I Remember – by *Ruth Langmuir Van de Water*

This is being written in the fall of 1981, when I am 82 years old. I have lost the sight of my right eye, due to a retinal detachment, following a cataract operation on June 3, 1980. Five operations in Flagstaff and Phoenix (flown to Phoenix by helicopter from Flagstaff - courtesy of our son David) did not save the eye. The cataract developing in the left eye is not growing rapidly, as there has been little change in a year.

I was born July 16, 1899, presumably at home, as normally no one went to hospitals in those days. The doctor in attendance was a Dr. Goodrich, whom I remember well, as he continued to be our family doctor, and made the customary house calls as we became sick. At the time I was born, my Father, Arthur Comings Langmuir, and Mother, Alice Dean Langmuir, were living at #4 Verona Place, Brooklyn, N.Y. Their first home after marriage was at 157 Halsey Street, where Uncle Irving, Mother's Father, Dr. Horace Dean, and a maid, also lived. My brother, John Dean Langmuir, was born on July 27, 1902. I don't know just when we moved to Flatbush, but lived for some time in a duplex (divided vertically so that we had two stories,) on East 19th Street. All I remember about that house was that there was a window on the second floor, out of which for some inexplicable reason, I was allowed to crawl. Because there was no railing around the small, perhaps 3' X 3' space, formed by a flat area between the slopes of the roofs on either side, I must have been carefully watched, as I survived. We moved from there before I started kindergarten at the age of five, and I remember moving small things in John's baby carriage, and I also remember John learning to walk at that new house.

I started school, in kindergarten, with a great teacher, Mrs. Reilly, black-haired and Irish, with a lovely pink complexion. I was very fond of her. I spent all my elementary school years at the same school, Public School #139. It was on the north side of Avenue C, surrounded by a high wire fence. It was between Argyle Road (East 13th Street and the street to the east.) We were never allowed to play in the school grounds after school, and if we managed to scale the fence, we were always driven away by a watchman. Girls occupied the west side, the left, of the school, and the boys the east side, and they never were mixed in the classes. I don't remember any other teachers until I reached the 6th grade, where a Mrs. Heffernan, of uncertain temper, used to throw chalky blackboard erasers, with considerable accuracy of aim, at unruly students.

My 7th grade teacher was a red-haired excellent teacher by the name of Miss Congers. It was then I began to take a real interest in schoolwork, and tried to be the best. We were seated according to our rank for the preceding week, and I was generally seated in the left (first) row in the first or second seat. Our seats had desks with lids that lifted to disclose space underneath where we kept our books and papers. In the space forward of the lids there was an ink well, in which it was great fun to dip the braids of the girl seated in front! These desks were bolted to the floor in rows running from the front of the room to the back, and were double, two seats together. The seats also lifted, so that we could stand in place. We sat with our hands folded on the edge of the desk when the teacher wanted our full attention. There was no problem about discipline in those days - the teacher's word was law, and no comeback if you complained to parents. The final disciplinary step was to have to go to see

the principal! But, I remember throwing spitballs, wads of paper moistened from our mouths, but that must have been when we had a substitute teacher, for whom we rarely behaved well. They must have led a rugged life!

I was once asked to read out-loud in class, something in history. I came to the word Protestant and pronounced it as it is spelled, and the class laughed, and I was embarrassed! I had been a Protestant, but had only heard it pronounced as Prod-is-tant.

The school was three stories high, the older children occupying the upper floors. The next step after elementary school would have been Erasmus Hall High School, but my parents decided I should go to the Packer Collegiate Institute on Joralemon Street in Brooklyn Heights, one block from the Court House area. Since Packer did not have half-year grades, I skipped the final half-year at PS #139, by name grade 8B. It was said to be a review of the previous 8 grades, and it was felt I could get along without it.

I entered Packer in the first year of high school, in September of 1912, in what was called the First Academic class. I stayed there for all of the four years of high school, not intending to go to college. The final two years of Packer, were the first two years of college grade work. Packer started in the first grade, so that if one stayed there for one's entire education, it took fourteen years. Graduation was only after the second year of college-grade work, the senior year. So I never graduated from anything until then, as I had left elementary school before graduation, and there was no graduation at the end of the 4th academic year, at the end of high school. It is now a co-ed school, but then it was entirely for girls, and as we had been separated from boys at PS #139, and I went to a girl's college, I never had any classes with boys until after college.

To get back to life during elementary school: We lived at 496 Argyle Road (earlier known as East 13th Street) between Dorchester and Ditmas Avenues, on the west side of the street in the middle of the block. When we first moved there, I remember the space across the street, on the east, was still planted to potatoes, and below the level of the street. It was soon filled in with houses, built one right after the other, with the basements not needing to be dug out too much. Young European Sycamores were planted on both sides of the street and eventually got to be large and handsome. The street was dirt when we first moved there, and I remember the evening party we all had when it was paved with asphalt, and we skated up and down and rode bikes that first evening, before any traffic was allowed on it. The neighborhood was lighted with gaslights along the parking, (grass strips between the street and the sidewalks.) These were lighted every night by a man walking along with a stick with a lighted wax taper, which could be moved out as it burned. This taper, on an extension, would be stuck up into a hole at the base of the Welsbach[1] burner, after the gas had been turned on by a device on the upper handle which could take hold of the flat valve turner. I suppose they were replaced by electricity eventually, but I do not remember this, and I don=t remember

1Welsbach burner (wlz=b|k=, -bŠk=) A lamp, invented in 1817 by Karl Auer Van Welsbach of Austria, consisting of a gas burner and a gauze mantle impregnated with cerium and thorium compounds that becomes incandescent when heated by the burner.

their being turned off in the morning -perhaps it was before we got up. My Father was working as chief chemist and factory manager of a glycerin and shellac company at 9 Van Brunt Street, along the waterfront in Brooklyn, owned by Marx and Rawolle, the old Marx having died, and the management being by Mr. Rawolle (final e sounded like ee.) Father became internationally known for his works in these fields.

Father and Mother bought an extra lot, the one to the south of the lot where the house was. That was the only lot on the block not filled with a house. The half nearest the street was made into a lawn, edged on the south and west by Mother's flower gardens. On the south side, in the flower garden, was a tamarisk tree, which at that time was a novelty; it had lovely feathery tiny pink flowers. It was eventually killed by being ringed by the holes drilled by a sapsucker, but it had been a wonderful place to watch birds.

Mother and I for several years went with a bird watching group from the Brooklyn Academy of Arts & Sciences, with a Mrs. Fletcher as leader, on early morning trips looking for birds. We made many trips to Prospect Park, to the shore of City Island, and there was one morning, we saw my only real mirage. Every one in the party saw it! There was a tropical island, fringed with palm trees and sail boats going up and down - off in New York Harbor! I had a 9X Busch binocular, and both Mother and I became expert at being able to spot birds quickly and identifying them.

The western half of the garden was filled by Father's vegetable garden, the rows running north and south. He was already fairly heavy, but he did all the cultivating and hard work himself, pushing a cultivator on wheels and with spikes that dug deeply into the ground. He grew corn, sweet tasting garden peas, lettuce, huge tomatoes (he saved the seeds each year for planting again), lima beans, pole string beans, strawberries, beets and a fine big patch of asparagus. It was one of my jobs to collect the beetles that would infest the asparagus and knock them off into a small pail containing kerosene. Another job was to break off the smut that grew on the ears of corn.

We also grew cantaloupe. We had a black cat, inevitably named Beppo - (all of Mother's cats or dogs had been named Beppo!) This cat would detect the best melons, and would eat off the ends. Father knew that if he picked those melons, chosen by Beppo, they would invariably be delicious. We also grew spinach, carrots, Jerusalem artichoke and oyster plants, the roots of which made for delicious eating. Everything tasted wonderfully. Mother grew fine, tall, sweet peas, which grew better than they did later in Oakledge. Someone said the nearness to the ocean made a difference. She also had pink rambler roses growing on a trellis next to the porch; I remember a June snowstorm covering the flowers. She also had a moon-vine, and we used to enjoy watching the big white flowers opening up in the evening.

My room had a two-window seat, overlooking the garden to the south. We had gas flames in our rooms in the beginning, replaced by a more efficient Welsbach burner, and that in turn replaced by electricity. I had a gooseneck lamp at my desk between the east window

overlooking the street, and the windows overlooking the garden. There was a west window too, looking into the vegetable garden and the houses behind us on the next street. There was a high fence running the length of the block dividing the back yards, and the cats of the neighborhood loved to congregate there at night and yowl! Several shoes were thrown by Father to stop their racket, hopefully. I did a great deal of reading, and I must have been a trial to my parents, as I was always being called down stairs for meals, particularly at breakfast time, as I was never ready, because I kept reading while dressing. I remember the thrill of our first telephone, placed in my parent's bedroom. That was always a shady room, as there were awnings on the windows over the porch roof, facing east. Our black cat always slept at my feet at night, and I still have the tan, very warm, Jaeger rug (blanket), which would get very black from his fur.

There was little automobile traffic for many years. Mother would call up the grocer and the meat market and tell them what she wanted, and they would deliver it in a horse-drawn wagon later in the day. The meat-market had no pre-cut meat; all was cut to order. The floor of all of the butcher shops were covered with saw-dust - but no saw-dust on the floor of the grocery stores. An old clothes-man would come around with his cart, singing out Old clothes. A Knife Sharpener would come with his hand drawn wheel and sharpen knives and scissors. Coal was delivered by a big wagon, and later with trucks. A chute would be put from the truck to the cellar window, and big chunks of anthracite coal would go clattering down into the coal bin in the cellar, with much dust.

Ice was delivered in great chunks in a horse-drawn wagon, chopped up to the size desired with an ice pick, and carried into the kitchen with an iron-spiked contrivance which would grab hold of the ice, and leave two handles to grasp. He wore a heavy piece of leather over his shoulder and back to protect him from the cold and wet ice when it was really heavy and needed to be carried on his back. We would often get up to 100 pounds of ice at once. He would put the ice into our wooden icebox, in the top compartment. No one had every heard of an electric refrigerator then. Father used to occasionally check up on whether the iceman was delivering the amount of ice, which he was, asking Father to pay for. He would measure the cubic dimensions of the ice, and by using the density of ice, figure out the true weight. It was always a mystery to the iceman, but there was never any argument, as he probably knew full well just what the ice actually did weigh. I remember as well, the cream on top of the glass bottles of Borden's milk that was delivered to our door.

Flatbush, as one might guess, is flat, so roller skating and bicycling were great fun. We spent a great deal of time doing both; I could ride no hands even to going around corners. The only hill anywhere near was that caused by the building in 1907 of the Brighton Beach line of the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Co., which through our area was partially submerged into an open cut, but depressed way below street level. While it was being dug, we had a wonderful time watching the steam shovels digging away, putting dirt into open railroad cars to be hauled away. It was an electric line, with shoes from the motors riding on the third rail to supply the current. In bad weather, there would be sparks from the third rail, which could be seen all the

way to our house, about three or four blocks away. I rode this line to get to Packer, five cent fare all the time I was using it, and Father rode it to get to work.

Father got his college education at the School of Mines in Columbia University, and needed to save money. So to save the 5-cent fare across the Brooklyn Bridge, he used to walk both ways Columbia was down town in those days, and Father was living in Brooklyn. He had gotten his Ph.D. in chemistry in Heidelberg, Germany, as there was no university in this country that could give a comparable education in chemistry. He got his degree in 1895, married Alice Dean on December 17, 1896, and worked as chemist for a time with a Manhattan company, Ricketts & Banks, and then for the rest of his working career was with Marx & Rowolle.

To get back to the train tracks and the only hill we had. We could easily climb this man-made hill over the tracks, on our one-speed bikes, and then dash down the hill on the other side, jumping the curb, and lifting the front wheel to mount the curb on the other side. This was also fun on roller skates. I learned to ice-skate while we lived in Flatbush, and I well remember how my poor ankles wobbled, and how I had to wear contraptions of leather laced up tight over the instep to keep my ankles somewhat steady.

We did a great deal of roller-skating on the sidewalks after there was enough auto traffic to drive us off the streets. I remember one man on the next block north of us, living in a house painted dark red, who vociferously objected to our roller skating past his house on a Sunday, so we used to go on other streets then.

The four of us in the evening would gather around a small round table in the parlor and each of us would be reading a book. First the light was from a kerosene lamp, and it was my job to keep the glass chimney clean. After we got electricity, we had an electric lamp with a shade which might have been a Tiffany shade, of much value nowadays, but probably was not. Ours was green, with small pieces of glass, but in no particular pattern. John and I were always trying to read out-loud bits of our books that we found of special interest. Father and Mother would then start reading out-loud, together, just what they happened to be reading at that time. The idea, of course, was that we were each reading something different, and it was very annoying to be interrupted with a little bit of something else that was entirely different. They cured us of reading out-loud that way.

My Father used to love to read out-loud to us while we were at dinner, and when the table was being changed from the main course to dessert. He particularly loved Mark Twain, and he could hardly read for laughing so hard. In those days, there were many young girls coming to America from Europe, and we had a succession of Scandinavian maid's who cooked, did the washing, waited on table, and did the upstairs work. As I remember, they were paid $30 a month, plus food and lodging, living upstairs on the top floor with their own bedroom and bath, and one night off a week (Thursday,) plus part of Sunday, after dinner.

One summer, in Flatbush, when we were without a maid, Mother had me take charge and do all the cooking and ordering of food, which was a very valuable experience for me. But she never taught me successfully to make a pie, or to bake fresh bread. She had loaf pans, which were cylindrical and indented to form space for cutting slices, and the house was very fragrant on the days fresh bread was baked. Mother always made the fresh bread herself. She had a large aluminum or tin bucket in which the ingredients for the dough were put, and a handle with a mixing paddle below was turned to mix the dough until it got all stiff and sticky. That I often turned, but pies I never mastered. Our first winter after Jack and I were married, and living in Oakledge, I used some directions for making apple pie which said to use ice water. It was very cold outdoors, so I opened the kitchen door, put on my fir coat and proceeded to make a good apple pie. But it was a bit rugged doing it that way, and I was not enthusiastic about doing it often. To this day, I don't feel easy about tackling a from scratch pie, much to Jack's sorrow.

One of my jobs as a child was to unwrap the Fels-Naphtha soap, oblong yellow cakes, for laundry use, and let them dry on the floor of the upstairs or attic -the feeling was that the soap would not dissolve so quickly. The washing of clothes was all done by hand, on washboards, and hung out on lines in the back yard to dry in the sun and wind, and on wet days, to dry on lines in the cellar. Another job was to take Father's glass beer bottles, which he bought by the case, having acquired a taste for beer while in Heidelberg, down into the cellar and stash them away there. Once I dropped a bottle on the steps, and I had to clean up the mess, giving me a distaste for the smell of beer which has kept me from caring much for beer ever since. This feeling was probably augmented by the stale smell of beer coming from the saloons prevalent along the streets of Brooklyn, doorways partially hidden by curtains of bead strings.

We children on the block would all play together - tag, hide and seek, jacks and jack straws, which required careful manipulation of the tiny pieces of wood. Card games included Hearts - all I remember playing. We did a great deal of roller-skating, which included playing hockey on skates. It had been discovered, when I was 12, during a physical examination at the elementary school, which I needed to wear glasses because of short sightedness. My first glasses were silver rimmed, horrible looking things, but they didn't break as the rimless ones I wore later did. I remember the oculist telling me that I wouldn't have to always wear them - when I got to be 50 (the end of everything in those days,) I wouldn't need them as I would then be more far sighted. He didn't know about the astigmatism I would develop, so that I have always needed to wear glasses.

Our first automobile ride was in a Stanley Steamer, owned by a friend of Father's. All the roads were dirt then, and you dressed accordingly to keep out the dust - wearing dusters or lightweight coats, the ladies wearing veils over their hats and over their faces. Everyone had a great deal of trouble with punctures and flat tires; it was a rare trip indeed when you did not have to change at least one, or at least had to put on patches so you could get home. Cars all had running boards then, on which were put little folding fences, or gates, to hold your luggage. All cars were open, but in case of rain, there was a folding hood with isinglass

windows, which could be put down. Windshields could be put down so to have a clear view ahead. Headlights were gas lit - carbide-acetylene, although I don't remember them, since the first car we had was a Ford Model T, bought in 1919 after we moved to Hastings.

All during my childhood, we had a player piano, with a large collection of fine classical music on perforated paper rolls. Father would generally play this after we had gone to bed. I got to know intimately a great deal of fine music, but never knew the names of what was being played. This has bothered me all my life in not knowing the names of very familiar pieces of classical music, but I have gotten to love and know note-by-note, much fine music. John and I used to play with this player piano, and enjoyed pumping with much vigor the Erlking by Schubert, or other loud and vibrant music. Father brought this to Hastings, but eventually it was disposed of, with the rolls, as he acquired fine phonograph records. I wish we had the old player piano now, as it has again become popular and old ones are collector's antiques.

Along with my Father and uncles, I never was able to play any instrument well. (I took piano lessons as a child) but we have all been very fond of music as played by others. Mother and I, and with Father at night, went to many fine symphony concerts (Albert Spalding, Heiffetz and later Yehudi Menuhin) and the opera. I also took voice lessons after college for a couple of years, had been in the Glee Club at Smith when we gave a performance of The Mikado - my voice, a mezzo-soprano, was fairly good. Mother used to tell me of how Grandma had had such a lovely voice, and how she sang Swing Low, Sweet Chariot so beautifully. I never heard her sing.

For several years, while I was going to Packer, Grandma would take me to the opera, every other week, for the entire season. I would go to her hotel in New York City, we would go to the opera, where she had two season tickets, spend the night in her hotel, and go back to Flatbush on Saturday. In this way, I had the wonderful opportunity to see many operas -I remember especially Caruso in Pagliacci with long expressive lace cuffed sleeves, and Einzio Pinza in Boris Godunov. I slept through some of Tristan and Isolde, but most Wagnerian operas I learned to be very fond of. I also used to go to the Metropolitan with a neighbor in Flatbush who lived across the street - a young man, Otto Sturenberg, who lived with his mother, and who had lived most of her life in Germany.

One more item about the house in Flatbush. The parlor had a fireplace of sorts, with an imitation log, with gas jets, which would give out considerable heat. Naturally, there was no flue, and the mantle over the fireplace was merely for looks. Very high up was a shelf, and I remember Father bringing home once, showing them to us first, some sticks of nitroglycerine, which were about three or four inches long, light brown in color. To keep them out of the children's hands, he put them on the top shelf. He remembered, too late, when we moved away from Flatbush, that the sticks of nitroglycerine were still there! Fortunately they would not explode by themselves. Years later, my Uncle Dean had a secretary in his office who lived in that house. I wonder if he ever told her about the nitroglycerine!

A family tradition started in Flatbush. Every Christmas, Mother would make delicious chocolate caramels. When Uncle Dean was a small boy in Montclair, N.J., he used to go with a country doctor on his rounds in his horse-drawn buggy. The doctor, Dr. Newton, gave him a caramel recipe, which is still a family treasure, and are made each year, and acclaimed with joy by the recipients. Mother used to make them, and then Ruth took it over, and still does.[2]Bruce asked for the recipe, but I don't think he has ever made any. Alex, in 1980, on our trip to Boston to the Retinal Associates office, greeted with great joy a box I had brought for him - he remembered them well.

We attended the Fourth Unitarian Church on East 19th Street & Beverly Road, I think. The minister was a mild, pleasant man with a dark beard, by the name of Mr. Harvey. I used to sing in the choir there; we sat up in the front, mercifully hidden to some extent by a railing with a curtain hanging from the top - we didn't always behave. I got a gold star for perfect attendance for five years at Sunday School. Looking back, I wonder which five years they could have been, as we left standing instructions with Mr. Harvey, that we would be at church only when it rained, as we spent every good Sunday off in the Highlands along the Hudson, or off somewhere else, walking.

We sometimes went to City Island where there was still a little trolley car, horse-drawn, with a stove inside and straw on the floor to keep the passengers feet warm. This held about 6 to 8 people. Trolley car riding was the only way to get around in the city as we had no car. Trolleys were electrically driven with a pole reaching up to an overhead wire. Going around corners would often cause the pole to jump off the wire, so the motorman would have to get out and put the pole back up against the wire. Trolleys were especially fun in the summer. Cars would be put on the line, special cars with seats running across, seating maybe 10 or 12 people on a seat. You had to squeeze between other passengers to get a seat in the middle or far end. There was a running board the whole length of the car -when the car had all its seats taken, people were allowed to stand on the running board. There were no confining walls, so it was as cool as the weather allowed. Flatbush was never too hot, as it was near enough to the ocean so that we would actually smell the salt sometimes. No one had every heard of air conditioning then, of course. You enjoyed sitting out on the porch on summer evenings.

We used to go to Coney Island for swimming in the earliest days; then it got too crowded so we went to Brighton Beach; then to Manhattan Beach; and finally took a small motorboat across Sheepshead Bay to Rockaway Point, where we had the place to ourselves. There was a big tidal pool behind the ocean front dunes, where we had great fun with an enormous log we called the Mauretania, and John and I would ride astride that. Father greatly enjoyed the waves, but we were content with wading in the ocean, and doing our swimming in the lagoon, as we called it. We spent many a happy summer day at Rockaway Point. We had to wear full-length bathing suits, with sleeves, and pants down to the knees, and complete with black

2The cooking and distribution, since 1987, has now been taken over by Nancy, our Granddaughter, who still mails them to appreciative family members across the countryside.

stockings and bathing shoes. My ordinary street clothes consisted of an undershirt, underpants, a Ferris waist, which had buttons on it around the waist, to which were fastened blouses and skirts. There was a time when I had to wear a back brace because I was not standing or sitting up straight enough. That had many strings on it, and a belt that could be tightened, so that the whole contraption had to be buttoned with a buttonhook. The stockings were black for ordinary weekday wear, and white for Sundays or parties. Dresses were always knee length for little children, and longer, depending on the fashion, as we got older - all the way down to the ankles at times. There was one plaid dress of which I was very fond - so fond I wanted to wear it Sunday on Easter. Mother disapproved obviously, but let me wear it - to my sorrow, as I found out when I got there, and found everyone else in white, or light pastel colors.

I generally walked home from Packer as classes were over at two in the afternoon. I would walk to Prospect Park, walk through the Park, and the final mile home from the south side of the Park. Weekends, we did a great deal of walking in the Hudson Highlands, and I well remember how the backs of my legs would hurt climbing Breakneck or some of the other hills. Father belonged to the Fresh Air Club, a hard boiled bunch of good hikers, only men, and we belonged to the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), but I think not in my early childhood. In those days, you could walk all day in Hudson Highlands and never see another person. We also took vacations in the White Mountains, climbing the Presidential Range and staying in the AMC huts. On one trip, Father was walking the trail ahead of me, and stepped over an old log in the trail, disturbing some yellow jackets which promptly bit me, the next to come along. My foot swelled so I had to wear one of Father's sneakers. Years later, when we lived in Hastings, I was bitten again by several yellow jackets, who had a nest in the cement bag wall separating our garden from the lane behind the house. I became unconscious and was revived with adrenalin by Dr. Sawyer, a neighbor, of the Rockefeller Foundation. Still later, in Omaha, another doctor neighbor advised my taking allergy shots against yellow jacket bites that had then become available. He said if I were bitten again without the shots, I would probably die from shock. The shots were very effective, as I have been bitten a couple of times since, and by taking an antihistamine, had no ill effects.

In 1907, we rented a cottage at Roxmore in Woodland Valley in the Catskills, and had a nice vacation there. I remember playing with another little girl, and enjoying with Mother the wild flowers, particularly the blue-eyed grass. We went there again in 1908; and to Central Valley in 1909. In 1910, we stayed at the hotel at Pearl Point on Lake George; in 1911 we went to Minnewaska, at the Cliff House, where John and I learned to swim, and had fun rowing boats, and exploring the crevices and the primeval hemlock woods. These vacations were always taken in June, and as school in Brooklyn did not close until June 30, even if the 30th were a Monday, Father would have no patience with that, and would take us out of school for the last two weeks of June. I don't believe it mattered much, as I remember taking dolls to school for the last few days while the teachers made up the report cards, etc.

In 1912, we took a historic ride on our bicycles to the far end of Long Island, and even then, it

made enough news for a whole family to go on a bicycle trip such as that, for us to be written up in local papers along the way. We went out on the south shore to Montauk Point, across to Shelter Island by ferry, and back along the north shore. All the roads were sandy, and hard going sometimes even if flat. One day, as we were going up a long sandy hill near Oyster Bay, Father was ahead of us, all pushing our bikes up the hill. He started waving his arms so violently we wondered what was the matter with him and while we were wondering about him, a car passed us going down hill, which we later discovered from Father, had in it President Teddy Roosevelt, to which we paid no attention at all. (He had been president from 1901 to 1909.) Mother had a two-speed bicycle, a novelty then, so that made hill climbing much easier for her.

In 1913, we took a trip, which Father tried to make as much as possible by boat, though we did take the train to Buffalo, N.Y. Here we boarded a Great Lakes steamer, and went to Duluth, including Lake Huron and Georgian Bay on the way back -it was great fun for John and me to stand in the bow and guess where the boat would go next on its way past all those islands. At Duluth Father showed us where the ancient level had been, far up the side of the hill on the south side of the lake. We took boats the lengths of Lake Champlain and Lake George, and the Hudson River. John got the mumps on that trip; and Mother was seasick on Lake Superior. She was always plagued by that, and on their frequent trips across the Atlantic, she would go to her stateroom and get in her berth before the ship left N.Y. Harbor -then she was all right. Father never got sick, and gloried in rough weather. The only time I felt a bit squeamish was on a small boat once in the Boston Harbor, and on a train ferry crossing from Warnemunde, Germany to Denmark, where the waves were splashing over the tops of the freight cars being carried on the open deck. John and I sat out of the way of the waves, and were comfortable enough, but did not want to go into the dining salon where Father was the only occupant.

In 1914 we spent our vacation at the Red Rocks Inn, in Newfoundland, N.J. In 1915, we went to Mount Desert Island, along the Maine coast and to Monhegan Island where we enjoyed the barnacles and other forms of sea life on the rocks at low tide, the lighthouses and the very few people. In 1916 and 1917, I went to a girls camp at Silver Lake, near Hawkeye, in the Adirondacks in northern N.Y. State, run by a Miss Nina Hart, head of the English Department at Packer. We lived in tents, rode horseback, swam, canoed, hiked (I had gotten some sort of award for being the best hiker,) played tennis and baseball, had plays in costume, and ate prodigiously of starchy foods, so that at the end of the summer when I came home, I could not get my skirt pulled together around my middle, and had to fasten it with an enormous safety pin, hidden under my middy blouse - a long hip length blouse of heavy cotton material, with a sailor collar and worn with a black silk tied bow. This was standard dress for gym classes at school also, worn over full, knee-length bloomers made of blue serge. Long black stockings and sneakers finished the costume. When we went bathing then, we also had to wear full-length bathing suits, complete with sleeves, pants down to the knees, with black full-length stockings and shoes.

I Remember – by *Ruth Langmuir Van de Water*

In 1918 we went on the White Mountain hiking trip where Yellow Jackets bit me. That September I went away to school, to college in Northampton, Mass. At Smith College, I was in the class of 1920. I was entering on advanced standing because of my two college years at Packer, so in effect I was a junior, but had had no hygiene courses, so I had to take freshman and sophomore hygiene as a part of gym class. My first year I lived off -campus at 12 Green Street down the street from the College Inn, and directly across the street from the south edge of the campus. There was one other upper classman, a sophomore, and the rest were freshmen, so I was duly elected president of the house. I had plenty to do, dealing with the housemother, Miss Hartwell, who loved to snoop and catch us violating the rules. I had a two-room suite with a private bath, with a roommate I had gotten to know at Silver Lake Camp, a Katherine Aldridge, who lived in New Rochelle. She later married a mining engineer whom she met on a visit to one of her father's mines in South Africa. They were later divorced, after three children were born - his name was Zadra, a name she always kept. Kay and I would often study in our bathroom, after lights were supposed to be out, lying in the tub lined with pillows, with towels or blankets across the window and across the door sill to cut out the tell-tale light. In those days, lights had to be out 10 pm except for, I think, four light-cuts a month, where you were allowed to stay up later to study.

We all had to study hard, but I was fortunate in having an excellent education at Packer, so the transition was easy. In leaving Packer to go to Smith, I needed Intermediate Algebra as a credit and requirement for math. I had enjoyed Elementary Algebra (but not Plane Geometry!) and my Packer math teacher gave me a text book that I studied by myself during the summer and enjoyed doing it. Fortunately the book had the answers to the problems in the back, so I didn't need a teacher. I don't remember taking the exam, but I must have passed it, as I received the credit hours. I greatly enjoyed Latin at Packer, and had taken six years of that, ending up in a class with only five others so we really had individual attention. I never regretted spending that much time on Latin, as it has been a help in understanding the derivation of many English words.

I took four years of French, the last year being called Conversational French, dominated by one girl who had had a French governess, but spoke ungrammatical French, she took a great deal of the teacher's time, and the rest of us never learned to speak French easily. When later I got to France, I could read anything, but was at a complete loss listening to the French speak so rapidly. Father used to tell of his amazement when in France as a young man, at how well the little children could speak French!

We were forbidden to smoke except in the basement rooms of the college dormitories, no smoking at all at 12 Green. My senior year I lived in Baldwin House, a regular college dorm. During this time I had a roommate, in a similar two-bedroom suite, Margaret Cobb from Cleveland, whom I later visited at her home in Willoughby, near Cleveland.

I majored in Chemistry because I had greatly enjoyed my courses at Packer, and got along well at Smith in Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis; but my senior year, I had a bad time

with Organic Chemistry, although that was my Fathers specialty. I was more interested in botany, and greatly enjoyed courses under Doctor Ganong. It was too late to change my major by the time I took Organic Chemistry, in my senior year, so I had to struggle along with it. I was dubious of passing my final exam, and I was scared of not graduating. One girl in the class of a little over 500 did not graduate, and everyone knew it before graduation day. So I marched into John M. Green auditorium, in cap and gown, and looked through the list of graduates in the program, and could not find my name! I shall never forget that awful sinking feeling; but eventually, I found my name in the list of Cum Laude graduates! That was June of 1920.

World War I had come to an end in November of 1918, and a great celebration on the streets of Northampton and on campus. There was a bad flu epidemic in the fall of 1918; classes were canceled for several weeks and we went to work on the farms near Northampton, in the corn fields, and in the tobacco sheds and fields. I worked in the cornfields. More than 20 million people died worldwide in this epidemic, more than were killed in the war.

One other noteworthy thing that stands out in my memory about college; walking back late in the evening from the library, I saw a most beautiful display of northern lights, wonderful waving wings of green like a lunar moth. It turned out to be the only one I ever saw, aside from some faint white pulsating lights seen once from an airplane.

At some point, for two summers and the part of a third, my wise Father had me go to learn typewriting and shorthand at the Heffley Institute, a part of Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. For some reason they had their own system of shorthand, neither Gregg nor Pitman, but more like Pitman. I have always been glad to have learned typewriting, and have done a great deal of it. The shorthand I was afraid to use when I got to college in taking notes, as I thought I would not be able to read it back weeks or months later when studying notes for exams, and as I was able to write long hand rapidly, I never really needed it. Later, when Jack would want to dictate letters to me for later typing, he always went slowly enough, so that I could still write long hand. So I have never really used my shorthand. But for years, the old symbols would go through my mind, and perhaps I could take it up again, if I ever needed it - which is doubtful at this stage of my life. But the typing has certainly come in handy in my present work at the library - cataloging new books, and typing out the first shelf list cards and the circulation cards in the pockets. I have used it for years in correspondence, even when it was considered impolite to write personal letters on the typewriter. I thought if I would lose friends that way, well that's just too bad!

In the fall of 1918, while I was away at college, Father and Mother and John, moved from Flatbush to Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y., 18 miles north of Grand Central Station on the Hudson River Division of the New York Central Railroad. They bought an old, run-down, marble house that had been built in 1850 of marble blocks from the quarry below the house, to make walls three feet thick. There had been an addition put on the house some time before, which was not stone walled - this was the guest room, with a bath between it and the room in the old

house which was mine, and on the north side of the house, another bedroom and bath, which were John's.

There had been no central heating in the house originally; so all the old rooms had fireplaces in them, with a grate to hold coal. Father used to buy cannel[3] coal, and we used the fireplaces a great deal - in the living room, dining room, library on the first floor, and in Father's and Mothers bedroom on the front of the house, and in my bedroom next to it with an adjoining door, on the second floor. There was an attic above that. Below the living room & dining room, library, floor, reached by stairs from a hall (in which there was an old dumb waiter to bring up food from the kitchen which had been below) - was the floor in which Father had put a billiard table (in the old kitchen,) beyond that a chemical laboratory in which he did consulting work for a few years after retiring; next to the billiard room which had an outside door, was a small bedroom which was used by a house-boy; most of the time by Boi, a Korean man who served as cook, waiter, house cleaner, etc. After Boi left Hastings, he started up a restaurant of his own in Coney Island, and then we lost track of him.

On the north side of that floor was Father's study, with book cases lining the walls, a large roll top desk, and next to that a bath room. Below that floor, was another, containing a root cellar, in which could be stored vegetables. Father put in a vacuum cleaner system which consisted of a motor in the lower basement, and pipes inside the walls all over the house, with outlets in convenient places, to which could be attached a hose and nozzle. The nozzle had a glass window in it, and it was very satisfactory to watch the dirt being sucked up. An oil burning furnace was later added off Father's laboratory.

They had to redecorate the entire house, as the wallpaper was hanging from the walls when they bought it. It had been built by Doctor Draper, and lived in by various people, including a Miss Benjamin whom the singer, Caruso, married.

In May, 1923, the house suffered a disastrous fire. Father had been burning up paper trash in the dining room fireplace, as he usually did every day, and sparks from the fire ignited the dried oak leaves in the gutters of the roof, and as it had a wooden roof, it caught fire and burned for some time before it was noticed. Mother and I saw the fire first, when we went down to the garage to get the car out to go to a garden club meeting. I called the fire department, but they got confused between South Broadway and South Driveway, and were delayed in coming. The water pressure was too low to reach the roof from the back of the house, with its five stories, so the roof mostly burned down to the stone walls, and smoldered for some time in the salt hay, from the Piermont marshes across the river, that had been packed between the top of the walls and the roof. The floor of my bedroom had started to burn by the time the fire was put out, and the water damage was tremendous. Quantities of water ran down the stairs, all the way down to the billiard room floor. Consequently, the whole

3Cannel (k|n=cl) - A bituminous coal that burns brightly with much smoke. May also be known as Acandle coal (from its bright flame.)

house had to be redecorated again, this time a slate roof was put on instead of the wooden shingles. This total job took months. The new wall paper in the living room had birds in the design, and one of the workmen asked "How are you going to feed all them birds?"

After a few years, Father acquired a Capehart phonograph which was able to take a big stack of records, flop one down on the turn table, turn it over when needed, and then store it away in another stack. It used to occasionally break great pieces out of records. Father said that it could take a bite out of a man-hole cover! No repairman could ever find anything wrong with the machine, but it may have been an uneven floor in the old house, as we had no trouble with it when we had it on Circle Drive. They gave frequent concerts and played whole musical selections of concerts and operas, to which friends were invited, and supplied them with librettos and silence was the rule during the music. Refreshments followed, making a delightful affair.

I have not mentioned my first opera, Hansel and Gretel. Father took us as a Christmas present when John and I were quite young, after having played the music many times before hand, so that we were very familiar with it. That was the first of many wonderful times at the old Metropolitan Opera House. I have never seen the present one.

We knew no one in Hastings when we moved there, but in Northampton at 12 Green Street, one of the freshmen, Louise Miller, lived in Hastings, so I did know her before we actually moved there. I went to college from Flatbush and returned for Christmas vacation to Hastings. All the redecorating had been done by then. I guess it was that fall that my parents bought a Model T Ford sedan. This sat in the garage all during Christmas vacation, as it was so cold, and no one knew how to start it! Later, Father attempted to learn how to drive it, but he was not a naturally good driver, and once, after narrowly missing the side of a large hay truck, Mother and I decided we would rather do the driving. So from then on, even when they graduated to a large Cadillac, she did all the driving.

In the summer of 1919, my Father, his brothers Irving and Herbert and their wives, Marion and Edith, a friend of Aunt Edith, John and I, as the only grandchildren old enough to go, went together on a horse back trip in the high country of the Sierras above Yosemite Valley. We had as a guide, Raymond Bailey, whom Jack Van de Water later got to know very well when he was a guide in the Yosemite. During that trip, I caught one fish, so small I had to put it back, in the water wheels (my first, and only, all my life). That trip was a great experience, and Jack and I, in 1962, retraced our route, neither of us having wanted to go back because of the expected crowds. Even in 1962 we were still high enough in elevation and remote enough to be by ourselves.

Before going into the Yosemite Park, we four had climbed in the Canadian Rockies, going on the Victoria Glacier at Lake Louise; the Illicillewaet Glacier at Glacier, B.C., reached the tops of Glacier Crest and Mount Abbott; then climbed Mount Rainier and the Pinnacle Range. We visited Father's cousin, Fred Leadbetter (son of his Mother's sister, Annie) and his family at

Vancouver, Washington, and that was where I learned to drive. Cousin Ted had an open Chevrolet and while driving on the Columbia River Highway, he suggested that I drive, which I did all day with apparent great success. Next morning, since I was so good, he said, why didn't I get the car out from the orchard, where it was parked. It had a hand accelerator, on the steering wheel, and I got it mixed up with the spark lever, and I went too fast, bending the supports of the open windshield on the branches of an apple tree. He was a good sport about it, and said if I didn't drive again that day, I would be scared to drive again, so I did, and have never been scared of driving since.

The summer of 1920 we spent at home in Hastings, no vacation. Father was retired by that time, and how do you have a vacation when you are retired? Many years after 1918, I heard this story from my cousin Alex, third son of Herbert. He related that when old man Rawolle died, and Jr. was going to take over the management of the company, in whom Father had absolutely no confidence, Father decided to take an early retirement, at age 46. This proposition was made; the value of the firm's good name was established by Father in consultation with others as zero; the value of the buildings and equipment also was considered to be zero; the price of glycerin was at a tremendously high value because of its use in explosives during the war. Father offered to sell his shares in the company, which he had acquired over the years, for the value of some fraction of the value of the glycerin they had in stock at the time. This was agreed upon, and he retired with a goodly sum, which he increased over the years by very judicious investing in the stock market. (The price of glycerin went way down in just a few months after his retirement.) This gave him enough funds to pay for the property in Hastings, and for the services, eventually, of a gardener, Andrew Ryan, much loved by the whole family, and occasionally Andrew's cousin, Dick Ryan. They both lived with their families on Washington Avenue in Hastings. Andrew in the house on the corner of Broadway and Washington Avenue.

Later, in 1932, Father acquired from the Anaconda Co., the marble quarry below the house, to which the company owned the water rights, as there was a small lake there and presumably some water source for the factory. Father had remembered in Paris, a beautiful park, Buttes Chaumont, which had been a quarry, and he undertook to make this quarry into a beautiful park as well. He employed a number of men in clearing out the poison ivy, etc. Once, they burned a pile of poison ivy, and one of the men was seriously affected by the inhaled smoke. They built paths, walls, planted native shrubs and trees, and made it a place of great beauty. It was visited by groups from Hastings, from the AMC, and by all the Langmuir guests. There was a small row boat used on the lake that was called the Queen Mary, as it was the largest thing afloat on the lake. The boat was much enjoyed by our two small boys later.

After Mother's death in 1943, the quarry was willed to Andrew, who used it for a while as a nursery for trees to use in his gardening work around town, then later for chickens none of these were profitable, and he finally sold it to a West Indian doctor. There was considerable criticism in town as he was thought to be a Negro. It eventually passed into the hands of the village, which is currently using it for a dump! I hope Father does not know this! Andrew lived

in Hastings for some years, was troubled with emphysema, and later moved to Florida, living there for a time before he died in 1981.

During the vacation of June 1921, we went to Cape Cod, and later in the summer I spent six weeks at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., taking a plant identification course, in which I passed a final test of 99 out of 100 plants being correctly identified. I lived in a campus house, Cascadilla Hall, and walked some distance to the botany buildings. The field trips were on the beautiful campus, and in the surrounding country - all thoroughly enjoyed. In the fall of 1921, without John who started that fall at Williams College in Williamstown, Mass., we went to Mount Chocorua; visited Father's chemical friend Doctor Comey; the Franconia Range; Mount Moosilauke; Lost River and Mount Monadnock, climbing whatever was there.

In 1922, with John for most of the time, we spent the entire summer, and part of the fall in Europe. We traveled with trunks, and, of course, had to cross the Atlantic by ship. We made the eastern trip on the Red Star liner Kroonland, a 14,000 toner, as I remember, and returned on the Majestic which we didn't like nearly as well. No satisfactory rough weather on either trip, but Mother spent the time in her berth as a safety measure. We landed in Belgium at Antwerp; particularly loved Bruges.

In Paris, John and I were directed each day by Grandma who knew Paris so well after her years of living there, where to go and how to get there by subway, etc., and to report at night on what we had done and seen. She had spent much time in Paris, as her husband, Charles Langmuir, had been the European agency director for the N.Y. Life Insurance Company. He had died of pneumonia soon after returning to N.Y. on a visit in December of 1898, and my Mother's mother, Mrs. Horace Dean, caught cold attending the funeral, and also died of pneumonia, so I never knew either of them. My Mother's father, Doctor Horace Dean, a dentist, lived with us in Flatbush for a number of years, and I remember hearing his banging on a large brass gong he had in his room. He had heart trouble, and was spending much time in bed. He died in 1906, while I was sick in bed with the measles.

To get back to Europe: While John and I were with Grandma in Paris, Father and Mother were attending a chemical convention in Marseilles. We went on to Switzerland, where John almost climbed the Matterhorn, turned back by very snowy, cold, windy weather; I had not started due to a temporary indisposition. I did climb the Wetterhorn later with a Swiss guide. From Switzerland, we went to Germany, visited Father's old university of Heidelberg, skipped Berlin, got new visas on our passports on a rainy day in Hamburg, took the ferry to Denmark, enjoyed Copenhagen and its beautiful steeples; on to Norway; from there to England and some time in London (much to our disappointment, no pea soup fog,) and then after John left to go back to college, on to Scotland, and Edinburgh, where I enjoyed climbing Arthurs Seat by myself, and looking at the smoky chimney pots below. We went to the Island of Staffa, scene of much of our much loved Fingal's Cave. The Isle of Skye was rainy and cold, but apparently never very cold, as large bushes of fuchsia were growing around the homes.

Grandma Langmuir was buried in the Greenfield Cemetery in Brooklyn. She has always been a great traveler, and many were the times the family used to gather at her ship, as she was about to leave for some great far away land, and to meet her again upon her return. She used to collect little silver charms and put them on chains. She never gave me one, because she thought I was not sufficiently interested, but I now have the one my mother had, and have typed a list identifying each little piece. (Our son, David, now has this treasure.)

She, in her later years, used to go to Florida for the winter, and one winter went as usual, but came back early because she was not feeling well. That was on February 1, 1936. She developed pneumonia, and her heart, which had been taking good care of her for years, did not stand up under the strain, and on the 10th she got much worse, and on the 11th, at 11 am, she died at age 87, with a temperature of 107.2, the cause being given as edema. During one trip of my Father's and Mother's, while we were still in Flatbush, she came to live with us, and very soon developed heart trouble, and went to bed to stay for some time. We had a maid at the time, so all she had to do was direct what should be done, and take it easy in bed. I do not remember her ever being bed-ridden again, until February of 1936.

We had great family parties at the time of her birthday in October, and whenever Uncle Irving would come to New York from Schenectady. That was about the only time I remember seeing my cousins, children of Uncle Herbert and Uncle Dean, who lived in Montclair, not too far away. We would visit them occasionally, but I never got too close to them - one reason being that I was the oldest, and at that age, a few years make a great difference.

When we moved to Omaha, we lost all contact with the family, which I have greatly regretted, and the big family reunion we had in the summer in 1981 at Martha's Vineyard, was a great opportunity to renew family ties, and to make new ones with the next generations. There were about 81 relatives there (in '81), and it was a great feeling to walk into a room, crowded with people, most of them strangers, and know they were relatives! It all started with my grandparents, their four boys, and the next generations. At the picture show we had there, it was interesting how the even the youngest would recognize Grandma's picture, and shout "There's Sadie!"

In 1923, I was taking some courses in Landscape Architecture at the N.Y. School of Fine and Applied Arts. It was impossible for a woman to get into the Landscape Architecture School at Cornell University or at Harvard. The course in N.Y. was nothing special, but it was interesting. I supplemented this with an Agriculture and Soils course at Columbia, years after leaving Smith. I nearly forgot to mention, that after graduating from Smith, I spent a year in the Botany Department at Wellesley College, typing in the office under the guidance of Dorothy Moore, helping in the laboratories where needed, etc. I lived with a nice Catholic family just off campus, two teachers, and their mother, and ate at a college dormitory near by. For this college year, I was paid $1,000. It was fun taking in the cultural extras in Boston, such as the Pops Concerts. Other members of the Botany Department, and I, would go off on

weekend trips to places like Cape Ann. We had a good time. I was offered a laboratory assistant job there for the next year, but turned it down.

Back at home, I went out hiking with the AMC often, and in the summer of 1923, I went with some Appie (AMC) friends to the Canadian Rockies. A group of us: Benhamin Seaver, Mortimer Bishop, ? Vernon, Dan Underhill and I were together for several weeks - they were all much older than I was. Dan Underhill and I made many climbs together from the Lake Louise Chateau - Mount Victoria, Mount Lefroy, etc. About the only time I ever played the card game of bridge was when the three of us and the guide were snow bound at the Abbott Pass Hut, between Mount Victoria and Mount Lefroy for several days, and after having read everything there, we were driven to playing bridge. I had never played, but they undertook to teach me -maybe I was only the dummy - I don't remember. Anyhow, I have never played since.

We moved on to Glacier, B.C. in the Selkirks, and I climbed Mount Sir Donald with a Swiss guide, supposedly the first woman to climb it by the northwest arrete. It was supposed to rank with the Matterhorn in difficulty. Because of that climb and others, I was invited to join the American Alpine Club, which I did, and remained a member for several years. We climbed only with ropes led by a Swiss guide - no one used pitons and other rock climbing aids in those days. We joined the Canadian Alpine Club for its summer camp in the Valley of the Ten Peaks, and later were about to climb Mount. Assiniboine, when a big summer snow broke up the camp, and all activities for the rest of the summer.

I went alone to Vancouver, did not see Puget Sound because of fog all around the boat, but did enjoy the Buchart Gardens in Victoria. I climbed Mount Rainier for the second time. This time it was with a larger group of people who had come from Seattle the day before, not getting acclimated to the high altitude. The standard luncheon ration issued was a small box of raisins, as everyone is expected to get mountain sickness. I was in superb condition from my summer of climbing, and Mount Rainier was no problem. I was hungrier than a small box of raisins would help, so the guide shared with me his huge sandwiches and piece of apple pie. He allowed me to go by myself down the mountain to catch the bus out, and going down on a snow slope, I slipped, and my ice axe failing to catch my descent, crashed into the stones at the base of the snow. Fortunately, I was only bruised, and was able to go on to catch the bus, but I should not have attempted any such descent by myself. I stopped off at Glacier Park, my second visit there, and it was a great anti-climax, as I only saw the outer fringes of it.

In 1924, I went by invitation, on a winter trip to Glen House in the White Mountains, in N.H. I had been the Secretary of the N.Y. Chapter of the AMC, Father had been president, and the chairman of the Outing Committee was a Jack Van de Water. We had seen much of each other since Father introduced us at an evening meeting, and it was at his invitation that I joined the outing of the hard-boiled Bemis Crew on its second winter trip between February 12 & 22. There were engineers in this group, and they kept a careful accounting of the

number of miles walked each day, and the number of feet in elevation each day. At the end of the trip Jack came out first, and I was second, having failed to go as high in KingÕs Ravine one day. During the end of that trip, we became engaged!

We were married on September 13, 1924, in the garden at Oakledge, with my cousins in attendance in the bridal party, and John Emory, Jack's best friend from Hempstead, as best man. A Dixon cousin of Mother's was the minister. We spent our honeymoon at Culver Lake, N.J. at a cottage owned by Jack's Aunt Jane, where we have since spent many happy summer days swimming, canoeing, sailing, and in the winter skating and skate sailing.

Father and Mother departed soon after we came back for a trip around the world, Father attending some glycerin and shellac meetings in England and India. We lived in Oakledge while they were gone. Jack had saved up enough money to buy a lot on Circle Drive in Hastings, in Riverview Manor. Father had offered me enough money to spend the summer learning French better in France, at Grenoble, or to use it in building a house. I chose the latter. So together we started building the house at 19 Circle Drive, on top of a high wall, which had been used as a retaining wall for an old house nearby, long gone, and beneath a beautiful old white pine.

We started keeping our own weather book, one side of the page with notations as to the minimum and maximum temperatures, and the kind of day; on the other side, one line about what we had done that day. These books have provided another long typed record, taking out many of the many items listed, the most important, and typing them so that they can be read in the future. I have been trying to read my Father's handwritten diaries of their travels, and it is very difficult, so I decided to type what we have. I will not repeat here what is given in those many pages.

We joined in with the family activities in Hastings, being only about a mile away from Oakledge. Every year, at the time of Grandma's birthday, October 26th, there would be a great big family reunion. The usual food served was quantities of wonderful steaks (bought at the butcher's a week or so in advance, and hung to get just the right amount of aging.) The steaks were broiled over charcoal in ceramic grills purchased in the southern Appalachians. They were then put in long stainless steel pans, surrounded with butter, in which were soaked pieces of bread, soaking up the butter and meat juices as the steaks were cut. With the steaks, were served lots of celery - and strangely, I don't remember anything else, except the final ice cream, generally home made. All during my childhood, and continuing on until Father died in 1941, I remember the great discussions he would have with his brothers - on all sorts of subjects, not necessarily scientific. However, Irving's latest research always gave rise to a great deal of earnest conversation. The talk during the family gatherings was always extremely interesting.

Father had been troubled during his later years with heart trouble. He told me it was due to the valves of his heart being infected by his tonsils many years before. He was always

overweight. He tried at times to reduce, but Mother told me once he didn't feel well when not eating enough, so it wasn't worth it. He died in his sleep at 2:15 am on the night of May 14, 1941. Mother called us at about 7 am. He was cremated, and his ashes scattered during a family ceremony in the Oakledge garden, the quarry, Draper Park - all places he had so much loved and supported during his lifetime in Hastings. Uncle Irving came down from Schenectady, and John and Laura from Nashua.

Mother was left all alone, except for Andrew. Jack and I, and the boys, had to leave Hastings on July 4th, as Jack had been transferred by the Bell Telephone Laboratories to Omaha, Nebr. So then, that left Mother really alone! The war was soon to start following the Pearl Harbor attack, and fuel was rationed, so the house must have often been cold. On May 18, 1943, it became more than she could take, and she ended her life, or tried to, by turning on the gas in the kitchen stove. Andrew found her when he came into the house in the morning and smelled the gas throughout the house. She was still alive, and was taken to the hospital in near-by Dobbs Ferry. Andrew called John, and John called me in Omaha. Dave was too young to leave alone in Omaha, so he and I left at once for Hastings. Pete went to work at a farm (Krejcis) near Rogers, Nebr., and Jack was left alone.

Mother knew me briefly when I saw her in the hospital, but soon became completely uncommunicative and never spoke to me again. I walked to and from the hospital every day. We had consulting doctors in from New York, and they told us that the carbon monoxide in the gas had affected her brain, and she would never recover. Shortly after being moved to a nursing home in Dobbs Ferry, she died on June 27, 1943, three days after her 71st birthday. Her ashes were also scattered in the gardens at Oakledge, in a family ceremony. Uncle Irving told me that he could not imagine anyone ending her life in that way, as there was so much in the world that was so interesting!

I sold the house to a Mr. & Mrs. Bohnert, artists from New York City, who had one grown son. On a later visit back to Hastings, a few years later, she told me that they just loved the place, and that their son would want to live there after they had passed away. Little did I know then, how the place would be left to go to rack and ruin. They took absolutely no care of the place, and stored their paintings against the beautiful big picture window in the living room, and all over the house, and never did any upkeep at all of the house or property.

A Mrs. Marilyn Hirsch moved to Hastings and used to take meals to Mrs. Bohnert after Mr. Bohnert died, for the Meals-On-Wheels program. She had made up her mind, that when the house became available, she would want to buy it. After Mrs. Bohnert did die, the place was sold to the Hirsch's, and they have been trying to "restore the house and grounds to the glory that was there when the Langmuir's lived there." I have sent pictures of Mother and Father, and what we had of the house and gardens. We have been there twice in the last two years, and I have hunted for what had been Mother's joy - her flower gardens. It was so completely grown over, that we had to hunt a long time before we could even find the central birdbath, which was now completely hidden by huge box bushes. I don't remember ever having any

box plants in that little central bed. The Hirsch's have a huge job ahead of them, but they seem dedicated to the project of restoring beautiful Oakledge.

We had 24 years in Omaha, living for the first ten years in a rented house at 113 South 51st Street, a half block from Dodge Street, with its bus to take Jack down town to the Telephone Building, two blocks from Dave's Dundee Elementary school, and two blocks from where Pete could take a bus on 52nd Street to go to his Benson High School. There were grocery stores within two or three blocks, and a very good movie theater, which had an excellent selection of films. So we were not bothered with the wartime rationing, as we did not need to use a car very often. Our landlady, Mrs. Burnett, charged us $80 per month for the three story house, with basement; four bedrooms and bath on the second floor, a large bedroom and a smaller one on the third floor, with a bath. She never raised our rent for the years we lived there, as Jack helped her by putting on storm windows, and helping to pay for a new more efficient oil-burning furnace.

In 1951, we finally decided to buy our own house, and moved into one at 508 North 72nd Avenue, that was nearly finished by the time we first saw it. We lived there for seven years, until the acreage which had been cornfields between us and Dodge Street was made into a huge shopping center. We didn't want to live so close to that, and bought land on 8566 Cedar Street, between Pacific and Center Streets. We liked the house on 72nd so well, that we built a mirror image of it on Cedar, only changing it because of the property's different orientation to the sun, etc.

During the war years in Omaha I worked as a Red Cross Nurse's Aide. I became president of the Corps, and as such, visited all eight hospitals in the city to see how things were being done at each one. I worked three times a week, for about six hours per day, returning home in time for the boys to be back from school. After the war, paid hospital aides gradually replaced the volunteers, and after a few years, the Red Cross went into the blood bank business, and I was a volunteer there for many years, once a week. One time, on a mobile unit at the Omaha Western Electric Co. Plant, always very well attended by donors, I was going down the line of people sitting, waiting, taking their pulses and writing it down on their cards. I had passed one young man, and had gone on to the next, when he said "Goodbye, Mom!" - it was Dave, and I had been so busy doing my pulse and recording duties that I hadn't taken the time to look at anyone's face.

In the fall of 1947, I was asked to help in the Study Center at Omaha University in the teaching of chemistry. I had not kept up with any new developments in chemistry since my graduation from Smith in 1920, and I had to do a tremendous amount of studying before I thought I could cope with the job. It turned out to be easier than I had thought, as it was mostly helping young men, recently returned from war service, back into college, mostly with the questions at the back of each chapter. If I kept a week or so ahead of the class, I did all right. But, too soon, I was given a second semester class, and a somewhat later another class of girls taking a household chemistry class, with some Organic Chemistry included. I

continued this for three years, and then the Study Center was given up, as there was no longer any need for it. This, and the job I had for one year at Wellesley right after graduating from Smith, were my only paid jobs.

We lived on Cedar Street until Jack retired, on April 1, 1965. We spent our last vacation in Wickenburg, Ariz. - where we had first become fond of the southwest, when we went there the winter Jack had pneumonia, and the following winter as insurance. We visited with Jim & Hattie St. Clair (Jack's boss at Bell Telephone Laboratories for many years) in Sedona on the way to Wickenburg, and Hattie said, “I know you want to retire in Omaha, but how about looking at some land here in Sedona?” So we looked, and left Jim with the job of finding out what was available, and at how much. When we returned, on our way back from Wickenburg, he had picked out three - one just north of his place which would require a bridge to reach it and a million dollars to build on it; one west of Dry Creek Road with no view, and the lot next to the St. Clair's on the south - which we did buy.

We left Sedona for Omaha on March 13th, in a snowstorm. At a retirement lunch in Omaha, Jack mentioned that we had bought some land in Arizona, and a vice president of Northwestern Bell said "I want to buy your house." Jack had to go to Des Moines that afternoon, and I couldn't be reached, so he called me from Des Moines and said - Brace yourself, someone is coming to look at the house! - And we hadn't even decided to sell it yet. They did buy it. We had planned a ten-week trip to Europe that summer, so before and after that we really worked to get ready to move. We had to have all the machinery in Jack's shop crated and boxed, so Dave and George Rybka helped, and finally we were ready to rent a U-Haul truck with a hydraulic end-gate, and took off for Sedona with Jack's tool shop and my loom aboard this truck. It was very underpowered, with what Jack called a Volkswagen engine. We had trouble getting up hills in flat Kansas, and in Kansas we had three flat tires as well, on the double rear wheels, due to someone's carelessness in putting the inner tubes into the tires. But we finally arrived, and were very happy with our choice of Sedona.

While in Sedona, we spent a great deal of time volunteering at the new Sedona Library, and as such continued my history of being a very busy person, but not necessarily being paid for it - by working many thousands of volunteer hours. In Sedona, I spent two full days a week, 8 hours a day, cataloguing new books, doing the initial typing of cards, getting the book ready for someone else to put on a plastic cover, etc. I would also hunt down difficult problems of misplaced or lost books or cards, and then later doing a complete inventory of the estimated 24,000 volumes in the library. That made for a long day on Wednesday - we started at 8:30 am or so, took a few minutes off for a very brief lunch, and worked until 5:30 pm, when Jack came for me, and we would go off to get a little supper, and then back again to work at the circulation desk until after 9 pm. We enjoyed it, and we didn't get tired.

Hearing a lovely bird sing and as spring approaches now in Sedona in 1983, I remember the four of us, Father, Mother, John and I, long ago on a spring day in Maine I think, on a forest trail, standing for a long time listening to the liquid and beautiful notes of a Hermit Thrush. I

have never heard a Hermit Thrush since without thinking of how we stood, spellbound, in spite of the number of mosquitoes.

I remember - our family had a wonderful time together!

This document has been from the original by Ruth's son, Dave Van de Water in March, 1995. This version was reviewed by Ruth for accuracy and for any necessary modifications that hindsight will provide.

Note: Ruth died in her sleep on January 2, 1997 after a short illness