

Early Aspiration

by Harry Zirkelbach

I am dead. That happened ten years ago. My name was Charlie.

Every child dreams of being an adult, doing dashing thing of their choice. Here is my story, a few words, childhood to death, told a friend, who told a friend. At least that's what I recall.

I was born in Denver in the late 19th Century, died at the onset of the 20th, 102 years old. A toe in three centuries.

Our family lived just outside downtown Denver, the Curtis Park area. Dad owned and ran a restaurant at 24th and Lawrence Streets with his brother. The building was small, open every day, supported both Italian families.

I was a large child. In the 9th grade I was already a 6 ft, 200 pound package. At times I was recruited to help in the restaurant but had to be careful in the four tables serving area. Cleanups were more trying than serving.

At completion of High School, a family friend Mr. Moutjoy, agreed to hire me as an apprentice for his one-man electrical contracting. I was hardly nimble, but strong and tall, traits Mr. Mountjoy lacked. I never missed a work day, learned quickly that first year.

That second year after graduating, one summer night after the restaurant closed, the family was at dinner when dad announced that his brother was returning to Italy the next day and that I would replace him at the restaurant. No other discussion. I left work as electrical apprentice without notice.

Now 6'2" weighed 260 pounds. I adapted quickly, was accepted by customers. My bulk, that small space, constantly challenging, tiring.

A year passed with few troubling incidents. Then at dinner 15 months later, dad announced that his brother had returned from Italy, would replace me in the restaurant, next morning. That night without my participation I became unemployed.

After a search, I signed to be a student at the Barnes Business School. In another 15 months I was graduated and obtained a clerical position at the Union Pacific Rail Yard in Denver. The initial record keeping grew into being Office Manager. 40 years later I was retired. Every day at Union Pacific RR I enjoyed what I did, knew I did it well.

My parents died long after the restaurant disappeared. In those early years I had married. No children were born us. We prospered before retiring. Then we came to Windsor Gardens for the remainder of our lives, became involved in the community and our church. And I learned to love the golf course. Still tall, now under 200 pounds, I played constantly, and in those twenty years here, I was credited with ten hole-in-ones.

In conversation with friends, I constantly recalled how love from my parents had directed my last 80 years. I could never have planned such a perfect life had I been left to my own choices. Their gift to me, a life beyond measure.

Thank you. Did I tell you we liked living at Windsor Gardens?