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A TALE OF TWO HARRYS

THERE were not one but two Harry Davenport mysteries in the extended Davenport family. Congressman Harry J. Davenport, my uncle, was at the center of a political and psychological mystery, and his uncle, Harry F. Davenport, was the victim of an unsolved murder decades ago. I had not thought about either Harry for many years when, in the spring of 1999, I visited McKeesport to mourn the death of an aunt in the Davenport family. A conversation with my cousins one evening goaded me into an impulsive—and probably futile, I told myself—search for information about the older Harry, the murder victim. Next morning, with extraordinary good luck, I found a crucial account of that murder and also stumbled on a lead that put me on the trail of the younger Harry.

Harry the former congressman had one older brother and four younger sisters, including my mother, Alyce, who died in 1991. Her sister Annamae, the last survivor of this generation of Davenports, died in April 1999 at the age of ninety-four. Two days before the funeral, Annamae's sons, Harry and Jake Osterman, and others of us in the next generation, gathered at Jake's home in White Oak, outside McKeesport, to reminisce about Annamae and her brothers and sisters.

The Davenports were a colorful gang. Edward, the oldest, went into politics in Los Angeles after an advertising career and was serving his second term on the Los Angeles City Council when he died in 1953. The two oldest girls, Kate and Julia, were twins. Kate, a hospital nurse with a wry wit, died in 1965. Julia became a Roman Catholic nun, Sister Catherine, who spent six years in China as a missionary in the 1930s and was evacuated only a step ahead of Japanese invaders in December 1941. She died in 1997, insisting to the last that she was a year younger than her twin. Annamae, brassy and bossy, had worked for many years as an office manager for various employers, including her brother Harry in the early 1940s. She knew she had only a few days to live when my sister visited her at a nursing home. "Hiya, Lynn," Annamae said. "I'm on my way out." The youngest Davenport, my mother, Alyce, had a bubbling comic sense like her sisters, but unlike them she had no desire to work outside the home and claimed to know nothing about business. She learned quickly enough when my father died suddenly, leaving her with two children and a hotel deeply in debt.

And there was poor Uncle Harry, who had died alone in a place where none of us had ever been. As always, various theories about his decline were offered. He drank too much, or he ran afoul of David Lawrence, former mayor of Pittsburgh and Democratic Party boss in western Pennsylvania. As always we came to no conclusion. Harry was a mystery and would remain so, it seemed.

One of my cousins mentioned the other Harry Davenport, a ghost from decades ago. We had heard stories that he was a policeman in the nearby town of Wilmerding and that he had been murdered by a gang of bootleggers, probably in the 1920s. Was this merely a legend, or was it historical truth? We didn't know. Our family had not kept newspaper clippings and had lost touch with the older Harry's immediate family. We knew only that this Harry was the brother of our grandfather, John W. Davenport. It seemed absurd that we knew so little about our great-uncle who had come to such a mysterious death.

Next day, with a cold wintry rain beating down on my car, I drove to Wilmerding. Although it is located only a few miles from White Oak, getting there, as with so many small towns in the hills of western Pennsylvania, poses a challenge to outsiders. I had not visited Wilmerding in some years, and I had to feel my way, negotiating a series of hills, edging ever closer, until finally I happened onto a vaguely familiar back road that

plunged down the north side of a ridge, landing me at the bottom in placid little Wilmerding. Surrounded by hills and bluffs rising to three or four hundred feet above the valley floor, the town straddles Turtle Creek. A shallow, muddy stream contained by concrete flood walls, Turtle Creek curls down the valley and empties into the Monongahela River at Braddock. Wilmerding was one of scores of small industrial towns that sprang up in the late nineteenth century either on the banks of Pittsburgh's rivers—the Monongahela, Allegheny, and Ohio—or in the hollows and valleys formed by their tributaries. Together, these towns and their factories formed a vast, interlocking system of mining and manufacture of steel and metal products that boosted America into the second phase of its industrial revolution. By 1999, industry had abandoned most of the towns, leaving only hulking structural remains, pensioners who once worked the factories and mills, and growing welfare loads.

I was fascinated anew by this remote valley, so far removed in space and time from the new, Internet-driven economy. I had the fanciful notion that if there existed parallel valleys roughly on the order of parallel universes, the Turtle Creek Valley would be such a place, eternally invisible to people in the widely known Monongahela Valley, whose banks were crowded, mile upon mile, with steel mills and furnaces constituting at one time the world's greatest concentration of heavy industry. While the Monongahela Valley received all the acclaim of industrial enthusiasts (and the contempt of Rust Belt haters), on the other side of the first ridge to the north, the Turtle Creek Valley remained hidden amidst towering hills, largely unknown and certainly unvisited by all except its residents. Yet a remarkable industrial system developed along this small stream, a system that was to electrical equipment and railroad braking systems as the Monongahela was to raw steel. In a sense the Turtle Creek Valley was the Silicon Valley of its time.

One man was responsible for this development: George Westinghouse, the prolific inventor and industrialist. In 1887, this valley was a long narrow strip of marshy, partly farmed land with tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad running up the middle. That year, Westinghouse bought five hundred acres along Turtle Creek, reaching from the present site of Wilmerding to East Pittsburgh, a few miles downstream. In 1889–1890, he raised a factory to produce his patented railroad air brakes and built the town of Wilmerding for the employees of Westinghouse Air Brake Company (WABCO). A few years later, Westinghouse

built a plant in East Pittsburgh to manufacture electrical equipment for another of his many firms, Westinghouse Electric Company. By the turn of the century, this hidden valley had become a great manufacturing center with a population of many thousands in a half-dozen towns lining the creek. Radical politics would find fertile breeding ground here in factories, union halls, and ethnic fraternal lodges.[1]

In April 1999, the air-brake plant consisted of several old factory buildings on the south side of the creek. WABCO had vanished in the economic maelstrom that felled many old-line industrial companies in the Pittsburgh area in the 1980s. A new company now operated the plant with a workforce of about two hundred, compared with seven thousand during WABCO's best years. Wilmerding had lost half its population, shrinking to about twenty-two hundred residents. But it was exceptionally clean and neat, displaying none of the rot and abandonment that marked the deindustrialization of so many other mill towns in the nearby river valleys.

I hoped to find information about the Davenport murder at the George Westinghouse Museum, located in the company's former headquarters building. This is a striking old brick-and-stone structure that sits at the top of a sloping, parklike greensward in the middle of town. Built as a community center, reflecting George Westinghouse's visionary, if paternalistic, social philosophy, the four-story building originally contained a library, restaurant, swimming pool, bowling alley, and meeting rooms. After much of the building was destroyed by fire, Westinghouse converted it into WABCO's general offices. Townspeople have always called it the Castle because of its imposing facade, including gabled roofs and a five-story corner tower with synchronized clocks facing in four directions.

The Castle was a marvelous artifact of turn-of-the-century industrial America. Visitors could wander through wide corridors and gaze into spacious offices still furnished with rolltop desks from early in the century. The museum, I found, was devoted primarily to Westinghouse himself, displaying examples of his inventive genius. All worthy exhibits for a museum goer, but of no help to me in my quest for news of a murder. Disappointed, I started to walk out the door. At the last moment, I caught sight of a framed newspaper article hanging on a wall behind a life-size manikin of a woman in an 1890s ball gown. I squeezed behind the manikin and began reading an article headlined "In Memoriam."

It was a clipping from the *WABCO News*, a company newspaper, mourning the loss of the company's chief watchman—and his name

leaped out at me—Harry F. Davenport. He was murdered by unknown assailants on the night of December 12, 1926. By a stroke of luck, I had found my man. (The *WABCO News* piece is not dated by year, but it contains clues that later enabled me to find newspaper stories with additional details, confirming the year as 1926.) According to the company paper, Davenport settled in Wilmerding in 1892, became a policeman, and rose to chief of police. In 1914, WABCO hired him as chief watchman, but he continued to serve as a borough constable. It was in this capacity, the piece says, that he "had incurred the enmity and ill will of a gang of boot-leggers on account of his activity in enforcing the Prohibition law." On the night of his death, he was ambushed on a dark street while walking home from the plant. Witnesses said a car pulled alongside Davenport, and a shotgun blast knocked him down. Two men jumped out of the car, struggled briefly with the wounded man, then shot him in the chest. The car raced away before anybody could identify it or the men. Davenport's wife Katherine testified before a coroner's hearing that she heard shots, ran to the door and "saw the slayers speed away." Her husband was fifty-eight. A gang of racketeers headed by the Volpe family of Wilmerding, well known in western Pennsylvania, was widely suspected to be behind the murder. Despite a countywide investigation, no indictments were ever brought.[2]

After making arrangements to obtain a copy of the article, I strolled along a first-floor corridor and came to an office door with the words UE Local 610 painted on the window. I felt another breeze from the past. Once upon a time UE was one of the best-known acronyms in industrial America, standing for United Electrical, Radio and Machine Shop Workers of America. (The union's official name was rarely used, or even known to the members, and the union was universally known as the UE.) In the late 1940s, the union represented more than four hundred thousand workers at General Electric (GE), Westinghouse Electric, Sylvania, and many other corporations. WABCO workers belonged to UE Local 610, and the business agent of the local in the 1960s, I recalled, was a man named Tom Quinn. With quickening excitement, I also recalled that Quinn had known my Uncle Harry and once gave me a provocative lead about his political fate that I never pursued. With Davenports much on my mind, I felt an urgent need to locate Quinn—if he was still alive—and follow up on that conversation.[3]

A woman in the Local 610 office tried to be helpful, but of course she did not know Quinn, who had left the union nearly thirty years before. I

began to think my luck had run out. She offered to call the UE national office in Pittsburgh, and rather quickly came up with an address and phone number. Quinn had retired and moved to Pompano Beach, Florida.

Diverted by other projects, I finally wrote to Quinn in December 1999, reminding him who I was and asking if he would repeat in more detail what he had told me about Uncle Harry in the sixties. Within days I received his reply, a six-page, hand-printed letter on tablet paper. Its short, pithy sentences mirrored the directness of Quinn's answers and—I would soon see—of Quinn himself. It was true, he wrote, that Harry was, in a sense, caught in the middle of a battle between the UE and its anti-Communist foes. But there was much more to the story, including a confrontation between Quinn and Harry, related in such understated terms that I could barely restrain my desire to know more.

I would need to interview Quinn at length. But his wife, Irene, was very ill. We finally arranged a meeting in April 2000 at the home of Quinn's son Ronald in the Pittsburgh suburb of Forest Hills.

To motorists passing through, Forest Hills appears to exist only as a pathway to other places. It has no mills or smokestacks, and its dominant physical feature is a divided, four-lane highway that splits the town in half. This is U.S. Route 30, the old transcontinental Lincoln Highway, known locally as Ardmore Boulevard. Lying just east of Pittsburgh, Forest Hills has indeed been a place passed through for more than two hundred years, first by an English army during the French and Indian War on a road hacked through the wilderness and much later by great armies of workers riding streetcars on Ardmore Boulevard to and from factories in the Turtle Creek Valley. At the east end of Forest Hills, one trolley line dipped down a steep incline to drop off workers at the Westinghouse Electric plant in East Pittsburgh, where Tom Quinn emerged as a union leader in the 1940s. Large numbers of Westinghouse employees, including many white-collar office workers and foremen, once lived in comfortable brick homes hidden in wooded ravines and hills on both sides of Ardmore Boulevard. The borough also lay at the geographical center of Harry Davenport's congressional district in 1948–1950.

I made my way from noisy Route 30 to Ron Quinn's home in a quiet, leafy neighborhood. Tom Quinn was standing on the front porch as I drove up. I had last seen him fifteen years earlier at a labor-history con-

ference. He was now eighty-three years old, still slim as I remembered him, but with shoulders slightly bent. As a younger man he had stood about five-eight, not large by any measure. But he had had a wiry, agile, ready-for-anything look. A tilt to his body gave the impression of independence, of a cocky loner, sure of himself, an orphan boy who shouldered his way into a world often closed to orphans and made his own place in it. He had what I thought of as a quintessential Irish face, with pointed nose and protuberant cheekbones.

Tom had had a rough time in recent months. Irene, his wife of more than sixty years, contracted cancer while they were living in Florida. The Quinns' three sons, all Pittsburgh-area residents, brought their parents back to Pittsburgh and placed Irene in a nursing home. Quinn suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized for a month. Strong-minded and resilient, Tom recovered sufficiently to leave the hospital and move in with Ron.

Knowing that I wanted to talk to his father, Ron had invited me to dinner. Another of Quinn's sons, Stephen, also was present. The Quinn brothers, I came to understand, had grown up in a close-knit family and were intent on protecting their father from any harm. Ron, fifty-eight, headed the Bureau of Employment and Training of Allegheny County. He also was a professionally trained bassoonist who played frequently with small orchestras. His living room bookcases were stuffed with books on art and art history. Steve, fifty-four, was a history professor at a local college. The oldest brother, Charles ("Chuck"), was principal of education at a state prison in western Pennsylvania.

We talked for two hours over dinner and dessert. When I switched on a tape recorder, Quinn responded to questions directly and simply, without exaggeration or rhetoric. The illness had left him feeling weak, but his extraordinary memory enabled him to recall events of fifty to sixty years ago in considerable detail. During one of my interviews with him in the 1960s, Quinn had told me that the UE helped elect Harry Davenport to Congress in 1948 and turned against him in 1950. I assumed this was merely a case of a union punishing a politician for casting a few wrong votes. I was wrong about that. I was also wrong in assuming that Quinn knew Harry only as a political acquaintance. I changed my mind when Quinn asked a question that startled me. Talking about Harry's congressional campaign in 1948, Quinn said, "He was very progressive, and we had high hopes for him . . ." He paused and asked, "Did he have a sister

who was a nun?" Yes, I said, mentioning her name, Sister Catherine. Quinn nodded. "I thought I recalled that. Harry and I, you know, we became pretty good friends. We'd go out night after night around the clubs and bars to campaign. You'd go into the bar and buy everybody a drink, set them up. Harry did more than buy one. He had a few himself. Some nights I had to push him up the stairs to get him to his apartment. But I liked him. We had a real opportunity to have a damned good congressman from the Twenty-ninth District."

If Tom had retained the memory of Harry's sister for more than a half century, I thought, the two men must have been more than political allies who shook hands once or twice. They appeared to have been friends, and my uncle might have betrayed that friendship for political reasons. It was not nice to contemplate, but I pressed on.

Quinn had many other memories about the persecution of Communists and non-Communists alike in the 1940s and early 1950s. He told of friends who spiraled down hill after losing their jobs; informers who were acclaimed as heroes for accusing people, only to be discredited later as liars; FBI agents monitoring his (Quinn's) activities year after year; Father Rice and his machinations; newspaper sensationalism; and the steadfastness of his wife and sons, who put up with threats and harassing phone calls without complaint.

By the time I left Ron Quinn's home, I had decided to continue my search for the elusive Harry Davenport. Tom Quinn had provided pieces of evidence that needed to be verified and augmented by other details about the man and his times. Over the next few years I interviewed Quinn many times. Most other participants in those events had long since died, but I talked to a few who remained, including Monsignor Rice. I also read oral histories and old newspaper accounts and found much useful material in the UE Archives at the University of Pittsburgh's Archives Service Center. The National Archives in Washington provided access to HUAC records.

As the fruits of this research began to accumulate, I decided to construct a story. The very act of writing a story, I thought, would put the material in perspective and yield insights that otherwise would remain buried under the surface of events. I wanted to know what Uncle Harry did and why he did it. Quinn had told me that he first met my uncle in the spring or summer of 1948 during Harry's campaign for Congress. Since that year also happened to be an important one in my own life, it provided an excellent borehole to the past.

McKeesport in the summer of 1948: sultry heat, the hollow clang of pipe banging against pipe at the National Tube Works, men streaming to and from the mill gates three times a day, soot raining down, sidewalks often blanketed with glittering specks of graphite deposited during a volcanic "slip" in a blast furnace. It was a busy time. A series of industrial strikes had disrupted life in the Monongahela and Turtle Creek valleys for two years after World War II. But with labor peace more or less restored, the factory towns had settled into a plodding routine of producing more and more steel and electrical equipment for the surging postwar economy. Nationally, Harry S. Truman was running for reelection, and in Pittsburgh, a dozen miles downriver from McKeesport, Harry Davenport was making his second bid for a seat in Congress.

I did not see much of my uncle that summer because of family circumstances. I had finished high school in the spring and would go away to college in the fall. I was excited but apprehensive about a future bristling with menace. With World War II only three years past, the United States and its allies were siding against the Soviet Union in a new conflict called the Cold War. Great armies were massed and poised to strike from either side of an artificial line dividing Western and Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, America, England, and France were airlifting food, fuel, and medical supplies into West Berlin, which stood isolated behind a Soviet blockade. On any given day, war seemed imminent. In the United States, HUAC was accusing Alger Hiss, a former state department official, of spying for the Soviets. It was said that Russia soon would produce its first atomic bomb, with bomb-making secrets provided by agents in the United States. In retrospect, this political environment seems mild in comparison with the threats posed today by nuclear and biological terrorism, the AIDS epidemic, global warming, and human reproductive cloning. But it was all we had at the time, and it seemed darkly ominous to a seventeen-year-old boy.

On the other hand, the future for me and our family seemed promising. My father was entering a new line of business. His beer distributorship, buoyed by wartime wages, had done very well, but Dad craved the challenge of planning and building something new. In 1948 he bought the old Clinton Hotel, a six-story building on Fifth Avenue in the middle of the business district and two blocks from the Tube Works. McKeesport was booming in those early postwar days, when American steel had few competitors around the world. With construction crews

and businesspeople crowding into town, Dad foresaw the need for more hotel space. That summer I pitched in as a carpenter's helper and painter's apprentice as Dad renovated the old Clinton from top to bottom and renamed it the McKeesporter Hotel.

The McKeesporter would become a haven for Uncle Harry at a difficult time, and I would come to know him better then. But in 1948 I perceived him only as a remote figure moving on the periphery of my immediate family. I had no informed opinion on his congressional campaign or his politics, though of course I knew he would be good for the country because he was my mother's brother. But I did not make personal plans based on Uncle Harry's election—aside, that is, from thinking vaguely about securing an appointment to Annapolis. Never mind that I was not a football star and that I lacked a quarter of an inch in height to qualify for education as a future Admiral Farragut. Congressman Davenport's influence, I may have thought, would somehow boost me over that shortfall.

I had been aware of Uncle Harry from the time that I was about nine or ten, when he would show up at Davenport family reunions, blowing in from some distant place, usually alone. He was not married then and shared an apartment in Pittsburgh with his mother, my grandmother, a widow for many years. In the early forties, Harry served as executive secretary of a chamber of commerce in the East Liberty section of Pittsburgh and also published a weekly shopper's guide called the *East Liberty Shopping News*. Before that he had worked in several cities as a retail advertising man and along the way had picked up a broad knowledge of politics, culture, and business as well as a large store of anecdotes from which he drew in relating explosively funny stories. When he felt like being charming, wit and humor seemed to burst from every pore. But just as often he radiated a moody darkness that concealed inner churnings of unknown magnitude. In his late thirties, Harry stood about five feet nine or ten inches and had thinning black hair and a thick chest. He looked impressive in a double-breasted business suit and walked about—glided, really—with all the dignity, grace, and certainty (already) of a powerful politician, as if he were chairman of a Senate committee.

My mother, father, sister, and I visited Harry and Grandmother every now and then on Marchand Street in Shadyside, right around the corner from Sacred Heart Church and adjacent to East Liberty. They had a capacious second-floor apartment with a large dining room and living room

and a front sunroom with three windows set side by side. I would stand at the windows, gazing down on a vacant street. I remember those visits with some particularity because time seemed to stand still in that neighborhood of large homes and apartment houses and few children. When I went outside, there was nothing to do except kick the curb and stare back up at the windows in the sunroom. When Uncle Harry was home, he would bustle about in a starched white shirt and tie, talking on the phone or working at a desk in the corner of the dining room. His shopping-news layouts would be spread over the dining room table, and he would occasionally pause at the table and with quick, sure hands shift a few mocked-up ads from one place to another. He gave the impression of being much in demand and always on the move. When Mother and Grandmother took us on a tour of stores in East Liberty's prosperous shopping district, Uncle Harry's handiwork, the *Shopping News*, would be everywhere—in shoppers' hands, at street-corner kiosks, lying discarded on the sidewalk.

When Harry ran for Congress on the Democratic ticket in 1948, some of the Davenport in-laws were not happy with his liberal political views. My parents contributed to his campaign, though more out of familial ties than political passion. Mother was apolitical most of her life, except in 1952 when she voted for Eisenhower, believing that he would keep me out of combat in Korea. Dad and his father both had been Democrats at least since the early 1920s, in part because the Democratic Party supported repeal of Prohibition, an action devoutly desired by Granddad, who had made a good living in the wholesale beer and liquor business. They also gravitated naturally toward the party that espoused the cause of the common man, even though it did more espousing than accomplishing. Dad rarely talked about politics, but he had enthusiastically supported Franklin D. Roosevelt, probably because FDR, like Dad, did not sit around waiting for supply and demand to come back into balance when business slumped. Uncle Harry's liberal convictions comported with Dad's belief that every man (if not yet every woman) deserved an equal chance.

We were too busy at the hotel that summer to become involved in Uncle Harry's campaign. But one evening my dad took us to a Davenport for Congress rally at a meeting hall somewhere in Pittsburgh. Several dozen people were milling around. The men drank beer from a half barrel contributed by my father. We sat on wooden folding chairs and lis-

tened to the speeches. I remember that my uncle salted his speech with an Irish accent for the benefit of the Irish Americans in the audience. I thought he laid it on a bit thick. But then he was a politician. For years after that, politics to me meant laying on the brogue. I have no recollection of what issues Harry talked about, what promises he might have made or equivocated on. Politics held no interest for me at that age. Too young to vote, I was absorbed in heroic thoughts of sports and romantic notions about girls. That year's presidential campaign also confused me. President Truman was running against Republican Thomas E. Dewey and a third-party candidate, Henry Wallace. There was much muddled talk, as far as I was concerned, about the Cold War, Communist spies, the atomic bomb, and labor unions.

Tom Quinn was probably at this meeting, and very likely my gaze lit on him, then quickly passed on, as it wandered over the hall in search of girls. After renewing our acquaintance in 2000, I mentioned this meeting a couple of times. Based on the scanty evidence I offered, Quinn could not recall the specific event but said he attended most of Harry's rallies in 1948. As legislative chairman of the UE local at Westinghouse's East Pittsburgh plant, he organized voter support for UE-backed candidates. The union was pushing Davenport in particular because his victory in a Republican district would help swing control of the House of Representatives back to the Democrats after major losses in 1946.

In a sense, then, I was present at or near the beginning of Harry and Tom's political relationship and personal friendship, which, as it turned out, would be one of the few keys that might unlock the secret of Harry Davenport. Fifty years later, when Quinn told me his story, a remarkable one in its own right, I came closer to understanding how he and Uncle Harry became friends and how their friendship fell victim to a crisis in both of their lives.

Tom Quinn was born on August 10, 1917, in Pittsburgh. Within a year his mother, Lillian, and probably his father were swept away in the great flu epidemic of 1918. Tom never knew his father's name and, years later, failed to find a trace of him in the chaos of the birth and death records for 1918. As a young boy, Tom knew only that he had no father and that the woman he knew as his mother, a widow named Adelia, was a tall, robust, hard-working woman who had immigrated from Ireland. After her husband died, she operated boardinghouses of the kind that were common in working-class neighborhoods, offering tiny rooms or

dormitory beds to single men who worked in factories or on construction jobs. Tom remembered in particular a big frame house on Wylie Avenue in the lower part of Pittsburgh's Hill District, a large immigrant neighborhood that sprawled across a hill just behind the city's business district.

The seven or eight boarders who lived in Adelia's house were mostly migrant construction men lured to Pittsburgh by work on new skyscraper headquarters buildings for major corporations. Young Tom performed many chores, such as shopping for vegetables and fetching chewing tobacco and White Mule moonshine from Adelia's larder when the boarders requested either. They were tough, weather-beaten men who wore soft caps and overalls with shoulder straps and carried their own tools. Tom liked to listen to them talk about their work. They seemed giantlike and heroic, and they treated him protectively. It was not the same as having a father. There was no towering father figure in his young life. But Adelia gave him love and made sure he received a good education, enrolling him in a Catholic grade school. In the 1920s, parochial schools generally were superior to public schools, and Tom's report cards usually had solid columns of A's.

This life came to a sudden end in early 1929. Adelia suffered a severe heart attack one night and died before morning. She had not yet turned fifty, and Tom was only eleven. Adelia had had the foresight to name her physician as Tom's guardian. He sent Tom to live with one of Adelia's sisters, Mary Layton, in Youngstown, Ohio, some sixty miles northwest of Pittsburgh. Mary, probably already in her sixties, also was a widow. She had six daughters, five already grown and married, and one son, and she worked nights as a cleaning woman in the offices of a utility. Mary had not had an easy life, but she was willing to give Tom a home. The sale of Adelia's boarding house had brought in a little money, which helped Mary care for Tom.

Sometime after he arrived in Youngstown, Tom learned a startling truth about his "mother," Adelia. She was really his grandmother, who had taken him in after his real mother died, Mary told him. Mary did not make this disclosure out of malice; she thought the boy was old enough to know the truth. Tom remembered being shocked, but the revelation did not change his feelings for Adelia. He still thought of her as Mother, who had done her best for him.

When Quinn told me this story in the summer of 2000, in one of my extensive interviews with him, seventy years had passed since his boyhood. He had had an eventful, sometimes stormy, life starting at a very

early age. Yet he dredged up memories of tough times with equanimity rather than bitterness. Gazing levelly at me as we sat on the front porch of his son's home in Forest Hills, Quinn described each experience in simple, understated terms. When I suggested that he might have had an extraordinary amount of bad luck early in life, he shrugged. In this shrug I saw that he had long since crossed that hurdle and had no need to jump more. Later, when I read his words as I transcribed them from my tape recorder, it occurred to me that Quinn learned at a very young age to take a skeptical view of life as it presented itself to him. Very little was as it seemed, and one must question conventional beliefs about religion, politics, or anything else.

In Youngstown, Tom finished sixth grade at a Catholic school, served as an altar boy, and sang in a church choir. Impressed with his abilities, the nuns skipped him over seventh grade. After Tom completed eighth grade, Mary dipped into Adelia's small inheritance to pay tuition at Ursuline Academy, where he finished two years of high school. In the Layton home, he formed a close friendship with Mary's son, Charles, who, though only in his twenties, had already seen much of the United States. He had hopped freights and traveled to California, where he worked as a fruit picker. Tiring of this, he rode the rails back to Youngstown and found a job in a steel mill. Shortly after Tom arrived, Charles was laid off at the mill and came home to live with his mother. In the early 1930s, times were getting hard. Charles could not find steady work and began selling appliances door to door. With time to spare, he took an interest in Tom, talking to him, taking him to the library, encouraging him to read. Charles himself had developed a love of literature, especially works that illuminated the social condition. He introduced Tom to the novels of H. G. Wells and John Galsworthy and to the plays of George Bernard Shaw and Eugene O'Neill. Charles professed to be a Socialist and said the country had to find a new way; capitalism was not working.

"He [Charles] had quite a bit of influence on my life, even though I only lived with him for a short amount of time," Quinn would say of Charles many years later in an interview with historian Ronald Schatz. "I don't know that he was a union activist, but he was kind of a free spirit. He had a pretty good idea of what kind of society we live in. He talked about the lousy conditions in the mills, and he said we have to do something about these conditions. But everybody was talking about that at that point. The jobs just disappeared. Guys were out there scrounging

around. I remember, about every three months he [Charles] was selling something different, vacuum sweepers, telephones, selling stuff."[4]

Under Charles's influence, Tom was drawn to books, especially social-protest literature. Dissatisfied with the reading assigned in school, he would play hooky some mornings and go to the public library to read more of Shaw. But this life was nearing an end. With family income dwindling and Tom's small inheritance exhausted, Mary Layton could no longer provide a home for him. She reluctantly appealed to Tom's guardian, and it was decided to transfer him to a Catholic orphanage in Pittsburgh, St. Joseph's Protectory. Charles argued against the move, and Mary cried and wrung her hands. Tom did not want to go to an orphanage, but he understood why it had to be so. Nonetheless, it was the third major separation of his young life. It could have embittered him or made him feel unloved, but he did not remember it that way. "Looking back, I'd say I was pretty fortunate," he told me in 2000. "There were always people there to help me. I was never hungry. I dressed well . . . got a good education." His great-aunt, he felt, had been more than kind to give him a home in the first place.

After moving to Pittsburgh, he heard occasionally from the Laytons in Youngstown. But Tom never saw Charles again—until his funeral. This occurred in 1933 or 1934. Charles committed suicide. "He never got a real job again," Quinn recalled. "His situation became intolerable, and he started drinking. He drank some terrible poison that ate him up inside. I went there for the funeral. It sure was heartbreaking."

St. Joseph's Protectory, located in Pittsburgh's Hill District not far from Adelia's boardinghouse on Wylie Avenue, was home to sixty-five or seventy boys, mostly orphans, ranging in age from about seven to twenty. The priests who ran the home were not Dickensian ogres who mistreated their innocent charges. The boys were not put to hard labor or abused in any way. There was, however, a price to pay for being an orphan, an intellectual price. Tom enjoyed learning and wanted to finish high school. But St. Joseph's could afford to pay tuition for only one or two boys each year at Pittsburgh's Central Catholic High School. Tom was not one of those chosen; he was enrolled instead in a welding course at the Connelley Trade School in the Hill District. His academic education came to an abrupt halt.

Even as he told me this story seventy years later, I could sense how deeply the loss had affected him. To be cut off from books and book

learning went beyond the normal punishment that indifferent society metes out to orphans. Rationally, Quinn knew that no one intended harm in denying him an academic education; emotionally, he never forgot it.

At St. Joseph's, Tom and several other older boys were housed in a separate building where they supervised themselves. They prepared meals and ate together and formed baseball and basketball teams. Quinn became a leader on both teams, even arranging game schedules and buying equipment. Then and later in life, when something needed doing, Quinn would step in and do it.

When I first visited the Hill District a few years before the urban riots of 1968, it had become almost entirely a black community, seething with anger—justifiably, I thought, even as I nervously threaded my way through groups of sullen men on street corners. Tom Quinn spent most of his early years in the Hill during the 1920s and 1930s, when it was the most colorful, exciting neighborhood in Pittsburgh. Since early in the century the Hill had attracted the poorest of newcomers from many ethnic groups, including the Irish, Jews, Italians, Germans, Syrians, and especially African Americans. Cheap tenement housing and warrens of hovels and tiny homes proliferated on the hillside overlooking Pittsburgh's Point, where the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers join to form the Ohio. By the 1920s, a growing black population dominated the Hill's culture and politics. To the degree that a black middle class and black institutions existed in Pittsburgh, they were centered in the Hill District, Homewood, and a few smaller neighborhoods. The Hill was a paradoxical community where people depended on their churches and religious networks for moral and spiritual guidance and at the same time supported a widespread numbers racket led by chiefs who, at least in legend, were Robin Hood–like characters. Jazz music blared from speakeasies and notable nightspots such as the Crawford Grill, and musicians such as Duke Ellington often performed in Hill establishments. Baseball enthusiasts crowded into the home fields of the Homestead Grays and Pittsburgh Crawfords, great Negro League baseball teams. Whites and blacks lived in peace in the Hill during those years, partly because most were poor and were recent immigrants from Europe and migrants from the American South.[5]

Quinn enjoyed this diversity as he grew to manhood, and he learned much about the bleakness forced on many people by poverty and discrimination and about the fortitude needed to surmount these circumstances. He also developed a strong sense of self. Growing up without a father and mother making decisions, leading him along one path or another, Tom began to think for himself. However well he was treated by relatives and others who cared for him, he essentially was alone in life. He had to be responsible for himself.

Tom's grandmother had brought him up as a Catholic, and he had attended Catholic church with his relatives in Youngstown. At the same time his cousin Charles, who had quit the Church as a young man, was introducing Tom to literature and to rudimentary socialist concepts that scoffed at both capitalism and religion. By the time he arrived at St. Joseph's, Tom had decided that religion had not helped him much in the past and would not in the future. At the age of fifteen or sixteen he began skipping Sunday Mass at the Protectory. One Sunday a priest found him holed up with a book in the boiler room during Mass. The priest lectured him and told him to go to the chapel and pray to his mother. "I went to the chapel," Quinn said in 2000, "but I didn't have any feeling about the efficacy of prayer. Part of it was my cousin's influence. I didn't see the value of going to church. It may be that I saw all this misery [during the Depression] and wondered, what value is religion. I don't know. I just came to this conclusion." He became an atheist.

Turning eighteen in 1935, Quinn was placed in a work-school cooperative program, alternating two weeks of work with two weeks of schooling, at a small factory in the Pittsburgh suburb of Sharpsburg. In theory, a co-op program enabled a student to earn money while learning on the job, and the employer gained a low-wage apprentice who might become a valuable skilled worker. In practice, employers tended to exploit student-workers, demanding the equivalent of a full day's work for a half day's wage. With the streets full of unemployed men and boys, many employers felt entitled by the law of supply and demand to operate with cheap labor. But Quinn refused to be exploited. Thus came his first run-in with management.

He had been hired by the Sharpsburg firm as a welder at twenty-five cents an hour. When he demonstrated his proficiency, the company gave him a ten-cent raise and assigned him to a full-time work schedule.

Quinn said he would gladly work forty hours a week if management would pay him the regular welder's rate of eighty-five cents an hour. His boss did not like this attitude. There were plenty of other Connelley boys willing to take Tom's place. Quinn refused to back down because "what they were trying to do wasn't right." The situation reinforced Quinn's growing awareness that he was on his own. He still lived at the Protectory, but the priests were busy with younger boys. Connelley School administrators said they were powerless; Tom would have to abide by the employer's policy. He still refused. He was fired.

He was not alone. Everywhere he went around Pittsburgh he saw out-of-work men and boys, some standing in long lines to apply for a job, some wandering the streets in ragged clothing. When he got together with other young men, they usually talked about who was hiring and what they paid and what the conditions were like—not that you could change conditions. Finally, Tom heard that Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation (J&L) was hiring at its huge plant in Aliquippa, some fifteen miles down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh. In January 1937, Tom and a friend from the Protectory moved a few belongings into a cheap room at an Aliquippa boardinghouse and went to work in the steel mill. Not for the last time, Quinn would be caught up in a historic event.