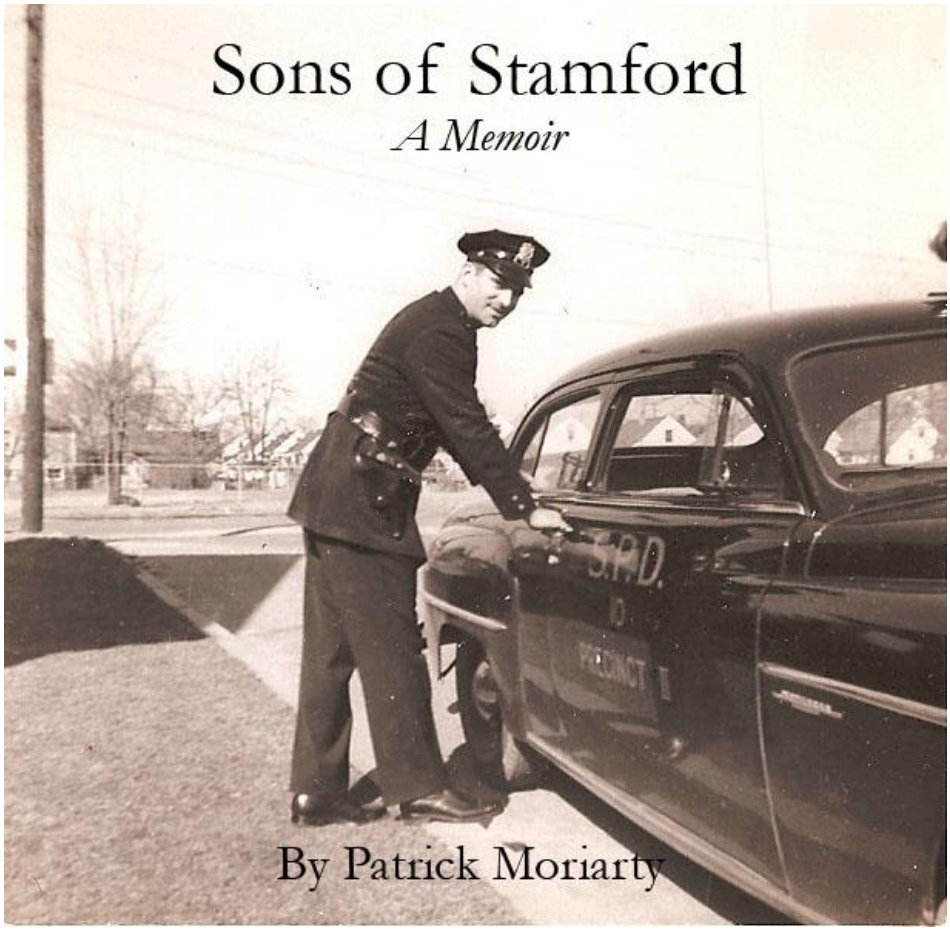

Submitted to the Department of English of Amherst College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with honors.

Faculty Adviser: Prof. Barry O'Connell

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For my grandfather.

Preface

My first attempt at writing about Stamford was a failure. I was a freshman in Mr. Cannon's high school English class and the theme of the curriculum that year was adolescence. Early in the fall, the class focused on that pivotal transition point between childhood and adolescence—the loss of innocence. One of the first things Mr. Cannon asked us all to do was to write a short piece that captured the innocence of our individual childhoods. I could only think of one way to do so.

I spent my most innocent years, those from my birth until the time I reached the age of six and a half, living with my family in Stamford, CT. Perhaps if I had simply focused on just one part of my life there—the allure of my old neighborhood, or my adventurous times at school, or my venerated paternal grandfather, the policeman, to name just a few possibilities—I could have succeeded in my writing. Apparently, however, I was too young a writer to know when I had overextended myself. I tried to squeeze all of these things and more into far too short of a piece. Looking back, it's no surprise to see Mr. Cannon's red ink scribbled throughout the margins of my paper. I had tried to do too much and what resulted was a jumbled mess of an essay.

What I could not have understood until I had engaged myself in that paper was that by broaching the topic of Stamford, I had tapped into far more about myself than simply the innocence of my childhood. Even though my family left Stamford when I was six and a half years old, I remained connected to the place in many complex ways that could not be parsed out within the limited range of a three page paper. For reasons that will be explored in the following extended piece, I developed an intense emotional attachment to Stamford, an attachment that has evolved and matured over the years, but remains to this day. My instinctual urge to write about Stamford had been right; I just wasn't ready to tackle the whole story yet. To articulate *all* of my thoughts and ideas about Stamford in a single piece would require a gargantuan effort. For the time being, Mr. Cannon set my sights on a more reasonable objective: if I were to write about Stamford again, I should narrow my focus and begin with only one aspect of how I felt about the city. From there, I could expand.

I didn't approach the topic of Stamford again until my junior year of high school in Mr. Potts' AP Language & Composition class. This time, I took Mr. Cannon's advice and narrowed my focus. Mr. Potts had asked us to write a short piece about something from our childhoods that had helped shape who we had become as teenagers. I wrote about playing as a child in my old neighborhood in Stamford and how, on Saturday mornings, I would sneak outside alone and venture to far-off parts of the neighborhood where my parents had forbid me to wander by myself. I related my mischief to a developing readiness within me to take some risks and also to an effort on my part to emerge from my parents' grasp and gain some autonomy. It was a focused, lively piece that captured a bit of what Stamford meant to me, if not the whole of it. Mr. Potts seemed to like it and so did I.

After that, however, I would not consider writing about Stamford again for a long time. I suppose that another opportunity simply did not present itself. Before long, I had moved on to college and was living away from home. Moreover, the man through whom I channeled most of my remaining identity with Stamford, my grandfather, who still lived

in Stamford with my grandmother as he always had, had gone through a devastating physical decline as he entered his eighties, hindering his mobility and his energy. I still revered him, but he had become very much a different man from the one I had known as a young child living in Stamford. For the first time in my life, I had perhaps begun to feel a bit detached from the city of my birth.

In the meantime, I immersed myself in my schoolwork at Amherst, declaring myself a double major in Economics and English during my sophomore year. In my English classes, I continued to work on my writing, but was never spurred to write about Stamford. Before I left campus at the end of the fall of my junior year (I would be studying abroad in Rome that spring and would not return to campus until my senior fall), I met with my adviser, Professor O'Connell who told me that it was not too early to begin thinking about whether or not I wanted to work on an honors project for English. I told him I would consider it, but I was not sure what I might write about.

Then my paternal grandfather passed away in January 2008, just two weeks before I would leave for Rome. It was a momentous and overwhelming occasion for me, the first death of a close family member that I had ever experienced. Once again, Stamford had come to the fore in my life in a way that could not be denied. It wasn't long before I resolved that I could not let my thoughts and emotions fester in the wake of my grandfather's death. There was a story about Stamford and my grandfather that had been waiting to be told and by then I felt that I was ready to tell it. The following memoir about my grandfather's life in Stamford is the final product of that resolution.

The memoir I have written draws upon my own experiences, family interviews I conducted, and some historical research. Whenever I can be, I am absolutely precise about the facts of my grandfather's life. At some other points, when memory and family interviews could not serve me well enough, I took the liberty of imagining things as they likely were. At these moments, the memoir almost certainly veers from historical fact, but I contend, nonetheless, that it remains closely bound to the truth. From these separate parts I have constructed a single whole. It has been by far the largest and most challenging writing project that I have ever worked on.

So, in a way, the following piece is a capstone to an eight year journey begun in my first year of high school, the consummation of my development as a writer throughout my past eight years of schooling. But this piece reaches farther within me than that classification alone would indicate. If this memoir succeeds, it will be because it expresses something much older and more fundamental within me than even my identity as a writer. It will be because the story it tells is the one I could not possibly ignore, the story that—if I ever were to put a story down in words—had to be written first. And, thus, it was written.

SONS

OF

STAMFORD

Nothing is left us now but death. We look to that with a grim satisfaction, saying, There at least is reality that will not dodge us.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Stories are for joining the past to the future. Stories are for those late hours in the night when you can't remember how you got from where you were to where you are. Stories are for eternity, when memory is erased, when there is nothing to remember except the story.

-Tim O'Brien

1

I used to think it was cool that my grandfather was a cop, back in the days when he would pick me up from pre-school in his cruiser and blare the sirens just for me. I would beam with pride every time I climbed into the back seat of that car and my classmates could only look on in awe. My grandfather would then take me on the short drive across Stamford to my house, where I would play with my tiny replica of his car—with flashing sirens and every other detail included—for the rest of the afternoon. Within my young mind, my grandfather had all the aura of one our most venerated celebrities.

But it had been a long time since I had thought about that, remembered those days. After all, he had been retired nearly fifteen years and he had scarcely resembled his former self for some time. Upon retirement from his fifty year career as a police officer, my grandfather proceeded directly from the police car to his armchair and a swift physical decline ensued. Perhaps my grandfather's physical transformation had led me to forget my former awe or maybe I had just grown out of that stage where wide-eyed admiration of one's elders comes so easily. Whatever the case may be, the fact of his career, his service, was no longer readily apparent to me.

Then it was January 2008 and I stood across the room from his casket, hands solemnly clasped, in line with my family. On the table next to the coffin were the only two pictures that he wanted placed there: a picture of him by his wife's side—my grandmother—and another picture of him in uniform. I hardly recognized the man in that second photo. He stood a broad-shouldered 6'4", so unlike the hunched, tired man that my grandfather had become by the time he died at the age of 86. Then again, I once had known that younger man well and so had countless others. That's why the line at the wake extended outside the door of the Cognetta Funeral Home in Stamford, CT, everyone there to pay their respects to Deputy Chief John F. "Jack" Moriarty. Nearly 800 people would attend in total. No one, I heard many people say, had ever seen anything like it. An honor guard stood at my grandfather's side throughout the wake and members of the Knights of Columbus came to offer their prayers. One of the condolences sent to the family read, "In the death of Jack Moriarty, Stamford has lost another of its old Irish lions. He will be missed."

Every ounce of awe I had felt in my childhood came surging back to me with all the clarity of those blaring sirens. I mourned not only the grandfather who departed on a cold Thursday night in January of that year, but also the grandfather who had passed more slowly over his final years; not the grandfather who I lost only so recently to that nondescript line between life and death, but the grandfather who crumbled for a long time, like an aging statue, until he was no more. I wanted to pick up the pieces and revisit the character I once knew long ago, to remember who he was and where he came from. I wanted the sculpture to be complete in ways that it never had been before, to imagine the

thoughts and facts that he had kept only to himself, but were so crucial in shaping the man he came to be. All I wanted was to go back.

My grandfather sat on the couch in the family room of our home in Dover, MA. By then it was early afternoon on that Thanksgiving Day during my senior year of high school and my grandfather had not moved since I had left the house shortly after seven that morning. When I came in through the garage he looked up with pleasant surprise though he did not move.

"Patrick, way to go," he congratulated me from his seat for the day (It was very nearly a throne—my grandmother would have to wait on him hand and foot all day.). "You played well."

I had just returned from one of the biggest events of my young life, our Thanksgiving Day football game against our archrivals, Medfield. We had squeaked out an exhilarating 35-34 win for my first win ever over Medfield, securing a school record 9-win season for Dover-Sherborn High.

I thanked him and smiled and sat down on the other couch across from him, but didn't know what else to say because my grandfather had not been at the game. He loved sports and—more than that—loved to watch his sons and, later, his grandsons play, but for the first time ever since we had lived in Dover and my grandparents had been coming to visit us, he did not feel up to coming to the game. When my father had told him that there would be a large crowd and that they would have to leave early to find my grandfather a seat, my grandfather replied that it was all right, he would just stay home. I didn't blame him. I had already seen how hard it was for him to hobble across the first floor from the stairs to the couch that morning—over the years, an aching hip had given way to a lurching limp and a haggard, hunched back, his hand gripping the wall or counter or whatever was within reach for support, too proud to hold a cane. Any and all physical movement had become a painful endeavor for him. There was rain in the forecast as well, which would only compound his physical difficulties. I considered, moreover, as I'm sure he did, that he would need all the energy he could possibly reserve to endure interacting in the noisy and crowded environment that my house would become once my mom's side of the family arrived for dinner. It was clear that my grandfather had every reason to stay home from the game that morning and there was no use in telling him differently. No one had managed to force him out of his chair over the last ten years so that he could get his proper exercise and no one—not my grandmother nor my father nor my Aunt Mary Ellen, who was also visiting with her family—could have forced him to come to the game if he didn't want to.

He was able to watch the game on the local cable channel, but we both knew he would have rather been there. That fact, however, would not be addressed, nor would be the reasons that he had stayed behind. We spoke briefly about the game, as if he had actually been there, but then the conversation died. We sat in a short silence, but the facts unspoken filled the room so loudly you could not hear them, but only sense a morose discomfort in the air. Such silence, which is no silence at all, is untenable and, before I could break it myself, my grandfather did what he so often would in such situations. He

began to speak once again, but this—I had come to understand in recent years—would be no attempt at conversing. It would rather consist of the mere generation of words to cover the silence. It was not conversation; it was talking.

He began, of course, with his beloved Yankees. I loved them too, ever since I had been a little boy growing up in Stamford, but I had heard this story before. It always ended the same way.

"All of a sudden, I looked up at the scoreboard in the ninth inning and the Red Sox had no hits. We were sitting in the bleachers in left field at Yankee Stadium and I looked at my friend, Olie, and said, 'Hey, Olie, Allie Reynolds'—they used to call him the Super Chief, he was part Indian—'Hey Olie,' I said, 'Reynolds has a shot at a no-hitter.' Well, Reynolds came out in the ninth and got the first two batters out."

Here, my grandfather would pause for effect, as if to build suspense, as if he had not told this one before.

"But then up walked Ted Williams to the plate and I said, 'Oh boy, I don't think this no-hitter is going to happen.' But to my surprise, Ted popped up foul." His eyes lit up and his voice quickened as he spoke.

"Now, the Yankees catcher, Yogi Berra, ran over to catch the ball, but he dropped it!" my grandfather exclaimed.

"So I said, 'That's it. You don't give hitters like Williams a second chance. He'll get a hit,'" and my grandfather waved his hands in an emphatic dismissal.

"But on the next pitch, Williams popped up again! And, this time, Yogi caught it."

I nodded with a forced smile—the grandeur of the tale, the iconic characters of Williams and Berra and the Super Chief, and the craft of the storyteller all lost on me on this one occasion of the innumerable relations of that story. A nod was all he was looking for. My grandfather talked on, returning his attention, as he always did, to Stamford.

He spoke at length about one of the most accomplished athletes in Stamford's history, Bobby Valentine, who would play major league baseball and go on to manage the New York Mets. He described a highly anticipated football game between Rippowam (a public Stamford high school that has since been changed into a middle school) and Stamford Catholic. Once again, I had heard the story before.

"At the time, Bobby was a high school athlete of the highest caliber," my grandfather said. "He was being recruited by programs like USC and Notre Dame for football and baseball both. So much was made over whether or not the Stamford Catholic defense could keep Bobby from scoring. Well, Bobby had some success in the first half and Rippowam went into the locker room with a 6-0 lead. Now, I don't know what the coaches for Stamford Catholic said to their team at halftime, but it sure worked. Stamford Catholic didn't let Bobby do anything in the second half and they scored five straight touchdowns and won the game 32-6."

I nodded once again in acknowledgement and my grandfather chuckled, but it all felt very far away from the here and now, very much apart from *my* high-scoring win over the despised Medfield Warriors on that Thanksgiving Day. When my grandfather digressed into an aside about the site of that game, telling me even more things that I already knew, I knew it was time for me to try to leave the room.

"You know, Patrick, they played that game at the stadium that still stands at Stamford High today. Boyle Stadium, it's called. They built it as one of those public works projects to create jobs during the Depression. Now, your great-grandfather, you grandmother's father, was a great plumber. He did really fine work. And he put in all the plumbing up there…"

I didn't nod anymore. My grandfather was stuck on a couch and talking. Talking and talking—about the same things, over and over. Sometimes I couldn't understand why. Other times, I realized that the present no longer satisfied him, that he was reaching back for something far gone and long ago. When I left the family room, I felt as if I had just stepped out of a time capsule and back into the real world. My grandfather was still on the couch.

I know of four reasons why my grandfather ever left Stamford's greater metro area in his lifetime: to visit his children once they were grown and moved away, to participate in training classes for his police work, and for the two longest trips he ever made in his life, a vacation to San Francisco with my grandmother and a trip to Ireland with her and my Uncle Jack. Stamford was my grandfather's domain. Other than for these reasons, he never left.

My mother, when my father introduced her to his parents, was not the first, nor the last, to have a good laugh at my grandparents' Stamford-centric life view. "It's their little center of the universe," she would say. By my late teen years I was in on the joke, I could laugh along too, but I had certainly been slow to come around to it.

I was born in Stamford, like my father and grandfather before me, and lived out a good deal of my childhood there. And wherever a child is is his center of the universe. So, especially as a youngster, I could not sympathize with my mother's joking, nor could her sarcasm tarnish my innocent mind which could not understand it. When we first moved away from Stamford—first to Orlando for two and a half years and then back north to Dover, where we have lived ever since—I was still only six and a half years old. With our departure, Stamford was forever crystallized for me within the innocent gaze of a child.

Thinking back on my old life there, I could not have imagined a better lifestyle for myself. I lived with my family—mother and father and two younger brothers—in a home on Lanark Road in Stamford's Shippan neighborhood, a shady residential area that juts out like an extended thumb into Long Island Sound, surrounded by water on three sides. Lanark Road spills down the hill from Shippan Avenue towards the sea. At the bottom sits a vacant lot on the water that, some time ago, was turned into a private beach shared by the homeowners of the adjacent Auldwood, Lanark, Chesterfield, and Ocean Drive North roads; a community named ALC for short. The neighborhood was young and full of children and we roamed freely from yard to yard in play. In the summer, we would swim at the beach and, in the winter, we would take the short drive to Cummings Park and go sledding. There was always something to do. Just across town lived my grandparents in the Cove neighborhood where my grandmother always had something good for me to eat and my grandfather, the policeman who had always lived in Stamford

and always would, waited with stories to tell. For a child, life could not have been better. Once we left Stamford, I could hardly ever wait to go back and, at the end of a visit, I never wanted to leave.

Trying to console me as I cried in the car on the way home, my mother would say, "Patrick, you know it could never be exactly the same way as you remember it," but I never believed her. How could she convince me otherwise when my grandfather's story-telling and mannerisms and lifestyle reinforced the thought that, yes, it could be true, the center of the universe—at least *my* center of the universe—sits in Stamford, CT?

I know by now that the Stamford of my memory is not—could not be—the Stamford that *is*. My memories are framed neatly, but nonetheless construed and disrupted, by nostalgia for youth and yesteryear. The good is highlighted and almost never the bad, certainly not the boring. When memories are forced to revisit reality, the results are often humbling. I'm always shocked to return to ALC, my old neighborhood, and find that nothing is ever as *big* as I remember it. Then again, my memories of Stamford aren't all candy-coated reveries. Substance fills their larger-than-life proportions. If nothing else, the tears I cried every time I left until I was twelve years old were as real as it gets.

What it comes down to, I think, are roots. Flying back to Orlando or driving back to Dover, I was supposed to be headed back home, but it never felt that way completely. What identity was I supposed to find as a northern boy in a tourist's town of tacky billboards and theme parks or as a Yankees fan in a Boston suburb? To be a Moriarty in Stamford meant something. Parts of me were based in Stamford that I would never leave behind, so the city took on a significance in my mind that was large enough to feed my own image of myself.

I had not only an extended family history, but a figure of some prominence in the city, my grandfather, to look to as a basis for my connection to Stamford. Not only that, but my grandfather had already constructed a view of Stamford's importance himself. It was his own little universe; I only had to believe his myth.

2

Growing up, I never knew much about my grandfather's childhood. He never talked about it and nobody else did either. If I ever asked my parents or my relatives about it while I was young, they would reply to me in quiet, measured voices.

"Granddaddy didn't have much when he was growing up in Stamford," they would say. "He grew up during the Depression. That's why he saves everything and doesn't like for anything to go to waste."

As young as I was, I got the impression that that was all I was supposed to know about the matter, so I would nod and be satisfied with their answers. As I grew older, however, I came to see that nobody, in fact, knew much more about my grandfather's upbringing than they had already told me, my grandmother included. He had hardly ever said a word about it to anyone.

I know that my relatives must have been right, however, when they told me how hard his childhood was. In his final years, my grandfather's favorite movie was *Cinderella Man*, in which Russell Crowe plays James Braddock, an Irish-American boxer who battled through injury to salvage his career and support his family during the Depression. My grandfather would watch the movie intently and repeatedly and, during the film's most heartbreaking moments, he would shake his head and only say, "Hard times—those were some really hard times." He would say no more, however, and he would shed no light on *his own* hard times, from *his own* childhood.

Of all my relatives, my grandfather's sister, Mary, who I rarely saw, surely knew the most about my grandfather's childhood—she had lived through it with him. When I sought her out and asked her about it following my grandfather's death, she told me everything she could, although there were some things that not even she could remember or know. Some facts about my grandfather's life had simply been swallowed up by the passing of time. The truth about his life, nonetheless, could be salvaged from the earnest testimony my Aunt Mary had granted me. It just needed some uncovering and illuminating.

Patrick Joseph Moriarty used to feel so in control. His every action had a clear intention, a clear goal. Moving on up. If you really wanted to make it in this world—make something of yourself—isn't that the way you had to be? It wasn't by accident he had lifted himself to become the first Irish-American foreman of the Stamford Rolling Mills. No, that ascension was the product of cool calculation and careful execution, a delicate combination of the two.

Patrick prided himself on his accomplishments, particularly because he knew he had no birthright to any of them. Who the hell was he after all? Just a poor Irishman's son

from Waterbury. Everything he got he earned the hard way. It wasn't that he was enormously successful either—his wasn't quite a rags to riches story—but he had always made enough to get by and always had the feeling that his life was perpetually improving by his hard work, tracing some continuous course of Progress. It was an impressive tale, this life of his, and, oh, the protagonist he had crafted.

Patrick knew what social norms needed to be met in order to climb the ladder. Show people what they want to see and you will get what you want—a rule to live by. For one, he went to church. Better to be Catholic in America than to have no faith at all, he thought. For another, he married Margaret Coffee in 1920. Success in American society required that you be a family man. If kids came along as a part of that, so be it. He did what he had to. He was willing to play whatever part he needed to in order to cast himself in a good light. Lastly and most importantly, Patrick worked hard at his every endeavor, never letting any one down. It were these ingredients, he believed, that scored him that prized promotion, that quantum leap of social and economic status; at the age of 28, Patrick was offered the foreman job at the Stamford Rolling Mills after working as a brass roller in Waterbury since the time he was a teenager. By the time he and Margaret moved to Stamford in 1921, Patrick had crafted what looked like the perfect life for himself.

The young couple moved into the second-floor of a two-family home in the East Side, a middle-class residential neighborhood. The living space for him and Margaret—a kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, and living room—sure beat the one room tenement apartment that he and his brother and sister and parents had suffered through living in for the duration of his childhood. Yes, this place was quite *nice*, Patrick thought. He still remembered the feeling the first time he came home from work, a feeling he would have many times again. The knowledge pulsing through his veins—*he was a foreman now*. He didn't take the orders; he gave them. It felt right to be on top like that. It was the role he had always envisioned for himself. Simply put, it wasn't so bad having a boss above you when you had some subordinates to reign over yourself.

Of course, Patrick had no deluded sense of royal blood coursing through his veins (because no one had handed him so much as a biscuit—he had worked for this), but he stood like a man in front of his throne that first night, when he paused on the steps heading up to his new home, turned with hands on hips, and surveyed his new domain, Maple Avenue. The neighborhood was removed from the hustle and bustle of downtown and the grime and commotion of the industrial areas. Other two-family homes lined the street. Women sat chatting on their front porches in the late afternoon (Patrick's wife already amongst them) as boisterous packs of children roamed freely amongst the houses and in the road. Freight trains rumbled along the tracks in the near distance, but Patrick could mostly ignore that imperfection when the neighborhood offered so much else. The men who lived here were the children of immigrants—mostly Irish like Patrick—who had done well for themselves. The cream of the crop, Patrick thought. This was *his* Stamford. Taking it all in, the realization was undeniable in Patrick's mind—*I've made it*. He was on the path to his American Dream. Things could only look up from here.

The eldest child, Jack, was born during that first year in Stamford. From a young age, Jack recalled adoring his father's way in public. It seemed that his father knew everyone in town. He had a beaming smile and a wave for everyone he saw and he could hardly walk down a street in Stamford without someone stopping to talk to him.

Jack could see his father was a well-liked man, even by his own workers at the mill. A couple of times a year, the men whom Patrick oversaw at the mill would convince him to join them at a pub in the Dublin neighborhood where most of them lived. Patrick did not like venturing over there too often—Dublin was an immigrant slum, not unlike the one that Patrick had grown up in in Waterbury and Patrick felt that he had lifted himself above that—but every once in a while he would indulge their wishes and join them for some drinks.

Patrick was everything to everyone, but Jack knew too well, as did his mother, that Patrick's politicking made him weary and that, by the time he came home each night, he had little energy left to share with his family. In private, the Moriartys rarely felt the affection Patrick spread so freely to the outside world. Outwardly, however, Patrick never failed to render the image of a perfectly happy American family. This peculiar divergence between Patrick's public and private lives manifested itself in some odd behaviors of Patrick's that could only have been recognized as such by his immediate family.

For instance, despite his busy work schedule, Patrick always managed to be in attendance for Jack's baseball games for the East Side Boys' Club—never failing to be seen in the wooden bleachers watching his boy play. But not once had Patrick ever asked Jack to play catch—just the two of them—when they were at home and no one else would be watching. In fact, whenever the whole family was at home, neither Jack nor anybody received much attention from Patrick. He was tired, he would say, and he sure seemed it, for he normally just sat in his armchair without so much as talking to his wife or two children.

The beauty of family life, Patrick thought, was that there was no longer a pretense. He did not have to earn their affection or respect. His position as husband and father commanded it. So his mind could relax from the strain of endless calculation that he so constantly engaged in when he was outside of his home. As long as he provided income for them, Patrick felt that he was doing his job.

Perhaps he would have rather lived alone, were it more socially acceptable, but sometimes having a family had its perks. Truth be told, Jack was a pretty good little baseball player. He stood out from the other boys on the diamond with his smooth fielding and sharp, tight swing. Perhaps more eye-catching than his natural feel for the game, however, was Jack's penchant for hustle plays, often beating out throws to first base and diving to catch sizzling line drives—so eager to impress. Patrick could not deny the small flush of pride he felt whenever a bystander sat down next to him in the stands to compliment Jack.

Patrick would accept their praise with a smile and, with a faux modesty, would say, "Yeah, he's doing alright." Patrick would never tell them, however, that he had nothing to do with Jack's ball-playing ability, that Jack had taught himself to play with his friends in the streets, while Patrick had been too indifferent to notice.

Regardless, by the time Jack was ten and playing a lot of ball, the positive attention Jack was receiving in public for his play gave Patrick good reason to start liking

him. Enough so that when Patrick would get home from work, he would pat his son on the back and say, "How was school today?" He still paid no mind though to the girl, Mary. She was six years younger than Jack and she was strictly for Margaret to take care of. As long as Mary appeared altogether *normal* to the outside world, Patrick had no other use for her.

Margaret would still often shudder at the memory. It was 1921 when she and Patrick had just moved to Stamford and within a month she was pregnant with Jack. She found out when Patrick was at work and she could barely contain herself as she waited by the window for him to come home so she could tell him the good news.

She leapt from her chair as he stepped in the doorway, ready to wrap her arms around him.

"I'm pregnant!" she exclaimed, smiling enormously.

Patrick stood in the doorway and did not flinch, digesting the information for a moment. Margaret suffocated in those few moments of silence, unable to read the stolid expression on Patrick's face.

"I thought we were going to wait to have kids," was all he said before proceeding to sit down at the kitchen table. He would say no more on the matter for that night.

Margaret cried that whole night, not sleeping for a moment. She learned then the fact that would haunt her for the rest of her life—Patrick never wanted to be a father.

Thus, with Patrick uninterested in raising their children, Margaret bore the brunt of the responsibilities. Patrick played his part in public, of course, but behind closed doors he was useless. Despite her unhappiness, Margaret never let on to the outside world, not even to the women with whom she chatted on the front porches of Crescent St.

When she was pregnant with Mary six years after Jack, Patrick was not quite as hurtful as the first time around. It was as if he felt some sort of indifference between having one or two children. "What difference can one more make?" he seemed to ask himself—it was a massive shrug of the shoulders. It was clear to Margaret, however, by the absolute neglect of all parenting duties that Patrick paid to their new daughter, Mary, that Patrick demanded there be no more new children.

That's why Margaret was pale as a ghost in the kitchen on that Tuesday morning in 1930. She had known for two weeks that she was pregnant with their third child, but had been too scared to tell her husband. The night before, she had convinced herself to tell him the next morning, just before he left for work, that way she didn't have to see him immediately after telling him and she could suffer in her disappointment all alone.

As he opened the door to step outside she said it—quickly, in passing, aiming for her words to slide by unnoticed. "I'm pregnant."

He paused for a moment in tacit acknowledgement of the statement, though he never turned around. He did not speak another word to her for a full week.

Once they began speaking again, it was only to fight. All through the pregnancy they argued. They could hardly stand to look at each other. Jack and Mary would look on with confusion. Mary would often start to cry, which would end the fight for the time being as Margaret looked after her. Even if Patrick had never liked being at home, he

now dreaded every moment of it. If he had it his way, he would work every hour of the day just to get away. Margaret, on the other hand, was convinced that this third pregnancy was a curse. On who—herself, the baby, the family as a whole—she could not be sure, but she knew it was a curse. There was no escape. She would say it in the middle of their fights and Patrick would only get angrier.

"It's not a curse, Margaret. Are you mad? It just wasn't supposed to happen! *That's* the problem," he would shout.

Future events, however, would seem to prove Margaret's prediction correct. Or perhaps it had been a self-fulfilling prophecy. Whatever the case, something about Margaret wasn't right following the birth of their third child, Billy. Once Margaret was fully recovered from giving birth, she still refused to get out of bed.

"I just don't feel up to it," she would say. Friends who came to visit could not recognize the ghost of her old personality that remained.

Patrick scolded her several times when no one else was around, "Margaret, we have to keep up appearances!" But she just stared with glazed-over eyes at the ceiling and ignored him.

Jack was old enough to know that something was gravely wrong with his mother and he asked his father, "What's wrong with Mom?" but Patrick never answered.

In fact, no one knew quite what was wrong with Margaret, but it was clear she was not well and could not manage to take care of the kids. She needed some sort of medical help. Patrick, meanwhile, claimed he could not both keep his job at the factory and care for the kids at the same time. So Billy was given to Margaret's sister for a time and Jack and Mary were sent up to New Haven to St. Francis' Home for children. They stayed there for a full nine months. Margaret saw several doctors during the meantime in Stamford. They managed to get her back on her feet enough so that the kids could come back home, but they never discovered exactly what was the matter with her. Everyone who knew her knew that Margaret Moriarty was never the same woman ever again.

In the aftermath of the stock market crash of 1928, Patrick continued to prosper in his work, despite the economic turmoil surrounding him. People were being laid off all around Stamford, but there had been no visible threat to his foreman job at the rolling mill and he really did not expect any trouble. In public, when asked about how he had held onto his job for so long, he would humbly profess to his own "good luck" or piously give his "thanks to the Lord." Privately, however, he credited his own craftiness and charisma for keeping him in work.

He was good at his job—he *knew* it. People liked working for him. That's why his workers always wanted him to come drink beers with them. He thought that if he fostered a good-humored environment to work in, people would work more efficiently. And they did. How could any factory ever let go of such an asset as himself, Patrick thought? Moreover, if he needed to, he could step back in line with the men who worked under him and perform just as well as they did if not better at their jobs. He could do it all.

All this feeling good about himself, of course, was before Margaret got pregnant with Billy. That's where a shift occurred. All of a sudden, for the first time in his life,

Patrick felt that life was not showing all of the cards in its hand. How the hell could he have anticipated his wife going absolutely *crazy*? What could he do now to protect what people thought of him? People were talking about them. He knew it.

He had been there at the First National, where he had to shop for his own food now that Margaret was unable. He was picking out a good loaf of bread when he heard the hushed voices of two women in the next aisle who turned out to be two women from the East Side.

"Have you seen that Margaret Moriarty walking around?" one asked. "She's so pale and hollow-eyed."

"Something's gone horribly wrong with her. She was such a nice woman," said the other. "Oh, to lose your children. Do you think her husband did something to drive her so mad?"

Patrick appeared at the end of their aisle and cleared his throat. The two women gasped. "Ladies…" he slurred as he gave them a hard stare for several seconds and then went on his way. He did not know what else to do. Already he felt, however, as though something had been broken which could not possibly be fixed.

That would not, however, stop Patrick from trying. When Margaret was well enough to care for the kids again in mid-1931, Patrick thought perhaps that they could all move back in together and forget that any problems had arisen. They could erase the last part of the story, begin from where they last left off. The kids seemed happy to be home and Margaret was glad to have the kids back. That much was clear, but he wasn't worried so much about them directly. He was more worried about what *other people* thought about them.

It was clear that Margaret had changed. She no longer socialized with women in the neighborhood and preferred to sit alone at home. Appearances had not returned completely to normal and Patrick was not happy about this. It helped, though, that no one at work acknowledged this sorry fact and, thus, the factory served as a haven from his problems. After all, his workers had their own problems. They were barely scraping by, living in those filthy tenements, trying to keep food in their children's mouths. They were on no grounds to point fingers. So whenever he was at work, things seemed quite all right. He managed to show up to work every day with a smile on his face every morning until late in the fall of 1932.

Then one morning, Patrick's boss, Sam Shephard, was waiting for him when he walked into the mill for the day. Patrick grimaced at this unusual start to the day when Sam asked him to come sit down in his office. Sam was cordial, but unusually grim and Patrick did not know what to make of it. By the time they reached Sam's office, Patrick was quite unsure of what was about to happen.

"Sit down," Sam said as he settled in the chair behind his desk himself.

Patrick sat down and held his hat in his hand as Sam let out a big sigh.

"I don't know how to do this," Sam started.

"Do what?" Patrick asked.

Sam tilted his head almost painfully and spoke.

"I've got to let you go, Patrick" Sam said.

Patrick crossed his legs and smiled. "Yeah, good one, Sam. What's this really all about?"

"No, Patrick. I'm serious. I have to let you go."

"What—what do you mean?" Patrick was dumbfounded. "What is it? Is it the economy? Are you eliminating my whole team?"

"No, that's not it, Patrick."

A moment of silence passed as a bewildered Patrick considered the possibilities, all the while staring down the man seated across from him.

"Does this have something to do with my family? Because I swear to God—."

"For good sakes, no, Patrick! I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to say what this is about. To tell you the truth, I don't even understand it myself. I just take orders."

Patrick shook his head in disbelief. "So you're telling me I don't have a job here anymore?"

"That's right," Sam said. "I'm sorry. You don't deserve this, but there's nothing I can do."

"Well who's going to replace me?"

Sam bit his lower lip and shook his head a bit, then glanced out his office window. Patrick followed his gaze. A twenty-three-year-old kid named Bill Ellington, who had only been working at the factory for a few months, was already standing in Patrick's usual position on the work floor.

"The kid! That's who is replacing me? This doesn't even make sense. No one even knows where he's from. He hasn't *earned* anything. There's no way he can do my job!"

Sam leaned across his desk, "Patrick, there's no room for argument here. It might not make sense, but it's the way things are going to be. This is above both of us. You don't have a job here anymore."

Something about it was starting to make some sense to Patrick as he sat in that office. Of all things, to be replaced by some outsider, an Anglo-Protestant kid who could put his best foot forward by merely declaring his sect? Yes, this was certainly a Protestant vs. Catholic thing, Patrick thought. But what an outrage! These are exactly the sorts of obstacles that Patrick Joseph Moriarty overcomes. When did they become stumbling blocks? This simply did not fit into the story that Patrick had been writing himself into. He was too shocked to vent any more anger, too frazzled to ask any more questions, and ultimately he was simply now unemployed. He decided it was to time to go. He buttoned up his coat, which he hadn't even had time to take off that morning, and walked out of the factory.

The cool late autumn breeze whirled inside the top of his coat and he held his hat above his eyes as the sun blinded him immediately as he stepped outside. He squinted under his cap at what appeared to be a whole new world. Before, he had forgiven, even overlooked, Stamford's domineering, industrial appearance because it was *his*. He had played his cards so well here that he had felt he had some sort of ownership stake in the city. Patrick quickly realized, however, that things looked a lot different from the top-down than from the bottom-up.

For the first time in years, Patrick noticed the dark clouds rising from smokestacks all around him. Large brick buildings hemmed in his vision in every direction. He was lost in the city where he had lived for over ten years. An industrial behemoth had just heartlessly swapped him for an alternate cog in the machine and for

the first time that he could remember, Patrick had nowhere he was supposed to be. He certainly could not go home in this state of mind. No, he needed to gather his thoughts and he thought he knew just the place to go.

There was one good reason there were so many pubs in the Dublin slum—often times, strangers in a strange land need a way to numb their pain. Patrick decided he would head over to one of those pubs, specifically the bar he would occasionally go to with his workers. Perhaps it would be best, he thought, to be around people who were feeling the same way he was. He walked the whole way. By the time, he got there it was noon and the owner was just opening up.

Patrick sat at the bar and ordered his first drink. The bartender was taken aback at the sound of Patrick's voice—there weren't many American accents to be heard in that pub at any hour, but certainly not at noon on a weekday. Patrick understood that perfectly well and was happy about it. He could not be seen like this, certainly not by anyone who mattered. The bartender knew enough not to ask questions, however, and got the man his drink. Thus, Patrick began to slowly drink himself into a stupor. At the moment, it seemed the only escape.

As the afternoon wore on, a crowd started to file into the pub, but Patrick mostly kept to himself, his head down, nose in his mug. It wasn't until Patrick heard that familiar Irish brogue behind him that he looked up—

"Say, Paddy, what're you doing here, now eh?"

It was Rory McLaughlin, an Irishman who worked for Patrick at the mill. Patrick had not realized how drunk he was until he lifted his head. He had to shake his skull and rub his eyes in order to see Rory clearly. Rory was actually only about five years younger than Patrick and he had worked at the Mills for as long as Patrick had been a foreman there. He was a good worker and truly deserved a promotion, Patrick thought, but he wasn't American-born and would never be given that opportunity. Despite this, Rory had somehow maintained good spirits in the face of it all. It was as if he knew the odds he was up against and managed to accept the stake he had earned considering them. Where did he find that resilience, Patrick wondered?

Rory gave Patrick a good-hearted slap on the back, took the seat next to him at the bar, and ordered a beer.

"Listen, Paddy," Rory leaned in towards Patrick, "I'm really sorry about what happened to you today. It's terrible. Terrible."

Patrick still had not uttered a word.

"I mean, you don't deserve it, my friend. Not at all. *Not'a'tall*. But that's how it goes, you know?"

"No. I don't know," Patrick finally retorted.

"Well, you know who the boy is, now don't ya?"

Was it a tall tale or true to the facts? Perhaps it can never be known.

Rory leaned in closer now and whispered.

"He's Henry Ford's illegitimate son, lad. Ya, that's right. As in the car company, laddy. Ford knows the owner of the Mills. You know how that works. The boy needed a

job and his father got him one. They'll move him up quickly through the ranks and if a few people get laid off in the process, it's nothing off their backs."

Patrick let his head bob forward slightly and he raised his eyes to look straight at Rory, mouth slightly open, deciding whether or not to believe.

"It's just the plain truth, friend. There was nothing you could do. It's okay, you'll do just fine now, don't worry…"

Rory kept talking, but Patrick wasn't listening. Something inside him was coming to a boil. All the emotion he had been containing all day. He clenched his teeth and fists. His faced turned red. His own merit overruled by the entitlement of some bastard aristocrat? All that he's earned stolen on the basis of some Old World structure of privilege? Man was about to *roar*.

But then it hit him. A realization so rational. It was no drunken impulse. It was as clear-headed a thought as he could ever wish to have had stone-cold sober. He slapped Rory on the back, walked out of the bar without a word, and left Stamford for good.

The decision to flee was simple. Without keeping up appearances, all was lost. Well, all proper appearances were gone by now; Patrick had nothing to leave behind.

When things were slow at the First National grocery store and the owner, Charlie Smith, was kind enough to give him a fifteen minute break, Jack would sit down on the steps behind the store and read the newspaper. Those breaks were the closest thing Jack had to free time besides Sunday afternoons. Ever since Jack was 12, when his father left, his schedule had been thus: full days of school from Monday to Friday, then head over to the First National after school to work until closing time; a full day at the First National on Saturday; then church on Sunday morning. It were Sunday afternoon and these hard-to-come-by fifteen minute breaks that Jack had to himself.

It was better that way, Jack often thought—less time for him to sit and think. When his mind wandered, he always returned to the same, astounding, unanswerable question. Why did his father leave? It wasn't only Jack who couldn't answer it—no one could. They talked about it up and down Maple Avenue and when word got to his workers that Patrick had skipped town, their astonished conversation echoed through the pubs of Dublin for days to follow. It wasn't that there were not ways to explain it away. Clearly, Margaret was not well—had never been herself since Billy was born—and losing your job like that—in times like these—had to truly shake a man to his core, but Patrick had always seemed to be such a stand-up guy. And what about the kids? How could he leave the children? Once and for all, the protagonist had been exposed for the man within.

He disappeared in the blink of an eye. All that was left of Jack's father in his life was the court-ordered child support, a $25 check that sometimes arrived on time each week and sometimes didn't arrive at all. His father had returned to the city of his youth, Waterbury, where he now worked and sent the checks from and where neither Jack nor his siblings would ever visit him. Back in Stamford, Jack's mother, who likely never could have held a job, never tried to find one either. So at age 12, Jack had started to work at the First National whenever he had the free time. The $25 dollars in weekly child

support and the money Jack earned at the grocery were the sole sources of income for Jack, Margaret, Mary, and Billy.

Smith, who oversaw Jack at the First National, was repeatedly impressed by how the boy had handled it all. Other boys his age were playing football and baseball for the high school, but Jack no longer had the time. His baseball dreams had died with his father's departure. If Jack had been pained by the process, however, he showed no outward signs of it. The kid was solid as a rock. He did everything asked of him and had a great rapport with the customers. Smith, who had known Jack's father peripherally, knew that Jack had probably picked those skills up from his father. What Jack had that his father didn't—for all Smith knew, it might have been in-born in Jack—was a sense of responsibility to people other than himself. That's why Jack hadn't followed his father and run away as well. Jack's impressive outward appearance, however, only masked the turmoil within.

Jack could still remember returning home that bleak, fateful night, walking in the door to his family's home on Maple Avenue to see his mother; sister, Mary; and brother, Billy—all three crying. Then his mother told him what they were crying about, but Jack didn't cry. He stood stone-faced, unmoved. It was news that would have made him cry just one instant before, but, in hearing it, he had fundamentally changed and he would cry no longer.

If he had the time to think about it, Jack preferred to teeter on that catastrophic edge in his memory, just before stepping through that door, straddling those two worlds. He would tug at his hair and rub his temples as the thoughts tortured him—a lifetime's limitless future reduced to a bleak, determined, burdensome path in an instant—he wished so badly to just forget it, but he could not help but dwell on it—his manhood thrust upon him so surely and quickly that it could not have been any other way. Jack resisted his fate yet, if only by wondering if things could ever have been different.

But all this thinking was moot, Jack knew, energy wasted that could otherwise be put to good use. He could not change what he could not *control*. So when he had time to think, he chose instead to keep his mind occupied. When he got breaks at the First National, he would read the newspaper. He always looked to the first page, hoping for good news, although it was hard to come by. It was 1935. There was a struggling economy that had begun with a stock market crash now seven years past that Jack did not even understand and it seemed to him that few adults around him understood it either. Still, Jack would look every time for a glimmer of hope, some sort of good news to lift his spirits. One day when he was 15, Jack found the headline he had been looking for:

> NABBED IN CHICAGO: UNDERCOVER POLICE CATCH CON MEN RED-HANDED!

Jack's eyes bulged at the headline, which ran across the top of the front-cover, and began fervently reading along:

> Police officers in Chicago have uncovered a tragic con game in the city's Loop neighborhood, centering on the various employment agencies in the area, a scam small in scale, but devastating in

its consequences to the individual victim. Police had been receiving reports for weeks of a con man who had been victimizing men leaving several employment agencies.

The man, a well-dressed fellow who often called himself Johnson, would approach one of the hundreds of unemployed men exiting the agency daily and say, "Hi there, are you in need of work?" Unsuspecting men would of course answer in the affirmative. The con man would then continue, "Well, I know someone in need of workers over at the train station. It will pay well. Are you interested?"

Johnson would then lead his targets over to the station where he asked them to wait on a bench while he would go over and talk to another man across the room—purportedly the man who had the work. Johnson would then return to the victim and tell him that the job was all his. "You start tomorrow, but you'll need a uniform. It costs $30 and he needs it now."

The desperate victims would scramble to gather the $30 in the quickest way they knew possible (it was typically all the money these people had left to their names)—with Johnson in tow all the while—scraping together all the cash they had at home or borrowing from relatives or neighbors. Then they would give Johnson the money to go get the uniform and Johnson would say to meet them at the train station the next day for work. The victim would show up for work the next day, but Johnson was nowhere to be found and their $30 was gone for good.

"It really was a heartbreaking and financially devastating blow for these victims and their families," said Sergeant Albert Fabrizi who headed the investigation. "Really, it was the last nail in the coffin for some people."

After receiving dozens of complaints over several weeks about this Johnson character, but coming up with no leads in the case, Fabrizi decided that the police had to resort to unconventional tactics. He sent tens of plain-clothes officers out to the involved employment agencies, waiting for one of them to be approached by this Johnson. After several days they caught him and twenty-five of his victims identified him in a line-up. Police have also arrested his partner in the scheme who was positioned at the train station.

"What's important, is that we brought these guys to justice," said Fabrizi (the police have not yet released the suspects' true identities), "but people need to know that this is not the only scheme like this out there and they need to protect themselves. And please let us know if you have any problems like these."

A warning that should be well heeded indeed, not that it will be easy. Times like these are hard enough even before we lose the ability to trust our fellow citizens. Rest assured, in a world where not everyone is who he appears to be, two of those shady characters are now behind bars.

Jack's hands were shaking with excitement by the time he finished reading. This was simple, beautiful stuff—the good guys beating the bad guys, the truth coming to the fore.

Jack's boss, Smith, poked his head through the door to the back steps. "Break's over, bud," he said.

Before Jack turned around and stood up, he made a silent resolution to himself to never be deceitful, to always be *exactly* what he seemed.

Then, as he stepped through the door which Smith held open for him, he paused, looked Smith in the eye, and made a second resolution, this one out loud.

"Hey Smithie, I think I'm going to grow up and become a cop."

3

Whenever my family and I arrived for a visit at my grandparents' home at 973 Cove Road in Stamford while my grandfather was still alive, it was always one of the first topics to be raised in conversation. We would be sitting in my grandparents' kitchen, drinking iced tea and eating the sandwiches or whatever else my grandmother had prepared for my brothers and me, when, to my father's bewildered frustration, which increased continuously with every visit, my grandfather could never resist asking:

"How'd you come down, Terry?"

"Well, Dad…" my father would begin in an overly didactic tone that hardly concealed his aggravation, a tone that said "well, if you *really* wanna know, then let's really flesh this thing out. Get down to the *nitty-gritty*."

There was never much to say. There are only two feasible routes from Dover, MA to Stamford, CT. The simplest and most direct route is to get onto I-95 S in Walpole and follow the highway for the next 167 miles until you reach exit 9 in Stamford. There you can exit and complete the final mile of the trip to my grandparents' home. Unfortunately, 18-wheeler delivery trucks congest I-95 for much of the ride between Walpole and Stamford, making for stressful driving if not several traffic jams. The slightly more roundabout, but less stressful, path is to take the Mass Pike West from Framingham to Sturbridge, where you then exit onto I-84 W towards Hartford. In Hartford, you cross the Charter Oak Bridge and merge onto Rt. 15 South—known at various points as the Wilbur Cross Highway and the Merritt Parkway and where, mind you, tractor-trailers are banned from driving to prevent traffic from congesting—, which you would follow until the Old Stamford Road exit in Darien. There, you leave the highway and follow the back roads of Darien for fifteen minutes before crossing into Stamford and arriving at my grandparents' house. With any luck, you could hope to finish the drive in about three hours, whichever route you choose. Both my grandfather and father knew these two possibilities by memory—I did as well, even as a child—, hence the absurdity, my father thought, of rehashing them at every opportunity.

Perhaps it was a nervous habit of my grandfather's, a manifestation of some need to fill the silence with something, even meaningless talking if need be. That's how my father explained it. I thought sometimes, however, that my grandfather was only looking for a convenient segue; he had a story he wanted to tell and he only needed a proper introduction. In the face of my father's incredulity, he often did tell one specific tale he deemed fit for the moment.

Hands clasped on his lap, he'd begin with a deep, hearty sigh that emerged from his chest like dust rising off a book cover that hadn't been opened in years. Often times, he would direct the story to me.

"You know, Patrick, years ago there used to be a lot of factories in all those cities you passed on the way down. New Haven. Bridgeport." The cities he listed depended on

the route we took. He would continue, "They employed a lot of hard-working folks. European ethnics," as he called them. "The Irish, Polish, Italians. Soon enough, though, those jobs disappeared. The companies all moved away. Difficult times followed. Lots of empty buildings now. A lot of those cities have never bounced back. And things changed."

The story would begin to falter here, my grandfather seemingly unable to come to terms with the vast changes he had seen his world undergo in his lifetime.

"Nowadays, you've got a lot of immigrants from elsewhere. Haitians and Latins…these people don't speak English." His words were never overtly prejudiced, but his insinuations were unclear; did the new immigrants arrive as hard times befell us all or were they the root cause of the hard times themselves?

Sometimes at this point he would mention the newly-created Spanish-speaking Mass at my grandparents' parish, St. Mary's, but other times he would trail off right about then.

I challenged him on one occasion, not aggressively, but just provocatively enough to see if I could get a reaction out of him.

"The immigrants are still working today, Granddaddy. It's just different now that the factory jobs are gone. Sometimes the work isn't steady. They have to operate on a day-to-day basis, waiting around for someone to pick them up with a day's worth of work for them—cleaning dishes or landscaping or doing construction. Maybe their assimilation would be more streamlined if they could find a steady job that they could go to every day like in the old days."

My grandfather listened, unresponsive. I realized he wasn't looking for a debate, so I never brought it up again. Whenever he got off to talking like this, we just sat and listened until he was done. After a moment of silence or two, someone would change the subject and that would be the end of it.

I'd always continue to ponder, however, my grandfather's lingering preoccupation with the transformation of the state he had lived his whole life in. The story he told clearly took on the proportions of legend or myth in his own mind, hence the sweeping generalizations he made. It was as if a spell had been cast over the entire state of Connecticut, an occurrence so mystifying that it eluded explanation. Its origins were above us all—magical if not divine. Did he simply not understand or did he not want to? Regardless, freed from the shackles of explaining the *why* of the story (If it could not be explained, why bother even addressing it?), my grandfather resorted to merely documenting some of the changes he had seen over the course of his life, an overview of appearances. His story only scratched the surface of things. I knew, nonetheless, that elements of it were true. I had seen the evidence with my own eyes—as he well knew—on the drive from Dover to Stamford.

The landscape of the state of Connecticut is littered with the skeletal remains of old industrial centers, cities once propped up by the jobs offered their citizens by hundreds of factories which used to operate within their borders. Hollowed-out brick warehouses and breathless smokestacks haunt the views from atop the interstate

highways which pass over and above these troubled communities; highways which connect the still-vibrant urban centers of Boston and New York City; metropolises which—unfairly, it may seem—were never so vulnerable as any of these smaller Connecticut cities to a sea change in the economy. These lesser cities had once attracted cheap, immigrant labor from Europe for years—from the mid-nineteenth century on—until the bottom dropped out some short time after WWII when manufacturers moved their operations to the South and West of the United States. This was, of course, before many of these manufacturing companies took their factories out of the United States entirely and began building factories overseas, but by then these Connecticut cities had long since met their fates.

Along I-84, south of Hartford, sits Waterbury, CT. Once known as the "Brass City" on account of its manufacturing prowess in said product—the inscription above the entrance to the City Hall reads *Quid Aere Perennius,* or *What is more lasting than Brass?*—Waterbury saw its last brass factory close during the 1970s. To Waterbury's south, New Haven is located along I-95 on the coast of Long Island Sound. Like Waterbury, New Haven's manufacturing economy died in the mid-twentieth century and early noble efforts at renewal in the 1950s were propped up only by the life support offered by Yale University—Yale remains the city's largest employer, followed by the Yale-New Haven Hospital. New Haven's good fortune to have the presence of Yale helped it last until the mid-1990s when the city experienced some true economic growth in service industries. Passing along I-95 at 70 miles an hour, I can see that appearances are improving, that at least the surface is being refurbished.

Driving further south on I-95, the highway passes through perhaps the hardest hit of all the deindustrialized Connecticut cities, Bridgeport. With no Yale-like institution in town, without a shoulder to lean on, Bridgeport received no sort of upkeep during the second half of the 20th century. It truly looks a ghost town from the interstate above, even when stuck in traffic behind one of those dreaded eighteen-wheelers and I have the chance to give the entire cityscape a long, hard look.

The view is depressing and repetitive, but drive another half-hour south on I-95 from Bridgeport—if the traffic is smooth enough—and soon you will be overlooking an entirely new landscape: the shimmering skyline of a modern city, the glimmer and shine of glass-paneled office buildings where various corporate headquarters are located; a high-rise Marriott Hotel with a revolving restaurant atop it; and the newest, soon-to-be-completed building, higher than all the rest at a skyscraping 34 stories, a luxury apartment building marketed under the name of Trump. This is downtown Stamford, a miniature metropolis at the end of a line of wheezing former giants. Invert the mystery, however, and you will solve the puzzle. Stamford is only at the end of the line from one direction, from north to south, from Dover on down. But trace a path from south to north through Connecticut and you will have your answer—Stamford is the first stop amongst these fallen cities heading into Connecticut from New York.

Stamford wasn't always a bustling urban center. For generations, it was occupied by Native Americans of Algonquin ties and they called the area Rippowam. Local history

says that the first European settlers came to the area in 1641. Shortly before their arrival, a representative from the New Haven Colony named Captain Nathaniel Turner had purchased the land from the Native Americans who were currently occupying it. The price: 12 coats, 12 hoes, 12 hatchets, 12 glasses, 12 knives, four kettles and four fathoms of wampum. The new settlers came from the village of Wethersfield to the north, a settlement of the Colony of Connecticut, where a religious dispute had threatened the well-being of the community. When representatives of the Colony of New Haven heard about the dispute, they suggested the move to Rippowam to Wethersfield's new religious minority. It was a win-win: the two religious factions of Wethersfield would be able to live apart and New Haven would get people to settle their newly purchased and quite arable land of Rippowam. Thus, from its very first settling by Europeans, Stamford was the product of savvy problem-solving and a feisty opportunism. All in all, 29 families came to Rippowam from Wethersfield that first year.

For two centuries, Stamford remained mostly an insular rural village, its inhabitants almost strictly the descendants of these original settling families. Aside from several wealthy merchant families who benefited from trade with the outside world through Stamford's port on Long Island Sound, the vast majority of residents were small farmers—growing potatoes, wheat, corn and more and tending to stock-breeding, oystering, and fishing—who provided sustenance for themselves and sold their surpluses to the markets of New York City. By 1800, the village's population had grown to around 4,000. It seemed, nonetheless, that Stamford could continue to operate in its isolated manner, a homogenous, rural community with only loose ties to the outside world for ages to come. And it would have, if one earth-shattering change had not ruptured the village's delicate balance for good.

1848 marked the opening of the New York-New Haven railroad and Stamford was chosen as a permanent stop along that route. The choice to do so by the railroad company mimicked the decades-old habit of horse-carriage drivers to stop in Stamford on the ride between New York and New Haven to water their horses because Stamford provided a convenient halfway-point between the two cities. Thus, choosing to put a permanent train station in the center of this quiet farm town was either the ignorant or well-thought-out (Who could ever know for sure?) continuation of an obsolete habit (Coal engines need not drink water nor rest as animals do.). In retrospect, the decision simultaneously has the undeniable air of both chance and inevitability to it; the choice equally could have gone one way or the other, but the city's future was tied so directly to it that it's now hard to imagine it being any other way. It was what it was. It is what it is.

The opening of the railroad was like poking a hole in the side of a gorging barrel, filled beyond its capacity with a cramped and combustible fluid. New York City was overflowing with immigrants, particularly the Irish, who had begun fleeing to the New World in the past several years in escape from the Potato Famine. If opportunities for work were not available in New York, they would look elsewhere and the New York-New Haven railroad provided just such a chance to do so. The Irish immigrants poured

out of New York on the new railroad line and a great many of them—11,000 by the year 1880—chose to get off at the stop named Stamford.

The time was ripe for a transformation in Stamford's economy. Astute businessmen understood that Stamford's proximity to New York and the immigrants from Europe who daily stepped off boats there could provide business ventures in Stamford with a possibly limitless supply of cheap labor. If a Stamford man could seize upon the technologies of the Industrial Revolution and successfully build a factory in Stamford, he would have all the imaginable manpower in the world to produce quality goods at a profit. During the mid-19th century, some men understood this idea and put it into action. Within Stamford, companies began manufacturing all sorts of goods, from locks and wallpaper to bicycles and typewriters and more. Factories began sprouting up all over Stamford and the workers kept arriving by the trainload.

For the first time in its history, Stamford was not a homogenous, Puritan society. Anglos and Irish, Protestants and Catholics, would have to live and interact together in a new order that had yet to be established. The Irish immigrants clustered together in the only housing they could afford, crowded tenements that hugged both sides of the railroad near the train station, an area soon to be known around Stamford as Dublin. The Irish were the first to arrive, but by the early 20th century, immigrants from other parts of Europe could be found throughout Stamford. A significant Polish population settled in the Waterside and South End neighborhoods during the late 19th century and created their own ethnic enclave. With the arrival of more and more immigrants, Stamford's overall population began to climb. It was 5,000 in 1850 and almost 19,000 by 1900. At the turn of the century, an enormous wave of Italian immigrants spilled into Stamford and, by 1920, Italians made up 12,000 of Stamford's 40,000 residents.

The settlement in Dublin represented Stamford's first challenge in governing an urban environment. Trash and filth littered the streets and alleys which wound between the thinly boarded tenements where people lived. Fire was forever an imminent threat to lives and livelihood. Icy drafts blew through cracks in the walls just as easily as disease would spread down an entire street in a matter of days. Entire families lived in one room apartments where people practically slept on top of each other. At the end of the day, thirsty workers packed nearby saloons where petty arguments could quickly escalate into fist fights in the streets. Assault, burglary, and other crimes were suddenly a common occurrence in Stamford. Disregard for New England's Blue Laws through occurrences of gambling, prostitution, and drunkenness particularly ruffled the feathers of Stamford's established aristocracy—the city's Anglo-Saxon elite were appalled. What was the cause of this newly arrived malfeasance? Was it the immigrants themselves or the living conditions they were subjected to that cultivated this turbulent environment? And what on earth should be done about it?

People had their theories. The state of Connecticut issued one possible answer in 1855 when they elected a Stamford man, William T Minor, a Know-Nothing candidate of the American Party, as Governor. The immigrants, popular opinion seemed to indicate, were the ones to blame. Nonetheless, Minor served just one term and the influx of immigrants into Connecticut continued. Stamford's problem of controlling the slums would go on, but the controlling elite seemed utterly averse to finding a solution.

The people of Stamford should neither have been surprised nor ashamed. The problems proliferating in Dublin were the problems of the working poor everywhere—where there isn't enough to go around, some people will choose to take with force what they could not otherwise earn civilly. Much could be controlled and improved by just a little bit of—oh, they even cringed at the word—policing.

Even as it grew, Stamford retained some of the stuffy Puritan high-mindedness of the city's original settlers. Communities in colonial New England had prided themselves on their adherence to their own moral code. If need be, they could police themselves, but no formal institution of law enforcement would be necessary. Thus, even as conditions in Dublin spun out of control, Stamford's ruling class resisted the notion that a police force need be created.

When the powerful Anglo elite relented, it was on one condition: if the immigrants needed policing, they were going to do the policing themselves. So, when Stamford began heading down the slow, but sure path towards a permanent police force directly following the end of the Civil War, it was Irishmen who they hired. From 1865 on, five men would serve as special constables for the city of Stamford. This was not full time work—the men were paid per diem for special events and arrests that they had to make. Not surprisingly, the lack of organization led to complaints about police behavior. At the end of a scuffle outside of a pub in Dublin, it was sometimes uncertain whether the policemen on the scene had served as intervening mediators or as some of the initial aggressors. By the end of the 19th century, it was clear that nothing short of a formal, organized police department would do. In 1894, the Stamford Police Department was put into place. George Bowman, a Scotsman, served as the first chief and oversaw a force of fewer than 10 officers. The department would grow from these humble beginnings to become an integral part of the city's well-being.

Ultimately, the benefits of cheap immigrant labor for business in Stamford always squashed any arguments over the merit of allowing immigrants to continue filtering into the country through New York. Furthermore, even despite the turbulence that their urban dwellings brought to the city of Stamford, the steadfastness and drive of Stamford's immigrant population as a whole could not be denied. The immigrants were the people working in the factories that made Stamford great. They built their own churches and schools—such as St. John's Church on Atlantic St, built by the Irish starting in 1870 and Stamford's first Catholic church, or St. Mary's Church on Elm St, still the largest house of worship in Fairfield County, an impressive gothic structure completed in 1928 where Catholic residents of the Cove could also send their children for elementary school—and many immigrants aspired to save enough to move out of the slums they had started off in. They were no plague upon a quiet New England village, but a shot of life to a burgeoning city. They were not to be ridiculed, but commended.

Stamford's proximity to New York had always been a formative influence on the composition of Stamford as a city. After all, Stamford's earliest farmers sold their surpluses to New York and, of course, it was the trains from New York that carried all those immigrants into Stamford starting in 1848. There were other connections as well.

During the late 19th century, New Yorkers were encouraged to vacation on Stamford's Shippan Point, undeveloped in comparison to Stamford's industrial areas and surrounded on all three of its sides by sandy beaches. Starting in 1866, a steamship named The Shippan shuttled back and forth between Stamford and New York, making travel arrangements easy. Grand hotels like the Ocean House, built in 1870, helped attract more vacationers.

Furthermore, as early as the beginning of the 20th century, some people who worked in New York began choosing to live in some of Stamford's quieter neighborhoods and make the daily commute to work by train. This was the birth of suburbanization. It seemed that, despite Stamford's own rapid industrialization, some of its residential areas had retained enough of the city's placid, rural roots to still be considered by New Yorkers as an escape from the development and filth of the city. If enough New York businessmen chose to move their lives outside of the city, however, and if the right circumstances arose, it didn't seem too much of a leap to think that their work would soon be following them beyond the city's borders as well.

Following World War II, as the factories in Stamford began closing down, this possibility became evermore intriguing. Stamford's industrial center, in a matter of years, had been rendered obsolete and dilapidated. In the face of such an uncertain future, Stamford was in dire need of a fresh start, some sort of drastic change that could help the city avoid the brutal decline that would otherwise ensue. In 1963, the city of Stamford contracted the FD Rich Co. to enact a massive urban redevelopment plan. 9,400 downtown acres were demolished—the city's historic center, Dublin and the immigrant slums—to make way for the new face of Stamford. Stamford rolled the dice, wagering everything in its history for the hope of a more secure future. By the late 1980s, eight million square feet of office space had been built in downtown Stamford. The gamble paid off and corporations scrambled for the chance to locate offices in Stamford, attracted by its proximity to New York. GT&E moved its corporate headquarters to Stamford in 1971 and tens of other corporations set up shop in the sleek, modern office buildings of Stamford's downtown. Later, UBS would open the world's largest trading floor in its building in Stamford. Over the span of just a few decades, Stamford had transformed itself from a manufacturing center into a hub of corporate activity.

It should be said that the plan for renewal was not enacted without debate or criticism. Not everyone accepted the idea that the city's historic center must be razed in order to give Stamford new life. The newly developed downtown, when fully completed, was criticized for not being pedestrian-friendly and, despite the lone contractor who worked on the project, for lacking a cohesiveness that tied the new downtown together. To the dismayed, Stamford had traded its character for a certain amount of security, at too high a cost.

It was the indisputable flaw to the realization of Patrick Joseph's dream when he had moved to Stamford, the irrefutable blemish upon his family's otherwise picture-perfect home on Maple Ave—the house lay only one street over from the railroad. Jack reflected on that thought with a bitter grin as he leaned against the driver's side door of his cruiser, arms folded across the front of his crisp, navy blue, Stamford Police issue blazer at the intersection of Maple Ave and Frank Street. It was a cool, blue morning in 1957. Back when Jack was young, as long as a train wasn't clambering by, the railroad might go completely unnoticed by the residents of Maple Ave—out of sight, out of mind. Sometimes the railroad reared its ugly head, however, in a manner such that its proximity could not be denied, such as when a four-year-old Mary had gone missing for a couple of hours one afternoon and Jack had found her standing five feet from the tracks, frozen in fear, as a rattling freight train steam-rolled past her. Jack's father had shrugged at the news, but Jack had to chuckle picturing his father pausing in disgust on those tracks in the dark on his way home (he had seen him do it), swearing to God he had heard the echo of some drunk Irishman hollering from Dublin-way, a mile or so down the tracks, "Oooooohh, Paadddyy boooy…I can *still* seeee yooouuu!" Jack thought that it might still haunt the old man yet.

If his father were still bothered by the memory of—or worried that someone else might still remember—where his family once had lived…well, they could all forget about it now. Jack was working a detail on the preliminary demolitions for the construction of the Connecticut Turnpike, known more commonly today in Connecticut as Interstate-95, directing traffic away from the preparations for this new superhighway or something or other that the government was building. It was going to trace the path of the old post road, Route 1, to alleviate the growing congestion on that old thoroughfare. Through Stamford, it would also follow the path of the train tracks and it would pass directly over and through where Jack's childhood home on Maple Avenue stood.

Jack did not flinch as he watched the bulldozer smash into the second floor apartment where he had grown up. "How the hell did I get this assignment?" he wondered. By the late afternoon, the house had been reduced to a pile of rubble and a cloud of dust. The workers were loading the remains into the back of a truck parked on the street.

Gone for good was his father's pride or shame or relief or guilt or whatever feelings may have still lingered in Patrick's soul about his time in Stamford. All physical evidence had been destroyed. The erasure was complete. Gone—Jack grimaced at the thought—was the first home he had ever known. Maybe I should write him, Jack thought. Be done with it. But no, this thing was never meant to have that sort of closure. The record of truth was Jack's to keep alone. The land even lied. It was all for just his one soul to bear.

The year is 2009. Stamford's population, last estimated in 2007, is 118,475. How many of them remember the Stamford of old, before urban renewal? Who amongst them knows that Canal Street was not always the asphalted boulevard that it is today, but was

once literally a canal, built so that ships could enter Stamford's center from Long Island Sound to deliver goods most efficiently? How many of them have heard of Dublin and know of the dirty ghetto which once butted up against the edge of today's shimmering downtown? Who has considered that I-95 did not always forge a path through the city of Stamford, that a house on Maple Avenue was knocked down to make way for history?

I sit, extracting information from this frayed packet, a special section from *The Stamford Advocate*, issued on Sunday June 30, 1991, saved since then and lent me by my grandmother, a celebration of the city's 350th anniversary. It's a tidy history tucked within these pages—one broad overview of the major events in Stamford's history accompanied by numerous special sections for the city's various neighborhoods, ethnic groups, and businesses. Stamford's healthy love for itself ("When you're Stamford, you're Stamford," a lifelong resident of the city, William Pitt, told *The Advocate* in this special edition) is readily apparent within—indeed materialized of—these pages, but what of a city that will knock down its monuments to build over them anew, sacrifice all the trappings of its past for a more certain future?

I realize now what my grandfather sensed in his heart, what he could never quite formulate into words, but always kept him preoccupied with that same elusory tale. In a time of change, even when a community manages to save itself—and better it survive than fail—, something is always lost; and merely acknowledging this reality never makes it any easier.

4

Ever the narrow road to keep, a tedious grind down a forlorn, predestined path—that was life as Jack knew it in 1939 upon the occasion of his graduation from Stamford High School. He hadn't been making his own choices, but how could he have been? There was no room for error; there was no room to take chances; there could be no gambling when survival was at stake. Jack trudged along his preordained course with all the determination of a workhorse with a job to do.

Ever since his father had left, it had taken everything Jack could give for the family to scrape by. They had bounced around from home to home for the past seven years, just trying to keep up with rent and always looking for a more affordable place to stay. From Maple Avenue, they had moved to nearby Elm St. into another two-family home. Their next place was downtown on Bank St., above a restaurant. The rent there was cheap, but the noise and commotion below proved intolerable and the family moved again after several months. Things may have hit rock bottom in January of 1935 when the family was living in a two-family home on Limerick St. in the Cove. The house was never warm enough. Whenever Jack came home from the First National, five-year-old Billy was always crying because he was so cold. Their mother could bring him no consolation. One night Jack had to cut the kitchen table into pieces to burn in the stove because they couldn't afford to pay for any other wood. Times weren't quite as hard any more, especially now that Jack would be working full-time instead of spending six hours a day in school, but clearly his choices were limited upon graduation.

College, of course, had never been an option for Jack, not since his father had left. He had the smarts for it too, but knew it was never even worth the trying. At Stamford High, he took only commercial courses rather than following the college prep curriculum. Following graduation, Jack would grimace sometimes at his conviction, conceived some years earlier, to become a police officer. As much as he tried to tell himself differently, he still wanted it—the chance to serve, to uphold the letter of the law. Maybe some day—if the right opportunity arose—it would happen, but not now. Wishful thinking couldn't light a fire in the oven, couldn't heat a house. He started to work full time at the First National.

Jack, of course, had long since accepted that his family was different; the fact of their broken home was as undeniable as the gossip constantly spoken about them around town. He could feel the rumors percolating through the curious gazes and sneaky glances of customers at the First National. In that day, there weren't a lot of other households without a father present, so people assumed that there must be something wrong with the Moriartys. Ever since his father had left town, the family had had no visitors save for his mother's sister, who came to town a couple of times a year, and the priest from St. Mary's, who Jack insisted join the family for prayer once a week though he could serve him no dinner. It pained Jack to live like that, an outsider, an exception to the norm. To

make matters worse, he bore the burden of the family's strangeness alone. Only he emerged each morning from their home to face the judgment of the outside world. His mother, Jack knew, had turned a blind, oblivious eye to her neighbors' distant disapproval.

One afternoon in late 1939, soon after the family had moved onto Lockwood Avenue in the East Side, a home where the family would finally settle down for several years, Jack returned home to find makeshift curtains made of sheets hung over all the windows. He asked his mother what they were for.

"I wanted to cover the windows," she said without turning to look at him. "The sunlight depresses me."

Margaret had closed herself off to the outside world and her children were locked up with her. The curtains would never be opened again. Jack tried several times to work up the nerve to protest, but could never find the words. Family was family and there would be no escaping this. Soon enough, Jack hardly noticed the darkness anymore anyways.

The few people who knew Jack well, those who could peek behind the veil, understood that Jack was just a good boy caught in a tough spot. Maybe that was the hardest part; Jack knew he was well-liked and could be even more liked if he were freer to open up to people. Despite all his troubles, Jack was popular in high school and remained close to a small circle of friends whom he had graduated with, even if he never allowed those friends to visit his own home (There was no room to gather in, nor anything to eat. Besides, Jack's mother would have been overwhelmed.). Once or twice a year, Jack would jump on the train with Olie Anderson and John Nelson to catch a Yankees game in the Bronx. Even though Jack was forced to quit the game far too young, he never lost his love for baseball. The ten cent bleacher seats were a luxury he could afford from time to time. It was a rare chance for Jack to release himself from his responsibilities for a few hours and actually spend some time with his buddies.

Occasionally, however, Jack's apprehensions influenced his behavior in ways that troubled his friends. People could be so nice to him that Jack worried he could never repay them, so he sometimes refused their gifts. When the Andersons invited him over for a congratulatory dinner shortly following graduation, Jack declined, claiming he had to work. Olie knew that Jack should have been available that night, but decided against worrying his mother over it. Nor did Olie ever address Jack about the lie (Olie wanted so badly to yell at him or shake him, to just tell him that *you've got to let someone do something nice for you for once in your life!*); but Olie knew the simple truth was that there's no forcing an ox like Jack Moriarty into doing something he doesn't want to do. Jack wished that he might not have to be so hard on himself or that he might chance upon some form of acceptance that he could not deny. He yearned for a spark and he waited in secret pain for his yearning to be soothed.

The boys were running through the streets to the recruiting center downtown. Jack was with them. It was Monday, December 8th, 1941 and the United States had just declared war on the Empire of Japan. Pearl Harbor had been bombed the day before and President Roosevelt had just told Congress that it was "a date which will live in infamy." Jack stood at the end of the line outside the military recruiter's office. The line extended for two downtown blocks. The entire city was buzzing. A nervous, excited chatter filled the air. It seemed that the whole of Stamford's populace was either waiting in line to enlist or standing on the other side of the road, watching their boys go off to war. The bystanders watched intently, not pointing or staring—Jack noticed—,but cheering and hollering for them *all* and the boys in line waved back in appreciation.

Jack stood in line for four hours that afternoon, awaiting his turn to file the proper paperwork, get his physical examination, and ship off with the navy. He had not much thought about how his family would fare without him there to support them, but something just felt right to Jack about standing in line that day with the rest of Stamford's young men. It seemed to Jack that the foreign threat of war to the American livelihood was greater even than the domestic threat of poverty to his family at that moment. He was answering to a higher calling, a call to service. For once, Jack felt as though he was part of the crowd.

He was surprised—although he shouldn't have been—to see a face he recognized when he finally stepped into the back room of the recruiter's office. The naval recruiter in Stamford, Steve McGregor, was a friend of Jack's boss, Smithie, and had been stopping by the First National for years. The prospect of fighting for the American military against the Empire of Japan had seemed so grandiose in Jack's mind that he had subconsciously expected an encounter of mythic proportions within the recruiters' closed doors, but the familiar face seated at the desk before him snapped Jack back to ground-level. He still stood in Stamford, where he always had.

"Jack, how are you?" Steve asked from his chair with a smile. Then Steve nodded to two men who had been standing in the corner. One appeared to be a doctor and the other was another recruiter. At Steve's prompting, they both brushed past Jack and closed the door as they left the room."

"Good, thanks," Jack replied as he watched them leave.

"Please, son, have a seat."

Jack obliged and then there was a silence. Jack wasn't sure if he should speak first.

"So, uh…" Jack sputtered, "I'd like to know what I have to do join the navy, Sgt. McGregor," Jack began. "Should I start filling out the paper work?"

Steve was leaning back in his chair, holding a pen behind his ear and twirling it in his fingers. He appeared to be gathering his thoughts. Then, abruptly, he clenched the pen length-wise in the palm on his fist, shifted forward in his seat, and leaned both forearms on the top of the desk. He looked Jack directly in the eye and spoke lower than before.

"Jack, I don't exactly know how to go about saying this to you, but you aren't what the navy is looking for."

Jack was a bit startled. He didn't know how to respond.

"Why—what do you mean? 'I'm not what they're looking for?' I'm here. I'm ready to fight. What else do you need?"

"It's got nothing to do with that Jack. That's not what I'm talking about. What I'm saying is that all these boys walking in here are different from you in another way. Something that does not have to do with honor or ability or any of that. Each one of them stands alone. They don't have wives or children or families to look after. They might have mothers who will worry about them, but truly these boys only have themselves to take care of so far in this world."

"What's that got to do with me?" Jack retorted.

"I've known you for a long time, Jack. How's your mother going to get by without you around? Who's going to feed your brother and sister?"

The flicker of recognition spread over Jack's face and quickly burned up in a red flush of anger. He gripped the armrests on his seat so hard he thought they might rip off. He pictured the spectators across the street. They would take back their cheers.

"Take it back, Steve! You can still change your mind. This isn't your call to make!" Jack began to raise his voice. "You think you're helping me, but you're not. My whole life I've been the oddball, Steve, but not this time. I'm not going to walk these streets while every other guy my age is out there fighting for our country. Every person on the street is just going to have another reason to point and stare and I won't have it!"

Steve began to speak once again as Jack continued yelling in a heated fervor, neither man hearing the other's words. The chaos went on for several moments until Steve was fed up and shouted out loud.

"*Enough!*"

Jack was startled and quit screaming. He began sucking in air. He relaxed back into his chair, which he now noticed he had risen out of as he was yelling. He tried to regain his composure as he realized that he had uncharacteristically lost his cool.

Steve let Jack catch his breath and then started to speak once more.

"Boys are lining up all across America to join the military just like they did here in Stamford today. The navy will be just fine without one less sailor, but there's a family in Stamford that can't lose its bread-winner right now, you hear? Now, I'm bypassing the physical and marking you down as ineligible to serve on account of a hardship. I'm making the call right here and now. There's no room for debate. Your fight has always been in Stamford and it's going to stay here."

Jack filtered the words as they arrived in his head, reducing them to a simple message, the rules of which Jack had been living by for as long as he could remember: *You will not stray from your path, Jack. Choices like these were never yours to make.*

For months and months, McGregor's words, his gesture, resounded through Jack's mind. Jack was angry, hurt, confused. All in all, 10,000 of Stamford's 60,000 residents would serve in a branch of the military during WWII. Jack Moriarty would never be one of them. With each week that passed, more and more of the boys who were Jack's age shipped off to fight. Before long, Jack felt like he was the only one left. He damn near was.

More than ever, Jack walked the streets of Stamford with his head down and spirits sunk. He didn't want to be seen. A patriotic fervor had swept the nation and

Stamford, like America, was galvanized for war. Everyone was prepared to lend a helping hand. To walk the streets as an able-bodied young man at home was to walk in shame. Jack felt the burn of their glares on his chest while he worked at the store. He could hear the whispers in their stares, "what's he still doing here?" they asked. There were too many people to explain to—it couldn't be done—that it wasn't his choice. Jack could hardly even blame them any more. He only wanted the chance to serve just like everybody else and, because he couldn't have it, he felt worthless.

Jack cherished any moment granted him out of the public eye, even the chance to return to within the suffocating folds of his mother's curtains if it meant he could have a respite from the constant scrutiny. Even the short breaks from work, which he still spent on the back steps of the First National, gave him just enough relief to keep trudging along through this life that was not his. Then in the late spring of 1944, on one of those breaks, an unlikely olive branch extended from the help wanted pages of *The Stamford Advocate*, resounding with all the glory of destiny, unfettered by the shackles of fate:

SOUGHT BY STAMFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT: SPECIAL CONSTABLE TO WORK FULL-TIME FOR DEPARTMENT. JOB REQUIREMENTS WILL INVOLVE SERVICING THE CITY OF STAMFORD IN VARIOUS AREAS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT. JOB PROMISES STEADY WORK AND, PENDING PERFORMANCE AND THE STATUS OF FUTURE BUDGETS, COULD LEAD TO POSITION AS A FULL-TIME OFFICER WITH DEPARTMENT.

It was an advertisement for one man and one man only. Who else could it be targeted for, Jack thought? Any other potential candidate, any able-bodied young man, was off to war. Jack stood up and walked off those back steps. He headed straight for police headquarters, the newspaper still clenched in his hand. The job was his before he even stepped in the door.

His first beat as a special constable for the Stamford Police was in one of the parts of Stamford he knew best: the Cove. Jack had lived in or nearby the neighborhood for his entire life. He had been born and raised amongst the people, along the streets he now served. The residents were Irish, Italian, Polish, or Slovak; mostly all Catholic. He knew them well because he was of their element—he knew how they thought and spoke, what they valued. He understood that the first immigrant populations were drawn to the Cove after the Cove Mills began operating in the 1850s. Present-day residents were either new immigrants or the working and middle class descendants of the early immigrants who had chosen to stay in the Cove, even after the mills burned down in 1919, because the area around where their parents had worked had become their home. Jack recognized the urgency in a Cove mother's voice when she berated her son on the porch for being late to dinner and understood full well why homeowners in the Cove toiled for hours in the yard on their days off, proudly trimming their hedges. The Cove's moral code was largely self-enforced. Law enforcement only provided a safety net, a surety that nothing could go unusually wrong, that the Cove would remain a home to be proud of. Countless children

played freely throughout the neighborhood. The Cove had to stay safe for them. Jack knew all this, so when he walked his beat in the Cove, he worked with the expertise of an insider.

For the first time in his memory, Jack was proud to walk the streets of Stamford. No longer could strangers point and stare. He stood tall in his uniform and commanded the respect of passersby. He walked his beat up and down the streets and made his presence felt. He learned the routines of the neighborhood even more intimately: what times the men left for work in the morning, who could be counted on to be sitting in the barbershop at the top of the hill every afternoon at 4:30, and what street the postman would be on at any time of the day. He knew all the kids by name and told them to keep out of trouble. He always walked at a brisk pace, the more to stay busy, but he'd slow down every time he passed by 973 Cove Road. It was 1947 when Jack first discovered that a pretty young woman named Jean Rohacik lived there with her parents. She worked as a secretary for the parks department and was just a couple of years out of high school. My grandfather might stop to lean over the green chain-link fence and admire the rose garden, immaculately kept by mother and daughter in the spring and summer. Out of the corners of his eyes, he would sneak glances toward the windows to see if anyone was home. If he paused long enough, the girl's mother would always bring him something from the kitchen to eat. And if he were lucky, were it really a good day, Jean would bring it out for him instead.

It got to where Jack was speaking to Jean outside her home several times a week. Still, Jack held back from completely opening up to her. He never told her then of the burdens he had carried—and still did carry—or that landing his new job and meeting her were just about the only two good things to happen to him in memory. Certainly, he never would have been the one to go out on a limb, but Jean still caught him off-guard on that Friday afternoon in July. They had been chatting about her roses when she interrupted herself.

"Jack, I'm meeting some friends of mine at the Colony for pizza tonight. I'd love it if you came along."

"Well, ugh—," Jack sputtered. No one had ever asked him anything like this before. "Well, sure. I think, I think I'd like that a lot."

Jack had set foot on uncharted territory, but it felt good to be forging his own path. His mother was confused when he came home from work the evening of that first outing to the Colony, the first of many dates with Jean, and changed and combed his hair and got ready to go out. He normally just came home and laid low around the house.

"Jack, I don't like the sound of this," Margaret said. "You don't have the time for games, chasing girls and all that. You've got responsibilities."

He tried to ignore her words as he emerged from the dingy darkness of the curtains and headed out on that first night.

Jack and Jean continued to see each other and Jean soon insisted that Jack come over to her house one night for dinner. In all the time Jack had spent stopping by in front of her house, Jack had never met Jean's father, Joe, and Jean was adamant that they be

introduced. Joe ran his own successful plumbing business and was always gone at work when Jack came by. So they picked a date and Jack was nauseous that night heading over to 973 Cove Road, so nervous was he that he would manage to blow the first impression, but the warmth of their home disarmed him as soon as he stepped in the door. Laughter echoed off the walls all night, pots and pans clinked, and Jean's mother mandated that neither Jack nor anyone ever leave hungry. Jack could not deny the feeling inside that this was what a home was supposed to *feel* like.

"So you're a policeman, are ya?" Joe asked at the dinner table.

"Well, I'm a special constable actually," Jack explained. "I work full-time, but it's technically a temporary position."

"No matter," Joe said, "That's a fine job."

Later that night Joe asked Jack to follow him outside. They descended the front steps and stood at the front gate, turning to take in the view of the house. Two large bushes sat on either side of the five steps that led up to the front porch. On the porch one door led to the family room of the first floor and the other door opened onto the stairs leading to the second floor apartment. In the yard on the right side of the house sat the rose garden, perfectly maintained, and also a young cherry tree, just six feet in height.

"I built this house," began Joe, "back about twenty years ago with my brother." Joe turned and looked up and down the street, to the grocery store up the road and back down to Cove Island and Long Island Sound at the far bottom of the hill. "And I love this neighborhood too, I'll tell ya. Good, honest, hard-working people here. I love this whole city, spent my whole life in Stamford. It's been good to me."

Joe started talking about his work, how he apprenticed as a plumber and eventually started his own business. Things got a little tight during the thirties, Joe said, as they did for everybody, but all the public works projects kept him busy through those hard times. Jack stood with his hands in his pockets, brow furrowed in concentration. He couldn't recall anyone talking to him like this before, trying to teach him something, offering some advice. Something resonated through Joe's voice—Jack could not have placed it then, not until years later, but it caught his attention nonetheless—the calm and collected knowingness of experience. Jack just wanted to keep listening.

"Look, Jack, I don't know you that well, but from what I understand, you haven't had the easiest go of it so far. But you should know this—and maybe you even sense it already—*this is a special town*, Jack. Of course, you're gonna have your bumps in the road, right? Everybody has to take a licking some time. Well, I've never seen a guaranteed thing in my life, but this is damn near close to it: you get out of Stamford what you put into it. It's been the case for other guys I know and it's been the case for me. Just know this: if you keep working hard, you're gonna do just fine here."

Jack nodded slowly, silently.

All right, son?" Joe asked, but he didn't wait for an answer.

Joe smiled and slapped Jack firmly on the back and, with that, he turned and walked back into his house.

In early 1949, with the blessing of Jean's father, Jack asked Jean to marry him. She answered a resounding yes, on the condition that Jack finally bring her to meet his mother. Jack said he would—soon. He waited another several months, nonetheless, until he obliged her. The wedding was scheduled for September, but Jack did not bring Jean to his home on Lockwood Avenue to meet his mother until a Saturday afternoon in late July. Jack had a strong sense that nothing good could come from it and he wanted to prepare Jean as best he could for that reality.

When he finally brought Jean over, his mother was polite, but listless, seated in the corner of the kitchen, casually conversing as if Jean were just a neighbor dropping in—though this never happened anyway—and not her son's bride-to-be. Margaret was shrouded in the darkness of the curtains so that Jack couldn't read her face and he grew uncomfortable as the visit wore on. He knew what she was probably thinking. He kept looking back and forth between his mother in the corner and Jean, by his side, stuck with him inside this cave of curtains. He began to wonder how he had gotten himself into this, how this could ever work.

After her visit, Jean was glad that it had finally taken place, but it was Jack who seemed a bit troubled as he sent her home that evening. When his mother reinforced his sentiments that evening, Jack—with heart wrenched—had made up his mind.

"She seems like a nice girl, Jack, but are you really going to get *married*? Are you ready to take on the responsibility of raising a family?" Margaret asked. "Things have been so hard at times, Jack. And now things are going so well for us. You're a policeman, just like you always wanted. Is now the time to take such a risk like this?"

His mother's thoughts echoed through Jack's mind all weekend. Maybe she was right, Jack thought. How would Mary and Billy fare without him around he wondered? On Monday afternoon, at the end of his shift, he passed by 973 Cove Road and Jean came out to see him. He whispered to her across the fence. He was sorry, he said, he just wasn't sure right then, he just couldn't do it. She started to cry and he asked her not to but she wouldn't stop and he turned to see if anyone was watching. He told her he needed to think and he left her, screaming and crying at the fence in the fading sunlight, as he went home to Lockwood Avenue to sit in the dark.

Jack sat stiffly in the kitchen, hands clasped on the table, eyes staring blankly at some spot on the wall, several inches below eye-level, so that his head was lowered sternly and his brow was furrowed. He hadn't moved in over an hour and his mind swirled in deep, meditative thought, beyond the point where words and sentences crossed through his mind to where he no longer thought at all, but only *felt* the significance of the decision he had before him. What the hell was he doing with his life? He weighed the pros and cons of his choices by monitoring the subtle fluctuations in his soul as he imagined the effects of a given decision (*He couldn't have known it all, even imagine it, could he? Everything that was on the line? Future lives were in the balance. They weren't his responsibility yet. They would be. He could make this right.*). He found himself intermittently holding his breath during moments of intense focus, then gulping for huge gasps of air as he took a respite from concentration.

One of the gasps shook him from his thought. He rubbed his eyes, bewildered as if emerging from a trance. What was he doing, sitting up after midnight, with work in the morning, paralyzed by thought? Did he believe he could think more clearly after everyone else had gone to bed, as if his mind would be free of all the ties that bound him to this godforsaken home on Lockwood Avenue if only the members of his family would go to sleep? Only then could he think more clearly? No, he still sat in the same kitchen. Nothing had changed. Shaking his head in disgust, Jack slowly leaned forward and rested his head on his arms. He surrendered to the darkness of a deep and troubled sleep.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Jack's head jumped off the kitchen table. He squinted at his watch, it was 5:30 AM. He had been asleep in the kitchen for almost five hours. The palest ray of sunlight was just beginning to creep through the edges of the drawn curtains. Then again, *Crack! Crack! Crack!* It was the crisp rapping of knuckles on wood, but, in his drowsiness, Jack thought he was being slapped across the side of his head.

"Hey, Jack! Wake up, son, the world is waiting!"

Jack heard the voice coming from behind the door in the corner of the kitchen which opened onto the back stairwell out of the apartment. He couldn't remember the last time someone had knocked on the door to their house uninvited. Had it ever happened? One eyeball was peering in the window through the sliver of glass covered by the edge of the curtain. It was Jean's father, Joe Rohacik. Jack rose and opened the door.

"Hi Joe, uh, what are you doing here?" asked Jack, a bit on edge.

"Come on, Jack. Step outside. Let's talk," Joe motioned with his hand for Jack to follow him down the stairs.

Jack closed the door behind him and followed nervously.

"Joe, I—," Jack began.

"Jack, please, let me give you my two cents and then I'll be gone," Joe calmly interrupted. "Okay?"

Jack nodded nervously and stuffed his hands in his pockets, unsure of what else to do with them. Then he raised one to shield his eyes from the rising sunlight that peaked over Joe's shoulders. Joe leaned casually on the chain-link fence, arms crossed on his chest and his right leg wrapped around the front of the left one. He peered with tilted head across to Jack, narrowing his eyes just slightly as if to get a read on him. Then he sighed and began to speak.

"I'm not here to tell you what to do, Jack. I'm just here to give you a little counsel if you want it. The way I see it is, it's been a long time since you've been able to think for yourself and make your own decisions and you're finding out right now that it isn't that easy," Joe shrugged sympathetically as he issued these words.

"Now, I could be wrong, but I'm pretty sure that in your heart of hearts, you would like to marry my daughter, but something is holding you back. Again, I could be wrong—and if I am, stop listening to me right now—but if I'm right, then I'm here to tell you that this is one of those times that you've got to take a stand.

"Do you remember what I told you outside of my house, Jack? Everything I said was true, but it well never apply to a man who doesn't know what's good for him, who

will never put something on the line for a chance at something better. I'm telling you right now, Jack, you can't let these folks hold you back forever. Your mother is a nice lady, but I don't think she's looking out for your best interests here. And, look, Mary and Billy are both just about fully grown adults. Pretty soon they have to start fending for themselves or they never will. I know my daughter, Jack. If you walk away from this, she's gonna be upset, for sure, but she'll survive it, she'll move on. I'm scared for you though, Jack. You might just walk back into that house for one last time. You could be swallowed up by all these curtains here on Lockwood Avenue for life. So, just for once, Jack, you should do what's right for you. It's now or never. You can make this right."

Jack had listened quietly the whole time that Joe was speaking. By the time Joe finished, Jack's eyes had adjusted to the morning sunlight. He stood with hands on hips and nodded slowly in thought.

"So, what do you think?"

Jack and Jean Moriarty were wed on a Saturday in September of 1949. The new couple would move into the second-floor of the bride's parents' home at 973 Cove Road. After the wedding, they spent the night in New York City. They then returned to Stamford in time for Jack to take his police examination on Monday. After five years as a special constable, he had been given the opportunity to become a full-time patrolman. Jack passed the examination and was eventually named a full-time member of the Stamford Police Department. Just once in a lifetime, Jack had rolled the dice and he had won big.

5

Before long, Jack and Jean had a burgeoning family. By 1955, the year my father was born, they had three little boys: Jackie, Jimmy, and Terry. Jack approached fatherhood with an impenetrable sincerity, a quiet fervor, which hardened itself against all outside influences. He would be a rock solid foundation for the family. He would ward off all detractors and protect the kids in the beginning. As they grew older, the kids could lean on him for guidance, then push themselves off when they were ready to carve their own ways. He wanted to guide them to that pushing-off point. He wanted to give them the Dream.

In one of those early years, shortly after Mary Ellen, the last child was born, the Moriartys sent out the first Christmas card that had all four kids in it. Over lunch at the station, one of Jack's fellow officers remarked at the growth of young Jackie in the picture.

"He's getting big, Jack. Starting to look like you. Maybe one day he'll be a cop too." The officer said this with a laugh—he meant it as a good-humored compliment. A couple of other nearby officers chuckled as well.

Jack did not so much as smirk.

"Never," he muttered under his breath.

The other officers were taken aback. They stopped laughing and exchanged glances with each other, unsure of just what had gone wrong. They all learned, then and there, that Jack Moriarty could not be humored when it came to his kids.

Years later, Jack's persistent steering rose to the surface once again. My Uncle Jack, by then, was studying pharmacology at Northeastern. He had struggled a bit and failed an organic chemistry class that was central to the pharmacology curriculum. He came home after that semester and told his father that he was considering changing his major to criminal justice, a field of study for which Northeastern is renowned.

Jack was enraged. "I didn't work so hard to send my kid to college so that he could become a cop!"

My Uncle Jack was confused. What was wrong with being a cop, he wondered? His own father had been one and it was a perfectly fine job. Why couldn't he be one, too? What my uncle did not understand then was that the Dream—as my grandfather saw it—was not a choice for his children, but a mandate.

If the kids had behaved themselves during the week, Jack might take them on a Sunday drive after church to a nearby park or for some other outing. Working the night shift so often, Jack did not always have as much time as he wanted to spend with his children, so he took advantage of the times he could. Once, while Mary Ellen was still a

baby, Jack took the boys out of the Cove and made the short drive down to the Shippan neighborhood. The houses along the street were slightly bigger than down the Cove and were built for just one family each. Nicer cars were parked along the street. The boys stared wide-eyed out of the rolled-down windows when their father explained to them that some people didn't have to share a house with another family.

"But where do their Nanas live?" asked my perplexed father, who was only four.

"Their Nanas have their own separate houses, son," replied Jack as new possibilities stretched my father's mind.

"Most people who live down here have gone to college," added Jack.

He was showing the boys, so young, all that they could have if they strived for it, all of it within the city of Stamford, all within minutes of home. He would see to it that they could have it if they wanted it. They weaved throughout the neighborhood of Shippan, winding along side roads and crossing back and forth across the main drag, passing rows of homes belonging to people who had had opportunities and seized them. The boys' amazement never waned. At last, they came to the end of Shippan Avenue, on the tip of Shippan Point. A concrete seawall stood at the end of the road, sticking some three feet or so above the street's surface and overlooking the Sound.

Jack took the boys out of the car and propped them up on the wall just right: Jackie Junior was the oldest and knelt in the middle and Jim and Terry, my father, squatted barefooted beside Jackie with their hands clasped between their legs. Jack opened the trunk of his car and lifted out the new camera he had just purchased at Caldor's. He told the boys to smile as they squinted into the sun and a light breeze tussled their hair. The boys must have sensed a seriousness in their father's tone for they did not fuss or fidget at all as brothers normally do, but only obeyed their father. Eyeing them through the lens of that camera, Jack saw purely the untapped potential of three young men and he would do all he could to help them fulfill it.

When I was a child in Stamford, my parents took me and my brothers on a drive every Sunday as well, if for a slightly different reason. It was a drive back to where my father had come from. We would get in our car outside our home in Shippan and take the short ride over to the Cove for family dinner at my grandmother's. All of my aunts and uncles and cousins would be there too. My grandmother would play host and cook lavish meals each week. It's the sort of tradition that people just don't keep anymore—*we* don't keep it anymore. By then, my great-grandparents had long since passed away and my grandparents had moved into the first floor of the house. A tenant now lived on the second floor. On any given Sunday evening, there would be some fifteen of us crammed into that four room residence, although it never felt cramped. It may have to the adults, but the innocence of childhood affords such happy oversights. It was never until I was older—twelve or thirteen years old—that I came back to visit Stamford and realized that my grandparents' house was *small*.

Thirty-five years after the first picture was taken of my father and uncles, I was eight years old when I too was propped up on that seawall at the end of Shippan. My younger brothers Ryan and Connor squatted beside me. My father walked ten paces to

the side so that we wouldn't have to look into the sun when he took the picture. After this photo was developed in full color, he would place it side-by-side in a frame with the black-and-white photo of him and his brothers that *his* father had taken, so many years ago.

I doubt I behaved too well as he took that picture. After all, we were on a visit from Florida during summer vacation and we were just about to go visit our old neighborhood, ALC. I must have been far too excited to see old friends to have the patience for taking a picture, but my father must have insisted.

On his days off from the night shift, Jack would often put in some hours at Ed & Andy's, a nearby sporting goods store, for some extra cash. Otherwise, he would spend the rest of his time sitting around the house, usually reading.

"Dad, do you want to play catch with us in the yard?" a bright-eyed Jimmy asked from across the small family room. Jack glanced at his smiling son and his two brothers waiting eagerly behind him. He grimaced and craned his neck to the side. Today, he just wasn't in the mood.

"Not now, boys," Jack replied, lifting his head from its seat on his shoulder.

Broken—a silent oath made many years before. He could not have ever explained it to them, could he? That it still bothered him to this day. That on the day he became a father he did not stop being a son. That to step into that backyard with ball and mitt would be to re-open the wound. It tormented Jack that some days he could be so happy to get out in the yard with the kids and on other days that sunken feeling inside his chest was so heavy that he could not bear to get up. So this time, he just said no and left it at that.

Not bad for a boy from the Cove. That's what they said around the neighborhood about Terry Moriarty, my father. It wasn't often that someone made it out of the Cove like *that*, moving back to Stamford after college and affording a home down Shippan. The neighbors would say the words with a wink and a laugh and that potent mixture of pride and self-deprecation that could only mean that a mountain had been climbed.

The drive to achieve had always been apparent in Terry. When he was first old enough to go to school with his older brothers, Jackie and Jimmy, they would all three of them walk the half-mile or so down the hill to the school at St. Mary's Church every morning. Jackie and Jimmy, however, did not like dragging Terry along. He was several years younger than both of them and would slow them down. His asthma often made the walking even tougher.

One day, my grandfather, driving home from the night shift in the morning, spotted five-year-old Terry sitting in the snow all alone on the side of Cove Road. He had been walking to school with his brothers, but when his asthma started acting up, his brothers had told him to go home "to play with little Mary Ellen where he belonged." Unable to walk any farther at the time, but unwilling to retreat home and cave in to his brothers' taunting, Terry had stubbornly chosen a middle ground and plopped himself

down on the snow. With some prodding, Jack coaxed Terry into the car to let him warm up. Jack thought it might be a good idea to bring him home for the day, but my father insisted on showing up his brothers and going to school.

"Well, if the little guy insists," thought Jack as he drove him down the hill to St. Mary's.

In moments like that, Jack could forgive his own shortcomings as a father. Sure, he wasn't perfect, but who was? His kids had the fire in them, so Jack knew he must be doing something right. And if Jack sometimes could not lift himself from his chair to play when the kids wanted him to, he was always there for the toughest of times such as these. That's what matters most, Jack thought.

"You should take the job. I mean it," my mother told my father.

My father wasn't so sure. He had never taken that kind of a leap before. He liked the job he had now as an accountant with Ernst & Young, working in their office space in downtown Stamford, built as part of the city's downtown revitalization project. Why should he risk switching to a job he might like less? The new position he was offered was at Pepsi. After my father got to know some of the employees there while auditing their company, the Pepsi guys had liked him so much that they wanted to bring him onto their team. It was, without a doubt, a great opportunity. At the time, Pepsi was chock-full of young, up-and-coming MBAs and my father would be thrown into that elite group. Clearly, he might feel as if he were in over his head at first, but the guys at Pepsi who knew him obviously thought he could do the work. There seemed to be few reasons to turn the job down, but something about it bothered my father.

"I don't think my dad would take the job if he were in my shoes," my father replied. He had watched his own father hold one job for his entire adult life. My father's decision-making was shackled, in part, by my grandfather's own psyche, the psyche of the company man.

My mother looked at him quizzically, shrugging disaffectedly. Here was the girl from a small town in Rhode Island, who had made it her life's mission to get the hell out of that tiny state and never look back, and her husband was about to pass up the opportunity of a lifetime and blame it on his father—a man who had never even bought himself his own house?

"Terry, you aren't your father. You don't have to do everything like him."

My father listened to her words and knew he had no choice. He took the job—and he hasn't looked back.

It was the job my father took at Pepsi that eventually moved us away from Stamford. When I was six and a half years old, my father got transferred to a new position at Pepsi in Florida and we packed up and moved to Orlando. Two and a half years after that, my father took a position with a cinema company in Massachusetts and we moved to Dover in time for me to enter the fourth grade in the September of 1996.

When my mother first told me that we were moving to a town named Dover, I asked her what the downtown looked like. My nine-year-old jaw nearly hit the floor when she told me it didn't have one.

"There's just a little center of town, with a town hall and a gas station," she said.

She wasn't lying. I had never lived in a small town before so I couldn't fathom the possibility of a place that didn't have a downtown, but Dover is about as small-town as you can get along the highly developed outer ring of Rte. 128 in eastern Massachusetts. A small suburb of Boston, Dover is located about 15 miles southwest of the city and has retained a distinctly rural feel through the strictest of zoning laws, which require minimum lots of one acre or larger for homes and prevent the arrival of any commercial building whatsoever. The hallmarks of sprawl have enveloped the surrounding suburbs, but Dover has remained without any shopping centers, supermarkets, restaurants, or even a T-station to connect it to Boston's lively center. Winding tree-lined roads wander up and down and from hill to hill across its fifteen square miles. The homes are set back from the road, often hidden by trees, inhabited by residents who are remarkably homogenous (95% of Dover's 5,627 people are white). Moving to Dover, I learned clearly the difference between city and town.

Dover's renowned public school system is regional, shared with a town of astonishingly similar size, appearance, and demographics, named Sherborn. I value very highly the education I received in the Dover-Sherborn schools and the friends I have made in Dover and Sherborn over the years. Nonetheless, on many a Saturday night in high school, while hanging out on a couch in a friend's basement for what felt, to my friends and me, like the millionth time in a year, it was hard not to see Dover for what it was not. It lacks close-knit neighborhoods and a sense of community—its large home lots, set apart from each other on long winding roads, discourage interaction among residents. Moreover, it lacks that certain combination of different types of people that makes our greatest cities interesting.

Deep-seated ties to Dover-Sherborn aren't common. It's a place where people move to raise their kids and then move away from, closer to Boston, after the kids grow up. The town affords its kids a good education, I suppose, but it keeps them bored, too. It didn't help my cause either that I had a good sense of a place that was at least a little bit more exciting, a place where I had longed to move back to for many years, Stamford.

One day several years ago, as I was cleaning out my room at home, I came across my yearbook from my two years at Rogers Elementary in Stamford where I attended kindergarten and the first half of first grade. I had not looked through the thing in at least a decade. I opened the book to my class' page where, just as expected, I saw my small five-year-old frame, as had been captured in so many other photos I had seen of myself at that age. I was shocked, however, to see the racial diversity of all my classmates who surrounded me. I hadn't remembered it like that. Little did I know as a kindergartner that being in that class would probably be the first and last time I could ever be considered a minority, as a white kid, for the rest of my life.

Rogers was a magnet school which drew upon students from all over the city of Stamford in an effort to eliminate the de facto segregation that can occur from more traditional school zoning. My parents and some others in the neighborhood had bought into the concept and sent their kids to Rogers. I have only fond memories of the place. Nonetheless, many of those parents from my old neighborhood would lose their faith in the system after several years and ended up sending their kids to private schools. My mother would often remark, when I used to yearn for our old neighborhood, that, rather than send us to private school, she would have probably chosen to move our family to a neighboring town with a better school system.

In fact, we had already gone through this process elsewhere as a family. After spending a year and a half in the public school system in Orlando, my parents switched me into a private school for the third grade during our last year there. When we moved back to the northeast, my family chose Dover over several other Boston suburbs mostly on account of its highly regarded school system. In this light, I understood what my mother meant when I would say while still young that I wished we still lived in Stamford and she would answer only that we never would have lasted there anyways.

Late on Saturday afternoons in the summertime, the backyard at 973 Cove Road was always full of people. The rumble of talking and laughter could be heard far and wide throughout the Cove from the crowded barbecues in the Moriartys' backyard. All the kids' friends from school and from the neighborhood would be there. Family friends would arrive as well: the Robattis, the Capalbos, the Robustellis, the Passaros, and the Hartemanns. Hamburgers and hot dogs would heat up on the brick grill in the back of the lawn, by the hedges, while the adults lounged in lawn chairs. My grandmother would shuttle around preparing the burgers and hot dogs and potato salad and would stop every few moments to yell at the boys to stop throwing the wiffle ball near the people who were sitting.

My grandfather would sit quietly and soak in the scene. Every so often, he would chime in with a one-liner and chuckle at his own joke. He had a penchant for falling asleep in his lawn-chair after eating, so Jukie Robatti started calling him "Captain Nighty-Night." Jack could laugh at that because it was all in good fun. The murmur of friendly voices made him feel very insulated, very far away from his past on Maple and Lockwood Avenues, though they were each just a mile across town. This was the good life. This was the family he always wanted.

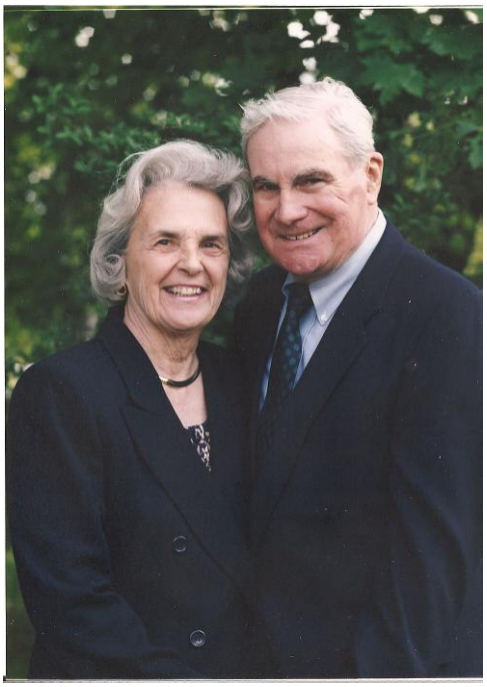
"I have always regretted," my father said in the eulogy he gave at my grandfather's funeral, "that my father never went back to school to get his degree." I can't help but feel that Granddaddy regretted it himself. He was, at heart, an intellectual, and—if he never said it out loud—it was understood that becoming a police officer had always been a substitute for a higher, but less reasonable goal—to become a lawyer. What drove him was respect for the law and if becoming a cop was as close as he could

get to it, then that was what he would do. I know he yearned to the end for a chance at higher education. He recounted to me countless time in his later years, from the couch in our family room in Dover or the couch at 973 Cove Road, about the law enforcement courses he had taken at Babson and Michigan State and Yale as part of his training as a cop throughout his career, clinging to those minor associations between himself and those well-reputed institutions of higher learning. I don't know that he ever relinquished the hope—certainly not the desire—of returning to school to get his education in full. After the kids had grown and moved out, he certainly could have, but he never could lift himself off that couch. He had been a Stamford policeman for life—maybe he thought changing that wasn't worth the risk.

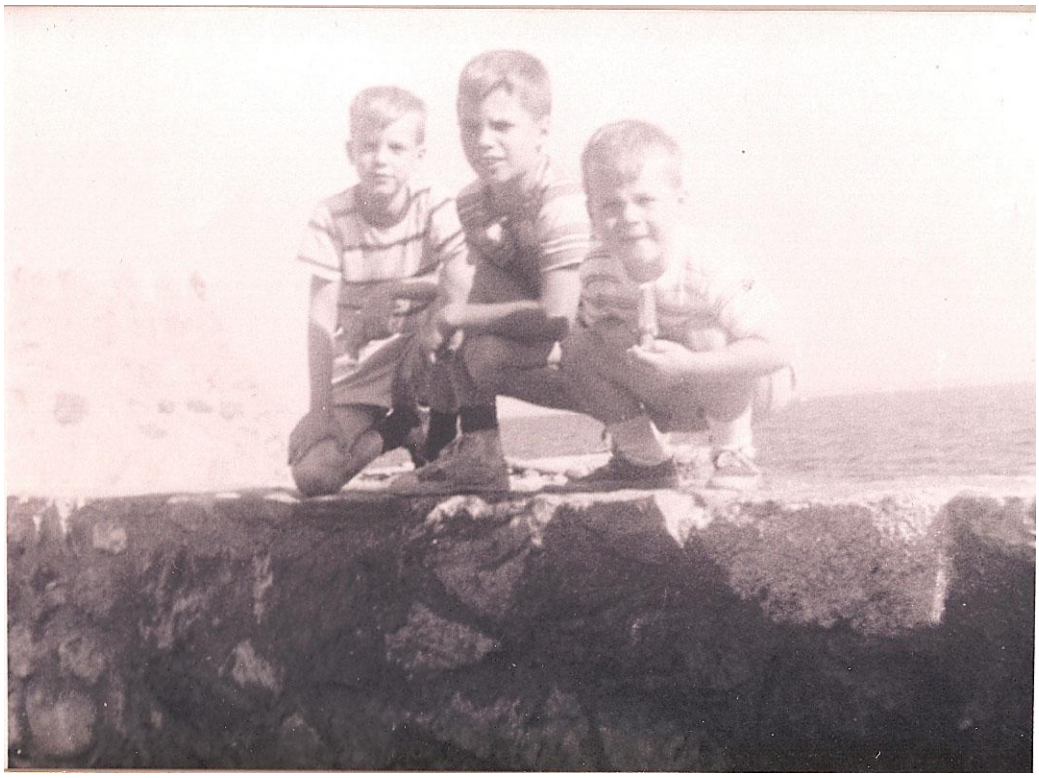
He would have to be satisfied with succeeding in the goal he had set for my grandmother and himself as parents—to send all of their kids to college. All four of their children graduated from four year schools. If my grandfather couldn't have it, at least they could. He had given them the Dream.

Photographic Insert

My grandfather poses beside his police cruiser on the street outside of 973 Cove Road.



Jack and Jean photographed together in early 1992 at a family gathering.



From left to right: Jim, Jack, and Terry pictured on the seawall at the end of Shippan Avenue in 1959.

From left to right: Ryan, me, and Connor photographed by my father on the sea wall at the end of Shippan Avenue in 1995.

6

Jack was appointed a regular officer for the Stamford Police on November 17, 1949. Despite Jack's five years of service as a special constable, he had faced grim odds for getting the job. Jack was still battling his past just to keep up with the present; the three other boys he was competing with for the new full-time position with the department had been in the War and were awarded extra points on the police exam for their service. When my grandfather, against the expectations of everyone involved, still scored better on the exam than the other boys, he was given the position. The boys who lost out would sue, claiming the job was rightfully theirs. While the mess was sorted out in the courts, my grandfather kept his head down, maintaining a low profile. In the end, the job was his. It was the official beginning of a long and illustrious career.

After serving for six years as a faithful patrolman, Jack was promoted to Sergeant in the summer of 1955, when he began working as the desk Sergeant at headquarters for several years. In 1961, he was promoted to Lieutenant and returned to patrolling Stamford's streets. Then in November, 1969, Jack was promoted once again when he agreed to become the Night Captain, running the entire department during the night shift from 6 PM to 4 AM, four days on and then four days off. He worked that shift until 1976. Finally, in 1981 he was promoted to his final post with the department as Deputy Chief. In that position, Jack oversaw police training and traffic safety. He also served as the police liaison for the construction of a new police headquarters during the early 1980s.

In his fifty year tenure with the Stamford Police Department, Jack would serve alongside eight Police Chiefs and thirteen mayors. He worked hard and steadily, never drawing attention to himself, but also never failing to be a reliable member of the team. He would never let anyone down and occasionally he would even catch his fellow officers off-guard with an exceptional performance at a certain task. As a result, no promotion came too soon and none too late—Jack was rewarded when other people realized that he deserved it and that's the way he liked it. Of course, no one had ever known Jack Moriarty to do a nice thing for himself. He shied away from plotting or manipulating. He only asked for the same chance as the next guy and that was all.

During his older years, after he retired, my grandfather would complain to me once about a policeman who had joined the Stamford Police late in my grandfather's career. The officer quickly made friends throughout the department and rose swiftly through the ranks. Ultimately, the policeman's star record would win him the job of police chief in Providence. My grandfather insisted, however, that the man was not a cop, but a politician. He may have done all the right things, but not for the right reasons and that's what counted most to my grandfather. My grandfather saw no need to strategize over the best move for his career. He intended, rather, to simply do what he thought was right and let others do the judging. In this way, my grandfather loved opportunity, but despised the opportunist.

Jack no longer walked a beat once he became a full-time officer in 1949. It was becoming more common for officers to patrol Stamford's streets in the police department's growing number of cruisers. It could have been repetitive, mundane work. It wasn't. Week by week and year by year, Jack drove the streets of a city whose face began to change. More and more, Jack was getting lost on streets that he had once known by heart, but no longer looked like he had remembered them.

The changes came in pieces. One by one, the factories started closing down during the Fifties. In 1958, I-95 was opened for traffic and drove its path through the heart of Stamford. By the mid-'60s, the downtown area looked like a massive landfill, as old buildings and the immigrant slums were knocked down and the layout was redesigned in order to add millions of square feet of office space. Moreover, previously unused land was being developed in North Stamford with one and two acre zoning; homes were being built there for the wealthy who would either commute to New York or work in the new office buildings downtown.

Stamford had always been stratified, but now the stratification was complete. My grandfather could drive around town and hop from one universe to another: the West Side slum, the working class Cove, the commercial downtown, the well-to-do Shippan, and the ritzy North Stamford. These neighborhoods and more all had distinct and separate characters. Where else could such extremes be found, in such proximity to each other and within one set of city boundaries? How could a single police force be assigned the task of enforcing a sense of order upon these incongruent parts? Then again, Jack never saw any of it as less than a unified whole. It all made sense to him. He saw smooth surfaces where the jagged edges of these pieces met.

There were moments, of course, that exposed cracks in the cement that held Stamford together. On April 5th, 1968, the day after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., there was unrest in Stamford's predominantly black West Side neighborhood. Demonstrators were taking to the streets in large, rowdy crowds. As choruses of coordinated chants rang through the air, the imminent threat of total turmoil reverberated through the asphalt. One shot had rung out in Memphis and its ripples had reached all the way to Stamford and beyond.

Lieutenant John Moriarty stood before the crowd, hands on hips, directing the police presence in the West Side for the day. In his professional, knowing demeanor, which he sustained even under duress, he channeled his best understanding of how to deal with this problem. Order needed to be maintained, but Jack recognized that the people's voices should not be suffocated—a national event had sparked this local uproar and to restrict the demonstrators' rage would only fan the flames. So the lieutenant directed his officers to keep things under control, but to avoid becoming unnecessarily aggressive. The officers mostly watched from the outskirts of the crowd, letting the demonstration go on, but not allowing it to spread. The occasional crash of breaking glass from the window of a home or store front would send a couple officers running through the crowd in an attempt to apprehend the perpetrators.

One officer joked, “We should drive these folks downtown where all the buildings are knocked down”—Stamford’s downtown redevelopment project had just gotten under way. “They can lay into anything they want to down there. Everything’s already broken.”

A couple of officers laughed amidst the uproar.

The *new downtown*—when it came down to it, that’s what this was about, Jack knew. Who would have a stake in it? Would redevelopment save one and all or only some? Sure, King’s death had provided the spark for these riots, but what fueled them in Stamford, and perhaps elsewhere, were local circumstances, questions as of yet unanswered that echoed through the demonstrators’ chants. Many people had already debated publically the ramifications of redeveloping Stamford, but perhaps black voices hadn’t yet been heard. Now they would be. My grandfather, as a child, had heard the noises that rose at night from the streets of Dublin. Even if he would never have admitted it out loud, my grandfather could make the connection—he could always recognize the voice of the disenfranchised.

All in all, things never got too out of hand and Lt. Moriarty could go home that day knowing that he had done his job. It’s a careful understanding like his—on days like that—that holds a place as diverse and complex as Stamford together.

On a June morning in 1987, Stamford Police Chief John Considine summoned my grandfather to his office. This was nothing unusual. My grandfather had been serving as Deputy Chief for six years by then and met frequently with Chief Considine, but the Chief wore an uncharacteristically dour, puzzled look on his face that morning. It appeared that he didn’t know how to begin.

“Jack, I just got off the phone with the Stamford Law Department,” he said. “Really, it was one of the strangest calls I’ve had in a long time.” Considine shook his head in exasperation.

“Jack—they’re gonna try to force you to retire.”

In the mid-to-late eighties, Stamford was a city grappling with its identity. Did its big city exterior shield a small town’s heart? Or had Stamford already sold its small-town soul, trading it for economic survival at too high a price? The debate—over where the city stood and where it should go next—was real. Then-Mayor Thom Serrani told *The New York Times* in 1985 in an article titled “Stamford’s Boom Brings Problems” that Stamford’s government was lagging far behind the city’s economic revitalization and that changes needed to be made in order to assure the city’s long-term health. The City’s Finance Commissioner added, “Stamford is slowly coming around to a big-city mentality. But it is taking time for the city fathers and the city mothers to realize that now is the time to commit resources.” In the views of these city officials, Stamford simply did not have the government staff necessary to attempt to deal with all of the problems a burgeoning city of its size faces.

Chief Considine, in the same article, echoed some of the Mayor’s concerns, pointing out that at 267 officers, his Police Department had ten fewer officers than it did ten years before, not nearly enough by his judgment. But he also nodded to the populist

sentiment: “We’re trying to cling to the small town. Whether it’s the impossible dream or not, I don’t know.” The old-timers, like Considine and my grandfather and many of Stamford’s residents, held out hope that Stamford could somehow strike a balance between its old and new faces. They weren’t ready to streamline change if it meant that the city’s essence be risked in the process.

In times of such political strife, it would be extremely valuable for the mayor to have one of his own men inside the police department. Serrani felt the need to push someone out who was very near the top so that he could appoint someone else to the position himself. My grandfather, the Deputy Chief and 66 years old, was the obvious target. Serrani asked the Law Department to enact an ages-old provision, buried deep within the city’s original charter and never before applied, that required Stamford Police officers to retire at the age of 65. My grandfather was the key target, but there would also be collateral damage: five other officers over the age of 65 would be pushed out the door with him at a time when the department was already undermanned.

When Considine first shared the news of the city’s plans with his Deputy Chief, my grandfather was unable to speak because of the overwhelming rage that had ignited inside of him. He had not felt this way in a long time—vulnerable, under attack. He had emerged from such helplessness long ago and made a name for himself in this town. Now someone was trying to thrust him back into his darker days, strip him of all the honor and respect that he had rightfully earned.

He had to gather his thoughts. He could not speak. Something felt so wrong, but he could not speak. He took the news home to his family where he could vent. At the next Sunday dinner, he finally told them what happened and then the words flowed freely.

“Ronald Reagan is 76 years old!” he exclaimed. “If he can keep his job in the White House, I can certainly handle my job with the Stamford Police.”

Every one in the family knew what must be done.

“You have to fight it, Dad,” my father told him. “You have to fight it.”

“Oh, yes, I know that,” my grandfather nodded. “Yes, I know.”

The decision to fight finally gave eloquence to my grandfather’s heated thoughts. His feelings were summarized in the words he told *The New York Times* in article about his plight: “I like this job too much to quit. It’s a challenge, but I know that I can still handle it. I don’t like the idea of being told summarily that I have to get out. I’ll know when it’s time to go.”

My grandfather and the other officers resolved to fight the matter in court. Although Stamford’s police union only extended its membership to policemen below the rank of Lieutenant, my grandfather, in a show of loyalty, had never stopped paying his union dues in all the years since his promotion to Lieutenant in 1961. Thus, the union offered to finance the legal services for my grandfather and the five other officers involved.

A federal statute had recently been amended to prohibit involuntary retirement at any age, but that change in federal law would not come into effect until 1993. In their legal challenge, the policemen would have to rely on a Connecticut state law, the Bona Fide Occupational Qualification, which disallows age discrimination under almost all circumstances. The case of *John F. Moriarty, et al. vs. The City of Stamford* was settled by the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. The commission

ruled that the relevant statute in Stamford's charter, in fact, violated B.F.O.Q. and, hence, was overruled by state law. In turn, my grandfather and his fellow officers won the case and were granted the right to continue working.

Thus, my grandfather's career was saved by a legal technicality, but I can only hope that Mayor Serrani—and anyone else who was involved—learned a deeper lesson from the whole ordeal, that he had overshot his bounds when he tried to take down Chief Moriarty. Cities aren't born overnight, nor are their leaders. You can knock down one building and construct it anew. Rebuild a whole city if you wish, make its structures better if you can, but the people who carry a city through a time of change can never be replaced. They cannot be expended, but should be consulted and heeded. Stamford almost lost its chance to do so, but my grandfather, ever the loyal, resilient soldier, refused to turn away.

The court ruling left my grandfather free to continue his work until his personally chosen date of retirement. He served for seven more years until the age of 73. Upon his retirement on December 30, 1994, my grandfather became—and still remains—the only man to serve the Stamford Police Department for fifty years.

7

My father and I step out of St. John's Towers onto Tresser Boulevard in downtown Stamford. The apartment complex, three towers in all, stands over the ground where Dublin, the immigrant slum, was once located. Stretching some seventeen stories into the air, the towers make much more efficient use of space than the dilapidated shanties that were once strewn about this area decades before. The St. John's complex was the lone residential space to be built atop the ruins of the leveled immigrant slum. Everything else is now commercial space.

I have just finished interviewing my Aunt Mary, my grandfather's sister, in her sixth floor apartment. She has lived there since the building's opening in 1971. Her brother, Billy, lived there with her, too, until his death in 2003. Neither of them ever married. When Mary first called the housing authority in charge of filling the living units in the new tower in order to get her name on the list, the man on the other end of the line was appalled.

"Mary, you have to understand, this building isn't for people like you and me," he told her. The area once called Dublin used to be the appropriate home for the Irish and other non-Anglo European immigrants of Stamford—no longer. Now, it would serve as low-to-middle income housing for some of Stamford's new minorities: blacks and, later, Haitian and Hispanic immigrants. Mary paid no heed to his words. She moved in anyway.

During my interview, she recalled, with striking clarity and honesty, her childhood and the world my grandfather grew up in. She urged us to investigate.

"Go see where the house on Maple Avenue used to be," she told us. "Go see it."

I place the crate (It's a hamper, actually, full of photos and other mementos my great aunt has kept over the years—my father and I had offered to organize it for her and then return it.) in the trunk of my dad's Jeep and climb in. We turn left on Washington Boulevard and progress for a couple of hundred yards until we make a second left on South State Street. Now we are driving northeast beneath the overpass of I-95, tracing its route through the heart of Stamford. The train station passes us on our right and so does the rail yard and Canal St. and then Elm St. Standing on the street corners, under the overpass, are tens of immigrant laborers—many of them are certainly my great aunt's neighbors—waiting in vain for a painter or landscaper or construction worker to come and pick them up for a day's work. It's already one in the afternoon and it's just two days after Christmas; there will be no work today, but I can't blame them for trying.

After a mile or so, we cross completely under the overpass onto the west side of I-95 and merge right onto Route 1. Fifty yards ahead, we turn right onto Maple Avenue, heading east again, back towards the interstate. And there it is, I-95, visible immediately after the turn, surging over and through the middle of Maple Ave. My father slows the car to a ponderous roll as we approach the overpass. We both lean and peer from the

windows, straining for a glimpse of something—anything—unobvious in the scenery around us. Nothing appears.

"I guess that's where the house was," my father says as we both sit back in our seats and gaze yet at the massive concrete banister that supports the highway fifty feet above us. My father never stops the car completely because, in the end, there is nothing to see. He accelerates and we continue towards my grandmother's house.

Half a mile later, we sit at the intersection of Elm Street, Cove Road, and Shippan Avenue. Turn right onto Shippan and follow the road for a mile and you will reach Lanark Road and ALC, my old neighborhood crystallized so idyllically in my memory. We will not go down to ALC during this visit to Stamford. A two day stay here does not afford us the time to visit old friends when we already have such little time to celebrate Christmas with family whom we do not see often enough. Thus, during this visit at least, my childhood memories will not be further infringed upon by revisiting what, to me, are the fabled grounds of ALC.

The light stays red. To the left, one hundred feet back from the road, sits St. Mary's Church, the place of my grandfather's funeral nearly one year before, its elaborate gothic spires reaching towards the heavens, looming high above the East Side and the Cove. Were its presence not so familiar (it had been there since 1928), the church, in all of its transcendent architectural ambition, would seem out of place at this humble juncture, across the street from two run-of-the-mill shopping centers with large, busy parking lots. I have passed St. Mary's many times without a moment's notice, but now I wonder: what striving spirits gave birth to this colossal structure before me?

In the parking lot diagonally across to our right, customers shuffle back and forth between their cars and the automatic doors of Grade A supermarket. The light turns green. My father steps on the accelerator and we continue straight through the intersection, bypassing Shippan Avenue as Elm Street becomes Cove Road after the light. We are ascending the hill to the Cove. I keep looking at the Grade A as we pass, its large, yellow sign—wholesome, unthreatening, American.

The supermarket passes from sight. Short apartment buildings line the street now. Small shops sit on the corners with names in both English and Spanish or Middle Eastern languages. Most passersby wouldn't know that the Grade A began like one of these corner shops, started by the Cingaris, a family of Italian immigrants, as a small grocery store before blossoming into the supermarket it is today.

We continue up the hill. The landscape changes a bit. Some houses begin to appear, interspersed with the apartment buildings along the road. We reach the crest of the hill and Cove Road begins to spill down the other side. At the far bottom rests Cove Island Park and Long Island Sound. 973 Cove Road is perched upon this down-slope at the corner of Euclid Avenue. I take in the familiar sight of the house: the green chain-link fence, the white vinyl siding, the front porch with one door for the first floor and one door for the second. At last, a site that won't dodge my understanding. The snow has partially melted to reveal the plot of the rose garden that my grandmother still keeps every summer and the cherry tree, which still bears plentiful fruit each year, stands thirty feet tall above the house, keeping watch over the property. We turn right onto Euclid and park on the side of the street.

My father and I walk in through the side gate and climb the back steps to the house. Everyone is in the kitchen. My two younger brothers, Ryan and Connor, sit at the table, eating my grandmother's Christmas cookies. My mother sits at the counter, speaking to my grandmother and my grandmother stands behind the sink, scrubbing dishes because, even though her children compelled her to get a dishwasher installed some years earlier, she refuses to use it.

My mother has just asked her for the recipe for one of her kinds of cookies and my grandmother has written it down, but my mother hounds her still.

"Okay, Jean," she says with a laugh, "are you sure that the entire recipe is written down on this piece of paper? There is nothing else I need to know?"

My grandmother looks up from her dishes with the innocent eyes of a doe.

"Why, of course," she replies, faking ignorance.

My mother continues, "I just don't want to have to call you next week because the cookies I make don't come out right."

"Well, what ever do you mean?" my grandmother counters.

My mother is trying to avoid the elaborate ritual that borrowing a recipe from my grandmother normally becomes. First, you get the recipe. Then you cook the dish for the first time, but it never comes out completely right on that first try. Then you have to call up my grandmother and let her know that "it came out too dry" or "the bread never rose completely" or explain the specific problem that arose, whatever it may be. Only then, after you have tried and failed, will she divulge to you the crucial secret ingredient that she did not include in the recipe she gave you. Every single recipe in my grandmother's cookbooks is incomplete. In written form, as a matter of pride, craft, or whatever other reasons she keeps to herself, she always leaves something out. The complete map exists only in her mind.

"Jean, you know *exactly* what I mean," my mother comes back emphatically.

Now my grandmother pauses her scrubbing altogether. She is a deer in the headlights. She starts to say something, then lets out a small laugh. She looks to me across the kitchen and winks. I crack a smile. When my mother then starts to tell to the story about her disastrous first attempt at cooking my grandmother's roast pork dinner, my grandmother can't hold it back anymore. She's laughing out loud. Then we all are. We're damn near hysterical. We laugh for a full minute before we stop to catch our collective breath. My grandmother wipes her eyes as she steps out of the kitchen into the bathroom. She has avoided answering my mother's question.

I sense that I can never know it all. I stand from the table and glance out the kitchen window into the backyard. The garage I can historicize. It stands in the back left corner, although it was not there when my father was a kid. When my brothers and I played wiffle ball in the backyard, the roof of the garage would serve as an enormous right field fence, a green monster of sorts, to loft home runs onto. Without the garage there, my father, as a child, would simply use the hedges, which now run behind the garage, as a deeper, shorter fence.

My eyes shift to the conspicuous brick structure to the right of the garage. I hadn't really *looked* at it in years. It looks like a six-foot chimney with two counters of granite, waist-high, that sit before it. I remember now that someone once told me it was a grill. A grate would be laid across the top of the two counters and a fire burned on the ground

below to cook the food. The smoke would rise out of the short chimney. It occurs to me for the first time, however, that I have never seen or heard of its use and I don't know how or why it is there. I've never even seen anything like it in anyone else's yard before. I turn to ask my father about it.

"It's an old-fashioned kind of thing. We used to use it a lot when I was young. Gannies' father built that a short time before he died," my father says. "Actually, that's not really the one that he built. We had so many barbecues out there that the grill he built cracked and crumbled a bit. Grandaddy had already bought a gas grill by then, but he paid a mason to repair the brick one into its original state. I don't know if it has ever been used since."

"Oh," is all I replied. So the brick grill stands as a monument.

"That's kinda weird," chimes in Connor from the kitchen table. He has not heard much of Joe Rohacik before.

"Yeah, well Grandaddy never backed down from what he believed in—on issues big or small," my father responds. "He wanted it done, so he did it."

Then I could see him, seated in the armchair in the family room. Not old and tired as he was when he died, but youthful, strong, and sturdy. Forever haunted by a past he kept to himself, but encouraged and bolstered by the merits of his own deeds, he sits tall and proud in the chair. He is embossed with the quiet confidence of a man of faith, of a man who is his own man, the kind of confidence seen in action not in word and that commands only the highest respect.

I see, too, how that feeling started to falter within him during retirement. Without the work on a daily basis, the merits of his deeds became less tangible, all the more so in a city that wore a whole new look, but did not reveal how it had gotten it. My grandfather held these secrets close to his heart and feared privately that no one else would remember what had once been. A self-fulfilling prophecy. These tormenting thoughts left him stricken where he sat, propelling a precipitous decline. Even I was blinded for a time, but not any longer. I have discovered what I can and it feels like enough. I cling to it now in the face of one looming, final change.

I look to my feet on the kitchen floor and realize that my remaining visits to 973 Cove Road are finite. The house won't be in the family forever. It is old and impractical and the day will come when no one will need it. Indeed, the lot the house is built on is worth far more than the value of the house itself. Across the street from the front of the house, there used to be a small, independent gas station during my father's childhood. Now, a parking garage and a small apartment complex sit atop that lot. Whoever acquires my grandmother's property next will likely do so with the intention of acquiring the three adjacent lots and developing a similar apartment building there as well. 973 Cove Road will never look the same again.

That will only make it harder to see the truth that Stamford, today, stands on the legs of men like my grandfather, even long after the men themselves are gone. The evidence hides mostly beneath the surface and requires careful excavation to be revealed—tedious work rarely performed. At least for now, at 973 Cove Road, proof abounds for the trained eye to see. When, one day, the house goes the way of the rest of Stamford before it, reduced to dust by the forces of transformation and renewal only to be built upon again, I will carry forth the memory of what was, for I, like the city itself, find

a firm foundation to stand upon there. It is the starting point for me, the place I take root in. All else is a growth from this place. If within me, what once was *is*, then I will have followed a worthy course; this is the undeniable reduction of my identity with this place, an identity that I have now come to understand.

No matter where I go or what I do, whatever I become or cease to be, one thing about me will never change. I will always be a boy from the Cove.

Bibliographic Essay

Many people have asked me, over the course of this academic year, to tell them about the honors project I have been working on. I enjoyed those opportunities to talk about my work, but I often found myself struggling to offer people a neat summary of the writing I was doing. Judging by the quizzical glances I received from some of my listeners, I was not at all sure that I had granted any of them a clear idea of what my project was all about. First, I would tell them that I was working on a biography of my grandfather, but then I would qualify that statement, explaining that the history of Stamford would also be a crucial part of the piece.

"So your thesis will be a biography combined with a history of Stamford?" they would ask.

"Well, yes—to an extent," I would respond hesitatingly because I could never stop myself from explaining my work further. I would tell them that I used to live in Stamford myself and that I, too, would be involved in the piece that I was writing. Thus, my thesis would also include an autobiographical element. Lastly, I would explain that I did not wish to cover all of the bases on all three of these topics, but only wished to touch upon the relevant information in each of them that related to a very specific story that I wanted to tell. After running through this information several times during conversations with different people, I resolved to reduce my explanation to one snazzy, succinct sentence that could sum up all of my thoughts. This is what I came up with:

> I'm writing a piece that is part biography of my grandfather, part history of Stamford, and part autobiographical, but is by no means definitive on any of those counts.

Well—it didn't come off as snazzy as I had hoped. I still wasn't satisfied with what I was getting across to people, but, at long last, I at least had some sort of relieving epiphany about the matter: *You can't explain everything to them, Pat. If they want to know, they will have to read the piece once it's finished.*

So I came to peace with my inability to articulate the scope of my endeavor out loud and resolved to do my talking on the page. Nonetheless, I still needed a simpler message to relate to people when they asked about my thesis, so I explained my conundrum to my adviser, Professor O'Connell. His solution was as pure and simple as I could have hoped.

"Pat," he told me, "what you are working on is a *memoir*. When people ask, that's all that you have to tell them."

So that's what I was working on, a memoir. I suppose I had known it all along, but when you talk about a project you are working so closely on, it's very difficult to allow yourself to sum it up in just one word. Nonetheless, memoirs were the works that I consulted early on in my writing process to familiarize myself with the styles of the genre I would be writing in. *All Souls* by Michael Patrick MacDonald is a family memoir that, like mine, focuses on an Irish-American family. MacDonald's intertwining of his family's tragic story and the history of South Boston, moreover, was quite instructive in how I might try to both tell the story of my grandfather and narrate the history of the city of Stamford. I also read some of Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men,* a memoir that is

culturally quite distant from mine, but I credit her imagining of certain parts of her family's history with spurring me to imagine some things about my own family's history at points where the facts have been lost to time. I hope that, in learning from some of the works of authors who have come before me, I have been able to adopt a style and voice all my own.

Indeed, writing a family memoir may even necessitate this, considering the deeply personal nature of the content involved—the sources I drew most upon for the writing of this piece were my own memory and experience. This is the bedrock upon which the rest of the memoir was based. Of course, in order to narrate my grandfather's life and also the history of Stamford, my own memory would not be able to supply all of the facts I would need. Through a series of interviews with family members, I spoke to my grandmother, Jean Moriarty; my father, Terry Moriarty; my mother, Diane Moriarty; and my great aunt and grandfather's sister, Mary Moriarty. All of them provided invaluable facts and anecdotes about my grandfather's life that I could not have possibly learned otherwise. I thank them for the time that they so graciously afforded me.

For information regarding the history of Stamford and my grandfather's career with the Stamford Police, I consulted many times over the Stamford Historical Society, *The Stamford Advocate*, and *The New York Times*. This project certainly could not have been completed without the bountiful information stored within those sources. Also, I looked to Stud Terkel's *Hard Times*, specifically when writing about my grandfather's childhood, for oral histories from people who experienced the Depression firsthand. Reading the words of some people who lived through that era helped me, I hope, to more realistically recreate the environment that my grandfather grew up in.

Finally, I would like to thank my adviser on this project, Professor Barry O'Connell, for believing in me from the start and helping me see this piece through to fruition. It would not have been possible without him.