David Joseph Marcou has authored 100-plus books, including this playscript (1720, AOFOP) and his 25-volume, award-winning “Spirit of America” series. He’s graduated Franklin, St. James, and Aquinas Schools, and the Universities of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Missouri. His writings have been twice-nominated for Pulitzers – for his La Crosse Tribune op-eds and for his play “Remembering Davy Crockett”. His photo-books have been twice-nominated for POYi’s. His credits include in Smithsonian Mag, Royal Photographic Society Journal, British Journal of Photography, New York Times, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, and Business Korea. David’s works are housed in South Korea’s National Assembly Library, Britain’s National Portrait Gallery, various Smithsonian Institution (SI) Archives in Washington, DC, and the Museum of Modern Art Library in New York City, among many. In 2011-2012, two of David Marcou’s 2008 Presidential Campaign photos were on display in the SI National Museum of American History Archives Center’s group-show curated by SI Archivist David Haberstich, “Gift of the Artist”. Mr. Marcou’s son, Matthew, is an Army Special Ops Combat Medic veteran and stellar university Engineering student married to Jessica Amarnek Marcou, a successful artist and university teacher.

Cover photo: Front of Marcou House at 1720 Prospect Street, La Crosse, WI, photographed by David Joseph Marcou ca. 2007.

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1720, and Our Family of Prospects –
A Reflective Play Written/Revised by, and Copyright 2016+ of, David Joseph Marcou.

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Playwright’s Preface:

After many, many books and 12 earlier plays, including one Pulitzer nominee, on Feb. 3, 2016, I started writing this play, about a place in time that’s likely meant more to me and my family than any other place on earth. It was where my siblings and I were raised; and it was the first and only house my parents ever owned (for 60 years).

My mom wondered what my new project was, and I told her I’d written a play that may be even funnier than my Irish play, and this time it’s an American play. She asked if Hillary and the Donald are in it, because if it’s funny and they’re in it, it would be an insane play. I said I don’t know if they’ll be in it but that any comic play has to be a bit insane to work. This play is just different-enough with enough humor to have positive effects via the presentation of its characters and ideas.

Our family’s home on Prospect Street (1720) and the people who grew up in close connection with it, are good subjects for the stage. My brother Dan and I were talking via phone one day (early 2016), and Dan asked, “Just how would somebody write about 1720 Prospect Street? So much happened there, so much that was pretty unbelievable.” I didn’t tell him then I had such a play in mind. We all felt we had prospects in those days, and we and our extended family still do.

Here is my attempt to write about my family’s and my ideas about that little yellow house on Prospect Street, the house Mr. Douglas sold my parents ca. 1954 when its siding was brown-painted wood -- soon-enough my parents had modern yellow siding put on, and we boys proceeded to crack a pane in it once with our baseball -- and which my brother Tom and his wife, Joy, bought from Mom after Dad’s death in 2015 and put up for sale after making some improvements.

Some details in this play aren’t precisely as they happened to the Marcous in actual time, but those that have been condensed into telling scenes should give viewers clearer ideas about what has made our family tick – great character, love, duress, humor, stamina, prayer, faith, hope, and lots of all those things. They say “character is destiny”; I hope the character of each family member in this play rings true. And I hope readers/viewers of this play very much enjoy the life suggested by it, where we lived, a block from the Burlington Train yards and its Que Restaurant -- our branch of the Marcou Family, and the people most influencing us and affected by us then, surely enjoyed living it.

David Joseph Marcou, Playwright, Creation of This Playscript: February-June 2016.
All of this play’s actions take place at or immediately around the home of David A. and Rose C. Muskat Marcou in La Crosse, WI. Events have been dramatically condensed and simplified, so a family’s life of 60 years at the 1720 Prospect Street address can be decently suggested in a modest number of scenes. Décor, photos, clothing, and furniture change a bit from scene to scene, but the essence of the Marcou family’s home remains present and positive—enough even in the final scene, mainly because the people at that address long loved that place, and what it still stands for. Every family should have at least one such address in their lives; this play offers one Marcou’s take on 1720, and our family of prospects.

Scene 1: Dawn, 5:58 AM, a train whistle blows, a Tuesday, ca. 1964. A handsome-looking woman about age 34 makes her way into the kitchen of a house on Prospect St., La Crosse. She is Rose, the wife of a meat-cutter and mom of seven kids. She turns on a light and the radio; Paul Robeson is singing “Old Man River”; Rose listens a moment, then changes the station to Hank Williams’s “Your Cheatin’ Heart”. Rose brings in a newspaper from the front-door, and retrieves some orange juice from the refrigerator for the table. Also, she cooks some scrambled eggs and sausage. Msgr. John Paul recites the Angelus prayer on the radio at 6AM (St. Francis’s Prayer for Peace). Then, Milo Knutson comes on, a former La Crosse Mayor doing his daily, early AM broadcast from the State Capitol in Madison.

Milo: Good morning, La Crosse. I’m Milo Knutson at the State Capitol in Madison, and this is news. (He mentions the US military’s involvement in a then-little-known-place called Vietnam, and follows that with some news from the State Legislature and its impact on La Crosse. Rose turns the radio off, as her oldest child, Davy, 14, enters from sleeping on the front sun porch.)

Davy: G’morning, Mom. How are things today? Any good news?

Rose: Not much, Davy. Some political stuff, and news from Asia I’d guess. How are you today?

Davy: Not bad. What’s for breakfast?

Rose: I’ll get your brothers and sisters up; we’ll have scrambled eggs and sausage with toast.
Davy: Sounds good. (A girl enters, Diane, age 8, fifth child of seven, and oldest of three girls.)

Diane (softly): Mom, are you going to iron my dress or should I?

Rose: You can do it, Diane. And wake up your sisters and the others.

Diane: Okay, Mom. Except Davy’ll have to wake Dad up. As we all know, Dad got in v-e-r-y late last night. G’morning, Davy.

Davy: G’morning, Diane. I usually iron my own shirt, but could you do that too? I’ll wake up Dad.

Diane: Sure.

Davy: Thanks. It’s by the ironing board. Don’t burn any holes in it; it’s my favorite shirt.

Diane: Oh, the red paisley one. Maybe I should burn a hole in it, so you’ll get a new favorite one.

Davy: Now, now, Sis, it’s a good-enough shirt, just a little different is all.

Diane: Just kidding.

Rose: Davy, start waking up your Dad. That’ll probably take a while, but start now, while the iron’s plenty hot.

(Davy heads into his parents’ bedroom. His mom usually sleeps in a recliner in the living room due to Dad’s snoring, which can be heard as Davy opens the bedroom door. Then, “Hut-Set-Brawl” can be heard being softly sung; it gets louder due to the lack of response from the bed’s occupant. Finally, Davy’s dad, Dave Sr., can be heard, saying: “Quit tickling my feet, Davy. You know I’m not ticklish.”

Davy: You may not be ticklish, but that old song seems to do the trick every time anyhow, and I figure you’ll notice the tickling too, even tho it might not make you laugh, like it does the rest of us. Probably you, Uncle Ed, and that Silver Star winner-buddy of yours, Frank Devine, have sung that old song in bars for years. You’ve got to get to work, Dad, after you drop some of us off at school. Mom’s making breakfast.
Dave: Don’t want any breakfast, just more sleep.

Davy: Well, Mom has some coffee for you; that’ll help get ya started. The Boulevard Foods meat department awaits. (He pulls the covers off his dad, who moans mightily.)

Dave: Okay, okay. A man knows when he’s not meant to get any sleep.

(A pants belt is heard jangling, and shoes are being put on. Davy re-enters the kitchen, as more of his siblings drift in, Dan first, third oldest.)

Danny: Mom, do you have a quarter? I forgot my lunch yesterday, and it was heck to pay at lunch time. Had to borrow a sandwich from Mikey. And he only had one.

Rose: Yes, Son, here it is. Give Mikey fifty cents, in fact. I knew you’d forgotten it the minute you went up the street. Sit down, and I’ll get breakfast for you.

Danny: Thanks a bunch, Mom.

(A little one cries.)

Rose: Oh, there’s Mary Kate. I’ll be right back, as soon as I get her bottle to her. (Grabs simmering baby bottle and goes, first turning rest of stove-heated foods way low.)

Danny (sadly): That’s okay, Mom. I didn’t want breakfast anyway. (But he spies some homemade cinnamon rolls with chocolate frosting on a shelf platter, and swipes two.) O-o-o-m-m, good. No wonder I don’t always eat breakfast around here, or at least that’s what mom says, because once, just once, I didn’t eat some strange mixture of oatmeal and mint jelly she made. The appetizers and desserts keep me pretty busy.

Denny (second oldest, entering): Say, Danny, you shouldn’t be eating up cinnamon rolls around here the way you do. Some people actually like them for dessert, not the main course.

Danny: You should talk. You steal chocolate chip cookies like there’s no tomorrow, when Mom makes them.

Denny: Well, you’re talking chocolate chip cookies – the cream of the crop in an otherwise vast wasteland.
Danny: Denny, you don’t know what you’re missing. Kids at school give three weeks’ allowance to get a couple of Mom’s cinnamon rolls. Mikey practically kills for them.

Denny: I suppose. It’s just that the boiled ham sandwiches we get a couple times a week draw other kids like flies too. I love boiled ham generally. Maybe I should carry a fly-swatter with me in the classroom. What do you think?

Danny: Oh, Mikey likes those too. But if you had a flyswatter, some wiseacre would probably steal it and sell it. Some of the kids are pretty slippery that way. They can’t get money any other route. Billy Debettinges and Jimmy Cranshaw, for instance. They’re real little shysters. Why I’ll bet they’d sell their mother’s best clothes for rags, then steal them and sell them back to her. And both of them still pick their nose sometimes; I’d guess we only did that when we were 6-years-old. Gosh, what’s this world coming to?

Denny: I forgot about Mikey, and Billy and Jimmy, too. How could I do that? They’re so much guardian angel and little devil in the three of them, as to make for a kind of, well, war of worlds, heaven and hell I mean. Funny how life works, though. Billy and Jimmy help Mikey like best buddies. Crazy match up, because Mikey’s so innocent, and the other two, well, they’re so incredibly guilty, but crazier things have happened in this world God must have made.

(Rose re-enters kitchen.)

Rose: Danny, as long as your dad will be on “The Throne” a while longer reading his ungodly sports section, why don’t you ask him if he wants coffee and orange juice with breakfast or just coffee? And tell him not to fall in with the scoring statistics, because then he’ll only have the shortest of time to fetch himself out and drive most of you to school and himself to work.

Danny: Sure, Mom. (He ducks into his dad’s bedroom to get to the bathroom door; knocking can be heard softly.)

Rose: Denny, are boiled ham sandwiches okay for lunch again or do you want peanut butter?

Denny: I love both, but I haven’t had peanut butter in a while. Can you make me two of them and cut them into quarters, Mom?
Rose: I think I’ll make everyone’s peanut butter today, even though peanut butter can be binding – you all like them and they’re nutritious too. Besides lunch meat is expensive, except for big baloney, which not everyone here likes, and I can only give you one boiled ham sandwich whenever you have them; I’d guess most of you have had your share of jelly sandwiches for this month too.

Danny (rushing in): Mom, Dad cut himself shaving. He’s bleeding, well, not like a stuck pig, but pretty bad anyway.

Rose (grabbing two ice cubes from a freezer tray, she puts them in a wash cloth and goes through the bedroom to the bathroom): Denny, you’ll need to make and pack your own sandwiches. Your dad needs some help right now.

Denny: Yep, Mom. I hope Dad’s okay. (He makes sandwiches, and wraps them in wax paper for bagging.)

Davy (enters wearing his red paisley shirt and a pair of tan pants): Denny, Dad did it again. Mornings when he’s not wide awake right away, he can cut his face like one hell of a boxer. And he’s been in a ton of fights so far too; maybe that’s why his drinking nights go fairly long. That, and maybe he has a girlfriend or two.

Denny: Dad’s always been a flirt, and a fighter. That’s what gets him through so many tough scraps, including the night he fell down drunk on our snowy Prospect Street, and Mom found him making angels in snow with the luck of the angels, who kept traffic away from him that night till Mom rescued him. His pack of Lucky Strikes was sitting on his chest when she found him. I just know I don’t ever want to be on the receiving end of one of his punches. It’s bad enough when we get it with the belt or an open hand. But clenched fists just don’t sound healthy.

Davy: I know it sounds strange, but spanking us is one way Mom and Dad have of letting us know they love us. They’ve never ever beaten us to within an inch of our lives (Denny gives him a look); well, maybe once or twice. But I heard American soldiers are in a place called Vietnam; it looks like someone is going to take a beating pretty soon there; let’s hope it’s not us. I know a girl named Linda from St. James who’s a freshman at Logan; she has a boyfriend, Terry, who just left for Vietnam; something about troop-trainers. I hope he is okay, b/c Linda and Terry are both nice.

Denny: Yeah, you’re right about that. Linda’s really nice.
Davy: You know, Denny, sometimes I think this old world ends when it ends for some people, while the rest of the world goes on living forever somehow, somewhere, having a grand old time, forgetting basically about those who went before. If I can do anything good in my life, it’s to preserve the memories of those people who have gone before, and us too, especially as to the good we’ve all done. (Kidding.) Of course, I’ll change my mind for the highest bidder, like everyone else, at least until I make my first million. 

(Lynnie enters, age 5, with the ability, like the others in the Marcou family, to talk keenly if, for her, in a high voice.)

Lynnie: Davy, is breakfast ready? I’ve got to be to kindergarten early today. Maybe Mom forgot.

Davy: Dad cut himself shaving, and Mom’s tending to him. She has some eggs and sausage warm for us on the back burner. (Davy dishes up some for Lynn and Dennis. Then, Danny enters kitchen and dishes up some for himself.)

Lynnie: I like eggs and sausage. As soon as I’m done eating, I’ll go to Linda’s house and walk to school with her.

Denny: That Linda has really become a good friend of you and your sisters.

Lynnie: Yeah, I really like Linda. She’s funny and she likes the same things I do.

(Diane enters with ironed clothes.)

Diane: Davy, you’ve got your shirt and pants. Here are some things for the others. (Putting them on an empty chair by table.)

Davy: Thanks, Diane.

Rose (returning): Your dad doesn’t need ice now; the bleeding’s stopped, thank goodness.

Davy: I hope Dad’s okay. Diane, you aren’t still feeling bad about him scolding you the other day for not waiting in the car when he was running errands with you girls? Errands that were delayed by his stopping for a few brewskies at the North Star.
Diane: Well, I did feel bad a while, especially when he shouted, “Diane, I thought I told you to wait in the car!” But then I thought, why should I feel bad? I wasn’t stopping him from doing his errands, just shortening his waterhole break.

Rose: Dad’s still in the bathroom, so be ready for a quick ride to school after he is liberated from his favorite room, you older kids. Lynn will walk with Linda to Franklin for her half-day of school. I’ll be here today with Mary Kate.

Diane: Mom, you’re a rock. Our family is a good family, and it all starts with you, and Daddy. Even if we’re not kings and queens like in England, we stick together and do good things. And that throne Dad sits on every morning is as great as anyone’s. He can’t help it if he spends more time tooting on his than most people. And he helps our town’s newspaper do great, to pass the time.

Denny: Yep, that’s right, Diane. If anyone wants advice on how to toot up a storm or run a newspaper sports section, all they have to do is ask Dad, and he provides anytime proof of how to knock ‘em dead.

Rose: Kids, we’re running late this morning. (Very loudly.) Everyone listen up – Get into the kitchen and eat; bring all your things and get ready to leave for school and work. We don’t have all the time in the world, but we’ve got enough, so get in here pronto! Dad’s got to be to work by 8, and all of you have to make it to school before then.

(The kids, except Mary Kate, all gather in the kitchen by fits and starts, including Tommy, fourth oldest of seven and youngest boy, who is very short, cute, quick-footed, and non-stop witty; a couple more grab a bite of breakfast, and chat too. They look a motley crew, but they’re the Marcou Motley Crew and proud of it.)

Denny: Do we look okay, Mom? Or do we have to do this whole thing all over again? Oh god, some of us have to use the bathroom after Dad is done in there!

Rose: You all look fine-enough. (Shouting.) But where is your dad? Dave – get in here! We’ve got to get you and the kids off to school and work. Boulevard IGA’s meat department is not going to sell any meat today if you don’t get moving. So, let’s go, Daddy-O!

Dave Sr. (shouting from bathroom): We’ll make it in-time, Ma, don’t worry. It’s a piece of cake.
Danny: Oh, you know, Dad, Ma. He always wants to wait till the last minute when it comes to being any place WE should be on-time. When he wants to be their on-time for HIMSELF, it’s a whole different story. He gets there with bells on and everything buttoned-up, even ten minutes early once in a while I’ve been told, ten whole minutes early! How’s that for crackin’ the whip? He really makes that old Chevy fly, when he wants to.

Lynnie: Yeah, Daddy likes to get himself there on-time, even if he speeds. It’s the rest of us that get late.

Tommy: Yep, that’s Dad all right. Flying like a big bomber, dropping his bombs on all the little kids, while he takes aim at the awards. He’ll probably get, what do they call it, the Extinguished Flying Cross. I’d like to get one of those myself someday, if I ever get my wings, and except for the extinguished part. (Tommy turns on the radio, EXTRA LOUD; it’s playing “The Wanderer”. His mom gives him such a look that all eyes are on her; Tommy jerks his body violently and says “Yikes”. He turns the radio off.)

Rose: Tommy, if you ever do that again, I’ll do what Sister Robertina did to your big brother Davy when he was in fourth grade. (Tommy looks scared.) Do you remember what he said she did to him?

Tommy (quiver, half-acting): Y-e-e-s-s, M-a-a-a. Davy smarted off to Sister Robertina, who was only 4 feet 10 and 75 pounds. Davy said she grabbed him by the collar and lifted his butt to the ceiling, ripping the top button on his favorite old shirt. You didn’t sew it back on to punish him for smarting off to Sister in the first place. I don’t want to risk being choked to death by you or a nun either, like Davy almost was by Sister Robertina, and I don’t want to lose my best shirt, that’s for sure. (Looking at his mom with puppy-dog eyes.) I’m sorry, Mommy. I shouldn’t have turned the radio on super-loud in the middle of breakfast.

Rose: You’re forgiven if never forgotten, Tommy, but be a good boy and eat your breakfast. (He sits down, and eats his breakfast at speeds never before seen by human beings.)

Lynnie: Look at Tommy fly, Everybody. He’s faster than Johnny McDougle runnin’ from Sheriff Bob Black after stealing little Timmy Dikeman’s bike. Never seen anything like it!
Tommy: Shut up, Lynnie, and eat. We need to get to school on-time, or I’ll get double-detention again. And Sister Flatiron Flavia REALLY ENJOYS playing that game with me.

Rose: What have I told you about calling nuns by nicknames, Tommy? You’d better quit that or you’ll have a nickname, too -- Dead Before Your Time Marcou. Now, Everyone, eat, and keep quiet!!! (It is actually quiet a moment as everyone eats.)

Tommy (finished eating, washing it down with milk): Say, Mom, I’ve always wondered: How are babies made? There are a lot of us in this family, and we were all babies to start with. Any ideas would help.

Rose: Tommy, sometime I’ll tell all of you how the babies in this family were made, but not now. It’s a family secret. Just put it down to the stork, for now.

Tommy (coyly): Oh, Mom, you really need to tell us all about that soon. Otherwise, we might get the wrong ideas about things. If it has anything to do with girls mixing with boys, Wow! -- it could really set us back.

Rose (dishes up more food to him): Here, have some seconds, Tommy. (He looks perplexed an instant, then gobbles that helping down too.) Anyone else still hungry? (Everyone passes, still eating mainly.)

Danny (changes his mind): Oh, Mom, maybe I will have another sausage and slice of toast.

Rose (retrieves seconds for Danny): I hope that holds you a couple hours, Danny, at least until your bag lunch at noon.

Danny: Don’t know about that, Mom. I’ve often thought it’d be nice if they took a tea break at school, in the middle of the morning, for extra food and, not tea, but Pepsis and chips.

Rose: Don’t count on that happening anytime soon, Danny. The Franciscans are good teachers, but they crimp on expenses. Tight as a drum, they are.

Danny: You’re telling me, Mom. My stomach growls like one of those Bengal tigers every mid-morning.
Denny: Don’t you think, Danny, the rest of us wish those nuns would open up their pocketbooks a little more too? I wish they’d take us to Wisconsin Dells every Friday, instead of the boy servers going to Milwaukee and the Dells once a summer only. And not a single female either on that bus heading to and from Milwaukee for a Braves game. What a waste of good seats, and my good deodorant and mouthwash, too. Usually, we go to Milwaukee and the Dells when cousin Stevey K. is staying with Grandma and Grandpa Marcou. I don’t mind my cousin too much, but it’s like Davy said once, he stays for TWO WHOLE WEEKS, and Grandma and Grandpa won’t let us near them then, though once I think I did go with Davy and Stevey to Copeland Field to watch a Little League game together, but don’t quote me on that. That was kinda fun.

Rose: Well, Denny, if there were females on-board for the Braves’ game, especially little girls, the parents would fear not only for the lives of their little girls, but for the lives of their whole families!

Tommy (with an impish grin): And why is that, Mommy?

Rose: Oh, you never stop, do you, Tommy? You’ll get that talking to earlier than you want, if you keep that line of questioning up. And my paddle might not be far away either; just keep it up and see.

Tommy: Sorry, Mom. You know how us boy wonders are – can’t keep our lippy lips shut.

Rose: That’ll be enough now, Tommy!

Tommy: Yes, Mom. As you say sometimes, “It’s better to be seen and not heard – even if you’re in the middle of an elephant stampede.”

Diane: Speaking of elephant stampedes – we’d better get crackin’ or there will be an elephant stampede out to Dad’s car, with little chance of surviving it, unless we all pray fast while we run.

Rose: Good point, Lady Di. All of you need to say a meal prayer right now. We all forgot that first thing this morning.

Tommy: I said mine under my breath, Mom. It may have been invisible and really quiet, but it got said. (His brothers and sisters all say, “Same here, Mom”, though most are lying through their teeth.)
Rose: Yes, yes, of course you all did, that’s why we’re all going to heaven someday. Thank the Lord for little favors and big wonders.

Denny: Mom, Sister Schenectady, or I mean, Sister Skelnia, said there actually is going to be a field trip next week – to the Channel 8 News Station. She’s got this idea we all want to be journalists. Why, I’ve never heard a more insane idea, but there it is, plain as day. And the girls are going with us. Course, it’s only a cross-town trip, not much danger there I’d guess. What do you think? Will you sign for me?

Rose: What makes you think I want any journalists in the family, though I did take a journalism class at Aquinas High. Sister Felice was my teacher and I didn’t write every day, but when I had an assignment, I always got inspired somehow, and wrote something very good. She gave me top grades. I did well in all my classes, even math and science. Sister Felice reminds me of Sister Valeria, Davy’s teacher in first grade, who made sure he did all his assignments when he was out of school five months with rheumatic fever. She even had his classmates make a group book for him to enjoy. Remember that, Davy? Construction paper, yarn for binding, penciling, and coloring.

Davy: Yes, Mom. That book was really nice, with Dick, Jane, and Spot their dog. The coloring was fun, and everyone added to it I guess. Sister Valeria was a nice nun. She was even pretty; I saw her without a hood once and she looked like any other nice-looking woman; kind of surprised me, because I thought they wore all that costume because they weren’t very good-looking to begin with. We did see her again, after she left St. James, at Grandma Muskat’s wake in Sparta a couple years ago. Maybe I’d even like to do some books myself someday, because she seemed very proud of her students, my friends, who did that book for me.

Rose: You don’t call her bonnet a hood; it’s a habit.

Denny: You said a mouthful, Mom. We know you did so well in high school, after moving to La Crosse from Grandma and Grandpa Muskat’s farm, that you helped Dad survive class-work, and that must have been a lot of extra work for you, a ton in fact. So can I go? I’ll even buckle down and be a better student. (Crosses his heart) Cross my heart and hope to die.

Rose: Well, I’ve got you pegged for the law, Son. Journalism??? Yes, you can go. You ought to keep the group on thin-ice with that sarcastic sense of humor. Don’t know where you get that from;
no one ELSE in this family is like that, right kids? (Several say: “Right, Mom. We’re never smartspastic.) Where do I sign?

Dennis (digging out a folded-up slip of paper from his pocket): Here you are, Mom. (She glances at it and signs.) Thanks a million. Maybe I’ll even land a seat on the bus next to the prettiest girl in class, Beth Blanding. She’s a sucker for a good set of legs, and that’s me all over again.

Rose: I knew there was some ungodly angle to your request. You just stay clear of little Beth Blanding on the bus. Do you hear me?

Dennis (half-lying): She’s not little, Mom; she’s taller than me, sort of thin but a little curvy, and has gorgeous red hair. I’ll do my best, though. (Under his breath.) But kids can’t always be held responsible for their actions.

Danny: Davy, what’s going on at Aquinas? You still out for freshman football?

Davy: Yes, but I’m about fifth string. A lot of rich kids in front of me. I’m not in the clique. Maybe I’m not even a good football player, though in grade school I was fast-enough that Ed Peaslee tripped me on purpose once, to keep me from an 80-yard touchdown. He caught me with five yards to go, the big behemoth, and broke my wrist. Chuck Liddell laughed about it.

Danny: Ed is a wily big guy, no doubt about it. Well, sometimes you have to be more sticktuitive than the clique, and a harder worker too. That’s what I heard on TV anyway. And you have to hope your broken bones heal quick too.

Davy: You’re probably right, Danny. I know I was sticktuitive-enough with Johnny McDougle last summer to finally take him at wrestling. I told him I was “getting wild” and I guess that scared him. Now Denny Behm is a different story; I can’t take him no matter how hard I try. I can take Jeff Ceason sometimes, if I can catch him. Jeff usually runs and gets a lethal weapon; but once I caught him on his snow hill and made him give. As for Dave Smith, he’s three years older than me and he’s strong as an ox. But I’ve got to focus at least as much on my studies as football. I’d like to go to college someday, and that will take a lot of hard work.

Danny: I’d like to go to school after high school too -- to be a police officer. I don’t know where I can go to school for that, but there must be at least as many schools in Wisconsin for police officer training as there are prisons in this state.

Davy: Good point. You’re doing okay in school, aren’t you?
Danny: Yeah, not great maybe, but decent. Some of my teachers expect me to be a straight-A student, because you get good grades, but I’m more the snake in the grass kind of student; I surprise the teachers with my brainpower when they least expect it. And Sister Slam-and-Jam (looking at his mom, saying “Sorry, Mom”), I mean Sister Cecilia, cut me some slack the other day when Jack Wittenberg and I got in a fight. I took Jack down with wrestling moves, not with punches to the head, and she respects that.

Rose: I think Sister Cecilia is a fine nun, and giving you a second chance makes sense. But keep working on your grades and stay in shape generally, and you just may be a good police officer someday.

Danny: Yeah, the time a couple years ago Dad punched me in the face when he’d been drinking makes me think wrestling and intelligent self-defense are the way to go generally. I’m glad the police officer who came here that night feels the same, and let me know that.

Denny: Danny’s a really good wrestler, Mom. Kids even call him “Dan the Man.” It makes even skinny old me think there’s a place for us kids who aren’t 6-foot-4 and 240 pounds. Of course, we do have our good looks to fall back on with the girls. (Chuckles emerge from the rest.) Somebody once told me I’d never make it through life just with my smile; but I do have a pretty nice smile, which I’ll still bet on in tight situations. (Flashes that smile.)

Rose: You are very skinny, Denny. I wish eating more would help, but you’ve got a high rate of metabolism, doctor says. You may be skinny all your life. Maybe skinny people are the wittiest.

Denny: Yeah, a high rate of me-table-and-me. I eat like a horse, Mom, but it just doesn’t stick much. Maybe I should start breaking into the Sweet Shop over-nights to eat as much ice cream and candy as I can stand, except I don’t like the penalties for knocking over grand establishments like the Sweet Shop.

Rose: Say, Everybody, time to get crackin’. Get in the bathroom anyone who has to yet, and finish dressing too; your dad’s in the bedroom now. Make it snappy. You’ve only a minute each to take care of that business and leave for school. Lynnie, are you set to pick up Linda?

Lynnie: Yes, Mommy, I am. I’ve even got bells and whistles on. (She whistles neatly, and rings a bell on her bookbag.)
Rose: Good. Make sure you two get home safely at noon, after your half-day. And be careful about strangers. Go ahead now. (Rose gives her a kiss.)

Lynnie: Bye, Mommy. Love you.

Rose: I love you too, sweetie.

(Tommy turns the radio back on, and it’s playing “The Lion Sleeps Tonight”, though not too loudly. Lights and music dim to nil.)
Scene 2: Mid-afternoon, June 5, 1972: The Marcous are just arriving back from a weekend in Fond du Lac. Davy is in Madison with his new wife, Ann; the rest of the Marcous come home to Prospect Street.

Rose: Well, first child married off yesterday in Fond du Lac and setting up apartment today in Madison; no honeymoon for them right now. I hope they’ll be happy. The Majeskas seemed nice enough. Ann is sharp as a tack and cute in her way. She looked nice in her white gown. I took some pictures.

Dave Sr.: Food at the reception was real good. Plenty of ham and scalloped potatoes, corn, and cake. Could have done without the green beans, though. The cake was my favorite.

Denny: Yeah, Dad, you’ve got the biggest appetite for sweets of anyone around. That’s something some of this family has inherited.

Rose: Yes, but your dad’s mother was diabetic, so your dad might become diabetic too, and that’s nothing to joke about.

Diane: Dad, do you have ten dollars for my St. James year book. I don’t like my picture in it, because I don’t like any pictures of me, but I need that book for the signatures I’ll get from my friends.

Dave Sr. (pulling a ten-spot from his wallet): Here you go, Sis. Knock ‘em dead!

Diane: Thanks, Dad. I really need that book.

Rose: Seems like there are a lot of readers in this family – from Dad with his sports sections, to the rest of us and our novels and histories. And of course the year books, too, because they come in handy, later on especially.

Tommy: Dad, do you have a ten-spot for me, too, just for my good looks.

Dave Sr.: Doubtful, Tommy, real doubtful. But I will give you five dollars to go get some ice cream cones for the family.

Danny: Ice cream cones sound great, Dad. (Dad gives Tommy a five-spot.)

Dad: Hustle on over, Tommy, but make sure Elsie at the Que gives you one of those special holders for them all.
Tommy: I know. I’ve done this a few times before.

Lynn: Mom, can Diane, Kate, and me have chocolate sauce on ours, because they’re really good that way?

Rose: Of course, Lynn. (She retrieves a bottle of chocolate sauce from the refrigerator.)

Kate: Yes, that’s the only way to eat vanilla ice cream, with chocolate sauce. Not too much, not too little, but just enough.

Diane: Mom, when will you take your wedding film in for processing? I want to see how terrible I look in the pictures, so I can warn Dave and Ann when they see them, that I always look bad in my pictures.

Rose: You do not look bad in your pictures, at least no worse than Tommy does when he poses for my pictures with his tongue stuck out.

Tommy: But Mom, that’s only for my BEST pictures. Usually I look really cool just by holding up the peace sign, sometimes backwards.

Rose: Yes, you and your backwards peace sign. It’s all the rage in Hollywood.

Denny: Well, at least Tommy’s conversant with all the rages today. He also likes girls, and who’d ever thought that was something we’d be involved with, right? Oh, I forgot, there are seven kids in this family!

Tommy: Yeah, Mom, we never had that talk about how babies are made. Any ideas now?

Dave Sr.: That’s enough from you, young man. I’d guess you’ve got plenty of ideas by now about how babies are made.

Tommy: But, Dad, I was just wondering about how you and Mom managed to have seven kids. We’re not rich, after all.

Dave Sr.: Rich in what counts, young man, rich in what counts. Now, be quiet. (Lights out.)

Rose: I’m glad the doctors have at last given you clearance to drive, after your heart surgery in April. I know you’ve missed it, and you can even start thinking about working a few hours again in a couple months.

Dave: Yeah, giving up smoking and drinking wasn’t easy; I always thought my Lucky Strikes kept me lucky, and the drinkin’, well that was with the guys. These days, I’ve got religion, a rosary every night with you. I’m feeling as fit as a fart in the middle of a fiddle. I hardly ever have shortness of breath any more, a sign I’m recovering, doctor says. Of course, doctors aren’t always right, but I hope mine is. I like a good meal, even with a little salt, sugar, and fat in it, but my heart doctor would have none of that last April, and you’re watching my diet like a hawk now too. Still, I’m glad you made me a hamburger for lunch. They are a lot easier to look at and taste better than oatmeal, which you’ve sworn I’ll be eating for breakfast the rest of my life. What a fate!

Rose: That’s right, and I hope liking it too. (Dave does a mock frown, then laughs.)

(Phone rings.)

Rose: Hello, Marcou residence. Oh, hi Dave. How’s Suk-Hee doing? I imagine she’s drunk more tea with honey than an old-style plantation owner. What? She’s had the baby?? Boy or girl? Boy? Well, what’s his name? Matthew Ambrose Marcou. Oh, that’s a fine name. (Motioning to her husband, saying: “The baby has the same middle name as you.) Congratulations! And give our best to Suk-Hee too, and a kiss to Matthew on the cheek. What’s that? You were there for the delivery. That’s exciting. Yes, your Matt was born on the first full day of the autumn equinox, when day and night are equal in length. So you say he’ll soon learn to both work and play hard. (Looking at Grandpa Dave across the table, smiling.) I don’t know where in the world little Matty gets that from. Oh, I do too, it runs in this family. What was that? You had picked out the name Michael, not Matt, but Suk-Hee gave you such a look when she was in labor when you said Michael, you went to the second name on your list? Sounds like the Green Bay Packers all over again; Vince Lombardi’s was the second name on the Packers’ list, but they asked him to be their coach anyway, and he said yes. The stuff of history!!

Dave Sr. (waving his hand at her): Say Hi from me, Rose, and Congratulations too. I’d break out some cigars, but I suppose my doctor and you would have fits.
Rose: Your dad says Hi and Congratulations, Son. Yes, we’ll be over to see the baby as soon as we can. We’ll be happy to have supper with you and your new family. Your dad just got medical clearance to drive again. We look forward to seeing you three. Keep everyone safe and happy there. Thanks for calling. Yes, we love you, Suk-Hee, and Matthew too. Good-bye for now. (Hangs up phone.)

Dave Sr.: Well, it’s about time she delivered. Ann never did that for young Dave in the seven years they were married; maybe that priest she was dating had something to do with that. He left the priesthood to marry her after the divorce; they have twins now. As for Davy’s new wife, Suk-Hee had so many false labors, I was beginning to think she had a pillow underneath her blouse and Davy was keeping her secret for her.

Rose: Now, Dave. Of course she was pregnant. When your son sees the delivery, there’s no doubt a child was born.

Dave Sr.: Well, it is nice to be a Grandpa again. And Matt’s a good name, like St. Matthew and some other good men too by that name. Ambrose is a good filler, as I know from experience.

Rose: Finish your burger, Dave. If you want an apple for dessert, you’ll need to eat up. (He eats up.)

Dave Sr.: Oh boy, an apple for dessert. I like apple pie better, with ice cream, but I guess that won’t be on the menu for a while. Not as long as my diabetes has me by the tail.

Rose: That’s for sure. (She clears away plates and silver, and sets a sliced apple on a napkin in front of Dave Sr.) You know, I doubted that Korean wife of Davy’s would turn out okay. She seems to have so many irons in the fire, without really working a job here. She sells a lot of the clothes she designed in Seoul, though. When they came here in April from Korea, Davy was sure he’d find a good journalism job, but no one hired him then. He worked some good journalism jobs in Korea for two years, but I guess that isn’t big enough in La Crosse, yet anyway; maybe someday it will be.

Dave Sr.: I’ve worked a lot of jobs in my life, and have never really been without a job, so it’s hard for me to understand. ‘Course, I was never a journalist, just an everyday reader of newspaper sports sections who watches TV sports, too.
Rose: Well, young Dave loves sports, but he also knows how to write about many other things too, plus take pictures. If he can find the right job or jobs, he’ll do fine. I don’t know why the local paper hasn’t hired him yet. And he’s sent out a lot of other job applications, too. I hope he’s not on some blacklist for having worked in South Korea. For goodness sake, he photographed Mother Teresa there, and received 18 letters from her later, too. Maybe he shouldn’t have interviewed Picture Post’s Hardy and Cameron in England in 1981; they might not be popular in some places. They did cover some pretty controversial subjects.

Dave Sr.: You never know about the media, Rose. They sometimes do things differently than the rest of us. At least he does a bit of freelance journalism; maybe that will develop into something bigger for him and the family.

Rose: I just know my children, and our oldest son is as gifted in many respects as anyone ever has been in this family. He’s already earned three university degrees and lived and worked in London and Seoul too.

Dave Sr.: And his first university was the UW in Madison, the state’s top university. Then, Iowa and Missouri. UW’s sports teams are tops, at least during good times, and Dave worked for them when he started school there. He was a pretty good running back and linebacker himself in high school. If he wouldn’t have taken his sophomore year off to work, buy a car, and pay his way through school, he might have been on the Aquinas varsity by then, instead of senior year after a year on junior varsity. John Michuta was a great football and baseball coach, but in football, he still sometimes favored kids from wealthy families as well as kids who stuck to the program.

Rose: Well, Davy is gifted at some good things, but he’s had to work really hard for what he gets. All our kids work really hard and are talented at many good things. And you’re one of the best meat-cutters around, while I can keep a house, records, and budget, and write and take a picture too once in a while. I’d guess our skills first came from our parents, then from our teachers. Thank goodness you actually sat in on a few of your classes at Aquinas, and were only in the principal’s office about half the time.

Dave Sr. (chuckling): Well, principals all kind of liked me, that’s all I’m going to say on that.

Rose: Yes, they liked you, like a hole in the head.

Dave Sr.: Still, they liked me. You can’t deny that, Rosie.
Rose: Seems like we’re at an impasse. Care to rub my shoulders?

Dave Sr.: If you insist. (They retire to the bedroom. Lights out.)
Scene 4: October 1997, 4:45 PM. Dave Sr. is watching TV in living room, waiting for the 5 o’clock news to begin.

Rose (enters, sitting down, looking very sad): I just got off the phone with Diane. She said they’d have some footage on the 5 o’clock news showing where Tony’s body was discovered, and letting the public know about the three deaths since July of young men in the rivers here. I’ll bet 10 to 1 they’ll find a high blood-alcohol content too in Tony’s body when they do the autopsy, like with the two others. But Tony’s drowning is horrible; I can’t think of a worse thing to happen to Diane and Rocky’s family.

Dave Sr.: You’re right, Rosie. But Diane has said many times that Tony drank a lot and did marijuana too.

Rose: Yes, it’s too bad she and Rocky couldn’t get him to stop that dangerous mix, Diane being a police cadet and Tony’s godfather and uncle being a Lieutenant on the force; but sometimes humans are only human. Tony may have been a bit depressed a while too, though he was a good worker for that recycling company. Still, Mark, his biological dad, didn’t have him over for Christmas last year, the way he had every year before then. It may seem old-fashioned now, but maybe for years Tony’s having been born out-of-wedlock bothered him. Diane was so young when he was born to her and Mark, and Tony and her living with us until Diane married Rocky, must have been hard on both of them. Rocky adopted Tony of course, but kids are tough to know completely sometimes.

Dave Sr.: Well, it’s just as hard for a young one like Dave’s Matthew, after Dave and Suk-Hee divorced. Sometimes I thought little Matt didn’t know which end was up. But he’s doing better now, and I hope he keeps doing better. Dave had trouble with him when he had troubles with Suk-Hee. His first wife, Ann, was just as headstrong, but she didn’t have the temper Suk-Hee does. Ann just kept dating the priest, teaching school, and not spending time at home. It’s no wonder Dave went away for a year to school in Iowa, after trying two or three marriage counselors. It was pretty much in the cards Ann would marry the priest, which she did, after he left the priesthood.

(Knock at the door. Rose answers it. It’s Dan, their third oldest.)

Rose (opens door): Oh, Dan. Come on in.

Dan: I can’t stay long. I just stopped by to say the preliminary report indicates Tony had a high blood-alcohol content – around .20. I don’t know fully about other
drugs in his system, but I think the blood-alcohol was the big contributor to his
death -- looks like it was accidental, probably fell in while urinating into the river
at Houska Park. He had two dollar bills in his pants pocket, the same amount
Grandpa Marcou used to pay Davy, Dennis, and me each week when we worked at
his store when we were very young.

Rose: Have you seen Diane today yet?

Dan: Not yet, but I’ll talk with her for sure tomorrow. She does know about Tony’s
blood-alcohol content though, because Sergeant Kloss let her know about that.

Dave Sr.: Good old Greg Kloss, a friend of Davy’s and Tom Elsen’s in high
school, and your good friend and work-partner for many years after that.

Dan: Yep, Greg is a straight-shooter, and one of the toughest, shrewdest cops I
know. Pretty good sense of humor too.

Rose: This whole thing has been terrible for Diane and Rocky, and also for Mark,
his biological dad.

Dan: It looks like Tony’s funeral will be next week, at St. James. Diane has asked
me to give the eulogy. I’ll talk about what Tony’s life meant to those closest to
him, our family and his friends. He could be a bright light sometimes, but he also
knew about the tougher sides of life. His graduation from Aquinas, before he
started full-time work, meant a lot to him. He wanted to get somewhere good, but
drink and marijuana didn’t help. He was partying with friends the night he died;
then got some more beer apparently, and went down by the river at Houska. He
was deathly afraid of water, as you know, so it’s hard to figure why he went so
close to it that night, but a lot of drug deals go down in that park. If he needed to
urinate, the river was right there.

Rose: Outside of his parents, you’ve known him best. We gave him car-rides and
presents over the years, had meals with him and family, and went to his baseball
games. I just wish we could attend his wedding, his babies’ births (tearing up, and
wiping her tears away with kleenex), their baptisms, and such. But that will never
be.

Dave Sr.: At least Diane and Rocky still have Robyn, and they may have more kids
in the future too. If their next child is a boy, I’ll bet if they don’t name him Tony II,
they’ll name him Danny. Tony had my and Davy’s name as his middle name; this
time I’d bet on Danny as his first name.
Dan: I’m not sure what Diane and Rocky have in mind about more kids, except both of them love kids. Anyway, that’s about it. Diane will let you know more about the wake, funeral, and burial; and I’ll be in contact too. There will be some things on the news in a few minutes. I hope it’s not too gruesome to watch.

Dave Sr.: He was our grandson; we’ll watch.

Dan: Thanks, you two, for being so understanding about all this.

Rose: It’s what we do, Son. Thanks for stopping.

(The three shake hands. Dan heads out the door, saying “Good-bye”, which his parents reiterate. Lights out.)
Scene 5: Sept. 11, 2001, 10AM CDT. Dave and Rose are watching TV coverage of the attacks on New York City’s World Trade Centers’ Twin Towers.

Rose (making the sign of the cross, as does her husband): It’s just sickening to watch the video-clips of the two planes crashing into those towers. Just think of the people on-board those planes, or the people high up in those towers, with flames all around. Some people even jumping to their deaths rather than being burned alive.

Dave Sr.: It’s just unbelievable what people will do to each other in the name of some bad cause or other. I hope the president says something brave that lifts up all Americans, because this country will need that for quite a while.

Rose: Davy and the group he leads are putting together that book, “Spirit of America”, which should be timely and strong. They’ve worked on it a year and it will be published soon. Dave says it’s about 100,000 words of text and 325 photos. Matt typed the text, and he’s only 13. This is like Pearl Harbor all over again, so all Americans will need to pitch in, in case we go to war. That book may be important, around here and some other places too.

Dave Sr.: Well, Dave’s adult students are very good writers and photographers. He said he’s directing about 125 people this time. I’d guess he’ll need to work very hard especially on the last few details, to make it work and sell.

Rose: Our oldest knows what he’s doing when it comes to publishing. He’s been doing this a while, and will likely do it a while longer too. (Pointing at TV screen.) Look at those people jumping. It’s one of the scariest things I’ve ever seen. I bet very few of the firefighters going up in that building will be coming home tonight. I guess a person really has to believe in doing their job well, to do that sort of job now.

Dave Sr. (rising): Yes, that’s right. I’ll be right back. I’ve got to use the restroom.

(Phone rings -- Rose waves to her husband -- then answers it.)

Rose: Oh hi, Dave. We were just talking about the awful attacks on the World Trade Center. You must have seen some of the TV coverage. You woke up with your TV on, just after the first plane hit? So they played that footage again, and then the second plane hit? Some of the scariest videos we’ve ever seen, and real besides. Oh, you phoned your cousin Steve first because our phone was busy? He’s working at Empire Printing today, isn’t he? Are you thinking about how to close
your “Spirit of America” book yet? Only the epilogue and a couple of photos need to be added? Well, make them good additions, because today’s news is very big, though horrible and tragic. I suppose it means our nation will be going to war again soon. We may, but that’s not exactly what your epilogue will cover? What are you thinking of? Oh, you’ll write about what occurred when the second plane hit -- the great courage of the American people, about where we came from, and what the future may hold. Yep. What about new photos? You’ll be working on that soon? Just need a couple, uh? Well, you must have a lot of very good materials already, after gathering and editing things more than a year. And you won’t bother Matt to type in your epilogue, you’ll do that straightaway yourself? Well, make sure you keep your costs down, because you know you’ve got a ten thousand dollar loan to pay back to John Hansen. You figure the overall bill will be about twenty thousand? How many books have you pre-sold so far? About 300 to your students, with a likely 150 more going to them after today? And you’ve got two book-signings planned? One at Barnes and Noble, the other at Pearl Street downtown? I’ve a strong feeling you’ll sell a lot more books because of these attacks? You say that Russian neighbor of yours who predicted a huge American catastrophe this year, when you had lunch with her a while ago, was right? Yes, I’m glad that gave you the motive to say spunky, spirited America would rebound, where the title “Spirit of America” came from. How is Matt doing, now that you have full-custody after his mom’s difficulty? He’s improving? Good. I know the first few months last year were tough on you both. But something tells me many things are helping Matt now, including the typing you’re paying him for. He’s doing fairly well with that, several hundred dollars, so hopefully he’ll save enough to make a difference later. Yes, that’s about it, your dad and I will watch more of this news today. Then, Dad has to work tomorrow. I’m glad I’ve retired from the medical records job I had at the nursing home. That gives me more time to pay attention to TV news, and read more things in the newspapers too. And your dad still loves sports sections. Yes, I’d better be going. I’ve got to get something together for lunch here. Your Matt will be home at the usual time I’d guess, although that sort of thing will be very different for students in New York City today and in future. Give Matt a big hug from us too. And your dad still loves sports sections. Yes, I’d better be going. I’ve got to get something together for lunch here. Your Matt will be home at the usual time I’d guess, although that sort of thing will be very different for students in New York City today and in future. Give Matt a big hug from us too. Thank you, Son, for calling. I’ll have your dad phone sometime soon, so you can talk sports when it’s a little better time. Yes, we love you too. Have a good day, and give our love to Matthew too. Good-bye. (Hangs up phone.)

Rose (speaking somewhat loudly): Dave, let’s say a rosary for those affected by 9/11, because that’s what they’re already calling today’s events, and for all our families. (Dave Sr. re-enters; they pick up nearby rosaries and begin. Lights out.)
**Scene 6:** December 2013. Matt and his wife, Jessica, are visiting Dave Sr. and Rose. Dan and his wife, Vicki, are also present, along with Davy. They’ve had lunch together there, and are now taking pictures in the living room.

Rose (with camera): Now, Matt, you and Jess stand in front of the TV. Yes, right there. Smile and look into the camera. (They do, and she snaps two photos.) Now, sit on the couch you two. That’s it. Smile and look into the camera. (They do, and she snaps two more photos. Davy is snapping all the action to document what’s happening.) Now, Dan and Vicki, and both Daves, stand with them here. (Motioning for all of them to stand perpendicular to the couch. They stand together there, and Rose snaps two photos again. Davy then asks everyone to stand together, including Rose now, and he takes two photo-portraits of that grouping, too.) There, that should do it for the picture-taking. Did you like the meal, you two?

Matt and Jess: Yes, it was very good. (Jess adds, “Especially the salad.”)

Rose: Will you fly back to Philadelphia soon?

Jess and Matt: Probably tomorrow, or the next day.

Dave Sr.: Flying while the iron’s hot, though it’s in the middle of winter, right Jess?

Jess: Yes. We do appreciate having lunch with you and the pictures, plus the Christmas gifts. It was very generous of you.

Rose: Our pleasure. I suppose now that you’ve served your country as a Special Ops Combat Medic and you’re back at university, Matt, you’re buckling down with new confidence and discipline.

Matt: Yep, my grades are straight A’s so far, and I intend to keep them in great shape.

Rose: And you, Jess?

Jess: My art teaching and design jobs are going very well too. It helps for me to already have earned a university degree in the city we live in. And there’s still family there on my side too. Seems to be working out fairly decently, though we may move after Matt graduates in 2017. Won’t know until a little closer to that.
Rose: Any plans for more family anytime soon?

Jessica: We’re thinking about that for some-time up the road.

Dan: Matt, what was the toughest part of your job in Afghanistan?

Matt: Staying awake, alert, and keeping the dust off equipment and ourselves. Oh yeah, we did a couple of other things there too.

Dan: Sounds like you performed admirably. But never let your guard down, Matt; that comes from an ex-cop of 30 years.

Vicki: Yeah, Matt did his duty over there. Now, he can study, work, and enjoy life a little more, while he’s keeping his guard up.

Matt: We plan on that, yes.

Dave Sr.: Any chance they’ll call you up, Matt, when you’re in the reserves?

Matt: Very unlikely. I hope to finish up with the reserves just before I graduate. Then, it’s on to the regular working world. Where cops bust the bad guys, and engineers like me, I hope, keep the electrical grids secure, etc. Somehow I’ll be working in defense areas I’d guess.

Dan: Not letting your guard down covers a lot of ground, doesn’t it, Matt?

Matt: Yes, it does. Yes, it does.

Jess: Well, we’d better be going, so thank you all again. We’re riding with Dan and Vicki to the Lenards’ house. (She hugs Grandma and Grandpa Marcou, while Matt does the same. Matt’s dad takes the action photos.)

Dave Sr. and Rose: Thank you, too. And we love you guys.

Matt and Jess: We love you, too.

(Door opens to let daylight in, and then as quickly, Lights Out.)
Scene 7: June 2015. The house at Prospect Street is fairly empty and being renovated a bit, with some elements relating to that visible. A DVD player is playing Porter Wagoner’s “The Green, Green Grass of Home”. Tom and Joy Marcou, who recently bought the house from Tom’s parents, are keeping busy, and also waiting for Dave Jr. to arrive to take some photos to record the look of the place.

Joy (holding up a photo of Dave and Rose): It’s a very nice 60th Valentine Anniversary portrait of your parents. Your brother Dave did one of his nicest photos with that.

Tom: Yes, he did. I guess it pays to sponsor his books and such, especially due to the good memories his words and photos create.

Joy: I agree. Maybe we can sponsor another one of his plays fairly soon, too. “Remembering Davy Crockett” made a bit of a splash in 2012, with the Pulitzer nomination. And it was certainly imaginative enough, while still sticking to a lot of accurate history about Colonel Crockett.

(A knock at door. Tom answers it. It’s Davy.)

Tom: Oh hi, Dave. We were expecting you. Come on in.

Dave: Thanks, Tom. Hi, Joy. Making progress, it looks like. I see you’re playing the song Dad wanted at his wake – “The Green, Green Grass of Home”. I didn’t hear it there, but Dan apparently had a DVD player with Eddy Arnold’s version on it. Eddy Arnold was Grandma Marcou’s favorite singer, but Dad often talked about liking Porter Wagoner’s version too. They didn’t have either of those versions in Seoul when I was there, just Tom Jones’s take on it; but good old TJ sure sounded great singing that old tune, halfway round the world from here.

Joy: Yeah, it’s a great song, no matter who sings it practically. We’re doing pretty good, pretty good. Not too much more adjusting and cleaning to do. We just bought the house from mom, and have put it right back in the realtor’s lap for re-sale; don’t know if anyone will take us up on that. Haven’t seen you since Dad’s funeral in March. I’m glad Tom and I were in from Texas for that, and especially three weeks before Dad’s passing, for Mom and Dad’s 65th Valentine Wedding Anniversary.

Dave: Yeah, Dad was somewhat foggy for the anniversary party, but you could tell when he put little Henry, Dan and Vicki’s new grandson, on his lap, he was still
ready for business. And it was nice to get some photos taken that day too. Which is why I’m here today -- so can I get started?

Tom: Be our guest. Will it take a while?

Dave: About 10 minutes, altogether. (He goes from room to room quickly taking photos a couple of minutes then enters the living room again.) I’ll finish up in a minute. How long are you two going to be in town?

Tom: At least another week or two, because now that the house is up for sale again, there may be a prospective buyer we can talk with.

Dave: What if you can’t sell it soon?

Joy: We’ll figure out something either way.

Dave: Have you seen Dennis and Polly lately?

Joy: You mean La Crosse’s municipal judge and his pretty City Hall wife?

Dave: Yep. I haven’t seen them since the funeral, and I didn’t really talk with them much then.

Tom: We had supper with them the other night.

Dave: Was Dennis still telling stories with you like Dad used to with Uncle Ed?

Tom: Big time. His court and his law practice keep him busy, but he and Polly also get over to their old watering hole, the Recovery Room, whenever they can. Plus, Mike, Dennis’s actor-son, is living in New York City with his partner, Mike Adank. Nick and Kelly are good, with Nick in the media business and Kelly working at Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center. Jacqui’s married and with a second little one on the way. And Joe is finally working a regular job, after several years as an online poker player. Meanwhile, Danny, Diane and Rocky’s son, is acting at school here. Of course, Danny played the newsboy in your Davy Crockett play. It was nominated for a Pulitzer, right?

Dave: That’s what they told me; they sent it to the judges. And I wonder how Mary Kate’s doing. I didn’t get much chance to talk with her at the funeral either.
Joy: Well, her son, Paul, is working for Logistics Health, and young Katie is busy at school and with music lessons. We hear that a Christmas Eve or two ago at Mary Kate’s house, Katie played the piano beautifully, including Beethoven’s “Song of Joy”, also the name of your Irish play, Dave.

Dave: Yes, I suggested she might play some of the music when we do a full staging of it. She played that Beethoven piece from memory after our staged reading at Aquinas in 2008, and did it beautifully then too. I guess Lynn and family are doing well, as well. She has a huge family, though she’s been divorced three times. And Dan and Vicki continue doing great with their relatively new daughter-in-law, Mayo research doctor from the Bahamas Cherisse. As for you guys, how are Stephen and Sebastian doing? Any sign Jody will relent and let Stephen and you visit young Seb anytime soon?

Tom: We always send her a card with money for Seb’s birthdays and at Christmas, and she sends us pictures. She will have no contact with Stephen, though. I hope she relents sooner rather than later. What about you, what’s next for you, Dave? More books and plays? Maybe a play about the Marcou family, for instance? And Grandkids?

Dave: If I wrote a play about the Marcou family, now that Dad’s gone, it would still have to include him in a huge way. As for grandkids, I’m hoping for some reasonably soon. And I’m always writing plays and books and photographing for books and creative contributions to archives, too. I wish I’d make some decent money for all that work. I do appreciate your sponsorships, though. You and Joy are my most loyal sponsors; and the family helps out generally, as well. Also, there’s a man originally from Central America who lives in my building, Ignacio, who’s bought a copy of each of my last 10 books or so. He’s an official sponsor, too. Always looking for more financial backing for my projects. Never know where and when that will turn up next. And don’t know how many more projects I have left in me. Someday, it may sort of be like the ending of some plays. The stagehands and/or actors sometimes just all-of-a-sudden turn the lights off and that’s it, maybe with a little music accent added in. By the way, remember what Dad used to say to us kids when we were very young, when he’d leave us in the car and head in for some brewskies, “Just wait in the car.” One day, many years after he’d given up drinking, he asked us, “Did any of you EVER wait in the car?” Maybe that comes from one of our ancestors being an explorer, Louis Joliet, but that’s another play I’d guess. As for Mom’s pictures, it looks like you’ll need another box. (Joy hands Tom one.) Gee, this one of Dad viewing an old photo album a few months before he passed will always be one of my favorites.
Joy: Yes, it is nice. Family members really do like seeing family, and friends, in the old photos, whether they’re very old, or from just a few months back.

(Another knock at the door. More of the family enter -- Rose, Kate and Katie, Dan and Vicki, and Dennis and Polly.)

Joy: Hi, Rose, Kate, Katie, Dan, Vicki, Dennis, and Polly. Where have you all been?

Young Katie: At Grandpa Marcou’s and Tony’s graves. We put some more flowers on them. They look really nice.

Joy: Yes, though the flowers there have to be synthetic, the people there weren’t artificial. (She hugs Rose.) Thank you for coming, Mom, and everyone here. We haven’t much in the line of refreshments, but there should be enough Mountain Dews in the fridge to wet everyone’s whistle. Dan, how’s your new book doing? What’s it called, “Law Dogs”?

Dan: Doing great. Even got some coverage on a Bill O’Reilly program.

Joy: Neat. It’s nice to have a couple of published authors in this family.

Dennis: About the Dew, I’ll get a few, in the can yet of course, she-bam’s the horse. (Dan helps Dennis.)

Davy: That reminds me of my poem, “A Rapping Sort of Say”, about Grandpa and Grandma Marcou rapping on the pipes to communication between their store and their upstairs apartment. They were really very good at it, and pretty humorous in the process. Hi, Mom, Everyone. I just took a few last photos of the old homestead. The empty spaces here are a little hard to grasp, because we did a lot of good living in this house. I made sure to get a photo of the basement too, because I know you, Mom, used it as a safe haven when the strongest storms blew through.

Rose: Yes, we all did; wind storms scared me a lot, because we don’t have a big house, though I do hope it’s sturdy-enough. Your dad probably used to bet on whether he’d find me in the basement with the mice when he came home during a storm; they must have taken odds at his favorite betting pub. But many of us have courage-enough. I’ll never forget what Mr. Douglas said soon after we moved in. The yard had a white picket fence around it then, and some of you kids broke a piece out of it. Mr. Douglas asked his sister, a friend of mine, what kind of family had moved in here, if we were fit to abide here, and when I heard about that, I
could have slapped him. But that little break in the fence, and eventually the whole fence came down, says a lot about our family. We don’t believe in false limits. We live our lives, like all human beings, and sometimes the fences need to come down, so bridges can go up. Did you get plenty of photos of the bathroom fixtures too, Dave? (He nods yes.) Tom and Joy put them in a couple years ago, but they still look great. (Smiling) Your dad always liked that bathroom. Kitchen cabinets look nice too. Another bit of beautiful work by Tom and Joy. (Dave snaps a couple more photos.) Say, Tom, where did you ever learn so many technical skills? Your dad couldn’t use a handsaw well, much less a power saw and sander. We should have shown the TV reporters more of your kids’ work when they interviewed your Dad and me for our 50th and 60th Valentine Wedding Anniversaries.

Tom: You and dad inspired us. With the fixtures and cabinets, I just wanted to be of use where you and Dad needed the work done. Dad and his Dad, also David A., never were very good mechanically, but they did some other things very well. I just wanted to fill in the gaps a bit.

Joy: Well, you certainly do that, Tom.

Kate: Why don’t we all go out to eat together tonight? Maybe Old Country Buffet?

(Dennis and Dan return with the Mountain Dews.)

Dan: Did I hear someone say something about a buffet? I could murder half a dozen appetizers and two or three main entrees too.

Vicki: You always have the ability to do that. You’re lucky you work out. Maybe tonight would be the best time for a big meal, what does everyone think?

Dennis’s Polly (in her cute, high-pitched voice): A good family meal does sound in order. What do you think, Mr. Justice, do you agree?

Dennis: With my undivided attention, I agree. The Court orders punishment for every one of you of plenty of food and drinks.

Rose: I could even polish off some of that too. Maybe we can get the big room at Old Country Buffet, the way we usually do.

Diane: I’ll phone there in a minute, and make sure we can. I’ll tell them it’s the usual Marcou culprits, but I won’t mention we’ve all got criminal records, though nothing more serious than laughing and crying as a family I hope.
Dave: Laughing and crying as a family. Maybe if you hum a few bars, we’ll catch the tune. Or maybe we can finish up here today with that old hymn that ends my Irish comedy, “Song of Joy”. (Smiles, then they begin singing that Irish play’s ending’s old hymn, “Amazing Grace”.)

(Lights dim slowly, as they begin to sing it. End of play-proper.)

(Lights suddenly up-again for the Encore. In bops 34-year-old Papa Dave, in short-sleeved, white dress work shirt with a pack of Lucky Strikes rolled up in one short-sleeve, black pants and black work-shoes on, with white socks. He knows he’s top male dog in the family, and all the others make room for him. He hands his wife a special rose.)

Dave Sr.: Well, my good wife, do I look okay for work or should I start over with my clothes and draw things out a bit longer? Oh, I hope you like this Louis Joliet Rose, Rose of My Life and Love.

Rose (takes the rose and kisses him gingerly on the cheek): Thank you, Sweetheart. You look fine, husband, like you’re primed for a prize-fight. In fact, it’s like you’ve just finished a prize-fight for the light heavy-weight championship, and won it.

Dave Sr.: Good, I’m set to go. What about the rest of this crew? I see Mary Kate and Katie are here, and Diane, Lynn, Tom, Dennis, Dan, and Davy of course, and some mates too. Is everyone following my lead today, or staying at home?

All: We’re following your lead, Daddy-O.

Dave Sr.: By the way, you in the audience can do your thing now, and I don’t mean boo or boo-hoo -- if you don’t do Good, the Mayor and Bishop’s police and priests will run you in. But thank you for belonging to 1720, and Our Family of Prospects tonight. And God Bless Us, Every One! Isn’t that how my grandson Mike says it? His first role in the Community Theatre was as Tiny Tim in Mr. Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol”. The rest of us don’t do badly either. Thank you all for being here. We love you all! (Audience applauds. Lights dim but don’t go out completely. “The Wanderer” plays briefly, and full cast and crew join the audience for mingling and chat. Then, Ringo Starr’s song dedicated to George Harrison plays, “Never Without You,” as the audience continues chatting with cast and crew, and some begin to leave. THE END.)
Further Note about the Marcous who lived at 1720 Prospect Street for many years: Dan Marcou, Vicki’s husband, was Wisconsin's SWAT Officer of the Year in 2005, for talking down a killer-hostage-taker while visiting Oak Creek. He is the author of several books himself, including “Law Dogs: Great Cops in American History”. Brother Dennis, Polly’s husband, has been La Crosse's Municipal Judge since 1997; he said the night of his first election, "This is the last elected office I'll ever run for; I'm glad I've won it." He’s still sticking to his plan. Tom and Joy worked in top-level federal jobs 30 years, including their last 15 years in Washington, DC; Stephen and Seb are their family, as are many nieces and nephews, and other close relatives. Diane Marcou Skifton, Rocky’s wife and a civilian Police Department employee, gave birth to three wonderful children, including Tony, who was one of the many young men who died mysteriously in the rivers at La Crosse during a decade or so. Lynn, who has been divorced three times, has a big, beautiful family of her offspring; she works for La Crosse County after many years as a Target Store Team Leader. Mary Kate, who has been divorced twice, was the first valedictorian to graduate from the new Logan HS Building in 1981 (and a Magna Cum Laude from UW-L soon after); she has two very talented children, and works as an accountant for Mathy Construction. A direct ancestor of this family was Louis Joliet, on the Marcou side, while the Fitzgeralds, Muskats, and Brunners were also essential contributors, some of them famous. Also, David A. Jr., David Joseph Marcou’s dad, was Steve Kiedrowski's mother's brother; Steve is a La Crosse actor, artist, writer, photographer, and promoter. SK starred in David Joseph Marcou’s Pulitzer-nominated play, "Remembering Davy Crockett", which David wrote, directed, and produced. In addition, David’s Irish play "Song of Joy--Or the Old Reliabs" was positively critiqued by the National Theatre of Ireland in 2010, the Abbey Theatre. Despite struggling against many adversities, especially in the 1980s, including a very difficult medical diagnosis in 1982, David’s writings have since then been twice-nominated for Pulitzer Prizes, and his photo-books twice-nominated for POYi Awards. He’s authored more than 100 books and more than a dozen plays. His son, Matt, born in 1987, is an Army Special Ops Combat Medic veteran and a stellar university Engineering student married to Jessica Amarnek-Marcou, a successful artist and university teacher. That little house at 1720 Prospect Street, was a powerful motivator for this branch of the Marcou family, and the same can be said for parents David A. and Rose Muskat Marcou, who married Valentine's Day 1950 and celebrated their 65th Valentine Anniversary in 2015, three weeks before David A. Marcou passed. Other Marcou and Marco families have lived along and/or close to Prospect Street, in one way or another, including Bob “Saboo” Marco and family. Bob was La Crosse’s best slow-pitch, 16-inch softball player for years, showing tremendous speed, accuracy, and power. His day-job was with Trane Company. Saboo used to chat with David A. Marcou when he was going by the back yard at 1720 Prospect Street. Memories of chats with David A. still inspire many people -- and chats the Marcou offspring still have with their matriarch, Rose, inspire many, too, even in Argentina. As Ringo Starr’s song says, “Never Without You”…
Acknowledgments: We are grateful to our ancestors, parents, my son and daughter-in-law and their offspring-to-be, my siblings and their offspring, other relatives of ours, our friends, role models, mentors, protégés, associates, sponsors, sellers, readers, viewers, counselors, clergy and religious, government and healthcare providers, printers and technical support, theatre producers, casts, and crews (especially at Aquinas Schools); and the archivists and librarians who store our works and materials for posterity, especially the La Crosse Public Library Archives, UW-L and Viterbo University Libraries, Wisconsin State Historical Society Archives, Missouri Historical Society Archives, UW-Madison, UI-Iowa City, and UM-Columbia Libraries; Library of Congress, many Archives of the Smithsonian Institution (especially the NMAHAC, the NMAI, and the SI Libraries), National Gallery of Art Library in Washington, DC, British National Portrait Gallery and British Library, South Korea’s National Assembly Library, etc. We thank God and our guardian angels, too! Everyone positively contributing to our lives and to this play’s success deserve their fair share of thanks and praise, always. No one ever said love is easy, but that little house on Prospect Street made it a decent reality for many of us, and for that we’ll always be grateful, since everyone’s family and their most memorable homes, loom in their backgrounds... and what great memories those backgrounds offer anyone who’s experienced such great upbringings in humanity and decent love there.—This playscript’s writing was begun Feb. 3, 2016, and revised and re-titled through June 13, 2016, by me, David Joseph Marcou.