

AN ARTIST'S LIFE



Nearly A Century Of Surprises

ROBERT B. KLEIN

Dedicated to Janet, Greg, Ande & Jack





A Family Tree Grows in Brooklyn

Last year I turned 95. Since the “little gray cells” are still working, it might be time to put some thoughts on paper. You may even have a chuckle or two.

I was born on July 30th, 1926, in my grandparents home at 579 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, New York. The three story brownstone was on a lovely tree-lined boulevard in the very affluent neighborhood of Crown Heights. It was really a great place to live. The Brooklyn Museum, Ebbets Field, The Brooklyn Public Library, Prospect Park and the Botanical Gardens were all just a few blocks away. There were many elegant movie theatres, beautiful churches and you could ride the IRT Subway into Manhattan for only five cents. And there was no crime!

How Lucky Can You Get?

I started drawing at an early age. Mostly boats, cars and airplanes. They were well done. My two grandfathers were artists and it was obvious I had inherited their talent. Grandpa Klein, Edward August Klein, was an architect. He had a successful career designing the banks for Manufacturers Trust. His greatest achievement, however, was helping to design the Hudson Terminal Building in lower Manhattan. Completed in 1909, it was the largest office building in the world. Several thousand New Jersey commuters passed through it every day. In 1960 it was completely demolished, making way for the World Trade Center.

Grandpa Stuebner, Rudolph B. Stuebner, along with his two brothers, Carl and Louis, migrated from Pittsburgh, PA, to open a china decorating business at 822 Broadway in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. They, too, had successful careers. So I felt that one day I would also be working in the art field. It was a nice feeling.

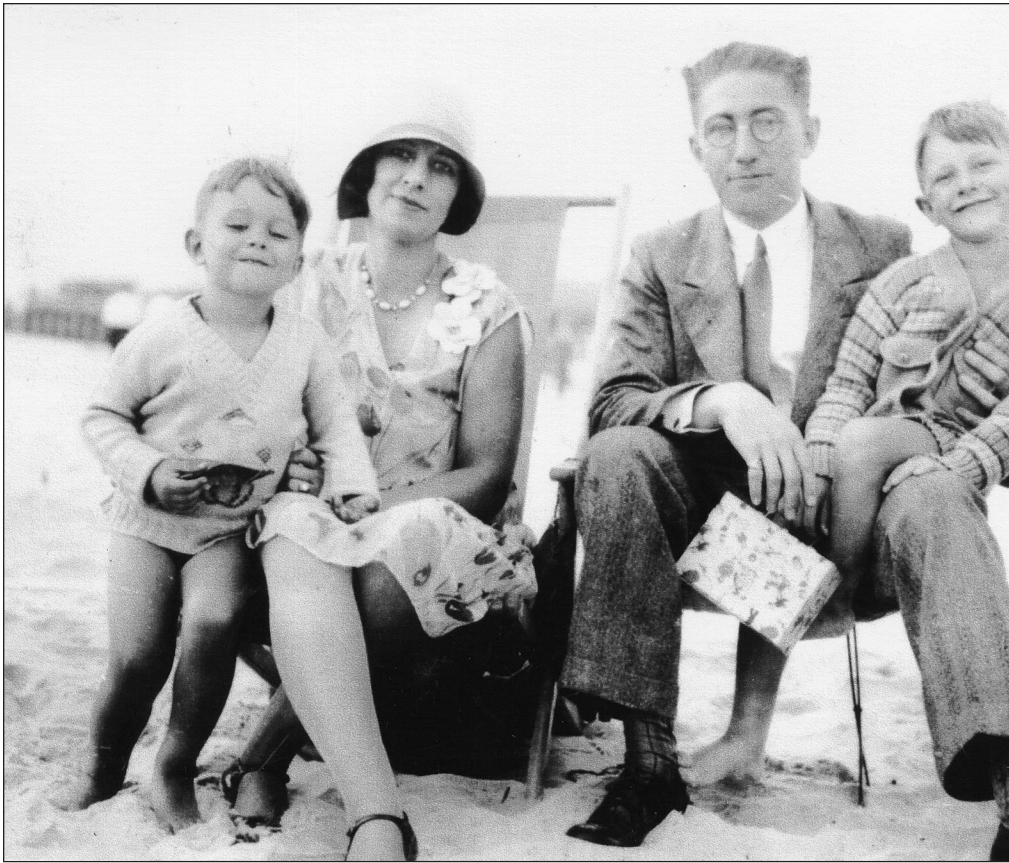




1927- My mother and me in Grandpa Klein's newly acquired Fay & Bowen. He is at the wheel.

Lake Hopatcong, New Jersey

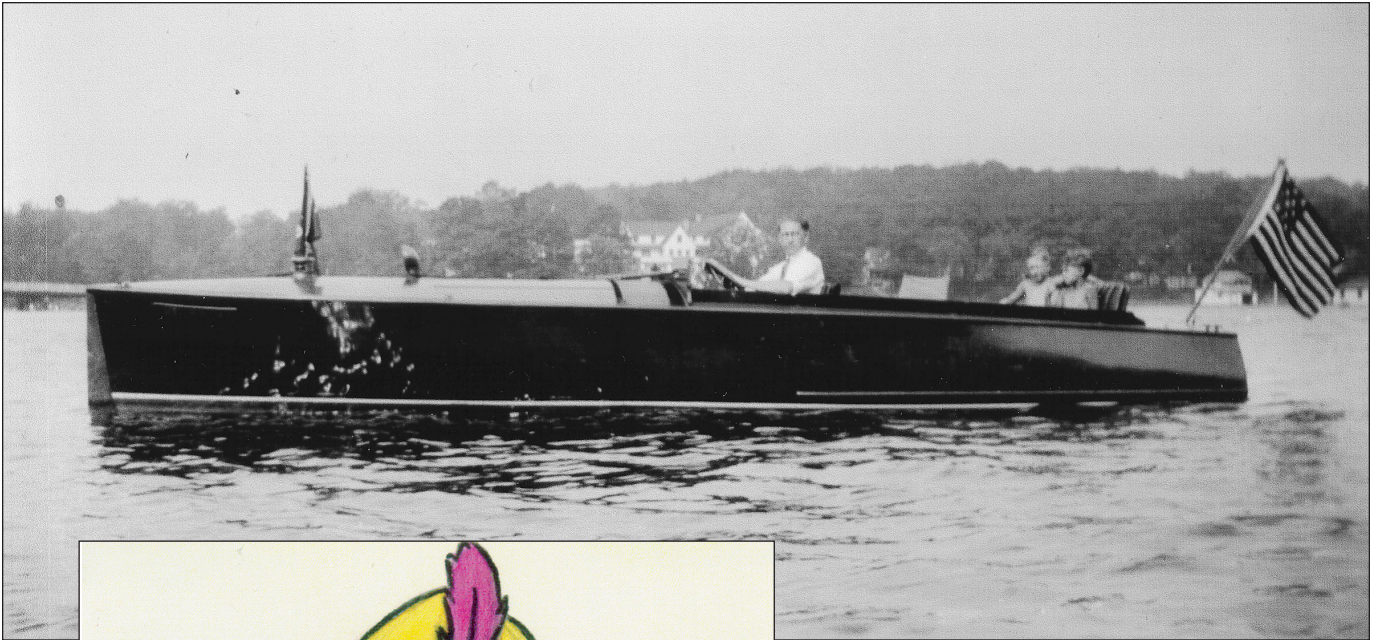
In the Spring of 1926, my Grandpa Klein was informed by his Brooklyn neighbor that her summer home in New Jersey was up for sale. He immediately drove up to see the property. He liked what he saw and quickly purchased it. It was a nine room Victorian style summer home on the shore of Lake Hopatcong. The lake is NJ's largest at nine miles long and with forty-five miles of shoreline. It's fifty miles west of NYC and at a thousand feet above sea level its cool summers made it an ideal summer retreat. I was born on the 30th of July and two months later I was riding in our newly acquired Fay & Bowen speed boat. From then on I spent most of my summers at the lake. Swimming, fishing, sailing all started at an early age. Life was good. In 1958 I married Estelle Ruth McElwee and moved into the winterized lake house year round. Estelle passed in 2020 but I'm still living here. As Estelle used to say, "It sure beats Merryheart." (a nursing/rehab facility that we both spent some time in).



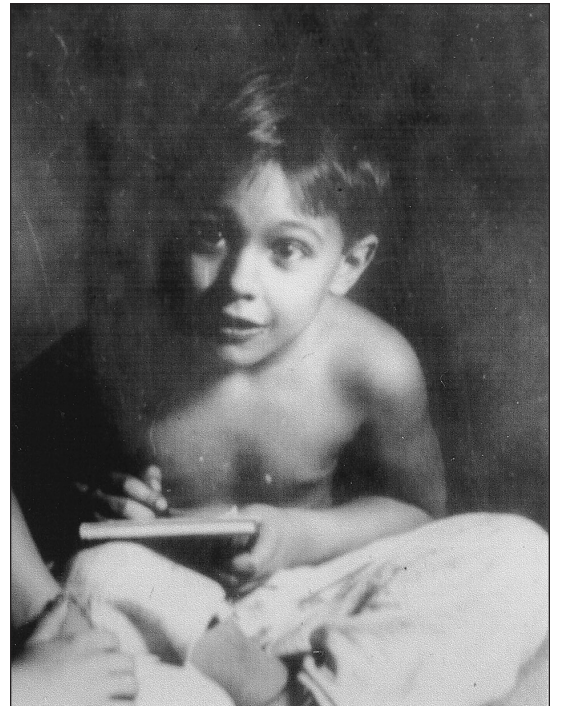
Vacationing at a Long Island beach. My father just got off the LIRR after commuting from his office in Brooklyn. I am on the left. My older brother, Edward, is on the right.



Aunt Edna, Uncle Ben and my mother.



Now my father's the skipper.



" I do believe he's sketching me."



1931 Interest in sailing started early.



Mr. Big Shot

Back in the 1930's there was a very popular show called "Uncle Don." It aired at 6pm over WOR and was listened to by every kid in the tri-state area. One of Uncle Don's sponsors was Good Humor Ice Cream. They announced a contest - send us your best drawing of a Good Humor truck. So I did. A month later, they announced the winner over WOR radio. "Robert Klein is the winner!" Wow! What a thrill that was. Not bad for a ten year old. The prize was a book of coupons that could be exchanged for Good Humor ice cream pops. Every time the truck came around, I would treat all my friends to free ice cream. For many weeks I was Mr. Big Shot. Uncle Don's career ended suddenly when one night, at the end of his show, not knowing the microphone was still on, said "That should hold the little bastards."

As Teddy Would Say, "Bully!"

A couple of months later I won another contest for my drawing of a Pride of the Farm ketchup bottle. The prize was a case of their food products. The prizes got better in 1939, when I graduated from P.S. 138. I was valedictorian and was also awarded the Theodore Roosevelt Medal for Citizenship and The American Legion medal for history.

One of my graduation presents was a camera and film developing kit which I received from my Uncle Ben and Aunt Edna. Little did I know that, one day, this gift would change my life forever.



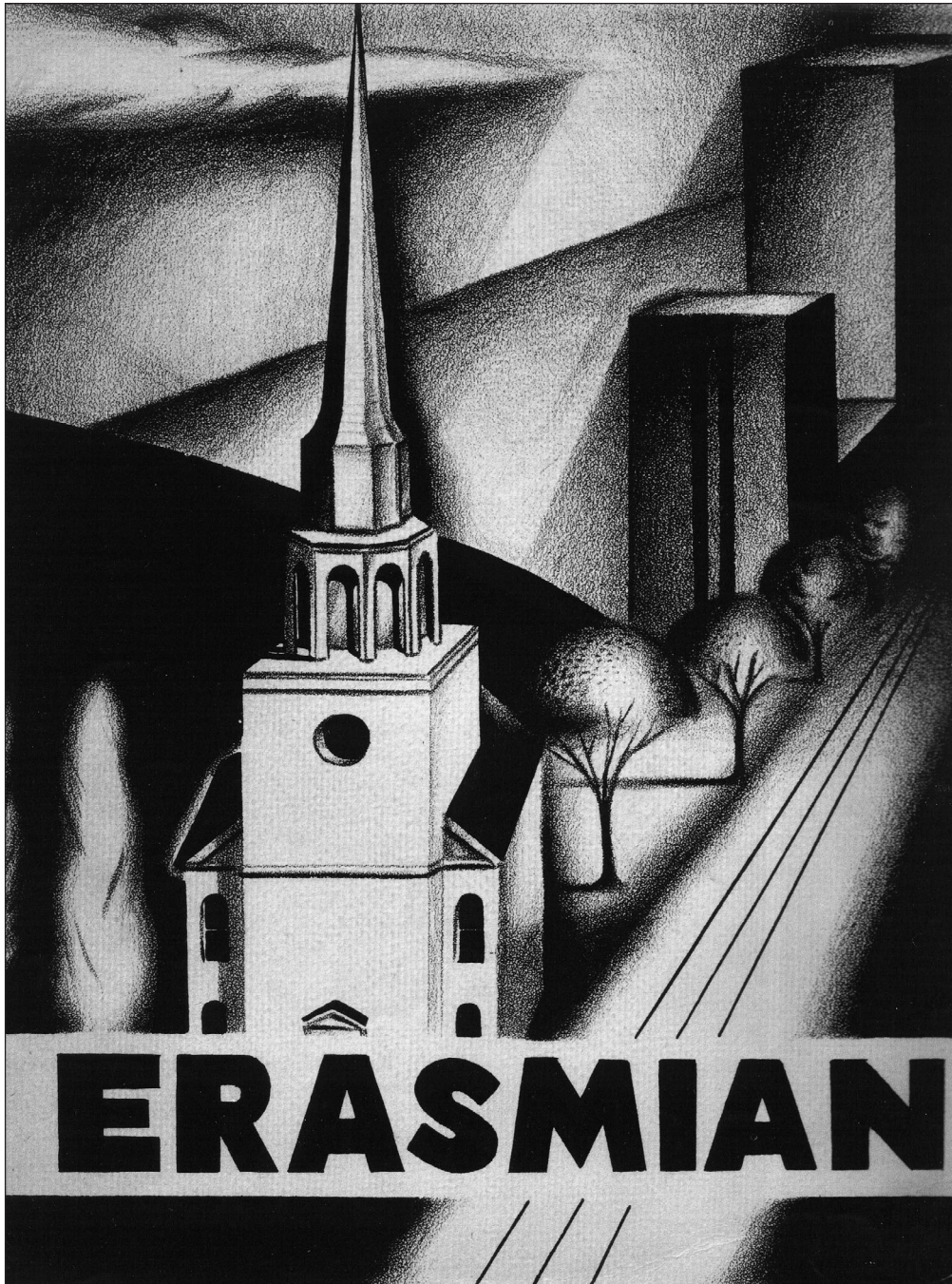
1939.
New York World's
Fair.

Taken with my
Brownie.

Erasmus Hall

That September I started classes at Erasmus Hall High School. It was the first secondary school in America. It was built by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1786 in Flatbush, Brooklyn.

I graduated in June, 1944. I was voted Class Artist out of the 1,000 students in my graduating class. Thank you Grandpa's Klein and Stuebner!



High school magazine cover, Lithograph crayon on Ross board.



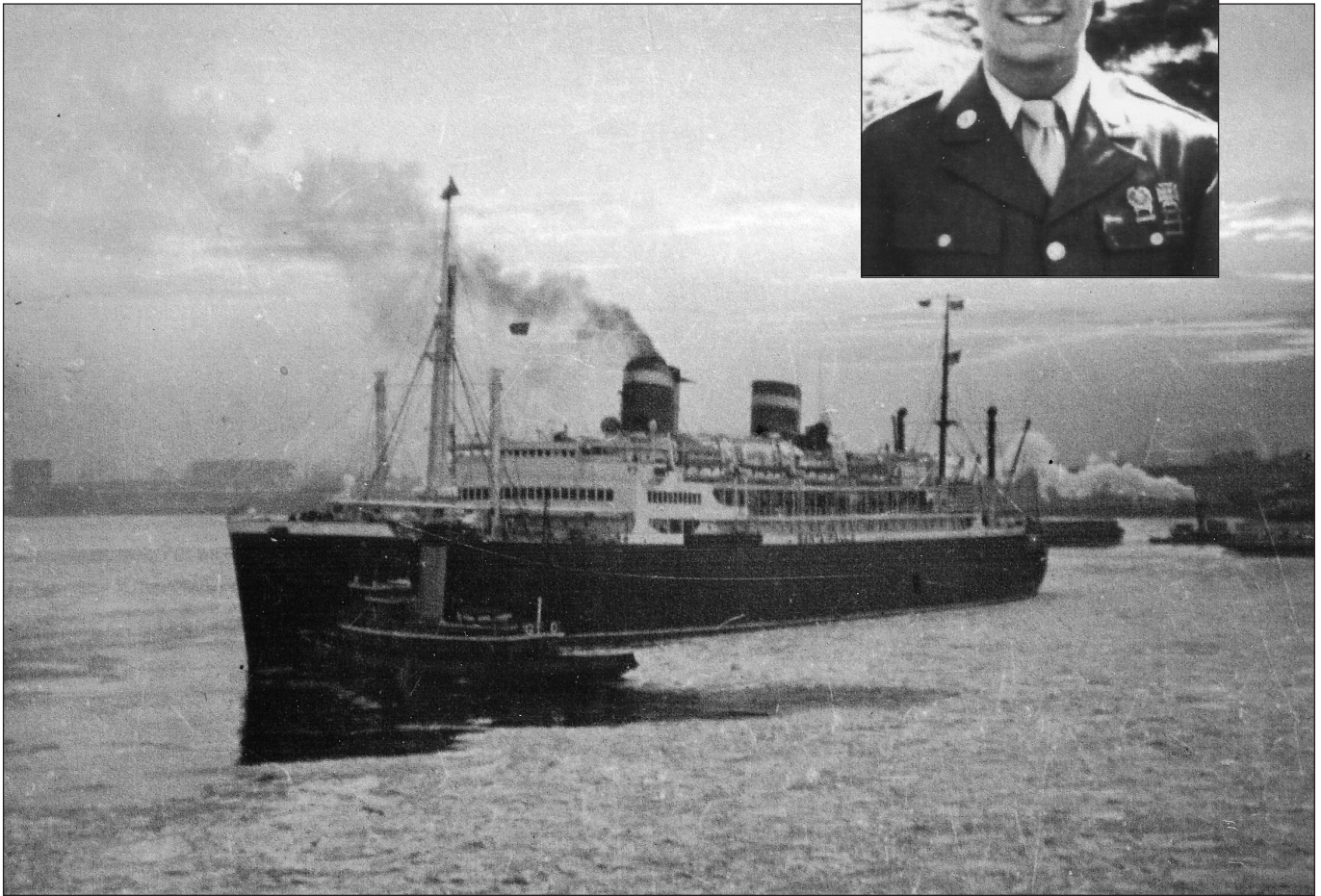
Erasmian

R. KLEIN



A Very Young "Old Blue-Eyes"

By the time I was a teenager, I was well into photography. I made a dark room in my Brooklyn home and bought an Argus candid camera which I took everywhere. I quickly shot this photo of a very young Frank Sinatra when he emerged from the stage door of the CBS Theatre on Broadway. At that time, he was the male vocalist on the popular radio show "The Lucky Strike Hit Parade".



That summer of '44 was to be the last of the fun and games for awhile. That Fall my draft board said "Uncle Sam Wants You." I joined the Army in November and was immediately sent to Camp Blanding in Florida for sixteen weeks of basic training. I was now in the infantry, assigned to a heavy weapons company where we became experts firing 30 caliber machine guns and 81mm mortars. Training ended in April of '45 and I was sent to New York for overseas embarkation.



Karlshafen, Germany

Our ship finally arrived in Le Havre, France on May 8, 1945 - VE Day! The war had ended! How lucky can one be? The scene on the pier was chaotic. The French civilians were cheering, singing, dancing, hugging. It was simply unbelievable.

Back in the States in the 40's, Tommy Dorsey had a hit recording of "Marie." His vocalist on that record was Jack Leonard. At the foot of the ship's gangplank was an Army band playing Tommy Dorsey's version of "Marie." And who was conducting and singing the vocals? None other than Sergeant Jack Leonard! What a great way to be welcomed to Europe.

Unfortunately, we could not join in the celebration. We were immediately loaded into a waiting freight train for a three day trip to Nuremberg, Germany. From there we were trucked to the various infantry companies stationed throughout Germany. I was sent to H Company in the 78th Division which was stationed in Karlshafen, a small picturesque town that had seen very little combat.



This former hospital was our new home. My bedroom overlooked the Weser River.

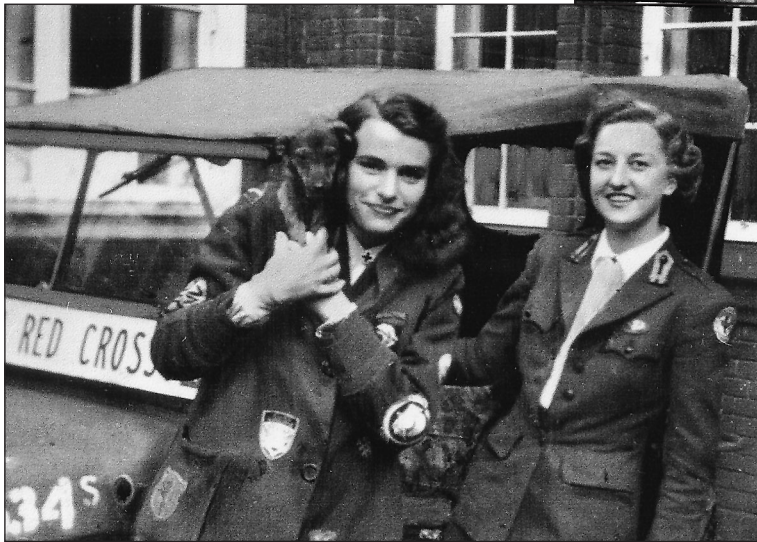
All the fighting had ended but the training continued every day.





The weapon in this photo was a Browning 30 caliber machine gun. It was used by the US infantry in both World War I and II. The first machine gun was invented by Hiram Maxim, brother of Lake Hopatcong's Hudson Maxim.

From 30 Caliber to 35mm



The war in Europe was now over and our occupation duties began. I was sent to communications school to learn Morse Code and also how to string wires atop telephone poles. But this was soon to end.

The Red Cross had a canteen in town where you could get free coffee and doughnuts all day long. It was a fun place to hang out and I frequented the place quite often. The Red Cross girls who ran the place learned of my artistic skills and had me making posters for their upcoming dances. One Saturday in September, while I was painting a poster, a Sergeant stopped by to admire my work. He then asked me if I knew anything about cameras. He went on to explain that he was the staff artist and photographer on the Regimental newspaper but was soon heading back to the States for discharge. The paper was looking for a replacement - would I be interested? When he learned of my very early photo background, he marched me over to the nearby newspaper office to meet a Lieutenant White, the editor of the paper. I was hired on the spot. The next morning I reported to the newspaper office at 9 a.m. where I was given a Speed Graphic camera, a Jeep and a German civilian driver! I was now an Official U.S. Army Photographer. No more reveille at 6 a.m.. No more telephone poles to climb. THANK YOU BEN & EDNA!



Berlin, Germany November 1945

That November, the 78th Division moved to Berlin. The city was divided into four zones: French, English, Russian and American. Each country ran its own zone. The American zone was run by both the Army and The Office of Military Government; OMGUS for short. OMGUS had its own official newspaper called The Observer. Parade Rest discontinued publishing and I was transferred to The Observer. It, too, was a weekly paper and run by American Civil Employees. Its office was located in the former Luftwaffe Headquarters which was in a suburb of Berlin. It was so well camouflaged our bombers never knew it was there.



OMGUS Headquarters



UNITED STATES HEADQUARTERS
BERLIN DISTRICT

PHOTOGRAPHER'S PASS

4 June 46

Date of Issue

011

Name Robert B. Klein

Organization OMGUS Observer-New Paper

Rank and Serial No. 42 161 018

The holder, whose photograph appears below, is an official United States Army Photographer or an accredited Allied Civilian Press Photographer. HE WILL NOT BE INTERFERED WITH IN THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS OFFICIAL DUTY BY THE MILITARY POLICE OR ANY OTHER UNITED STATES ARMY UNIT OR BY ANY GERMAN CIVILIAN AUTHORITY.

By Command of MAJOR GENERAL KEATING

[Signature]
Asst Adjutant General



Robert B. Klein
Signature of Holder



The first Russian tank that entered Berlin.

One of my early assignments was to photograph The Chancellery, Hitler's former headquarters. Above the main entrance was the sculpture of a very large eagle holding a Nazi swastika in its claws. Propped up against the wall was a very long extension ladder on which a German civilian stood, removing the swastika with a hammer and chisel. Here was the Thousand Year Reich coming to an end. It was just luck being there at that moment.



Hitler's headquarters. The Reich Chancellery.



Hitler's office. The only thing remaining was a huge chandelier hanging from the bombed out ceiling.

Inside the Reichstag. Note the Russian graffiti.





Marshal Georgy K. Zhukov (2nd from right), commander of the Russian Army and Conqueror of Berlin, dedicating a Soviet War Memorial.

Some weeks later, a Russian War Memorial to the five thousand soldiers that were killed in the battle for Berlin was dedicated. This was a beautiful structure built on the famed Unter den Linden, just one block from the Reichstag. This was one big ceremony. Honor Guards from all the zones were present along with an 8 foot wreath from Stalin. On the dais, along with three other officers, stood General Marshal Zhukov, head of the Russian Army and Conqueror of Berlin. They were all in serious conversation but as I approached the dais, Zhukov spotted my camera, stood at attention and gave me a million dollar smile. It's one of my favorite photos.





Stalin's wreath.





Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, World War I.



Fresh flowers arrived daily.



Two Russian officers inquiring if we had any Mickey Mouse watches for sale. It was their most requested item. That's the Brandenburg gate behind them.

His Fortune Went Up In Smoke

The "Black Market" existed everywhere in Europe but was really prevalent in Berlin. Cigarettes sold for \$100 a carton. We all knew this so we saved all our rations for Berlin. On our very first night there, my roommate went to the nearby subway station to sell his duffel bag of cigarettes. His contact never showed up. He returned with his bag of smokes along with a fraulein he had picked up. Fraternization was now legal. He and his new acquaintance retired to the adjacent bedroom. Sometime later he revealed to me that they had great sex but he was unprotected. The venereal disease rate in Berlin was the highest in all of Europe. Three out of four girls had V.D. so I convinced him that he should go to the prophylactic station to be treated for exposure. He did just that. While he was away, his new girlfriend ran off with his bag of cigarettes, unbeknownst to me. When he returned he nearly killed me. It was the most expensive sex he'd ever have!



Typical street scene in the center of Berlin.



They were just told they were going home.

New Year's Eve Ended On a Sour Note.

My father, Edward Alfred Klein, played the piano. He took lessons early on but eventually played everything by ear. He was really very good. You'd name a song and he'd play it. I inherited this skill. I, too, took lessons but preferred to play by ear. Like my father, I became a very good piano player. Fast forward to the Red Cross Club in Berlin. It was housed in a luxurious mansion, just a few blocks from where I was living. They had a Steinway grand piano there which I often played during my many visits. That new year's eve, the gal in charge asked me to play at their party. Everyone gathered around to sing along. They also fed me alcoholic drinks: Scotch, cognac, vodka. Many songs and many drinks later, I suddenly found myself on my knees, looking up at the keyboard. I knew I was going to be sick. I ran to the door and made it outside to violently heave up. I then, literally, staggered back to my billet. I can remember crawling up the stairs to my bedroom. I slept for two whole days. When I awoke, I vowed never to drink alcohol again! (At least not to that extent.)



This is where I lived in Berlin. A quiet street with nice homes. But don't ever come home drunk. They *ALL* look the same!



This was our local house of worship in Berlin. Jewish services were held on Saturdays. Catholic mass was 9 AM on Sunday. 10 AM was the Protestants' turn. And the Germans got their church back at noon. Everyone got along just fine. The atheists went to the Red Cross Club for a late breakfast.

I was christened Presbyterian but when it came time for Sunday school, I wound up in a Congregational church. It was closest to where we lived. I can remember playing Joseph in the Christmas play. Hated every minute of it. The church was torn down when they erected an apartment building on the site. The next nearest Protestant church was Baptist. The minister told my mother "Robert can not join the church until he's baptized with a dunk in the water." My mother said "No, thanks" and proceeded down the street to a Christian Science church. I attended their Sunday school for quite a while. However, one day my best friend, a Methodist, called to tell me about a church band he was organizing. They needed a piano player. Sounded like fun so I became a Methodist. A short while later I received my draft notice. That ended the music and religion.

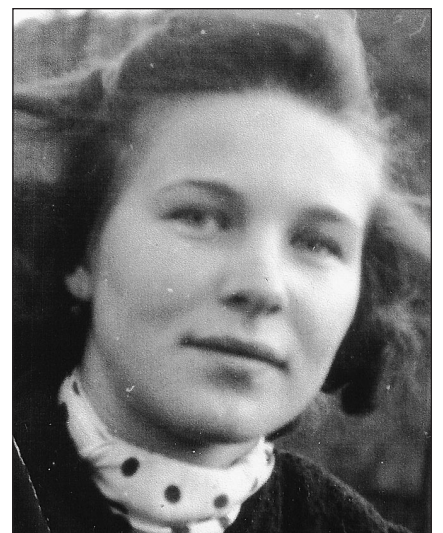


Billie... my fraulein.

When I first met Billie, I asked her if she'd like to go to the Red Cross club for a hamburger. She said "I'd like that but first you must meet my parents." I received their instant approval when I told them my Nana Stuebner and my great grandparents were all born in Germany.

Why Are All These People Smiling?

The German people welcomed the Americans. The GIs shared their PX rations with the youngsters who had not tasted candy and chewing gum for many years.





This little guy is waiting for his Hershey bar.

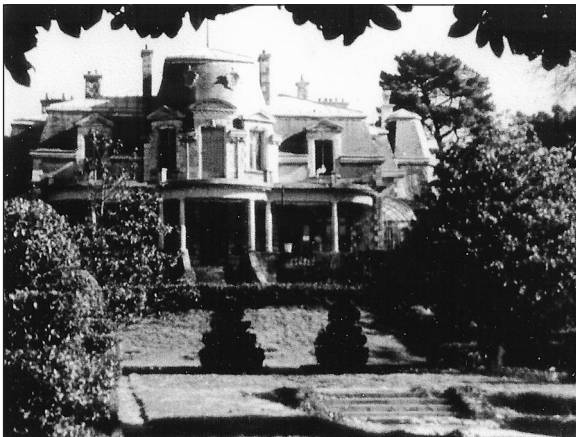


My work on the paper ended unexpectedly when I received some good news from the Army - "You have been chosen to attend Biarritz American University in France, starting January 1st. 1946." Shortly after arriving in Germany, the Army announced that the American University in Washington, D.C. would be establishing a branch of their school in Biarritz, France. There would be many college level programs available and interested G.I.'s were asked to apply. They were offering courses in painting so I applied. The Army looked up my school records and decided I was eligible. What luck!



Arrow points to my hotel overlooking the beach.

Biarritz is a well known resort town on the Bay of Biscay in southern France. For years it had been a playground for the rich and famous. Many luxury hotels lined its waterfront which could accommodate the many students. So on January 1st I started my college education. Art classes were held in a villa that was previously owned by Empress Eugenie, the wife of Napoleon. It was like a dream come true. After a three month course in painting, I returned to Berlin. After all, how many nudes can one take?



Life magazine article (next page)



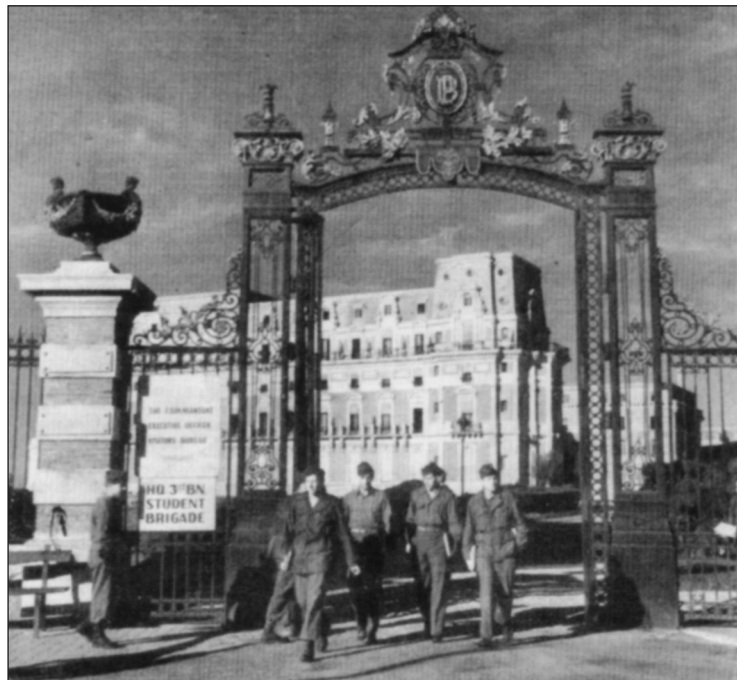
TWO STUDENTS LOOK THROUGH ROCK ARCH ACROSS BAY TO GLISTENING BEACHES AND ORNATE VILLAS OF BIARRITZ, WHICH THEIR COLLEGE

ARMY UNIVERSITY

GIs in Biarritz study in elegant splendor and "never had it so good"

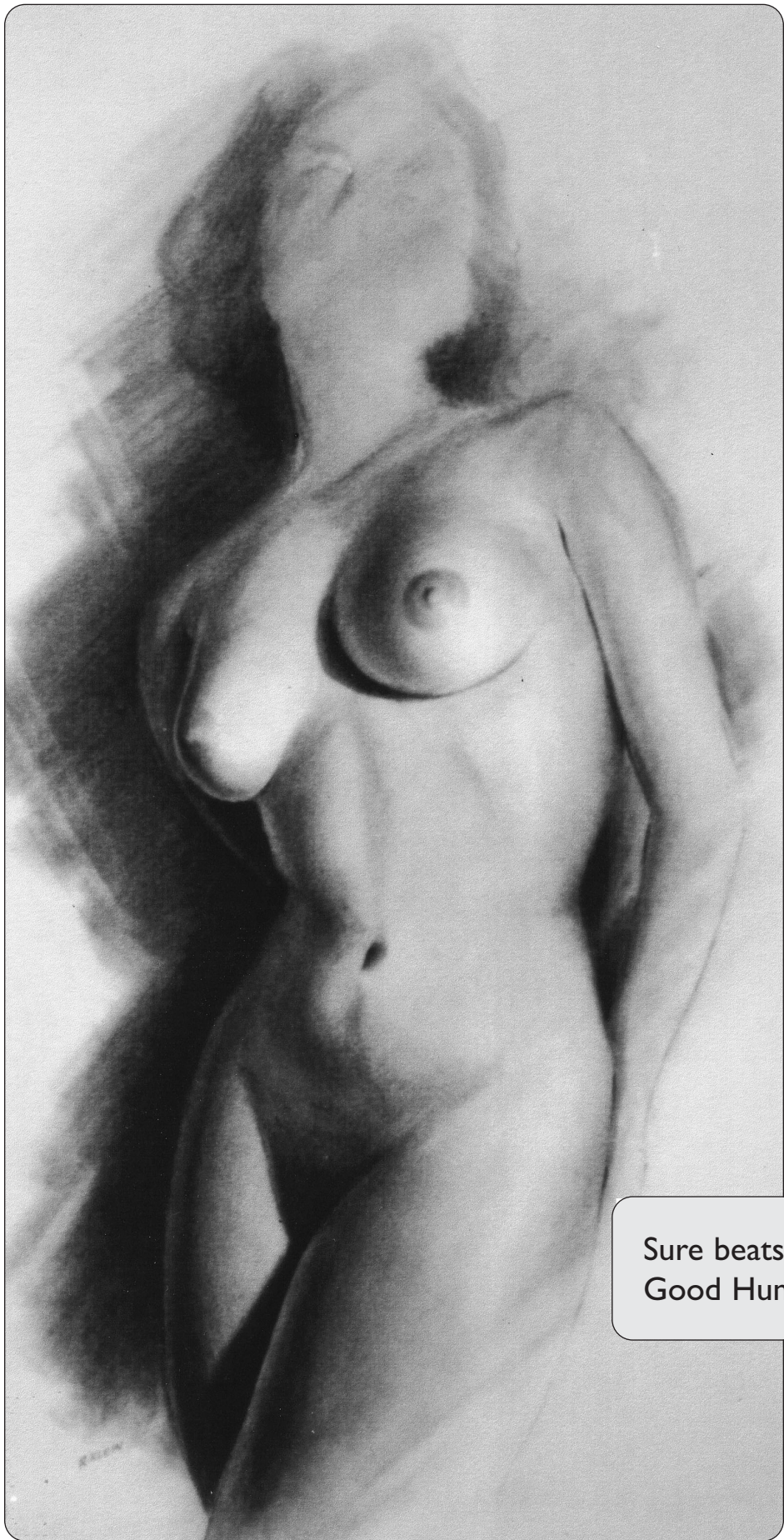
To keep its idle soldiers in Europe busy and give them a chance to improve their minds, the U.S. Army is setting up a chain of colleges and trade schools on the Continent. Swankest of these institutions is the university at Biarritz, the fashionable and exclusive spa on the Bay of Biscay. There the Army has set up classrooms, dormitories and laboratories in the elegant villas, hotels, palaces and casinos which Napoleon III, Empress Eugénie, Queen Victoria, King Alfonso and Edward VII once enjoyed.

Biarritz Army University has 4,000 students who are taught by 300 top teachers from U.S. colleges and the Army. Any Army man or woman with a high-school education can be admitted. They study on Army time and pay, are billeted in private hotel rooms. They are issued real beds, soft mattresses, clean sheets and pillowcases, eat in lavish mess halls. They eat from fine chinaware and linens, use excellent silverware. To GIs their two months of work and play at B.A.U. are "the best break we ever had in the Army."



DORMITORY for enlisted men is Napoleon III's former palace. The royal gates (above) are still intact. The

university's commandant, Brig. G. Croskey, occupies Napoleon's and E



Sure beats drawing
Good Humor trucks.



Lucerne, Switzerland, April 1946

More Good News

Prior to my leaving France, the Army announced a contest to redesign its Regimental Crest. Of course, I submitted a design. The Army chose my design as the winner. First prize was a 10 day vacation to anywhere in Europe. I chose a trip to Switzerland. So back on the train I went. Visited Bern, Lucerne, Lausanne and Lake Geneva - spectacular scenery and one great vacation.

"Swiss Mountainside" pencil sketch.

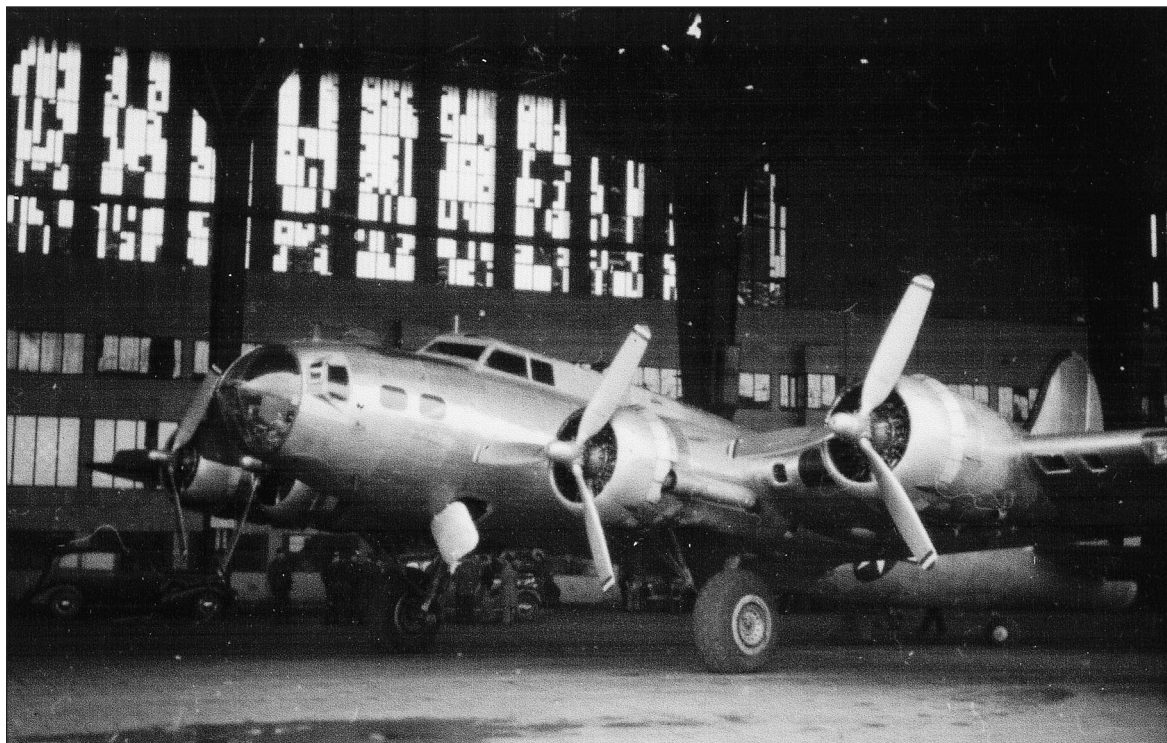






Four-star General Joseph T. McNarney, Commanding General, ETO.

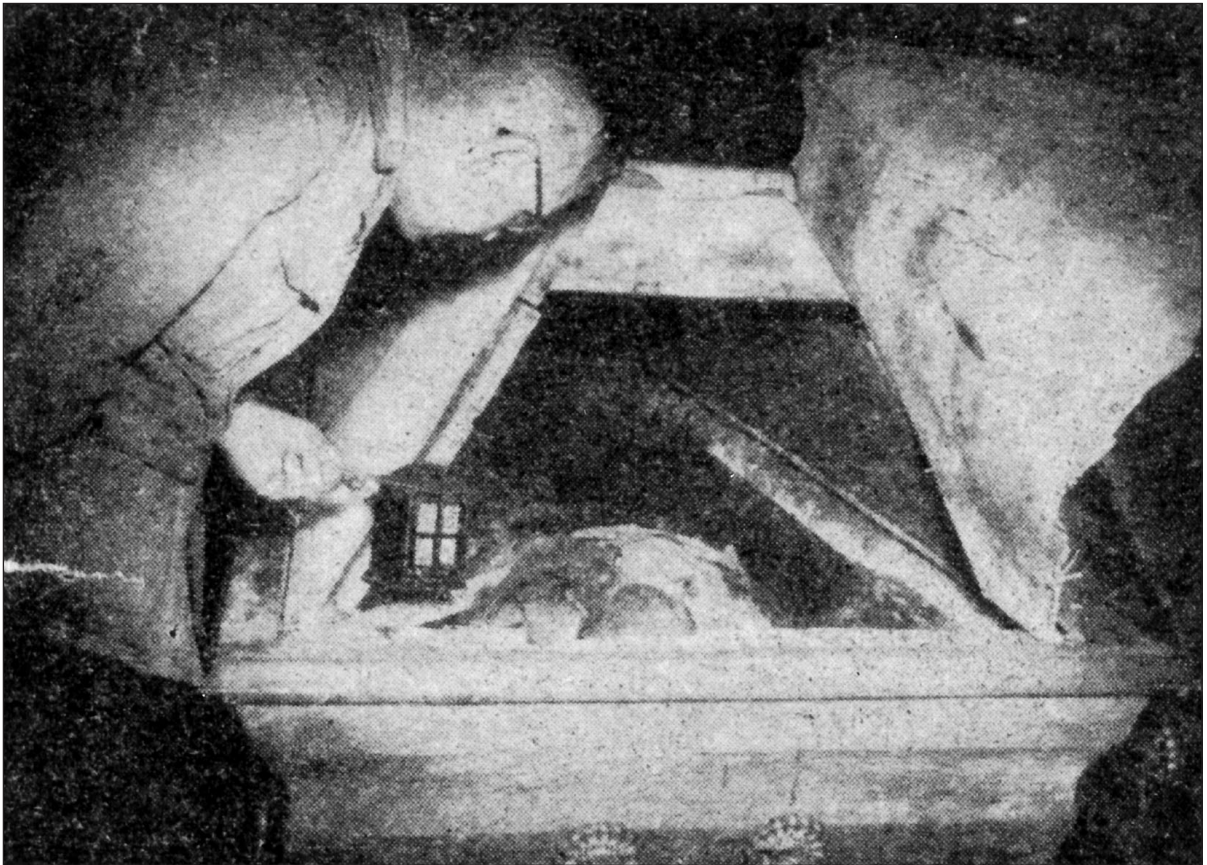
It was then back to Berlin and my job at the newspaper. Photo assignments were quite varied. Many trips were made to Tempelhof Airport to photograph visiting Generals and Congressional people. There were horse shows, parades, sporting events, receptions, military reviews, just about everything.



The B-17 bomber. America's "Flying Fortress"

Would You Like to See the Coffins?

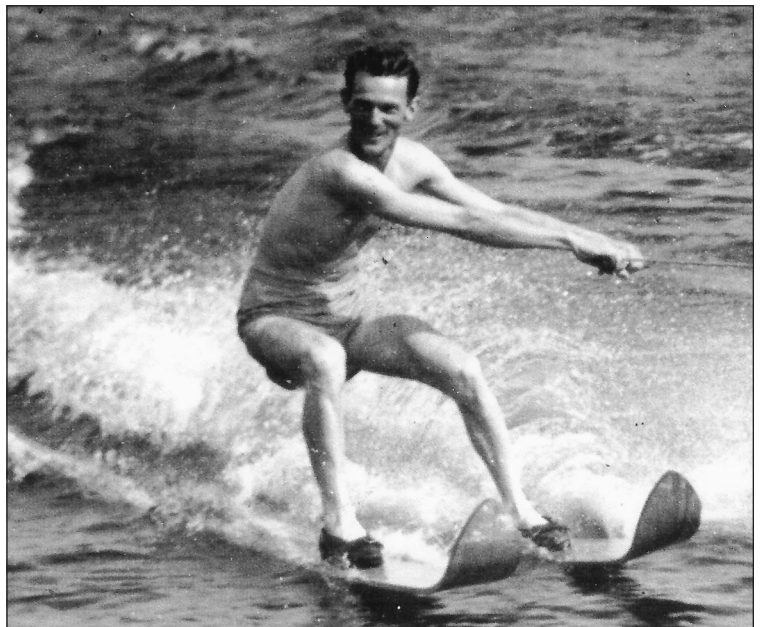
That's what the caretaker asked us when we arrived at the Church of Peter and Paul, hidden in the woods outside of Berlin. It was right out of a Dracula movie. I and Vivienne Adams, a copywriter on the paper, were there to view the royal crypt in the cellar of this little church. The caretaker lit a tiny lantern and led us down the stairs to a darkened room with five coffins containing the remains of royalty. Upon each coffin was a gold crown. One of the coffins had been ripped open, revealing the decomposed body of Prince Friedrich Karl, who had died sixty years ago. Gone from his uniform were the medals and sword which were stolen by Russian soldiers when they discovered the crypt.



Prince Friedrich Karl – himself.



Wannsee Beach
The GI's take over
the Nazi playground





Note OMGUS on the bow of the boat. We won.

*"Palm Beach"
of Berlin...*

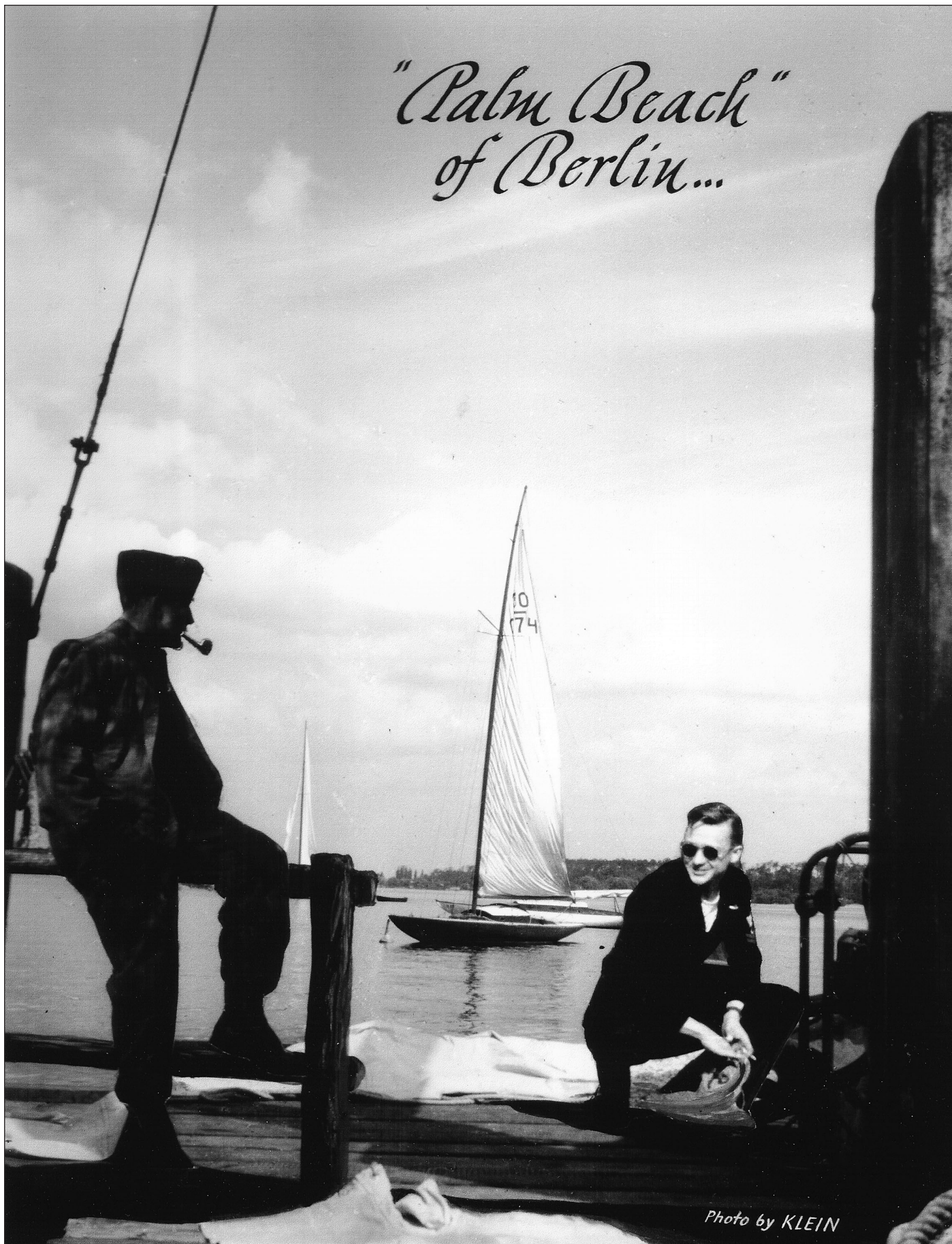


Photo by KLEIN

My Myopia

Karlshafen, Germany. It was my first week in my new company. It was early on a quiet Sunday morning and I was standing guard duty at a bridge in town. A jogger was running toward me. He was wearing shorts and a T-shirt. When he passed in front of me he stopped and said "Is there some reason you're not saluting your colonel?" I explained that I was new there and didn't recognize him out of uniform. He accepted my explanation. I also remembered reading in an Army training manual that you salute the uniform, not the person. I thought it best not to remind him of that.

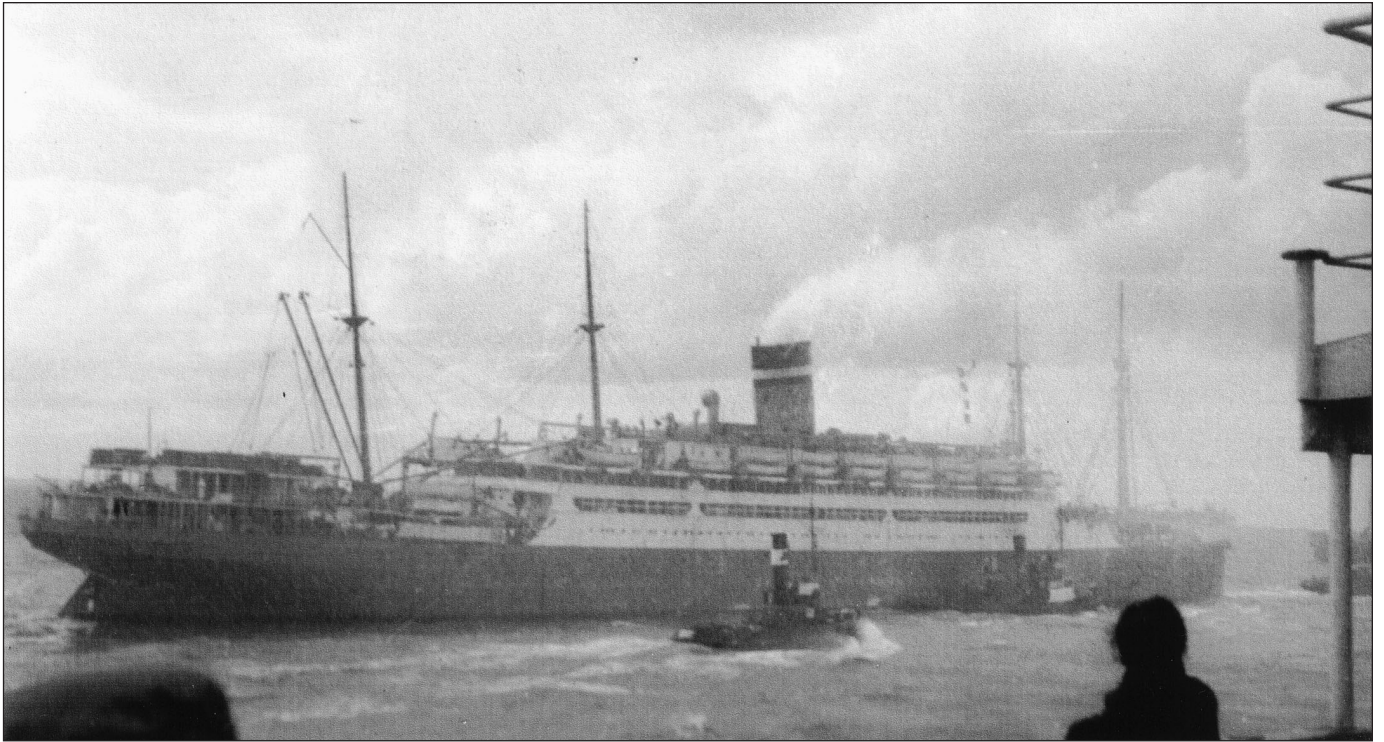


My Colonel, Col. John Ondrick (left). Clothes definitely make the man.

My 15 month tour of duty in Germany has now ended. It was really a great experience. Next stop - Bremerhaven for redeployment back to the states for discharge.



Bremerhaven: Waiting for their ship to come in.



Auf Wiedersehen!



The White Cliffs of Dover, England.





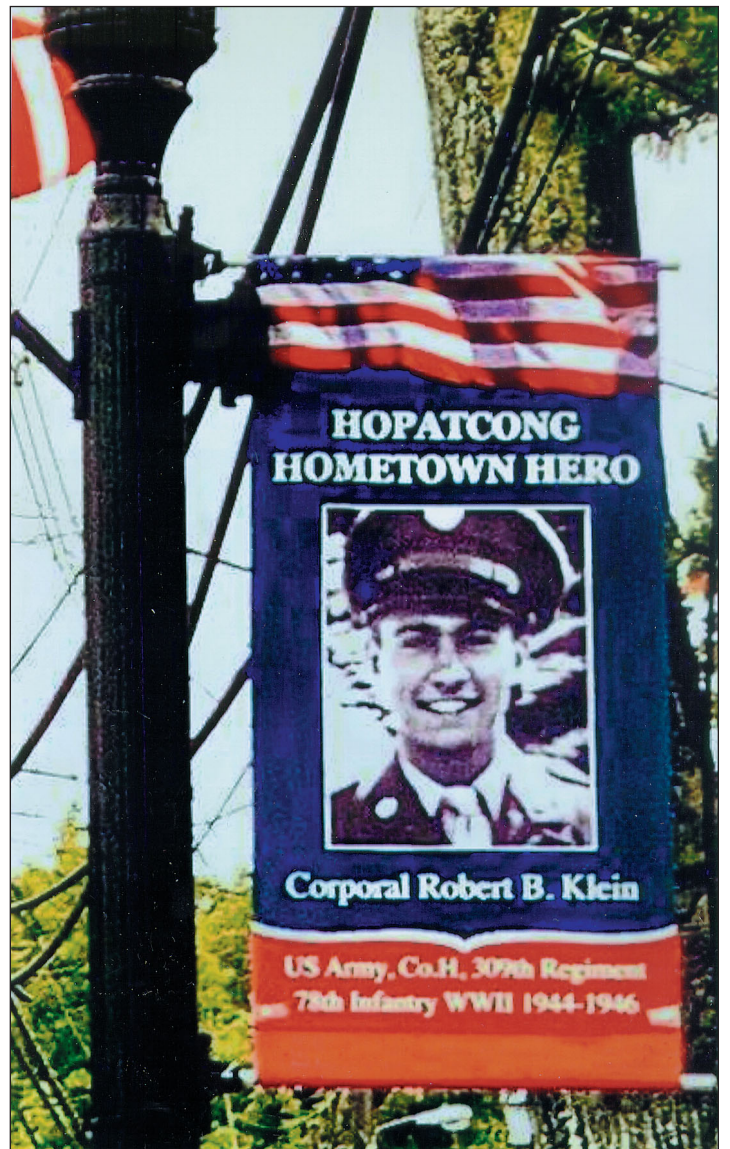
Not a dry eye on the ship as the Statue of Liberty came into view in the New York Harbor.

On the Brooklyn shore there was a huge sign that read:

WELCOME HOME. WELL DONE.



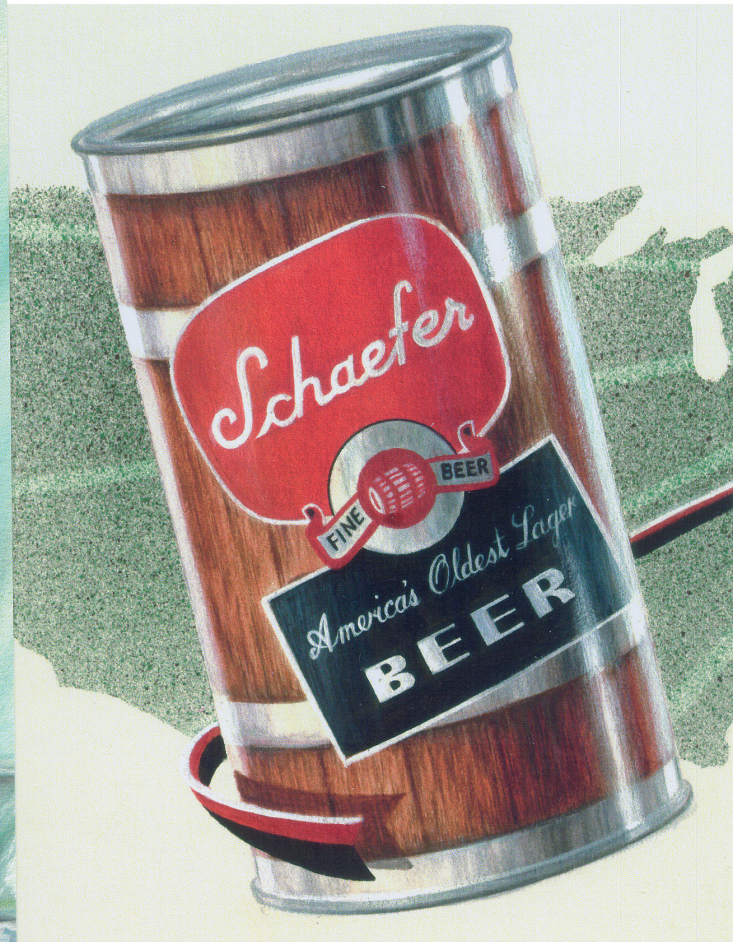
August, 1946. Back home again.



2021. It only took 75 years.

The Art Career School

That's where I started in September of 1946. The school was located in the Penthouse atop the Flatiron Building in New York City. The course ran for three years. Here are a few of the school assignments:



Designer colors

Each year, about a month before graduation, the head of the school would invite a working art director to come and talk about what your portfolio should include when job hunting. So in June of '49, John Lynch, an art director at Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn, BBDO for short, was invited to give a talk on that subject. The dean chose my portfolio to be reviewed because I had completed it and I was also at the top of my class. His talk was quite informative. We learned about the role of an art director at advertising agencies. One week later he called the school to offer me a job as his assistant art director. I immediately accepted. I was to start work that following Monday. Wow! Another great stroke of luck.



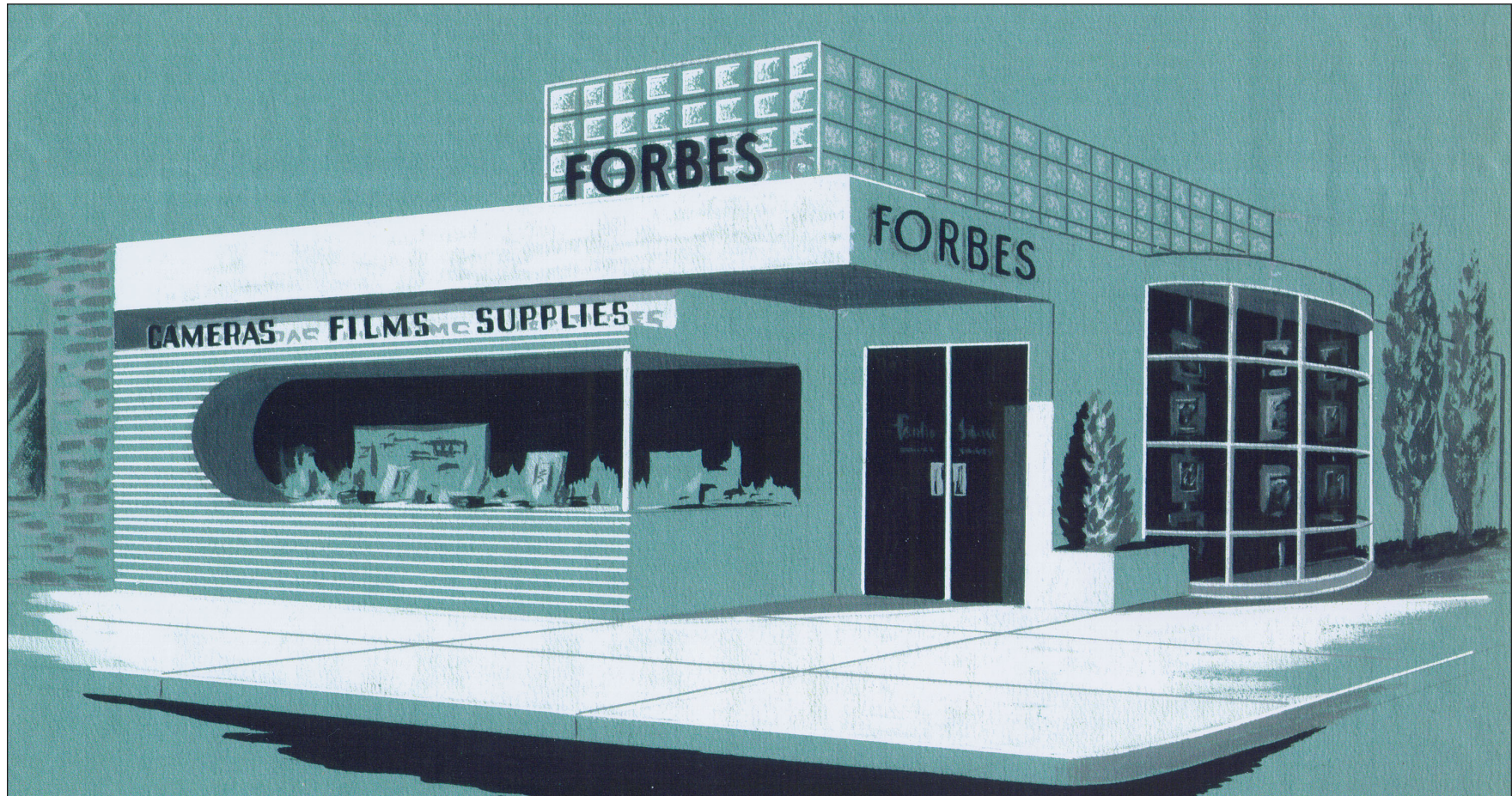
Branchville countryside. Watercolor



“Early Autumn.” Watercolor.

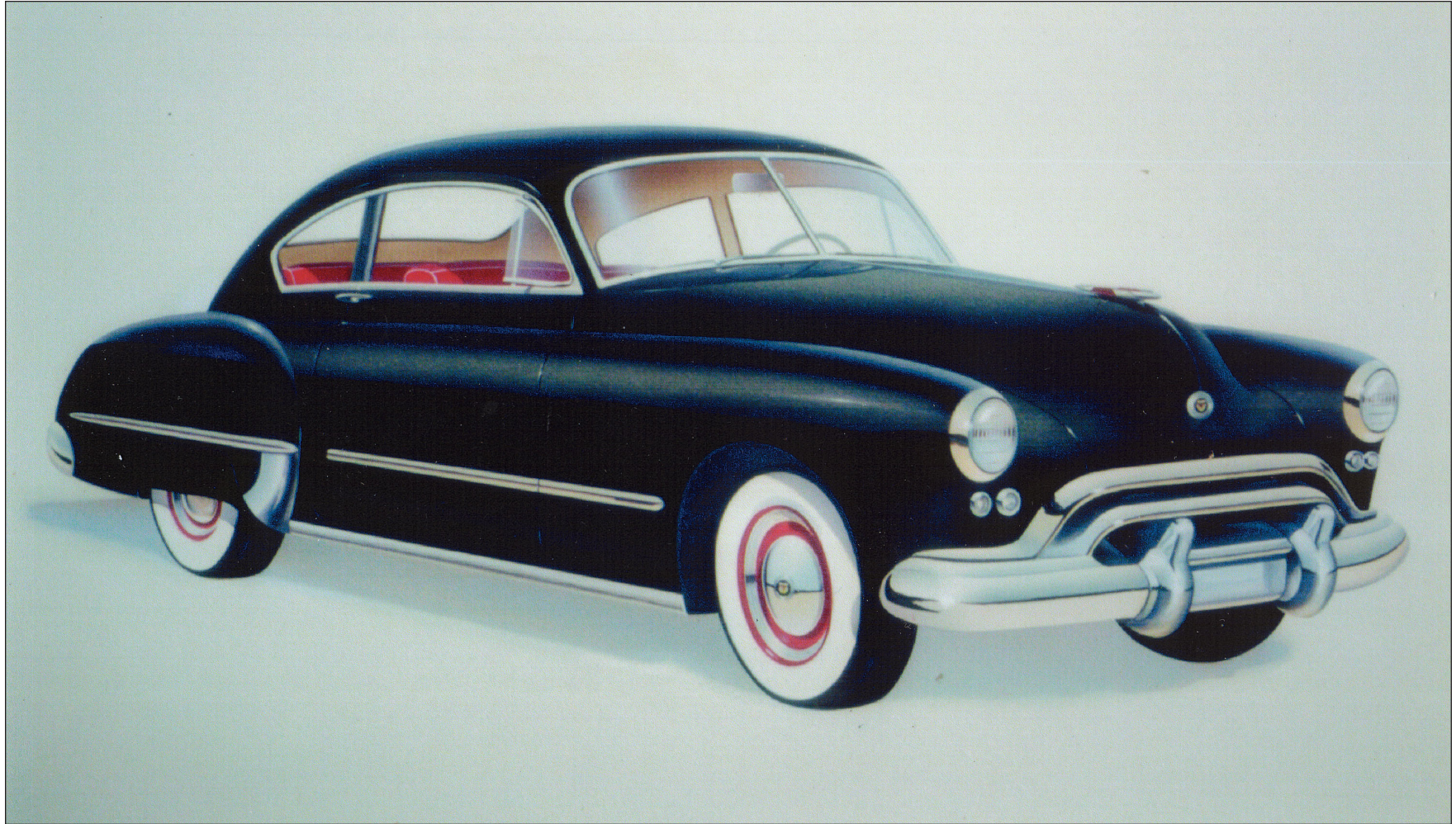


“All is kaput” Pen and ink drawing.

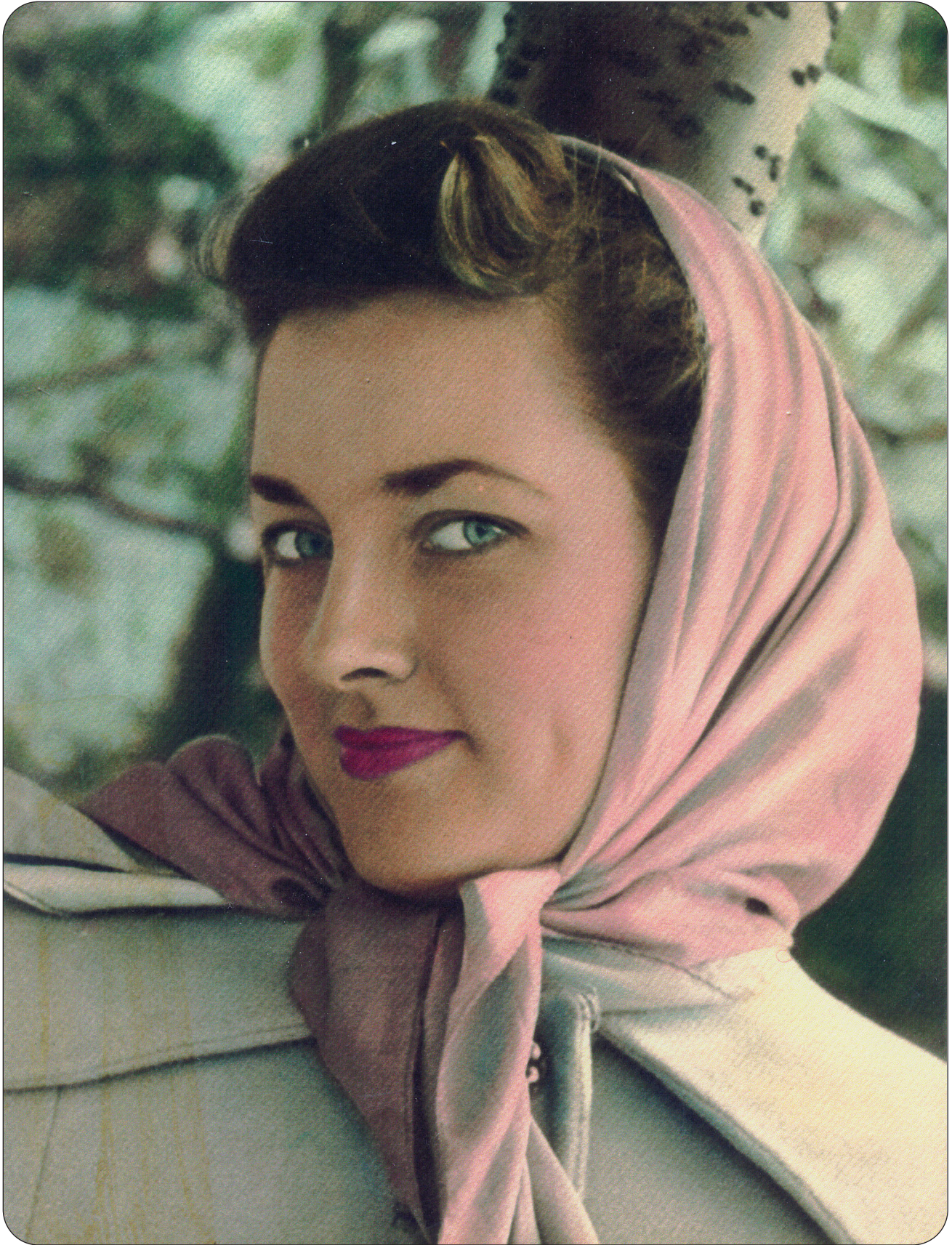


Architectural drawing. Black-and-white ink on colored paper.

We're now back in art school. We're halfway into a session drawing a nude female model. Suddenly a window washer appeared at the classroom window. He was peering through the glass and admiring this very attractive body. When the model spotted him she jumped up, threw on her robe and shouted "I don't want him to see me naked!" True story.



Airbrush rendering of a 1948 Oldsmobile 98. This was my first car.



Since there were no art classes on Friday afternoon, it was my time to practice portrait photography on my classmates.





Joan Agosta.



Edward Klein

May 24, 1958. Wedding day at Holyrood Episcopal Church in Manhattan. After a honeymoon in Washington, D.C. and Virginia, we returned to our lake house in Hopatcong. (below)



There Was No Need For Miracle-Gro

Across the street from us, at the foot of Chinopee Avenue, is a home that, in the 1930s, was owned by a well-known artist. He lived there with his daughter who was born and raised there. At an early age she was struck with terminal cancer. She requested that, upon her death, her ashes be buried in a large urn on the patio, adjacent to the house. Her wish became reality. A short while later, the property was sold to a Max Robinson, Edward G. Robinson's brother. He moved in, along with Jenny, his German lady friend. Jenny babysat for us and we all became good friends. Jenny was a vegetarian. She had filled that patio urn with all sorts of vegetable seeds and they grew fabulously. One day she invited us for lunch and told us she had prepared a mixed green salad with the vegetables from her urn garden. My wife and I looked at each other and quickly told her that we'd had a late breakfast and were going to skip lunch. We knew, as they say, where all the bodies were buried. When Jenny died many years later, she left the house to Estelle. By then the urn had completely disintegrated.

The Flying Deer

One evening, about 6 PM, I was putting out the garbage for pick up the following morning. As I was pulling my can to the shoulder of the road, a deer came hurtling through the air, heading directly for me! It was a large, female, Whitetail deer. It hit me like a ton of bricks and threw me down onto the driveway. Next thing I know, the deer was on the ground alongside me and for several moments we just lay there, looking at each other. The deer had been hit by a passing motorist and the impact from the car bounced it into the air before landing on me. The lady driver stopped her car and called 911. The deer hobbled away while I waited, in great pain, for an ambulance. I wound up in Dover General Hospital for x-rays. Fortunately, nothing had broken. I was released and sent home.

While all that was happening, Estelle was a mile away at the monthly Council meeting discussing what to do about the large deer population in Hopatcong. To this day the problem has not been resolved. Moral of the story – have your wife put out the garbage.

Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn

BBDO was, at that time, the largest ad agency in the U.S. Lucky Strike, Revlon, Dodge, U.S. Steel, DuPont and General Electric were just some of its clients. They occupied several floors of the Zekendorf Building at 385 Madison Avenue. I would be working on the following accounts: The Saturday Evening Post, The Ladies Home Journal, Holiday magazine, Marine Midland Banks, Armstrong Flooring, DuPont building products and the General Electric Theater, hosted by Ronald Reagan. The work was exciting and the hours were long. But it was worth it. The title of Art Director and window office came some time later.

I now had a chance to work with the very best photographers: Victor Keppler, Ed Venti and Hans Knopf of Life magazine to name a few. One day the receptionist called me to inform me that a Henry Ries would like to show me his work. It was the same Henry Reis that I'd worked with at the newspaper in Berlin. He now had a studio in NYC doing work with ad agencies. We revived our friendship and worked together for many years. Small world.

Marine Midland Bank was one of my favorite accounts. We prepared an ad campaign featuring well know people saying "We know the bank that knows New York." Ad #1 featured Spyros Skouras, head of 20th Century Fox movies. Ad #2 was Al Steele, CEO of Pepsi Cola. On his desk was a photo of Joan Crawford, his wife. Bennet Cerf of Random House and "What's My Line" fame was in the third ad. Within one month after I photographed them, all three men had died. The ads never ran.

Bruce Barton, one of the four directors of the agency, was also the Republican U.S. Senator from Connecticut. Every four years the agency would prepare the advertising for the Presidential nominee. In June of 1960, Richard Nixon was running and I was selected to handle his advertising. A copywriter from Washington was sent up to N.Y. to work with me. By November we'd completed our work. A thirty-two page supplement about Nixon and his accomplishments was to run in every large newspaper in the United States a week before the election. It was also to be sent door to door in all the large cities. He lost the election by the smallest number in U.S. history.

In June of 1963, BBDO lost the Revlon account. This was huge. I was one of fifteen art directors that had to be let go.

I Got My Job Through the New York Times

That's what their ad campaign said for the longest time. So every day, for the next two months, I religiously went through the want ads. Nothing. No one was hiring in the summer. Finally, in early September, an ad appeared that sounded right for me. Macmillan Publishing Company was looking for a person to head up their new in-house ad agency. I had my interview on a Friday. I was hired and was to start work on Monday. One more time, I got lucky.

Gone With the Wind

They published Margaret Mitchell's best seller in 1937. To this day, outside of The Bible, it's still #1 in circulation. Macmillan also published The Free Press books and Colliers' Encyclopedia. They also owned Brentanos and Katharine Gibbs secretarial school, Estelle's alma mater. Their brand new building was at 866 3rd Avenue. My new title was "Executive Art Director." The art department had ten artists. We produced brochures promoting their books and also did all the advertising for Brentanos. The head of the advertising department had a drinking problem and was eventually let go. I was chosen to replace him. I now was their Director of Advertising.

Albert Spier was Adolf Hitler's personal architect. He chose Macmillan to publish his book, "Inside the Third Reich." A few of Hitler's actual architectural drawings, for reproduction in this book, were sent to me. They were actually quite good! Too bad he didn't pursue that profession.

In the spring of 1988, Macmillan was suddenly acquired in a corporate takeover. The entire New York operation was shut down. Hundreds of people were now out of a job. The timing was right. At 62, I was ready for retirement.



Now it's my turn in the 1955 Chris-Craft Capri.

One day back in the '40's, my mother, father and I went out for our first boat ride of the season. As we were going along, my father commented on how high the water level of the lake was due to all the rain. My mother said "Yes, I can now touch the water when I put my hand over the side." My father and I looked at each other and just smiled.



Past and present. 1926 Fay & Bowen and a 1955 Chris Craft at the yacht club.



For years an ice boat was on my “wish list.” And on one of my birthdays, Estelle surprised me with an ice boat on our front lawn, complete with a giant red bow. It turned out to be the most fun ever. 60 mph on a frozen lake. There’s nothing like it.

One year in early March I took it out for a spin. The ice had gotten dangerously soft and that day, about 20 feet from my dock, the boat crashed through the ice. There was no way I could get out and get to safe ice. A few minutes later the police, firemen and medic's were racing down to my dock to help. Someone had witnessed the accident and called 911. They quickly threw me a rope and pulled me back to the shore. About a year later I met a fellow in town who asked “Aren’t you the guy who went through the ice?” Nothing like being famous.







Some 40 years later, I'm back in New York harbor. This time at the wheel of the schooner in the photo below.





That was Estelle, my First Mate.

You can quit now. But if you want a brief description of my family, read on.

My father, Edward, was an insurance salesman. He died at 61. Pancreatic cancer. My mother, Jeanette, lived to 91. I had an older brother, Edward, who passed away at 88. He served in the army medical corps during World War II and made it all the way to Japan.

My wife, Estelle, was born in Manhattan. After George Washington High School, she attended Katharine Gibbs. From there she worked at BBDO until we were married in 1958. She was a great animal lover and was the founder of The Hopatcong Animal Haven in the early 1960's. It continues to this day. Always passionate about politics, Estelle served as a Republican Councilwoman for many years. She also got into real estate and had quite the knack for it. She became the top broker of lake-front homes.

Back in the 1920's Hudson Maxim, the inventor of smokeless gunpowder, built a home on Lakeside Boulevard. He was world famous and was constantly entertaining famous people: Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, Alexander Graham Bell, just to name a few. They would all stay at Maxim's guest house adjacent to his own home. In the 1980's the guest house went up for sale. Estelle got the listing. She needed a headline for the ad she was running and I came up with "They all slept here, *except* Washington."

We had just one daughter, Janet Lynn. She grew up in Hopatcong but later moved to California where she attended San Francisco State University. After graduation she began working for United Airlines and recently celebrated her 31st year with them. Congratulations!

Janet is now living in Sparta, New Jersey, with her husband Greg Wittenmeier and their two children, Ande and Jack. Greg is a native of Mill Valley, California and studied ceramics at Alfred University. When he moved to New Jersey he became a remodeler and can build or fix just about anything. And to perfection.

Ande Wittenmeier, my granddaughter, graduated from Sparta High School in 2020. Grade wise, she was the top female student in a class of 300 and number seven in the entire class. She, too, was voted class artist. She is now at Syracuse University majoring in Illustration. And I must say, Ande is more creative than I ever was. She'll go far.

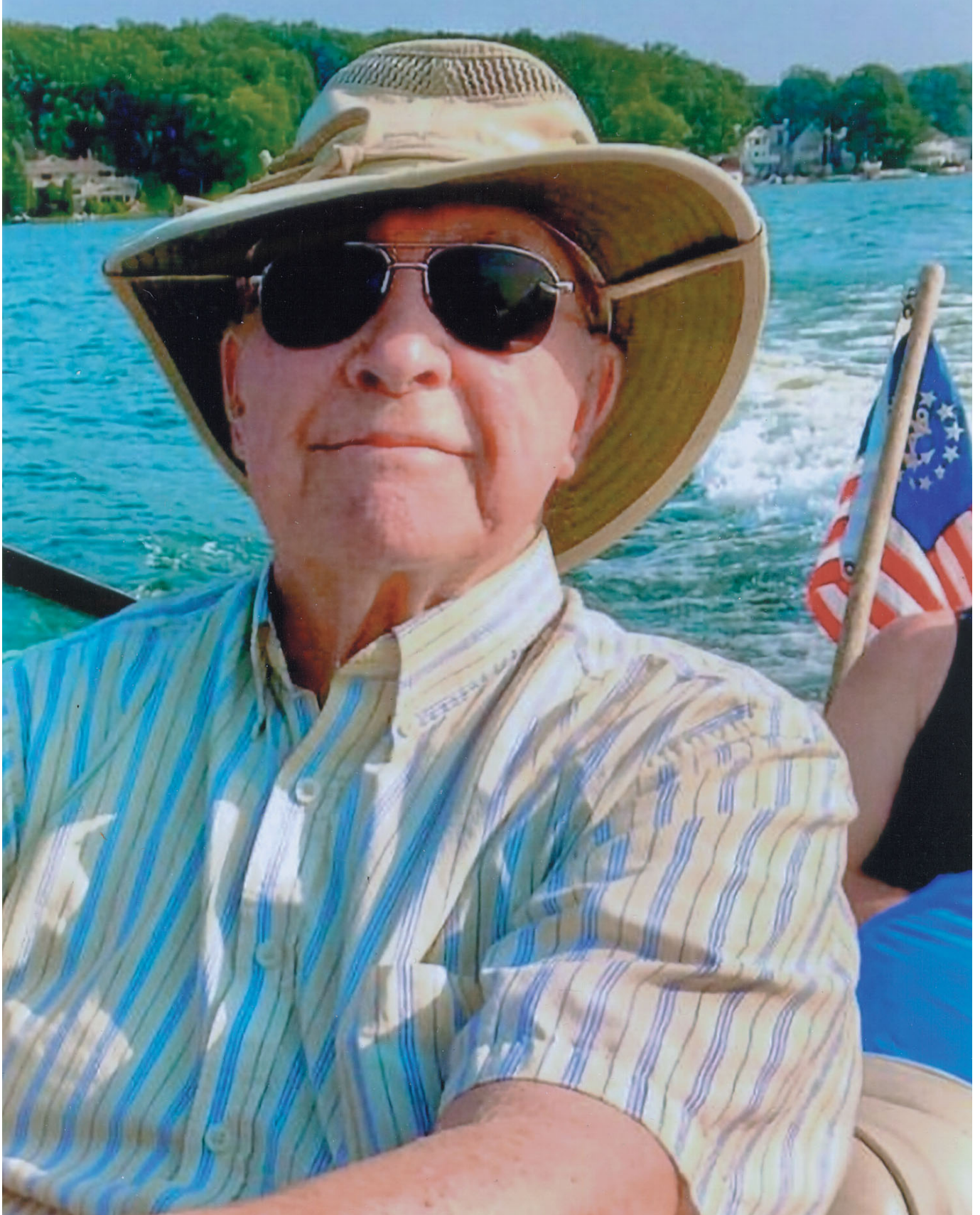
Jack Wittenmeier, my grandson, is currently in Sparta High School and will be graduating in 2024. He is a whiz when it comes to computers and, like his sister, excels in his studies. Jack is also part of the cross country and track team, following in his father's footsteps. I keep telling them how lucky they are having smart grandparents.

Early Retirement

It came for me in the summer of 1988. I'm fortunate to have the best family anyone could want. For the most part, life has been very good. Will there be a second book? Perhaps. Depends on those "little gray cells" and if my two writing fingers continue to work.

In closing, I must give thanks to Liza, a wonderful woman who has made these "Golden Years" most enjoyable. She takes care of all my needs. She keeps me in Depends.

My advice to all you young folks out there: stay away from cigarettes and drugs, drink only in moderation and marry rich. Bye-bye.



I open this book with a 1927 photo of me boating on Lake Hopatcong. Now, nearly a century later, I'm still lucky enough to enjoy its sparkling waters.

Meet the Family



Estelle



My parents Jeanette and Edward Klein



Greg, Janet and Edward.

My Shutter is Still Clicking.



Last year the Lake Hopatcong Foundation held a photo contest. They were looking for the best shots of the lake that could be used in their 2022 calendar. There were almost 300 entries. They picked this winter photo, taken from my front porch for the month of December. I'm now almost 96 years old and still enjoy fishing from the end of the dock seen in this photo. I once had a T-shirt that read: "Every hour spent fishing adds one year to your life." Perhaps there's some truth to that.