

# GROWING UP WITH WARREN HARDING

"The Little Devil" Comes to Town

By Jack Warwick

Boyhood Playmate, School Chum and First Newspaper Associate of the Republican Presidential Nominee

I

Back yonder in the early '70s Warren Gamaliel Bancroft Winniepieg Harding, dressed up in his first long pants suit of perpendicular stripes, stepped out of a small, yellowish-brown house in a side street of a little Ohio village and presented himself as a candidate for president of the United States of America. What the republican national convention did at Chicago, June 12, 1920, was to give formal recognition and official endorsement to this boy's incipient ambition.

The aim of this story is to tell some of the intimate things that go towards filling the gap between the first pair of long pants and Chicago, events which the public does not know. The big outstanding thing in Warren Gamaliel Bancroft Winniepieg Harding's nomination—this is as far as the writer cares to tote the excess nomenclature—is that the door of opportunity has not been slammed in the face of American youth, that it is still open to boys who look forward and strive. Warren G. Harding's struggles were not less humble than the experiences of James A. Garfield, the boy who drove the canal mules.

In telling these things I wish I might eliminate the personal pronoun and avoid the appearance of clinging to the coat tails of a possible next president. As it is and must be, I am a monstrosity—the shrinking violet that has developed into a sunflower. But I must bloom on.

Drab Caledonia.

There would have been no sense in starting this story off like fiction making silvery sunlight filter through fretful mapale trees on a summer morning. It would have added nothing in the way of interest to what is to follow if I had thrown in a background of hills and forced them to stand on tiptoe and kiss a purple horizon. One cannot, in good faith, plant mountains in the soil of a notoriously flat corn belt. Neither can one conscientiously make an inspiring perspective of a town pump in the center of the expansive, barren public square of an old-fashioned village.

It is better to stick to facts. In this case the main fact is Warren G. Harding, republican nominee for president. His boyhood was spent in this old-fashioned village with the

barren public square and a town pump in the center, or near it. Paraphrasing, it ought to be recorded that the pump has been removed, but the well remains where it was in Harding's young days. It is no easy matter to move a well.

This village, in Marion county, O., is the back yonder of my affections. To me the place has always been on the map, but Harding has made it stick and stick up, if it is not now stuck up. It has a few more than 700 people. In my memory the number has remained about the same from one census to the next. The variations have been insignificant. Caledonia is like thousands of other American villages that furnish new blood for the larger towns and cities. Most of the young people get away early in life and establish themselves in the big outside world.

Back Warwick Meets a New Boy

Returning to Harding, he first dawned on my vision that morning of a glorious summer day, spick-and-span in his first long pants. Truth forces the admission that he looked better in them than he looks in golf togethery, or the Washington cameras are addicted to campaign lying. It does not matter whether he was six or eight, he was tall for his age, and is yet, for that matter, he was conscious of his new clothes and looked imperious. It was the only time he has ever looked that way to me, and this goes for a period covering many years.

The Hardings—the father was a country doctor—had moved from Morrow county, where Warren Bamall was born, but not in a log cabin. It so happened that I was born in a log cabin, mentioned here because it was the only time I ever got ahead of Harding. But I must bloom on. As a new boy in town that long pants morning, Warren Gamaliel inspired the traditional boy aversion to tidy newcomers. He registered considerable self-satisfaction and looked good enough to muss up. The parents had come to town to stay indefinitely, but the youngster created the impression in my mind that he was merely stopping over for a brief period.

Nothing came of the desire to desecrate the new clothes. Furthermore, they didn't last long, anyway, for the boy soon grew out of them, feet first. I cannot recall the next meeting with the newcomer, but it was not long before a mutual friendship was formed that ripened into a faith that made it possible to assimilate the hard knocks that came to us in later years.

Warren Becomes the Town's "Little Devil"

Every small town has a few oracles who make it their business to enlighten the community as to what boy is going to congress and which one is headed for the penitentiary. The oracles never deal extensively in presidents because the demand is light. I recall a visit to Caledonia not long since during which I met the major oracle of the town. He greeted me with this remark: "Well, Jack, I see Warren got there." He added that Warren always was mighty smart. Warren had then reached the United States senate. It so happened that the senator had been one of the boys to whom the oracle had given the title of "little devil."

But that "little devil" phrase was not applicable to Warren G. Harding's young life if it was meant to imply any sort of viciousness. He was always good humored, full of fun that didn't hurt. He was a harmonizer and peacemaker among belligerents.

Since the Chicago convention Caledonia, when it isn't standing on its head is scratching it in an effort to recall all the little, simple things the nominee did when he was a boy in the village. When memory doesn't produce results, fancy comes to the rescue. Not all of the stories told are absolutely true. The temptation to embellish is strong within the people of a presidential candidate's boyhood place of residence. The man the Caledonians are talking about was a regular boy, human in his love of harmless fun and without the taint of incorrigibility. Somewhere I have seen it intimated that during their early residence in Caledonia the Hardings were acquainted with poverty. William Dean Howells has defined poverty as the dread of want. There was no dread of want in that home. My visits there were frequent, and to me it was one of the happy, homey homes of the village.

Later in this series of recollections I want to say something about a wonderful woman. She died ten years ago. More than once since she went away my heart has ached for an opportunity to put in print my impressions of the mother of Warren G. Harding.

A Dream Newspaper.

It was in this Caledonia home that two boys dreamed dreams of some day editing and printing a newspaper. They even went so far as actually to prepare copy for their dream paper. Many miscellaneous articles were clipped and put away, to be ready for the great publication day.

I have seen the statement that Harding's first journalistic work was done on a college paper at Iberia, where the old Central Ohio College which graduated him was located. If he did that, he kept me off his exchange list. I never saw the college publication, though I was never entirely out of touch with him while he was a student in the institution.

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Tuesday Jack Warwick tells of Harding's school days and his first smell of printer's ink.

## SOCIETY

A pretty little secret that is no longer hidden is the engagement of Miss Ruth Mary Jones, petite daughter of Mrs. Blanche M. Jones to Merlyl W. Smith of Mill City. This interesting bit of news was made known yesterday afternoon at the "at home" when Mrs. Jones gave in honor of Mrs. E. F. Carlton who is soon leaving for Eugene and the guests were quite surprised at the announcement which was made known by a telegram which was sent to one of the guests during the afternoon. The wedding will take place some time the last of August and Mr. Smith will take his bride to Mill City

where he is assistant sales manager for the Hammond Lumber company. Miss Jones is the elder daughter of Mrs. Blanche Jones and has a host of friends in Salem where she has lived for a number of years. She graduated from Salem high school in June, 1917, and for a year was stenographer for the Hammond Lumber company at the Mill City office and it was here that the romance was begun. For several months she has been stenographer for the Charles K. Spaulding Logging company here. She is a talented girl and is an accomplished musician.

The rooms were gracefully adorned with sweet peas in the pastel shades. At the tea time dainty refreshments were served by the hostess. Those who were present were Mrs. F. E. Carleton, Mrs. Roy Burton, Mrs. J. H. Ackerman of Monmouth, Mrs. Alfred Lunn of Corvallis, Mrs. Thomas S. Roberts, Mrs. Romeo Hunter, Mrs. Elizabeth Miller, Mrs. William D. Clark, Mrs. May Moore, Miss Marcy Hunter, Miss Florence Jones, Miss Ruth Jones and the hostess.

Mr. Clifford Farmer is home after a visit of several days with Portland friends.

Mrs. George Burnett and Mrs. S. N. Jordan have gone to Newport for a short outing.

Mrs. E. V. McMeichen is in Portland for a few days while she is the guest of Mrs. Robert McKean (Hazel Erickson).

Mrs. D. W. Matthews of Wood-river, Ill., has gone to Harrisburg to visit for a few days at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Shisler.

Miss Hortense Epley, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Epley and Hugh I. Smith of Cottage Grove were married at the Epley home Friday afternoon at 3 o'clock, Rev. D. H. Leach of Eugene officiating at the quiet service.

Mrs. J. C. Aiken and Dr. and Mrs. Louis Albert Banks of Roseburg

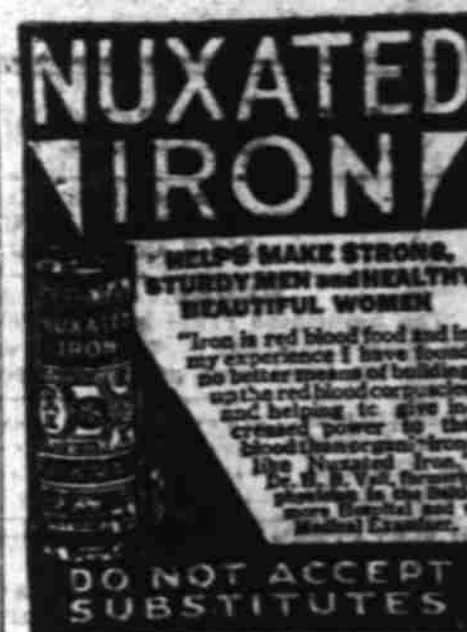
were guests during the week of Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Spencer.

Mrs. W. Carlton Smith is in Astoria visiting friends while Dr. Smith is attending the American legion meeting.

### THIEVES SPOIL STATUES.

BRESLAU, Germany, July 29.—Unable to check the despoiling by metal thieves of monuments in the public parks, the police have decided to remove to places of safe-keeping all bronze statuary which can be easily transported. Among the statues of great men placed under "protective arrest" are those of Germany's nature poet, Eichendorff, and the composer of war songs, Koerner.

A bronze statue of Diana has been mutilated, the vandals having wrenched off her spear. They tried without success to cut off her arms. Many brass and bronze inscription tablets have been stolen.



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