

GETTING LOST

Simple things can be very confusing to a child. Ashlyn Street followed the curvature of a hill. After a long block, it turned to meet Landis, the next street up. It continued on to meet half a dozen other streets with which I would eventually become very familiar. At the time of this story, Ashlyn Street was a mystery to my three year old mind.

I had followed my older brothers, Chick and Paul, up the street and around the bend. They had friends living in the houses there. Paul was then six and Chick eight. Their friends were much older and bigger than I.

My reason for tagging along behind my brothers that day escapes me. Devoting my early years to doing everything they did, it is no surprise that I followed them. Being much younger and smaller, it is also no surprise that I was playing by myself while they played with their friends. Engrossed in my own games, I either did not hear or ignored their shout that it was time for lunch.

I looked around and had no idea where I was. No kids were in view - all had gone home for lunch. The bend in the street surrounded me with strange houses. Even absent the bend, our house was at the other end of a

long block - too far away to be seen by an adult, let alone a three year old.

Not knowing where I was, my three year old response was to cry.

Two women came out of their houses to ask what was wrong. My sobs told them I was lost, so they asked where I lived. Not knowing where I was, I could only answer with more sobs. Fortunately, my brothers returned and led me back the long block to home.

Traumatic as that was, it did not keep me from trying to follow my brothers. We lived across from a large field kept level by wide stone retaining walls. My brothers played baseball and football in the field. Being much too small to join them, I spent my time playing along the top of the wall. No balls came my way.

Later, when Dad took my brothers and neighborhood scouts on a camping trip, I watched their departure from our back yard, tearfully claiming, "I'm a cub scout too." The response to those tears was the ever dreaded reply, "You can go when you're older."

As my brothers continued to grow, it would be a decade before I caught up to them. Long before that, I found friends my own age and gave up being on the same team with my brothers. Only then did I reconcile

myself to the separation begun at age three, when I got lost a block away
from home.

