

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, April 13, 2009

Easter Sundays, 1926 –1939: Yesterday, Ruth and I enjoyed a pleasant Easter Sunday and a delicious dinner at her niece's home near Harrington, Delaware, as we have done annually for at least 20 years. It reminded me of Easters of long ago, when my three cousins and I, all born in 1924, would be the beneficiaries of Easter Egg Hunts made possible by our parents. Unfortunately, my father took home movies of all of them.

My recollection is that Easter was seldom a pleasant day, weather-wise. It was usually cold and windy, but that did not deter us. Often one or more of "we kids" would be sick, and the hunt had to be postponed for a week or two but never canceled. Sometimes it was held at my cousin Eleanor Marshall's parents' home in Yorklyn, and sometimes at the twins Bob and Alan Mancills' parents' home at Mendenhall (Pennsylvania), but it seemed over half the time it was at Auburn Heights. All these properties had big lawns with lots of bushes, highly suitable for hiding eggs.

Unfortunately, as with all home movies, the adults did all they could to stay out of the picture, so there is little footage to show our parents in action. Once in a while my mother and my aunts appeared briefly, and my grandmother Marshall ("Lizzie") appeared once about 1928. My father never showed up, as he was the photographer. There was entirely too much footage of the kids' meanderings—very uninteresting for viewers, then and now.

In 1926, Eleanor and I, being eight or nine months older than the twins, were running around hugging each other while the twins were located in an express wagon and reasonably comfortable to stay there. Eleanor's sister, Lorraine, was becoming quite a young lady at nearly 14, and the twins' big brother, "Normie" Mancill, was 11. They tried to play catch with some sort of ball, but neither was very good at it. The "hunt" was more of a charade than anything else, but Eleanor and I seemed to be hunting for something in the bushes around Auburn Heights.

As we grew older, year by year, the hunt became more competitive, but there never were winners or losers. All of us were dressed up in our very best: the women with nice dresses, long overcoats, and fancy hats, usually with beads or a plume or something, and the men with their best business suits, white shirts, dark ties, long overcoats, and felt hats. Even we kids were dressed in our best, but as the day wore on were often a "sight" after frolicking in the yard at top speed. If only I could have dressed like my father and my uncles! (I always hated short pants.)

In the 1930s, the Easter Egg Hunt alone was not enough to keep us occupied, so peddle cars, velocipedes (tricycles), express wagons, and scared white rabbits were introduced into the activities. When we became teenagers, we were really not interested in hunting eggs any more, but we enjoyed each others' company, and the adults didn't want to give up on the idea, either. The year 1939 was the last for the hunts. Feeling quite like adults, and dressed nearly like them, we smiled as we rolled eggs toward a target a few feet away to see how many we could get into a marked circle on the grass. The smile was to indicate that we were really too mature to do this silly stuff, but we would comply one last time for the faithful photographer. Coincidentally, my father lost interest in taking home movies about that time and allowed me to practice with his Bell & Howell movie camera that I enjoyed very much, off and on, for many years. Sixteen millimeter movie film was expensive, especially after color was available, which limited my movie-taking.