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FLOOD OF MEMORIES

A Review by John W. (Jack) Sagabiel

Flood of Memories is a historically significant, heart-warming account of growing up in the West End of Louisville during the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's. This detailed, sometimes humorous, memoir written by brother and sister Fred Armes and Lois Armes Lawrence depicting the life of their large family during those sometimes difficult, yet happy, times will stir the memories of "old west enders" of the unforgettable times, places, and faces of their past. The plight families experienced during the 37 flood was followed by wonderful neighborhood memories of Jim Dunbar's service station, Jarboe's Market, the drug store, the Shawnee School, the Railroad Whistle, the Park Theater, the VFW Lodge and Fountain Ferry Park.

Fred and Lois share with us personal memories of a family devoted to facing the pressures of everyday life during the beginnings of the twentieth century. Luther A. Armes and Mae Emma Larkin Armes married in 1917 in their West End of Louisville neighborhood. During the next thirty years, the couple met the challenges of World War I, the Twenties, the Great Depression, the Great Flood of 1937, World War II and the birth of eight healthy children. Those were exciting times for the family of ten.

The road of life can begin anywhere, but where it ends is up to the strengths of the family. Luther and Mae Armes did not have the opportunity for formal education beyond the primary grades, but among their strengths was the appreciation for education. All of their children earned high school diplomas, and several earned professional undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Mr. and Mrs. Armes reestablished their expectations for the future with the birth of each of their eight children. The family standard for all was a well-disciplined citizenship and an unimpeachable character. To this day, the Armes standard continues to be their bond with their parents' ideals of principles, character, and integrity.

I became acquainted with the Armes family during the 1940's. Fred moved from cutting grass in the neighborhood to selling ice cream bars from a bicycle-driven wagon. The ice cream was packed in hot ice, and Fred would pedal up and down the streets of the West End ringing his bells to attract attention and sell his 5-cent bars of goodies. It was a hot summer job, but Fred always persevered.

Shortly thereafter Fred secured a job at Jim Dunbar's service station, and I secured a job as a drug store soda jerk and delivery boy. Both of these businesses were on the corner of 3rd and Market streets. In 1948 we graduated from Shawnee Junior High School and were on our way to Manual High School.

The summer of 1950 was a major time in our lives. Fred purchased a 1930 Ford coup with a rumble seat; I purchased a 1928 two-door Ford sedan. We two buddies had hit the big time. By now Fred had a very special friend named Betty Kuhn. Betty cared a great deal for Fred, but she was not very impressed with his car. From time to time she would ask her dad if he could use their family car with the excuse that it was cold and Fred's car didn't have a heater. Mr. Kuhn was always very generous and understanding of Betty's wishes. He cared a great deal for Fred, too.

Fred played football at Manual and was president of our graduation class. Many would feel his most outstanding recognition, however, was his election as president of Manual's chapter of The Nation Honor Society.

Senior prom night in January 1951 was a major social event for Fred and me. Our high school graduation was the first coed graduation in Manual's history. The following week Fred and I drove my car to Bowling Green pursuant to my enrolling at Western Kentucky University. Fred later went on to a successful academic tenure at Rice University in Houston, Texas.

"Father Time" and location has limited our fellowship together since 1951, but we are blessed with memories that have endured though the years. The Armes family was a leading West End partner in a generation that conquered numerous challenges and prospered with the commitment to make each day a time to grow. One by one the children's accomplishments become inspiration for the future. This remains their continuing band with their parents.

Today the "Great Resilient Eight" are now three. The Armes family reputation represents an achievement from yesterday. It is to be lived today and guarded and enhanced tomorrow by their heirs.

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