting instead of beating up the Axis powers.

"How could string help the Army?" he asked, logically.

The Keating children peeled paper from tin cans and flattened the cans for the war effort.

Big olive drab-colored trucks full of khaki-dressed troops, in convoys of dozens and dozens of trucks, each one with 15 or 20 soldiers in the back, rolled up and down Victory Drive behind the Keating house every day. The troops were probably going to the beach for the day but the Keating children thought they were going to defend Tybee. They were dressed for it.

As the huge roar of a convoy filled the air, the Keatings would dash over to Victory Drive on their bikes, Marcie on Harty's handlebars, to see them pass. They loved to wave at the soldiers as they went by -- and the soldiers would wave back and throw little knots of paper with their names and addresses written on them. Some of the Keating children wrote to these "pen pals," but none developed into longtime friendships.

## **Squash the squash**

Barry helped to dig the family victory garden, even though it took up too much space in his beautiful green back lawn.

Unfortunately, Daddy chose to grow squash, which made both Barry and Harty throw up. Mary had too much sense to eat the stuff, although Jimmy ate it regularly without evident harm. Marcie wisely followed Mary's example.

The children picked squash almost daily and pushed it on the neighbors to save their own health.

Soon the victory garden outgrew the back yard and a vacant lot on the southwest corner of 41st and Reynolds was taken over by us and another neighbor, an old man who lived on Victory Drive. We had no idea who owned the property -- the war made it okay. This lot became a real miniature farm, with rows and rows of greens and even corn growing. There were lots like it all over Savannah.

## **Shark fertilizer**

When Jimmy and Tom O'Brien, a first cousin, caught a shark at Tom's house at the beach, they brought it into town to the Keating back yard for everybody to admire. After a few days, it began to smell awful, so the boys pulled it down to the victory garden on the corner and buried it. That shark grave was the best spot in the whole garden.

Barry wanted to bring in some goats to eat the weeds in the victory garden, but his idea didn't catch on with Daddy, so the children learned to pull them.

## **Easter finery**

Every Easter, war or no war, Barry and his brothers put on natty little navy blue jackets and short white pants. Harty finally got three-quarter knickers, which made him feel incredibly grown up. Barry got them the next year.

Barry had long bare legs. He could hardly wait for long pants and finally got them, the same year Harty did, although Harty thought Barry should have to wait at least another year, since he was two years younger. But he was so tall!

Soon Mary had stockings for Easter, even though there was a war on and Mother didn't know where she would ever get another pair. You just can't wear socks with high heels, Mary insisted.

Marcie was growing every day, a sweet presence in the house. Everybody adored her. Her Easter outfits were lacy, frilly, pink or blue. Just precious. But most days she wore sundresses or shorts, or long, warm pants with little hoods on her jackets in the winter.



**Can this be the same trike? Marcie, about 1942**



## Rationing

Barry was growing like a weed. Did I say that before?

During the war [*What war? ask younger readers: World War II, the big one, WW2, U.S. involvement 1941, starting with Pearl Harbor 7 Dec followed by declaration of war Dec 8 and ending 15 August 1945; not the war to end all wars, U.S. involved 1917- 1918, the Great War, World War I*], food, gasoline and some other items, shoes among them, were rationed.

Daddy needed plenty of gas coupons since he traveled for a living. On the windshield of each car was displayed the category, A, B, C or D, that the car's driver was entitled to. D was the least, A the most. T was astronomical. It stood for Truck. Sometimes a filling station operator who appreciated his regular business would give Daddy a couple of black-background T coupons, which were to be used only by trucks, instead of the green-background C and D coupons. They were good for 20 gallons instead of two each.

While there were certainly no hardships, after all, nobody was shooting at us, although they were at many other people, there were minor difficulties, like shoes wearing out too fast.

## Walking out of shoes

Shoe coupons and several kinds of food coupons were kept in separate books, one for each member of the family. The allocations were no doubt carefully planned by the powers in Washington, but they always seemed a little skimpy to the extravagant Keatings.



Barry had the double problem of growing very fast and being very hard on his shoes. Jimmy and Harty went through shoes in a hurry, too. And the shoes themselves were of very low quality. After all, top quality was for the troops.

Mother and Daddy gave up their shoe coupons for the children, but they still walked through the bottoms and poked out at the toes.

Mother finally took Jimmy, Harty and Barry downtown to the Ration Bureau in their worst shoes and said: "Look at these children! They've got to have shoes!"

The Ration Board agreed and she got four extra shoe stamps. One was officially for Mary, who didn't go along -- but Mother used it for Barry since he needed it so much more.

*[When Mother died, I found the ration books still in the sideboard. Foolishly, I gave each sib his/her own book, so they are all scattered and nobody knows where any of them are any more.]*

## **Four and twenty steaks**

Because Daddy, Uncle Tom, Jimmy and young Tom went to sea for the Coast Guard every month, they ate like kings. Their rations were huge. Daddy simply wrote a "check" for the food stamps at the grocery store when he was checking out with piles of steaks and other goodies denied ordinary mortals. *[Harty says this was not so but I remember it very well. Who's older? You decide.]*

But Daddy must have taken an oath or something. He jealously guarded these allotments from the rest

of the family. Only if something were left over from the three-day trip would he bring it home. But the boatmen usually ate it all.

The rest of the family -- even skinny, hungry Barry -- had to make do with lesser portions. Sometimes a kind of jam that was not rationed -- mango was one -- would turn up on the grocery shelves and Mother would stock up. But that was considered "hoarding," so she wouldn't get as much as she'd like, although she would make two or three trips to the stores. Even peanut butter, Barry's favorite food, was in short supply. The children didn't actually go hungry, but just had to make do with items they weren't that fond of.

## **Beating the system**

When butter came into the store, having enough coupons did you no good. Mr. and Mrs. Weiner, who owned the grocery store, had their own rationing system: one quarter-pound block to a customer. Mother's method for handling that was to send each of her children to the store on an errand -- and add a quarter-pound of butter to the list. You had to run over fast, as soon as the butter came in. [*Price and 38th Street? Or somewhere in that neighborhood.*]

Barry zoomed over to Weiner's one day and bought something like a head of lettuce that required no coupons and a quarter-pound of butter, requiring one red coupon, which he laid down on the checkout counter with the money.

Mrs. Weiner looked at him sharply. "Aren't you one of the Keatings?"

"Me?" he asked. His grip tightened on the butter.

Mrs. Weiner had already seen two or three Keatings that day. In fact, Mary was heading to the checkout line right behind him, trying to act like they weren't together. She cut out and browsed around the store, waiting for Mrs. Weiner to take a break so somebody else would check her out.

Barry slunk out of the store with the precious butter and ran down to Mike's to tell how he almost got caught. By the time he got home, the butter was mush. The family ate it anyway.

Mother finally figured out that, when butter came in at Weiner's, all the stores had butter. So she would stop at Roger's and the A&P, too, and get as much as they'd let her have. Since she was a regular at all the stores, she had no difficulty. This was really called hoarding. Daddy had to build Cupboard D, three feet by three feet and ceiling high, to hold all the stuff. Some of it may still be there, or Jim's children may have demolished it..

## **Photographs**

When Mother realized that she had let her babies' childhoods slip by with so few photographs, she began taking them downtown occasionally to Adler's for professional pictures.



**Marcie, at Adler's photo studio, about 1942. Or is that  
Mother's vanity bench?**



**Marcie in the yard on 41st street, about 1942**

## Babysitting

Mamie was getting old as the children grew up. She would babysit while Mother and Daddy went out of town, but it was getting hard for her.

Mamie made some of the difficulties for herself.

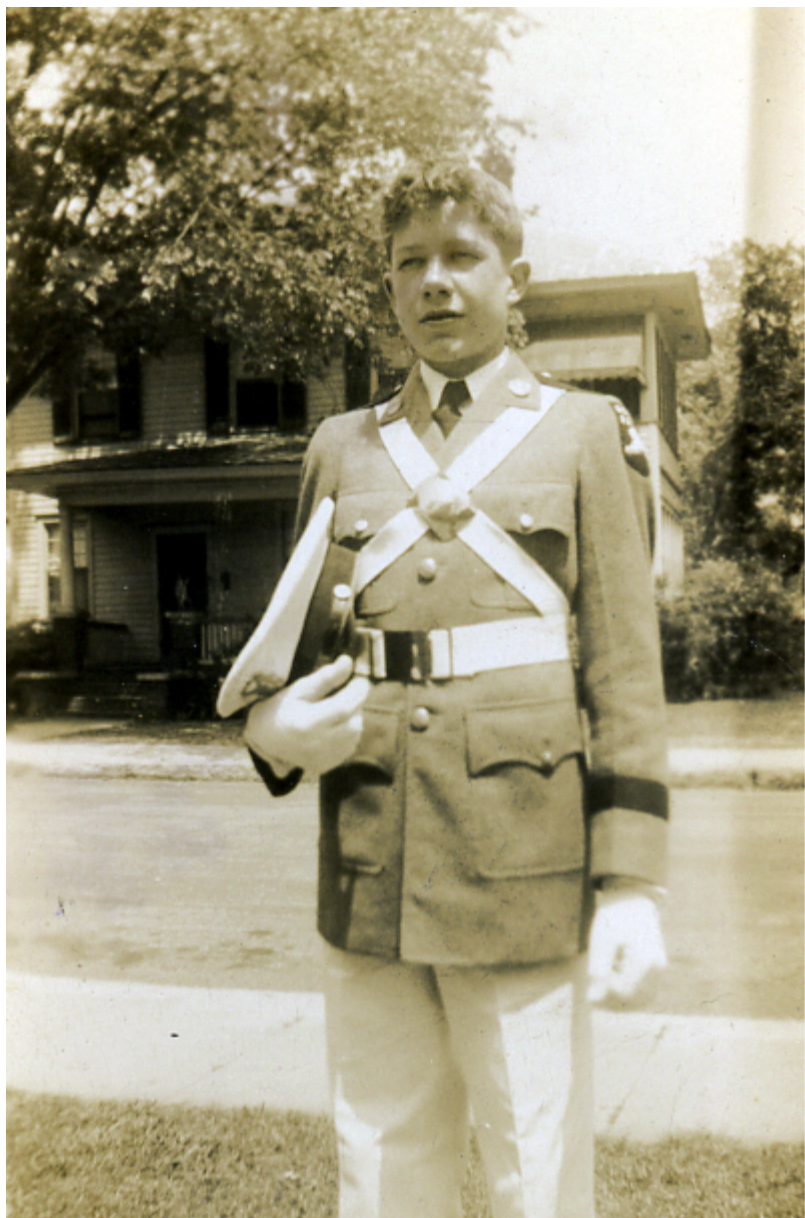
She always spoiled the Keating children. If it were summertime, she would order ice cream from Leopold's, just as she had when they were little. In winter, Mamie would let them bring apples upstairs when they headed up for the night. When everybody finished, Jimmy would volunteer to take the apple cores downstairs to throw them away. Everybody else was too scared.

But Mamie said that might bring an insect [*that's what she called roaches*]. Her solution was bizarre: she would eat the apple cores, choking on the hard parts. Wonder why she didn't just flush them?

The children loved Mamie and she loved them. She was always available to tell or read a story, to play games or to help with homework. If Mother made you crazy, you could always go cry in Mamie's arms. She patted Marcie to sleep every night, even when she was trying to read one of the novels she loved. Marcie tells the story on herself: she slammed Mamie's book closed one night and demanded to be patted to sleep.

Mamie died in 1943, the first glimpse of death for the Keating children. Mother was really devastated, but the young people snapped back fast. They missed Mamie, but they didn't focus on it for long.





**Jimmy in Benedictine uniform, including one of Mother's now-famous shots of the house across the street, about 1943**

## **Growing Up**

The children were growing up. Jimmy was already at Benedictine Military School and Mary would soon be going to St. Vincent's Academy, the girls' school. She had been delayed for a year when the sisters started a ninth grade at Sacred Heart, so started St. Vincent's as a sophomore the next year, must have been 1944.

Even Barry, who had been the baby for so long, was starting to grow up. He was definitely going to be very tall. Harty would graduate from the eighth grade soon and go to Benedictine too, in 1944, and Barry would be right behind him.

## **The motorized bike**

Daddy got a gasoline-powered washing machine for Aunt Kitty to use in the country, but it wouldn't work any more. So he took the engine out and put it on the black Schwinn bike that Jimmy had bought with his news route earnings.

Jimmy and Daddy took turns amazing the neighborhood - and the Keating children - with this fabulous contraption. They rode it down to Atlantic Circle, around the circle, and back up to the house.

Fast.

Mary rode it for ten feet and jumped off, screaming, in absolute terror. Daddy still had a grip on the back of the saddle and managed to stop the bike. Harty was much more proficient on it, and rode it with skill and professionalism, around and around the circle.



Barry was dying to ride it, but Daddy was too used to his being the baby and thought he was too young.



**Harty in his three-quarters, Victory drive, Easter 1944.  
That's Mary in the background, awaiting her turn.**

Finally, after teasing, begging and charming Daddy into it, Barry got to ride the motorized bike. Daddy walked along with him, holding the back of the seat to steady him, then began to run as the bike went faster.

As the bike picked up speed, Daddy had to let go and yelled instructions out to Barry as he sped down the street.

"Slow down!" he yelled.

But he had forgotten to show Barry how to slow it down, or maybe Barry had forgotten how to do it. Or maybe he just had the need for speed.

## **Riding the whirlwind**

Barry was driving a hurricane and it wouldn't stop until it ran out of gas.

Barry sped down 41st Street and curved, leaning steeply to the right, into the circle. He then leaned quickly in the other direction to head around the circle. The bike went faster and faster.

He got halfway around the circle and knew he was going to make it. But the bike went still faster.

Daddy was running down 41st Street after him, yelling: "Hold 'er in the road!"

It was good advice, but when he got almost three-fourths of the way around, Barry couldn't hold her in the road any longer. He and the bike went crashing into the curbing. He fell, hard, to the street on his arm and was dragged, face first, by the bike. Mary

ran inside to tell Mother the news while his father and brothers dashed after him.

"The brakes wouldn't work," he told Daddy and Jimmy and Harty as they came puffing up behind him and took him home.

## **Broken, scratched, hurt**

Barry was hurt, badly hurt. Everybody knew that when they saw him. His sweet, beautiful little face was horribly scraped where he had slid along the tar-and-rock pavement. His arm was broken. He couldn't even be proud that he had Break No. Four in the family, three of his own, although we congratulated him.

Daddy and Jimmy took Barry to see Dr. Crawford and he was patched up but he still hurt something awful. When Barry got home, he didn't feel like laughing. He couldn't even smile.

The other children couldn't believe it. This bright, sunshiny creature, who usually danced around the house instead of walking, was laid low. Barry slept for almost two weeks, hardly coming out of his room.

When the other children peeped into his room as they came home, he was usually asleep. If he were awake, he would try to smile, but he didn't feel much like it.

When they offered to read him a story or bring him something, he'd say, "That's okay," his polite way of saying "No."

Gradually, he got to the point where he could sit up and look at a book, but he would soon drift back to

sleep. His body was busy healing and had no time or energy for anything else.

## **Back to life**

At last, he felt well enough to come downstairs, still wearing his bathrobe, but up, out of bed. Always extremely slender, he was incredibly thin, but it was a day for family celebration. Rosa, who was the cook, had made a dinner featuring all of Barry's favorites.

Barry sat down at Daddy's left and looked at the food without interest. He poked at his plate, but his heart wasn't in it. Mother told him to go lie down.

After he left the table, Mother said Barry's face still looked so gory that it was ruining her appetite.

Within another week, the scars were healed and the black-and- blue-and-yellow marks had faded. Soon even the broken arm was healed, but it was a long time before Barry was himself again. He ended up losing a year of school because of the accident and his asthma. It was Barry's third broken arm, three for Barry, the fourth for the family with Jimmy's.

## **Automobiles, again**

During the war, it was time for the older Keating children to learn how to drive. Jimmy turned 16 in 1943. John Mew taught Jimmy and Mary in the country in his father's pickup truck. He showed them how to keep the needle exactly on 60, unlike his father, Uncle Al, who sped up only when somebody tried to pass him. Of course, he also taught them how to head straight at a tree and make a right-angle turn to the left without touching the brakes. They learned

to pump gas into the pickup from the multi-gallon farm tank. It was locked, but John knew the combination.

Daddy bought a 1937 Chevrolet that was to play a big role in Barry's life. He was far too young to drive, but Barry hopped into the car every time it moved, and began to learn its peculiarities, which were many, as the older sibs learned to drive.

## **Boats, too**

Daddy joined the Coast Guard Reserve during the war. He and Uncle Tom, Daddy's brother-in-law, Tom's father, went out on Uncle Tom's 25-foot cruiser every few weekends to guard the coast against the Nazis. Barry was a great patriot and he wanted to help. He also wanted to go on the boat for the fun of it. And the food looked fabulous as it was packed for the weekend.

The Nazis must have been laughing. The tiny boat, with a machine gun screwed to its mahogany deck, rocked on the Atlantic waves while the weekend Coast Guardsmen, children and men too old or too ill for the draft, waited for ships to come. They stopped all the ships that entered the Savannah channel and Daddy and Uncle Tom went on board in white dress uniforms to inspect the cargo and make sure the ship wasn't going to be sunk to block the harbor. The channel is dredged of sand 15 miles out at sea, so the water is rough. The Atlantic slopes off very gradually.

When foreign ships arrived, the language barrier was incredible. Daddy's only foreign language was a little German, which seemed unpatriotic during the war, but many ship captains knew it. He fell back on his

Latin with the others, and reported at home that Latin worked with the Portuguese! He had learned German and Latin when he was at Benedictine, from Father Alcuin, the same Father Alcuin who later bullied Barry.

The Keating children all pictured the scene as Daddy told about it: the tiny cruiser, rocking crazily on the big Atlantic Ocean, miles out from shore, stopping a gigantic ocean-going ship by the sheer force of Coast Guardian authority; then the big ship letting down a rope ladder. The big ship was rocking one way in the ocean and the little boat was rocking in another. The rope ladder had its own wild motion. Then the tiny boat extended a hook to grab the ladder, losing another boat hook to the strength of the ocean every few weeks. Finally, the ladder being grabbed, two tiny Coast Guard officers in their dress whites [Daddy and Uncle Tom] climbed the wildly swaying ladder up to the deck.

Daddy and Uncle Tom finally broke down and let Jimmy and Tom go with them. They needed somebody to stay with the boat while they went on board the big ships. All of Barry's begging couldn't get him on that boat for a weekend, but Daddy brought a spare piece of steak back to the family a couple of times and Barry got first shot at it. Nobody else even saw it.

## **The war comes home**

On the day of his Benedictine graduation in 1945, Jimmy joined the Marines. He was afraid the war would end before he could get into it. He left home that same night on a Greyhound bus with his pal Billy Fogarty. The two of them stood up all the way to

Parris Island. Buses and all transportation were jammed during the war because it was so difficult to get gas and few people had cars after years of the Depression. But the two proudly became United States Marines, giving Barry the thrill of being related to a hero.

The war ended within a few months. On Victory in Japan Day [V-J Day] in August, Daddy and Harty and Barry got on the Habersham Streetcar and went to the Isle of Hope, where Daddy kept the boat at Brady's Boatworks. Daddy brought along brushes and a bucket of white paint. The three of them went to work covering the gray color that had been required in wartime with a brilliant coat of white.

Mother, Mary and Marcie followed on a later streetcar. There was still no gas, but the boat would be ready as soon as gas came back from the war.

It was in 1942 or 1943 that Daddy gave his best invention to the Pentagon. He had tried and tried to patent his boat design, and hired lawyers in Washington to search the patent archives, but had never been able to get a patent. As the war heated up, he wrote to the Pentagon, enclosing the plans, and gave the design to the United States "to stop the Nazis and Nips," I think he wrote. Later, sometime in the 80s, a Navy publication declared that his design was used for "the fastest boat in the Navy for 40 years." Daddy was gone, but the rest of us were as proud as he would have been. The idea for the hull was to lift the chine out of the water by using two skids on the outer sides of the hull. When the boat planed, it rose out of the water. The pilot, which Daddy built on the front porch and in the side yard, was also the fastest one in local waters for many years, with a 30-horse Johnson.

When the war ended, Jimmy's education in how to kill was cut short. He was sent to the Mojave Desert to be a court reporter for the huge wartime backlog of courts martial. He couldn't take shorthand, but he wrote as fast as he could. Even though his hand was cramped from writing all day, he often wrote home.

Barry loved Jimmy's letters and would occasionally break down and write back. Barry particularly loved it when one of Jimmy's letters was addressed to him personally, with its military return address. Mother and Daddy and all the children, even little Marcie who had only recently started school, wrote to Jimmy.

When the war ended, it was easier to get cars. Mother and Daddy each got new cars every year. Most of them were extremely luxurious because nothing else was available. Daddy said that the dealers knew they had you so they loaded them up. But he refused to buy another Oldsmobile because the dealer said he'd have to get his name on a waiting list after Daddy had bought one from him every year for years and years. The best of the new cars was called a "Silver Streak," and had backseat windshield wipers, unlike any other cars of the day. A Chevrolet, of all things, like the old car the teens were driving, but much more luxurious..

## **Busy brothers**

Barry's brother Harty was busy at school. He had to walk "jug" for hours so wasn't at home to play catch or race bikes around the neighborhood in the afternoons. Jug was pointless marching around and around the parade ground for punishment. Harty wasn't bad, but he just laughed when other people



did, annoying the priests who were trying to teach serious stuff, like English and history.

When the air turned cool and crisp, with a few yellowing leaves on the trees, the radio crackled with news of the Big Ten and it was football time! But there was nobody to play with. Mike was willing but he was too little.

Mary was big, as big as a grownup. She padded around pretty well with a basketball, and Marcie could play catch. He and Mary would be opposing quarterbacks and Marcie and Mike could serve as pass receivers, he decided. He wore the confident look of a winner who had figured out the answer to a difficult problem.

Barry planned one of his campaigns. Would he have to talk it up first? No, Mary and Marcie were easy targets. All he had to say to them was "Let's go!" and they were ready for anything. Mary would borrow Mother's car and the three of them would go to Triple X or Our House. Barry always talked about football on these trips.

When he got home from school, if the girls weren't out shopping with Mother, they were sometimes at home, engaging in quiet pursuits, reading or playing dolls with Marcie's April Dawn, playing the piano or playing records. They'd surely rather play football, he thought. Wouldn't anybody with red blood? Barry rushed in one afternoon from school and found the two girls sitting around. He looked at them like red meat: somebody to play football with!

"I've got an idea," he said. "Okay," they agreed, eager for some action.

First of course, the body had to be stoked. Barry ate for half an hour straight, wolfing it down, knowing that he could feel stuffed because he would have an easy time beating these two sissy girls at football. As he ate, he magnified the afternoon's pickup game in his mind. Maybe it would become a major annual game, the 41st Street Classic, maybe even a bowl game. The Toilet Bowl? This was gonna be great!

"Come on!" he shouted as soon as he had finished. "Let's go play football!"

"Is that the ball with the little pointy ends?" they asked, looking lazily up from their books. Barry's heart sank as he went outside to look for Bootsy or Mike. Powder puffs may be okay for basketball or baseball but they are no fun for football.

## **The girls at the CYPA**

The CYPA [Catholic Young People's Association] next to the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist became one of Barry's haunts. He and Mary walked or took the bus there almost every weekend for one night at least, usually two, sometimes three.

There was lots to do -- dancing and pool games and card playing and standing around talking. Not many people had ping pong at home, so Barry and Mary beat everybody at ping pong after their years of practice, playing almost every day. There was even a little theater group. They thought it was fabulous!

For Barry, the biggest attraction was the girls. These girls were older, 15 or 16 if they were a day, and so sophisticated! They knew everything! They were

comfortable in conversation, taking him for granted as a boy their own age, not bashful like girls his age.

They wore makeup and brassieres! These girls didn't collapse if he held them tight while dancing. They didn't even die if he kissed them. They were women of the world! And thank God they had no idea he was in the seventh or eighth grade.

Nobody asked Barry's age, although he was too young to be an actual member of the CYP A. He was tall and talked a good game, and they knew Mary had lots of brothers at BC, so they all assumed he was older than he was.

He particularly enjoyed Mary's friends and they returned his devotion in spades. Barry was tall, a great dancer, good-looking, interested in their conversation -- what's not to like?

## **The long walk home**

Barry, with Gertrude Murphy, Mildred Laird, Mary Jo Harte, Myrna Foshé and Mary walked a zigzag path home as they dropped off first Gertie on Waldburg Street, then Mima a few blocks farther, on Huntingdon Street near Price Street. They would then cross town to 36th and Jefferson streets for Mary Jo. Then it was on to 40th and Jefferson streets to take Myrna.

Beautiful Myrna was an orphan, living with her sister who was only a little older than she was. Myrna's beauty was not marred by the fact that she had a long scar across her cheek from the terrible wreck in which her parents were killed several years before.

Myrna sometimes kissed Barry goodnight, which made the whole long walk worthwhile for him. Then Mary and Barry would walk all the way across town from Jefferson Street to Reynolds Street and home. It seemed like nothing. Mary was younger then – and Barry was walking on air!

In the meantime, Marcie had started at Blessed Sacrament School. In second grade, she met another little girl who would become a friend of the whole family, Mary McDevitt. Mary was new to Savannah, and Marcie was new to everything, an untaught child except for her sibs. They struck up a firm friendship and both were fixtures in each other's houses, Marcie making friends with the McDevitts and Mary making friends with the Keating family. Soon both families loved both little girls. Margie Strippy, who lived in the neighborhood, was another friend Marcie's age that everybody knew and loved.



**Marcie on her bike, about 1946**

At last when she was six and about to enter first grade at Blessed Sacrament, Marcie got a bike and the old tricycle was retired, gone forever from family snapshots.

Mary graduated from St. Vincent's in 1947. Nothing flashy, but her name did get called out for some level of honors during the ceremony at the Cathedral, making up according to Mother for all the agony she had caused. What agony? Who knew?

Oh, yeah, it was because Sister LaSalette went nuts. She accused Mary of cheating in Chemistry. Mary and Myrna sat next to each other in Chemistry, and a test was scheduled. Myrna had a stack of cheat notes an inch thick, which she showed to Mary. Mary told her to hide them, thinking Myrna could have learned Chemistry in the time it took to make all those notes.

But Sister caught the byplay at the end of the front row and rushed over to accuse Mary of cheating. "No, I didn't!" wasn't enough, and Mary was kicked out of Chemistry, banished to typing. She was a wreck, thinking she needed it to be accepted in college. Not as bad a wreck as when Sister Bernadine, the principal, called Mother to come down to school. Two hours of discussion with Mary and the two nuns, with Marcie along as an unwilling participant, were not enough to convince them that Mary didn't cheat, wouldn't cheat, could never cheat. So typing was the solution. Sister LaSalette had always seemed a little nutty around school, constantly insisting that Mary was an only child. "I know an only child when I see one," she would say.

A couple of weeks later, Sister Bernadine took Mary aside at school and told her that Sister LaSalette had a terrible time with sinusitis and didn't sleep well at

all. She had been taken to the hospital the night before. “Screaming,” was the campus gossip.

“She didn’t tell me that,” Mother said firmly, her older daughter banished not only to typing but to some kind of Cheater Hell.

*[For me, typing was a great skill. Daddy had taught me his “hunt and peck” system, but the “touch” system was way better for someone with a lifelong career as a writer. And Armstrong College had no objections when my new friend Picot and I made the highest grades in the history of the school on the entrance exam, when he was 15 and I was 17.]*

*[Disclaimers, anyone else? Just a couple more, from Jim and Harty, below.]*

The next year, Barry and Mike graduated from grammar school on a hot afternoon in the blessed air conditioned coolness of Blessed Sacrament Church, the first church in Savannah to have such a modern device. They were ready to go to Benedictine in the fall.



**Mary in the esplanade on Victory Drive, Easter 1947**

## Chapter V

### Joan and Barry

It was while Barry was at Benedictine that his heart was completely taken by Joan Ann Alberino. Joan, he firmly believed, was the most beautiful girl in the world. She seemed to believe that Barry was the most handsome boy in the world. Joan went to Savannah High School, sworn enemy of BC.

Barry's fashion sense, inherited from Mamie and Mother and who-knows-how-far-up-the-line, may have helped him to spot Joan, who always dressed beautifully, besides her beautiful self.

The two of them went to every High School and BC dance together, looking gorgeous. They were always the best couple on the floor -- and those two could dance up a storm! They saw each other every chance they got.

Mother loved to go to dances. She would even chaperone dances at BC and St. Vincent's -- and flirted madly with all her children's friends. They thought "Big Marcie" and "Big Jim" were wonderful.

The children's friends all seemed to like Mother and Daddy even better than their own children did.

### No place to hide

When Barry checked into his first Latin class at BC, he looked around smugly, figuring he could handle this one easily. After all, he had been an altar boy at



least briefly and knew lots of Latin. And his father spouted Latin all the time.

Barry turned to Mike with a "Just watch this" nod. Barry looked up alertly as Father Alcuin came in.

Father Alcuin looked back. "Keating?" he asked.

"Yes, Father!" said Barry, jumping up to stand beside his seat in the approved style.

"You related to James Keating?"

"Yes, Father!" Barry shot back. "He's my brother."

"No, I mean James Michael Keating, class of '14."

"Oh, Father, yes, sir, Father, that's my father," said Barry, stumbling a little on his words.

"How about James Pinckney Keating?"

"That's my brother!" said Barry with his famous smile.

"And Patrick Joseph Keating, Jr.?"

"He's my cousin," said Barry, getting a little worried. Patty was probably a conduct problem at school -- he certainly was at home.

"What about John Harty Keating?"

"That's my brother too," said Barry proudly, forgetting Harty's afternoons walking jug. He preened with delight and looked around to see if the other guys were noticing what a famous person he was.

"Piece of cake," Barry was thinking to himself. "This is gonna be better than I thought."

"Are there any more at home?"

"No, Father," answered Barry. "I'm the last boy."

Father Alcuin would surely be nostalgically fond of him and wistfully sad that there were no more Keatings to come.

"Well, just watch yourself in this class. I'm not putting up with anything from any Keatings," announced Father Alcuin sternly. The whole class laughed, to Father Alcuin's annoyance. It was the last laugh of the semester.

## **Barry learns to drive**

Within just a couple of years, it was time for Barry to learn to drive. Joan's parents bought her a car and she and Barry zoomed around all over town in it.

Barry got to use the 1937 Chevrolet for driving lessons but he was laying his plans. That sweet piece of machinery was gonna be Barry's car!

First, he had to help Jimmy, Mary and Harty to realize that their best educational choices were out of town, although they were attending Armstrong Junior College for a few quarters. Jimmy finished at Armstrong and moved on to the Hunter Field campus of the University of Georgia. That campus lasted only a few years.

Since they were all leaning in the out-of-town direction, it wasn't hard for a master like Barry. The

great apes were kicking the adult babies out of the nest and the adult babies could feel the boot on their rears.

Soon, Jimmy went to Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. He didn't write home as much as he used to during the war. When his \$50 GI veteran's check came at the beginning of the month, he bought one case of beer and one case of beans and stashed them under his bed against the hard times sure to come at the end of the month when the rest of the money was gone. At least he never starved or thirsted to death.

*["How did you know I did that?" Jimmy asked when he saw the paragraph above. "You told me, a long time ago," I said. At least fifty years, I thought.]*

Mary went to the University of Georgia in Athens. Mother and Mary were getting along very badly and it was time to go. Daddy babied her -- sending her \$15 a week and making her the richest girl in her dorm. She only wrote home when she was confined to her dormitory for some minor disciplinary infraction, usually drinking, but the family could always get her on the phone. They knew her problems were Daddy's fault, because he had told the Dean of Women that he wanted to sign a blanket approval for his daughter to drink. That news went all over the authoritarian level of the UGA campus, and didn't help Mary in her attempts to hide her naughtiness.

Harty wholeheartedly agreed with Barry that out of town is better. Daddy was being particularly awful to Harty. He went to Georgia Tech in Atlanta and never wrote, not even in need of money, not even when he was drinking. In fact, he hardly ever went home except for short visits after he once got away. Harty

started earning his own money. He stayed in Atlanta for many years. It didn't take him that long to graduate, although it was a while. Savannah was still home, but Atlanta was becoming so.

*[“No, Savannah was **always** home,” Harty insists.]*

## Chapter VI

### Barry in Charge

At last the master was running things.

What Barry didn't realize was that all those older siblings were carrying some of the load around the house and that it was all going to land on him. No wonder they were all so glad to go! Barry was still in his mid-teens, pretty young for the heavy parental responsibility that was about to come his way.

Barry was in undisputed charge once again. He felt he would be free, the way he was when he was little, when his older brothers and sister went off to kindergarten or grammar school for the day or off to the country for the summer and left him at home alone. He could give orders to Rosa, Gail and Richmond and they would carry them out.

But now, instead of coming home in a few weeks, Jimmy, Mary and Harty were gone, possibly forever. He was missing all the fun they made around the house. And now, of course, he had a baby sister to look after, although she and her buddies Mary and Margie were kids to have fun with. McDev had to be home before dark, unfortunately. Mr. and Mrs. Strippy weren't quite as picky, but expected Margie home by bedtime [10 or 11] every night.

Barry and Marcie were left pretty much on their own at home. Mother and Daddy didn't worry too much about their children once they got them out of the crib. They knew the older ones would look after the younger ones. Mother woke them up on Sundays and

made them go to church, Rosa cooked and cleaned for them and got them off to school, Daddy gave Marcie an allowance and that was pretty much all the parenting they got. Daddy always said it was the children versus the adults, and he was pretty much right.

## **Bosco gives the example**

Marcie talked to Barry one day about this. Did he think Mother and Daddy loved them?

Barry said that Marcie should look at Bosco. "You know how she lies around and lets her babies milk her when they are first born, and then she pushes them away? Well, that's the way parents do, too."

Barry wasn't satisfied with that explanation, but he couldn't think of any other. Marcie wasn't satisfied either.

"That's the way dogs do. Sister says people are completely different from animals. People have a spirit," she said, "a spirit that lives forever. Mother says that, too."

"Don't pay too much attention to all that Catechism stuff," said Barry.

But she had made him think about something he'd rather ignore. Most of Barry and Marcie's friends' parents helped with homework and generally hung around with their kids, admiring their accomplishments and even brushing their hair and washing their faces. They played with them, went to parks with them, took them on vacations.

"Mother makes us brush her hair. She told Mary she couldn't go off to school because she had to do Mother's hair. I'm afraid I'm next. I told her I made a basket when you and I were playing the other day and she didn't think it was good. She told me about how she was a basketball star," said Marcie.

"Yeah, I've heard that a few times, too. Every time we win a game," said Barry. "Maybe she just doesn't care."

## **Mother cares**

"Oh, no! Mother cares about me! She always wants to wear a dress just like mine!"

"I guess that's a good sign. She never wanted to dress like me," laughed Barry.

"No, but she always wants to go to your school dances. She hates to go to my PTA. When I bring my report card home, Daddy and Mother always say they made straight A plus. I can hardly get them to sign my card. I think they're ashamed of me."

"Don't be silly. Mother's busy. And Daddy's out of town," said Barry, with sweet reasonableness.

"Mother thinks that Margie Strippy's parents are terrible because they ignore Margie. But Mother ignores us, too," she said. "I'm not riding my bike around the neighborhood at night because I'm out with you, not because they care about me."

"Don't worry," said Barry. "You've got me. And Jimmy and Mary and Harty love you. And Rosa loves you."

"That's true," Marcie agreed. "Maybe that's all we deserve."

"No! You deserve everything! You're a great kid! Everybody says so," said Barry.

"You deserve everything. You're great, too. Just look how well you play basketball and drive and everything. I think you're wonderful! Everybody thinks you're wonderful!" Marcie said.

And thus did they hold each other up. Marcie squeezed Barry's hand pretty hard sometimes, because she knew he would take care of her. His hand would hurt, but he didn't mind. She thought nobody would bother her when he was around, and they didn't. She believed in him.

## **Sing a song of Latin**

One day, Marcie was telling Barry her troubles with Mother and he sang her a song he said was her answer from Mother. He still couldn't carry a tune, but his message about Mother's message was clear:

*"You say you're in trouble with Sister? "You'd run away if you dared?"*

*"You say you don't understand Latin? "Here's a nickel. Call someone who cares."*

Just kidding. He counseled her constantly. "Quit sucking up to Mother" was the main counsel Marcie got from all of her older siblings. "You'll be better off when you figure out she doesn't give a damn about you."



## Night life

Barry took over the 1937 Chevrolet, gave it a coat of cream-colored house paint and named it "Little Toot." It was his car for sure. He and Mike and Marcie could be seen tooling around town in it at all hours, sometimes with Mary McDevitt if she were spending the night at the Keatings. Margie, too.

Mike and Barry kept Little Marcie, really a little girl -- only about ten -- out at night until they were ready to go home themselves. Mother and Daddy weren't home anyway. Barry did the best he could and Marcie had a great time.

Marcie loved the Triple X and Our House night life. She would go over to Joan's car to talk and laugh with the girls, although sometimes she would nap on the back seat of Little Toot. Barry supported the high life on lawn earnings and Marcie's allowance, and used Lucky Strikes out of Mother's carton in Cupboard A. He was pickier than Richmond, and didn't like Daddy's Camels. Well, except in emergencies.

## The sauce takes over

Unfortunately, Barry could do nothing to control Mother and Daddy's drinking, which was getting heavier as they got older. It's the family failing.

Mother and Daddy had always enjoyed their sauce, drinking just a little most of the time to add to the fun. But they were drinking more and more as they moved into their 50s. Life in the Keating house was less and less fun for Barry and Marcie.

Daddy still drank whiskey neat followed by water, but sometimes drank Manhattans, which were becoming Mother's favorites. The red vermouth that goes into Manhattans is made from the bottom of the vermouth barrel and the Spanish believe it may affect the mind. It was not long before the half-pint or pint of bourbon in Cupboard C was upped to a fifth and joined by a fifth of red vermouth. The one-ounce whiskey neats became two-ounce Manhattans plus another ounce of vermouth. If nothing else, the alcohol affected the mind.

## Chapter VII

### **St. Patrick's Day**

The biggest booze day of the year in Savannah is Saint Patrick's Day. The Irish seem to lose all inhibition and many display drunken behavior on the street.

But it was the one day when Mother and Daddy always tried to behave, at least until sundown. They acted positively superior about all the drunks, forgetting that they got pretty boozed up themselves the other 364 days of the year.

### **All the boys are on parade**

The boys from Benedictine always marched in the St. Patrick's Day parade, with the girls cheering from the curb. Barry looked smashing in his uniform, and the girls swooned. Joan was jealous but proud... and all the boys were flirting with her, too.

Daddy always marched with the parade, too, as did most of the Irish men in town, in the "carrying o' the cups" tradition.

But he refused to carry a cup, and carried instead his grandfather's blackthorn shillelagh, brought from Ireland in 1872.

Instead of a derby, he chose to wear his usual Homburg. And instead of drinking heavily, as most men did, he stayed sober -- at least until evening, when the Hibernian Society had its annual dinner.

## Misery

But the rest of the year, things were getting pretty miserable on 41st Street. With their older siblings moving on, Barry and Marcie began to realize they weren't getting much parenting.



**Pat, the stern uncle, at St. Patrick's Day about 1950. In the background, his son Patty, who turned out much like him. Do family stories usually tell the truth like this?**



**Daddy at the St. Patrick's Day parade, about 1950. That's his blackthorn shillelagh in his hand and his Homburg on his head. Who's that other Irishman?**

Mothers are supposed to be motherly, they would say. But Mother was concerned only for her own

doings, her clothes and her bridge and her drinks. And daddies are supposed to be daddyly, but when Daddy was at home, he was deep in the bottle much of the time.

Maybe Mother and Daddy weren't very happy, and they pretty well took it out on their littlest children. Life was tough for the kids left at home. Barry had to distract himself from the sadness by throwing himself into other activities.

## **Johnny Harris' bar**

Richard was the "family" waiter at Johnny Harris Restaurant on Victory Drive. When Joan and Barry went in after a dance, he would serve them one Tom Collins between them without asking any questions. Sometimes he'd bring a second if they begged. They and their friends would dance the rest of the night away.

The bars in Savannah weren't that picky about carding people in those days, so Barry and his friends could ease into the bar at Harrises at 15 or 16 if they wanted. Mike was too small, so they would leave him in the car and slide a beer out to him.

One night a group of men at the bar invited Barry to play Liar's Poker, which he had heard Daddy talk about but had never played himself. Daddy had emphasized some angles of the game more than others. Each one in the group picked up a dollar from the change on the bar and Barry opened.

"Two deuces," he said.

This child had been playing cards all his life.

"He means twos," said one of the others to a man who didn't understand.

The bidding got higher.

Finally, the man on Barry's right said, "Three nines," and it was Barry's turn again.

Barry hooded his eyes. He can do that, you know. He just drops his eyebrows and closes his eyes and he's hiding in there. You don't know whether he's got the Queen of Spades or the Queen of England. Then he opened his eyes and looked at his right-hand opponent.

"Get outa here," Barry said. "There can't be two bills in this bar like this. Four nines!"

The other men looked at this innocent child's face and decided, "He can't be lying."

The guy with the three nines was lying, but nobody was sure about Barry, so they all folded and he cleaned up. He had even lied about the two deuces! To celebrate his winnings, Barry sent one of the boys out to Little Toot with a beer for Mike.

## **Roundball time**

Barry was one of the tallest boys at Benedictine, so the basketball coaches pitched woo until they got him to join the team.

He was an instant star, playing on the varsity team from his freshman through senior years and starring several times in state tournaments. His little buddy Mike was recruited as a towel boy, rushing out onto

the court with cool, damp towels for the players and dry ones for the sweaty spots on the floor every time the whistle blew for a timeout.

Beautiful Joan sat in the stands with her friends, not knowing whether to cheer for her own team or for Barry's. Marcie sat with them sometimes.

Watching Barry play basketball was a thrill. The fans roared with delight as his long legs took him quickly back and forth on the floor. He made it look effortless. His tosses to the basket looked almost casual, belying all the hard practice that went into his uncanny accuracy. By the time he graduated from Benedictine, Barry had broken every record there was in the BC basketball record books.

Daddy was a big Benedictine fan. One year, with Barry on the team, the Benedictine team won a berth in the state tournament. Daddy went out on the court and picked Barry up and ran around the hardwood with his youngest son on his shoulders while everybody cheered.

*[Well, maybe not exactly like that. But it's a nice memory. H]*



## Chapter VIII

### Out of the Nest

After getting bored with Armstrong, Barry found a job and worked for a while. But he wanted to go off to school. Daddy wanted him to finish Armstrong first, but getting out of town was a major need for Barry. Home was getting impossible.

So he started a campaign. He sent off for leaflets and catalogs from schools all around the country and sorted them out. After a lot of talking and some smiles and charm, Daddy agreed, but the car could not go. Barry went to Southern Tech in Marietta, near Atlanta, and left Little Toot at home. Joan went to Brenau in Macon. But it was too much for Joan and Barry -- they missed each other terribly.

On January 1, 1955, when they were still very young, Joan and Barry were married at the most beautiful wedding you can imagine. Joan was breathtaking and radiant in her candlelight taffeta and lace and her long, flowing veil. Barry was handsome in his cutaway.

Her parents gave a fabulous reception at the German Country Club. It was the party of the year for the couple of the year. They dressed divinely, they danced divinely. They looked gorgeous together, both tall, both good-looking. They had a wonderful honeymoon and were the happiest two people in the world.

It would be nice to say that they lived happily ever after but Barry and Joan, like all real people, had their ups and downs. Their greatest uppers are their

three daughters, Ann, Marcie and Beth. Their other great uppers are Ann's son, Marcie's children and Beth's daughter and son. But this is getting way, way ahead of the story.



**The Keatings at Joan and Barry's wedding. Jim, Mary, Harty, Mother, Daddy, Marcie, and Barry.**

## **Building, building, building**

Barry, having attended Southern Tech where the major course of study is construction engineering, naturally gravitated into the construction industry. He spent an apprenticeship at Neal Blun in Savannah, working behind the counter and learning every piece of construction equipment there is to prepare himself further for his chosen career, much as Daddy had done after Georgia Tech.

Meantime, Barry built by hand a house for Joan and him and their first child, Ann. Mary went to the site one evening after work at the *Savannah Morning News* to help him. He had staked the foundation and was ready to tie the strings around because the concrete truck would be coming first thing in the morning to pour the slab.

Barry tied most of the cord, and Mary -- in her high heels -- pulled it around a few of the stakes. In the inside corner, left front, she tied it around the outside of the stake instead of the inside -- and the slightly misshapen slab can be seen today if any tourists are interested.

It gave Barry fits when he started putting up the walls and roof.

"How thick can a stick be? It's less than an inch," said Mary.

"An inch is as bad as a mile," said Barry.

It was always cold in winter and hot in summer on that side of the front hall, although Barry insists kindly it wasn't that bad.

## **Components, components, components**

Soon Barry went into his own business and developed the then- infant component industry to a point well beyond its previous stage.

In a small factory, he built a slew of huge roof trusses with the help of a crew of carpenters. The trusses were loaded onto big trucks and sent out to the fast-

developing suburbs of Savannah. It was a head-turning sight: Savannah had never before seen anything like it.

People were curious.

"How do you get around in your attic with all that wood?" somebody would ask.

"When is the last time you were up in your attic?" Barry would answer.

"Well... " would mumble the questioner.

"There's plenty of room, even if you still have Grandma's trunk," he assured them.

Barry and Joan built another house in one of those new suburbs, Mayfair, the finest suburb built in that era. It was a beautiful house, with all the special amenities that they wanted. And its roof was supported by Barry's trusses.

The boom-and-bust nature of the construction industry and his financial partners' nervousness finally brought Barry's business to its knees -- but construction was changed forever. Nobody builds any other way any more. *[This was written for Barry's 62nd birthday in September 1994 – has something new been invented?]*

## **The Movie Star**

It seems a little odd, looking back from modern times, but there was a time when an Olympic swimmer became a movie star. What did she do in movies? She swam.

Esther Williams was very beautiful, looked great in a one-piece swimsuit, and smiled convincingly for the camera. She starred in quite a few big movies. Eventually, she became involved in a business deal with a national swimming pool company.

Barry also became involved with the company, running the local aspects. At his request, Miss Williams was scheduled to visit Savannah and a full-force publicity push began.

Early in the process, Barry received a list from her agent of things Miss Williams would require during the visit, such things as a first-class hotel suite, meals in outstanding local restaurants, and a daily quart bottle of Tanqueray gin. No problem for Barry. He arranged all.

The movie star happily appeared at all the scheduled functions, carrying a large glass of water everywhere she went. The water glass was even mentioned in the media coverage. She smiled prettily for pictures with local dignitaries and chatted sweetly, even with roustabout pool installers. She was beautifully dressed and made up. Everybody loved her.

Barry's office, which he had virtually abandoned during the big publicity stunt, reported to him that pool orders were pouring in. He and Joan were delighted with the success of the visit. Esther Williams even remembered Joan and Barry when they met at the publicity parties, and greeted them enthusiastically by name. Movers and shakers hosted and attended parties, and ordered pools for their own back yards, to their children's delight.

Then Barry's assistant spotted Miss Williams pouring herself a fresh glass of water. "Straight out of the Tanqueray!" he said.

One of Barry's partners objected. "We can't have a drunk going around promoting our pools!" he complained.

Barry pulled out the list of requirements from Miss Williams' agent. "A daily quart of Tanqueray's gin," he pointed to.

Miss Williams conducted herself beautifully. The only blip in the entire week-long visit was when her limousine pulled up in front of the Weis Theatre on Broughton Street for a public appearance, and one of Barry's partners was the first one to open a door and get out. He was greeted with the huge applause that belonged to Esther. That wasn't her fault. Several hundred people were gathered in the street to greet the famous lady, and the local entrepreneur being applauded was as surprised as anybody. He looked nothing like Esther Williams. It was just that the crowd was over-excited about seeing a movie star, an honest-to-God movie star, right there in little old Savannah..

The huge applause continued when she got out of the limo, carrying a large glass of water. Late at night, the lovely movie star's voice slurred a little, but so did everybody else's.

## **Jacksonville, Atlanta**

Joan and Barry and their family moved to some of the livelier construction markets, first Jacksonville and then Atlanta, to pursue the high points.

By the 1970s, Barry was building major projects all over Big Switch. And Joan was managing major apartment developments after they were built.

## **House almost deserted**

With most of her children gone, Mother cut back on her household staff. Gail Clayton, nanny for the older children, died young. Rosa Johnson, housekeeper and great cook, who had looked after Barry and Marcie, was getting older and had some health problems. Richmond was slowing down.

Jimmy had gotten married in 1951. Mary went to work for the Army during the Korean War and then moved to New York. Harty stayed in Atlanta after he finished Georgia Tech. Of course, Barry was married. Somebody had to wash the dishes on 41st Street, though, and sometimes Marcie was the one.



**Marcie washing dishes -- a big occasion, 1951**

The older sibs didn't desert the family, but they weren't around very much. When they did come home, they were different. They had new friends, had lived new adventures. It wasn't quite the same but it was great to see them when they showed up.

By the time Marcie started at St. Vincent's, she was the only child in the household. Barry looked in on the family frequently as long as he lived in Savannah. And Jimmy was a regular visitor, as he moved out of town only temporarily. Betty Rose missed her mother too much.





**Mary, home from New York for a holiday, 1954**



**Marcie, growing tall and ever more beautiful, was a star in the glee club at St. Vincent's, 1956, second from right in front group.**

## Off to School

Marcie was way past ready to leave home when she graduated at St. Vincent's Academy, and she and Mary McDevitt went to the University of Georgia in Athens. Marcie was ready to try anything to get away from the house, and actually considered the convent at one point. Barry talked her out of that, fast.

Within a few months, Marcie was engaged to Joe Cleaver and they were married in June 1959. The children were all relieved that Marcie had gotten out of the house. Joe seemed like a great guy and Marcie seemed to be nuts about him. Anyway, she had gotten away -- that was worth a lot.

Joe and Marcie moved to North Carolina and then to California, with Chicago along the way.

## Nieces and nephews and nieces and...

Barry's oldest brother Jimmy married Betty Rose Mason in 1951. They had four children, Jimmy Jr., Helen, Roselynn and Rebecca, all born in Savannah. After their divorce in 1959, he married Carmen Valdivieso y Rodriguez of Madrid, Spain, and Tetuan, Spanish Morocco. They had four children, Isabel, Michelle, Michael and Thomas, all born in Savannah. Jim has nine grandchildren and is retired from his roofing business and from dock supervision. Jim and Carmen live in Savannah. Betty Rose and Jimmy Jr. lived at Tybee until her death, too young, in 1996; son James lives in Savannah. Helen lives in California, Roselynn in Savannah and Becky in nearby Claxton. Isabel lives in New York and traveled in the theater until her dazzling, spectacular, Tony-nominated success playing Judy Garland in the huge Broadway hit, "The Boy from Oz," followed by movie roles. Michelle is in Michigan, Michael in California and Thomas travels in the theater, stationed in Charleston. Helen has three children; Michelle has two.

*[Jim died in March 2008 His ashes were placed in Pinckney Cemetery at Uncle Dessie and Aunt Olive's Calhoun Plantation. Mary O Pinckney Merrick, their daughter, gave him a beautiful eulogy.]*

Mary was married in December 1959 to Picot Floyd, a wonderful man who died in 1989, too young. He is buried in Savannah. They have three children, Keating who was born in Savannah, Picot Jr. who was born in Alexandria, Virginia, and Adam who was born in Atlanta, and five grandchildren. Mary is a free-lance writer and part-time university teacher,

now mostly retired. She, Keating and Rhoda [two children], Picot Jr. and Suzy [three children] live in Tampa and Adam and Tracy in Orlando, earlier in New Smyrna Beach, even earlier, Hallandale, in 2010 back to New Smyrna Beach.

Harty married Betty Benton of Orlando and Walterboro and Atlanta in February 1961. They have two children, Shawn, born in Louisville, Kentucky, and Amber, born in Atlanta. Harty is retired from the electrical industry in which he designed special applications. Betty has a business she operates from home, DeskTop Graphics. They live in Madison, Mississippi, and have moved out of their big house and built a beautiful new smaller one. Shawn and Nancy [two children] were in Birmingham and Madison but have moved to Alabama. Amber and Rob [two children] lived in Richmond and moved to Denver after living in Canada temporarily. They are now in Austin. No, now it's Tennessee.

Baby sister Marcie married Joe Cleaver in June 1959. They had two children, Marcie, born in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Burton, born after they moved to Saratoga, California. Marcie and Joe are divorced, and she married Irv Grossack of Bloomington, Indiana, in November 1995, after a whirlwind courtship that began in Atlanta, of all places. Her daughter Marcie lives in Connecticut and Burton lives in his own private Idaho. Marcie has four children and Burton has three.

Most of the grandchildren are married and many have children, but ancient Aunt Mary can't keep up very well. Watch the Keating Family Website for more info, [keatingfamily@yahoo.com](mailto:keatingfamily@yahoo.com).



**Harty, Barry, Marcie, Mary, Jimmy in Indiana at Marcie's non-wedding a few years ago. Marcie refused to marry Irv then, but later relented and they married in 1995. Irv, unfortunately, is in a nursing home with dementia. Barry, Jim and Harty have all died.**

## Chapter IX

### Life Changes

Barry and Joan's Ann was born while they still lived in Savannah. Marcie was born a few years later. Barry and Joan's third and final daughter, Elizabeth [Beth] was born in 1964 in Atlanta. Thank God her baby picture was quickly followed by a shot taken at one month. We new parents always think those babies are so beautiful until we look at the pictures later and realize they look like Winston Churchill.



**Beth at one month, 1965.**





**Beth at birth, 1964.**

When the weather got decent enough in 1965, Joan and Barry took their three daughters outside for a family snapshot.



**Barry, Joan [holding Beth], Marcie and Ann, 1965.**

Occasionally, almost by accident, some of the Keating children would arrive in Savannah for a visit at the same time.

## **Circling**

Mother and Daddy began traveling in earnest after all the kids were gone, making what Daddy called "the great circle," going to Charlotte or Chicago where Marcie and Joe lived; Alexandria where Mary and



Picot were; Atlanta, where Harty and Betty and Barry and Joan lived, and Picot and Mary lived later; Louisville, where Betty and Harty later moved; and back to Savannah, where Jimmy and his family were.



**Mother, Joe Cleaver, Marcie Cleaver holding Little Marcie Cleaver; Barry Keating, about 1962.**

They made this trip several times in a VW bug, usually taking the "shunpike" route, avoiding the interstate highways and seeing the sights of America. They had a blast! They always managed to work a few major bridge tournaments into the great circle route.

The 'rents still drank too much, but it didn't bother their children nearly as much when they didn't have to be around them all the time.

Besides, the kids were doing their own share of drinking by then. It runs in families, you know.

Did they actually drive to California? Most people fly, but Mother and Daddy prided themselves on traveling in “flyover America,” so maybe they did.

## **Nicknames**

Jimmy's oldest son, Jimmy, couldn't say "grandmother" so called Mother "Fran," and the name stuck with all the grandchildren and even the in-laws that she always called her ‘sons-in-love’ or ‘daughters-in-love.’ She loved her new name.

It was a good thing she had it, because the drastic “family shortage of names,” as Daddy called it, meant that almost everybody had her name. The grands called Daddy "Papa," accent on the second “ah.”

Picot and Mary and their children lived in Savannah for four years in the late 60s and early 70s while he was city manager, so they turn up sometimes in family snapshots.



**Fran and Papa on his birthday, June 27, 1969. That's Picot Jr. in the background. It's Picot's fifth birthday, Daddy's 72nd.**

## **Fun, then Cancer**

Daddy and Mother had a good time right up until almost the end.

Daddy appeared to be in perfect health until he was stricken with lung cancer after more than 50 years of smoking no-filter cigarettes. He was so strong that the cancer took a year and a half to kill him.

When he was diagnosed with lung cancer, Daddy said in relief that he was grateful to have smoked himself

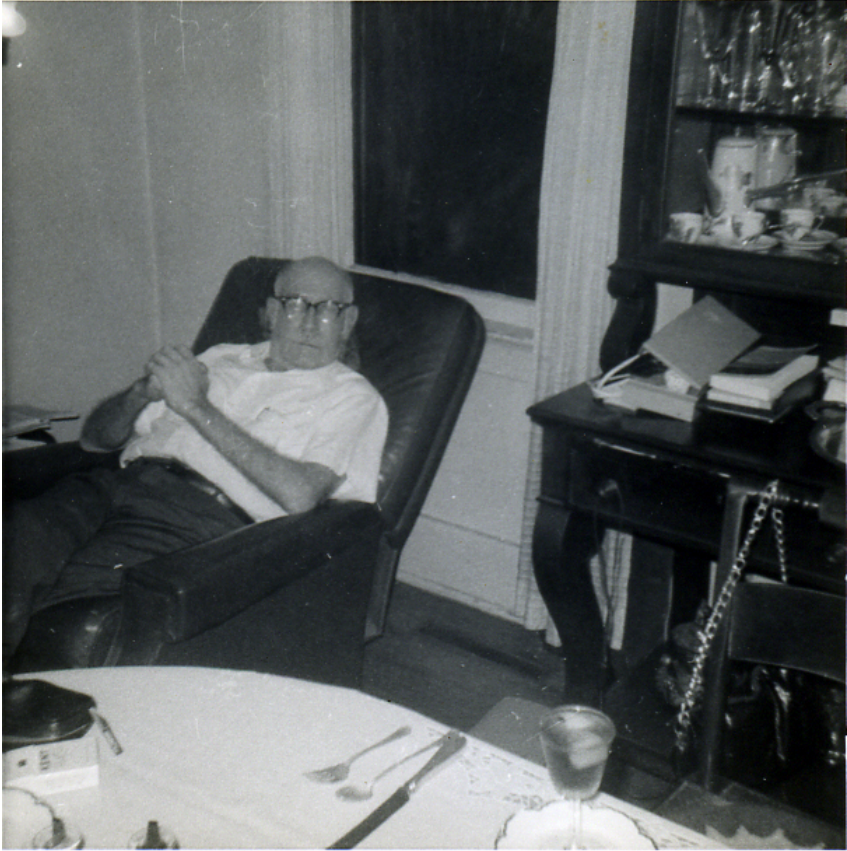
to death instead of drinking himself to death, as everybody had always said he would. He was serious.

The children, especially Jimmy who was living in Savannah, visited as often as they could. Jimmy was there every day, taking care of both Daddy and Mother.

Mary, living in Florida, visited as often as possible. There was a gas shortage, so sometimes she had to take the train.

Although he never wanted to go to a nursing home, Mother felt sure Daddy didn't realize he was in one at the end. He died at 75, and had a grand funeral and a big write-up in the paper, which Mother loved.

His proudest statement during his last illness was that his liver was fine. He had medical evidence at last. He was seriously glad not to have killed himself with booze, but with cigarettes.



**Daddy in his go-back chair in the dining room on 41st Street, about 1972.**

## **Mother was Next**

Mother lasted only a few years longer. She missed Daddy terribly and spent all her time playing bridge, as she had done since girlhood. She loved the game and was a great player, nationally ranked, as was Daddy. Mother drove her car right up to the end, usually only in daylight, if she could get home in time.

Her goofy old VW pulled a weird [and dangerous] trick once. She parked it in the carport, as usual, and

later, while she was upstairs asleep, it spontaneously caught fire and burned part of the carport and [the really dangerous part] was licking at the house, right on the stairs, where her escape route was. She called Jim, who was sensible enough in the middle of the night to call the fire department before he left home. He rushed over and walked her safely downstairs. The car insurance paid the damages.

She died of cirrhosis at 78 while in Tampa visiting Picot and Mary. When the children gathered to say goodbye, the doctor said it wasn't a bad way to go. Mother drifted off into a coma, almost like falling asleep. Her diamond rings, which she left to Marcie and Mary in her will, were stolen while she was unconscious in Tampa General Hospital.



**Mother playing bridge with Phil Cranman about 1975.**

## **Hair**

By the purest stroke of luck and due to no good behavior on his part, Barry still has all his hair. His father was as bald as an egg.

His brothers are both bald or thinning. Even his older sister Mary is thinning considerably [she blames it on radiation], although little sister Marcie is still holding on to her hair. His nephews are losing theirs too.

That thick, dark hair Barry had as a baby, although not so dark today, is almost as thick as ever. His family used to worry that he was so skinny, but he is still slender and still looks healthy today. And that great smile is still in place, despite all he has lived through. He's got some serious arthritis today, but he takes tons of aspirin and pretty much tries to ignore it. His Reynaud's disease keeps him indoors on really cold days. The Marfan's syndrome doesn't affect him, he says, just makes him tall and skinny..

## **Family traits**

Barry has the same family traits that everybody else in the family has, only more so. He's damn sure when he's damn sure, just like his father was. His brothers and sisters are like that, too, but maybe not quite so much.

Barry has some outstanding traits, too, that the family doesn't really share. He's not a fashion slave, but a suit hangs on his broad shoulders as if it were designed for him. And he has a fashion sense that he must have gotten from his mother and maternal grandmother, both fashion victims in their time.

He has also managed to be successful in his own business, which the sibs have not done. No matter how well he did working for someone else, he always wanted his own business. Brother Jim ran his own firm, Keating Roofing Co., for a few years, but like all construction businesses, it was hot and cold. He went to work on the waterfront in a union job, directing stevedores in loading and unloading ships, until his retirement in 1992.

During those early days in Atlanta, Barry was riding high. He drove the finest cars available and wore the greatest clothes. When Georgia State Patrol members stopped him on the highway for going up to 100 miles per hour in one of his white Cadillacs, wearing one of his fabulous white suits, they were impressed.

If you didn't know him, you might think, "White suit? White Cadillac? He must have looked like a pimp!"

But Barry always looked like a gentleman. The troopers never noticed the audacious empty six-pack of beer on the seat beside him as they either ticketed him just for the speeding or waved him on after a warning.

## **Barry a big hit**

Barry is the darling of his nephews. With an all-girl family of his own, he gives the boys more attention than they really deserve and they love it. At least one of them [Adam] has been reliably quoted as saying he wants to be Barry when he grows up. Not be LIKE Barry, but BE Barry.



On summer afternoons and weekends in Atlanta, Barry played for many years on the Driftwood softball team.

He was a regular at the Driftwood Bar & Grill, which had been Harty's favorite bar until Barry took it over. Harty, after years of faithful attendance, left the Driftwood forever when everybody started calling him "Barry's brother" instead of correctly calling Barry "Harty's brother."

Although he is not a frequent attendee now, everybody at the bar is happy to see him when he drops by. While Barry is still to be found at the Driftwood once in a blue moon, he says today that Harty can have it back. But Harty has moved on to Mississippi.



**Barry on the Driftwood softball team, second from right, back row.**

## **Lively construction**

Barry in Atlanta entered a livelier construction milieu with a major architectural firm there, Heery and Heery. He did cost estimating and construction management on all their major jobs for several years, but even a big architectural firm has trouble with the ups and downs of construction.

Barry was traveling extensively. Once he was headed for Saudi Arabia to negotiate with a member of the royal family and stopped off in Rome to get a visa. As it turned out, he had to stay in Rome for weeks while he awaited His Majesty's pleasure. What a punishment! He even learned a little Italian – and Arabic. And he loved Rome.

On another Saudi trip, Barry decided to go home by way of Ireland. He had never seen it and thought he would enjoy it, so he scheduled a few days in the Emerald Isle.

A few weeks of negotiating with His Madge in the incredible heat of the desert had Barry totally ragged out by the time he left the sandy Saudi kingdom. It turned out that he was so tired and jet-lagged that he saw almost nothing but slept most of the time he was in Ireland. Gotta go back someday.

## **Ditching construction**

After years of working himself to the bone in the construction industry, Barry finally decided to pitch the career he loved as being too cyclical, totally subject to depression and boom. One year you can't build half the things people want you to, so they get mad at you. The next year nothing's happening, you

can't get any business and the customers say it's all your fault.

It was affecting his private life, too. The family moved to Gary, Indiana, where Barry was building a domed stadium, just as that city started going straight into a decline.

## **Fun at the beach**

The Keatings had a good time for a while, living at the beach. Beth even operated a hot dog stand a couple of summers. But the national depression of that period sent Gary spinning down.

Barry and Joan made friends with all the top people in Gary, including the Mayor, and would have stayed longer if there had been any business. Under Barry's picture in the Gary newspaper, it said: "Barry Keating, Outstanding Local Businessman." The city people talked about doing something but, after the stadium's completion, there was no money to build anything else.

While he and his family laid plans to move back to Atlanta, Barry and a partner sought business in nearby Chicago, and luckily got a contract to re-build some rundown housing for the Chicago Housing Authority. The buildings turned out to be more rundown than the Authority had admitted, and the money for cost overruns became harder and harder to collect.

It was hard to get people to work on the buildings, too. And the neighborhood was positively dangerous. Barry finally gave up on commuting and just stayed in one of the completed apartments so he wouldn't

get his head busted in at night when he finished work -- almost alone -- before he could head out.

## **A bad winter**

By then the family was waiting for him in Atlanta, and Barry had to spend one last, cold winter in Chicago by himself, finishing up the contract. Not only was his family gone, his partner deserted him. It was a bad winter. Cold as hell, too.

*You know about the founding of Chicago, don't you? Some guys in New York said, "We've got filth, corruption and crime. But it's not cold enough! Let's go West! We'll found Chicago!" -- Mary, a one-time New Yorker and one-time-only visitor to Chicago. Too cold. Marcie knows.*

Barry worked with a bad case of the flu, but he finished. He came home to Atlanta paler and skinnier than ever, almost like the little boy of years before after his big bike wreck.

When he finished the contract in Chicago, Barry had closed out his construction career with a bang, managing the building of two domed stadiums, traveling to Europe and Saudi Arabia to drum up business and building houses in Savannah, apartment houses in Jacksonville, more apartment complexes, tall office buildings and churches in Atlanta.

He even built a bridge. If you go with him to the rotating restaurant at the top of the Georgia State Bank Building, he'll point it out to you, and several other of his more prominent and highly visible structures on the Atlanta skyline.

Built a bridge?

“It wasn’t easy,” he said. “They wouldn’t stop the trains.”

*[Harty says, “Maybe not.”]*

## **Joan and Barry together**

As Barry's birthday approached in 1994 *[he'd be 62]*, he had settled for several years into his own business again and loved it, although it was totally unrelated to construction. Both he and Joan were involved.

Joan and Barry bought a lovely tri-level house on gorgeous grounds north of Atlanta and their two older daughters, Ann and Marcie, both established homes of their own in the metropolitan area. Ann, who teaches school, has one son, and Marcy [“Moose”] an executive with Georgia-Pacific, has three children. Beth, a restaurant manager, is living in Virginia Beach, Virginia, where she has built a new house. She and husband Reggie have two children. Their lives are very busy.

Joan and Barry's new career was one that both of them worked at. Even Beth was involved in it from time to time before she moved to Virginia. Barry was the president and ran the company and Joan managed the paperwork flow. They opened a phone room in an old office/shopping center at Five Points to sell Septiclean, their own product, which they manufactured at home and shipped all over the Southeast.

In later times, they established outposts throughout the South and closed the Atlanta phone room when

the elderly shopping center was demolished. Septiclean is a septic-tank clearing product.

Barry liked to cook out on their deck overlooking a beautiful garden full of dogwoods and azaleas, pine trees and oak trees. Joan was an early riser. She got up and got the paperwork done so she and Barry could enjoy lunch together somewhere. They picked up tons of checks at the Post Office and then headed home for a pleasant evening together, either with Barry cooking out or Joan cooking in.

## **Kicking-back time**

Nothing is forever, but for years Barry and Joan's dream came true. Once upon a time, when they first fell in love, they longed to be together all the time. Instead, they had to do what their parents said, go to school and stuff like that. Now, they were their own bosses and they chose to spend all their time together. Sure, they got sick of each other once in a while, but mostly it was great. And they and their children often went together to the mountains or the beach at the end of the summer.

Both of them worked hard, but they kicked back a little from a few years ago when they were just starting the business. Then, they worked in the phone room every night and did the paperwork when they had a chance. They worked like dogs, all day and half the evening.

Later, their operation was more computerized and they had people to help them. They shared the computer work and did not work on the phone at all any more, thank God. It's a helluva way to make a

living. *[Believe me, I've tried it. With my children, who never want to try it again. Me either. - M]*

Barry and Joan hired their next-door neighbors to do most of the 'factory' labor now that Barry was taking it easier and Beth moved. The phone room downtown theoretically ran itself with a reliable manager and little intervention from Barry or Joan until they closed the Five Points office.

The Driftwood? Well, they do hit it once in a while for old times' sake, on a holiday or other occasion when one of Ken's special meals is laid on. But they have many other favorite spots located more in their own part of town. It is restaurants more than bars for Joan and Barry these days. Not dry restaurants, but not just bars.

They don't go as much as they used to, maybe, but Atlanta is still Big Switch, an exciting place, and they break out of the mold once in a while to take in the doings of the city. Still, they are truly homebodies, enjoying home and each other. And their precious children and grandchildren.

At home, when Joan is ready for a break, she telephones the girls or checks out Home Shopping. When Barry's relatives came to visit, she is an incredibly gracious hostess. Joan plans and prepares most of their meals, and -- when they are going out -- figures out something that can cook in the crock pot until they get home. She still loves to shop. And she is still gorgeous, maybe more so, if that's possible.

## **Right up to the end.**

Barry's life changed forever on August 15, 1995, when Joan died. It was her birthday, which seemed to make it sadder. She was visiting Beth in Virginia. This book was written in happier times, mostly. They had been married for 40 years.

Joan went easily, thank God, the way everybody would like to go. Family and friends gathered to say farewell and to hold Barry up in his sorrow. Barry cranked up his business again, after a quiet time that he fully deserved. He took a real body blow, but his life was not over.

Life was different, for sure. Barry cooked and cleaned for himself. He simplified the household so it wouldn't be a fulltime job. He tried to make plans to change his headquarters, maybe to South Carolina, but not too far from his girls and his grandchildren in Atlanta. Tax problems in Georgia were making him think he'd like to move. His phone workers didn't always collect state sales taxes. Oops! So the company had to pay them.

During that recovery time, when Barry conked out at the end of the day, he fixed himself a glass of face cream.\* Then he checked out a basketball game on TV -- he still loves the sport. He can figure the odds with the best bookmakers and actually wins more than he loses -- he says. On Saturdays, he gets up early for a game of golf with his regular foursome.

*\*white wine [said to be good for the skin]*



## Chapter X

### Lightning Strikes

But he was lonesome, despite having many friends. One of the loveliest Atlanta ladies was Mary McDevitt Pharr, called Mary McPharr by the Keatings, just because we're goofy. Mary and Barry were good friends from childhood who enjoyed movies and meals with each other.

Sisters Marcie and Mary both urged Barry and Mary to get together as more than friends. Each responded that it was too late, that they knew each other too well, more like brother and sister.

Then came that memorable night in Barry's kitchen. Mary came over to the house and Barry cooked one of his excellent meals. They had a good time laughing and talking and the night wore on. Mary decided it was time for her to go home.

Mary McPharr got up from the kitchen table and went over to Barry at the sink to give him her usual sisterly, peck-on-the-cheek, good-night kiss. But Barry's lips missed Mary's cheek and they were kissing, really kissing. It was then that they decided that all that tight friendship, all those years of being buddies, had turned into love, regular mushy love. Sweethearts, after all those years!

### Plans change

Everything changed. Barry had planned to build a bachelor cabin in the woods -- out the window. Mary had planned to grow into an old crone -- out the

window. Barry had planned to reopen his business -- out the window. Mary had planned to travel extensively alone throughout the world when her son was grown -- out the window.

Barry sold the house he had shared with Joan and moved into an apartment behind an Atlanta mansion, complete with gorgeous garden and swimming pool. Mary stayed in her house. Her son Matthew was still at home. Mary and Barry became more frequent visitors to each other's houses and were out together almost every day.

## **The big day**

June 25, 1999. Remember that date. That's why they chose it. Mary and Barry figured they couldn't ever forget it because it was exactly halfway between Christmas and Christmas.

They got married, but wouldn't tell the rest of the family when it was to be. Mary wore the most beautiful white suit Barry said he'd ever seen. Barry wore a new pair of pants, a fresh shirt and his nice blue jacket. Mary made him take off his ever-present navy-blue hat.

It was a serious day, but they laughed a lot anyway.

Mary picked up the phone and called me. "Hello. This is Mary Keating," she said. Well, since I'm Mary Keating, it took me a heartbeat to catch on that today was their wedding day!

The whole family is thrilled that Mary and Barry have found each other and have found happiness.

## One Ending

I'm writing this ending right before leaving for the big party to be given 15 August 1999 by Marcie and Irv and Betty and Harty. Of course, as in 1992 for his 60th birthday [*or was it 1994 for his 62nd ?*], I've waited until the last minute, until it's impossible to complete the book before leaving. But Mary and Barry say -- insist -- that they don't need or want any wedding presents. Having combined two households that already had too many appliances, they say that everybody who comes for the party will have to take an appliance home in the trunk: refrigerators, freezers, computers. Some of the nieces and nephews are saying "Why not?"

Barry picks up the cordless telephone for an occasional chat with his sisters and brothers. And he still looks great -- maybe more so.

## FINIS

HAPPY much-belated 60th BIRTHDAY, September 22, 1992. Revised 1997. Revised again 1999.  
Someday I'll get it right. MKF

And HAPPY wedding day -- June 25, 1999. Many, many happy returns to you and Mary McPharr!

In August, family and friends met in Atlanta for a celebration of the marriage.

I think what I loved the most about writing this book was that it made Barry cry when he read it. Real, handkerchief-wielding tears. One of those HUGE white handkerchiefs that he uses.

Not revising this any more. This one hurts too much. Barry and Mary divorced, then got back together and moved into the house Barry built in the hills near Monticello, Georgia. Then came the black day, 13 August 2003: Barry died of brain cancer on Friday the 13th. The only good parts were:

A) As Barry lay dying, he wrote a note to Mary saying "thank you," and as he reached the end, he unforgettably squeezed her hand.

2) The girls planned a memorial service for him at Tybee in the early fall, when we all got together and, oddly, had a good time, at Mary's brother Michael's wonderful house.

III] Mary McPharr would add one more: At Christmas 2003, she received a beautiful bouquet from the girls, making her cry and smile at the same time.

His adored daughters are moving on with their lives. Barry's beloved Mary McDevitt is living in their home with their two huge dogs, who seem more huge each day, and Barry's spirit and memories are with her especially in every corner of the house that he built. They are with all of us too, his children, grandchildren, siblings and all remaining.

His physical self is truly gone, sprinkled in the river [called officially Moon River but still thought of by us as the Back River] by his darling grandson, Ann's Christopher. The rewriting of *Barry: A Life* is really over this time. The calendar says 15 January 2004.

## **MKF**

Well, another: St. Patrick's Day has passed. It's 22 March 2006, and I'm through at last!

Okay, one more. It's 1:29 a.m. on 13 August [the black day] 2006, and it's time for me to get a glass of face cream and drink a toast to my sweet baby brother.

Now I'm crying: it's 7 January 2008 at 1:53 a.m. and I'm truly through with this book about my sweet baby brother.

Okay, one more run-through, 14 January 2009. MKF

Really FINIS 14 January 2009

From a Christmas card dated 20 December 2002, to Suzy, Picot, Myrina, Daphne, Mary Floyd [before Maeve was born]:

*“Mary says you are back working -- bet you enjoyed having some time w/family. Perhaps we’ll see you St Pat’s this March.*

*“We sure enjoyed last year – I’m still up to here w/cabin work. We are about out of money, so I am doin’ all work myself + just buying materials – hope my body will hold up.*

*“Love, Uncle Barry”*

## **FOOTNOTE**

I refuse to call this another addendum. It’s a footnote.

In 1939, in the depths of the Great Worldwide Depression , the father of Picot Floyd Sr. was forced to close his business, Floyd & Co., on West Boundary Street in Savannah. What has this got to do with Barry? You’ll see...

By then, the formerly busy cotton brokerage was reduced to being called a cotton “pickery.” The work was to buy burned bales of cotton, pick out the unburned portions, re-bale it and sell it. Not too obviously, but it seems it wouldn’t be a business that could survive as long as it did.

When the business closed, Marmaduke, Picot’s father, was no longer able to take his little boy to work with him daily, where Mum Dinah and Pompey, two of his employees, helped to care for little seven-or-eight-year old Picot. Picot’s mother, Dolores, was employed full time at the Georgia Historical Society, and Marmaduke went into the surveying business and developed real estate. Mum Dinah cooked daily for all the workers, and Pompey had teeth filed to points. Picot thought that both were former slaves,

but, since slavery ended in the 1860s, it seems unlikely.

Picot was sent to Charleston, where he lived and went to school at Porter Military School [academy?] His history teacher taught the class that Abraham Lincoln's father was John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, a former Vice President of the United States and a cousin of the Pinckneys. Everybody in Charleston believed that was so.

Nancy Hanks, Lincoln's mother, was a bar girl in Charleston and Calhoun's favorite. Nobody in Savannah believed it. But now a historical document has come to light that shows the complete possibility of the South Carolina story. It appears that Nancy Hanks was already pregnant or had just given birth when she got into that mule wagon and rode to Illinois, or Kentucky, wherever it was, with Tom Lincoln. Must have been an awful ride.

Lincoln, medical science says, had a condition called Marfan's Syndrome, a rare genetic condition. Genetic, get it? Our cousin Calhoun [why do you think they call it Calhoun Plantation?] passed it to Lincoln and also to Barry. It causes the body to elongate and the face to become lantern-jawed as the body matures. Barry, sadly, always felt he was ugly after a childhood when he was beautiful. Barry needed this book; Jim, Harty, Marcie and I didn't need it.

When I went to see Barry on his 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday, he and Joan picked me up at the airport. On the way to their house, Joan had to stop at the grocery store and I handed the printout to Barry, in the driver's seat. I was right behind him where I had hopped in at Atlanta's Hartsfeld airport.

He began leafing through his present as we parked, waiting for Joan. It wasn't long before I saw him pull out that giant handkerchief he used and start mopping his eyes. That was my reward: he loved it!

The historic document, which Barry never saw:

*Copied at Abbeville Courthouse,  
South Carolina District of Abbeville:*

***This agreement made and entered into on the 19th day of February 1809. I John C. Calhoun of the said state and district, of the first part and Nancy Hanks of the second part, for and in the consideration of the sum of \$100.00 per year, to be paid to Nancy Hanks, for the support of an illegitimate son born February 12, 1809. The said sum of money to be paid to Christopher Orr, who shall act as guardian for said child. John C. Calhoun Signed in the presence of, and on the above mentioned date. Witness Christopher Orr, Robert Brown Norris, Thomas Lincoln.***

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5:26 p.m. 2 December 2, 2009 MKF

How about 5:54 a.m. 20 January 2010? Gotta stop!



I'm through, 8 February 2010. Sending this to Ann for proofing as soon as Keating has a chance to scan the pictures.

STOP! 15 May 2010 I'm through!

Another run-through. A few corrections. Picot has scanned in the pictures and this is going to Ann. 19 November 2010.

I refuse to date it any more.