

*This file is an excerpt from*

*Falkenburg, Donald R., The Falkenburgs, a Colonial American Family,  
Willow Glen Publishing, San Jose, 2016.*

*This multitouch book is available as a free download on the iBooks Store. Individual chapters of this manuscript are currently available at:*

<http://falkenburg-genealogy.com>

*Please note this is copyrighted material. If you directly quote this book, please cite. Any direct quotations from my manuscript should be quoted and properly documented. I have been careful to do this with the material contained in this work, and I ask that you respect my intellectual property as well as those I have cited.*

*If you have questions or comments please feel free to contact me at:*

[drfalken@comcast.net](mailto:drfalken@comcast.net)



All Rights Reserved

© 2016 Donald R. Falkenburg

Willow Glen Publishing



# Reminiscence



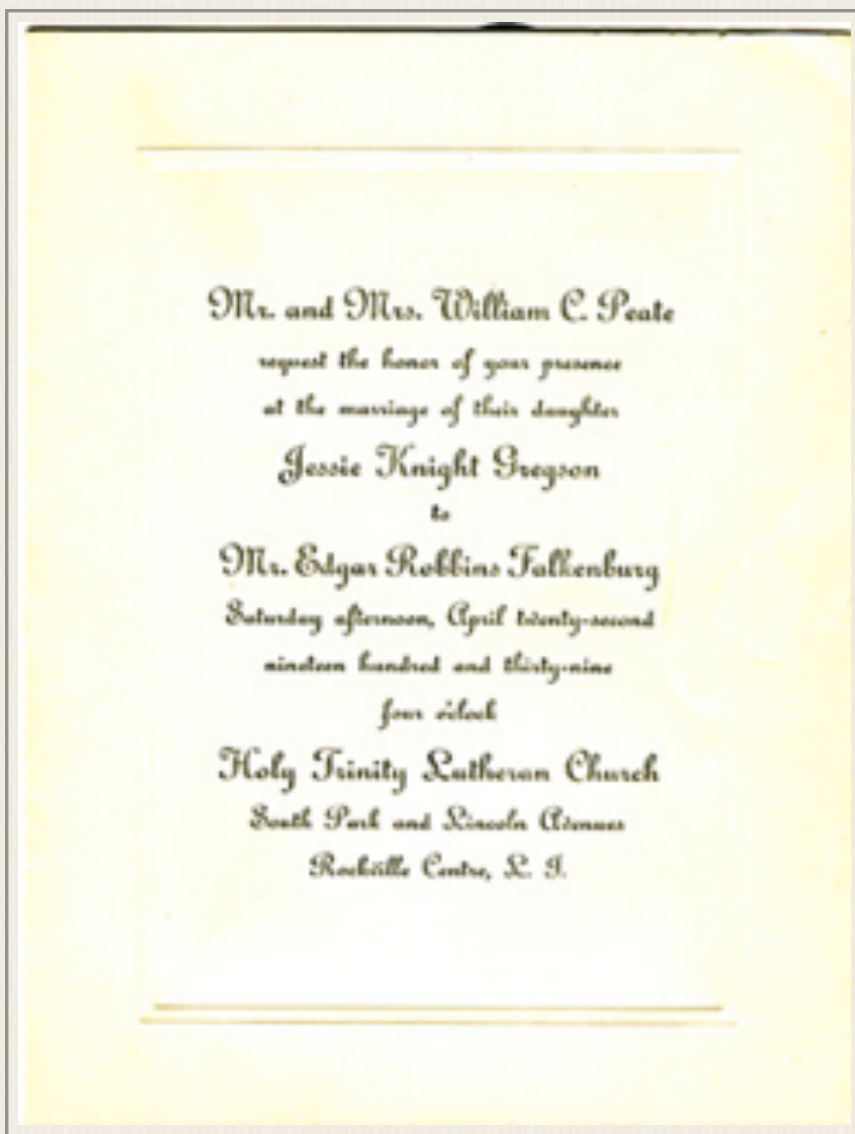
*This chapter entitled **Reminiscence** is structured different from the rest of the Falkenburg story. This chapter tells the story from my recollection of life as I was growing up. My focus here is how I have seen events shaping our nation, and not so much on what I have accomplished. As I enter my seventy-fifth year, I look back on all of the changes that have occurred during my lifetime. Progress seems to be accelerating in an ever more complex world.*

# Ed and Jessie Falkenburg

I don't know any particulars about how my parents Ed Falkenburg and Jessie Knight Gregson met. They both lived in the same general area (Rockville Centre, Long Island, New York) but their families were from very different backgrounds. My father's parents lived in an upscale community. While they were not rich, they lived a comfortable upper middle class life. My mother's parents were employed by Holy Trinity Lutheran Church of Rockville Centre, and continued their life-long occupations of domestic service, cleaning and maintaining the parish church. My mother had lost her father Archibald Knight Gregson when she was three years of age, and her mother met and married William Peate while they were employed by the Cunard Line as housekeeper and steward on Atlantic crossings.

When Ed and Jessie Falkenburg were first married they lived on Seaman Avenue, in Rockville Centre, NY. My father was a graduate of New York University

in business and marketing. He worked in sales for a variety of companies including The Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company (now known simply as 3M), and my mother was a telephone operator for the New York Telephone Company. As the young Falkenburgs looked to start a family, they decided to purchase a home in the neighboring town of Oceanside, New York. In 1940 they purchased a small Cape Cod style home (previous page) at 4 Glenwood Court in a newly built subdivision for the price of \$6,000. I was born at South Nassau Community Hospital, Oceanside New York, and Glenwood Court was to be my home



*Wedding Invitation Jessie Knight Gregson and Edgar Robbins Falkenburg*

until I got married. Our home was tiny by today's standards: two bedrooms, one bath, a living room, kitchen and a small dining room off the kitchen. It was located on a corner lot at the intersection of Glenwood Court and Colonial Place. We had screens to close in the front porch during the summers, and this became a place to seek refuge from the heat and humidity of a Long Island summer.



*Young Don with Jessie and Ed Falkenburg*

Two years after I was born, my brother Glenn arrived. Glenwood Court and Colonial Place were intersecting dead-end streets—an ideal place for kids to play. There were plenty of playmates for my brother Glenn and me. On holidays we would dress up and parade around the block. Most evenings during the summer you could find us playing Hide'n-Go-Seek, Tag, Ring-a-Levio, Red-Rover, or sitting on the curb playing the whisper-game Telephone. I was too young to remember the key events leading to World War II, but there were some things I clearly remember about the war years. As the war effort in the U.S. grew, life became more difficult than usual. Rationing of gasoline, butter, and many other commodities were a fact



*Playmates in the neighborhood (Glenn on left in cowboy hat and Don on right in indian regalia)*

of life. I remember that we collected bacon fat and left it for collection on our front step. When I asked why we did this, my mom told me that they would use the fat to make fuses for bombs.

My father was air raid warden for our neighborhood. When the sirens sounded at night, he would put on his steel helmet and leave to patrol our small



*Don (left) & Glenn (right)*

community, while my mom shut the draperies and turned off most of the lights within our house. It was frightening for kids who had a hard time distinguishing between drills and imminent threats. I remember that we used to keep boxes of sand in the attic. One day my brother Glenn and I were playing upstairs and decided that it would be fun to use the sand to create roads for our toy cars. When my mom came to get us for dinner, she was very upset and told us that the sand was to protect us if the Germans dropped incendiary bombs that went through our roof. After that, whenever I heard an airplane outside I ran and hid under a tree.

I remember the end of the war (likely VE day, although I cannot remember for sure). When we got up, word quickly spread through our neighborhood that the war was over! Everyone was gathering outside and spontaneously a parade formed in the streets of our neighborhood. My mom gave each of us a cooking pot and a large spoon, and soon we were outside making a racket with the entire neighborhood. Sometime after the armistice, I was lying on the front lawn of my home when squadrons of war planes filled the sky flying in wing-to-wing formation. As we lived only a few miles from the Atlantic Ocean, the planes had entered U.S. airspace and were flying a victory formation over New York, heading to home bases in the northeast. It was an unbelievable sight which I can vividly picture today, some seventy years later. The war in the Pacific theater went on for a year later until the United States dropped two atomic bombs. The Enola Gay

## World War II

*In NOV 1936 Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan signed a pact against the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement. In JUL 1937 WW II began in the Pacific when the Japanese invaded China. In SEP 1939 Germany invaded Poland, initiating WW II. Two days later, honoring a guarantee of Poland's borders, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. The spring of 1940 saw the invasion of Denmark and Norway by Germany; a month later Germany attacked western Europe. Most of the world was in turmoil with conflict in both Europe and Asia. Throughout the next year, United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt maintained support of western Europe, but tried to keep the U.S. out of direct involvement in the hostilities. This ended on 7 DEC 1941 when Japanese fighters, bombers and torpedo planes mounted a surprise attack on the Pacific fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The attack came as a profound shock to the American Public; on December 8, the United States declared war on Japan, followed by a declaration of War upon Germany three days later.*

dropped “Little Boy” a gravity bomb which exploded 1900 feet above the city of Hiroshimai, Japan. Shortly after that a second atomic bomb nicknamed “Fat Man” (a reference to Winston Churchill) was dropped by parachute over Nagasaki. One week following the awful destruction unleashed by that Allied attack, imperial Japan surrendered and the war was finally over.<sup>7-1</sup>

When I was a youngster, there were no computers and no television. A prime source of entertainment was the Saturday children's matinee. We went to the Fantasy Theater in Rockville Centre. The venue consisted of cartoons and se-

rial western adventures—you had to come back the following week to see the next chapter. Tom Mix and Hopalong Cassidy were among our favorites. Of course, movies were in black and white, no color! At home we had a console radio in the living room. It was the size of a desk and finished like a fine piece of furniture. The top opened to reveal the tuner (AM and short wave) and on the left was a turntable for 78 rpm vinyl records. We had a collection of Bing Crosby and Guy Lombardo recordings. Most often, however, the radio was used to listen to live shows. The Shadow was a collection of serialized dramas. Each episode began "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!" My brother and I used to love to listen to the Lone Ranger on the radio. In those

**7-1** *Franklin Roosevelt coordinated the war effort among the Allies and formed a special bond with Britain's Winston Churchill. Roosevelt suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage and died on April 12, 1945, less than one month before VE Day. The decision to use the U.S. developed weapon of mass destruction fell to Harry Truman, who was Vice President under Roosevelt, now President of the United States.*

days, hiding between layers of Nabisco Shredded Wheat cereal, there were cardboard inserts which contained characters that could be cut out and assembled. If you collected enough box tops of the cereal, you could send for a four quadrant color map of the territory that the Lone Ranger and his faithful companion Tonto roamed. When we had the maps and our tokens from the cereal boxes, we had a visualization of the episode. As the Lone Ranger galloped along the mine path, cut-outs followed along!

Television programming began in the late 1940s. But, we did not have a receiver. The Levins who lived at the end of our block were the first to have a TV. What a wonder! They invited all the neighborhood kids to come to their house at 5:00PM to watch the Howdy Doody Show on NBC, then the only TV station. We watched images of Howdy, Buffalo Bob Smith, Clarabell, Princess Summer Fall Winter Spring and the Flubadub in fuzzy black and white. About twenty neighborhood kids sat on the floor staring at a 10 inch screen. It was wondrous. We all went home and asked our parents to buy a TV, but it would be a while before my dream came true. After about a year of watching the show at the Levin's home in black and white, WOW what is this? They had an attachment, a vinyl overlay that was colored blue on the top, transparent in the middle and green on the bottom. Viola, color TV! That is if you were watching a static picture of a meadow with a blue sky. Anyway, we thought that it was pretty hot stuff, even if Howdy Doody had blue hair and green shoes.

Our family got a TV in about 1952. I remember that one of the first big events that we watched was the Coronation of Elizabeth II, as Queen of the United Kingdom. Our next door neighbor made the mistake of saying to my mom that this was all too much fuss about nothing; born in England, my mother made it clear that this was an incredibly important event to her and to the world.

Television became a part of family life in the early 1950s. Milton Berle's Texaco Star Theater aired each Tuesday night at 8:00PM on NBC.<sup>7-2</sup> "Uncle Miltie"

**7-2** *As I write this in 2016, I can tune into hundreds of broadcast channels (admittedly not all worth while watching) but in the early days of television there were only four channels in New York: ABC, CBS, NBC, and DuMont. All broadcast live and living black and white. At 11:00 the networks went off the air after playing the Star Spangled Banner.*

became a part of our family as my grandparents, my parents, my uncle and his family gathered around the television to watch slapstick routines and outrageous costumes, that often had Berle appearing in drag. Other shows from the era included You Asked for It (viewers sent in postcards describing something that they wanted to see on television). <sup>7-3</sup> The Fred Waring Show (a musical variety show), Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts (a precursor to now popular talent search programming), and Captain Video and His Video Rangers (a kids sci-fi series).

There is an interesting story about the last of these shows. At the time, television programming was done in New York City. Many of the television personalities lived in the suburbs of the city. One of the characters in the Captain Video series was a deranged scientist named Dr. Pauli. Captain Video circled the globe in his X-9 jet foiling the evil Dr. Pauli. The actor who played Dr. Pauli lived in my home town. Kids in the area who saw him coming home began to throw rocks at the home of the actor. After all, they were Video Rangers and they were committed to help their hero, Captain Video. As a result of the harassment, our school organized a special assembly for Dr. Pauli to come to talk to us and explain the difference between actors and the story-line. The real-life Pauli actor showed us how they created the special effects used on the TV show. Most impressive to us was the creation of evil-fog produced by putting dry ice into water. Following the event, Dr. Pauli was able to lead a more peaceable life in his home.

As summer approached each year, Glenn and I eagerly awaited our family vacation to Maine. Our destination was the Doe farm in West Newfield, ME near the border with New Hampshire. My father had been going to the farm since he was a boy, and I made my first trip (though I don't remember it) when I was six months old. Ethel Leavitt and Harry Doe were sister and brother who ran the boarding house/farm. It was located about a mile from beautiful Province Lake, along a dirt road that passed through wooded lands and finally opened to the farmyard. "Uncle" Harry tended the farm while "Aunt" Ethel ran the boarding house. We loved getting away from suburbia for two weeks each year. My parents, brother and I, along with my grandparents, Uncle Larry, Aunt Gene, and my

**7-3** *One request was to show William Tell shooting an apple resting on the head of his son. The reenactment featured a master archer, and was played out on live TV.*





*Our Falkenburg family (L to R) at the Doe farmhouse in Maine (back) Jessie, Gene, Larry, Juliet, Ed, (front) Ray, Don, and Samuel (my brother Glenn must have been napping)*

cousin Ray all went to the farm. There was something simpler about life on the farm. Today, we would call it self-sustainable living. The farm produced much of what we ate, and the meals were simple, and simply delicious! Aunt Ethel did not have a modern kitchen; all meals were prepared on a wood-fired stove, that Uncle Harry lit, when he got up early to begin chores on the farm. There were no alarm clocks. We were awakened each day by the smell of fresh biscuits baking in the oven. Each day we had a full farm breakfast including oatmeal, eggs (collected that morning from the hen house), bacon, biscuits, and for us kids, fresh milk from Buttercup, the cow. After breakfast we would often take a ride. One of the places that was on our list was Sanbornville. This was a tiny town with only a few stores; we always went to Sara's Spa, a soda fountain and general store. One of the things that interested me was the large collection of comic books displayed on long racks in the store. I bought the latest Adventures of Superman, Archie, or other classics for 10¢. If I had these today, they would be worth a lot of money! It was a special day if our trip to Sanbornville coincided with the arrival of Boston and Maine train on its trip north. For us kids, the powerful steam locomotive hissing and puffing was a wonder of modern technology!

Dinner was served at the farmhouse at 1PM; this was the main meal of the day. Sunday dinner was special and included chicken and home made ice cream! Uncle Harry went to the chicken coop and selected an older bird for the sacrifice. With a swift hand he captured it by the feet and quickly cut off its head with an axe on a chopping block. I really did not like to go see this, but understood that this was the way of life on the farm. We did love to watch the making of the ice cream, however. First we went to the ice house. This is where the ice cut during the preceding winter was stored under sawdust and hay. A block was retrieved using tongs and tossed down to a waiting wheel barrow. Uncle Harry chipped the ice away with an axe to fill the freezer. Again, fresh cream from the cows provided the base for the dessert. The ice cream flavor might be vanilla, blueberry (freshly picked) or even grapenut (my grandmother's favorite). If we were lucky our vacation would coincide with the once-a-month churning of butter. This was accomplished using a large cradle churn that was rocked back and forth until the cream turned into butter. It was exciting for us kids to see where the food really came from! In the afternoon it was off to the beach, or if we were lucky we might go with Uncle Harry on one of his farm chores which included the cutting and harvesting of hay. Now, he did not have one of those fancy bailers that picked up the hay and bundled it into convenient packages. He had to use a pitch fork to load hay onto his truck and then when we returned to the barn, again toss the hay up into the hay loft by hand. I don't think that we were all that much help as he did his chores.

The 1950s were an unprecedented time for the growth of the middle class in America. The growth started after World War II, and continued throughout the decade of the 50s. Each year seemed to get better for families. They had more disposable income and families bought new refrigerators and washing machines, now available at reasonable prices. Our original refrigerator had room for one small ice tray in a very tiny freezing compartment. This is where my mom kept the cod liver oil that was a part of our daily regime for good health. In the 40s, mom did wash in the kitchen sink with a wash board; the dryer was the fresh outdoors. Now we had a refrigerator in which we could keep a quart of ice cream and mom no longer had to do wash by hand. This was not a time of growing affluence for

all Americans. America was still divided between the haves and the have-nots. The have-nots were black and rural Appalachian white living in poverty. The divide between black and white America began as the United States was formed.

On 17 MAY 1954 (I was thirteen years of age) The United States Supreme Court issued the historic *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, KS* stating that all laws that established a segregated education system in the United States were unconstitutional. Throughout the nation, states struggled with the implementation of this historic decision. We were a nation divided by race, and now we were being told that we had to open our school doors to students who were different from ourselves. In Little Rock, capital of Arkansas, a southern state with deeply ingrained beliefs regarding racial separation, the school board agreed to a gradual implementation of the Supreme Court ruling delayed to begin in 1957. In 1957 nine black students with excellent grades and attendance records were selected to integrate Little Rock Central High School. Arkansas governor Orval Faubus, personally intervened, and when the day came to integrate these nine youngsters into the all white school, they were prevented from entering by the Arkansas National Guard. The highest court in the land said that the school must be integrated, and Governor Faubus prevented that from happening. In addition to the presence of the National Guard, mobs of citizens showed up with shouts to lynch these students. The crisis was broken when President Dwight D. Eisenhower deployed federal troops (the 101st Airborne Division of the United States Army) to escort the students to their new school.

### ***A Nation Divided***

*The Founders of our nation were simply not able to resolve the issue of slavery in those revolutionary times. The bitter disputes between northern and southern patriots over the rights of slaves was so bitter that it nearly scuttled the birth of our nation. It was only through compromise that the issue of slavery was tabled for a period of fifty years, during which time the Congress was forbidden to take action on the issue. This inability to deal with slavery in the new country led to the inevitable conflict of brother against brother in the United States Civil War. Following the most bloody war in the history of our nation, slavery was abolished in the nation. This did not end the second class status of African Americans in the nation.*

This entire drama was played out on television screens across the nation focusing our attention on this tragic phase of our nation's history in a way that had never been done before. I remember watching this play-out on TV. Of course, this show-down was not the end of racial problems in the nation, but it was a turning point. Racism in the south was overt with restrooms labeled men, women and colored. In the north it may not have been as blatant, but racism was still an evil that the nation was still fighting hundreds of years after the the Declaration of Independence stated "All men are created equal".

Christmas was time for great celebration in our family. It was a time for the several branches of our family to take time to come together for celebration. When we were young, there was no hint of holiday around our home until we woke up on Christmas morning! No tree, no garlands, no outside lights... nothing. After Glenn and I went to bed, my parents began to transform the house. This meant putting up and decorating the trees (we had two). decorating the outside of the house, and transforming the basement into a wonderland to host our



*Our home at Christmas*

relatives. Oh yes, my dad had to deal with assembling toys like bicycles, etc. with often confounding instructions, while mom busied herself preparing the Christmas feast. At the first crack of light on Christmas morning my brother and I would bound out of bed and peek into the living room, returning to our parents' room and announce that Santa had been there. Mom and Dad told us later that often they had only a couple of hours sleep before we came bounding into their room with our happy announcement!

My aunts and my grandmother helped prepare the Christmas dinner which would feed about twenty-five relatives who would assemble in the basement, decorated for the holiday. There were always two large turkeys, freshly baked rolls, and



*Ping pong table transformed for the feast*

Our relatives from as far away as New Jersey came to the Oceanside feast, and many neighbors and close friends joined the family for the less formal late supper. My friend John used to call my mother Super Mom as he could not imagine how any person of mortal abilities could pull off such a feat!

Each year on our birthdays, my parents took my brother and me into Manhattan. Since my birthday was in mid January, we always visited Rockefeller Plaza and the “big tree”. It was a delight to see the decorations which adorned the city. We loved the animated windows at Macy’s Department Store at Harold Square! Our special day usually included the show at Radio City Music Hall which featured the Rockettes in the Christmas extravaganza. The living nativity was the finale of the live production. In those days, you did not go to Radio City Music Hall to see only the live show, but the event included a movie. I remember one that we saw was entitled “The Boy with the Green Hair”. Although today I could not describe the gist of the story, I do remember that my parents bought me a clay head that we filled with water and applied a mixture of grass seed and a growing medium which was smeared over the head. Voila, in a few days we had a boy with green hair. I smile today when I see advertisements for Chia pets on the television, realizing that I had the first of what would become a cultural icon.

Our trip to New York always included lunch at a restaurant. My very favorite was the Horn and Hardart Automat. If I recall, while this was a chain of eateries, the one we frequently went to was near Times Square. What was so special about

a wide variety of side dishes that would feed the crowd. This was not a buffet, but a sit-down dinner. My father carved the turkey and my mom and aunts served the table. Not all of our relatives could make the 2:00 PM dinner, so a second feast was set at about 7:00 in the evening. A large spiral sliced ham was added to supplement the left over turkey and trim-

the Automat? Today, I would not be impressed. I'd rather go to a nice sit-down fancy restaurant, have a well-prepared meal and a glass of wine. But as a kid, the Automat was a truly wondrous place. You picked up a cafeteria tray and queued in front of banks of little windows, each of which had a sandwich, a salad, a roll, a piece of cake or pie... anything that



*Horn and Hardart Automat*

would appear on a menu. There was no waitress or server, only these little cubicles. My father gave us a pocketful of nickels, dimes and quarters; each of the windows had a price listed and coin slots. You put your coins into the slots and voila, the door opened and you could take your piece of cake! Glenn and I thought it was amazing. Since no one ever opened the doors to fill the vacant spaces, we wondered what happened after we took our sandwich. If you watched closely, however, you could see that when a bank of ham sandwiches were depleted, the entire column of ham-sandwich windows would rotate and a few seconds the empty windows would fill with the food item.

Throughout my elementary school education, I always enjoyed science class. As I entered junior high school (we did not call it middle school in those days) my Christmas wish lists included telescopes, microscopes, and a variety of science kits. In high school I took advanced math (in those days this got you up to solid geometry, but no calculus). I loved chemistry and physics. After studying chemistry, my parents got me a large Gilbert Chemistry set. Today, they do not make such sets as they are deemed to be dangerous. I set up a laboratory in the basement of our home where I did my experiments. I even had an atomic energy laboratory set with radiation sources, a Geiger counter, a cloud chamber and all sorts of neat things. As with the chemistry set, such science kits for kids are no longer available on the market.

Biology was interesting, and I loved dissecting a frog in our school biology lab. My friends and I decided to try this at home. We went out to the marsh and caught some frogs which we brought home. The idea struck us that we should try to do a live operation of the frog. I had chemical instructions for making chloroform. With our anesthetic in hand we wrapped the frogs head with gauze and dripped chloroform onto it until the frog went to sleep. We opened his chest and were able to see the heart beating. Now what? How should we sew our patient up? Well, we had not quite thought this through entirely. In the end poor *Rana Pipiens* died on the operating table.

I loved my class in drafting, learning layout and perspective. I had my own drafting table, T-square and triangles at home. My father had a subscription to *Architectural Digest*. I loved to read these magazines. When I saw an article on Frank Lloyd Wright's *Falling Waters*, I realized that homes did not have to be designed to look like all of the houses in my neighborhood. There was a relationship between a building and its environment. My first glimpse of Joseph Eichler's mid century modern homes in California sent chills up my spine. Here was design in which indoors and outdoors merged into a common environment! I began to design homes with round curvy rooms and office buildings with cantilever overhangs. As I entered my junior year in high school, it seemed that architecture would be the direction I would head for my career. I took a battery of aptitude tests at Stevens Institute in New Jersey, and amazingly, my highest scores were in three dimensional reasoning and memory for design! About this time the magazine *Popular Mechanics* ran a feature article proclaiming Engineers can start their careers earning \$10,000 per year! In discussing my future with my father, I decided that career opportunities in engineering probably exceeded those for employment as an architect. Both required spatial visualization and the skills at which I excelled. So the stage was set for me to go to engineering school.

We considered many options, but decided to attend Clarkson College near the boarder of New York State and Ontario, Canada. After graduating high school in 1958 it was off to the boonies of northern New York State.

## College Years

Leaving home to go to college some 360 miles away was both exciting and frightening. What would it be like to be away from my family and friends? What would life be like in a dormitory? How would I adapt to this new life? Well, it was a great experience! I met all sorts of new people, some of whom would become life-long friends.

Clarkson College is located in the very small town of Potsdam, NY. Without Clarkson and the State Teachers College a mile away, the town would be nothing but a small village. Clarkson's student housing was located west of town on a hill across from the hockey arena. Class was on the other side of town. So, every morning there was a mass promenade from the Hill Campus to the downtown classrooms. We crossed the Raquette River and Fall Island on which Trinity Episcopal Church was located, and headed for class. Back to the dorms for lunch and again back downtown for afternoon classes. Today, university registration is a time to select classes and schedules. In those days, registration at an engineering school was a time to appear and pick up your pre-planned schedule. There were no choices, and no electives. All freshmen took the same classes. In fact, it was not until my senior year that I had the opportunity to elect a class of my choice. If my memory serves me, I had two electives in my four years of undergraduate study.

The walk back and forth between the hill and the downtown campus was invigorating during September and October. In December, we had to face a North Country winter. Wow, the first time the temperature hit 0° F, those of us from downstate thought we would freeze to death. However, we had not seen anything. When January and February rolled around, we were facing -30° F. Is it possible that it could be that cold? Freshmen and Sophomores were not allowed to have cars (and in those days it would not be common for a college freshman to own a car), so it was trudging thru the snow, across the bridges to class. When the temperature dips below minus 15, droplets of exhaled moisture begin to freeze on the hairs in your nose. We soldiered on!



What made winter bearable was ice hockey. The Clarkson Golden Knights were a ranked team in eastern college hockey. Our arch rivals were St. Lawrence University ten miles southwest of Potsdam and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute RPI in Troy, New York. If it was  $-20^{\circ}$  F outside, it might be  $0^{\circ}$  inside the hockey arena. Warmth was supplied by a butane pocket heater and a small flask of whiskey.

As they say “if life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” So if you live in the frozen north make the most of it. The biggest event of each year on campus was the Ice Carnival. Each fraternity and dorm group worked feverishly to create an ice sculpture for the event. These ranged from modest efforts to two-story animated ice sculptures. Ice carnival celebrated musical entertainment (of the era). American jazz icon Dizzy Gillespie appeared on campus. In this era of folk music we had Peter Paul and Mary and the Smothers Brothers as entertainment at events. The culmination was the Ice Carnival Ball.

I graduated with my undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering in June 1962, and accepted an assistantship to pursue my M.S. at Clarkson. A month after beginning those studies, (October, 1962) the United States faced an enormous challenge from the Soviet Union. After a secret meeting between Nikita Khrushchev and Fidel Castro, in May 1962, The USSR entered into an agreement with Cuba to place nuclear missiles in the island nation. In October of that year, U.S. spy planes detected missiles on Cuban soil. This was a direct threat and a provocation to the United States. President Jack Kennedy acted swiftly and established a naval blockade around Cuba. For thirteen days the world teetered near the edge of nuclear war between the cold war adversaries, the United States and the USSR. The confrontation ended on October 28, 1962, when President Kennedy and United Nations Secretary-General U Thant reached an agreement with Khrushchev. The missiles would be removed from Cuba. During this time, Clarkson students were glued to the emerging news on the crisis. The availability of information at the time was very different from today’s instant access via the internet. Our information came from a teletype machine that chattered away all day, spilling paper on the floor. We watched through a glass window and read the news

as it was posted on the wires. As students there was great concern an outbreak of war would change our lives forever.

During my graduate studies I found that I really enjoyed teaching, and upon completion of my program of study, I was offered a job as an instructor at Clarkson College.



*Building an ice statue for Ice Carnival in my freshman year*

## Marriage

In August, 1964 Don Falkenburg married Liane Rossi at the First Presbyterian Church, Oceanside, New York. Our honeymoon took us north to Vermont and Canada where we stayed at Le Manior St.-Castin on Lac Beauport, just north of Quebec City. From Quebec we headed south west back to the U.S. and Potsdam New York. Our new home was a small apartment at 20 1/2 Grant Street behind the home of Professor Bill Lowe and his wife Sally. Although Don had lived in the Potsdam for six years, Liane was not ready for the intense cold of a North Country winter.

We entered the apartment through the living room, furnished with vintage, yet comfortable, couch a small drop leaf table a chair and our TV. Off to the left was our (pink, or was it coral) bedroom and to the right was a small eat-in kitchen and the bathroom. This would be our home for two years. Once again, winter entertainment was Clarkson hockey. If the weather was nice, we enjoyed taking a trip north to Montreal Canada—about three hours distant, this was the closest large city to us.

Liane had taught school in Baldwin, Long Island, NY and was fortunate to get a job about six miles north of Potsdam in the town of Norwood. The first day that the temperature dropped below -20° F Liane was shocked that she still had school. She was even more amazed when she found out the the children had to go out on the playground for recess. Some of the children did not have adequately warm clothing for that temperature.



*The first big snow of 1964*

While we lived in Potsdam the nation suffered one of its most traumatic events—the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. I had heard Kennedy give a campaign speech in Potsdam when I was an undergraduate student. Kennedy was the youngest president the nation had elected; he began his term as 35th President of the United States in 1961. JFK and his wife Jacqueline captivated the nation; many referred to them as American royalty. After rather droll years of Truman and Eisenhower first families, the Kennedy White House saw a transformation into a vibrant social scene with fine food and fine wine replacing down-home cooking. The Kennedy White House is remembered for its foreign policy during the height of the cold war. The unsuccessful invasion of Cuba (The Bay of Pigs), The Cuban Missile Crisis and the beginnings of the Vietnam War occupied the young president. Attorney General Bobby Kennedy, brother of the president, unleashed an unprecedented war on organized crime. Another hot-button area was civil rights. As the nation careened toward a crisis in race relations, the Kennedy White House unsuccessfully attempted to apply the brakes to events that would alter our national character.

Friday, November 22, 1963 (18:30 UTC <sup>7-4</sup>) was a day that all who were alive will remember exactly what they were doing. President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was fatally shot while traveling with his wife Jacqueline, Texas Governor John Connally, and Connally's wife Nellie, in a presidential motorcade in Dealey Plaza, Dallas, Texas. The President died a half hour later at the Trauma center at Parkland Hospital. The nation was stunned and entered into a period of national mourning. I still vividly remember the television pictures of three year old John Kennedy Jr. (John John) standing with his mother saluting his fathers flag-draped casket was carried out of St. Matthew's Cathedral. The nation suffered through two more political assassinations in the next five years: Martin Luther King, Jr. an American clergyman, activist, and prominent leader of the African-American civil rights movement and Nobel Peace Prize laureate was assassinated 4 APR 1968. Robert F. Kennedy, the Attorney General of the United States and brother of John F. Kennedy was shot 6 JUN 1968. In response to the 1968 assassinations, a song written by Dick Holler and recorded by Dion remembered four assassinated Americans, all

**7-4** *Greenwich mean time*

icons of social change, namely Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy.

## Back to School

Potsdam was our home for two years. During this time I was planning to continue my education toward the Ph.D. Time was spent deciding where I wanted to study. In the summer of 1965 Liane and Don took a trip across the United States and stopped by several universities including Stanford University and Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland OH. I was offered assistantships at MIT, Stanford, and Case Western. Likely because I was treated as though I was not just another student coming to their university, I chose CWRU in Cleveland.

In 1966 we set off for Cleveland, OH to begin Ph.D. studies. Our home was on the eastern side of the city of Cleveland in an area known as Richmond Heights. We lived on the third floor of a newly constructed apartment building. This would be our home until 1970. Don commuted to University Circle in Cleveland and Liane to her new job as a teacher in the Mayfield Heights school district, just south of

### **Abraham Martin And John**

*by Dick Holler*

*Has anybody here seen my old friend Abraham?*

*Can you tell me where he's gone?*

*He freed a lot of people,*

*But it seems the good they die young*

*You know, I just looked around and he's gone.*

*Anybody here seen my old friend John?*

*Can you tell me where he's gone?*

*He freed a lot of people,*

*But it seems the good they die young*

*I just looked around and he's gone.*

*Anybody here seen my old friend Martin?*

*Can you tell me where he's gone?*

*He freed a lot of people,*

*But it seems the good they die young*

*I just looked 'round and he's gone.*

*Didn't you love the things that they stood for?*

*Didn't they try to find some good for you and me?*

*And we'll be free*

*Some day soon, and it's a-gonna be one day ...*

*Anybody here seen my old friend Bobby?*

*Can you tell me where he's gone?*

*I thought I saw him walkin' up over the hill,*

*With Abraham, Martin and John.*

our apartment. We were fortunate to be supported by NDEA and NSF fellowships to pursue the degree.

When Don arrived on the CWRU campus, he found an encampment of the National Guard. Racial tensions had been growing between the have's and have not's of this nation. The University Circle was located in the cultural hub of Cleveland, but that was next to predominately African American Hough community in Cleveland. Race riots broke out July 18 and continued until July 23, 1966. Racial tension was high between the Cleveland's police force and the African American community. When the police arrived, violent confrontation ensued, gunfire and brick-throwing by angry residents. Ohio governor James A. Rhodes activated 1,600 local members of the National Guard, who arrived in Cleveland 11:00 p.m. that evening. The Hough area became quiet after the troops were deployed. This was only one of a number of U.S. cities that erupted into violent confrontation during this era. Don's studies at Case thus began in an environment marked by violent confrontation. And as we will see, violence marked the completion of his tenure on campus.

As Don got close to completing the requirements for the degree, Liane and Don decided to begin a family. Our eldest son David Robbins was born at McDonald House, a university hospital located just two blocks from Don's office. Juggling schoolwork and our new family became difficult. Our apartment which seemed right-sized for us when we moved in was now getting a bit tighter. Don's office became baby Dave's nursery. In those days, an elementary school teacher could not be seen pregnant. So as soon as Liane began to show her pregnancy she was forced to quit. Today, that would be cause for a law suit. Staying at home and preparing for the birth allowed Liane to meet neighbors with whom we have kept in touch ever since our days in Cleveland. Don's dissertation was nearing completion, and feeling the positive experience with the hospital and doctors in Cleveland, Liane and Don decided to have another baby before we left the community. Born just 16 months after Dave, Steven Jon joined our family. Finishing the dissertation and planning for the final defense with two babies was difficult, but we made it!

During my senior year in high school, the Soviet Union launched the first successful artificial satellite into low earth orbit. Four years later, the Soviet Union again beat America by announcing to the world that cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin had become the first human in space. The U.S. program was beset by launchpad failures and national malaise set in regarding America's technological superiority. During his first term as President of the United States, Jack Kennedy set the nation on a course to regain the lead in space exploration. On May 25, 1961, President John F. Kennedy announced before a special joint session of Congress the dramatic and ambitious goal of sending an American safely to the Moon before the end of the decade. During the decade of the 1970s the nation built the technology for the moon landing through a series of manned space programs including Mercury, Gemini, and finally Apollo. We gathered around our TV set on 5 MAY 1961 and watched Walter Cronkite's live broadcast of the launch of Navy Commander Alan Shepard aboard the Freedom 7 space capsule, the first American astronaut to travel into space.<sup>7-5</sup> On 15 JUL 1969 three astronauts, Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins blasted off from the Kennedy Space Center and 20 JUL five days later Armstrong and Aldrin had landed on the moon. The lunar module Eagle descended from the command module piloted by Collins



*The Earthrise from the surface of the moon*



*Neil Armstrong setting foot on the moon*

**7-5** *The suborbital flight, which lasted 15 minutes and reached a height of 116 miles.*

descended to the surface, and the nation watched as the crew counted off the distance to the final landing site. Finally, at 20:18 UTC, the announcement came from Armstrong, “The Eagle has landed!” Broadcast on live TV to a world-wide audience, Armstrong stepped onto the lunar surface at 02:56:15 UT July 21, 1969 with the words heard by millions: *“one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind.”* Apollo 11 effectively ended the Space Race and fulfilled a national goal proposed in 1961 by the late U.S. President John F. Kennedy.

At the beginning of the discussion of Cleveland, I mentioned that violence greeted us to the city and it would again appear when we were leaving. The second time, however, the violence was not racially motivated, but grew out of frustration with what seemed to be an interminable war in Vietnam. The following was written by Jerry M. Lewis and Thomas R. Hensley<sup>7-6</sup> and recounts the events leading up to a violent confrontation between National Guard troops and students at Kent State University who had assembled to protest the war in Vietnam.

*“On May 4, 1970 members of the Ohio National Guard fired into a crowd of Kent State University demonstrators, killing four and wounding nine Kent State students. The impact of the shootings was dramatic. The event triggered a nationwide student strike that forced hundreds of colleges and universities to close. H. R. Haldeman, a top aide to President Richard Nixon, suggests the shootings had a direct impact on national politics. In *The Ends of Power*, Haldeman (1978) states that the shootings at Kent State began the slide into Watergate, eventually destroying the Nixon administration. Beyond the direct effects of the May 4th, the shootings have certainly come to symbolize the deep political and social divisions that so sharply divided the country during the Vietnam War era.”*

When I completed my Ph.D. program at Case Western Reserve University our young family moved to Michigan where I took a job as assistant professor at Oakland University in Rochester, MI. Those final days were really difficult. David was two years old and Steven was only one. Attempting to finish my doctoral dissertation with two youngsters crawling around was a challenge. Today I would use a word processor on my computer to write, but in those days composing was by typewriter. I felt very fortunate to be able to borrow an IBM Selectric

7-6 < <http://dept.kent.edu/sociology/lewis/lewihen.htm> >



which had replaceable type balls, so that I could type the Greek characters I used in my dissertation. More complex symbols had to be rubbed on from transfer papers. Of course, final corrections required that the entire paper had to be retyped; no insertions and reprint available. At times I'd be working at 2:00 AM, the boys had awakened and were crawling around the living room as I worked at the kitchen table.

Finally, it was complete and I had my final defense. We began packing our things for the trip to Michigan. A few friends helped to carry things from the our third floor apartment in Richmond Heights to a U-Haul truck we had rented. However, it took longer than I had expected. We finally got off in late-afternoon for the not-to-far trip across Ohio and up to our new home, a two story apartment in Rochester, Michigan. I had hired a couple of students from Oakland University to help us unload, but we were so late that they left. There were, of course, no cell phones at that time to make an easy connection for a message. It was dark



*Steve and Dave in New Hampshire (1974)*

when we arrived, and we were all exhausted. We pulled out a blanket and pillows from our moving truck and all fell asleep cuddled on our bedroom floor.

## Final Thoughts

This story ends in my twenty-ninth year of life. If I attempted to chronicle what our family has done until now, some forty-six years later, I would have to write a couple of thousand pages more. My intent has not been to write a detailed description of my life here, but to capture some of the events that shaped our branch of the Falkenburg family set against the history of our nation. Some readers might wonder why I chose to talk about some historical events and not others. The simple answer is that what I have described in this chapter were things that defined who I was and who our family would become.

What will the future hold for the Falkenburg family, for my children, grandchildren, and generations to come? There are so many challenges that face the nation. Today climate instability caused by the warming of earth's atmosphere poses a long range problem not only for our family, our nation, but also for the entire planet. So many people today believe what they want to believe, that global warming is a natural phenomena and humankind is not responsible for it. Cutting back carbon emissions will hurt our profits and our way of life. Such reasoning is so short sighted and aims at near-term comfort and ignores the long term disaster that is at our doorstep.

The United States and western civilization are facing terror imposed by radical theologies. The reality hit this nation on 9/11/2001 when terrorists flew planes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Pennsylvania. For most of us these kinds of events are difficult to understand. Some Americans want to return hate with hate. As I write these words, the nation is in the midst of a presidential election. Fear mongering is rampant, not only on the issue of curtailing terrorism, but on a variety of issues from crime to immigration reform. We seem poised to abridge the basic tenets of our democracy—the ideals on which our nation was founded.