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Carleton, 1939

“What is this China affair? Did you give the boy permission?”

Through a fog of sleep, my mother had got up at midnight to answer the telephone, only to find herself being interrogated by her younger brother. My Uncle Frank had learned from my grandmother that I had been selected to be a “Carleton in China” teacher at the school in Shansi. He was not impressed.

It was my senior year at Carleton College, and I was thrilled at the prospect of spending two years in China. My mother and father, although not enthusiastic about the idea, were buoyed by the reactions of friends who thought it to be quite an honor.

In 1939, Midwesterners didn’t know much about China. It was a long way away, and the newspapers mentioned China only in the context of stories about famine, disease, and war. My worried mother was consoled by my younger brother Frank, who told her that “any hardship is compensated by the thrill of adventure.”

My maternal grandmother, Johanna Kara, didn’t say much when she was told of the China teaching. When my mother mentioned that my brother wanted to buy a car with his vacation money, my grandmother remarked, “He’d better save it to send to John in China.”

My Uncle Frank was livid. He told my mother, “You and Frank jump into the car and drive up there and thrash this thing out. Schools around here weren’t good enough. This is what Carleton does to him.” Mother described

her brother's reaction in a letter to me, saying "He just raved, I suppose, because he fears for you in that war area. He wanted to know if the money was in escrow so you wouldn't go hungry."

In 1939, my family's reactions were typical of American attitudes toward the Chinese. My mother and father were first-generation U.S. citizens of Czech descent. My father was born in 1889 in Racine, Wisconsin and my mother a year later in Chicago.

My father had lost his father when he was very young, and he had taken a job at the post office after finishing eighth grade. My mother, because of poor eyesight, had completed only a year or two of high school. When they were married in 1917, they lived in Chicago. Mother used to tell me about her early years in a predominantly Bohemian (Czech) neighborhood. Every Saturday my mother walked to Bohemian school, and she wrapped her language books in brown paper so her non-Czech neighbors would not know where she was going. Mother got a good education and spoke excellent English and Czech without an accent.

Mother's family was fairly well off. Her father, who had come to the U.S. at 16, had been apprenticed to a shoemaker. By hard work he soon had his own shoe store, and his four children—twin boys, my mother, and another son—all received good educations. My Uncle John Matthew (after whom I was named) became a doctor and died in Europe just before World War I while working for the Red Cross. He is buried in Skopje in what is now Yugoslavia. His twin, Matthew John, became a car salesman, and Frank, the youngest, was a pharmacist who became quite prominent in Chicago politics, running for Congress on the Republican ticket in 1933 when Franklin Roosevelt and the Democrats swept the polls.

When I was 3 years old, Dad traded his city job at the post office for a rural post so the family could live in the suburbs. We moved to an acreage just south of the village of La Grange, some fourteen miles southwest of Chicago. A year later my brother Frank was born and we moved into a two-story house in the village of LaGrange Park. Our house was built on a 50-by 125-foot lot at 426 N. Catherine Avenue. It had a basement with a coal-burning furnace. Those were the days before refrigerators, and we had an icebox. During the summer, my brother and I used to wait for the iceman, Fritz, to bring a 50-pound block of ice into the kitchen. He would always chip off some pieces of ice for us on a hot day.

The third child, my sister Marie, was born in 1927. My family, like most, went through some financial setbacks during the Depression. Mother and Dad lost some property they had bought for investment, and we had to sell our car. But Dad kept his job, so we always had enough to eat and did not suffer. Mother took a job and used the money to pay for piano lessons for

me and my brother and sister. In a Czech family, it was understood that the children would learn to play a musical instrument. Until I was 13, I had to practice my scales at least an hour every day. Although I had no talent, I did learn to play from sheet music. My sister became a very competent musician, playing both piano and organ.

Growing up in a small town, I walked to school every day. I was a small, shy boy who did fairly well in school. My report cards from first and second grade were mostly “excellents” and “very goods.” La Grange Park was a quiet town, and my friends and I played baseball and touch football in the street. When we got a little older, we made our own diamonds at the Kemman farm a few blocks away. We borrowed our families’ push lawn mowers to cut the grass on the infield. With the other boys in our neighborhood, I spent many afternoons refining my throwing, fielding, and batting skills. I was never the best player, but when we were choosing sides I was never the last one chosen.

Throughout high school I played on the lightweight basketball teams. When I graduated in 1935 I weighed only 135 pounds and was just over five feet tall. However, during the summer after graduation, while working for my Uncle Frank at the Savoy Drug and Chemical Company, I put on weight and grew to almost six feet.



This picture was taken in 1935 in LaGrange, Illinois, with friends Ellen Clark and Kay Moore.



The Lyons Township Junior College basketball team won the state junior college championship in 1937. Front row, left to right: Perry Obalil, Les Skeels, John Hlavacek, Clary Klindera, Henry Moore. Back row, left to right: Coach Jack Boge, Guy Brown, Jack Ruse, Bill Henning, Howie Ball, Gil Kruger, Manager Earl Forbes.

Money was still scarce when I graduated from high school, so I continued my education at Lyons Township Junior College, a two-year institution. My grades were good, and I played on the basketball team that won the Illinois Junior College Championship. During my second year of college, as the only sophomore on the team, I was elected captain. We won the state championship again, and I was selected to the all-state junior college team. That same year, I was elected president of the sophomore class.

By the summer of 1937, my family's fortunes had improved. My father had quit his job as a postman and joined my uncle at his company. During vacations from school from the time I turned 16, I worked at the factory. As a son of one of the owners, I always got the worst jobs. I remember cleaning out huge vats and also, in the summer, standing over spinning copper kettles and mixing Alka-Selzer-like concoctions at temperatures well over 100 degrees.

When I was in junior college my sports celebrity helped me to overcome some of my shyness. I had never dated in high school, but in college I began to socialize. I dated a lovely girl and made a number of friendships that lasted

for many years. I was voted class president during my sophomore year. I had a great time with my friends. In the winter we went on toboggan parties and skated on the frozen creek. There were no ice skating rinks, so we made our own ice hockey rinks at the bends in the creek.

It was the era of the Big Bands, and Chicago had two popular dance halls: the Aragon on the north side and the Trianon on the South side. My friends and I went to the Trianon, which was closer to La Grange, to listen and dance to the music of Lawrence Welk.

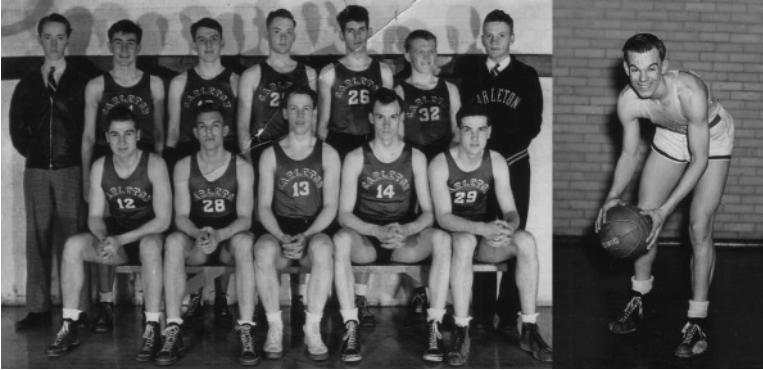
Neither Mother nor Dad had gone to college, and they wanted to make sure that each of their children would earn a college degree. Where would I complete my schooling? My parents had no idea, and I had no burning desire to go anywhere in particular. During my high school summers I had assisted at the village playgrounds, and I had thought of pursuing a teaching career. A recruiter from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, Mr. Van Riper, called on my parents and extolled the virtues of the college. He told my parents that my grades were good and that I could be admitted as a junior, as all my credits would transfer. My mother asked him, "How do you know John's standing in the class? We don't know it ourselves." He assured Mother that he had ways of finding out, and so, because of a recruiter, I enrolled at Carleton in the fall of 1937.

Because I was a transfer student, I was assigned to a room in the freshman dormitory. My roommate was Ted Peacock. Carleton, at that time, had three dorms for male students: Davis for freshmen, Burton for sophomores and juniors, and Severance for seniors. As a transfer student, I also played freshman sports. In La Grange, we had no football program at the junior college although I had played in pickup games. Now, at 165 pounds, I tried out for the freshman team and made the team as a guard. Freshman teams are the guinea pigs for the varsity, and we spent many an afternoon being pummeled by the bigger linemen on the varsity team.

Carleton was a great college for students who wanted to play sports and still get a good education. I was taking mainly mathematics and chemistry courses, and after labs there was still time to roll down the hill to the practice field. When it came time for the annual frosh-soph game, the sophs were not going to allow me to play for the freshmen because I was a junior, but it was ruled that I was eligible and I played. I don't remember the final score, but I do remember the best tackle I ever made, stopping the soph fullback (Bob Gielow) on the one-yard line. (I have always thought it amusing that one can remember a single incident for so many years.)

After football season I played on the freshman basketball team. Here, too, we practiced with the varsity. Our team was pretty good, playing a number of other freshman teams. I was elected captain—no doubt the only junior

ever to be elected captain of the freshman team. In the spring, I played on the fresh-man baseball team, playing third base, shortstop, first base, and even doing some catching.



I am second from left in the group shot.

In addition to playing for various teams I also went to classes. My grades were above average, although not as high as they might have been. I spent too much time with my new friends playing bridge, which was about the only social life I had at Carleton since I was still dating a girl back home.

During the summer after my junior year I worked at the Savoy Drug and Chemical Company where my uncle was a vice-president and my father a factory superintendent. In the fall I returned to Carleton for my senior year, moving up to Severance Hall, the dormitory for upperclassmen. I shared a suite with three friends from my first year: Ted Peacock, Jim Dymond, and Bob Payne. Jim had been a halfback on the freshman football team and made the varsity as a sophomore.


During my senior year I moved up to the varsity football team, playing a pulling guard on offense and a tackle on defense. Our team was not very good. We lost every game except the final one of the season. I played in the first two games and then dislocated a shoulder in practice and had to sit out the next few games. At the end of the season, with my arm heavily taped, I played in the final game and finished my football career with a win. (Twenty-five years later, in 1963, I was selected to the Sports Illustrated Silver Anniversary All American football team, which honored men who had played football and who distinguished themselves after college.)

After the football season I played on the varsity basketball team as a first string guard. Our team started out with high hopes, winning our first few games. We beat Marquette, North Dakota and South Dakota Universities

and gave Iowa a good game, losing by one point. Then, we went down to Northwestern and played them close in the first half. In the second half the roof fell in and we were soundly trounced. But we had a great time and enjoyed the celebrity status of varsity players.

Official Program

FRIDAY NIGHT, SEPT. 30, 1938



Probable Starting Line-up

Beloit College . . . vs. . . . *Carleton College*

40—Campbell, 165 lbs. Left End 34—Dunham, 220 lbs. Left Tackle 43—Anderson, 185 lbs. Left Guard 35—Ochsenbuhler, (Cap'n) 170 lbs. Center 39—Moore, 161 lbs. Right Guard 23—Cox, 182 lbs. Right Tackle 25—Fagan, 186 lbs. Right End 30—Virgill, 151 lbs. Quarterback 32—Day, 158 lbs. Halfback 31—Cordish, 148 lbs. Halfback 24—Pinske, 183 lbs. Fullback	68—Jackson, (Cap'n), 173 lbs. Left End 67—Clarke, 194 lbs. Left Tackle 39—Constan, 172 lbs. Left Guard 43—Soren, 166 lbs. Center 60—Reidman, 210 lbs. Right Guard 44—Hlavacek, 173 lbs. Right Tackle 46—Kroding, 170 lbs. Right End 40—Sittel, 184 lbs. Quarterback 26—Lockren, 163 lbs. Halfback 25—Macko, 158 lbs. Halfback 22—Riegel, 180 lbs. Fullback
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—OTHER PLAYERS—

53—Andrews, Halfback 23—Gault, End 43—Harrison, Guard 46—Johnson, HB. 32—Ludke, Tackle 48—Zimonski, End	42—Attoberry, End 40—Freeman, Center 38—Hill, Halfback 44—Illegren, Center 41—Suberschal, Guard 37—Strand, End
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—OFFICIALS—

Head Linesman—*Dir. Osborne* (La Grange, Ill.)
 Umpire—*Fred De Vinney* (Columbus, Wis.)
 Referee—*Arch Morrow* (Madison, Wis.)

Next Home Game — Saturday Night — October 8th

CORNELL COLLEGE PARENTS' DAY

Kickoff at 8:00

ALSO On Tonight's Program

COOLEY'S CUPBOARDS

FOR GOOD THINGS TO EAT

1629 Orrington Avenue 505 Main Street 1517 Chicago Avenue

BASKETBALL

December 7, 1938 PATTEN GYMNASIUM

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY			CARLETON COLLEGE		
NUMBER	NAME	POSITION	NUMBER	NAME	POSITION
4	Robert Saley	F	2	Richard Raiter	F
5	Lester Harman	F	27	David Conover	F
6	Bob O'Brien	F	34	David Murray	G
8	Adlington Vance	G	35	Oscar Olson (Capt.)	F
9	Dick Paul	F	36	Harvey Lemay	G
10	Jim Currie	F	37	Quater Nelson	C
11	Samuel Davis	F	38	Edward Berry	F
12	Bob Stupaj	F	40	Robert Jackson	C
14	Walter Kowalski	F	41	Roger Lockren	F
17	Bert Barthes	F	42	Robert Thoms	F
18	Don Turner	G	43	Edward Overstreet	C
19	Bill Coulter	F	44	Robert LaHue	F
21	Leslie S. Gauder	F	45	Milton Minkie	F
23	Charles Melcher	F	46	John Hlavacek	F
24	Douald McCann	F			
25	George Zwick	C			
26	Bob Volty	C			
27	Robert Kable	C			
28	Perry Fausse	C			
30	James Bittig	C			

SMOKING IN LOBBY ONLY

Officials: Referee, *Nick Keane* (De Paul); Umpire, *Bill Harlow* (Chicago).
 Next Home Game: Pittsburgh, Saturday, December 10.

Your Week-Day Lunches 50c

The Vera Megowen

1611 ORRINGTON AVE.—EVANSTON

AT CHURCH STREET

Your Week-Day Dinner 75c

After the Christmas holiday, during a game at Carleton in March, I had an attack of acute appendicitis. I left the game and flew home for an appendectomy. While I was home recuperating, my friends at Carleton entered my name as a candidate for the Carleton in China program. My football teammates knew I was planning to become a teacher after graduation—I had done some student teaching at the high school in Northfield—and they thought I would make a good prospect for China.

So, when I returned to school, I learned that I had been selected along with J. Rhodes Longley ("Jay"), a junior. The Carleton in China program usually sent one teacher, an underclassman, each year so that when he returned, he would finish his senior year and promote the program. The Carleton in China teaching scholarships were financed by the student body. It was unusual for a senior to be chosen, but two teachers were coming home at the same time because of the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. John R. Caton and Paul Clifford Domke were coming home to finish college. Jay would stay for two years, and I was to stay for three years to get the program back on its regular rotation. Thus, my going to China was completely unplanned and unusual because of circumstances. First, I was a transfer student and had been at Carleton only a year and a half; second, I was a senior, and seniors had never been sent to China before.

Naturally, I was very pleased and looked forward to the next few years. Like many other graduating seniors, I had not planned for the immediate

future. Why I was chosen, I still do not know. I never asked, but I believe that Dr. Franz Exner, my chemistry professor, may have influenced the decision. I had received A's in his classes, and he had two married daughters who lived in China.

When I was selected, I talked with Dr. Axel Vestling, the faculty advisor, and asked him if the teaching assignment required religious teaching. I told him that I had no religious upbringing and if the assignment required it, I would not be able to go. He asked, "Do you behave like a Christian?" and I replied, "I think so." That was that.

My parents and brother and sister came to graduation in June. Immediately afterward we drove to San Francisco, stopping along the way to see the Great Salt Lake, Yellowstone National Park, and Reno. Earlier, Jay and I had made arrangements to sail on the Matson line to Honolulu, the first leg on our journey to China.

TONIAN

MINNESOTA

Z-550

Friday, March 24, 1939

Play Reporter Describes New Drama Venture

By AUGER

In accordance with The Carletonian's policy of keeping up with the times and current events with an "inside" view, we have dispatched a member of our staff to make candid observations on practice for the forthcoming production, "Our Town," which is expected to appear at 8:00 p.m. on April 1.

So zealous was the investigator that he not only went to see what was going on, but he also wormed his way into the cast in order that he might more accurately report on the proceedings from an actor's viewpoint.

Writes Experiences

With an inner glow, we present his account:

"The first day was a very trying one. I had to read the play, and I don't like reading plays. I mean I usually don't. I got rather used to this one around about the middle of the first act, when I began to discover that the characters were quite human and this was the sort of thing that could happen to anyone."

"So I read the whole thing. For a while it seemed like sort of a queer play, but more and more I got to thinking how much all the situations were like situations that we all face at one time or another."

"I wouldn't say it is 'poetic.' That would scare people. There is a sort of prejudice against calling some things 'poetic.' But it is the sort of play that brings out things you have had in the back of your mind for a long time, and starts you wondering about it all. And then pretty soon you finish the play and feel a sort of satisfaction. I did. I was actually glad I'd read it, afterwards."

Regrets Impulsive Act

"So the first formidable barrier was not so bad as it had looked. Next thing I thought, was my duty as an actor. For a while, I felt that perhaps I'd been a little rash in rushing into this thing headlong. I didn't get over that by the middle of the first act, either."

"When you are up there trying to act, it seems suddenly a little different from when you were just thinking about it. First you feel a little foolish, and then when and if you get over that, you begin to realize that you have let yourself in for some work."

"But then that is not so bad either, when you get into the spirit of the thing. You can have quite a bit of fun, especially watching the other characters. For pure amusement it is much better

Hlavacek, Longley Will Go to China



Westward Ho!

Irish Folklore Is Lecture Topic Next Thursday

Next Thursday evening, March 30, an illustrated lecture on "Irish Folklore" will be given by Seamus O'Duillearga in Great Hall at 7:30 p.m.

In his lecture, Mr. O'Duillearga will tell of the Irish people, who delight themselves in relating tales of long ago and have one of the most interesting folklore backgrounds of any country. The lecture will be illustrated with slides depicting the life of the story-tellers and their families.

At present, Mr. O'Duillearga is director of the Irish Folklore commission in Ireland, which is collecting and preserving the wealth of folklore and other traditions of the Irish people, and a lecturer of folklore at University college in Dublin. He is also a member of the Royal Irish academy and editor of "Bealaideas." Because of his extensive knowledge of folklore, he was invited to lecture in 12 German universities last year, and has talked to two international folkloric congresses.

Home Oratory Meet Preliminaries Slated

Will Relieve Caton, Domke at C-in-C Posts in Summer

John Hlavacek and Jay Longley are the two men who will represent Carleton-in-China for the next two years. The choice was made Sunday evening at a meeting of the C-in-C board at the home of Dr. A. E. Vestling, chairman.

Longley and Hlavacek will leave America from San Francisco about July 1. Although the term of their stay in the orient has not been definitely set, the board felt that a departure from the customary two years was unnecessary.

This year's choices were made along somewhat different lines from those followed in past years. It has been the custom since the initiation of the project to accept application from juniors only. This year, however, a junior and a senior are being sent abroad.

Interviewers Eliminate

The interviewing board of George Wattles, Milton Minkin, and William Cheek had as its duty the recommendation of men to C-in-C board for the final selection. There are 17 members on the C-in-C board, 14 of whom were present when the final ballot was cast Sunday night.

John Hlavacek is a senior student with a well-balanced language background, and an interest in teaching. He transferred as a junior and in his first year at Carleton was a triple-numeral man, winning recognition in football, basketball, and baseball. At La Grange, Illinois, his home, he was prominent in playground supervision.

Jay Longley, a junior from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, looks to medicine for his future, regards his prospective stay in China as a valuable background for that work. He has worked summers as a boys' camp counsellor and was prominent in his freshman and sophomore years in both basketball and baseball, in the latter of which he won his numerals.

Caton, Domke Will Return.

The two will replace Jack Caton and Clifford Domke who are to return as seniors next fall. Caton enjoyed a three year stay, while Domke was gone for two years. It is hoped that arrangements can be made with Oberlin college for Longley and Hlavacek to make the crossing with that school's representatives.

Asked how he felt about the choice, Lonsley replied in part,