

Growing up in Coral Gables

by Donald M. Kuhn

One of my first memories of Coral Gables must have been in 1925 when the streetcars were introduced. I was nearly three and playing alone behind our big home at 824 Ponce de Leon Blvd. The house was on the southwest corner of Antequera Avenue, one block south of the Tamiami Trail (Southwest Eighth Street). An office building now occupies that site. Suddenly there was a horrendously loud train whistle, and inching north on the boulevard came a huge, black steam engine, the first I had ever seen. It frightened me, and I crawled through an opening under the house to escape it. In all likelihood, that one-time appearance of the steam engine was in celebration of the coming of the street car to Coral Gables.

During the same period, incredible as it may seem, peacocks wandered along the boulevard, their tails spread like fans. I thought they were the most beautiful of all creatures. For some reason, they disappeared soon after.

My dad, Paul C. Kuhn, had died a year earlier in the summer of 1924, before I reached the age of two, and I have no memory of him. My two brothers, Merrick, the eldest, and Richard, the youngest, have no memory of our dad either.

My mother, nee Helen Merrick, was the youngest of George E. Merrick's three sisters, the other two being Ethel and Medic. Besides George, my mother had brothers Charles and Richard. Mother was a twin; her sister, Ruth, died of diphtheria a year before the family moved to Dade County in 1900.

Of the six surviving children of Solomon Greasley and Althea Fink Merrick, my mother was the only one to bear offspring, so we three kids grew up with unusually close relationships with our aunts and uncles.



The home of Helen Merrick, the mother of Donald Kuhn, at 824 Ponce De Leon Boulevard, Coral Gables circa 1924—presently the site of an office building.

Mother's second marriage was to John V. Bond, an uncle by marriage who was widowed. He was a contractor, specializing in building coral rock homes. In 1926 we moved into his house at 1217 Coral Way where we lived until I was ten years old.

People today think that when the boom wound down after 1926, everyone went broke overnight. That was certainly not the case with the Merricks. The economic decline was slow and insidious. Uncle George and Aunt Eunice lived in their house at 836 South Greenway Drive until the end of the 1920s, Aunt Medie in her home at 1133 North Greenway Drive, and Aunt Ethel and Uncle Ted in their home at 711 University Drive. We had servants during those years. We had telephones and automobiles.

From my earliest age, I knew that Uncle George was special. He had become the head of the family when my grandfather died in 1911. While still in his thirties, he had created and built Coral Gables, its splendid waterway, the Venetian Pool, the Douglas Entrance, the Biltmore Hotel, was a founder of the University of Miami, and donated the land for its campus. Despite his subsequent financial failure, the family held him in awe. I was no exception.

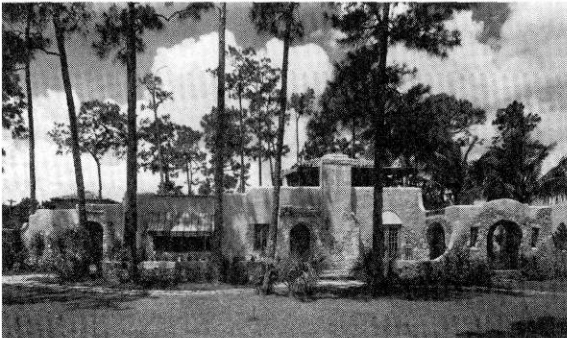
Uncle George had a big Lincoln (as I remember) and it was driven by a handsome, black chauffeur named George Allen who lived in the apartment above the garage. Uncle George's garage was unique. It had front and back garage doors. One could

drive from the street into the back, then out the front without backing up.

We never entered Uncle George's house from the front door on South Greenway Drive, but always through the side gate on Castile Avenue. George and Eunice kept two parrots on the porch. They had gorgeous blue, red and green colors. The living room decor was like nothing I had seen elsewhere—Spanish, of heavy dark woods and leathers. There was a strange, dark-wooded desk, obviously Spanish, trimmed in red and gold and possibly other colors, with many little drawers. That desk would fascinate any child. Uncle George always gave each of us three brothers a dime whenever he saw us, just like we heard Rockefeller did.

My brother, Merrick, who died in 1989, told me that he had read that a syndicate had offered Uncle George forty million dollars for his holdings in 1928, which George refused. I have not been able to verify that.

The great hurricane of 1926 struck when I was not quite four. Our sturdy home of coral rock stood like a fortress. However, there were



The splendid home of George and Eugene Merrick at 836 South Greenway Drive. The Merricks resided there from 1924 until 1930. HASF M3687

screened sleeping porches on the east and west sides, and the wind drove much water into the house. The water nearly reached my knees, and I was having great fun wading. Father stood me on a chair and ordered me to stay there while he began bor-

ing holes through the floor with a brace and bit to let the water out. Merrick's treadle car blew away during the night, and we never saw it again.

The 1926 hurricane was very exciting to us kids and we eagerly looked forward to more hurricanes from that time on.

The 1930s were hard for the grownups, but not for us kids. The chief effect of the depression on us three brothers was that we received

no allowances; we had to fend for ourselves. My mother, a free spirit, was very permissive. Father administered discipline.

It wasn't until 1933 when my stepfather lost his house at 1217 Coral Way through foreclosure that we moved back into my mother's home on Ponce de Leon Boulevard, at which time we no longer had a phone or car. Father got around on a bicycle. All the other houses except my grandmother's (Coral Gables Merrick House) had been lost by that time also. My Aunt Medie's automobile, her prized Wills Sainte Claire two-door convertible, rested on blocks in our driveway.

When I was growing up in the 1920s, most families never locked their doors. Traffic in front of our house on Coral Way was sporadic. One could hear noises long distances away. Every morning, somewhere to the east, a rooster crowed.

Every week, it seemed, a car would strike a dog somewhere, and we would hear that awful sound, "aiee, aiee, aiee," until it faded in the distance. When I was four or five, my grandmother's little fox terrier, Mike, was struck and killed at the intersection of University Drive and Granada Boulevard. Aunt Medie and I carried Mike home. He is buried somewhere on Coral Gables Merrick House property.

For some reason, loose dogs seem to be more car-savvy these days.

My brothers and I spent hours on the playground at San Salvador Park, a block away. When my mother wanted us home for lunch, she would stand at the front door and call our names—"Merrick, Donald, Richard!" We heard her easily from where we played in the park.

The Coral Gables Country Club was a lively place many evenings. I enjoyed lying in bed, listening to the music waft across the distant golf course as I dropped off to sleep.

In the distance, we would also hear, all too frequently, the sound of car accidents in Coral Gables. First would come the screeching of tires, then the bang, and then the distinctive tinselled sound of breaking glass settling to the street. Cars had no safety glass until sometime in the 1930s, and even in a minor accident, one could be seriously injured by shards of glass, some as deadly as kitchen knives. Seat belts weren't an option until the 1950s.

I witnessed my first accident when I was five. I was returning with my mother from a morning walk on Country Club Prado. I saw two cars crash at high speed at the intersection of Coral Way and Red Road. I wanted to see the accident close up because one

car had turned over, but mother shielded my eyes and marched me home.

A few years later, I saw a terrible accident on the Tamiami Trail at Cortez Street. A touring bus, identical to the one that Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert shared in the movie *It Happened One Night*, struck a car with such force that the car was hurled like a toy into a vacant lot, shearing off a pine tree before it landed. The car contained a family with children, all of whom had been ejected from the car. I was eight or nine and unused to such carnage. I ran to the corner and vomited.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the main section of the Gables lay between Douglas and Red Roads, and between the Trail and Bird Road. Beyond Bird Road there were miles of paved roads and sidewalks and vacant lots. The unique “villages” in the area with Dutch, Chinese, and French architecture were enclaves, somewhat like oases, separated by blocks full of Florida pines with a few houses here and there.

The Coral Gables waterway snaked through the area with only a half-dozen homes built on it. One of my favorite homes in Coral Gables was Telfair Knight’s home on the waterway. Telfair was Uncle George’s general manager. His home was on the west side of the waterway on University Drive, a little south of Bird Road. It was a large home, Mediterranean in style, painted a light brown. It had a circular driveway, and a swimming pool and cabana. The Knights entertained a lot, and as a kid, I enjoyed their parties. At one such gala event, the guests were given gold watches.

Father had three children by his previous marriage, and for a while they and we three brothers all lived together. Vernon, Mildred and Frances were in their teens and danced and partied a lot to the tunes of the day. By 1928, they had all moved north. Vernon left his Lyon and Healy trombone behind which I learned to play a half-dozen years later.

There were no locks on most of the city-owned buildings such as the Granada or Alhambra entrances or the castle-like circular stairway leading to the arch of the Douglas Entrance, or even the pump room under the De Soto Fountain near the Venetian Pool. In the 1930s, the cover of the manhole leading to the pump room was never locked, as it is today. It was our make-believe dungeon, dark and damp. We went there after dark, with candles or flashlights.

The coral rock entrances to the city were made-to-order clubhouses. The Granada entrance was okay, but our favorite was the one at

Douglas Road and Alhambra Circle. It was close to the elementary school. When school let out, we would head for our clubhouse in the arch over the street. It was easy to get into. The doors were never locked. No one ever bothered us. All of these sites at various times



The De Soto Fountain with the Miami Biltmore Hotel (today's Biltmore Hotel) in the background.

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became play areas for some of us as we were growing up.

Coral Gables was not without its hazards for young boys. There were bigger boys who bullied, for instance. The plazas around the city offered hiding places where one could waylay you. The plazas at Granada Boulevard and Columbus Boulevard were two of their favorite lurking spots. I was underweight and lithe, and I could run like a gazelle to escape them. I had no problem running through vacant lots and their sandspurs, but they did. Sometimes a bully would chase me, and I would pop into the house of a surprised neighbor for a haven; their door was invariably unlocked. What would a bully do if he caught you? Make you say “uncle,” stuff like that. By the time I was nine, bullies were no longer a threat to me.

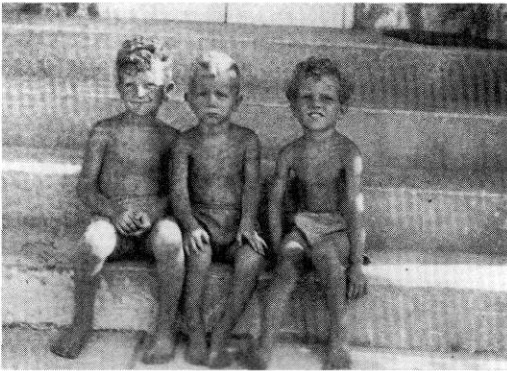
My mother believed that the sun was healthy for growing kids, so until we entered grade school, we rarely wore shirts or even shoes. This state of affairs upset a lady down the street at Madrid who complained about us “heathens.” Recently, I learned from Tommy Lifsey, who used to live in the same block in the rock house with a blue roof, that Daniel Redfern, a lawyer neighbor, wrote a letter to her that effectively shut her up.

Father, like Aunt Medie, owned a Wills Sainte Claire. Ours was a four-door convertible, a “gangster car.” Its hood emblem was a flying goose. We referred to it by its common name, the “Grey Goose.” It was an expensive car, high-powered and quiet-running. On Sundays we drove down Columbus Boulevard to the Congregational Church

where Father, Mother, and we three brothers attended adult services. There may have been a Sunday school, but we three never attended it. During sermons, Father could be counted on to nod off, and sometimes to snore. One evening a silent film was shown in the sanctuary. It was *King of Kings*, a 1927 movie directed by Cecil B. de Mille.

After church, nearly every Sunday, our family would climb back into the Grey Goose for long drives in the countryside. We ventured as far north as Opa-Locka where there was a zoo and huge zeppelin hangars, and as far south as Royal Palm State Park, south of Homestead. In 1929, we drove up to Palm Beach for a swim in the strong surf there. We also took in a movie, *The Canary Murder Case*, at a theater located in an arcade in West Palm Beach.

Two of the main northward thoroughfares, Le Jeune Road and Twenty-seventh Avenue were narrow, two-lane highways. They were sometimes crowded with traffic. Miles north on Twenty-seventh Avenue was the Municipal Airport where air shows were held. In 1936 or 1937, some of us rode bicycles there to see the new bomber called the Flying Fortress.



Merrick, Richard, and Donald on the front steps of 1217 Coral Way, Coral Gables in 1927.

Once, returning from Opa-Locka in the Grey Goose, coming down Le Jeune Road (or possibly Red Road), we

passed by a “train wreck” promotion. Tickets were being sold to the public for an upcoming Sunday in which two steam engines would be sent crashing into each other at high speed. Father said “no” to our pleas to attend, and he was right to do so, for the crash turned out to be a dull affair, in fact, one big dud, according to the newspapers.

Occasionally we would drive into Miami to a Spanish restaurant on Miami Avenue north of the Capitol Theater. (Mother always referred to that street as “Avenue D.”) Invariably Father ordered *arroz con pollo* for all of us. We brothers called it “rollio com pollio.”

Father's good friend Dick Rice and family owned an orange grove and packinghouse in Kendall. Father worked there on occasion, and he often took me with him. We would drive through Larkins, now South Miami, past the Larkins movie theater which became a Holsum bakery, through a piney area until we reached the Kendall grove. I would spend the day playing among the orange trees, or visiting the noisy packinghouse located across U.S. 1 by the Florida East Coast railway tracks. During cold snaps, black smoke pots would be put around the orange trees to help prevent freezing. Some time after World War II, Dick Rice's grove disappeared and the site became a snake farm tourist attraction.

The road to Homestead was mostly pine country. The little crossroad towns of Kendall, Perrine, Goulds, Princeton, and Naranja were easily identified, because miles of pines and palmettos separated them. Turn left toward the bay—pines. Turn right toward the Everglades—pines. Near Homestead were farms that grew tomatoes and other vegetables, and groves of oranges and avocados. Civilization ended at Krome Avenue.

On several trips that we made to Homestead in the Grey Goose, an ancient black steam engine facing north on a siding fascinated me. It was ancient because, like some of those old steam engines seen in Westerns, it had one of those odd funnels shaped like a fat, angular, pot-bellied stove, big in the middle and narrow at the top and bottom. It was near Princeton, always there in the same place. I fantasized that it was the "little engine that could" that in an emergency would come to someone's rescue, climbing an imaginary hill, chugging, "I think I can, I think I can." *The Little Engine That Could* was one of the first books that I read as a child.

There was a county hospital in Kendall where the poor were supposed to go. When I was ten, I had an abscess in my left hip. This was in 1932, and there was talk of an operation in the Kendall hospital. Thankfully, that was not to be, and Dr. Arthur Weiland of Coral Gables performed an operation on me at Jackson Memorial Hospital. I spent three weeks there and became a favorite of the nurses. My ward was in a screened sleeping porch. Recently I tried to identify the building with its tropical, red tiled roof, but I could not find it in the huge maze that is Jackson today.

The post-boom years were an okay time for us kids. The whole Miami area was one big playground, filled with vacant or unfinished

buildings and secret haunts. These included structures as large as a skyscraper and as small as a corner gas station. In Coral Gables, the two largest unfinished structures were the concrete skeleton of the administration building on the undeveloped campus of the University of Miami on University Concourse, now Ponce de Leon Boulevard, and the large, U-shaped, apartment building at 121-125 Zamora Avenue. We referred to it as the "Three-Story Building."

The "Three-Story Building" was a concrete block shell on the outside. Inside were under-flooring, stairs and studs and no interior walls. Although the doors and windows were boarded up, we found a way in. Two bosom buddies, Jimmy and Billy McDonald, and we three brothers considered it our private playhouse. It was the biggest playhouse one could ever want. This was in 1933 after we had moved back to my mother's house on Ponce de Leon Boulevard when I was ten. Coincidentally, Jimmy and Billy had moved, too, to an apartment at 144 Mendoza Avenue behind the "Three-Story Building."

In downtown Coral Gables, during business hours, one was always aware of the Renuart Lumber Yard. It was off one of the side streets west of Ponce de Leon Boulevard. The noise from its electric saws reverberated up and down the boulevard. There was also a riding academy nearby.

The Coral Gables Theater, on Ponce between Alcazar and Minorca, was big, modern, and comfortable. Mr. Boone, a baldish man friendly to kids, managed it. His main usher was a suave young man with slicked down black hair who wore a classy serge uniform. During the 1930s, the theater sponsored occasional vaudeville acts between movie shows. I remember seeing Joe Penner ("Wanna buy a duck?") perform there. The theater also sponsored the usual "dish" nights and prize drawings, such as for turkeys at Thanksgiving. In 1933, I saw *King Kong* there.

From Alcazar Avenue, the theater could be accessed through Hupps Pharmacy. Hupps was famous for its great candy counter, and also for its soda fountain that competed against the soda fountain of Alcazar Drugs across the street on Ponce. There was a gas station on the Minorca side of the theater, behind which two yellow school busses were routinely parked. They were used for transporting teenagers to Ponce de Leon High School on U.S. 1, opposite the undeveloped campus of the University of Miami.

There were only one or two vacant lots between the theater and Coral Way. In 1936 or 1937, on one of the lots, a narrow one, a new building was constructed which seemed to be a positive indicator for progress ahead. It housed a stock brokerage firm.

The main intersection of Coral Gables was Ponce de Leon Boulevard and Coral Way (Miracle Mile after WWII). Yet there were only two buildings at that corner, the Administration Building of the old Coral Gables Corporation and the Colonnade Building. For a few years, a miniature golf course occupied the northwest corner (we called it a Pony golf course). The southeast corner was vacant, until it too sported a miniature golf course. The two courses competed against each other. The intersection was further humbled when the administration building was modified to house Sam's Service Station on the southwest corner. Gas dispensing must have been a very good business in the 1930s; there were six gas stations on Ponce de Leon Boulevard between Coral Way and the Tamiami Trail. A pharmacy and bus station eventually replaced the miniature golf course on the northwest corner.

There were not many other structures along Coral Way. There was a three-story building on the north side a little west of Douglas Road. On Biltmore Way west of City Hall, there was only one building that I can recall.

All the Merricks liked ice cream, including Uncle George, and there were three parlors in the Gables. Two of them were located on Ponce de Leon Boulevard—one near Flagler Street, and one near Bird Road. The third and by far the most popular was Worthmore on Aragon Avenue off Ponce de Leon, two stores west of Dad's barber shop. Many flavors were available, including grapenut, but I always preferred their vanilla.

One of my very early memories was a "community night" held at the broad intersection of Ponce de Leon Boulevard and Alhambra Circle. The area was cordoned off from Ponce eastward to the triangular building that housed a bank in front, and post office at the rear. There was a root beer stand on the north side of the square. Father bought us ice-cold root beer that was dispensed from a huge barrel inside the stand. It was a balmy night, and the area teemed with people. A band played. I don't recall any speeches.

Eventually, the bank and post office were relocated, and the vacated building became a church. The post office moved into a section of the Administration Building of the old Coral Gables Corporation, across

an arcade from Uncle George's real estate office that he established in the mid-1930s. In 1938, when I was taken north by car to live with my



George Merrick, the creator of Coral Gables, on the steps of the newly-opened Miami Biltmore Hotel, January 1926. HASF M4078 (W)

Aunt Medie and Uncle Quint in Greenwich, New York, I saw numerous signs on U.S. 1 between Miami and Jacksonville advertising Uncle George's real estate business in Coral Gables.

Periodically in the late 1920s, my mother would take us three boys into Miami to shop at Burdine's, or Cromer-Cassel's (later Richards), which supposedly, until the downtown Walgreens store was built, had Miami's only basement. We would take a streetcar from downtown Coral Gables into Miami. We could go via Flagler Street or Coral Way. Most of the time we traveled via Coral Way. The streetcar on Coral Way was big, modern, and swift. The motorman allowed us to ride up front. Usually, we had lunch at a small corner restaurant on Southeast First Street toward the bay. I always enjoyed looking up to see the castle-like turrets of the Halcyon Hotel, and the sprawling, yellow Royal Palm Hotel on the river.

In 1927 when I was going on five, my aunt Medie took me to my first University of Miami football game. It was played on a field on the undeveloped campus, about where the University's baseball stadium is today. There were wooden bleachers along the west side of the field. I

enjoyed the excitement of the adults, but was more interested in the popcorn and peanuts than the game.

In 1928, our family was still well-off enough for my mother to take us three children to Basil, Ohio (now Baltimore), near Columbus, to visit my deceased father's parents. We took a train to Jacksonville, a ship to Baltimore with a stopover in Savannah, and a train from

Baltimore to Columbus, Ohio. In Baltimore, I experienced my first hill. I climbed it, ran down it too fast, and tumbled into a house at the bottom. Strangely, I have no recollection of the return trip from Columbus.

My grandmother's home, Coral Gables Merrick House, was always interesting and a source of fun. It was like entering an art museum. Paintings, mostly by family members—Mody, Uncle Denman, Uncle Richard—hung in every room. Photos of Uncle Richard were on a wall above a cabinet holding the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Mody's hand-

adorned the dining room. The whole family met there for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. My grandmother Althea (the grownups called her "Alley", and we three kids, "Mody," pronounced "Moady"), sat at one end of the table,

Uncle George at the other. We boys were never allowed at the big table. We had a card table in the same room to ourselves. Sometimes, we would be allowed to run the player piano. We celebrated perhaps a dozen such happy occasions before my grandmother died in 1937.

After dinner at Mody's, when we were real young, we played under the sunroom behind the bamboo trees, among scores of conch shells stored there. The grotto was larger then than it is today. It included a large pond with goldfish, much larger and deeper than the pond in front. We became expert at starting the various sprinklers servicing the grotto, and enjoyed watching them run. The banyan tree in back and the rubber tree in front were great for climbing, especially the rubber tree. The swing outside the summer room was also a lot of fun. Our favorite game after dinner was hide-and-seek, and as I recall, I was usually the most successful at hiding myself. The south garage was



The Coral Gables House, the boyhood home of George Merrick. Members of the Merrick family lived there throughout the boyhood years of Donald Kuhn.

HASF M3678

off limits because that's where Uncle Richard and Uncle Charley made beer.

No recounting of early Coral Gables would be complete without comments on Coral Gables Elementary School. I entered kindergarten in 1927. I remember nearly all of my teachers – Miss Thompson in kindergarten, Miss Feaster in first grade, Miss Stoddard in second grade, Miss Dunlap who encouraged me in English, Miss Madry (mathematics), Miss Ware (geography), Miss Fulks (English), Miss Khoury (music and physical education), Miss Baccus (first grade), Miss Linder (eighth grade, art and penmanship) and one man who resembled the actor, Gene Raymond, but whose name I don't remember.

There were no fences at the school. Two custodians—janitors—lived on the premises. They were Mr. Garrett and Mr. Simpson. All of us children liked them immensely.

The school seemed to be a magnet for grocery stores. The Coral Gables Grocery was across the street on Ponce de Leon Boulevard. Flanagan's, in the Laidlaw Building, flanked the school on the south at Minorca, and Table Supply was on the north at Navarre. Father shopped at the Table Supply, an early supermarket. Our food budget was \$10 per week. That fed our family of five, two dogs, and a number of cats.

The school day started with the playing of the bugle, the raising of the flag, and the Pledge of Allegiance.

By far, the dominant personality at Coral Gables Elementary School was Miss Abigail Gilday, the principal. She was a big woman, and to a child, utterly huge. She occupied a small office, so small that she seemed all the larger. Her upper arms were as big as logs. Her dress fell straight, like Mother Hubbard, to her ankles, nearly hiding her black, laced shoes. Her ability to widen her eyes and stare us down was such that no culprit dared lie to her, lest he melt into the floor. We respected Miss Gilday, but feared ever being brought before her, because we knew we couldn't fool her under any circumstance imaginable.

Miss Gilday believed that most studying should be done at school, so we had very little homework. The homework we did have was mostly confined to required memorization, such as selections from Shakespeare. Once a week we would assemble in the auditorium to listen to Walter Damrosch's radio show on music appreciation. Once a year at assembly, the Coral Gables police and firemen would demonstrate drug paraphernalia and educate us about the evils of opium and heroin.

Once when I was twelve, Billy McDonald and I (he was my best friend) had the audacity to skip school, play hooky, that is, and think that we could get away with it. It was a fiasco. We rode Billy's bike into Coconut Grove and were playing in the park on the site of the old Peacock Inn when a policeman intercepted us. He deposited the bike and us at the principal's office at Coconut Grove Elementary School. The principal phoned Fanny Tooley, legendary as the hard-nosed, red-haired truant officer from downtown Miami, to escort us back to Coral Gables. The principal then went to lunch, leaving Billy and me alone in her office. Billy's bike was leaning against a coconut tree just outside the principal's door.

We commiserated regarding our plight. Neither of us wanted to be confronted by Fanny Tooley, or Miss Gilday, or my stepfather, or Billy's mother. Our childish solution was to compound the situation by deciding to "run away" and travel north to see the world.

We jumped on Billy's bike, rode it to a nearby block that was vacant, and hid in the middle of the block until school let out. We envisioned that all the police in Miami were hunting for us. Using mostly back streets, we traveled north to Thirty-sixth Street, then up U.S. 1 past Seventy-ninth Street. By that time, we were tired and a little hungry, and decided to hitchhike. The first car that came along picked us up, bike and all.

The driver, a young man, drove us as far as Fort Lauderdale. There, he pulled over to the shoulder and tried to talk us out of traveling farther. While he was talking to us, a state trooper stopped to see if we needed aid. When the driver got out and began talking to the trooper, Billy and I, huddled in the back seat with the bike on our laps, knew the jig was up.

Fort Lauderdale at that time was a small town of under ten thousand. While the police awaited the arrival of Billy's mother who had both a phone and a car, they treated us like celebrities, and served us ice cream. The worst part of the ordeal was the long drive home. Billy's mother uttered not a single word, which was worse than if she had berated us.

We never faced Fanny Tooley. Father gave me a tanning with his razor strop. We survived Miss Gilday's withering stare and promised her our good behavior in the future. Mother and father ordered me to stop seeing Billy, but that was impossible to enforce, for I saw him at school every day.

I met Jimmy and Billy McDonald when I was in the second grade. Jimmy was a year older than Billy and myself. Their mother, Sara, was a

widow. She sold ties door-to-door initially, and then took a permanent job with Pan American Airways. The McDonalds lived in the downstairs part of a garage apartment on Madrid Street near South Greenway Drive. The Houston family lived upstairs. Billy and I became fast friends. Later, we discovered that we both liked the water. We fished and sailed near Dinner Key, canoed in the Miami River, and frequented the Venetian Pool and Tahiti Beach.

Billy and I particularly liked the area around Dinner Key. We enjoyed watching the PAA clippers land and discharge their passengers. Somehow Billy and I managed to own a small sailboat with a center-board and collapsible mast. We liked to take her out at six in the morning when the bay was like glass, and one could see the baby barracudas close to shore. We frequented a sandbar called "White Island." There was nothing on it but crabs and sand flies, but it was fun just getting off the boat and exploring it.

Sometimes we ventured as far as the two Deering Islands north of the Deering Estate (Villa Vizcaya). With their numerous Australian pines, the islands made excellent camp sites.

Once we beached the boat on the mainland north of the estate and visited the Devil's Punch Bowl. We had read about it in the newspaper. It was a mysterious, natural appearing round hole about a yard or so across, flush with the ground, in a heavily wooded area not far from the shore. I don't recall seeing water in it.

Swimming was an all-day affair. The Venetian Pool, with its caves, towers, and abundant foliage, was great for playing hide-and-seek. Once, by perching on the fence near the entrance to the pool, I successfully hid "in plain view" like ET in the closet. Two kids coming from opposite directions met directly in front of me, wondering where I could possibly be hiding. I could have touched them.

Our canoe in the Miami River was an apparent Seminole Indian dugout that Billy and I discovered buried in mud near the turntable train bridge of the FEC railway. We were pursuing an eel when we stumbled across it. The canoe easily held three or four persons. With the canoe, we were able to paddle real close to the manatees that frequented the mouth of the river.

One summer day, when the Brickell Avenue Bridge was being repaired in raised position, a workman high up accidentally dropped a large bucket of aluminum paint that hit the water only inches from me.

Had it struck me, I surely would have been severely injured or killed. I was splashed with paint, which I had a hard time explaining to my mother, for she was unaware of our boat in the river. She knew only of our boat at Dinner Key.

The Granada Golf Course provided sport many evenings. One of our unusual pastimes was a game we called "tanking." Dotted around the course were some thatched-roofed, open-aired huts that provided thirsty golfers with shade and cool water. The water was cooled by a block of ice resting on coils in a square tank above the spigot. One of the huts was near Madrid Street and South Greenway Drive, a half-block from the garage apartment where Jimmy and Billy lived. After dark, we would remove the lid from the tank, and if the block of ice was large enough, we took turns pulling down our britches to see who could sit on it the longest. It sounds crazy, but that's one of the ways we had fun.

Boy Scout Troop 7 occupied an edge of the course on South Greenway Drive. I joined the troop in 1935 and greatly enjoyed the camaraderie and activities. We usually ended our evenings playing "Capture the Flag," a game for which the golf course was amply suited. We camped on Snapper Creek, off Red Road across from a nudist colony. The nudist colony later became the Parrot Jungle.

In 1934 or 1935, we discovered the tropical jungle of Matheson Hammock, and sometimes spent all day there playing hide-and-seek on our bicycles. We rode our bikes through the narrow jungle paths. Some sections of Matheson Hammock with their giant ferns and huge tropical trees made us feel as though we were in deepest Africa. Farther down Cutler Road in front of a general store was a large, rare Sausage Tree that enhanced the Hammock's mystique.

Sometimes we played on an unfinished stretch of the Coral Gables waterway that wended west along South Alhambra Circle. The canal had been dug, but coral rock gravel from the excavations was still heaped on the south side, making mini-hills. Nearby, we found some corrugated, galvanized roofing panels, and rounded an end on each to make them into sleds. Then we would climb to the top and sled down, racing each other for hours at a time.

It was not unusual in that section of the Gables to find dry-land turtles that my mother called gophers lazing in the middle of an empty road. We played with them for a while, then put them into the weeds across the sidewalk so that they would not be run over by an occasional

car. Sometimes a family of six or eight fat little quails crossed the road toward some unknown destination, like organized chickens.

I abhorred and feared scorpions, and became adept at uncovering the little brown things hiding in old, damp woodpiles. I was rarely successful in destroying one. Once, when a tree was being planted in the Alhambra parkway at Ponce de Leon Boulevard, I saw an ugly, jet black scorpion as large as a man's hand crawl out of the hole into the grass. A workman killed it.

Then there were the rare centipedes, yellow, an inch wide, and nearly a foot long that we kids feared more than any other insect, because we were told that one could kill us. Other creatures that we feared were the coral snake and the white-mouthed water moccasin. Once, around 1934, a wild cat was discovered in a huge live oak at the rear of the Clara Reina Hotel on Alhambra Circle only a block from Douglas Road. A hotel staff member shot it out of the tree.

I was by no means non-studious. The Coral Gables Library was located nearby in the Douglas Entrance, on the first floor, beneath the Grand Ballroom. The librarians, Miss Beaton and Miss De Pamphilis were extremely helpful to my brother Merrick and me. Merrick encouraged my reading, and the two of us enjoyed many evenings at the library, taking books home to read. My younger brother, Richard, was less interested in reading, but he had a natural bent for arithmetic. The library was later moved down the street to its own building.

Merrick liked to own books. At one point, he owned an entire set of books by Horatio Alger. He had a large collection of books on Napoleon. I favored biographies on pirates, inventors, and statesmen, particularly George Washington.

Oftentimes in the summer, and after school, I visited my grandmother Mody. She suffered from arthritis, and got around the house on crutches, never complaining, just sometimes saying, "ouch." My visits to Mody usually included playing board games with her, our favorite being "Pollyanna." My grandparents had been true pioneers. They moved to Florida from Massachusetts with five children in 1900 when Dade County had only one thousand people and "Coral Gables" was a wilderness. Uncle Richard, the sixth child, was born in 1903; he came in with the airplane, as he liked to say.

After Uncle George and Aunt Eunice lost their home around 1930, they moved into Miami to live on West Flagler Street, near Southwest

Twenty-second Avenue. They would come over on weekends and take Mody for drives around Coral Gables. I accompanied them sometimes. I think that Uncle George never tired of viewing his creation, his "City Beautiful." He would point out his favorite buildings. He was particularly pleased with the Biltmore Hotel; it was always the last sight on our drive. Mody was fun to be with and I was sad when she died in 1937.

Occasionally, in the rainy season, we could expect mosquitoes from the Everglades. They came in swarms on hot, humid evenings, blackening screen doors in their attempts to enter. Tourists in the winter often complained about the many bugs in the area; I would think to myself, "They should see them in the summer."

It was a common occurrence for tourists to stop their cars, stick their heads out the windows, and ask me for directions to a destination in the Gables. Sometimes they complained that they were hopelessly lost. I enjoyed helping them. Earlier, until the beginning of the 1930s, pink telephone-type booths housed "You Are Here" maps, that dotted Coral Gables. These had been placed strategically around the city for the benefit of prospective buyers and tourists. Gradually, they disappeared, as did the handsome, wooden street signs. One of the last surviving map booths was on Coral Way at Anderson Road, across from the Granada Golf Course.

When we kids weren't playing in the "Three-Story Building" on Zamora Avenue, or at one of the arched entrances, we earned "movie money." Our supply source were the "secret" fruit trees throughout the Coral Gables area, starting with the avocado, mango, key lime, and guava trees at my grandmother's place, Coral Gables Merrick House. Our favorite avocado tree was concealed by pines in a lot on Ponce de Leon Boulevard across from the Antilla Hotel. Every year, it produced huge avocados for us that we sold for a dime a piece. There were additional trees in the same general area near the Coliseum, and across the Tamiami Trail west of Ponce de Leon Boulevard. These included some orange trees, and several wonderful Persian lime trees. West of Le Jeune Road in an unincorporated area was a small grove of pecan trees. Around the Venetian Pool and stretching toward the Biltmore Hotel were numerous grapefruit trees planted by the Coral Gables Plantation that survived the building of Coral Gables.

Five of us—Billy, his brother Jimmy, my brothers Merrick and Richard, and I—considered these to be our private source of income.

In season, we picked the fruit and sold it door-to-door. Year-round, we searched various areas, especially behind gas stations, for recyclable bottles. Certain quart milk bottles were worth five cents. The right ones had a large five cent symbol embossed in glass on the bottom. To us, they were a mother lode.

Our goal: Fifteen cents per person—ten cents for a movie, and five cents for a candy bar, my favorite being a Butterfinger. Usually, we exceeded that amount.

The Coral Gables Theater was our favorite theater, but when another friend, Henry Bryant (he later became a surgeon) and his numerous beautiful sisters moved to an area a little south of Southwest Eighth Street near Seventeenth Avenue, we gravitated toward the Tower Theater. The Tower was a kid's dream. On a Saturday afternoon, the Tower's program would include Pathe News, The March of Time, a cartoon, a comedy, a serial, and a Western. The comedies featured Our Gang, Edgar Kennedy, Leon Errol, or Pete Smith. All for only ten cents. Each of us had favorite cowboys, such as Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson, or Buck Jones. My favorite was Tim McCoy, who, years later, I was pleased to notice, played a cameo role in the movie *Around the World in Eighty Days*.

Occasionally, we would go to the Tivoli on Flagler Street near Seventh Avenue or the Rex, or The Olympia in downtown Miami. The Olympia advertised itself as "air-cooled."

A movie downtown was usually an all day event. We would go to the southwest corner of Ponce and the Trail. (The lot there was vacant, except around July 4th when a stand would be erected for selling fireworks.) When the light turned red, we would split up and go car-to-car seeking a ride into Miami. We competed to see who could be the first to arrive in front of the Olympia Theater. Then we would play hide-and-seek in the four-block area between Miami Avenue and the Olympia Theater at Second Avenue, and between Southeast First Street and Northeast First Street. We knew all the sites that offered access through a block, such as Burdine's, the Red Cross Department Store, and the Halcyon and Seybold Arcades. When we tired, we went to a movie, and usually enjoyed exiting into the heat and brightness of the late afternoon. If we had the money, there was a soda fountain at the entrance to the Seybold Arcade on Northeast First Avenue that, for 10 cents, served, we felt, the best milkshake in town. The stoplight at the

corner of Southwest Eighth Street and Second Avenue was the best place to catch a ride home.

Sometimes we went to Bayfront Park to play in the sunken tropical garden there, or to Pier Five to admire the Chris Crafts.

Occasionally we kids would have the money to eat at the Dinner Bell restaurant in downtown Miami. It was located on Northeast First Avenue, and what a bargain it offered! For only fifteen cents, one could get a full course dinner. One's only choice was the entrée. With it came a salad, vegetables, and dessert. The beverage may have been extra, I don't recall. On holidays such as at Christmas or Thanksgiving, the price was twenty-five cents.

In the summer of 1936, when I was thirteen, the family sent me north to visit Aunt Medie and Uncle Quint in Englewood, New Jersey. The Clyde Mallory Line ran ocean liners to New York. I was put on the *Algonquin*, traveling steerage for twelve dollars. Because I was a kid, I was allowed the run of the ship, and on the three-day, 900-mile trip, my love for the ocean was secured.

Uncle Quint worked in New York as chief detective for the Essex House Hotel, and sometimes I accompanied him into the city. I promptly fell in love with New York, roaming it alone from the Metropolitan Museum to the Battery. In Englewood, my neighbors were George and Dick Button (Dick became an Olympic skating star). Another neighbor was the young Malcolm Forbes. Malcolm, three years my senior, introduced me to the game of croquet. At summer's end, I returned home on the *Seminole*, this time confined to steerage, but looking forward to entering Ponce de Leon High School. Unfortunately, I never kept in touch with my newfound friends in Englewood.

In November, I became a newsboy, and began selling the *Miami Daily News* on the street. Sales were brisk during the winter season between November and May. Tourists were interested in racing results, closing stock market prices, and the weather up north. I quickly discovered that many sales could be made to people entering or leaving restaurants. One of my best restaurants was the Barcelona, the Gables' most upscale restaurant at the time. It was next door to our home on Ponce de Leon Boulevard, separated from us only by a vacant lot.

The building that housed the Barcelona had an interesting history. It was built to sell and service Buick automobiles. The showroom occu-

pied the first floor facing Ponce. Its garage was on the second floor, accessed by a ramp at the rear. When Buick vacated the premises early in the Depression, Arthur Fishman housed his realty agency in the showroom. He installed a white-picket fence in front of the glass showcase to create a rustic appearance. Coming home from elementary school I discovered that if I took a stick and strummed it across the fence, I could produce what I later learned was a Pavlov reaction in Mr. Fishman. On each such occasion, he could be expected to come rushing out of his office, his face flushed, yelling, "I'll break your neck!"

At some point in the 1930s, Viola Belasco rented the garage upstairs where she conducted dance classes for young boys and girls. When the Barcelona moved in downstairs, Viola moved her studio to the Douglas Entrance. It was located south of the arch, facing Douglas Road. Occasionally, we less advantaged kids would annoy her classes by making funny faces through the glass front of her studio.

I never dined at the Barcelona, but peering in, I admired its décor—the tiled floor, the chandeliers, the dark Spanish tables and chairs, the thick red water glasses, and elegant red napkins, and the waitresses in costume. I remember the fuss made when golfer Ralph Guldahl and his entourage came there to dine. He won the 1937 U.S. Open.

The Barcelona was so successful the management opened a second restaurant, the Seville, opposite Coral Gables Elementary School. It too, was elegant, but the clientele there never had the level of interest in newspaper-reading that the Barcelona crowd did.

The Ponce de Leon Restaurant, a little south of Alhambra Circle on the east side of the street was also an easy place for selling newspapers. It had a U-shaped counter with stools, surrounded by an aisle and sit-down tables. Two men ran it, one tall and one short, both of whom were easily recognized as owners by their tan jackets. I thought of them as Mutt and Jeff. They were the only managers who allowed me to circulate inside among their clientele. Many of their diners were singles who purchased papers to read while they ate. It was a very popular restaurant, and I made many sales there.

Other restaurants of the era were the San Sebastian in the San Sebastian Hotel, the Tiffen (later the Green Lantern) on Le Jeune Road, and Nina's Tea Room on the Tamiami Trail at Douglas Road. Newspaper sales were not good at these restaurants, primarily, I believe, because tourists were a small fraction of their clientele.

My great-Uncle Denman Fink and Aunt Zillah often ate at the non-touristy restaurants. Like all of the Merricks, they also enjoyed movies. I remember seeing Uncle Denman and Aunt Zillah at the Coconut Grove Theater one evening at a showing of "The Ox Bow Incident." Uncle Denman was turned off by the movie, commenting to me that he didn't need a "lecture" on lynching.

Uncle Denman made a good living as an artist, even in the Depression. He was an illustrator for the *Saturday Evening Post*, and painted portraits and murals. He allowed me occasionally to watch him work on his murals. Like my grandmother Mody (his sister), Uncle Denman had a fine sense of humor. He delighted sometimes in racing his car through the driveway that ran between Coral Way and Castile Avenue at Coral Gables Merrick House, honking his horn furiously at his sister, on his way to play tennis at the Coral Gables Country Club.

Newspapers in those days, when there was extraordinary news, issued "Extras." These events always resulted in bonanzas for us street sellers. These included the assassination of Huey Long, the disappearance of Amelia Earhart, and the retrieval and execution of Bruno Hauptmann.

Henry L. Doherty was a big name in the Miami area in the middle 1930s. He controlled both the Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables and the Roney Plaza in Miami Beach. He flew guests between hotels by auto-giro—a helicopter with wings. During Christmas of 1935 or 1936, I joined a line of under-privileged children to receive presents from Mr. Doherty at the Biltmore. When it became my turn, I realized the occasion was being filmed, and I hid my face from the newsreel camera, because I was embarrassed, as a Merrick, to be there. I am ashamed to admit that I accepted the present. It was a disappointing, insignificant gift to boot.

The year 1937 was pivotal for me. Pan American Airways moved the McDonalds to Port Washington, New York, where Clippers flew to Europe. A car struck my stepfather on the Trail near the Douglas Entrance, severely injuring him. His older children moved him to Maryland for years of recuperation. My grandmother Mody died. We lost our house on Ponce de Leon Blvd and moved to a small bungalow at 2261 Southwest Sixtieth Court, west of Red Road near Coral Way. I was in the 9th grade at Ponce de Leon High School, and doing poorly in my studies. I was not used to being assigned homework.

The family managed to buy me a new bicycle at the Sears store near the County Causeway. I proudly pedaled it to Coral Gables, parked it

by the Coral Gables Theater without a lock, and went in to see a movie. When I came out, it had disappeared. Another of life's lessons learned the hard way.

Somehow, another bicycle was purchased for me. I was expected to help pay for it by taking on a paper route. At the time, Miami had three dailies: the afternoon *News*, the morning *Herald*, and a newcomer, the morning *Miami Tribune*, a brash tabloid that sold on the street for a penny a copy. The *Tribune* was featuring a series of stories that depicted Miami policemen as redneck Cossacks. It had a fairly broad home delivery in Coral Gables, but not nearly as great as the *Herald*. So I took on the *Herald* route.

I had some seventy-five customers who lived between Granada Boulevard and Douglas Road, and between Coral Way and Menores Avenue. Each morning, I biked myself from Southwest Sixtieth Court and Coral Way, picked up my papers at the boomtime Alhambra Building (since replaced) at the corner of Alhambra Circle and Le Jeune Road, beginning my deliveries at Granada, and ending up at Menores.

I heartily embraced the dark, early morning hours with the accompanying quietude and dearth of traffic. I even welcomed rain. Once lightning struck a tree a dozen yards away, introducing me to that strange, indescribable smell of ozone. Sometimes I preceded my pickup with a stop at Peacock's Coral Gables Bakery on Ponce de Leon Boulevard. The Peacock's pastry smelled so good in the early morning, and tasted terrific! I knew Buddy Peacock well, having gone through elementary school with him. He was famous for the bread named for him. His picture was on every wrapper! I always wondered, but never inquired, whether they were related to Aunt Eunice who was a Peacock.

Unfortunately, I didn't have the *Herald* job very long. Life is sometimes unfair, I learned. An old lady complained to the Coral Gables Police that she saw me steal a bottle of milk off her front steps early in the morning. I was apprehended at the end of my route, and two policemen escorted me to confront the lady, a Mrs. Campbell. Although I stoutly denied being the thief, they believed her, and curiously, on the way back to the station, tried to beat me into a confession. They did this by placing me between themselves in the front seat, instead of seating me in the rear as they had earlier. Then, in a lonely stretch of road, they stopped the car and turned and shoved me hard, back and forth between themselves, like a basketball, while shouting at

me to confess. Through tears, I fiercely retorted that I had all the milk I needed at home, and that I wasn't about to confess to something I didn't do. Finally they gave up and returned me to the dinky police station on Salzedo Street at Minorca (or was it Alcazar?), where, at about 10 a.m., Chief Sox entered and ordered me home. The next morning when I reported for my papers, I found that the *Herald* had fired me.

In retrospect, I believe the thief may have been the *Tribune* carrier. He had my build and also had curly hair like I did. In the early morning darkness, Mrs. Campbell could easily have mistaken him for me.

Even though I shall never forget the incident of the stolen milk, I have always tried to look upon it in a positive light, as a life experience to be appreciated for its worldly teachings. After all, I hadn't been arrested, and I didn't go to jail! And I have been mistrustful of eyewitness accounts ever since.

I continued to sell the *News* on the street.

Before summer's end of 1937, to relieve my mother of trying to handle her three unruly, teenage sons, Uncle George and the rest of the family arranged to send us three brothers to an inexpensive boarding school in Maitland, north of Orlando. Uncle Richard drove us to the school in September in his Willys automobile. Forest Lake Academy was a work/study school, and I labored on its farm. I also resolutely worked to improve in my studies. In November, I turned fifteen.

However, I did not exhibit model behavior. My lifelong adventure-some spirit caused me, recklessly, to accept a dare to hitchhike to Miami, 250 miles away. I rationalized that I needed a new pair of shoes. With little forethought, and no funds, on a cold Saturday morning in January 1938, I easily slipped away from the school and set out for Miami.

I arrived at the foot of Flagler Street after dark, distressed that the weather was no warmer than in the Orlando area. I was cold and hungry, and worse, I realized that I had no idea where my mother lived. She had recently moved. Uncle George and Aunt Eunice lived the closest to where I was, so I decided to seek refuge for the night with them.

Despite the cold, East Flagler Street was abuzz with people, noise and music. In the Walgreens block, Professor Seward, the astrologist, was at his usual spot in front of his imitation railroad observation car, and I stopped briefly to enjoy his spiel. Twenty more blocks and I would be at Uncle George's.

They lived in a bungalow on the south side of West Flagler Street near Twenty-second Avenue. I stepped onto the porch and knocked at the door. Uncle George opened the inside front door, and with eyes widened, peered down at me through the screen door that still separated us. He asked, incredulously, "Does the school know you are here?" I replied, "No, but—," and that was as far as I got. I don't recall his additional words, for they came in a roar, revealing the famous Merrick temper, which we three brothers inherited also. He thrust open the screen door and tried to grasp me, but I jumped to the sidewalk and hightailed it west on Flagler Street, with Uncle George chasing me in a hot, but futile pursuit. He had become quite portly, and I easily outdistanced him. I decided to head for the Gables and turned south on Twenty-second Avenue Road to the Trail. After my adrenaline settled, I realized that I probably would be no safer with Aunt Eppie at Coral Gables Merrick House, because Uncle George would undoubtedly be there waiting for me. I decided to go to one of my childhood haunts, the Douglas Entrance. After collecting some discarded newspapers along the way, I climbed the circular staircase to the room above the arch. Stone seats traversed the room on either side across the road. Using the newspapers, I slept a fitful night on the east seat, mostly shivering, while reveling in the idea that I had at least half-fulfilled the dare. Coming to Miami had been a bad idea, I realized, and I decided



The Douglas Entrance to Coral Gables, one of Donald Kuhn's boyhood haunts. HASF X-793-1

to return to the school when daylight arrived.

The next morning I caught a ride to Biscayne Boulevard. As I was walking north along Bayfront Park, a policeman in a car spotted me as a vagrant. He picked me up and continuing north deposited me at the city limits at Seventy-ninth Street,

advising me not to return. This was followed by a swift lift to West Palm Beach where unfortunately I was then stranded until dark. Finally,

I managed to hitch a ride in an open truck to St. Cloud, where I awakened a policeman snoozing in his car on the main street at midnight. It was still very cold. I asked him for a bunk in jail for the night. Instead, he took me home and provided a bed for me in his garage. His wife gave me a great breakfast the following morning, my first food since leaving the school. Then the kindly cop sent me on my way, after assuring himself that I was, indeed, headed back to Forest Lake Academy.

It was now Monday, and I arrived at the school in time for lunch. I learned that the school had been unaware of my absence until Uncle George called to see if I had returned. I became a minor hero among the students. And the school was lenient with me. No roller-skating for two weeks.

That summer, I sought and went to live permanently with my Aunt Medie and Uncle Quint who had just purchased a 65-acre farm with a one hundred-year-old farmhouse, near Greenwich, New York, 30 miles north of Albany—for \$1,200, I later learned. I was nearly sixteen, and eagerly looked forward to experiencing my first snowfall, and temperatures below zero. We lived happily without electricity, telephone, running water, or indoor plumbing; Aunt Medie cooked on a wood-burning range. I studied by kerosene lamp. In 1941, I graduated from Greenwich High School in the upper tenth of my class.

With Uncle George's help, I received a music scholarship to the University of Miami where I matriculated in September 1941. I played trombone and was obligated to perform in the orchestra and march in the band. I majored in drama and minored in journalism.

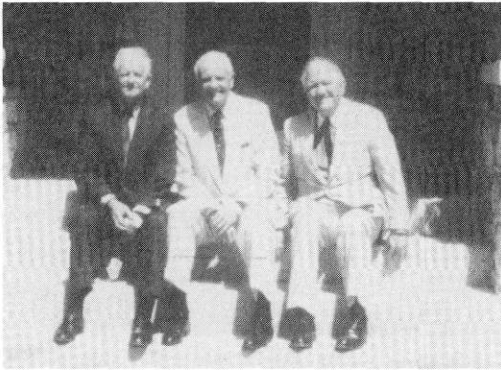
One evening in October 1941, en route to a Friday night football game at the Orange Bowl, I stopped by the bungalow from which Uncle George had chased me three years earlier. I was dressed in my U-M marching uniform. George and Eunice invited me in. After some chit-chat, Uncle George, digging into his pocket, said, "Well, I suppose you are here to ask for some money." I was startled, and it gave me great satisfaction to inform them that I didn't need any money, but just dropped by to say "hello." This incident provided me some insight into Uncle George's interaction and relationship with the family during his lifetime.

Pearl Harbor was attacked a few weeks later, and I joined the Navy as an apprentice seaman.

Shortly before I boarded the musty troop train that would take me north to Norfolk, I briefly visited Uncle George to say my goodbye at his office in the main post office in downtown Miami. He wished me

well but said he felt that I was rash in entering the war so soon. However, I think he understood when I explained that if I was drafted, which was certain, I might not get my choice of service.

Only three months later, in March of 1942, Uncle George died. My ship, the destroyer Hambleton, was in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, fresh from the South Atlantic. The captain denied me permission to attend the funeral. Although I was nineteen, I cried quietly in my bunk that night while a fellow sailor tried to console me. Uncle George had been a major father figure to me. Despite my rebellious ways, and perhaps sometimes his better judgment, he always stood ready to counsel me



Merrick, Richard, and Donald on the front steps of 1217 Coral Way, Coral Gables in 1988.

and help me in whatever way he could.

After the war, I returned to the University of Miami on the GI Bill and graduated in 1949 with a BA in journalism and a minor in drama. I was married and moved to Chicago. Then, from 1954 to 1959 I once again lived in Coral Gables, at 7300 Mindello Street, but moved to Minnesota and

a number of other states to pursue a career in fund-raising.

My childhood memories of Coral Gables and Miami were in the main pleasurable ones, with a struggling, yet close-knit family, many caring and generous uncles and aunts, and a wonderful grandmother.

As for my childhood friend Billy, I long ago lost track of him and Jimmy, his brother, died in California of diabetes.