

MOBILITY

by Harry Zirkelbach 02-02-2011

AS A YOUNGSTER OUR FAMILY MOVED THREE TIMES
IN THE FIRST TEN YEARS OUR PARENTS WERE MARRIED.

AT THE SECOND HOUSE MY SISTER AND I BEGAN SCHOOL. GRADUALLY WE
LEARNED THAT CLASSMATES, OF OUR DIFFERENT GRADES, HAD ALL BEEN
BORN IN THAT TOWN,
AND THEIR FAMILIES NEVER HAD BEEN FAR FROM THAT CITY.

AT SCHOOL, THROUGH GEOGRAPHY AND READING,
THESE TWO LEARNED OF OTHER WORLDS, BEYOND THE HORIZON, THAT
THE OTHER CHILDREN HAD NEVER VISITED.
THESE SEEMED TO LACK THAT MAGIC CARPET TO RIDE, VENTURE OR
JOURNEY TO A DISTANT LAND BEYOND,
IN IMAGINATION.

A CLASS READING OF JACK LONDON'S 'CALL OF THE WILD'
DID NOT TRANSPOSE MOST TO ALASKA, ITS BITTER COLD, SNOW, THAT
HUSKY DOG;
THEY SAW COLD, SNOW, AND THEIR PET DOG IN WINTER, WALKED THEIR
BACK YARD AND STREETS BUNDLED AGAINST THE COLD, KNOWING THEY
MIGHT GO HOME FOR COCOA,
ANY TIME DURING THE STORY.
AND THEY WOULD NEVER FREEZE TO DEATH.

THIS WAS NOT SO WITH THESE TWO YOUNGSTERS.
THEIR FATHER WORKED FOR THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD, HAD TAKEN
THEM MANY TIMES TO VISIT RELATIVES
IN THE BIG CITY 50 MILES SOUTH.
ON THAT RIDE, AND AT THE DESTINATION, THEY SAW HUGE FACTORIES
FLOATING DIRTY SMOKE INTO THE AIR,
PRODUCING THEY KNEW NOT WHAT,
SAW THE H.J. HEINZ BUILDINGS
(SEEMED LIKE A LOT OF FACTORY JUST TO PRODUCE A BOTTLE OF
CATSUP).
AND MARVELOUS BRIDGES CROSSING THE ALLEGHENY RIVER EVERY
FEW BLOCKS.
BANKS HOUSED IN MASSIVE BUILDINGS,

NOT THE CORNER STORE BANK THEY KNEW.
IN THAT DISTANT EXTENSION OF THE VALLEY WHERE THEY LIVED,
THEY SAW RICHLY DRESSED PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES
NEVER SEEN ON THEIR WALK TO FAMILY, FRIENDS,
CHURCH, SCHOOL OR ANY STORE.
THE TREK INTRODUCED THE HUGE WORLD BEYOND,
INVITING COMPARISON WITH THEIR HOME TOWN.

FROM THESE JOURNEYS THEY LEARNED,
THAT THEY DIDN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE WORLD,
BUT THEY COULD LEAN MORE WITH MOBILITY.
AND AS STUDENTS, READ STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE AND PLACES
YET UNKNOWN IN THEIR SHELTERED VALLEY
AWAIT THE ADVENTURE

AND THEY WERE ALWAYS READY.

“TEACHER, WHAT IS THE NEXT ADVENTURE BOOK WE WILL BE READING
TOGETHER?”



“I want to see what he has seen.”

Harry Zirkelbach
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