

*Autobiographies are usually written by the rich
and famous. Here is one done by a "Common Joe".*

*by
Joseph A. Postulka*

For the past ten years I have been trying to write my autobiography, but it was too easy to put it aside, figuring I have plenty of time. Now I have a condition called peripheral neuropathy, which causes damage to the nerves on the bottoms of my feet and elsewhere in my body. My thumbs on both hands and two fingers next to them become numb to the point where I can't hold a pen.

On Halloween amongst the trick or treaters was a ghost. When I offered it candy, I was informed it was the ghostwriter I hired, so we immediately started our project. After finding it disappeared without leaving a business card or bill for services rendered. I didn't even know if it was a male or a female. So here is my story....

INTRODUCTION...

My father, Adolf Postulka was born on March 19, 1897 in Moravia, a state of the Czech Republic. He was a butcher by trade and served in the Czech Army in the Calvary division in WW1. After the war he married my mother, Josephine Slosova on November 21, 1921.

Times were pretty rough then, so my dad decided to come to America to start a new life. He found out he would need a sponsor to do this. Once he accomplished this, he came to America on a ship called the SS America on December 24, 1921. He began work in a coalmine in Colorado because that is where he could earn the best salary. After accumulating enough money, he decided to send for my mother, who came here by ship and train with her nametag pinned to her coat and a metal trunk carrying all of her belongings. My mother and father then decided to move to Kansas, where my sister Anna Postulka was born on May 19, 1923. She went to McCormick grade school and Harrison High School. She then got a job at Western Electric through a friend of the family. She married Uncle Joe and they lived on Troy Street with my mother and father. Pat Adams was born on March 17, 1954. She eventually married Ben Ingram. Karen Adams was born on December 20, 1956 and eventually married Bob Gaydos.

After some years, my father and mother decided to move to Chicago in the area of 25th Street and Sacramento, where they rented an apartment. I, Joseph Postulka was born there on October 10, 1927. My dad told me on that day he was helping build the walls for the Cook County Jail, which was a block away from where we lived. Our neighborhood was a mixture of nice Polish and Bohemian people, but my dad would complain, "Damn Pollaks---go to church on Sunday and rob my coal on Monday".

My mother got a job cleaning in 1939 at the Ponsare Card Shop, where she earned \$220 a year, which would amount to \$4,180 now. Because she enjoyed sewing and was very good at it, she also took in side jobs sewing on her Singer sewing machine, which was powered by a foot pump. Eventually I offered to install a motor on it but she declined saying she had better control than with an electric machine.

After awhile they decided the apartment was too small and they wanted a house of their own. They found their dream home at 2632 S. Troy St. The price they paid was \$3500 and after finding out later that it was built in two parts, Dad felt he got cheated, as he wasn't told this before the purchase. The house was a frame building, built in 1875, with kitchen, living room, and two bedrooms upstairs, and the same layout downstairs. My sister had the front bedroom and I shared the kitchen bedroom with my parents. The only toilet, which was shared by both apartments, was downstairs in the enclosed porch.

The downstairs apartment was rented to the Pterka family who had a boy James, my age, and a girl Dorothy, my sister's age. After a few years they moved out and my dad decided to remodel both apartments.

Because the house was built about 18" below the city sidewalk, it was considered an English basement. There was a wooden sidewalk on the north side of the house and you had to go up two steps to go up to the city sidewalk.

The apartments were heated by a pot-bellied stove, which was in the middle of the kitchen, using coal and wood. Usually on Saturday we would take our baths in a metal tub in the middle of the kitchen. It contained water heated on our stove. Our main fear was someone knocking at the door, coming to visit our parents at this time.

Fortunately my dad had some tradesmen as friends, including a bricklayer, plumber, and a carpenter. He began the project by putting in a bathroom upstairs. Since he was a concrete finisher, he poured a concrete floor and baseboard in the new bathroom. We now had a tub with clawed legs, a washbasin, and a hot water tank, which was heated with a sidearm heater.

Since my dad was from the old school, he believed the chores should be divided up by the men in the house doing the outside work and maintenance of the house. My job was to keep the pot-bellied stove full of coal and wood, shoveling snow, and anything else he thought necessary. The women were responsible for cleaning house, cooking and dishes, and keeping up with laundry.

My dad used to do concrete side jobs on Saturday and Sunday and would take me along. At that time they mixed concrete by hand. We had the stone, sand and cement delivered by truck. My job was to add water with a hose as they were mixing and to make sure not to get any of the mix on their shoes or I would hear about it. After the job was complete, I cleaned all the tools. The best part of the day was sitting at the kitchen table figuring the pay. My take was \$6-8 a day, which was more than I made delivering newspapers.

SCHOOL DAYS...

I went to kindergarten at McCormick School, which was three blocks from where we lived. At age 6, I entered first grade and I was an above average student, but had to read things over twice in order to retain them. I had a very good attendance record except for the time I had the chickenpox and had to stay home. They used to have to put a sign in the window saying "Quarantined- Do Not Come In".

The school was a three-story building and you had to go upstairs to each floor and walk around the outside perimeter to get to your homeroom. A teacher was at each end of the hallway. I remember getting a lot of cold sores then and my mother would put white cream on them to help them heal quicker. I hated this because my friends would razz me that I got them from kissing girls. I'd wipe the cream off so they wouldn't see it, but in going back to homeroom, the teacher would spot me and reapply the cream.

At that time the boys used to wear corduroy knickers, which were knee length pants with elastic at the knee. With these I got a new pair of leather boots that were called high tops and they had a little pocket on the side that would carry a pocketknife. There was a cover over the pocket with a snap so you didn't lose it. The knife usually had a screwdriver and bottle opener attachment. It was never used to settle arguments because in those days, arguments were settled with fists.

Another thing I remember is a class called Social Studies, where we learned how to hold silverware, and other things you needed to improve your life. One of the last things we learned there was how to dance. The teacher would pair us off in couples according to size. Since I was a pretty tall kid, she

paired me with a bigger girl, and though not the best looking in class, she was very nice. We'd never have made it on Dancing With the Stars because we moved around like two boxes.

While I was in the 7th grade, I bought myself a skinny-tired bike for \$3.50 and got a paper route delivering the Herald American, an afternoon newspaper. I delivered approximately 35 newspapers. I did my own collecting and many times the drapes were moving but no one came to the door. On Sundays after making my regular deliveries I would take my wagon full of papers and go through the neighborhood yelling "Sunday morning paper!" for those who didn't get regular weekly delivery. Some of my hobbies then were collecting stamps from around the world, and coins from the US. I also enjoyed building model airplanes, mostly warplanes.

My friends and I formed a club called the Pandas and we used to meet in an empty storefront with an adult volunteer named John Bojan who guided us making sure we did everything the right way. We played games like checkers, Chinese checkers, and card games like Old Maid, and then we'd order 50 burgers at 5 cents each. There were 14 members at the time, boys only. We formed a softball team and I was voted captain, so I had to make lineups and other things a captain/manager would do. We decided to get jerseys, and to get the money to buy them; we had to go to different businesses to get sponsorship for money. This wasn't my favorite job. I remember we purchased the shirts, gray and black in color with the name "PANDAS" on the back. There were numerous clubs like ours in the surrounding area, so we had an 8-team league. Each time we played, each player had to give 25 cents, which was used to buy the baseball. The winner would take the excess money and the ball. If you didn't win too many games, you had to sew the old ball instead of playing with a new one. At that time we used to buy a Harwood ball, which was a quality ball, but it lasted the longest and was the liveliest. The price was \$1.75.

I graduated from grade school in June 1941 and went on to Harrison High School, which was located on 24th and Douglas Blvd. Our class was divided because there were two high schools in the area, Farragut and Harrison. Most of my friends ended up with me at Harrison, depending on the borders of where you lived, which was how they decided which high school you went to. I made the football team in my sophomore year and took a tech course, so I never learned to type, or anything else office related. I took all shop classes, along with Math and English. I liked Math but didn't care for English much.

I played on the football team for 3 years. My position was in the line as a guard and I had a fella by the name of Al Lesniak as a tackle playing next to me. He was a very good friend of mine and also a grammar school boyfriend of your mother's. Knowing her, I enjoyed her company but there were no romantic feelings between us at that time. I remember playing my senior year where though we had a very good team we still lost to Austin High School 7-6 in the championship of the league, so it was a very sad ending.

While in high school we formed a club called the High Hats. At that time there were many clubs like this called social athletic clubs. These clubs would run dances to create revenue for different activities. Usually these dances were held at the Sokol halls, which was where many Bohemian people would practice and perform gymnastic routines. When playing football, there were cheerleaders at every game. These were the popular girls. There were three in particular called "The Big 3", Katz, Perky and Bartz.. And this is where I first met your mother. We went to the senior prom, but my date was Auntie Perky and your mothers date was Bruno. I drove us there in my dads 1940 Nash. It was a very nice time.

After graduation in June 1945, two of my teammates and I got scholarships to attend Northwestern, Illinois and Indiana University. We visited each school and decided on Indiana because the other two colleges were too spread out and you'd have to take the bus to some of your classes. Northwestern being a private college, a lot of students came from wealthy families and we didn't feel we fit in. Indiana University was situated in a nice area. People there were friendly and family oriented. It was located 50 miles northwest of Indianapolis in the city of Bloomington.

We had to start college the day after high school graduation in order to play in regular football games. Because of this we missed the senior boat cruise on Lake Michigan. I understand they had a lot of fun there. I did get to play football briefly in four games. We had a very good team, but did not win the championship.

ARMY TIME...

I finished my one-year of college and was drafted into the Army one month later. I took my basic training of 8 weeks in Little Rock, AK, I was shipped to San Francisco and then to Japan as a replacement group. I joined the 25th Infantry, which was called the Lightning Division and the arm patch on our uniform showed a shield and a bolt of lightning. Even though I was trained in heavy weapons platoon, they put you where they needed you and I ended up being an MP (Military Police).

I was very surprised that conditions in Japan were so behind the times and I saw that everybody wore masks because of the sanitary conditions. I noticed a Japanese worker with an ox pulling a cart which had 6 buckets on it, each 2'x3'. We used to call these honey wagons. He was picking up waste from the ox and other places. Later on I remembered talking to one of the operators and asked him whether he used to empty the GI latrines. In broken English he said, "GI crap no good. Too much paper." The other thing I observed was transportation was mostly done on trains. I saw one station with around 20 people waiting for a train and I was surprised that the men had no respect for the women when boarding the train, men boarding first. If a window was open on the train, the men would climb through rather than waiting in line.

I stayed in the MPs for 3 weeks, and with my football experience I was asked to join the division football team, and they put us up in a 6-story hotel. This was a good experience because we got to play other divisions of the military. I got to see different cities like Tokyo and Yokohama. This was like a vacation for me, only with pay.

We had a good team and ended up in second place in the league standing. After the football season, I was called in to the Provost Marshall's office. I was worried because I had just sold 2 cartons of cigarettes at black market prices. I didn't smoke, but we were all rationed one carton a month. After cross-examination, he asked me if I wanted to join the CID (Crime Investigation Detachment). It was a 7-man operation, which investigated crimes, committed against the Japanese by US personnel. The uniform we wore had a gold braid with no rankings on it. The reason for this is you might have to interrogate a higher-ranking officer, which could harm your investigation because they could pull rank on you if they found out you were a PFC. I was issued a jeep and was allowed to go into restricted areas if it involved an investigation. It was very interesting work. I recall one case in particular where 2 GIs were hauling surplus material to a main deposit. Since surplus was not counted, they would

drop off part of the shipment to a Japanese factory. When we raided the factory, we found 3 foot high stacks of blankets ready to be sewn together to make jackets. The army had khaki colored blankets and the navy had white and dark blue. It took 2 blankets to make 1 jacket.

After awhile, the Army decided to discharge all draftees so that they could become regular Army. I was asked if I wanted to stay in my current position or be discharged. Not wanting to sign up for 3 years, I decided to go for the discharge. I came home in April of 1947.

CAREER TIME....

I got a call from my Indiana football coach to see if I was coming back to school. I really wasn't interested in going back to college, or getting an apprenticeship for one of the building trades. In the meantime, my father got me a job as a union laborer at International Harvester where he worked building new docks and doing cement repair where needed. My pay was \$1.80 per hour, which was very good at that time. After working about 4 months, a friend of mine, Wally Lach, who worked at RR Donnelley, printers of Life, Look, and Time magazines, told me they were forming a new department and were hiring. I applied the next day and was hired as an apprentice in the engraving field, which meant working with small tools while looking through a magnifying glass which was right up my alley, since I liked working with my hands. It was a 5-year apprenticeship starting at 87 cents an hour, 37 and half hours per week. Every 927 hours you would move to your next bracket. With overtime, I finished my apprenticeship in 4 years. I worked in Letter Press, which means printing from a raised surface.

When I was age 55, they decided Letter Press was too costly so I was transferred to the Roto Department, which printed with 6' cylinders coated with copper. Roto Printing is printing from wells, which are filled with ink and wiped off with a wiper blade. As the paper goes over it, it sucks up the ink. The deeper the well, the darker the printed outcome. This was the opposite of what I was doing earlier. After awhile, with the help of electronics and photography, much of our work was eliminated. So once again we were downsized and I was offered a package to retire, which allowed me to get the same pay at age 60 as I would if I retired at age 62. I decided to retire on October 1, 1987 after 40 years of service. Since then, I have enjoyed every year of my retirement years.

THE BUILDING OF THE JOSEPH A. POSTULKA FAMILY....

I started dating your mother while working at RR Donnelley. I always enjoyed her company and felt like I wanted to spend as much time as I could with her so I proposed to her and we set a date to get married. Since her father passed away when she was a senior in high school that left her mother, Anna Kotulak and her living alone in a flat of a 2-story, 4-flat building, at 2120 S. Fairfield. The building had one bathroom for each floor, toilet only.

We didn't want to leave grandma living by herself, so we decided to take her with us. We found a house on 2729 S. Homan Ave. in the city. It was a brick 2-flat built in 1895, set on the back of the lot with a one and a half car garage facing the alley. There were two steps up to the city sidewalk. We

rented the second floor out and lived on the first floor. The house had two bedrooms and a full bathroom on each floor.

On February 17, 1952, I married your mother, the love of my life. The ceremony was held at St. Roman's Church in Chicago. The bridesmaids were my sister and Aunty Perky. The groomsmen were Uncle Joe and my friend Henry Kava (Coffee). The reception was held in Berwyn at the Old Prague restaurant and hall.

We drove to Florida for our honeymoon and while driving through Indiana, I ran out of gas. A tanker truck went by but was hauling diesel fuel, which didn't do us any good, but he did call someone who could help us.

After getting home from our honeymoon, your mother continued working at her old job doing office work at Sinclair. If I wasn't working overtime, I would pick her up from work. Otherwise she would take the streetcar home.

We knew we wanted to have a larger family, so on December 1, 1955 we decided to buy a bigger home in the suburbs at 3004 Prairie Avenue in Brookfield. It was a new home and the purchase price was \$20,500. It had 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms, one in the basement. Later on we built a garage attached to the house. I did all of the painting and decorating myself so that more of our money could go toward our mortgage.

We soon started to build our family and after a miscarriage, a second pregnancy brought us Joanne Marie on June 11, 1953. Eventually she fulfilled her longtime dream of becoming a hairdresser and married her high school sweetheart, Bud Williams on August 25, 1973. She enjoys gardening, boating and motorcycling in her spare time. Bud and Joan are now retired.

On August 31, 1955, Paula Ann was born. She always had a dream of working downtown, so she ended up earning a position at Harris Bank in Chicago in the finance department. Paula married Erik Krueger on August 19, 1995. Paula has followed in your mother's footsteps and is an excellent baker, sharing her Christmas cookies with family and friends, and other goodies throughout the year. Paula and Erik have enjoyed many good years traveling around the world prior to their retirement.

Andrew Joseph came along on Dec 22, 1957. He attended DeVry and got his degree in electronics. Since he wanted to live in California, he chose a job working for Hewlett Packard in California. He came back to Illinois and now works at a church as a tech specialist, performing various other duties. Andy enjoys cooking up specialties on his charcoal grill and sharing them with friends and family.

On March 4, 1960, Nancy Jean was born. Since she always loved animals, she decided to pursue a career in that field and attended college to become an animal healthcare technician. She worked at a veterinarian clinic for Dr. Rowell for many years continuing on to become an office manager at a VCA clinic in Berwyn. She has formerly spent years breeding her specialty rabbits in a little rabbit house built by Ray and myself. Nancy married Dr. Raymond Bishop on September 23, 1990. They both enjoy traveling around the country in their spare time.

Thomas Jefferson was born on November 6, 1961. He attended DeVry and Triton College interested in electronics. He found a position at Aamed Medical servicing wheelchairs, concentrators and other medical equipment. This is where he found his passion for helping people. Eventually he found a job

well suited to him custom fitting wheelchairs and scooters, using a company van to make house calls. After some years, the company went out of business, but he hopes to get back into that field very soon. Tom keeps the house well organized like Mom would have and enjoys listening to music and taking the bike trail when he has spare time.

All five siblings went to grammar school at St. Louise de Marillac and high school at Riverside Brookfield. I am fortunate at this time that Andy and Tom are living at home and are able to help take care of me. Otherwise I would have to move to an assisted living facility. I am very proud of each and every one of my sons and daughters and the accomplishments they have made. As I have aged, I find the tables have turned. Now they are helping to take care of me, and I appreciate them so much.

As a family we had many wonderful holiday gatherings together with the Adams. Some were spent at their house and some were spent at our house. There was always plenty of good food and a lot of laughs.

We took some great family vacations in our station wagon. Some of our trips included going to Washington D.C. and the Smokey Mountains, and visiting Aunty Perky in New Jersey going through Pennsylvania and New York. We also rented cottages on different lakes in Indiana and Wisconsin and did a lot of swimming and a little bit of fishing.

I always wanted to build a house on a lake, so in April 1976, I bought a trailer home sitting on two lots off the lake and one 50 foot lot on the Lake of Egypt, in southern Illinois. Eventually we built a nice home on the lake lot plus storage shed. The family spent many good summers there. We spent many hours fishing, skiing, and exploring the lake in our pontoon boat. We sold the lake house in June 2000, since it was becoming a chore to take care of two houses.

I remember our 25th wedding anniversary. Our sons and daughters pitched in and sent us on a Caribbean cruise, which was one of our best vacations. We enjoyed it so much that we took them on a cruise twice, because a cruise was such a restful vacation and so much family fun.

UNPLEASANT MEMORIES....

In June 1989, we took a one-week vacation at the lake. I stepped on a deck board and injured my right knee to the point of where I just had pain, but wasn't immobilized. When we got home, the pain got worse, and I decided to go to the Emergency Room. When I saw the doctor wheeling the cart with the plaster of Paris, I knew I was getting a cast. I had a horizontal crack across the kneecap.

In 2006, I had my first total knee replacement of the right knee. In 2016, I fell in the garden and the old replacement shattered the bone and two inches of the bone had to be removed and a larger knee replacement had to be inserted. Most recently in 2019, I fell in the living room and ended up in the hospital with a fracture of the two bones above the ankle leading to the knee. Since they decided to stabilize the area with a metal plate and bolts, when I was able to start physical therapy, I had to wear a boot instead of a cast. Most of my falls were due to balance problems I've had for the past 30 years.

2013 was not a good year for us. Your mother had serious medical issues throughout the year, and on October 2nd she passed away. I lost the love of my life then. I miss her greatly but am so glad we had 61 wonderful years together. I know without her I would not have accomplished everything that I did. I loved her dearly.

HOBBIES...

I have always enjoyed working with my hands, especially using wood. I have made birdhouses, lawn ornaments and some furniture. My greatest project was in 1994 when I started making wooden Christmas ornaments. Each year I would choose a different pattern, and using exotic woods, created one for each of my kids, my nieces and my sister. I would start the project before Thanksgiving to make sure I finished for Christmas. For some reason or other, 2015 was the last series of ornaments I made. It was a fun project, and it was a big setback when my physical problems kept me from being able to continue this tradition.

Another hobby of mine was gardening, where I used to grow tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers. I found out that all vegetables in the garden were tastier than ones we could purchase in the store, especially the tomatoes. With twelve tomato plants, I had a lot of extras to share with my family.

Another enjoyable hobby I had was baking Christmas cookies with your mother. We would make the dough in the morning, and then bake the cookies in the afternoon. We always had a lot of laughs. I was always glad if there were any rejects because they would have my name on it. I didn't get many because she checked them often to make sure they weren't over baked.

With all of my hobbies, even in retirement, I never became bored.

L.A.S.T.Y....

Now that I have finished my autobiography, I will wait my turn to go to heaven to see your mother and at her request I will be taking four bags of kłuski noodles and four pounds of butter.

I purchased a one-way ticket because I fear if I came back it would be as a monkey because of my love of bananas. I know not many people have monkeys as pets, so I might become homeless. So please if you see a monkey, don't think it's me.

I want to apologize for any misinformation given here. My 90-year-old brain is starting to show wear and tear, and there are no replacement parts available.

So goodbye to all and I love you. Keep together and help one another as needed and remember to adjust to the conditions you have, and you'll live a long and happy life like I had.

Love,

Dad

December 25, 2020

