

James Wilder Truher Jr. - our early years

as remembered in 1980 by his mother, Helen Burke Truher

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July 4 through December 10 1934 THE MOUNTAIN CABIN

[Jim2 was born December 10, 1934, when
Helen was not quite 24 years old.
Helen was born December 23, 1910. -- JBT]

You, and I arrived by train to meet your father at Berne, Washington, where your father had spent three days building a little house (a shack really) of three rooms. He was employed by Coyle Construction Company as a superintendent of highway construction. There was no place for me to live (with you) so he built this little place of three tiny rooms -- the first was his office, the second was our living/dining room and the third was our bedroom (just big enough for a double bunk (you and I slept on the top bunk), and some orange crates to use as a dresser of sorts. Outside in the woods was the needed toilet. Also outside were beautiful woods and a delightful mountain stream. The house was built across the highway from two tents in which two of your Dad's foremen lived with their wives. A half-mile or so down the road was the big camp for the workmen -- about 100

of them who worked, at that time, for 50 cents an hour.

Your grandmother visited us during the summer for a few days and as I think of it now she must have worried about the circumstances in which her baby daughter was living, but she never complained. She enjoyed the beauty of the surroundings and so did I. Really, it was a very pleasant summer. We had a little excitement one day when they were blasting tree trunks for the new highway, and our little house could have been destroyed. One huge trunk (about 4 feet in diameter) was blown under the back door of our bedroom. From then on, I had a back porch.

But the big excitement came early in November when we awakened to see a beautiful white world. Snow on every branch of the evergreens, snow and ice on the road, snow on the rocks of the stream. I was very excited, but your Dad was worried, and with good reason, it turned out.

The highway to the coast and to the east was closed and the train, couldn't get through. I Learned later that the two women across the highway began boiling water as soon as they

got up, just in case you should decide to arrive a month early. But I wasn't a bit worried -- I just enjoyed that snow. But that night there were avalanches all around us and the stream became a river. We stayed up a long time while Dad went out every hour to measure the rise of the river just in case we needed to get on higher ground. But the river went down before morning. And by noon the next day the train came through. And you know who was on it -- you and your mother.

One of the women across the road had a sister named Nell Barber who had 6 kids (aged 2 to 20) and lived in Seattle. Arrangements were made for me to stay in Nell's house and pay board until Jim came home from the construction job. I missed your Dad a lot at that time, but there was a lot of distraction with the Barber family. They were very good to you and me.

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On December 9, your Dad finished the work at Berne for that year. He loaded our car on a big truck, but again couldn't get to the coast over the shortest route. We had to go a couple of hundred miles out of the way to get to Seattle. I

had started into labor before he arrived at the Barber family place, so they took me to Providence Hospital that day (the 9th of December). However, my labor pains were spasmodic so I went to sleep. I had pains off and on the next day, and you were born about midnight. You weighed 7 pounds and 5 ounces and had a strong pair of lungs. The doctor had to make an instrument delivery (it was Johnny Marcks fault -- really the nurses fault) so your lip was cut and your head was kind of pointed. These things disappeared (the cut and the point) in a couple of days.

Your Dad and I were delighted with our new little son. In fact, your Dad was so excited the night you were born that he called my mother and told her that the baby was 7 feet 5 inches and weighed 20 pounds. Your grandmother and grandfather Truher and May were at the hospital when you were born. You, of course, were the first grandchild in that family and they were almost excited as your dad .

**December 10, 1934 through April 1935
SEATTLE APARTMENT
[Jim2: 0-5 months old]**

On December 11 and some days following, I was in a state of euphoria because I sincerely felt that I had participated in a miracle. Here was this healthy, strong, cute little boy brand new to the world. I was in a room in PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL and my roommate was Helen Marcks. In those days mothers and

babies stayed in the hospital two weeks, so you and I and Helen and Johnny Marcks got well acquainted.

While we were there, Dad scoured Seattle looking for a furnished apartment which we could afford. He found one at 1616 E. Howell on the third floor. I'll never forget going home from the hospital. I carried you until we got ready to go in the apartment house and then your Dad carried you for the first time. He was so very, very careful of you that I had to smile, but I couldn't let him see me smile because he was so earnest and obviously felt such a sense of responsibility. I had a hard time walking up all those stairs (no elevators) because I had a lot of stitches and was all bent over. It was a nice enough apartment and we kept you in our bedroom (the only one) .

The four months or so we spent there were pleasant and uneventful after the first couple of weeks. You and I had problems those first two weeks because my doctor insisted that I should nurse you

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and I was anxious to be a good mother. However, you cried and yelled and acted as if you were hungry all the time. The doctor had us buy a baby scale and weigh you before and after feeding and the quantity of fluid was sufficient so the doctor said I must be exaggerating and to let you cry -- it was good

for your lungs. But I didn't believe it after a while and went to the drug store and got a baby formula to supplement your feeding and after that you were fine.

Somewhere in March or April we had word that Bob Erskire and three or four other fraternity brothers of your Dad's were coming to Seattle en route home from playing basketball in Japan. The first we knew any more about it was about 8:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning when a lady from downstairs came up and told us there were a bunch of guys down there yelling "Truher! Truher! Truher!" So they got acquainted with you and spent the day with us. The reason this was a big event for me was that I didn't know anyone in Seattle except Nell Barber (You and I lived with her before you were born) and your grandparents and Mike and Minerva McDermott and Mike McDermott Jr. who was about 3 years old.

You were baptized in the church in Renton, Washington, with your Aunt May and Uncle Louis as godparents. Your grandparents and parents also attended. I don't think you cried, but maybe a little.

Your Dad did all your laundry because the tubs were in the basement four floors down. I remember Mike McDermott looking down his nose and saying that was "women's work", but your dad was helping you and me the way he has done all his life.

This apartment was on Capital Hill and grocery shopping was nearby. We never had money to have a baby sitter or go anywhere except drive to your grandparents so you had a great deal of attention from parents and grandparents. I used to take you in your baby carriage over to see Minerva McDermott and past Volunteer Park to see Nell Barber -- but that was only when it wasn't raining, which in those months was very, very rare.

By the time we moved you were about four months old and weighed somewhere around 16 pounds. I took you to a pediatrician regularly and he said you were in perfect health. You had grown about 6 inches, and were beginning to get sore gums because you got your first tooth at five and half months after we moved. You were sweet and good natured and fun to play with. I talked to you a lot and you seemed to try to talk back.

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**APRIL to early January 1936
Reine's Housekeeping Rooms
1416 E. Howell, Seattle
[Jim2: 5-13 months old]**

The construction job at Berne was not finished when Dad and the crew had to leave and come home because of the snow, so he had to go back to the mountain cabin in April when the snow melted. It was obvious that I couldn't take good care of you up there in the circumstances I

already described - nothing but a small wood stove, carry water for a half mile and so on. And the apartment was quite expensive. So we looked around and found two housekeeping rooms in a big old house just two blocks from our present apartment. In many ways, this was a happy choice. Paul and Jeanette Reine (a couple about our age--I'm sure you met them years later) were managing the rooms. They had 3 rooms on the ground floor, and rented out our two rooms plus 3 or 4 bedrooms upstairs. There was one bath at the end of the hall upstairs, which everyone shared. I washed your things (and ours) by hand in an old tub. There was no such thing as a laundromat in those days. We had an electric hotplate to cook on and a sink and table and 2 chairs in one room and a bed and a couple of straight chairs in the other room. You and I played on the bed a lot. I used to try to mimic your every movement and get my exercise that way, but I couldn't keep up with you.

Helen Nelson came to visit during the summer and we all went to the zoo on the streetcar for entertainment. Again, you and I went out in your buggy over to Volunteer Park and to visit McDermott's and Nell Barber. I had no car, of course, but there was a library nearby. We had no radio, and of course it was long before television.

Your Dad came home a couple of times a month when he could get a ride to the city and was always surprised at how quickly you were

growing up. By the end of 6 months you had four teeth and weighed about 20 pounds and were 28 inches tall. One thing you didn't get was hair -- just some blond fuzz. But you were trying to crawl.

Dad came home again to stay when the snow drove them back to town. He worked in the Coyle Construction Co. office about 3 days a week during the winter. We were both happier when he came home and the fall passed quickly. I notice that I wrote in your baby book that we had a pleasant Christmas at Truher's in 1935 and you played with your toys, of course, because you were just over a year old.

In January, 1936, Coyle got a construction job in Walula, Washington, where the weather is often 20 below zero, but little snow - so they could work. Dad and I decided it was time to take you to visit your grandmother in Los Angeles, so in mid-January Dad went to Walula. You and I went by train to L.A. The porter kept the berth down through the whole trip so you could climb around or sleep or whatever you wanted. It was a pleasant trip, considering everything, and you seemed to enjoy it. I had fun watching you.

In October on the day you were 10 months old we had your picture taken. There was a contest to select the most perfect baby and we thought that was you. Later I had Jack's and Mike's pictures taken on their 10 month dates. The three hang above our bed now.

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JANUARY to MAY, 1936
Grandmother Burke home
2007 W. 73 Streets, Los Angeles
[Jim2: 13 – 18 months old]

Your grandmother and Aunt Edna met us at the main L.A. railroad station, and of course you were the center of attention because they had never seen you before. We had a room of our own at my mother's and were very comfortable while your poor father was working long hours in below zero weather where there usually was a strong wind. He got very sick during the winter and probably had pneumonia, but fortunately I didn't know anything about it until the following summer.

You took your first steps on New Year's at Grandparents Truher -- that is, your first steps alone. Within a couple of weeks you were walking quite well. Of course by the time your Dad saw you again you were running all over the place. You weighed about 28 pounds when we got to mother's, and I soon learned that I had a weak back. Picking you up and carrying you caused me to have problems, so that if I bent over I had to lie down on the floor to straighten up. Well, I had to stop picking you up and encourage some climbing on your part. That was the only problem I can remember from those months except that we both missed your

Dad . I remember that Edna brought home a boy friend one day and you ran up to him and cried out "Daddy!"

You learned to talk very early. By ten months you said a few words and I wrote in your baby book that you had a vocabulary of 18 or 19 words by the time you were 14 months old. In fact, you were already beginning to put words together.

One day my friend Lorraine came to visit me. I ran out to the car to welcome her and when we came in the living room you had climbed up in a big chair and were holding a newspaper in front of your face. You didn't even look up when we opened the door. Lorraine (who knew nothing about babies) said, "Oh, I didn't know babies could read!" A number of my friends and your Dad's (such as the Pierces and the Woodhulls and the Boswells) came to make your acquaintance and exclaim over our accomplishment. Actually, it was Bill Pierce alone who came because he wasn't married yet. Anyhow, I saw more friends in that four months than in the three years I had lived in Seattle.

You can see from the attached picture that you were a very sturdy little guy.

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MAY - JUNE 1936 -
Wallingford District, Seattle

[Jim2: 1 yr + 6-7 months old]

I don't even have the address of this one month sojourn. Dad had finished the Wallula job and Coyle had no other job. So Dad rented a couple of housekeeping rooms (again with a shared bath) and you and I came back on the train anxious to see him. We must have stored your crib at Truher's because it was there when we came in.

Dad could hardly wait to see you (and me, too) after so many months. By this time you had quite a vocabulary and were about 34 inches tall and running all over the place.

We enjoyed our brief stay, but the only thing I can remember about the other roomers is that there was a man who was very interested in reading people's character by the shape of the head. With your lack of hair you were a perfect subject and he expressed great interest in what he said were unusual contours of your head.

After about three weeks Coyle got another job and we moved to Wenatchee, Washington. By this time, we had to tie a crib on the car along with all our clothes, minimal dishes, pots and pans. Moving was beginning to be difficult.

JUNE - SEPTEMBER 1936
Wenatchee, Washington (Route 2)
[Jim2: 1 yr + 7-10 months old]

We were fortunate to find a small, partially furnished house on a farm between town and the job. It wasn't especially nice, but it was located on a lovely knoll with a view of the Columbia River [\[JBT ref 6a \]](#), and you and I really enjoyed that summer. We had our own bathroom this time!

You were putting words together and I remember that you would walk up to a wall and say about 6 indistinguishable words and walk away. You did this many times, but I never found out what it was all about. Otherwise you communicated well. Mr. Coyle had [two high school sons](#) working on the job and they stayed with us, so I had quite a lot of cooking and cleaning to do. Also, [Helen and Owen Miller](#) (Helen Nelson now) visited us one week end.

You were interested in little toys by now and had a wonderful place to play all day long. This is where we were living when you stuck the raisin in your nose and Dad and I had to hold you down while the Wenatchee doctor got it out.

SEPTEMBER – part of OCTOBER 1936
Cashmere, Washington
[Jim2: 1 yr + 10-11 months old]

I don't recall why we had to move to Cashmere. This is a small town near Wenatchee. Anyhow,

the only place we could find to live was a two-story hotel. We had one room (shared bath), but running water in our room and a washing machine on the other end of the lower floor. You got mad every time I left you with Dad and went down to wash. But we had some long, lazy afternoons in a porch swing on a porch which extended across the front of the building. I have a note that we stayed in Seattle for two weeks of this time, but I don't recall where we stayed. I think we had a hot plate in our room in the hotel so I could heat your food and a few things for us. The time passed fast.

JBT ref 6a:
Eight or nine pictures appear in photo album 1 (PA1) from this summer in Wenatchee. The picture from the "lovely knoll with a view of the Columbia river." is [picture A on page 9 of PA1](#). The previous [six pictures on page 8 of PA1](#) show Jim2 with parents on the Wenatchee farm property with parents and in visits with grandparents, uncle Lewis, and aunt May Truher, and another picture with Helen Nelson. Another picture in this sequence is [photo F on the still previous page 7 of PA1](#). The likely ninth picture is photo D, also on page 7, the two high school sons of contractor Coyle. shown with Jim1 and Jim2 with the rented farm house in background.

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OCTOBER 1936 to JANUARY 1937

1730 - 15th Ave, SEATTLE
[Jim2: 1 yr + 11 months
to 2 yrs + 1 month old]

We rented housekeeping rooms on Capital Hill again; this time just a few blocks from the Reine's where we had lived before. This time we had a living room, bedroom and kitchen, but again, a shared bath. We were only about three blocks from a grocery store, so you and I walked to the store every day. If we were going to visit Nell Barber you got a ride in the collapsible buggy. This was only on nice days, of course, and between October and January in Seattle there aren't many nice days. That reminds me that those years we had a wooden folding clothes drier, so I always had baby clothes drying in the house. That made for a lot of dampness, what with the dampness outside too.

At the time of your second birthday you were 36.5 inches tall, and we were told that this should foretell that your eventual height would be just twice that or 6 ft. 1 in. I have noted in your book that you chattered continually at this age and would attempt even such words as "automobile" though your attempt wasn't always clear to others. I had a little birthday party for you on Dec. 10 and my friend Nell Barber and her daughter Mary Ann (age 4), her daughter Betty Paine (age 19) and her granddaughter plus Jeanette Reine attended. Helen Marckx was going to attend and bring Johnny, but Johnny caught a cold and they couldn't come.

Your father worked for Coyle in the Seattle office two or three days a week, but there wasn't much to do. So when your grandfather Truher offered us about 50 feet off the corner of his 2 acres in Riverton Heights, your Dad immediately began to make plans for building a small house on it. At the same time your grandfather gave the same amount of land to Louis and the same to Helen Alderman. I guess Mary and May were to get the house and the property on which it stood. However, it turned out that none of the brothers and sisters ever did anything with the property, except your father. He started drawing plans and when our rent was up the end of January we moved in with your grandparents while he built the house.

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FEBRUARY through JUNE 1937
3115 So. 135th Street.,
Riverton Heights, Seattle
[Jim2: 2 yr + 2-6 months old]

Once in a while Seattle has snow and ice for a week or two. It happened that early in February, 1937, the ground was frozen, then covered with about 8 inches of snow, which stayed on the ground more than a week. But that didn't stop your Dad. He started preparing the ground [for the new house] right away.

He cleared off all the snow where the house was to stand and made a path through the snow from Truher's big house to the new site. We got you dressed in your warm red suit (see previous picture) and you trudged back and forth following him around for an hour or two every day. He had to carry boiling water in a teakettle from Truher's in order to level the ground where the foundation posts were to stand. But in a month or two he had built a little house, which included a living room, a tiny bedroom just large enough for a double bed and your crib, a bathroom, a kitchen and a back porch with a brand new washing machine. (The underlined words illustrate the importance of the new conveniences, which delighted me and kept you neat and clean.)

Of course the three of us moved in before the house was finished. A few years later we added a larger living room and used the old one as a bedroom. That was because we had Jack and needed more room. It was wonderful to have our own house. You had a big yard to play in and loving grandparents to fuss over you as well as parents, of course.

I continued to take you to Dr. Somers, the pediatrician, for regular check-ups and he continued to say you were a perfectly healthy little boy. That is important because when you were six he is the one who had me keep you in bed for several months. [Jack comment: I recall learning much later that this forced bed rest confinement was because the Doctor detected

a slight heart murmur; later discounted as inconsequential. to health.)

We learned in June that Coyle had been awarded a new job up in the mountains. It was on the west side of the same pass where we spent the summer before you were born (see [original] page 1). The new job was at Scenic, which is the entrance to one of the longest railroad tunnels in the country. We came home to the Seattle house once or twice a month and spent a night or two. But we didn't move back until December.

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JULY to DECEMBER 1937
SCENIC, WASHINGTON
[Jim2: 2 yr + 7 months to 3 years old]

You can see from the picture [\[JBT ref 9a\]](#) on the opposing page the house we lived in for two summers -- 1937 and 1938. By the summer of 1938 we had Jack with us. Living next door were the Roaches (he ran the big shovel on the job) and they had a little girl [\[JBT ref 9b\]](#) you played with. She was only about a year old that first summer and couldn't talk to you. This was the summer that Marnie, English and Poncer appeared one at a time. I don't know where the name Marnie came from, but we think that English came from a workman who couldn't

speak English very well and we had to explain that to you.

You can see that the houses were very rough. We had wood stoves for cooking and heating. We had an inside bathroom, but no tub. So we took turns taking a bath in the kitchen in a big washtub on the floor. Of course there were no rugs and what furniture was there was broken down from years of use. The houses had been built for the construction foremen at the time the big tunnel was built. That reminds me that one day, officials came to all the houses and said that from 11 to 1 that night we were to keep all lights off and stay in the house because the President's train was coming through. Of course we all stayed up (turned off the lights and went outside) and that's as close as I ever got to a President. It was Franklin Roosevelt, of course, and his train went roaring by and into the tunnel.

My mother and Edna visited us [JBT ref 9c] that summer (we had one bedroom down and a big attic type room upstairs) but they only stayed a night or two. In the lower picture you can see the beautiful little stream [JBT ref 9d] that ran about 50 feet in front of the house (the railroad was about 30 feet behind it). It was fun for you to climb around on the rocks, but the water was too cold even to wade in.

From the time when Marnie came to stay with us until he went out of our lives without fanfare, you never did anything wrong. For example, I remember one day when I had brought in from

the line a huge basket of clean clothes and left the basket on the floor to look at something on the stove. When I got back the basket was tipped over and my clean clothes were mostly on the wooden (and not very clean) floor. I said, "Why, Jimmie, you shouldn't tip over my clean clothes." And you said, "Oh, I didn't do that--Marnie did it." So I said, "Well, if Marnie is going to act like that I won't let him stay in the house. He'll have to go outside until he is ready to behave." And pretending to be mad, I took hold of the nonexistent Marnie and opened the front door, pushing him out saying, "Now, you get out of here, Marnie." At that moment a neighbor came around the corner to knock on the door. I think she thought I had a screw loose. Maybe I did?

Mona [JBT ref 9e] also visited us that summer, and we had lots of walks through the woods to the post office (one of 4 other shacks). Once a bear got on our porch at night and ate some meat, but we didn't see him.

JBT ref 9a:
http://www.truher.net/gene/HBT/PA1/HBT_PA1_12web.jpg, photo 12A

JBT ref 9b:
http://www.truher.net/gene/HBT/PA1/HBT_PA1_11web.jpg, photo 11D

JBT ref 9c: see PA1 photo pg 11 and 12, same as above link, for HBT's mother, Kate Burke, and sister, Edna

JBT ref 9d:
Reference is to a Xerox photocopy of a stream in my HBTText Album. This stream is not reproduced in photo album PA1, but we may have it elsewhere.

JBT ref 9e:
Mona also on pg PA1, pg 12, picture E

***** HBT original page 10 would begin *****

NOTE: HBT's Photo Album 1 covers these same years, where Jack (JBT) has added some text. Find this complimentary album (PA1) from [larger document](#) ; same link is

<http://gene.truher.net/TBF.ntweb/>