



## My First 100 Years

The story of 51 year member, Dan Weiss

by Ken McWilliams

Dan was born into a much different world than we have today. He has been witness to the birth of most of the technology that we take for granted today. When Dan was born, only 7% of the homes had electricity, 5% had a phone, and only 6% had indoor plumbing. Heating and cooking was accomplished using wood or coal burning stoves.



Daniel Weiss

Life expectancy was 51 years for men and 56 for women. The population of the U.S. was 100,000,000, less than one third of today. Self-service Supermarkets didn't exist. You would give your shopping list to a clerk at a general store and he would fill your order for you. There was no such thing as sliced bread, Band-Aids, or the thousands of other prepackaged conveniences that we enjoy today.

Consumer radios were not available because there were no commercial radio stations yet. The automobile was making headway, but was still out of reach for most people. Ford sold its one millionth Model T in 1915. Studebaker had begun making cars, but still produced horse drawn vehicles. Yes, it was very different.

The following is a brief look at Dan's life as he conveyed it to me.

Dan was born at home on a Saturday, December 11, 1915. (95% of all births then were at home.) His home was at 814 Bodine Street, Philadelphia, PA. Bodine was a very narrow, cobblestone street. (Note: bold, italicized words are direct, paraphrased, quotes from Dan.)

An early memory of mine is that of our milkman. His horse knew every stop on his route, and we could hear the bottles clanging in his wire carrier as he delivered our milk and picked up the empty bottles. Our tiny house had a coal heater and an outhouse. We had piped water in the kitchen. (Cold only.) We slept 3-4 in a room, had gas lighting, and sconces as far back as I can remember. We never had electricity at that house.



Milkman and his delivery wagon

My parents immigrated to Philadelphia from a small village in Romania about 1906-07; probably to escape the Romanian Army that did not take too kindly to its Jewish

soldiers. My father was raised by a man and woman who were not his parents. I don't know the reason for that. Over the years my true surname was lost. On the ship manifest, arriving in Philadelphia, their names were listed as Benjamin and Elizabeth Weiss. (It may have been the name of the converted Jewish woman who raised him.)

My father was a harness maker in Romania and through the aegis of some Romanian friends in Philadelphia, he was hired as a luggage maker, and that became his life's work.

Over the years I had seven brothers and one sister. All my brothers are gone as well as all my cousins, aunts, uncles, and of course, my parents. My sister is still here at the age of 97, although she suffers from dementia.

I am told that I attended the Madison Elementary School for two years from the ages of 6 to 8, but I have no recall of that. We moved in 1923 to 628 W. Columbia Avenue in Philadelphia. Our new, and larger, home had much more room, electricity, and even a tree in the backyard.

With electricity, we had electric lights. If a bulb burned out, we would simply take it to the electric company, which was about two blocks away, and they would give us a brand-new bulb at no charge.

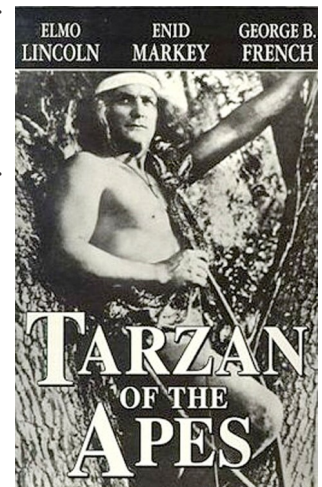
We never had a telephone, but that did not stop us from receiving phone calls. There was a candy store and a drugstore nearby and they both had telephones. We would give our family or friends the phone number of the stores. If they wanted to talk to us, they would call one of those numbers, and the store would send a runner to our house. (Usually a young boy) We would give the runner a nickel, then rush to the store for our call.

Our mode of transportation was our feet or a trolley car. The trolley had a driver and a conductor. The fare was five cents and transfers were five cents.

My first recollections of moving pictures were of the silent type. There were many small movie theaters called Nickelodeon's in Philadelphia. I remember they had weekly serials that always ended in a cliffhanger to entice you to come back the following week. One in particular that I remember was "Elmo Lincoln" the first Tarzan.



Dan's parents



Elmo Lincoln, the Saturday Matinee Hero



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I was enrolled in the Ferguson School three blocks from our new home. I had a terrible stuttering problem ever since I was two years old, and I was laughed at, and made fun of, because of it, at school. At the age of 14, I left school in the 8th grade because of this. One day, my teacher asked me a question and I momentarily froze, and then stuttered badly trying to answer it. All of my classmates, and even the teacher laughed at me. I could not endure the humiliation any longer.

I had no diploma, and went to work as an errand boy for a print shop at \$5.00 a week. The Graphic Arts industry fascinated me, and it would become my life's work. I tried to learn all I could by getting jobs that would advance my knowledge and skills in this industry. In all of my working life, I was never fired.

Because of my stuttering problem, I led the life of a loner, whose mind took me to faraway places, and I dreamed the dreams of a dreamer. My brothers gave me short shrift, and I had very few to no friends to commiserate with. I was never chosen to play the games kids play at that period in my life.

I was one member of a large family, and because of this grew up in my own world of fantasy. Because I was pretty much alone, I did a lot of exploring in the city of Philadelphia. I went to most of the historical sites I read about in my school books, and did a lot of imagining about life in those bygone days. I continued to be interested in the Graphic Arts industry. I worked in many parts of the business which helped increase my knowledge about the profession I had chosen as my future.

As with most young people, the opposite sex came to be an interest in my life, and I learned to hide my stuttering somewhat by not using words or sounds that caused my fluency to falter to the extent that it shamed me. It did ease up to a point, and gave me much needed confidence. Having a number of female friends that found me a worthwhile companion or friend, my life took on a new existence. I became a member of the Woodside Park Roller Skating Rink. I even had my own shoe skates, and spent many a pleasant summer evening there in feminine company.

My 23rd year (1938) was a very good one for me. I got my first car, and my first girlfriend. My car was a used 1932 Dodge coupe with a rumble seat.



1932 Dodge coupe, with rumble seat

Over the years I continued to learn more about my chosen trade, and about myself. My stuttering continued but I managed to control it somewhat. I was not among the lucky 80% that outgrew it with age. It was a handicap that would plague me, at the most inopportune times, forever. It is

debilitating and interferes with every aspect of your life, from school, to friendships, to family life, to earning a living, and even personal relationships.

I'll fast-forward now to the late 50s. I was not married, and did not see that as something that I would ever consider. That is, until I met a very pretty girl named Evelyn. A mutual friend introduced me to a woman that was forming a club for single men. The purpose of the club was to create a place where single women could meet single men. I joined the club, and that is where I met Evelyn. I was smitten from the beginning, and we began dating. This was late 1958, and we were married in the spring of 1959. Evelyn had graduated from high school and was working for a nonprofit



Dan and his wife, Evelyn

agency that catered to helping immigrants. She never made much money working there, even after progressing from receptionist to executive secretary. Money was not an issue with her, she truly enjoyed being able to help others and spent 44 years with that organization.

After we were married we lived in Evelyn's apartment while we looked for a place of our own. Eventually, we found a plan of new homes that were being built in Northeast Philadelphia. We moved into our new home in February 1961. I still live in that house today. I lost Evelyn in May of 1997; two weeks shy of our 39th anniversary.

When we moved into our new home I did a lot of custom cabinet work throughout the house. My boss's brother was aware of my woodworking skills, and one day showed me a woodworker's magazine that featured a bracket clock. He asked me if I could build one similar to the one shown in the magazine. I accepted the challenge.

I passed a clock shop on my commute to work each day, so I decided to stop in and ask for some advice for my project. I talked to Fred Breitingger, the owner, and he suggested using Seth Thomas time and strike movements. He was able to provide me with five movements. I proceeded to create five of the bracket clocks shown in the magazine. They all turned out quite well.



One of the 5 clocks

Little did I know how my world would change with that visit to the clock shop. In 1964, Fred invited me to join the NAWCC. I accepted his offer and am now a 51 year member of this great organization. I joined Chapter 1 in Philadelphia, and made many friends through the years. Sadly, many of them are now gone. In 2010 I joined Chapter 190 in Ventura, California. In many ways, the five years since I joined have been the most rewarding for me in the sense of doing things that help make our great organization a little better. Obviously, living in Pennsylvania, I don't get to go to their monthly meetings. However, I was able to attend the 2012 NAWCC national convention held in Pasadena,

California where I had the opportunity to meet many of my fellow Chapter 190 members.

In 1985, Dan heard a commercial on the radio for the "National Stuttering Association." They have about 40 chapters in the U.S. He joined the Philadelphia chapter and became their newsletter editor because of his printing background. In one of his editorials, he suggested having a day dedicated to the awareness of stutterers. The idea came to the attention of Sen. Roth, who introduced a bill that would set aside one week to recognize this affliction. In 1988, President Reagan signed into law, that the second week in May would be known as "Stutterers Awareness Week".



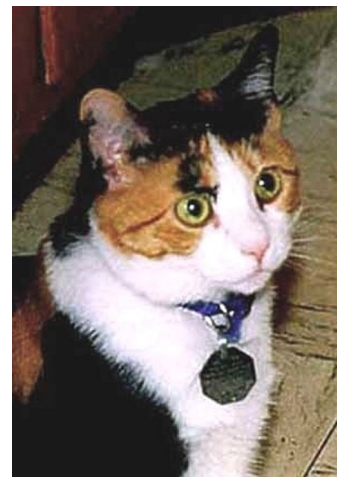
Dan is, and has been, an active member of our organization. He has hundreds of posts on our message board. He created a virtual plaque for members who have achieved 50 years in the NAWCC. To date, we have 284 such members. Dan also decided that our founding members needed to be remembered. He created a founders plaque that lists the names of the 52 officers and members who were present in our organization when it was started on November 7, 1943. The plaque can be found in the museum in Columbia, Pennsylvania.

Dan has also created yearly calendars featuring watches and clocks from the NAWCC membership, and

from our Columbia, PA Museum. Chapter 190 is in the process of distributing the 2016 calendars to its members. Dan has just completed the 2017 calendar which features rare clocks from Jim Chamberlain's collection. Dan does the design, layout, printing, and binding of the calendars himself, and pays for all supplies. All proceeds from the sale of these calendars are donated to the NAWCC.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention an important member of Dan's family. After Evelyn passed away, the house was very quiet and lonely. Dan decided that he needed a companion, something that would bring life back into his home. This came in the form of "Johnie" his first cat. He told me that this was the second best decision that he ever made, the first was marrying Evelyn.

Johnie is gone now, and his latest companion is Frankie II. This is a very special cat in that it is the only non-human, dues paying, card carrying, registered member of the NAWCC.



Frankie II - NAWCC #167825

# Happy Birthday

Happy 100 Years, Dan!  
What an amazing life you have had.  
All of us here at Chapter 190 wish  
we could be with you, or you with us,  
to celebrate your milestone in person.  
Congratulations from each of us.

Robert Gary

And  
Congratulations  
On Reaching Your  
100th Year

I have used your calendars for the  
past three years. They are unique,  
like no others anywhere. Each one  
is hand made with care and  
affection. How elegant...how  
wonderful. I hope to meet you in  
person someday.

George Gaglini

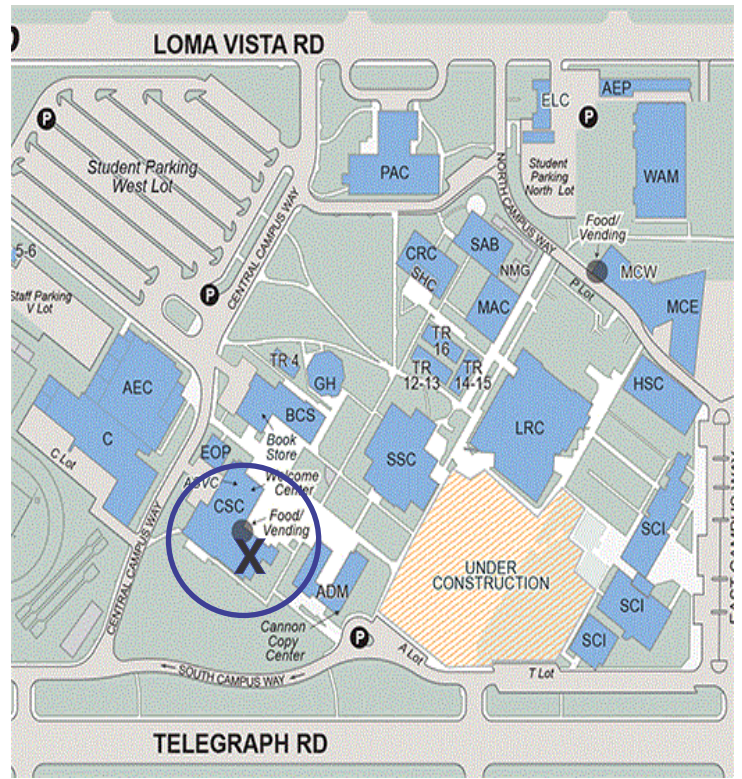


Congratulation Dan on 100 Years!  
Seven years ago you joined Chapter 190. Your reasons for joining were to "enjoy horology, create NAWCC calendars, and to keep young". Dan, you keep achieving your goals and you have more than fulfilled your commitment to help Chapter 190. You have inspired all of us with your example. Thank you Dan, for all your work, and thank you for all your contributions to the NAWCC and Chapter 190.

Mike Schmidt



The Chapter 190 meetings are held the third Sunday of each month. (No meeting in December)  
 We will meet in the Campus Student Center (CSC) on the Ventura College campus. The CSC is located in building "B", east of the gym and



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**NEXT MEETINGS  
 JAN 17**

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