

Early Denver

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Those blessed with a Denver birth will have no great jumble of early scenes that captures those who came here as youngsters or later. The child's memory grows logically one scene at a time, creating the totality of life.

My friend Bill came to Denver after thirty years of New York, the U.S. Army and cities of the world. Never considered this city in 1948 as anything but a collection of yokels, and in his mind with good reason. Yes it was impossible to visit a bodega, find most everything somewhere on the premises, and yes everyone here spoke with the same accent, not like his beloved Brooklyn.

In Denver, we came about the same time, Bill and I did see the unusual.

... Mrs Doud, Mamie Eisenhower's Mom, had an early electric car, parked outside her garage, the 900 block Downing Street, looking exactly like the carriage of the Old West, excepting the windshield and headlights. Yes it had no reins, but was steered by a tiller., not unlike a boat. Boy did those occupants sit high off the roadway!

... The Denver Mint, bullet holes findable from the time it was robbed.

... And the D&F Tower, by law the highest building allowed downtown until the arrival of Zeckendorf ten years later. (Bill would become one of the twenty-five guests to lunch in the small restaurant the top of the tower, April 29, 1951, when Harry and Barbara wed, had the wedding party catered there.)

... The Zietz family's Buckhorn Saloon, where Buffalo steaks, Rocky Mountain Oysters were included in the delicacies that could be ordered. And both elderly owners and their sons, older than us, told stories of visits from Buffalo Bill and his Indian friends, there to dine and get drunk.

... And the miles of Boulevards throughout Denver, divided, with a small park between, throughout the city, a rarity in the East where property values bordered on the exorbitant.

Bill's family lived on Bay Ridge Parkway at the meeting of the Hudson and the Atlantic, on property later condemned for the eastern anchorage of the Veranzano

Bridge connecting the state to New Jersey. In Denver, Bill missed the Ocean, its breeze, odd fragrances, fog, and the bustle of commuters hastening to and from their employment, morning and evenings.

Bill found no busy streets in Denver, saw driving in the mountains scary. Where are the guard rails? Does everyone speed? Has life no value? Traffic deaths in Colorado were five times that of New York Traffic. In his neighborhood there was little speeding, excepting after the bars closed; even then everyone was extra careful not wanting to hit another drunk driver.

New York City. The very words attracted beauties from the world. From a grade school girl classmate who became a model, Bill met and socialized with many beauties, never dating. They and his friends win advertising, made him good judge of commercial female beauty. He would seldom volunteer the news to other men, "there's a real beauty", or agree with them then when they found one they thought qualified, for he would be prepared to make the female look like a frump after announcing half her short-comings.

Your date. Always the beauty you deserved. After all, Bill was no fool.

Still on his time in Denver he wrote a story every day, mailed that to various publishers in the evening. He created on the typewriter, as do most journalists.

Bill had a Masters Degree Literature, obtains after the Vwar, from Columbia University. Some, smaller circulations welcomed his pieces, grammatically correct, small stipend. But he treasured rejections when there was a hint of encouragement from a major house. A portion of his military retirement returned to the Postal Service monthly.

He and I were Denver roommates the year before I wed. Most nights I would return from work, first in construction, then as Policeman, recount moments over a meal. Invariably these incidents triggered at least one story Bill had always wanted to write. He'd type something before going to sleep. Bill never rewrote. I never found a typo in anything he wrote.

Bill and I had been room mates in Washington earlier; were visited by his friend Paul Klapacke, one of New Works finest, the two of us giving Bill an extensive background on the mores, frailties, exaggerations that are common to Police work everywhere.