

A mnemonic fog quickly gathers when I try to recall details of my family life in California before I reached the age of seven¹, a life which seems to have been spent on the move. But a few isolated memories stand out from the mist: of a childhood friend, Richard Gilliland, whose mother, I was later informed, committed suicide by throwing herself off the Golden Gate Bridge; of my father's running children's story, "Stripy the Skunk," written in his flowing hand on ruled sheets of yellow paper; of my father describing to me the various sorts of clouds—cumulus, stratus, cirrus, nimbus, etc.—and of his pointing out the various constellations such as the Pleiades; of a book of dinosaurs, in which both the name and the squat form of the *Eryops* I found amusing; of "Tootle", the cautionary tale of a locomotive that strayed off the tracks; of a Halloween skeleton suit and a T-shirt from the period of World War II bearing the repeated message "Keep 'em flying"; of my fascination with the curious names of the colors in my crayon set—magenta, gamboge, burnt umber, ochre, and sienna; of a plain grey teddy-bear.

My chronicle begins in earnest with our move to New York in 1951.

¹ Years later I was to learn a little about my five-year-old self from a letter my father sent me just after I received my doctorate. I quote from it:

The fruition of your plans in Fresno in 1950 is finally a reality—however a little late. You probably don't remember do you?... we were discussing atoms and molecules, or at least that's when you found out about them from me. I can remember verbatim the conversation. You asked what the coffee table...was made of. I said glass & wood—bright eh? Anyway, you said "I know, but what are they made of?" so I said "Little particles" "What are they made of?" "Molecules", etc. to atoms. At that you asked if everything was made of atoms. Oh yes. You looked at the fire and asked about the flame—yes—gas, etc.... Then, you asked about light, as the lamp was burning—No—but out of the blue, you asked how fast light travelled. Yore ole Dad gave you that answer. Anyway, following that you said that you wanted to be a scientist and get a Ph.D. Where you heard of that I couldn't figure but you knew what it was in general terms. Then you wanted to know when you could get one and I told you probably under the age of 30. Then you told me that you'd like to have it by the time you were 21. I guess you figured that when you had reached manhood you should have a Ph.D.