

THIS WAS MY WORLD, LITTLE DEAR ONE – Mathilda’s Scrapbook

Don’t cry, Little Dear One. Come here, come here, let me hold you. I know, they went off down the hill and left you here. I was heartbroken when I saw them bringing you up that hill, even while my arms were aching to hold you. Turn around, my little one. I am just to your right. Yes, I am here, right next to you, and I want you to know that I will always be here right next to you. Things will be different for you now, but they won’t be quite as bad here as you might expect. All of us here, or at least some of us, are very good at making Stories, and I am particularly good at that, so I think you and I will have some good times together. I always really enjoyed telling stories to my little ones and reading books to them.

What you will eventually discover, to your delight, I think, is that all of your life will be lived from now on in your mind. You have only to think something, and it will be there. It is sort of like that new cinematographic motion picture thing my friend saw in Madison back in 1916, about the war news, where all the things you would read about in a magazine or a newspaper or book were projected onto a big screen, with words and pictures that kept moving and flowing along with no sound. In your time people would call these movies. You have seen some at the theater in Lancaster, and the ones you saw had sound. Here you will make your own movies, only much better ones. With your quick mind, you will be able to do many magical things with pictures, words, sounds, even smells and tastes, the feel of things, and ever so much more. You can have some amazing adventures.

The best thing is that you are not limited to what you already know, nor to things you have experienced or read, nor to only what a normal eight-year-old boy would understand. Everything that ever happened or has been written about or lived, even things that happened before or after your time, will come directly to your mind as you think about it. When you are making a Story, all these other thoughts and pictures and words will be available to you in the form of swirling bits of information. Many years from now there will be something called Virtual Reality, where special tools let you feel like you are actually living a different experience. What you and I can do now is much more complex and thrilling than that, even, because our Stories will have so much more information in them! One problem is that there is so very much information of every kind out there in the universe that at first it will be overwhelming and a bit difficult to make a Story. But you are inquisitive and adventurous and free-spirited, just as I am, so I know you will fairly quickly figure out how to make Stories. You will probably soon be using Story tools that I have not even thought of yet! Best of all, we can both see and live the Stories together if we choose. Quite wonderful, don’t you think, and a lot of fun, really!

How will we do this? Well, you remember how it was to lie in the grass on a beautiful summer day and watch the clouds above you drifting by and changing shape? Well, you can think of Information like that, swirling and teeming masses of stuff that will be called data bits years from now, stuff that keeps changing because the universe is so complex and unknown and always changing. So our best strategy is to lie still, position our butterfly super-nets, let the Cloud of Information Data Bits (CIDaB) flow through our minds, and then reach up quickly with our nets and catch those data bits we want for our Story. There is no right Story and no wrong Story, and there are as many ways to make a Story as there are people who make them. There is no worry or stress that a true Story of today might not be quite so true tomorrow. There are only Stories we create in each moment of our time with the facts that are available to us at that moment. You can make the Stories as true or

fanciful as you please, catching whatever data bits appeal to you at the moment. Your choices are as unlimited as your mind. In addition, you can purposefully make your Stories untrue, if you wish to get very creative. But it is important to let your reading audience know what kind of story they can expect from you. You must not lie to your readers.

You are new at this, so we will do a first Story together. I am going to choose the Story of my Life, and I will make it as true as possible because it was, after all, my life. However, it is very important to remember that no Story can ever be completely true. The facts that are available keep changing as people remember, experience, or find new facts. In addition, there are so very many facts that we can never include them all in our stories. Everyone remembers and experiences things differently, which means that all these different versions of the facts are in the Information Cloud. So it is helpful to remember that my Story is going to be about **my** memories and experiences, and the things that were important to me. In scientific terms, you could say that each individual person has a neuronal mind center that has been formed by all the experiences that person has ever had. Every time something happens to you, whether real or only in your mind, neuronal pathways are laid down or paved over. These pathways are like roads on which incoming data then travels, endlessly. Or you could think of it as every person having a specific pair of glasses through which he or she sees all data bits. Even you and I will not see our Stories in quite the same way, and each time you make a Story, your mind, and your future Stories, will change again. I think that is actually what I like the most about this whole process. Everything we create is endlessly unique and different! This story we are making right now is **my** Story of this moment, and no one else in the entire world can make this exact same Story, and even I in the future cannot make this exact Story!

Another thing I really like about creating Stories is that we can add to the Stories any information that may have affected us but that we may not have been aware of at the time we lived it. This happens particularly when we are children, because the whole world is so new and so packed with experiences then that while we are living those experiences we usually do not understand the larger context in which they happen. That is what makes our Stories here so excellent: we can add all the historical data and contextual material that explains our lives and makes our Stories so rich and full. So I will be adding a lot of information that was important in my life, even if I did not really understand it then. I did live in a very exciting and challenging time!

Now, there are many ways to create Stories, but I think the easiest way is to create a Scrapbook, where we lie back and catch from the CIDaB the data bits that interest us and then stick them into a timeline of our choosing, which can be random or not, as we choose. For our first Story I am going to choose pictures and words about my life and about things that were happening or that interest me about the years before I came here. We will not try to make a polished or finished story. This will be a scrapbook. We will simply grab words, phrases, paragraphs, or even sometimes whole essays that interest us, and paste them into our Scrapbook. I love pictures, so we will grab a lot of pictures. I will add explanations and commentary as necessary. We will put everything into a sort of linear timeline, with one event following the other, but we will also be free to jump around in the timeline as we like. Another thing to remember is that we don't have to look at everything in the Scrapbook, even while we are creating it. I want to put ever so much into my scrapbook because it is all so very interesting to me. But whenever we get to a part that does not interest you, or that gets too detailed and complicated, we can just skip over that part and go on to something else. There will be lots and lots of things that we can look at that will interest you. And remember that if we

don't like a Story, we can simply make it over, again and again, endlessly! So, Lights, Camera, CIDaB, ACTION!

Let's start with who I am, because you don't know me. I am your grandmother, yes, your true grandmother, your Daddy's mother. Here is the last picture they took of me, long before you were born. I was 23 years old then. I am the mother in the middle, holding your uncle Marvin, and the little boy next to me is your Daddy. Isn't he ever so cute? He would turn three years old the day after this picture was taken. He was eating a piece of watermelon. The man behind us is your Grandpa. Doesn't he look proud? I think he looks like a movie star! This picture was taken on our farm on July 4, 1914.



The woman to the left of me in the picture is your Great Grandmother, whose two youngest children are with her, and the man behind them is your Great Grandpa. They are your Grandpa Johnnie's parents. Do you see their little girl Olivia is barefoot? She loved to go barefoot! The woman on the far right in the picture is your great aunt Elizabeth, your Grandpa's sister, and the man behind her is her husband, my brother Joe. The other people are our dear friends and their children, Martin and Katherine Koopman and Ed and Lena Hermsen. Isn't it funny, how Katherine is smoking a pipe? But you see, some women did smoke pipes in those days. In your time those women who smoked usually smoked cigarettes, because in the 1920s after the tobacco industry was broken up under the anti-trust laws, in order to survive, cigarette makers started targeting women as well as men, trying to get them to smoke. Native Americans were of course using tobacco products for their medicinal qualities even before the arrival of Columbus. Tobacco was also commonly used in the

American colonies and subsequently in the United States as chewing tobacco and snuff and in pipes and cigars during the 18th and 19th centuries. White women in the 1800s saw American Indian women smoking pipes and maybe decided to try it themselves, but widespread use of tobacco in cigarettes came largely during the 20th century. Here are some advertisements I saw when I was a girl: an 1890 advertisement for Turkish cigarettes, an 1897 Art Deco ad for smoking a cigarette, and a 1918 war ad for cigars. They are interesting, aren't they?



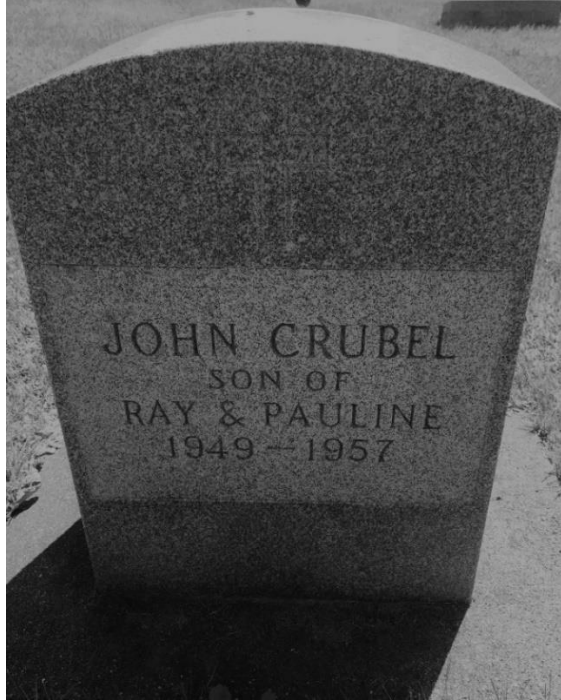
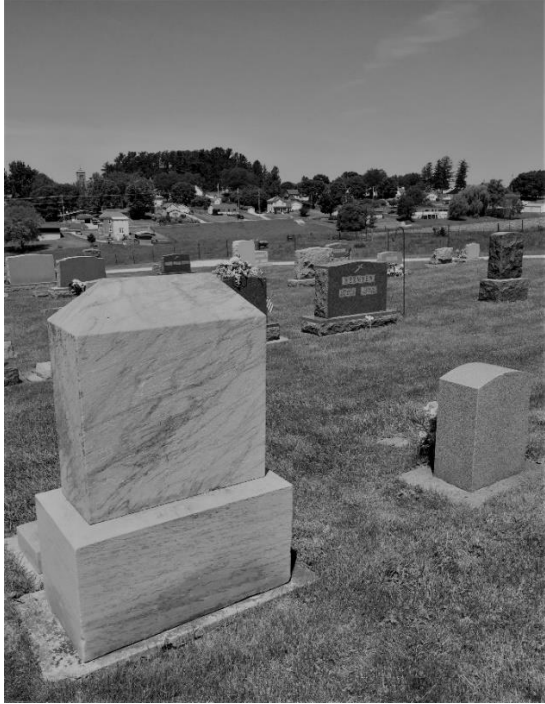
But back to the first picture: the couple on the left in the picture were the HermSENS. They had a farm to the north of where Johnny and I had our farm. We adults in the picture were all holding a big piece of watermelon, because we were celebrating our first Fourth of July all together in Wisconsin! Oh my Little Dear One, those were such exciting days! All of us had moved to Wisconsin by then, after our lands sold in Iowa or South Dakota, and our five families were so happy together, to be starting a new life together in a new state. The town of Bloomington, where we moved, was growing so fast, and our farms were making such good money, and there just seemed to be all the opportunities in the world for all of us. We missed our families back in Iowa, but really, since most of us had our first cars by then, we could go visit them with no trouble at all. Our farms in Bloomington were close to each other, and all of the children in this picture played together when we could get together on Sundays after church. This was in 1914, four years before they brought me here. Who could ever have dreamed that in four short years I would be here on this hill and my children would have to go on without me?

They brought me here when your Daddy was only seven, one year younger than you are. And no, I certainly did not want to come here, but I have learned that we just don't have any say-so about things like that. You see, there was a very bad flu that year, something no one had ever known about. None of us really understood how deadly it was or how quickly it could kill us. When it happened to me, everything went so fast I really did not know what was happening. All I knew was that one day, about three days after we went to that huge Armistice Day celebration in town, when the big war had finally ended, I did not feel well. I had a bad fever and pounding headache. I thought it might be the flu, so I tried to rest in bed when I could for a few days until my fever would go down. When I thought I was getting better, I got up and cooked some dinner for my family and I washed

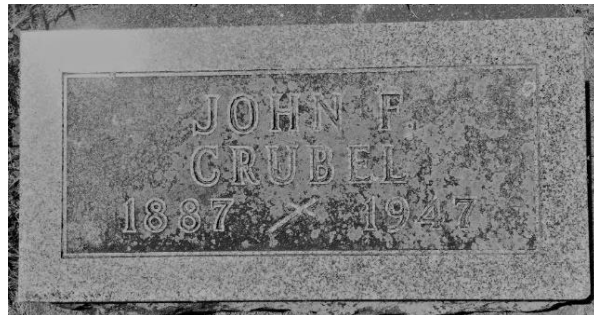
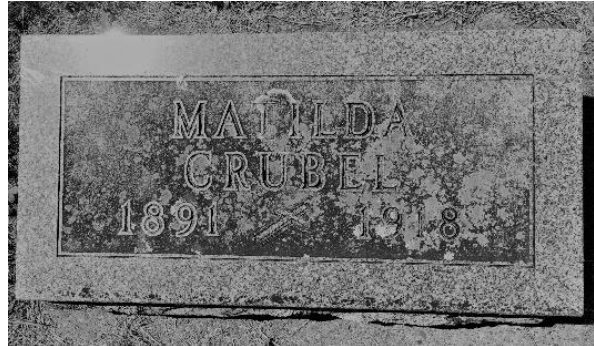
some of baby Patricia's diapers, and the next day I tried to feed the chickens and collect eggs. But I just did not feel well. Also, I kept having strange stomach pains. A few days later I was having trouble breathing, and I went back to bed. But it got harder and harder to breathe, and I felt like I was drowning. Then my skin started to turn blue, and your grandpa got so scared, and he didn't know what to do. He telephoned for the doctor, but the doctor was out on another call. He telephoned my parents and they said they would come, but they lived in Iowa. Johnnie telephoned Joe and Lizzie and his parents. They said they would come right over. He tried to prop me up in bed on pillows so I could breathe better, but it got harder and harder for me to breathe. He was saying, "Tillie, today is our eighth wedding anniversary. Exactly eight years ago today we were married. So this just has to be the day you get better because I want us to be together for a lot more years. Come on, my Tillie. You are my very own dear one." Your Daddy was there too and he kept holding my hand and calling me, "Mama, Mama" and I was trying to answer him, but I seemed to be going under a heavy water that pulled at me and wouldn't let me go, just like the Mississippi River water that grabbed you and did not let you go. Then I was choking and trying so hard to get air, trying so hard, trying so hard, and then everything was going black. And the next thing I knew, I was here on this hill. So you and I had pretty much the same experience, my Little Dear One, and oh, my, it was so scary and so bad. I just wanted to grab on to my Johnnie, and to your Daddy, and to all my babies, but something powerful was dragging me away. I know just how scared and alone you were feeling then, when that powerful water sucked you under. It is all so very sad, how these things happen in life.

But we can't do anything about that, so let me show you where we are right now.

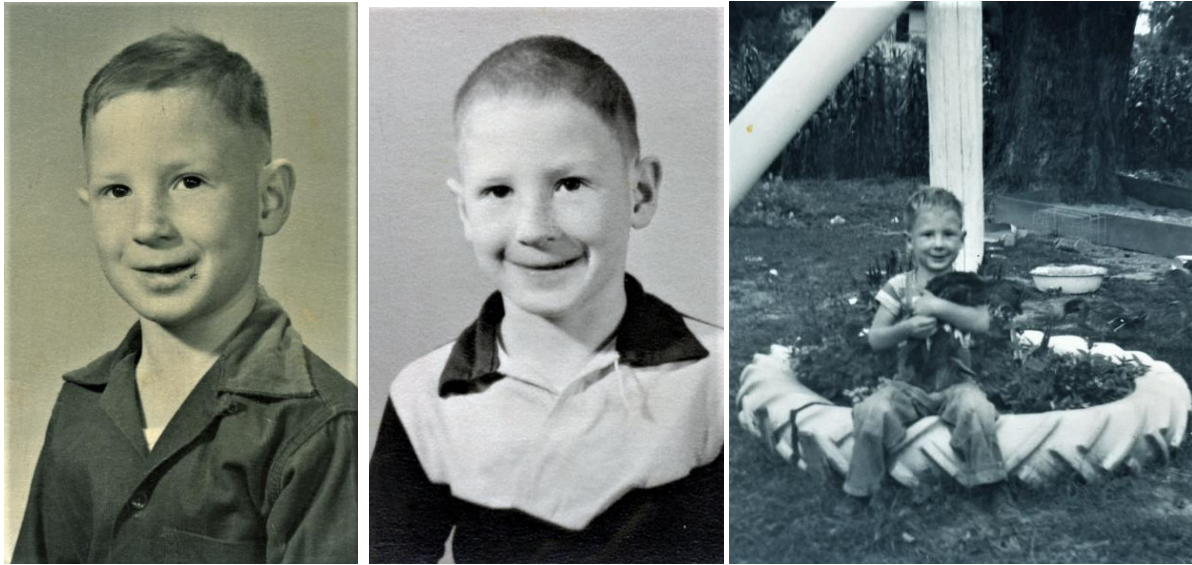
We are here, on this hill in the section of Bloomington, Wisconsin, that they call "Brooklyn." It is called Brooklyn because there is a deep ravine there, with a bridge connecting this area to the rest of the town, just like the Brooklyn Borough in New York City that is connected to the Manhattan Borough by a bridge over a river. The big white marble memorial stone in the left picture below was the one my Johnnie put up for me, because I was the first of the family to come here, and, as it turned out, I was like the matriarch of the family. The smaller one next to it is the one your Mama and Daddy put up for you. Do you see how close you are to me? You can even read your name: John Crubel, Son of Ray & Pauline, 1949-1957.



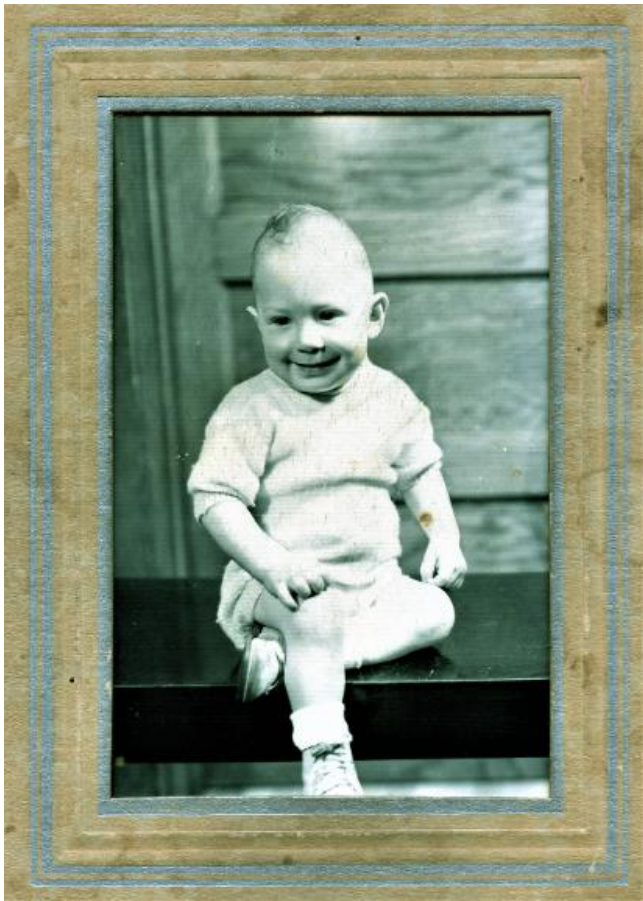
In these three pictures you can see the old, small stones marking the places for your Grandpa and me, and your stone is just behind ours. No one can ever be placed between us, so we will always be right next to you.



But let's talk about something happier: you!



You probably remember this first picture of you, your school picture from last year, the last picture we have of you. I love this picture because you have a challenge in your eye, and your devilish grin reminds me of your Daddy. The next picture is your school picture from first grade. Do you



remember how hard it was for you to sit still then? You were used to being able to run and jump and play all day, and suddenly the Sisters made you sit still. Mostly you really loved recess then. The next picture is a wonderful little picture of you holding the ducks you loved so much. You used to spend hours playing with those ducks that your mother raised for food and eggs.

And here is my very favorite picture of you, your baby picture, with your leg crossed under you and looking like you were ready to jump right off that table to have some fun. The next three pictures are of you on your



First Communion Day, including one of you with your

friend and a great one of you with your Daddy, my son who used to be a little boy like you, when I could hold him and I was not here on this hill. For Catholics, the First Communion Day was one of the most important days of your whole life.



Now, do you want to know a little bit about me and your Grandpa? This is me when I was 13 years old, and your Grandpa when he was 23 years old. You were named after him, did you know that? I called him Johnnie, and sometimes I might call you Johnnie too. Is that OK? He came here two years before you were born. Here are our wedding pictures, which I really love. My Johnnie is just so very handsome! On our wedding day he was 23 and I was 19.



Now this next picture will interest you, dear Little Johnnie. This is your Great Uncle John driving the first car in Salem, South Dakota, a 1908 Ford Model T Tourer. See how the car is built, so different from the car your Daddy and Mommy had. Your Great Uncle is driving an inspector to work.



By the time of my wedding day on November 22, 1910, he had traded in his 1908 Tourer and bought a new 1910 Tourer. What a beautiful car that was! That is your Great Aunt Regina on the left, my 13-year-old sister, then your Grandpa, then me, then my brother, your Great Uncle John, in the car, and then your Grandpa's 14-year old brother Henry. I really really loved my brother's car and told my Johnnie that we needed to get one as soon as we could! What do you think of that car? Wouldn't that model car be a great addition to your collection of toy cars?

