

A Member of the Craig Family

Trying to remember the very first things that happened in one's life doesn't have any good chronological markers. They are a series of events that have a place in time, but not in a very orderly fashion. I was looking at some old photos the other day and although I couldn't have been very old, I do remember the event. I was sitting at a little play piano and



behind me is a Christmas tree. My father was a prominent physician in Honolulu and was the principal physician at the Shriner's Hospital. As part of the Christmas season, our family would go down to the hospital after we had celebrated in our own tradition. This was one of those events that I remember and have a photo to put it into perspective.

So where does a writer start telling the tale? Early experiences or what?

Perhaps it would be best just to state some simple facts about the family so when I do mention places and names they might have some significance.

I'm sure the late 20's, Honolulu was an interesting place to be. No one was really familiar with the then "Territory of Hawaii." It was just some remote place where the people ate poi and danced the hula. How it came that my father accepted the position in this rather remote place is unknown to me. Travel in those days was by ship and it took the best part of a week one way, but the family did end up in Hawaii. Later, on the mainland people assumed that to have been born in Hawaii, my father must have been in the military.

My mother and father met at the University of Southern California. Now here the details are a little sketchy. Mom worked in Washington, D.C. after graduation, so I'm not sure what happened in the interim to the day of her marriage. Dad went on to Rush Medical School at the University of Chicago. My brother, Bob, and my sister, Elmyra (Myra), were both born before Dad took the position at the Shriner's Hospital in Honolulu. My sister, Marilyn and I were both born in Honolulu; Marilyn in 1928 and me in 1931. Bob is just ten years older than I, and Myra eight years older.

Apparently before my arrival on the scene the family was all convinced that my mother would deliver a boy and I had been already named "Jimmy." In fact I was called Jimmy until I entered kindergarten. I remember coming home complaining that the teacher was always saying, "Jimmy, don't do that!" There were eight Jimmys in the class and one of

us was bound to be doing something unsuitable at any moment during the school day. Mother took it upon herself to instruct everyone to call me by my middle name, Marvin. It has been so ever since.

There you have it. A busy father, a dutiful mother who often entertained friends of my father's or had her lady friends in for bridge, and four kids spanning ten years in age.

My brother and sisters speak fondly of Dad, but I really never really knew him. He left early in the morning for rounds at the hospitals before going to the office in the Dillingham Building. At dinner time, our family always ate dinner together around the dining room table. Dad has his position at the head of the table and would carve the meat and serve the plates. The maid of course would assist in bringing food to the table or getting that extra glass of milk. We did spend time together on Sundays as a family. We would always go out for dinner after church at Central Union. Dinners would be rotated between the Oahu Country Club up in Nuuanu Valley, Lau Ye Chai's Restaurant in the Waikiki area, and the Kewalo Inn, a seafood place on Kewalo Basin near Waikiki.

On an occasion when we were constructing a fish pond at our beach house at Lanikai, Dad was there with the family. But I cannot remember a single occasion where just the two of us did anything as father and son. Once during Boy Scout Makahiki, a yearly Scout-O-Rama type of event, he came to see our Cub Scout Pack do its thing. I had the impression that his late arrival and demeanor suggested that he had taken time away from work for something that he really didn't want to do.

Shortly before the War broke out in December 1941, Dad came down with Parkinson's Disease, a debilitating brain disorder. Physically he was not able to stand upright and maintain a normal gait. He had poor balance, and over time, his mental function deteriorated. So at age ten, when a boy might expect some attention from his father, I had none. My mother spent the next eight years taking care of him until he died in 1949. At first she drove the car and he was able to see his remaining patients. A physical therapist came to the house to help with the stretching and strengthening of his muscles. He started taking vitamin B intravenously every day with the old style glass syringe. None of these things worked on the progressive disease. He became discouraged after having to give up his practice, so in 1946 we left Hawaii and moved to California.

My brother, Bob and I have probably gotten to know each other as older adults better than we did as kids. He was ten years older than I, so we did not do many things together while growing up. Occasionally I would go out in the boat with him while he and his friends would go spear fishing off of Lanikai beach. Or I would hang around while he and his buddies were practicing with signal flags trying to learn the Morse code to pass the test to become a First Class Scout. He graduated from

Punahou, went off to the National Boy Scout Jamboree and ended up at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire all in the year I was eight. I don't know what the logistics were, but my parents along with Myra went to the mainland that same year and took in both the New York and San Francisco World's Fairs. Marilyn and I stayed at home with Mrs. Wiederhold, affectionately known as "Hold." She was the grandmother of one of my friends, "C.R." Anderson.

Bob came home from Dartmouth the summers of 1940 and 1941, but did not return to Hawaii until after he had completed medical school and returned with his then wife Rita to do his internship at Queens Hospital. After he left Hawaii, it was to be many years before I saw him again.

Myra graduated from Punahou in 1941 and was off to the University of Oregon. She came home not to return to school until many moons later. Marilyn finished high school in 1945, and was off to the University of Southern California.

During the war years, Central Union Church had activities in the afternoon including volley ball, singing etc. for the servicemen. Many families including ours would then invite them for Sunday supper. We always had a gang, partly because of the food and partly because of the two attractive Craig daughters. It was at our house that Myra met Arnold Murray to whom she was married in 1945.

Let's get back to Mom. I'm sure it was very difficult for her to give up the life she had with Dad as the bread winner. I can remember that we had to let the domestic help go and were eating rather simple meals because now there was no regular income. We sold the house and moved. Going through a house full of memories and possessions and having a sale was quite an undertaking. One of the unfortunate things that happened was that my lead soldier collection, my Lionel train set, and a number of other things went with everything else.

Mother came to depend on me for a lot of things. The money from the house in Honolulu went to buy a four unit apartment building in South Pasadena. It was not too far from my Mom's sister Elmyra Scott and her family and from USC, where Marilyn was going to school. All of the painting and minor repairs became a joint venture, and Mom and I worked together to keep up the apartments. We lived in one unit and rented the other three for income. In spite of myself, I became fairly good at painting and repairing leaky faucets. The units always rented quickly because the rents were reasonable and the walls were freshly painted and the hardwood floors polished. The kitchen cupboards were all painted and thankfully did not have to be redone too often. Latex paints were not around at that time, so the kitchen and bathroom walls and ceilings had to be painted with oil based paint. We usually did just the living room and bedrooms.

Mom had a lot of strength to do many of the chores that needed to be done. She had developed her upper body strength by helping Dad and physically turning him over several times during the night. He had a



unique grunting call that he would use when he needed to be turned or go to the bathroom. His weakened muscles prevented good breath support and his speech was not much more than a whisper.

Most of what a young boy might be learned from his father for me was from my mother. In retrospect I learned a lot. Some things, however, were simply misinformation. I remember that on one occasion she told me that I shouldn't masturbate because over time it would make my penis "all big!" She didn't know that at the time I was thinking to myself, "What's the matter with that!" She meant well.

She did insist on good manners, being polite, and never getting angry. The latter really bugged Pat after we were married. She would get angry and get over it. I would get angry and stew and not say anything! She did like my manners, though!

One negative aspect of Mom's encouragement came in the form of "you can do better." What ever I did was OK, but... It was the "but" that cut you down rather than encourage. I mentioned one time that I would like to teach, long before I headed in that direction. Her comment was that I should strive to be a superintendent! I think that sometimes that I don't want to do something or try to do something because somehow it wouldn't be good enough.

So much for the family. Now at least you will know whom I'm talking about as the various members get mentioned throughout the rest of these writings, however long, or perhaps boring, they may be.