

3. Palo Alto High School

David: You were saying you've been haunted since your childhood by your memory of Lake County.

Henry: Well, not exactly since my childhood, but my young adulthood. To me, it was a kind of Shangri-La, if that term means anything to you young whippersnappers. It was the closest thing to Utopia that I could imagine. I spent an awful lot of time up and down Northern California and on up into Oregon, particularly during the time I was with Lois, looking for something that might come close to trying to recapture those days. She in her girlhood grew up on a homestead in Montana, so she had the same feeling toward that that I had toward Lake County. She and I never [pause]...oh, I *was* with her when I got the ranch in Forestville. That was in 1984, and as I say, it hasn't worked out [laugh] as I had hoped but I've still held onto it through thick and thin, always hoping that not only would I be able to escape there occasionally at least, but that eventually I could strike some kind of spark in the breasts of one or more of my children and that they would carry on after I kick the bucket.

David: Well, you may be interested in knowing that one of Erica's cousins bought a cabin up in Cobb a couple of years ago.

Henry: Interesting

David: And Erica and Noah have gone up there a couple of times just on the weekend. There are no farm animals but it is Cobb.

Henry: That's interesting, indeed. Okay, so with that preliminary...

Gene: How old were you when you were in Lake County?

Henry: I was there when I was 10 and 11, and then there were summer camps for another two years. The glory years were those in which we spent time year round. There were a couple or three years after that when we went up there in the summers.

Gene: Was that to the same cabin or a different one?

Henry: Toward the very end, a fellow from whom we had been renting the cabin that I was really so fond of wanted it back and so we spent time on the property of another fellow, but it wasn't the same because it didn't have the creek running right alongside the house. Now, do you remember where we left off?

David: Right there, the guy repossessed the cabin and you headed back down to Palo Alto.

Henry: Right, okay, that would have been in 1940. It might seem that if I were born in 1927, in 1940 I would have been 13 but because my birthday doesn't come until the very end of the year, in most of 1940 I was still only 12. There were several changes when we moved back to Palo Alto. Did I mention anything about our buying the house next door to us, along about 1936 or 7, from the Ellsworths? I believe I mentioned the name Ellsworth – she helped my

mother with the nursery school for a while and her husband was an unemployed but very competent carpenter. They, despite the fact that my mother tried to help out by hiring Mrs. Ellsworth with the nursery school and giving Charlie Ellsworth odd jobs around the place (adding on a sleeping porch and so forth), had to sell their house. My mother was so successful with the nursery school that she bought it, and I and my brother and father and she moved into that rather than sharing with the nursery school itself. So that was a difference.

I was now ready for the 9th grade. In many school districts that would have meant that I was a freshman in high school, but in the Palo Alto school district it meant that I was going to junior high school. The high school at the time was only three grades. I don't remember very much worth mentioning in my 9th grade year. It was Jordan Junior High. It was probably about half a mile, maybe a little more than that from where we were living. I was riding a bicycle at that time, so that's how I got back and forth to school.

It had a homeroom system. Our homeroom teacher was also our English teacher – Miss Wells was her name - known to the boys in the class as "Horse Face Wells." [laugh] I sat in the back of the room and sat next to one of the guys who was kind of a roughneck. He and I used to whisper back and forth, including our opinions about Horse Face Wells, but somehow or another Wells thought that I was a star pupil and made me a teacher's pet whether I wanted it or not, which I didn't. I'll never forget the time that the class had been out of hand most of the day and she kept them all in after the normal time for adjournment at the end of the day except for me. I was so surprised to be singled out in that way that I couldn't think of anything else to do but to follow her instructions, which were to walk out. In retrospect, I should have said I would prefer to stay with my friends. But they didn't seem to hate me or resent me for being a teacher's pet, so I got along okay through that year. She singled me out to write a class poem for the Annual and it still exists somewhere.

A major development was that I joined the Boy Scouts. The Boy Scouts are in bad repute nowadays because some people consider them to be overly authoritarian and overly patriotic and overly religious and mostly because they are considered to be homophobic. I don't know where that controversy stands at the moment but it was no item for discussion back in those days. Nobody had heard the word homophobic. It would have been unthinkable to have a scoutmaster who was a predator of young boys. If there had been a rule handed down by the national organization that no predators of young boys need apply for a position as scoutmaster, I would have been all in favor of it.

In the summer of 1940, I guess it was... no, I think it must have been '41, I went to Boy Scout camp in Lake Huntington, which I just looked up in the atlas and found that it's in Fresno County. It was a very beautiful setting. The idea of Boy Scout camps was to get as many merit badges as you could, and I got merit badges in bugling and art and probably two or three other things. The whole goal of Boy Scouts – as you probably don't know – was to get enough merit badges to go up through certain ranks. You began as a Tenderfoot, the second step was Second Class (I guess), third (I guess) was First Class. And then they began a graduation from Star Class to Life Class to Eagle Scout. I eventually reached the Life Class. I had to have 20 to 25 merit badges, something like that. But I was never able to get one in swimming. Otherwise, I would

have been an Eagle Scout. I sank like a rock in water, try as I might. The more I tried the more water I inhaled, it seemed. It got to be mental, I imagine, more than anything else. It's still with me; I've never been able to swim, never.

So that brings me to my sophomore year at Paly High. It was probably 2 or 3 miles from where we lived, but once again my bicycle was the means of transportation and it was very good exercise. Among other things I remember fondly, because it came in handy for all the rest of my life, was that I took a class in typing. I would recommend everybody do so if they haven't already. I became fairly good at it. I think I got up to about 60 words per minute and if I remember correctly, that was net after suffering subtractions for errors. So that was pretty good, I guess. Anyway, I got good grades in it and I enjoyed myself the whole year.

I think it also may be worth mentioning that my brother and I during this period attempted to keep in some contact with our father, who was still back in Davenport, Iowa. I'm not altogether sure what he was doing. I think he probably had by this time settled whatever problem there was with the probate of his father's estate. My brother and I would write letters to him occasionally and he would reply occasionally. Particularly, we contacted him at holiday times. I'm not sure exactly what years we might have done this but my brother got very interested in recording, making home recordings with disks that used some kind of stylus. I don't know the technique but I remember making greetings to send to my father in that form.

I'm very, very foggy on this but for reasons I cannot recall we (that is my mother and brother and I) moved back from the Ellsworth house into the nursery school house by the fall of 1941. I don't know why but I do remember this; the only space available for me was a kind of anteroom at the very rear of the house. You had to go through my brother's bedroom to get to it. It was no larger than a large closet. Since it was the only thing available, I accepted it. In retrospect now, I realize it was good for me because it put limits on the amount of junk that I could acquire [laugh] and clutter up the space with. I had to be efficient. There was a little desk there that I used, there was a 6 foot long bed and there may have been a small closet. It was probably 6 feet by 8 feet, something like that.

I had a radio by the bed which I used to use to listen to programs like "Your Hit Parade" which would have Frank Sinatra singing the leading songs of the day. I was listening to that radio and I was probably listening to popular music on some station or another when the program was interrupted with a news flash. This was the morning of Sunday, December 7th, of 1941. I think it was about 9 o'clock in the morning, our time. It was much earlier in the morning Hawaii time. I remember going into the kitchen where my mother was working on breakfast and telling her what happened and she knew immediately that it meant that we were at war.

The following day, at Paly High, we were all called into the auditorium to listen to Franklin Roosevelt's speech to Congress in which he spoke about "the day that would live in infamy." This profoundly affected my life as time went by, of course. In the short run it didn't make much difference. I do remember that there was a fellow in my Latin class whose name was Toshio. He was a jolly fellow and I liked him. I think he had tears in his eyes when he told us that he was going to have to leave. We talked about that in my Civics class which was taught by

a woman named Miss McCauley. She said that it was necessary to protect the Japanese from vigilantes and hooligans who would otherwise attack their places of business and their homes, and beat them up on the streets and so forth and so on. I found this rather persuasive. However, it was not included in any of the rationale that was given us by the government. It was argued that the Japanese were not to be trusted and that the younger generation was still dominated by the older generation and that the older generation was still loyal to Japan. There was very little debate about it at the time. The Supreme Court, of course, ruled it to be constitutional, so that was that.

Rationing was put into effect, rationing of gasoline and tires and various kinds of food – sugar and meat - most essentials. It affected the nursery school. My mother had to go before the Ration Board to appeal for some allocation of stamps which would enable her to feed the nursery school children their lunches. She was able to get them to see reason and also to give her a proper allocation for gasoline because part of her service with the nursery school was to pick up the children whose parents didn't have the time or desire to do so on their own...and to take them home at the end of the day. She needed to have gasoline for that purpose and the Rationing Board saw it that way.

To make a long story short, I don't recall that we needed to change our lifestyle very much at all. It was probably difficult to get certain kinds of meat (the better kinds of meat) but there was no limit on what they called "organ meats." You could buy all the beef heart, liver, kidney and whatnot that you might want. To me, that was kind of an adventure. I wasn't familiar with some of these things but I thought that they were fine. So we had a lot of beef heart. As I say, we didn't feel the pinch, not that I recall, anyway.

We, of course, did our bit as we could with War Bonds and collected scrap metal and saved fat from cooking to take into a collecting point from time to time. We supported the effort as best we could. I think we probably helped the effort in some respects by providing this nursery school service for families in which the father might have been drafted into the Armed Services. If there was somebody to take care of the children, the mother could have volunteered for service in a hospital or something of that sort. I imagine that happened and my mother was happy enough to do that. Things went along. ..

Eugene: Was Oscar going to the same high school or a private school?

Henry: My brother was still in private school. My brother and I never went to the same school at the same time.

Now, along about February I think it was, maybe March, in the normal course of events I would have gone out for the track team. I never went out for the basketball team. I should say that in those days they had four different divisions: 110, 120, 130, and unlimited (or Varsity). Roughly speaking, they were weight classifications but it was actually a combination of weight, height and age. I would have probably been okay in the 120 division of basketball if I had gone out for it. I was able to jump high enough but I had never had any practice dribbling or shooting or any of those aspects of the game, so I never went out for that. Track and field – I knew how to run so I was all set to sign up for that – until I became very sick with something that was diagnosed

as Scarlet Fever or commonly known as the strep throat. [Cough] Oh dear, I sound as though I have one right now!

Strep throat was a serious business as I soon found out. My temperature started going up and it went up and kept going up to about 106. My mother brought in the family doctor, the same woman who had presided over my mother's pregnancies (except for the one in Texas). She knew a lot about all different branches of medicine. Fortunately, she was up on the recent developments on the control of bacterial infectious diseases, including strep, because sulfa drugs that had been quite recently developed and there was already a demand for them by the Armed Forces. Somehow our doctor (her name was Judith Johnson) was able to get some sulfanilamide. She knew exactly how much to give me to control my raging fever. It saved my life. I think that's the sickest I have ever been with the possible exception of my heart attack. But even then, I was taken to an emergency room in time and I don't think I was ever really in danger of dying from that. I was in danger from this strep throat.

Needless to say, this knocked out any hope of going out for track that year. In fact, I had to stay home and recuperate for probably six weeks or so. I had to try to keep up with my studies in absentia. In some ways this was easy to do. For example, in English the required reading that year was *A Tale of Two Cities* by Dickens. Dickens was already a great favorite in our family. My mother had read *David Copperfield* to us, so we all shared in *A Tale of Two Cities* and eventually I wrote a book report on it. I eventually returned to all my other classes and the rest of the school year was uneventful. I think maybe that was the year I went to Boy Scout camp. The previous year was our last gasp at Mr. John Lee's property, which he called High Valley. This was the summer before Pearl Harbor.

We tried having a summer camp and it was pretty much a disaster because my mother by a fluke of history had to put up with a number of moochers. A couple of friends from Stanford, who said they had been in my father's class way back when, in the School of Education, had fallen on hard times and wondered if there was some way they could help out at the summer camp. Mostly they just needed free room and board. My mother couldn't really think of anything useful for them to do but she tried to think of things. Then, my father's sister, my Aunt Pearl (her husband had come to the end of the line with her) needed a place to stay. What could my mother say to that? The trouble with Aunt Pearl is that she weighed over 200 pounds and was an enormous eater, so all in all the camp was a losing proposition financially.

[Short break]

Now I've said that there wasn't much change in our day-to-day lives, but there were some changes. One of them was that my mother had to become a little more careful in her shopping because there were certain shortages of some things that weren't on the ration list but which were nonetheless necessary. On the other hand, there were price controls on things like the cost of tuition at the nursery school. I'm not sure it was really price control if she didn't want it to be but she did want it to be, being a good citizen. Then, on the other hand, there were other things that were in short supply where the merchants were able to charge what the market would bear. She needed to be a little more careful in her shopping.

I started going around with her as she shopped and became more interested in such things. I became very interested in food in general. I probably had been for some time but maybe it increased during this period. I remember going with her to the butcher shop and selecting whatever was reasonable and I guess this would extend to watching her when she prepared these things. There were different ways to prepare beef heart, for example. This has influenced my later life, no question about it. I always been interested in cooking, I've always been interested in shopping, and I've always been interested in looking for bargains. Some people think these things are carried to an excess but it's always been part of my life for better or for worse.

I'm trying to think of anything else significant that might have happened during this period. Let's move along into the spring of 1943. Now let me think about this for a minute [long pause]. No, let's back up to late 1942. [Another long pause] I was still 15. I feel hopelessly in love with the girl who was sitting in front of me in Latin. Her name was Jeannie Brokaw and she was the most beautiful creature I had ever invented, and the sweetest. The fact that she was not very good in Latin meant absolutely nothing to me. [laugh] As far as I was concerned, she was perfection. Yet, I didn't know how to let her know. [laugh] I don't know if you guys are familiar with the Peanuts comic strip, but Charlie Brown has a crush on a little red haired girl. I had a hopeful crush on Jeannie Brokaw.

I would follow her in the halls of Paly High between classes to figure out what other classes she went to besides Latin, and I tried following her after school to find out where she lived but she usually took the school bus and I was not able to follow that. One day, for one reason or another, she missed the school bus and she started walking home. I took that opportunity to follow her on my bicycle at a discrete distance of a block or so. Eventually I found where she lived, which was quite a ways away, probably a mile and a half or so.

I kept thinking and thinking about what I could do to let her know of my existence. I could look at her all class (in Latin at least) from the back but I didn't have any reason to believe that she knew who I was sitting in back of her. Finally, there came a time when there was going to be a school dance. I summoned up the courage to write her a note which said, "Would you like to go to the dance this Saturday?" I remember the exact wording. The reaction was better than I could have imagined. She turned around, smiled broadly and said, "I'd love to!"

So far so good, but then problems arose. How were we going to get to the dance? A lot of my classmates, being 16 or older, were able to drive and had driver's licenses. A few of them had cars of their own, I suppose, although they were certainly limited by gas rationing. They were able to use their parents' cars for things like school dances. I was in no such shape. I couldn't think of anybody with whom I could double date and so in the end I couldn't think of any option but to be driven by my own mother and have her wait around outside the school gym until the dance broke up and then drive us back to Jeannie's home.

That was the least of it. I foolishly thought that I could bluff my way through dancing by something our teacher at Cobb Valley School had tried to teach us one day, which might have been the Texas Two Step or something. I don't know if it ever had a name or deserved to have

a name. When I got poor Jeannie on the dance floor and started stepping on her feet [laugh] after a few minutes I suggested we retire to the sidelines. We spent the whole rest of the evening watching other people dance. That brought into play another one of my total miscalculations – I had absolutely no gift for conversation. I couldn't think of a single thing to say except once they played a song by Glen Miller that I like so I said, "I like that song!" hoping that it might start a conversation of sorts. Unfortunately, Jeannie didn't find that to be very stimulating [laugh] and so we spent the entire evening saying practically nothing. It was disastrous – one of the most humiliating nights of my life. Oh, how I blush to think of it! Poor girl!

David: Why didn't she contribute something to the conversation?

Henry: Well, because she was as bashful as I was.

David: There's got to be something you talked about.

Henry: I can't remember a thing

David: Latin class, sports...

Henry: We might have said something about Latin, but that didn't last long. Anyway...

David: Gene, did you have an analogous experience at some point?

Gene: Maybe when I was younger.

Henry: Well, I'm glad I'm not the only one!

David: If only you could go back in time, with what you know now...transport...it could be so different.

Henry: Exactly right. I spent a lot of my life thinking back on that and a lot of other things that I might have handled differently. I'm told that I shouldn't waste my time on such exercises, since they are all futile, but I can't help myself.

I'll move on now to something happier. I guess that it was in March of 1943, at which time I would have turned 16. [Pause] I'm all boggled up in this. I was still only 15 when the time came to sign up for track again. I was a junior and this time I was in fairly good health. One of the side effects of the strep throat often is that it does something to your heart. I sometimes wonder if that has something to do with the fact that it finally caught up with me in June of 2000 (when I had my heart attack). When I was a junior I felt fine and signed up for whatever was available. It turned out that with my combination of age, height, and weight, I could have qualified for the 120 class. If, in fact, I had continued on that path I could have cut quite a swath through the opposition because I was pretty good. There was nobody else in that class at Paly High so I was put into the 130 pound class, not just based on weight as I say, but we called it 130 pounds.

I told the coach that I wanted to go out for the ¼ mile, I guess because I had watched that event at a track meet that my father took me to. I don't know exactly why, but for whatever reason I thought that I was better qualified for that than a shorter or longer distance. Without my proving it in one way or another, he just took my word for it. The season began with a conference-wide relay meet. Paly High was a member of the Peninsula Athletic League, which included teams from Burlingame, San Mateo, Redwood City, and San Jose. In this relay meet, our coach had us signed up for a 4 by 100 event and a medley relay consisting (I think) of 100 yard dash to lead off, 2 220s and ended up with a 440.

Lo and behold, to my great surprise, he had me running anchor in the 4 by 100 event. I had never asked for it or shown any particular aptitude for a short sprint, but there it was. Also, we had been given very little time to practice at handing the baton. Somehow, we carried on this sprint relay successfully except with the limitation that I was so green that I didn't realize that the race went on until somebody broke a string across the finish line. I saw a chalk mark on the track 10 yards short of that point and slowed down. [laugh] However, I was given such a lead by the three other guys that even though I slowed down to a jog I still broke the tape and we won that race. Wow.

I should have mentioned that one of the other fellows in this great division with me was a very good sprinter and another was a very good hurdler and high jumper. They are the ones who really made it possible for us to win. Then came the medley relay, which might have been the final event, I don't know exactly. Once again, they gave me a substantial lead to start the anchor leg with my ¼ mile and I still forgot to wait for the tape and I slowed down before I got to that point. But I had run a sufficiently fast anchor, along with the fact that they had already given me a goodly lead, that we broke the meet record. This appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle the following day. That was pretty interesting, except they had all our first names wrong. I was Jack Anderson. [laugh]

I'm going to go into a little detail here because it all leads into what I will end up with. Our next event was a dual meet with Burlingame High School on their track. It was made out of oyster shells and quite different than any of the others I ever ran on. It was a very fast track. The leading ¼ miler on the 130 pound division on the Burlingame team was a guy who had won that same event the previous year. My teammates told me that he was *very good* so I adopted a strategy of just following him until near the end, and that if I had the strength I would pass him and if not I would come in second. As we got to the last 50 yards or so I still felt full of pep and I passed him, so that was very successful. I won in 56.4 seconds.

The next meet was in San Jose and before the ¼ mile one of the San Jose team members came up to the little group that I was with from Paly High and said, "Who's the guy who ran 56.4 last week?" They all pointed to me and that made me feel good. And again I won. It came down to the final meet of the year which was an All-Conference meet. I finally got my comeuppance. I followed the same strategy of holding back a little bit until the end but I didn't have quite the kick I needed so I came in second. However, because we had these other fellows on the team in the same division as I, and I did run again on the winning relay team, all in all we won our weight division for the whole conference. That entitled us under the rules of the athletic

department at Paly High to get block "P" letters, which was a mark of some prestige. Otherwise, for minor sports, they had what they call a small "p."

One other thing happened that same spring. There was a games day set aside one afternoon in which representatives of various teams – the water polo team and the baseball and the track team – were supposed to demonstrate to anybody who wanted to watch the rudiments of their sports. I was eating lunch in the school cafeteria at noontime of that day and a couple of guys from the varsity track team rushed up to me. I was eating a sandwich of some kind. They said, "How would you like to run with us this afternoon?" I said, "Huh?" They said, "We're going to try to break the school record in the 4 by 440 relay." These two guys were both ¼ milers on the varsity team. They were going to bring along with them the guy who ran the 880 and they wanted me to run with them even though I was only on the 130 team. They didn't know anybody else who was able to run 56.4.

Well, it was a surprise to say the least and I wasn't sure how I would be able to do it after having eaten as recently as I did. There was this to be said for it - in all of the other meets I slept very badly the night before. I was always terribly nervous. I always had butterflies. On this occasion, since I didn't know what was coming, I didn't have that problem. So anyway, it was to be an exhibition, really. There was no competition. We were running against the clock. I think I ran the second leg. There were a number of people in the stands, including Jeannie Brokaw. I did my best and by coincidence somebody timed my leg of it and I did run another 56.4. The group of the four of us did in fact break the school record for that event.

Shortly after this I was approached by a fellow named Dick Jennings. He was a fellow member of the junior class who had moved to Paly shortly after December 7th because he was an Army brat. His father had been stationed in Hawaii and a lot of the school kids in Hawaii who could afford to do so (that is, the children of Army officers usually) were evacuated to the mainland. He was very hail-fellow-well-met, very good at making friends. It seems that he had taken it upon himself to work out a political slate for the elections that were about to come up for student body officers. He looked upon himself as a kingmaker with himself occupying a position a little outside of the main spotlight, although he was going to run for one of the offices, but not one of the top offices. He had handpicked one of the two varsity ¼ milers to be Commissioner of Finance. His name was Richie Muller. He handpicked another varsity ¼ miler named Dick Couterie (sp?) to be the Commissioner of Boy's Athletics. Dick Jennings himself was going to run for Commissioner of Publications. He asked me to run for Commissioner of Public Welfare. My jaw must have dropped [laugh] because I had never run for anything. I had never even thought of running for anything. If I had thought of it, I would have laid down until the thought went away. It was just nothing I was interested in or thought I was qualified for.

The fellow running for Commissioner of Public Welfare was named Philip Pierce and he had a long record of having run for a lot of offices. I think that at the time he was Chief Justice of the Student Body Court, something fairly responsible of that sort. It was just assumed that he was made for the job and that he was a shoo-in. I don't know why Dick Jennings took it upon himself to try to recruit a competitor to Phil Pierce. Nobody had anything against Phil. I just never understood it. So I said I wasn't interested. [laugh] I said, "I am totally unqualified."

Maybe he let it drop on that occasion and maybe he came back later, I can't remember that whole sequence of events, but he kept after me. He said on one occasion, "Don't worry, I'll tell you what to do!" I guess the point he was making was that he would instruct me in Robert's Rules of Order and whatever other fine points might be needed to fill the position.

I thought in the end that nothing would come of it and there was nothing to lose since Phil Pierce was so popular. I might as well let Dick Jennings have his little joke even if it meant that his whole slat would not be elected, only 3 out of the 4. I just couldn't believe that it was going to happen so I relaxed until I began to get rumors that maybe it wasn't a shoo-in for Phil Pierce, and I began to get nervous. I began to tell my friends, "For God's sake, don't take this seriously!" I began to make posters to vote for Phil Pierce. [laugh] If I had been a praying man, I would have prayed mightily that this whole thing would go away.