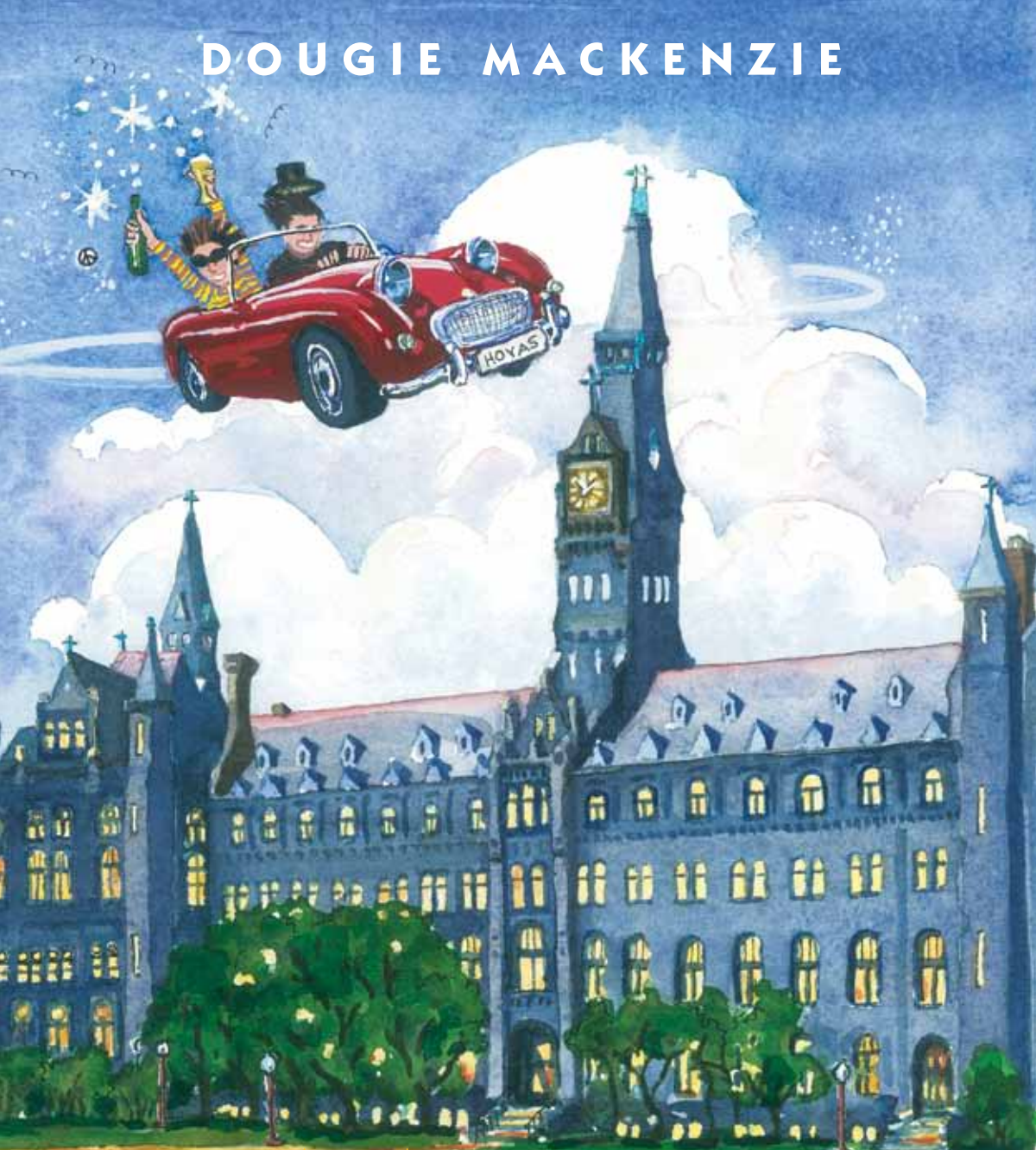


DOUGIE MACKENZIE



Mango Lassie

A MEMOIR OF THE SIXTIES

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Preface

BRUCE LEE'S BIG BREAK CAME IN 1964 at the Long Beach International Karate Tournament when Ed Parker asked him to give an exhibition of kung fu.

I had the good fortune to meet Ed Parker when I was fighting on the karate tournament circuit. This was the legendary Ed Parker who taught Elvis, and founded his first karate school in Utah in 1954.

It was September 6, 1980, and the tournament was The Lake Erie Karate Classic. It took place in Middleburg Heights, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland. Ed Parker was conducting a seminar in *kenpo* the night before, so I thought I'd drop in.

The seminar was terrific. We watched Mr. Parker demonstrate rakes to the face and hand techniques that were part of his "alphabet of motion." When he asked if there were any questions, my hand shot up. "Our guest in the back," said the father of American *kenpo* karate.

"Mr. Parker, I'm not very big. So I'm not sure that hand techniques would work. I think *tae kwon do* kicks would be more effective."

I hadn't meant to sound confrontational, so I was surprised when the entire room turned and glared at me.

Ed Parker just shook his silver bangs, and smiled broadly.

"I haven't shown you my kicks yet," he said.

With this, he motioned for his assistant instructor to brace himself, and, KA POW! Ed Parker nailed the black belt squarely in the sternum with an explosive side kick. The poor fellow flew through the air and landed ass-over-teakettle. Wow! Talk about leverage!

Fortunately, the young man was very fit. He quickly righted

himself—no harm done. No one said a word. They had only to read the astonishment on my face to see that my conversion to *kenpo* was instantaneous.

After the seminar, I approached the sturdy young instructor.

“I’m really sorry. I didn’t mean to get you killed.”

He laughed disarmingly, flashing a smile that would’ve charmed the Theban stones.

“It’s an honor to get kicked by Master Parker. It knocked the wind out of me. And I knew it was coming.”

“That must’ve hurt,” I said. “Tomorrow morning you’re gonna feel like you were T-boned by a Buick.”

“We get our kicks getting our kicks,” he laughed.

By 1980, kicks had gotten harder to find.

You see, the greatest kick in my life had come five years earlier, in 1975, when I bought a car in Amsterdam with my girlfriend and drove it overland to India.

What an adventure. Try driving through the mountains of eastern Turkey on a dust-choked washboard road, with no guard rails, and room enough only for one car. Fearing we were going to die, I cried out as big trucks bullied our Fiat sedan. We recoiled when we saw the broken hulks of cars and buses that had gone over the road’s edge, rusting like discarded toys on the floor of the canyon below.

After twelve hours of terror, we found ourselves in Erzurum where we were ambushed by two hooligans before we found our night’s lodging in a filthy hotel.

In Afghanistan our first night was spent in Herat where we slept guarded by wild-looking Pashtoon tribesmen with antique .303 Lee-Enfields. They kept vigil all night below our porch on charpoy rope beds.

Our Fiat broke down constantly. It was so hot in Tabriz, the dashboard melted. We were caught in a landslide on the Jammu road to Kashmir. Dodging a boulder the size of a Volkswagen made my legs shake so violently that I couldn’t keep them on the car pedals.

While writing a book of our Asia overland adventure entitled

Stopover Bombay, it hit me that I needed first to write *Mango Lassie*, about the passionate years that were the Sixties.

Who am I to write about those mad pursuits? Why me, you ask?
Why not?

As that old cowboy Elmer Keith used to say:

“Hell, I Was There!”

Introduction

I want a long straight road . . . and a car with the cut out
wide open speeding a mile a minute into the Sun
with a princess by my side..

—Harry Crosby

I GREW UP IN COMFORTABLE CIRCUMSTANCES, a darling of privilege and genteel luxury. I was driven to Middleburg, Virginia’s Hill School by my banker father in his beige Mercedes. It was a round-fendered “Ponton” sedan with a hydraulic clutch and big Bosch foglights. The heater took forever, so we froze on winter mornings.

Mom drove a ’57 Ford, and its V-8 blew heat like a dragon’s own breath. It was a hip machine. Robert Mitchum drove one as a moonshiner in *Thunder Road*. That Ford was also my first car. I put Moon spun-aluminum hubcaps on it and christened it “Road Rebel.”

I could’ve been a moonshiner, too, only I had no sense of direction, asthma, and really bad allergies.

There was a small movie house in Middleburg, but we rarely saw films there. My father’s bald head was too tempting a target for gum-drop-throwing miscreants seated up in the theatre’s balcony. So going to the cinema meant a trip into D.C.

There was scant traffic in 1957, and Dad drove like Juan Fangio in that year’s legendary German Grand Prix. Full chat meant a ninety-mile-an-hour knuckle biter over Route 50’s undulating hills. Northern Virginia was a verdant vista of untouched farmland all the way to Fairfax. Today, you’ll encounter more red lights than a night in Amsterdam.

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After our roller coaster ride in Dad's car, we were happy to be in D.C. Hell, after that hairy tear in the Benz, we were happy to be alive.

My brother Bruce was older and could read whatever he pleased. My little brother, Ross, and I made do with comic books, but never bought them. We were baseball crazed. Our money went into baseball cards. When we were small boys, Ross and I would trudge the three miles into town to buy baseball cards at the bus station. We loved the Middleburg of our youth when it was a sleepy Southern town of seven hundred. The main drag was lined with big shade trees, and we had two hardware stores. Now, the little hamlet is packed with trendy boutiques and tourists.

My father, Don MacKenzie, was an avid outdoorsman. He taught us to hunt, and fish, and ride our feisty Shetland ponies. Dad made sure we knew the name of every creature in the forest. When he took us canoeing, he'd whisper, "See that woodpecker. That's a pileated woodpecker."

Dad was quite the naturalist compared to our down-home local folk. The country people couldn't distinguish a honey bee from a yellow jacket. Everything of that ilk was "a bee." And "a bee" was liable to get in your "cold slaw."

"Gall danged bee!" Mrs. Barker would shout as her trusty flyswatter smacked the dickens out of any insect that blundered into her bus station newsstand.

Everything to Mrs. Barker was "a bee." A woolly mammoth could frolic through town, but if it strayed into her newsstand, it was fair game. I liked Mrs. Barker. She combined the grace of an ox with the charm of a venomous reptile.

One day, when Ross and I were loitering at the newsstand, we discovered *Mad Magazine*. *Mad* was more risqué than any comic book. We huddled together and snuck a long, sniggering peek.

"Does your mother know you look at them books?" croaked Mrs. Barker in her jaybird twang.

We guiltily returned the magazine to its rack and hotfooted it out of there before Mrs. Barker mistook one of us for "a bee."

“Does your mother know you look at them books?” alerted me to the fact that certain books were taboo. I’d heard Brigitte Bardot described as “sexy,” so I thought “sexy” meant cleavage. Cleavage gave me erections before I knew what they were. Girls my age produced the same effect.

One place I got to see lots of cleavage was on the covers of paperback books at Fluornoy’s Rexall Pharmacy in Middleburg. Fluornoy’s had an old-fashioned soda fountain where on a hot summer day we would enjoy a cherry smash or a chocolate marshmallow sundae. If my Uncle Burr was in town, we might even have a banana split.

The paperbacks at the drugstore were enticing. They cost fifty cents and sported lurid covers. It didn’t matter what the book was about. It could be Perry, the Squirrel. The cover would feature busty squirrel tramps in a wanton pose, flanked by randy male squirrels. The background sketches would depict scenes of squirrel depravity. “Rodents From Hell,” the cover would tout.

The cover of James Baldwin’s novel, *Another Country* depicts a straight white couple gazing at the Manhattan skyline. The interracial couple in the book would’ve caused a furor in my hometown. Repression was the order of the day. Even the airwaves were segregated. My brother Bruce had “race records” by Little Richard. Little Richard wore make-up and screamed like a crazy woman. We white kids weren’t allowed to buy his records, and Christian radio stations wouldn’t play them. If we wanted to hear “Long Tall Sally,” we had to buy the Pat Boone sanitized version.

Young men in my day didn’t gun down their teachers and fellow students. We didn’t play Doom or listen to music that degrades women and extols murder. We were God-fearing souls who believed in the traditional values of our Founding Fathers. We worked our fingers to the bone, keeping America great. And when we were weary, we rested. We were doers. We didn’t sit around feeling sorry for ourselves. We were too busy getting wasted and nailing chicks.

We were the Baby Boomers—and we went boom boom all night long, brother. We didn’t need Viagra. We had a ball, and made sure our

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women went home with a smile. They couldn't walk or talk, but they could smile.

Here's to you, gentle reader. May you smile, too, when you read this, and remember the Boomers, whose lives outshone the stars in that magic frisson of Flower Power... the Sixties.

CHAPTER

1

Squeak from the Baby Corridor

When my cats aren't happy, I'm not happy. Not because I care about their mood but because I know they're just sitting there thinking up ways to get even.

—Percy Bysshe Shelley

I NEVER HAD MY RAP DOWN WITH CHICKS, so when I started getting lucky, it came as a surprise.

I went to military school when I was thirteen. While my friends were off to prep school, I flunked the eighth grade and wound up at Randolph-Macon Academy in Front Royal, Virginia.

When it came time to go away to school, I was assured that life away from home would be fun, like pony club, only I would spend the night. Oh, the new friends I'd make, and the jokes we'd share!

I still remember that first chaotic day at Randolph-Macon. Dad helped me carry my luggage up to my room. Then, he and Mom kissed me goodbye and drove off, praying they'd done the right thing for their darling boy.

What a shock it was that first morning when I shambled to breakfast with three hundred sleepy Sasquatches. Instead of chumming about with the chaps in *Chariots of Fire*, I found myself locked in Alcatraz with the cast of *Sling Blade*.

Still a child, I naturally brought toys with me. My favorite was an electric football game that vibrated and sent the players helter-skelter. The power was turned off at taps, so I consoled myself with blocking out plays in the dark. It was a lonely time.

I was the smallest boy—too small for an M1 Garand, so they issued me an old bolt-action Krag. The Krag—the U.S. Model 1898 Krag-Jorgensen—was the rifle that Atticus Finch used to dispatch the mad dog in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

I was known as “the Mexican hairless” and hazed in the shower. I tried hiding out with the swim team so I could shower in my bathing suit. That dodge worked at first. But we had a mean senior who threatened us with a GI shower if we didn’t shower on a daily basis.

Our tormentor went room to room just before taps. I could hear him coming down the hall, asking the first-year “rats” if they’d “had a shower.” I would be reading my Bible with an angelic look when he peered through the door. This foiled him, or so I thought. One night he stopped and stared at me, sucking his teeth.

“MacKenzie,” he drawled, “did you take a shower today?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Who saw you?” he demanded flatly.

“Butch did,” I replied, my heart thudding away.

I listened intently as he went across the hall to Butch’s room to verify my story. When I heard Butch confirm he’d seen me in the showers, I breathed a sigh of relief. Butch Smith was a benevolent soul from Georgia, and I showered when he did. The instant I saw Butch in his bathrobe, I frantically peeled off my uniform.

The older cadets were a terror. The “rat” system empowered them to employ torture. One Saturday morning two of them dangled me by my ankles down a third-floor laundry chute while full bags of laundry whizzed past.

For us, there was no privacy, least of all in the head. The johns had no doors, and you let it all hang out in the showers.

The sight of so many naked boys all in a row was too much for our French teacher, Captain Irving Nightingale. “Nightie,” or “Irv the

Perv,” should’ve been singing “Where the Boys Are” with Connie Francis.

And he loved the showers. Wiping steam from his Coke-bottle glasses, Nightie would flounce down the line of cadets, squinting at tadgers. Then, he would call out a name and gape at each one as though he expected it to reply. The older boys used to mock him by holding theirs and making them talk, like Señor Wences. It was outrageously funny, and we laughed poor Nightie out the door in a panic.

Cadets fell out when they fainted. But I was the only idiot anyone could remember who had fainted at Federal Inspection in full dress uniform in front of Pentagon brass. I was carried to the infirmary, where I put down a story about having weak kidneys. No one bought it, least of all our school nurse, Mrs. Dove Zunk.

“Zunkie” was a world-weary pug with a puss like an angry cabbage. Her hair looked like someone took a can of spray paint and ruined a perfectly good hedgehog. Zunk was World War Two surplus, like much of the staff. Only Mrs. Kennedy, the librarian, was different. She was a Spanish-American War relic, like my bolt-action Krag rifle.

Our school physician, Dr. Blum, was a squirmy old codger with outsized hands and feet, like a character in an R. Crumb cartoon. Dr. Blum made his rounds every day after breakfast. I sat up in bed as he put a cold stethoscope on my chest.

“You’re exhausted, young man. Aren’t you sleeping?”

I broke down in tears. I couldn’t stay awake through mess three. When I put my head on my plate, one of the redneck faculty wives conked me with a serving spoon.

“Stay in bed. Get some rest now, Douglas.”

“Okay,” I managed feebly.

“What’s that you’re reading?”

“*Another Country*,” I said, “by James Baldwin.”

Blum took wire-rimmed spectacles from his timeworn suit pocket. I think he had on the very same pinstripes the day Hitler bombed Antwerp.

“What’s it about?” he asked pleasantly.

“It’s the story of a Negro homosexual who kills himself.”

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Dr. Blum cringed. He put my book down like it was a dead snake. “You’re going to poison your mind,” he warned sternly.

I was sipping my orange juice one morning when Nurse Zunk arrived. To my chagrin, the infirmary had drained of its real patients, exposing a tidal pool of screw-offs, notably me and Len Montalbano. Lenny was a jovial Italian kid with long eyelashes and a Roman nose.

“Tell Zunk you have the runs,” advised Lenny.

“Why would I do that?”

“So she doesn’t give you an enema.”

Before I could reply, Lenny sprang out of bed and scurried to the safe haven of the bathroom.

“Breakfast in bed is not an occupation,” declared Nurse Zunk sourly.

“No, it’s an avocation,” I said wearily.

I should’ve kept my mouth shut. The last thing I needed was a slanging match with a charwoman.

“MacKenzie,” she drawled, huffing her bosom like a spinnaker, “when you get out of that shower, I’m gonna give you an enema.”

“But I don’t need an enema,” I pleaded pathetically.

Arguing with medical staff is as futile as trying to beat up a cop.

“You get in that shower,” ordered Zunk, who had the bedside manner of Zyklon B.

Lenny was suave. I was so twitchy, my school nickname was “Lizard.”

“What are we gonna do, Lenny?”

Lenny didn’t answer. He smiled inscrutably and went padding off in his flip-flops.

Lenny was the prince of the flip-flop long before Jimmy Buffett. The flip-flop is an important bit of kit. Essentially a rubberized member of the sandal family, the flip-flop endows its wearer with the cachet of a couch potato. Folks get out of the way when they hear the approach of flip-flops. That’s because they respect the fact that the flip-flop wearer might be carrying an adult beverage.

I waited for Lenny for what seemed hours. Then, there he was,

with a big smile on his face. He was carrying something, but I couldn't make out what it was. It turned out to be a brace of single-shot, disposable enemas.

"You won't believe what I told Zunk," he said, laughing. "I told her we were both shy about our bodies and that we'd be much more comfortable if we gave each other the enemas rather than have her do it."

"What did she say?"

He beamed triumphantly. "She bought it."

What a break! I breathed a sigh of relief as Lenny took each enema and squirted it into a big potted palm.

I didn't want to leave the infirmary. I was quite content to loll in bed, reading novels. But I couldn't sleep late, thanks to the idiot buglers who blew reveille at six-forty a.m.

I hated all the marching and endless drilling in the heat and humidity. I was also painfully homesick. I wanted to sleep in my own bed with my border collie, Shep. Shep was the sweetest dog. If he heard me crying, he would come up from under the bed and console me by licking my face.

Boarding schools make sure you never have a free moment. We stayed busy, cleaning our rifles or watching army training films about how to lance a boil or treat a comrade with a sucking chest wound.

Boarding school makes you fend for yourself. It gives you a leg up on your peers because you're thrown into the fray at an earlier age.

Boarding school instills discipline. You learn to take orders from dullards, and you learn to like it. You're the new boy, and you want to fit in. Only your new-boy status makes you stand out like Quasimodo in *Swan Lake*. Yet you fend off the jibes and the homesickness because you have to. You learn to adapt, and it makes you a better man.

Boarding school is where you learn to live like a leper and scrounge like a beggar. If you can survive boarding school, you can survive anything. Nuclear winter will be a snap. And you'll wear the appellation "human vulture" like it's the *Croix de Guerre*.

Life was tough. The second month of my first year—1962—saw

the Cuban Missile Crisis. Nuclear war seemed imminent. Then, in 1963, President Kennedy was shot dead in Dallas.

Jack Kennedy was our neighbor in Middleburg; his wife, Jackie Bouvier, had gone to Holton-Arms with my sister, Gail. The First Lady also foxhunted with Dad when he was a Master of The Middleburg Hunt.

One Sunday I sat behind President Kennedy in church. He was with his daughter, Caroline, and to me he looked like a movie star. I usually went to the Episcopal Church, but I went to mass that morning—at the community center—because my best chum, Ricky Patch, was the altar boy and I'd spent the night at his house.

It was exciting seeing President Kennedy, although, I must confess, I was a Nixon man—so much so, I had captained the Hill School debate team for Ike's beleaguered vice president.

Nixon lost the election, but we won the debate thanks to the quick wit of GOP classmate, David Barrows. Following the Democrats' impassioned recounting of Jack Kennedy's heroics in the South Pacific, David riposted with, "What does *swimming* have to do with being President of the United States?"

The audience roared and cast their votes for our Republican warhorse, who took the school election by a wide margin.

My third year at Randolph-Macon was hell. My brother Bruce committed suicide the day before my sixteenth birthday. Bruce was twenty-three. He'd graduated from Princeton, and he taught French for a year at St. Mark's in Dallas. Then, mostly to please Dad, he enrolled in law school at the University of Virginia. Bruce died in his dorm room from a mixture of alcohol and sleeping pills.

Ross and I refused to believe that Bruce could have taken his own life. Then, Dad read us the suicide note and described how Bruce's last cigarette had burned his fingers.

Up to this point, we had no indication that anything was wrong. My sister Gail confirmed that Bruce had shared some of his morbid ideations with her, but it never went any further than that. We buried Bruce in Rock Creek Cemetery. Ross and I wore our RMA uniforms.

It was the darkest day of our lives.

After the funeral, Ross and I were at home with one of Bruce's friends as we broke down Bruce's closet. "Bruce was a 'queer,'" the friend confided.

Ross and I were speechless. Being gay in 1964 ranked below being a communist or a cop killer. Gays in the movies dutifully bumped themselves off by the last reel. The only "good faggot was a dead faggot."

If Bruce had hung on a little longer, he would've felt the liberating Zeitgeist of the Sixties. Gay Pride was just around the corner.



Hunt Meet

Millicent MacKenzie with our friend and neighbor, Freddie Warburg (1949)



Dad, Don MacKenzie, (left) at "Journey's End," Middleburg, Virginia, with Daniel Cox Sands, MFH, the Middleburg Hunt. Mr. Sands, horse racing and fox hunting luminary, also known as Mr. Middleburg, donated Glenwood Park race course to the area. (January, 1949)



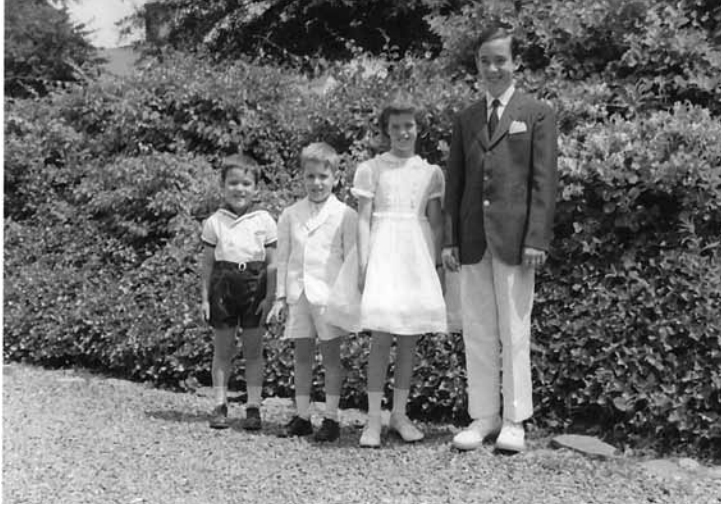
Our family home, "Journey's End," Middleburg, Virginia



Doug MacKenzie, left, at age 2 (1950)

*Mom and Dad, below, at The Middleburg
Hunt Ball (1949)*





*The MacKenzie Clan, inset (l-r), Ross, Doug, Niki and Bruce
"Journey's End" (1953)*

*Foxcroft Pony Club, above, Millicent MacKenzie with sons, Doug on "Little Better,"
and Ross on "Penny MacKenzie" (1953)*



The Hill School Debate Team, inset, Doug MacKenzie, debate captain for Nixon, squares off with Jeanne Moon, captain for Kennedy (1960)

President John F. Kennedy, above, leaving Mass at the Middleburg Community Center (February, 1963) (photo by Howard Allen)



*Doug MacKenzie wins the Prize Composition in the first grade,
accepting the award from Miss Anne Gochmauer,
Hill School, Middleburg, Virginia (1954)*



Doug MacKenzie, top, first-year rat at RMA (1962)

My dog, "Shep," inset, at "Journey's End" (1964)

Don MacKenzie, President of the Middleburg National Bank, above, shown here at work.

Dad gave his opinion of the town in Sports Illustrated magazine (February 11, 1963)

"Take away the horse and do you know what's left? Nothing."