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AN INAUSPICIOUS START

IN 1918 I WAS a laborer in Henson's lumber yard at twenty cents an hour, sixty-two hours a week, straight time for all of it. It took me about an hour and a quarter on the trolley cars each way, home to job and back, so life was rugged. I started in August, and my first job was unloading bundles of green lath from cars. There is no skill or finesse to that chore. You just pick up a bundle and stack it on the truck.

I was so tired the first day that I vomited my dinner and went to bed. The second day I was supposed to be best man at a wedding, but I could not even eat my dinner and missed the wedding. The boss told me, however, I had unloaded two cars more quickly than any laborer they ever employed. At Christmas I was raised to twenty-five cents, dated back to the first of December. My self-pity evaporated when I stepped on a scale and found I had gained ten pounds.

I was rushing Anne McCloskey at the time so I had subscribed to the Saturday night concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra. After working nine and a half hours (the other days were ten

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and a half), I would trolley home, get spruced up, take the trolleys to Anne's home in West Philadelphia near 50th & Chester, back with her to the concert. Two rows behind us was my rival for Anne's affections. He read the score as the orchestra played and wondered how Anne could put up with such a clod. After those hours of heavy work in the open air, I slept through more fine programs than I heard, lulled to sleep by the hot Academy.

Although the pay was the same, lumber counters outranked laborers. When the weather became cold, the counters pulled rank on us and carried the lumber after teaching me and a couple of other laborers how to grade. One of the legitimate ways a good lumber checker could make himself valuable, in addition to seeing the board footage was correct, was to see a wide board that was completely free of knots for a fraction of its width, say four inches on a twelve-inch board, send it to the mill to be ripped into four inches of the best grade and not down grade the other eight inches. I became, perforce, a grader.

While Anne was in college, I signed up as assistant scoutmaster, chief purpose to learn to govern a terrible temper. That purpose was not perfectly accomplished. One evening, Father Skelly, the pastor, rebuked me for signing the transfer of a kid to another troop. Red tape is everywhere. It was a fact that the scoutmaster attended the troop committee meetings for which I was ineligible, but no troop meetings. I exploded with the observation that I was accustomed to being paid for signing my name and I was quitting.

As I recall, my remunerative signing was my weekly pay check of \$40. I stalked out, walked half way home, turned back and announced that temper control was one of my reasons for joining the Scouts and I was back for work. Shortly after that I was scoutmaster.

The McCloskeys were not precisely overjoyed when Anne and I were married. Her father had left school when he was fourteen. By the time he was forty he had built the McCloskey Varnish Company into a substantial business and amassed an impressive fortune. Then he fell sick. Trips to the various European spas did no good. Four years later he died broke.

Meanwhile his daughters had been at Eden Hall, and the over-

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due bill was huge. Mrs. McCloskey took a job as probation officer in the Municipal Court and paid it all off. It was her determination as well as Anne's purpose, intelligence, and built-in integrity that made Anne a graduate of Manhattanville.

My prospects in 1922 cannot have seemed much brighter. They were soon to appear dimmer.

As an engineer fortified only by a high school education, I asked my boss in The Bell Telephone Company for a raise.

"Mr. Henkels, you are not the best engineer in the Company and it will be a long time before you get a raise,"

"I think I should resign, Mr. Brown."

"That would be a good idea." So, I gave him six months' notice, not knowing what to do to support a young family.

At the end of six months the only thing I could get was selling landscaping on commission. Anyone can get any selling job on commission, but I always had been interested in such work, and accepted. It did not pay a living. I gave notice of leaving. With the Bell many of the complaints I settled or tried to settle involved tree trimming. Some linemen would ask an owner to sign permission to trim one tree and the owner would find out later that he had consented to tree trimming and pole setting without limit. Of course, this was not company policy and a solution to the problem seemed a promising opportunity for me to do tree-trimming on contract.

My first sale was to Mr. George S. Van Antwerp, manager of the Counties Gas and Electric Company of Norristown, to start a gang of six men July 2, 1923.

A talented artist friend of mine, John F. McCoy, saw that his employer, Atwater Kent, had made all the money he wanted and was slowly going out of business. Over the bridge table he asked me to admit him to the new venture as partner and we each put up \$500 to buy a truck. The sign we had printed on it said: HENKELS & McCOY. On July 2, we started trimming trees on Route 202, west of King of Prussia. We have worked for the Counties and its successors ever since. It is now part of the Philadelphia Electric Company. Four of the original gang are dead, two still on the payroll.

Atwater Kent took years to close up his plant, so I bought

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Johnny out with \$500 lent me by my brother-in-law, Orville W. Forte, of Boston. Henkels being a peculiar name, I kept the title Henkels & McCoy. In September we put on another gang for Arthur P. G. McGinnes, of the Ardmore office. Bell work followed.

Then the Philadelphia Suburban Gas & Electric Company gave us the job of trimming trees for rebuilding the electric lines for a company which it had just purchased in Doylestown. Doylestown is the county seat of Bucks County, which means a large population of lawyers and county officials. The trees were large sugar maples, as a rule in poor condition. I cannot say too often that sugar maples are not happy in our latitude except at high altitudes. They start at approximately sea level in Maine and as they go south along the Appalachians they gradually climb higher. By the time they reach Pennsylvania they are well up on the mountains. However, landscape men keep using them around Philadelphia.

To start our campaign, I called on the editor of the Doylestown Intelligencer, which rumor had, was owned by the reputed Republican boss of the state. The editor gave us a good write-up and I kept in touch with him during the entire operation. I addressed the Women's Club, told them of our aims and problems, and asked the town's cooperation. These aims were to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Of course we obtained the permissions from the property owners, though some obdurate owners sometimes caused important shifts in plans. To save fine trees we often changed the side of the street on which we were running the line, pole locations and service loops. On the whole the operation was a success. (The patient did not die.)

One of the early customers was the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania, which at that time also controlled the South Jersey territory, from Lambertville across to Princeton, Hopewell and Atlantic City. We would estimate all the trees in a central office district, which meant riding every line.

When I say "we started" 'or "we did" anything, I mean Anne and I. "You are me – or is it I?"* is the way we lived then and

*Curtain line of Cyril Maude in "Grumpy."

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the way we live now. Early times, then the Depression, and an adventurous spirit led us to try anything and to eat anything that didn't bite us first, and we preferred it on the rare side. When the children came we trained ourselves to listen to all demands and requests, not merely explode with a petulant "No!" In this way we never denied a permission without a sound reason, whether we could explain it or not. It was the same way with the work we shared. Unless faced by obviously impossible odds, we gambled on every job we could get.

One day in my second-hand Durant, Anne and I were estimating the Cynwyd exchange. We followed a line that dropped more and more until we were down to a single pair. This led down a slippery back road that became a mere trail for a farm wagon. To my dismay it ended at a fence with no place to turn around. My bald tires slipped on the ice and we were in trouble. Anne had never driven but I showed her how to put the car in reverse. I dug footholes in the ice to brace myself and at a signal she let out the clutch as I pushed. We gained six or eight feet. Then the digging in and pushing were renewed. Gradually we gained about a hundred feet of the two hundred we had to go. Next time she put it into second, and pushed me slipping and sliding and, I must admit, swearing, half the distance we had gained. Ultimately we reached the top. Next day she started driving lessons.

We went into landscaping almost as soon as we started trimming trees. I solicited this work wherever I could.

One of the prominent architects I had been calling on was Emile Perot, designer of institutions. He called me up one day and suggested that I go to Pleasantville, New Jersey, to see Father McCallion who was building a combined chapel and school. On a bitterly cold day, Anne and I drove down in the same open Durant touring car. In the basement I waited while this priest I saw there was conversing with another man. With back still turned to me I was told, "I'm Father McCallion, this is Mr. Meagher, the builder. You're a salesman. What are you selling?" (Here I interpolate that Meagher is an Irish name pronounced Mahr and I always chuckled when our men called it Meager.) I replied I was not a salesman but a landscape man sent down by

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Mr. Perot, his architect. "Of course you are a salesman. You sell trees. Look around and tell me what I want. I already know what I want." I told him it was almost dark so I had but a half hour to see what he had been planning and dreaming about for at least six months and that it was bitterly cold.

I went out for about twenty minutes and came back. "Father, I can't give a detailed outline of what you should have in this brief time, but I do have one fundamental idea. You need two *cryptomeria japonica lobbi* by the front entrance."

"What are they?" he asked and I rolled him around from there. I had a few other botanical names to use if he knew *cryptomeria* (the Japanese temple tree) but it was not necessary.

Sequel. I hadn't fooled that bright man a bit. He only wanted to see if I had any spirit. Seventeen years later, when I had joined Seaview Country Club, we went to Mass at his Pleasantville church. He was at the door when we went out, so I introduced myself. Monsignor, for he had advanced to that dignity, simply said, "Your Japanese trees are doing splendidly."

In these early days we did not investigate credit as much as we should.

We built a driveway for a gay blade in Abington. He had an elderly housekeeper but entertained a succession of ladies who were neither elderly nor housekeepers. Ordinary collection methods having failed, Anne went to try to collect in person. As she was somewhat pregnant at the time, the housekeeper obviously was perturbed, anticipating a support controversy. Well, the owner was not home, so Anne went the next day when she saw his large car in the drive. He came to the door and was much relieved when she stated her errand. He was not relieved, however, of the \$762.45 he owed us. Finally we put it in the hands of Gilbert Rodman Fox, a most respectable and competent lawyer in Norristown. He filed our complaint and in due course we saw the affidavit of defense.

One paragraph in the defense said the work was poor, citing that the roller had upset. This was the time of steam rollers. Vaguely I remembered such an incident, which had not invalidated the quality of the job. However, it would be murder before a jury. Also, he had a picture showing water on the drive,

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indicating a low spot. The picture was dated, and a check with the weather bureau showed no rain for the previous ten days, so this was easily answered.

For months I was trying to find a convincing answer to the upset roller, but thought of none. When the case was called he had a new lawyer, not having paid the original one.

As I was sworn, I still had no answer, replying to the defendant's questions satisfactorily but always in the back of my mind I was trying for the answer to "Mr. Henkels, if the job was so good, how did the roller upset?" On and on went these routine questions. Finally, "That is all, Mr. Henkels," with the roller unmentioned. Mr. Fox having his verdict, immediately saw the sheriff. One of the tricks of a deadbeat is to have the notice posted in some inconspicuous place. Fortunately our attorney had great standing in the Norristown Court House so the notice went smack dab on the front door. Payment was prompt.

I said we tried everything in those days. We did.

We were planting a few shrubs on the place of a retired insurance man when he called my attention to his dilapidated porch steps. His eloquence sold me into building concrete steps at cost, for the experience. When finished, they were a ponderous monolith, which looked as if they had been made by men without trowels throwing shovels full of concrete in the general direction of the porch. The sides bore no semblance of straight lines and I upbraided the drunk who had called himself a mason. "Yes, Jack," he said, "they are crooked but I would like to explain why I made them that way."

Ever since I have treated concrete with respect and aversion.

We tried all kinds of jobs and we met all kinds of people. Some would be libelous to describe. One I remember was an interior decorator, a bachelor, who lived with five cats in the second story of a converted stable on a large estate. I thought he was a bit precious but changed my mind when he told me the name of his cats. They were Merrill, Lynch, Pierce, Fenner, and Bean.

It was not as amusing when we resurfaced a driveway of two lovely elderly sisters in Germantown. We were living from hand to mouth at the time, paying with nominal drawing accounts and

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bonuses. His eye on the bonus, our man had skimmed on the job. The first winter that driveway broke up beyond patching or repair. We would have to remove the surfacing and do the job over from the start.

We had no money to do this. A few days before Anne had bought a loaf of bread and a half pound of sugar with our last eleven cents. I went over to see the ladies, admitted our liability and asked them to worry along with the bum job until we had a little money. This took all the courage I could muster, but it was an impossibility to pay for the material and hire a roller. I walked out like a beaten cur.

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EARLY DAYS

ANNE AND I HAD bought a large semi-detached house, a half house on the unfashionable side of Germantown Avenue. It was our home – it still is – and for years it was also the home of Henkels & McCoy. We operated the business from the rear outside kitchen and paid off our help, when we had the money, through the kitchen window.

We started business with one experienced gang of tree trimmers. Like all construction workers, living outdoors, their work subject to weather conditions, many of them compensated for the dangerous and intermittent work by drinking bouts.

One of our best tree men made a ceremony of it. One time he came around to borrow some money and in the course of our talk mentioned he had been a Fairmount Park Guard. I expressed surprise and he asked in amazement, “Didn’t you know I was a gray squirrel?”

It seems that one bitterly cold day he was on a box directing traffic at Ridge Avenue and Lincoln Drive, one really tough intersection. From time to time he warmed up from a flask. Fi-

nally in exuberance he waved on the Ridge Avenue traffic. Hearing protesting horns from the Wissahickon Drive cars, he made a grand gesture that would have done credit to Stokowski, "All of you come, all of you come." He was helped down off the box and shortly after helped out of the service.

Probably the greatest of that era was Bill Spencer, who boasted that he lived in the only three story house in Irishtown. This was a two-story house with an ornamental parapet across the front, probably two to two and one-half feet high. Someone had painted an imitation window on this, hence the claim. Bill had been a skilled mechanic for the Bethlehem Steel Company. So skilled was he that he had been sent out to demonstrate the enormous presses they were manufacturing. Thousands of pounds to the square inch, Bill could regulate a press so that it would mash a block a half inch thick but leave a watch uninjured. He could really layout a road or landscape job and then, to use his expression "make them bow down under it." He trained many of the younger men.

One afternoon he came around to the house. "John, John, I decided to swear off, so I went to the front." This meant that he signed the pledge before his parish priest, a document which he showed me. When I remarked that he was drunk, he told me Father Higgins had instructed him to take one more to straighten him out.

The next morning, he came around again with the same paper. "Why, Bill, you're drunk now."

"Well, Father Higgins told me to take one drink in the morning to straighten myself out." Later that day he telephoned me he was in the Branchtown police station. I said something about being drunk and he indignantly denied it. "They arrested me on misconstrubious suspicious." Much time I spent in those days in magistrate's courts getting competent men out and to work.

We were working on the estate of Mr. Uditsky one Saturday afternoon. As I remember it, Bill, Dan Lynam, Doc Johnson and Mike Derrick were the gang. Mr. Uditsky called me in and asked if the men would like a drink. A hot afternoon during prohibition made the question rhetorical. I brought the men in and Mr. Uditsky explained that the wine was for religious purposes, so

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he read a verse or two. Mike Derrick, the Scot, raised his glass, "Many the times I have had to swear off on the Book, but this is the firrst time I have ever taken a drrrink on the Book."

There were more sober incidents. We owned little equipment yet. We had not the money to buy it, but we did have a gasoline crosscut saw which we kept in an unsightly garage behind the house. One day the children—we had three now, the oldest, four - took the cap off the oil line and poured in a copious supply of sand.

There were few dull moments. Every chink in our time was filled in. I had retained my interest in Scouting. Right after our June honeymoon, Anne and I began spending weekends in a tent at the Scout camp, near Norristown.

We needed cooking equipment so I called Fort Dix to buy an army portable stove which was really complete. Not for sale. Could I rent one? No. However, I could tell by the conversation that I was not flatly turned down. How could I get one? We will lend you one and after a month or two write me to say it is worn out and we will write it off the books. Quite a guessing contest.

Troop 207 grew by leaps and bounds. At one Court of Honor thirty-seven boys received merit badges and three became Eagle Scouts.

We organized football and basketball teams, playing among others, the second teams of Penn Charter, Germantown Academy and Chestnut Hill Academy. This resulted in several scholarships for our boys. One strict rule. Anyone who protested a decision came out of the game immediately.

Celebrities would make short speeches at our meetings. I remember Babe Ruth at one session, Connie Mack at another. We would invite the boys in groups to our house for sandwiches and soft drinks. It was quite apparent at a glance they could not eat all. This was an opportunity to teach table manners. I told them I was older than they, so it was not patronizing or rude for me to tell them how to behave.

Take a sandwich and a glass of punch and go over to the other side of the room. The quantity of food, (which furnished Anne and me with meals for several days after) was the touchstone.

I have always speculated about what would happen if twenty of our most elegant members of society were starved for ten days and then put into a room with nineteen sandwiches at the other end. I suspect they would be running before they arrived at the table.

The Philadelphia Council of the Boy Scouts had a swimming meet at Willow Grove Park. The YMCA troop was represented, quite legitimately, by the Central High School swimming team, scholastic champions of Philadelphia. We had a bunch of little Irish kids from Waterview Playground. Much to our surprise we came to the final event, the 200-yard relay, tied. Our anchor man, "Quote" O'Donnel, started two yards behind the 50-yard champion of Philadelphia. As they finished, "Quote" reached out, then the other boy, then "Quote's" other hand. That is pretty quick work. The judges decided the O'Donnel hand had not quite touched. He pulled himself out to the enthusiastic slappings of the other boys. Then before all the big-wigs of Philadelphia Scouting, he repaid my years of Scouting. "Mr. Henkels, we certainly made them swim for it."

Somewhat over my dead body, we had a "banquet" every year. All the honored guests sat at the head table, with a catered dinner for which we were repaid with long tiresome speeches. The Scouts had hot dogs and baked beans. The meeting was at 8 o'clock so I had all the kids in the meeting room at 6 o'clock. For two hours we played all the roughhouse games we could think of. I led them into the "banquet" hall at eight, and the guests marvelled at the quiet discipline of the sweaty audience. Of course, they were too exhausted to squirm during the speeches.

My interest in our Boy Scout troop brought unexpected results. Our camp was about one and a half miles beyond the Norristown trolley line. We had one badly crippled boy whom my assistant scoutmaster Tinker Fleming and I carried up the road, spelling each other, to the "Ohs" and "Ahs" of passing motorists, but no offers of a lift. Then we all lugged those big squad tents about a quarter of a mile from the storage barn and Sunday evening reversed the laborious process.

Some of the older boys showed great fondness for the out-

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of-doors and many started in our tree department as apprentices and became first class tree men. Others transferred into the electrical department, advancing in time to line foremen.

One attractive boy was Fred Schmid who was a fine climber, but above all an ornithologist. He took me on a bird watching expedition to below Salem, New Jersey. We both wore hip boots. Our way to observe the nest of a bald eagle and a flock of wood ducks led across a huge swamp, which Fred assured me was not deep. About half way across we sank to above our boots, but kept on. Within a hundred yards of land, the water was up to our chests.

“Jack, Jack, see the white egrets! I always thought they nested here.”

“Shut up, you damn fool, I’m drowning.”

At that it was touch and go. There were some matted floating islands. By lying at full length and worming ourselves along we at last reached higher ground, (only about three feet of water) and waded ashore, slimy and grateful. No one could swim in those heavy boots. We saw the eagle eyrie, with the male bird screaming at us in the musical tones of a farm wagon in need of oiling. We discovered how young wood ducks returned to their nest in a hollow tree. Their claws are sharp and they simply climbed the six or seven feet. Fred was at Hawk Mountain every year for the famous hawk migration. Fred followed his love, and is now in the National Park Service.

Three other Scouts I recall at this time. Dave Jones, who wished to be a bookkeeper, kept our books on a part time basis. On the strength of his annual report that we had made money I bought Anne a Kelvinator for Christmas. The trouble was that he had his plus and minus mixed up. Instead of making \$2,000 for the year, we had lost that amount. From then on, rule of thumb dictates that no matter what the C.P.A. reports, if bills are hard to pay and we are collecting like mad, we are not making money.

Two Scouts, Joe Gardiner of Troop 7 and Charley Hendricks of our troop, made good as linemen. Joe is now electric maintenance foreman at a big duPont plant. Charley advanced along other lines, just as successful. He went into union politics and

became business agent of a line local.

By dint of pounding the pavements we were selling more and more jobs, and soon we got one of our first big ones. It proved profitable in more ways than one.

It was the athletic field of Ursinus College. Then we got all their road work. We had been asked to use student labor. One young man, a divinity student, began to assemble equipment and men before we actually started. When I sent our superintendent up, this young man had such a thorough grasp of the job that the experienced pro was second in command. The young man was Arthur C. "Buck" Faust whose ideas proved brilliant then and later. This was the start of our policy to raise our own bosses, young men, and if necessary back them up with technical assistants.

We got a considerable volume of grading and planting at the Sesqui-Centennial in Philadelphia and the first New York World's Fair. These were rush, uninteresting contracts, hiding or ornamenting the phony stucco constructions.

We required a great volume of topsoil on the Philadelphia job. Nearby was quite an area of vacant ground that would pass the topsoil specifications. I offered five cents a cubic yard for the soil, with us to load and haul. The owner said he wanted a day to think it over. The next day when I called he said a competitor had said the soil was worth fifty cents. I inquired how much they were buying. Well, they weren't buying anything, just setting a fair price. I said we had been in the market for 60,000 cubic yards but could get it from a brickyard in Southwest Philadelphia, which we did.

Sometimes you can get topsoil more profitably. Some years later we had a roadway grading and seeding job in North Jersey. The only way to get the soil was to buy a nearby eleven acres and strip it. The ground abutted on Route 1 at an important intersection. We paid \$4,000 for it, sold the topsoil \$4,000 and still had the ground. We were offered successively \$6,000, \$8,000, \$12,000 and \$16,000 for the acreage. We finally sold for \$17,000 somewhat against my judgment.

The "we" of both the Henkels family and of Henkels and McCoy were expanding now. We had two children; three more

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were to come. The business was joined by two men. After he had graduated and delivered two sermons, Buck Faust decided that outdoor life was the life for him and joined the company. Before that, Anne's brother, Louis J. McCloskey, suave man about Rittenhouse Square, gave up the security of the Glove Ticket Company to join in the adventures he heard about evenings in our half-house on the wrong side of Germantown Avenue.

His first assignment was to fill a nail keg with horse manure and distribute it among the bushes at the Delaware Bridge Plaza, which we had planted. Some of his load went into the pit for the memorial tree President Calvin Coolidge was to plant there later in the week.

We started business when power shovels and cranes were the only mechanized equipment. Earth was moved by horse drawn scoops. That meant James (Pop) Sharp in the Germantown vicinity and William J. Foote on the Main Line. Pop was a competent, courteous gentleman, whose chief assistant was Strawberry. Strawberry is lost in the mists of antiquity, but Pop, when mechanical equipment made teams obsolete, became an extremely valuable foreman. The first time I figured we were really professionals was on seeing a grading job Pop did at Laverock, pronounced as Ed Koch and the architect said, "Lave, as in washing, Rock."

Gettus Woodson and Charley Johnson and Robert Burton were regulars in Pop's gang. They showed up every spring as regularly as the first robin and often timed it better. The rumor was that Charley and Burton, who roomed together, hibernated all winter, never leaving their bed. Charley, a big man, wore shoes larger than Satchel Paige. Anne asked him once why they were so big and he replied the reason was so he could get "the bandages" on inside. We pursued that subject no farther. He was probably the best grader I ever saw. Give him six stakes and he would finish grade perfectly a tennis court in a day. One spring he didn't show up. Just that.

McCleary Jones drove for Foote. Day after day he could look at the rear end of a horse and turn out a fine job. McCleary today is equally known as the husband of Margaret, who for twelve years has run our house to perfection, even when we have been

away for months.

I was astonished once on a rainy day, when the clan always gathered and the bite was put on us for an advance, to hear McCleary assert that a loaded Mack dump truck had passed right over his chest. Worse was to come. "Mr. Henkels can vouch for that. He saw it."

His brother, nicknamed Casey, had a church on Sunday and worked for us during the week. He was all right, but nothing like McCleary who did and does a magnificent day's work. With us it has always been the highest accolade to say, "He's a good worker." It has been the open sesame to pay advances, legal advice, and I don't know how many other problems to solve. Incidentally, McCleary always says he received his name because his uncle was an Irishman.

Three more of the colored men gave us invaluable help: Gene Turner who needed bail because he had "cutagirl," John Bohanna who was drafted and sent to Aberdeen where his first job was to sweep out the officers quarters. John had no stomach for an ocean voyage, much less being shot at on arrival at destination. He easily solved that. In his time off, he pressed the officers' uniforms and shined their shoes. He was always crossed off every departure list and came back to work a svelte 310 lbs. I see that is only two.

The other is Bob Brooks now our building superintendent. He came to me one Sunday for five dollars. A wheel had come off his Oakland and smashed the fender of a car going in the opposite direction. I asked him if five would cover the damage. "Yes, sir. That man said he wanted to be as easy as possible, because that was the best three wheel driving he had ever seen." I have never seen any and perhaps don't know what I have missed.

If Louis McCloskey thought his first assignment with Henkels & McCoy lacked dignity, some of mine had even less.

We had garnered a contract to shovel the snow from the electric substations in time to comply with city ordinances. One time a Saturday storm came up. Starting with heavy wet snow, it turned to sleet and rain, driving the men off the job. Knowing Philadelphia weather, I knew it would freeze up over night. Sunday would bring a deluge of personal injury complaints, husbands

tripping wives and all the variations that could be thought of only by a claims adjuster.

Some of our gangs, soaked to the skin, had already quit, but it was up to me to do something. I called up the Waerigs and the other Irish tree men and Negroes, like the Sharps, and piled seven of them into my car. Our first stop was Ludlow Sub, a pavement a square long in the center of the city. The men piled out. Then I noticed that with real forethought they had provided an extra shovel. The hint was obvious. I started shoveling as the eighty five-cent an hour gross was important. When I turned in our time sheet for signature, the supervisor of Ludlow read, John B. Henkels, Jr., foreman.

“What are you to Hinkle?”

The reply was easy but irreverent: “I am Hinkle.”

We cleaned up everything that evening and when the cold sun came up Sunday morning there were no occasions for accidents. All during these pioneer days we tried hard to get big jobs, prestige jobs. We tried to do them well, and we tried to know what we were doing. The size of our operations has changed considerably over the years, but not our approach. We still try to know what we are doing.

In the winter of 1926-27 when Buck had just been graduated from Ursinus, he introduced us to Dr. Brownback, the professor of botany, who volunteered to give us a night course in the elements of his specialty.

A group of seven or eight of us accepted his very kind offer and went to the college one night a week all winter. I remember Anne and Lou, Buck, Freddy Schmid and I used to go, also probably George Mobley and Frankie Albright.

Dr. Brownback started us on *Sellaginella* and *Equisetum*. He made microscopes available to us and showed us how to cut transparent sections thinner than paper. We saw with startled eyes the marvelous process of cell division, the nuclei, chromosomes and other elements. I remember his explaining photosynthesis, helio- and hydra tropism, how a leaf covered by the shade of another will find its way to the sunlight, the behavior of the membrane permeable only one way which produces osmosis and how the transpiration of plants affects our atmosphere. Leaves often

come out red in the spring as red absorbs more sunshine. I have since become convinced that the crispness of the vegetables in Chinese restaurants is based on osmosis in ice water helped along with compressed air as in pressure creosoting.

Dr. Brownback could give us only the fundamentals of the science in the time he had, but it explained many of the mysteries of life to us and I believe none of us have ever forgotten it. He was a born teacher and gave us technical equipment we needed badly and to me personally a knowledge of plants and trees that has given me great pleasure wherever I have been, tropics, tundra, desert, or mountains.

Later he took Anne and me on botanizing expeditions. From the first growth of spring, the skunk cabbage, we saw the two hepatica, round lobed and sharp lobed, violating all tradition by growing together.

We successfully grew arbutus by planting it at the top of a slope. We had tried many other locations with no results. We experimented with *Polygala paucifolia*, Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), various ferns including the maidenhair adiantum which is more widely distributed than any other fern I have observed.

One time I took my two small sons to Mount Misery in New Jersey to botanize. This is a moderate sand dune and is ecologically unique. There is no train of plants connecting it with anything in the state, and both flora and fauna are unusual. I never elsewhere saw bear-berry grow wild except on Cape Cod.

As we were fording a creek and some sloppy lowland, I was hailed by a man who lived there.

“Are you gathering specimens?”

I replied, “Yes.”

“I just saw a big one go under that plank.”

“Big WHAT?”

“Rattlesnake.”

We climbed out of there in a hurry. He took us to his house where he had caged several dozen rattlers and copperheads, waiting to get a load for one of those venom-extracting laboratories.

Our introduction to botany not only gave Anne and me a lifelong interest but it paid off. Henkels & McCoy was cutting brush along rights of way, trimming trees for a half dozen utilities, but

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also successfully soliciting business from all of the best architects and working with the best nurseries in the Philadelphia region.

Our little knowledge came in handy in other profitable ways.

One time, Bob Utz of the Philadelphia Electric at Ardmore told me of a threatened suit against the Company for extensive tree loss in Brookline. I looked at some of the trees. They did not show the characteristic pattern of gas damage. I then asked for a map of the gas mains. Some dying trees were on streets with no gas. We took samples to the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania. They isolated a disease now known as canker stain. We presented the evidence to the township authorities. They told me that if I could convince their expert witness, Samuel H. Baxter, head of the Fairmount Park Commission, they would withdraw the suit. Mr. Baxter was a man of great erudition and absolute integrity. He made a field trip with me and one to the Arboretum. These convinced him that there was no gas damage.

Another association with Mr. Baxter was on the Delaware River (Benjamin Franklin) Bridge planting job. Mr. Baxter was retained by the Bridge Commission to supervise and inspect the work. Two of the items were large *cryptomeria lobbi* trees. The only place to get them was at the then large and famous Andorra Nurseries. We determined to select them at the nursery before digging. Mr. J. Howes Humphries was officially the secretary of the nursery; actually he ran the place. He took us out to see the row of trees and Mr. Baxter selected two. "Those will be \$250 each," said Mr. Humphries. To argue with him was like taking on a tote board, so I told him to wrap them up. On our way back Mr. Baxter remarked in his dry way that there seemed to be a cover charge when Mr. Humphries waited on you.

We had been doing a great amount of business, for us, with G. & W. H. Corson, in stone for drives and with Andorra Nurseries for plants. Corson's is the oldest limestone quarry in the country and certainly the largest supplier of dolomitic limestone, in which the mineral is magnesium instead of the more usual calcium. Founded in 1822 it is also the largest lime quarry in the country. Their product explains to me the name of the mountain range in Italy, Switzerland and Austria, the Dolomites. Under Phil

Corson as president, the business has grown, expanded and branched out far beyond the dreams of his predecessors until to-day they process 8,000 tons a day, a big operation. On the other hand Andorra has practically disappeared. This is a loss to the entire country, as for sizes, varieties and skill in digging, they were, in my opinion, in a class by themselves.

Both companies were concerned that we had fallen back in our board. Anne went up to see Mr. Humphries, secretary and guiding genius of Andorra, and told him frankly how our finances stood. She ended up by telling him that his ledger (how I hate the word) would show him exactly how much we owed for nursery stock. We were not running up accounts here and there, but were buying everything from Andorra. Mr. Humphries told her that he wanted his money. However, he continued to fill our orders, and send us bills, BUT NEVER A STATEMENT OR DUN.

She then called on Phil Corson, to whom we owed a considerable amount for driveway stone, but again it was our only stone bill. She showed him our figures and he agreed to go along with us, giving her the most flattering business compliment she ever received; "Mrs. Henkels, you really are a salesman."

We were not the only ones who were struggling in those early days. Some of our subcontractors were almost as badly off.

One of our early customers was Don Peters. He built fine houses for speculation, many of them very desirable. The locations were splendid. When the bottom fell out of that, he embarked on government-aided apartments and finally went broke on a row of houses in Darby. At the time of his success, Don figured he would add incentive to the work of his stone mason, and started John Barba in business.

John admitted sheepishly when once I asked him his occupation in Italy, "Shoemaker." However, he had that Italian instinct for ascertaining the cleaving planes of stone. We used him for stone garden walls, gate posts and "Ha Ha's." One day John came around to our outside kitchen or office, tears in his big soft eyes. He wanted money, he needed money, Anne asked him why today and not tomorrow or the next day. "Tomorrow is the tenth of the month." He had been discounting his bills with the money

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we borrowed at six percent.

We had started the business with no cash, but delightfully understanding customers. Before we were able to establish a modest line of credit at the National Bank of Germantown, we just scraped along. Our hero then, and now, was Arthur McGinnes, a fiery Virginian, who was superintendent of the Ardmore office of the Counties Gas & Electric Company. He would call us up perhaps at 10 o'clock Friday morning and tell us crossly that if we didn't get our bill in by noon he could not pay us the next morning. What a man! The bill would be typed quickly and rushed out, knowing that if it was, say \$438.00, we would have Saturday morning 43 ten dollar bills, a five and three ones.

Our line of credit at the bank expanded slowly until by 1933 we had a line of \$4,000 on assigned accounts of such excellent companies as the Philadelphia Electric Company, Bell Telephone Company, J. S. Cornell & Sons, and John McShain. We preferred to borrow that way, as it kept us up on our collections and we had the advice of the bank on prospective customers. The bank board met on Thursday and as the bank was rushed on Friday and Saturday, we, with their approval, brought our bills in on Monday for financing. One Monday, we came in to finance the paychecks that were already out and were shocked to hear that on Thursday the board had called our loan. As Mr. Knox told Anne, "Capital is timid." She replied that it wasn't timid but in a blue funk. They had just been caught mildly in the Boltz fraud. We scurried around and managed to cover our payroll of about \$4,000. However, next week came around with terrifying rapidity.

For that payroll we could raise only \$400. I took it in cash and went out to see the gangs. I never will forget the Irish and the colored. Most of the others told me they had worked for their money and wanted it. They were paid. But the colored, "Must take something home. How about three dollars?" Or it would be two or five. Johnny Mullen insisted that he lend me \$500. He was only a foreman then.

Another of our clients was the talented architect, H. Louis Duhring, and his able assistant, Raymond Holland. He did a great amount of work for George Woodward, the State Senator. Mr.

Woodward did much good in an unobtrusive way. A great problem for young professional men, then and now, was a place to live within their means to "accord with their station in life." Mr. Woodward would build attractive houses in excellent locations and rent them to these young men. The terms were that the lessee paid all taxes, and 6% on the cost of the house annually; the owner maintained the exterior, the tenant the interior. I think Dr. Woodward's name must be blessed in many a house to this day.

Before planting any of these houses, Ray Holland and I would go out at night to see the silhouette in the full moon and design our masses of shrubs and trees to mesh with the basic plan.

Dr. Woodward divided his work rather evenly between Mr. Duhring and Robert McGoodwin. Once when I was driving Mr. Duhring in the Star, which succeeded my Durant, we happened to go past the McGoodwin job. They exchanged the amenities and McGoodwin asked for comments on his work. At that moment we were in the rear of the houses. Professional rivalry overcame Mr. Duhring's innate kindness and he said, "Evidently they are not supposed to be looked at from this side."

Mr. Duhring refused to own or drive a car so we always picked him up at his house, which, with a second story porch complete with cast iron railings, looked like an old fashioned Pennsylvania Dutch hotel. Invariably, he would walk out of his house and say, "Oh, I forgot something." He would then go into the house again. This would happen several times before we were on our way. He was an extraordinary man. Talking to a mechanic he would say, "Let us put this five feet four inches over the side wall," and put a mark on the wall, just like that. Later we would measure and his line would be exactly five feet four inches. On one of our trips, with several of our children (Anne's and mine, not Duhring's) in the back seat, we passed a somewhat substandard looking store. "I'm sorry to say I own that building." He was a delight.

3

WE ATTRACT ALL NATIONALITIES

CAME ANOTHER CRISIS, domestic rather than financial this time but of deep import to Henkels & McCoy. Whether we were making money or losing it we were still not too sure, but business was picking up.

We had two or three small children and a housekeeper. The housekeeper and Anne managed the house, the children, and, working from dawn to dark, all the clerical work of the company. Undoubtedly we had to have more help.

The problem was whether to employ an expert office assistant or a nurse for the children. The diaper, then the school age would pass, and the business was Anne's lifeblood as well as mine. Despite maternal murmurings, I decided on a nurse.

Anne had been a brilliant manager. Should she fritter away her life with worthy committees, bridge, of which she was an undisputed master, or should she develop the principles and methods of the business of which she had been the lifeblood? I made the decision—a nurse was taken on. It was one of the most far-reaching decisions I ever made. Year, after year, her un-

derstanding, her investigating of new equipment and new procedures, has been both solid and progressive.

At about the same time we moved our offices. The 10 X 14 foot kitchen, always inadequate, became impossible. We leased two rooms over a drug store at Greene and Rittenhouse Streets. Buck Faust and Lou McCloskey were both partners now. Roy Lehnen soon joined us as a third partner. We brought in more and more office people with the usual wear and attrition.

Sometimes I would like to call ours a Christian business. It never was. I am a Catholic, which none of my partners were. Three of the real architects of the business were Jews: Jerry Stern, our lawyer; Harold Dunn, our C.P.A.; and Marty Helmus, who rose from laborer to head our gas and underground department.

To some Protestants at the time even my Christianity was suspect. Lloyd House was the able and meticulously honest supervisor on A.T.&T. rights of way. Together we would ride the lines estimating on the cutting of brush. Inevitably after submitting these estimates we got the work, but in the earlier days of our relationship, it sometimes seemed as if my religion would lose it for us. This was one actual conversation as we rode along on one of our two and three-day inspection tours.

“What did you think of President Wilson kissing the Pope’s toe?”

“Mr. Wilson did many foolish things.”

“Do you go to Church?”

“Every Sunday.”

“Do you go to the Mt. Airy Baptist Church with their men’s Club of 700?”

“No, it is three miles from my house but it must be an inspiring sight.”

“Perhaps you go to Mass.”

“Perhaps I do.”

As he left me at the house, Anne would ask, “Does he know?” My reply was to quote from the Lady of The Lake: “The foe, invulnerable still foiled his wild rage by steady skill.”

Later, after we had become friends as well as business associates, I told Mr. House that I was a Catholic and even brought my Scout Troop demonstration team down to his church for an exhibition.

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If we were never wholly a Christian business. we certainly were not all the same color. African and Caucasian have worked side by side in Henkels & McCoy since the beginning. We were never interested in the pigmentation of a man's skin. If he could do the job. he was on; if he couldn't, we didn't want him no matter what his color.

We had whites, blacks, the Irish, Ursinus college boys working during the summer, and in our pioneer days we had our full share of Danes. At this time I recall Hans Christensen, Hans Larson, Harold Aarlborg, and the inimitable Frank (Jingle) Holmstrom.

Christensen came to us fresh from college, with an invincible satisfaction with everything he did. Architects and owners were ignored, or even worse, talked down. He stayed two or three years. His most outstanding characteristic was jumping the gun on a change of light when making a left hand turn. He wrecked two cars that way.

Larsen had come to us from "The Argentine." "g" as in get, having accomplished prodigies of valor there; such feats as single-handed saving twelve huge, again the hard "g," earthmovers in a flood. He was energetic and bright. Working on a share of the profits, he broke our routine of always pruning shrubs after transplanting. He just slapped them in. Even when they survived there was die-back at the tips and our jobs looked, and were sloppy. As we had concentrated on name jobs and prestige architects and contractors, the situation was an unhappy one.

Aarlborg was a landscape architect with a whim of iron. I could agree with the client architect on a general layout, turn it over to him and receive a thoroughly different plan. Telling him that no doubt his idea was excellent and possibly superior, I would ask him to redesign the lay-out in accordance with our instructions. No soap. It came back with slight modifications. So another Dane bit the dust.

Then there was Frank (Jingle) Holmstrom. He could and did whip out, unaided and unknown to us, estimates on anything. "Jingle" is a contractor's appellation I learned from Harry McNichol.

Recently, Charles Feters, Dick Gibbons and I went on an inspection trip in Delaware County. First we came to Linde Air,

one of my customers. Our work had been so excellent that we had been given the job at a higher price than two competitors. All on it's own, Frank sublet it to the low bidder. I called up the Linde manager to make an appointment to apologize personally. He told me not to bother, we would never work for him again. I said that was not the point, that I wished to humiliate myself as a matter of self-discipline and example to my confreres. I went to Linde and received the dressing down I deserved.

Later we passed another plant, General Chemical I think it was, a customer of Gibbons, and he had the story of how he was taking a price to them of \$16,000. He was told they already had a price from us of \$11,000. This was news to Dick and he asked who had signed it. "Frank Holmstrom."

Charley had his case or cases. So had Marty Helmus. Evidently Frank would see the record of incoming telephone calls and gallop off, in all directions. It would have been funny if it wasn't so serious and costly. I think we might have stopped it by immediately destroying all incoming envelopes. This would have cut off his source of bidding paper.

His versatility was complete. One time at the Flower Show, Charles Dearnley upbraided me for a rock garden Frank had put in. I told him it would be rebuilt at our expense into a big league production. He told me not to bother, he would not use us again for anything. I replied new work was completely extraneous, that we were rectifying a mistake and that I would send him a letter stating that we wouldn't work for him even if he asked us.

We did a good job on the rock garden as we had excellent men, Riebe, Stender, Weierbach. Sometime after that a man called me up. He had a job and Dearnley had recommended us with the remark, "They won't work for me, but I don't think they will draw the line at my friends."

There was another man that belongs in this category. Although possibly he was not a Dane, he had all the benign influence on the business of the Danes. The first day he was on the job he charged across a windrow of earth, completely incurious as to its origin and fell into the trench. This early promise was adequately fulfilled. The next job on which I saw him was installing the mercury vapor lights on Vine Street, the first ones

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in the United States. Our print gave us a location for our cable and when we dug down we struck, very gently I am glad to say, Bell Telephone conduit. As a matter of interest, we also found wooden water pipe in use.

“Ratchet Head”, a name our man had earned beyond question was going over the problem with Joe Mahoney, superintendent for Union Paving Company, prime contractors on the job. They decided to move our trench about three feet, to avoid this trouble. I was horrified. We had spent practically no time on the works so no extra was involved in our request for new, revised drawings. Imagine a failure in either the telephone or our installation years later. Well, the lights on Vine Street are in, and in accordance with official drawings.

On the Vine Street job, “Ratchet Head” would grab a wheelbarrow and run it to the trench instead of supervising. One day, Bob Bricker saw this and was annoyed. He told the concrete driver to give the barrow a real swinging load. “Ratchet” had to call for help.

Winter came on, work slackened, so we brought him in to install new ceiling lights in the office. We have a false ceiling suspended by wires with catwalks of boards adequately spaced. One day his foot came through the ceiling. He could do it.

All these instances pointed out clearly a defect in our organization. Buck Faust, Lou McCloskey, Roy Lehnert and I had many fine qualities, but the business had outgrown our way of running it, which was on the order of a bunch of small Soviets. We needed someone to co-ordinate, pull the loose ends together.

We found the man in one of my golfing partners, Andrew L. Lewis, General Manager of G. & W. H. Corson. He and I with Charley Slaw of Slaw Landis, and Dick Evans of Highway Materials played a bloody foursome for small stakes. General manager of Corson’s sounded good, but the authority was somewhat constricted. Phil Corson was a highly aggressive and competent administrator and a general manager was redundant. Of course, Andy was also a salesman supreme. At that time Corsons did not have the stone washing equipment they have now, the asphalt would “strip” off the dusty stone, but Andy still sold a lot, recommending tar as a binder, which would grip the stone; it was a

cent or two higher in price.

I offered Andy a partnership and full authority in operations and he was quite hesitant, because Corson was a solid outfit, we had only potentials. He went home, asked his wife, Lucile, who, while by no means an Amazon, was so coordinated an athlete that she could hit a golf ball further than any of us.

"Accept it," said Lucile, "I know that Jack must have thoroughly considered this and would not make an offer unless he was reasonably sure it would be advantageous to you." Andy did accept, and so well did he organize us that we all made money; Andy three times the amount of his last year at Corson's.

We had outgrown the rooms over the drugstore and moved to the front room of a bowling alley across the street, where Eve Brown and Ethel Bender joined up. It was there Andy reported on his first day. It was a shock to him. He had been accustomed to a private office and a secretary. He found himself in one crowded room full of telephones, typewriters, and men talking and arguing. Any vacant chair was up for grabs so that the last man in transacted his business standing. This was different, but Lucile had been right-half right, that is. Andy's acceptance of a partnership in Henkels & McCoy was advantageous both to him and to us.

"Organize, deputize, supervise and follow through," the head of the Christian Brothers had told me when I met him in Rome. Andy knew how to do just that, and he learned some of our ways. Like me, he is grounded, and as the office is not near a good lunch place, he sends out for sandwiches. Recently a woman suing for divorce complained that her husband was the only graduate of Haverford College who carried his lunch in a paper bag. Andy's sandwiches are usually delivered in a bag. He can almost qualify.

Andy brought in organizing and administration experience we had never had. To see the supervisors sit one by one at his desk as he hears confessions is reassuring. He keeps at it until the man solves his own problem. He is a superb salesman and a diplomat. Recently I got still another illustration of his modus operandi.

Harry Hackman called me up in Andy's absence and wanted

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action on a job. I told him we would have a gang out the next day. Harry said, "Jack, that is why I always want Andy and not you. You have committed yourself to a gang for tomorrow. Andy would have told me he was upset at the lack of action and would move heaven and earth to correct the condition. You made a firm commitment, Andy promises nothing."

Personnel was expanding now as well as business and office space. Our first salesman was Fred Bendien and, as we were solely in tree-trimming and landscape work then, he knew his stuff. Before coming to this country from Holland he had been a packer for a Dutch nursery with a large export business. So much stuff passed through his hands that he could distinguish among the large number of hybrid rhododendron varieties by their leaves and buds.

Salesmen can be good, but in our experience, the engineer who can tell us how to use his equipment and help solve our problems is better than the out-and-out salesman. We decided that we who did the actual work could be the best salesman for Henkels & McCoy. I took a course in salesmanship at Temple and later we had a course at the office for foremen, telephone operators, and all other key personnel. We had a caterer send in dinner, and a man from Temple gave the course. He was a Notre Dame graduate who had a big job with the General Outdoor Advertising Company. Later he gave us several handsome jobs erecting the framework for some of his big signs.

Soon Henry Riebe joined us.

No one ever connected with the business added as much to our budding prestige as Henry F. Riebe, F.R.H.S. (Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society), in other words, a Kew Garden graduate. Born in Germany, educated there and in France before being admitted to Kew, Henry had international respect, admiration and love. Harvard had a splendid botanical and research garden in Soledad, near Cienfuegos, Cuba. Mr. Walsingham, its chief, knew him. At Tela, in Honduras, the head of the United Fruit experimental garden knew him. His name was open sesame at the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard, and the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania to whom I appealed, always with success, to solve my technical problems. The same was true

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at the Bellingrath Gardens, Fairchild Gardens, Hope Gardens in Jamaica, Edinburgh Gardens in Scotland, the Bishop Museum in Hawaii. At Kew itself they rolled out the red carpet for Anne and me with my introduction from Henry Riebe. He knew all the best nurseries and the unusual plants, so that our plantings were always distinctive.

It was Henry who pointed out to me that the stock and scion to be joined must have exactly the same rate of growth. Of course they must have the same number of chromosomes and be closely related. Parenthetically, some light treatments of 2-4-D has apparently changed the number of chromosomes in hollies. The rate of growth is of more importance the longer the plant lives. I have seen in Fairmount Park trees evidently planted for the Centennial Fair of 1876. One above the graft was double the circumference of the stock; in another case of a different species of tree, conditions were reversed. This knowledge was important in winning a case for the Philadelphia Electric Company that might have been expensive, high in thousands. A huge Rivers variety of copper beech was slowly dying. The owner charged it was the effect of gas. To, me it showed none of the characteristics of gas, although there had been a slight leak about sixty feet away. Experts from the Universities of Pennsylvania, Penn State and Rutgers were called in by the contending sides. They looked for fungus and borers. Borers, by the way, are not a cause of sickness in a tree, but a result. Healthy trees throw off borer attacks. I pointed out that the circumference above the graft was approximately nine feet, below it was thirteen. I showed that the cambium and the xylem and phloem, the life giving veins and arteries were being choked off by the acute letter "S" at the graft. It was the first time these scientists had ever seen this. They were convinced and the suit was dropped.

Riebe was directly responsible for another pleasant experience. Anne and I were touring the South and visited the magnificent Bellingrath Gardens south of Mobile. Waterfalls of artesian water were beautifully placed, although the water had so much sulphur that it was poisonous for plants. Acres of large camellias, have many flowers lying on the ground, where they stay fresh for several days. There was one patch carpeted with Afri-

can violets, and a greenhouse was filled with a huge flame vine, a bignonia named *Anemopoegma Chamberlainii*.

After some time I met Mr. Hunt, the superintendent, and inevitably a Kew Garden man. I introduced myself and we looked over some plants together. He showed me a small bushlike tree and asked me what I thought of his fine holly. "Excellent, but it is not a holly, but *Osmanthus ilicifolium*." Henry would have been proud. At the end of our tour, Mr. Hunt took us back to the entrance and refunded us our admission price. Evidently this is one of his tests for phonies.

I did not use Henry's introduction to the famous David Fairchild, who was in ill health, but everywhere I have been the name of Henry Riebe stands for a delightful gentleman and skilled horticulturist.

All that met Henry Riebe were charmed by his personality and knowledge. The finest amateur gardeners listened to him and used his skill. One of them was the daughter of the president of a famous nursery. The first climbing rose was named after her and she would point modestly to the blurb under her name: "No good in a bed, but wonderful against a wall."

When we really needed prestige, Henry supplied it by urging us to exhibit in the Philadelphia Flower Show. But the blood and sweat! Bringing espalier fruit trees to leaf and bloom at the proper season, strawberries into fruit, flowering trees into bloom! Rare azaleas and even sod had to be perfection. The lugging in, making a forty foot long walk look to be much longer by gradually narrowing it were terrifically hard work. There was no formula for the path perspective, it was all trial and error. A quarter inch in width was the difference between a true look of perspective and an appearance of utter distortion.

These difficulties were greater because of the variation in the time of Passion Sunday, on which the Show opened. This variation in date made sense as the majority of the exhibitors had merchandise to peddle for Easter. Plants, tools, bulbs, seeds, fertilizers, heated the blood in the spring. We had no such pitch.

All we could obtain was general prestige, which turned out to be considerable. We won five first prizes in five years.

Some of our fine exhibits were aided materially by the mag-

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nificent wrought iron work of Bill Darlington. At times they outshone our part, but were so light and graceful that they never were overpowering. The “Forger” as we called him was a true artist.

We were beginning to get there, but so was an irresistible force, an all-embracing, not to say choking, circumstance, a bottom of the cycle stagnation—call it what you will— that along with a few million other people I had failed to see coming. We hadn’t solicited the business. We hadn’t bid on it. We didn’t want it, but along with the aforementioned other millions of people, we got it anyway. The Depression.



Early crews, trademark, equipment and working conditions. We are happy to say that the methods and practices of the 1920s fell away as national awareness of worker safety came into being. Inset, above left: a young John B. Henkels, Jr. as he appears in his high school year book. Inset, right: John McCoy.





Jack Henkels did the negotiating, planning and selling. His wife Anne was an able administrator and a full and equal partner in the fledgling business. Quoting a line from a play Jack has said of Anne, "You are me – or is it I?"

Louis McCloskey was Anne's brother. Lou joined the new company after being regaled with tales of adventure around the dinner table. He quit a promising job and never looked back. Arthur C. (Buck) Faust was a divinity student when he first met Jack. His immediate grasp of the business so thoroughly impressed Jack Henkels that he was hired on the spot. This was the beginning of training and elevating managers from within the rank and file of Henkels & McCoy, a practice which is still very much in evidence in the 21st Century as it was in the 1920s.



Lou McCloskey, Jack Henkels and Buck Faust in a photograph made in the 1950s.



Henkels & McCoy is proud of its reputation in fair hiring practices and its equitable treatment of all employees. Jack Henkels stated unequivocally, "When a man comes to work for Henkels & McCoy and proves that he is a worker, he has a job, a permanent job, as nearly as anything in life is permanent... If we forget the men who work for us, we deserve to go broke."

Bob Black (circled, above) was hired in 1925 and was the first H&M employee to serve for 25 years. Bob rose from laborer to a member of the three-person employee profit sharing trust in the course of his career (shown below at left, conferring with Mrs. Anne Henkels and Mr. William Huckle). When Mr. Black passed away in 1964, he was still on the Henkels & McCoy payroll.

It has been said that Henkels & McCoy has treated all its workers equally – long before it was fashionable – and certainly for far longer than it has been the law of the land. This progressive attitude has helped many an employee climb the ladder of financial freedom and economic success.

