

My Narrative Begins

My name is James Robert Cade. I was named after my father, J. Robert, and his brother, my Uncle Jim. My mother's name was Winifred Cade - no middle name. It didn't



J. Robert Cade and Winifred Schuetze on their wedding day.
October 31, 1926 - San Antonio, Texas

occur to me to ask her why, on the night I was born, but my Great Grandmother Gruen told me when I was eight, so I can now satisfy your burning curiosity. The Doebbler's, the Gruen's and the Schuetze's, from whom I am descended, were all frugal people. Living on the farthest outpost between civilization and the Comanche Indians, they had to be. They didn't want to waste breath and ink giving a baby girl a middle name as she would acquire one when she got married. I'm sure at this point you have deduced the fact that I did not inherit their frugal nature.

On September 26, 1927 at the C. & S. Hospital in San Antonio, Texas at 11:20 p.m., I came on stage. The next few things I tell you are not from my own personal observations, but I will repeat faithfully what I was told a few years after the events.

It was a dark and stormy night. Even in the delivery room one could hear the rain slamming the

windowpanes. Zeus' thunderbolts were deafening and his lightning rods almost blinding. When I slipped into the world, my Uncle Charley, who delivered me, caught me and held me in his strong arms. My bottom was so pitifully small (this was still true when I was thirteen) that he didn't want to spank me, so he just held me in his arms and said, "Cry, you little bugger, cry." I was so comfortable and warm, and perhaps a bit rebellious, I refused to do so. Finally, he held me up by the heels, gave me one swat on my pitiful bottom and said, "Now cry you little rascal, cry." I obliged and as crying babies should always be given to their mothers, I found myself in her arms, an imminently satisfactory place, and went back to sleep.

About thirty minutes later, my two grandmothers were ushered into the room and pronounced me the most beautiful baby ever. When my Grandmother Cade asked my grand-

father didn't he agree, he said, "Yes, but he'll out-grow it." I was so content that I didn't cry even after that harsh assessment of me. Tonight, Mary Cecelia and Magdalena, two of my granddaughters, told me I was so nice and so handsome. It made me feel good that someone, after 73 years, agreed with my grandmothers.

When I was about three months old, my parents noticed that I frequently cried when I was put in my crib for an afternoon nap or put to bed at night. My Great Grandmother Gruen, my Grandmother Schuetze and my Grandmother Cade were brought in as consultants. The three ladies, who cumulatively were the mothers of seventeen children, agreed that colic was the most likely cause, but also considered the possibility that I had an earache.

All agreed and recommended that at bedtime my mother and father should hold me over their shoulder, pat me on the back to make me burp and sing lullabies to me. My Grandmother Cade, who had raised the possibility of earache, thought I should be treated for both. None of the three ladies had ever had a child with earache, so they discussed what to do. Grandma Cade remembered her great grandmother had been a friend of General Robert E. Lee's mother. Whenever Mrs. Lee's baby had an earache, they dropped warm olive oil, in which a hairless mouse had been steeped for three weeks, into his ear.

Grandmother Cade told my mother and father and my Grandmother Schuetze and Great Grandmother Gruen that General Lee's mother had told her grandmother the treatment had always worked when Robert Edward was a baby. General Lee was a hero to my parents and my Grandmother Cade. However, my Schuetze and Gruen forbears were Union sympathizers and my Great Grandfather Louis Schuetze, who taught school and piano in Fredericksburg, had been hung by a group of Confederate Irregulars. But they finally agreed that Bobby Lee had grown up to be such a fine man and he had been stationed at Fort Sam Houston before the war with Mexico. So they decided to try the mouse olive oil and hope that I grew up to be as fine a man as General Lee. I don't know today how they would rate me compared to Bobby Lee, nor do I know how much the olive oil or the burping contributed to the good results, but I can tell you that I soon became very fond of the lullabies. My two favorites were *Casey Jones* and *Steamboat Bill*. *Casey Jones* had 23 verses, but I can remember only snatches of them. As the refrain was sung 25 times, I remember all of it and will write it for you so you'll know what kind of lullabies put children to sleep in 1928.



Little Bobby Cade

*Casey Jones, climbed into the cabin,
Casey Jones, orders in his hand,
Casey Jones, climbed into the cabin,
And he took his farewell trip-ah-to the promised land.*

The other song was about Steamboat Bill. The words were so tender and soothing that I'm going to tell you about the verses I can still remember.

*Steamboat Bill, Steamboat Bill,
Steaming down the Mississippi,
Tryin' to beat the record of the Robert E. Lee.*

*Build up your fires, let the old smoke roll,
Burn up your cargo if you run out of coal,
If I don't beat that record, Billy said to his mate,
Send my mail in care of Peter at the Golden Gate.*

*Steamboat Bill, Steamboat Bill,
Steaming down the Mississippi
Tryin' to beat the record of the Robert E. Lee.*

*Up stepped a gamblin' man from Lou-e-ville,
Tryin' to place a bet against the Whip-or-will.
Billy pulled out a roll, it certainly was a bear
And the explosion of the boiler sent 'em up in the air.*

*Steamboat Bill, Steamboat Bill,
Steamin' down the Mississippi,
Tryin' to beat the record of the Robert E. Lee.*

*Said the gamblin' man to Billy as they left the wreck,
"I don't know where we're goin', but we're neck and neck."
Said Billy to the gamblin' man, "I tell you what I'll do,
I'll bet another thousand I go higher than you."*

*Steamboat Bill, Steamboat Bill,
Steamin' down the Mississippi,
Tryin' to beat the record of the Robert E. Lee.*

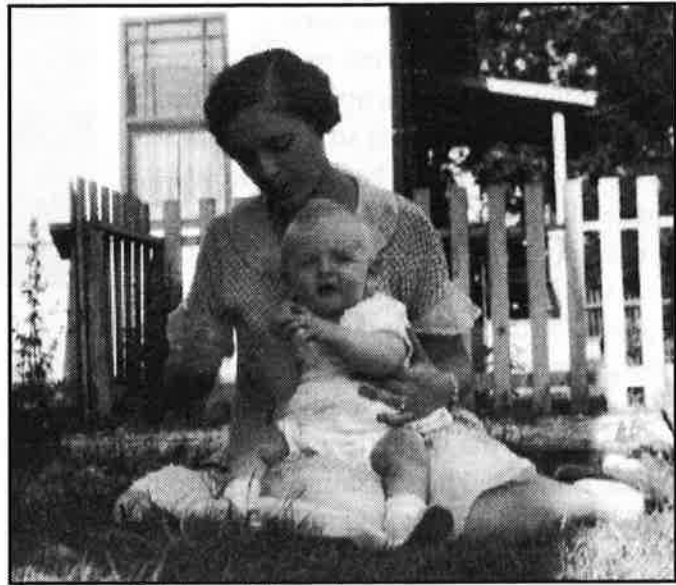
*The rivers all in mournin' for-a-Steamboat Bill,
No more they hear the moanin' of the Whip-or-will.
The steamers all in crepe that ply the stream
from Memphis down to Natchez and-a-New Orleans.*

*Steamboat Bill, Steamboat Bill,
Steamin' down the Mississippi,
Tryin' to beat the record of the Robert E. Lee.*

My parents and their consultants never quite figured out whether the olive oil, the burping, or *Steamboat Bill* and *Casey Jones* deserved accolades for the good results, but Mary and I answered the question when our son Michael was three months old. Michael cried every time we put him down. I looked in his ears and didn't see much. Mrs. Lapas, our landlady who lived in Greece when she was a girl, reminded me of the mouse oil treatment, and as she didn't trust anything that could be seen only by using a magnifying glass with a flashlight on the end of it, ignored my diagnosis and recommended that treatment. We walked the floor and burped him, to no effect. We never tried the hairless mouse steeped in olive oil treatment, the third item in our experimental protocol, for as soon as I began the second item, which was to sing *Casey Jones* and *Steamboat Bill* and put just a little hip hop in my walk when I got to the Whip-or-will, or took his farewell trip-a-to the promised land, Michael always settled down and went to sleep.

Tales From Childhood

On September 26, 1928, my family had a party to celebrate my first birthday. Both of my grandmothers were there. My Aunt Thelma was there. Everyone called her Didda and my mother Diddie, because my Uncle Clarke, when he was young, had trouble saying Thelma and Winifred and named them Didda and Diddie. My Great Grandmother Gruen, my Uncle Eddie and Aunt Alma also came. At earlier family get-togethers in Aunt Alma's back yard, she discovered that I liked beer and she gave it to me as I asked. At my tender age I didn't know when to stop and consequently left the party somewhat wobbly on my knees. This



Bobby and his mother in the back yard.
122 East High Avenue

greatly annoyed my mother, who told Aunt Alma that she didn't want her baby to gain the dubious distinction of being listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the youngest child to develop alcoholic cirrhosis of the liver. It didn't occur to me when I heard the story several years later to ask if her fiery protest ended my sojourn in the realm of Falstaff.

I know you must be curious about my mother's rather puritanical mindset concerning alcohol, so to satisfy your burning desire for more information about that important matter, here follows my understanding of the facts: my grandmother became a member of the Women's Christian Temperance League when my mother was two. Her action was precipitated when my grandfather came home on payday, happy, but not so steady on his feet. My grandmother immediately began berating him. Grandfather Schuetze, after several minutes, interrupted with, "Now Tillie, now Tillie, he is not drunk who from the floor can rise again and drink some more. He is drunk who prostrate lies and cannot drink and cannot rise." He then lay down on the floor and closed his eyes for a few moments before getting to his feet, smiling and saying, "See."

When my mother was four, she was a junior member of the WCTL and took part in a play. Her lines were, "Liquor is the only thing that can make a father sell his baby's shoes." I believe when she died at 89 ³/₄ years, her identification with the WCTL was as fervent as it had been when she began her stage career.

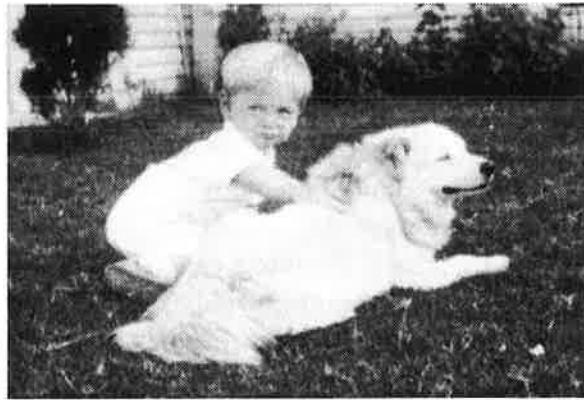
Back to my birthday party... I was about to tell you that Mr. and Mrs. Crosby and their dog, Pal, who came along to play with me, were also there. The Crosby's had moved to San Antonio several years earlier when they decided Duluth, Michigan was too cold. They met my Aunt Didda when she became engaged to their son, and, through Didda, met her family. They became a part of our family several years before I did. Mr. Crosby was an enthusiastic

bird hunter and often went hunting with my grandfather and my father who told me that Mr. Crosby, at eighty, with a tremor of intent, was the best shot he had ever seen.

They each had a drink of their favorite beverage followed by cake and punch. The ladies, taking me with them so I could play with Pal, adjourned to the back yard to sit in the shade of the pecan tree and talk, when, for some reason, all the ladies went back in the house. I was left in our safe, fenced, back yard to play with Pal, who decided he didn't like the game we were playing and thought playing "knocking Bobby down" would be more fun. He ran at me from the south, bumped me and I landed on my pitiful bottom. Just as I got up he came from the west, then the east, then again from the south. That dog had a brilliant analytical mind, and hadn't come at me from the north because I was so close to the house he couldn't get up enough speed to knock me down.

I was screaming bloody murder when the ladies, led by my Aunt Alma who was concerned for the safety of her little drinking buddy, rescued me. When I had regained my composure and my ebullient humor, my mother took a picture, the only one we have of Pal with me petting him.

During the summer before my third birthday, my mother decided to put in a flower bed along the east side of our yard. The ground was turned over and sand and manure worked in. She planted roses, some of which were blooming 55 years later. Rose bushes were too big for me to be of any help, but for Dutch iris, day and canna lilies, I could help my mother by digging a hole in which each bulb was to be planted. Mother waited patiently while I excavated each hole and placed the bulb. She waited again while I placed dirt around it. Then together we would tamp the loose soil down until the bulb was snugly in place. As I write this, it sounds as if we were an efficient, well oiled machine. From comments I heard many years later, my grandmother estimated that my help had increased the planting time by a factor of 2.5. Mrs. Taylor, our next door neighbor, thought it closer to 3.7. Both agreed, however, that I was so cute, the prolongation was justified. My parents said, in addition to being cute, they thought I was a very good gardener.



One morning, when our labors were nearing completion, I asked my mother, who was watering the flowers, "May I can lada da pados?" My mother was very pleased that I had, at two and a half, learned there was a difference between

“may I” and “can I” and, although I didn’t know which one to use, I covered all bases by using both. She had me repeat my question several times; the meaning of “may I” and “can I” was clear, but she couldn’t understand what I meant by “lada da pados.” Finally she told me to show her what I wanted. I reached for the garden hose and it was apparent that “lada da pados” in conventional English was “water the flowers.”

During the early days of my seventh summer, I saw a man sitting on a green wagon pulled by a big horse whose color I can’t remember. I went to the curb so I could observe this fascinating spectacle more closely. As he approached, I could see his wagon was full of watermelons. He stopped right in front of me and asked if I would like to buy one. He told



Bobby and Thelma Cade

me that a melon that weighed about 25 pounds sold for 25 cents. Twenty five cents was the sum of my wealth that day, but it never crossed my mind that if I bought that watermelon I would be reduced to penury. I ran into the house, found my two dimes and one nickel and ran out to close the first big deal of my life. I proudly carried my watermelon into the house. Then, barely able to restrain myself from running to tell my mother and grandmother what I had done, I thought, what if she thought I had frivolously wasted my money? My pitiful bottom might not keep me from getting my first spanking since the night I was born. I hid my melon behind the living room door, where it was slightly less likely to be seen than if it were in the center of the room. I began working up some tears, which I hoped, in conjunction with my pitiful bottom, would save me from the punishment I deserved. When my mother came into the room, she exclaimed, “Where did that come from?” Caught, I had to tell her and, with pre-worked tears in my eyes, asked her not to

spank me. To my complete surprise and great relief, she said, “Why, Bobby, that’s so sweet.” Everyone enjoyed the watermelon, no one more than I.

The next day I came to a major fork in my way. I took it. I remember this because we still had watermelon in our icebox. A bald headed man, walking door to door, came up the street, knocked at our door and asked if he could talk to my mother. I greatly admired his polished brass buckle which had WAG molded on its front surface. My mother came to the door and Mr. Grey, for that was his name, told us he played the violin in the new San Antonio Symphony Orchestra. His stipend was not enough to live on in 1933, and, thus, he was out soliciting students for himself and his wife, who taught piano. Mother asked me if I would like to learn to play the violin and asked my sister, Thelma, if she would like to study the piano. Both of us answered in the affirmative, and, thus was born a teacher-student friendship that would last until both Mr. Grey and his wife died.

A love of the violin, which still burns brightly, was kindled, and now, 65 years later, I turn to my violin for consolation and pleasure. Its beautiful tones still add joy when I’m happy, help me cry when I’m sad, and always bring fond memories of a wonderful man.

When I was fourteen, I was interested in archery, worked at an archery range during the summer and bought a 75 pound Ben Pearson bow with rawhide backing, and practiced assiduously. Robin Hood or William Tell, I was not, but at 100 yards I could hit a standard

target nine times out of ten. Early one Saturday, my mother went to an all day meeting and my father, a lawyer, was preparing for a trial, so he too, would be gone. I got out my bicycle, my bow and a dozen arrows and headed for a wilderness area around Lake Medina, about fifty miles north of San Antonio, to go deer hunting. It was a beautiful October morning and I wore blue jeans and a short sleeve shirt. Five miles out of San Antonio the road became two narrow lanes and went through fields scattered with cedar, oak, mesquite trees and grazing cattle. I felt in complete harmony with the world. Ahead was the hill country; the sky was a beautiful deep blue, the sun felt warm and white clouds occasionally shaded me from its rays. The hills, stretching into the distance, were a deep, hazy blue. God's world was, indeed, wonderful. Thirty minutes later, I reached the hills; the road curved round and round and went up and down. My fourteen year old legs, accustomed to riding fifty to sixty miles a day, weren't complaining and coasting down S-shaped curves was great fun. About 11:00 a.m. in the heart of the wilderness, I turned off onto a gravel road, actually just two tire tracks, rode a couple of miles and parked my bike. I then walked to a hillside that overlooked a green pasture. The only sound was created by the wind blowing through the trees and making the tall grass murmur as it swayed back and forth. I sat down on a big rock and waited for deer to walk through the meadow below me. After a few minutes, my stomach informed me I hadn't eaten in several hours and my tongue told me I hadn't had anything to drink for that same several hours. Next, my brain reminded me I had neglected to bring anything to comfort either tongue or stomach. I, however, sat patiently, almost stoically, on my old grey stone waiting for deer to appear and sure enough, in an hour or two, a big ten point buck and eight doe came browsing through the meadow. I took an arrow with a hunting tip out of my quiver, put the nock to my bowstring and waited, scarcely breathing, watching them come toward me. The wind was blowing into my face, but the only sound I could hear was my heart pounding in my chest. Those beautiful creatures came straight toward me and when the buck was only a hundred feet away, I drew my arrow to its tip. I knew I couldn't miss at that range. Then the strangest thing happened. I couldn't release my arrow. I lowered my bow and watched as the deer, led by the big buck, came closer and closer. When they were less than sixty feet away, I lifted my bow again, but instead of shooting, I coughed, and those lovely creatures turned and I watched nine white tails disappear in the brush.

I sat down on my old grey stone again to survey the meadow, the hills, the trees, the grass and at least a thousand little yellow flowers. The wind continued to blow, but as the sun fell lower, I felt chilled. The clouds continued their march to the south, and they too were changing. Instead of white puffs floating by, they became solid, and to the north and west, had a dark blue-black tint. I began to wish I had worn a jacket when I took off that morning. I walked quickly through the woods to my bike, tied my bow and arrows on it and began retracing my tracks. About the time I reached the paved road, the blue-black clouds were above me and were blocking out the sun, the wind was howling and I was cold. Down the twisting road around great hills, if I looked back, I could see the road curving around a hill I had passed only minutes before. As the sun dropped farther and farther behind the hills and darkness fell, it was difficult to see the path I had traveled. I rode on perhaps ten miles, though it seemed closer to a hundred. When I looked back, I saw the headlights of a car several miles of curves behind me. I checked the headlights frequently and about twenty minutes later, the headlights and I were on the same curve. I slowed down and after a few minutes, a pick-up truck slowed down beside me. One of the occupants rolled his window

down and a cheerful voice asked, "Bobby Cade, what are you doing out here?" Almost immediately that same cheerful voice asked, "Would you like a ride?" It was Reverend Schertzer, the pastor of the church we attended. They had seen me twenty or thirty minutes earlier and Reverend Schertzer had said, "I bet that's Bobby Cade." Two days earlier he had been struggling in catechism class trying to explain to me the value of memorizing Luther's explanation of the first article of the Creed. He won, and I can still recite it. The driver was Lee Schuhardt, a member of our church who had been an usher the day I was baptized. They helped put my bike in the bed of Mr. Schuhardt's pick-up and invited me to sit between them so I would warm up.

When they got me home, Mr. Schuhardt carried my bike up to our front porch and Reverend Schertzer smiled, laughed and said, "Mrs. Cade, God watches over fools and Bobbies, and your son qualifies in both categories."

My father told me they were so happy I was home and well that they would not even have to use my pitiful bottom as an excuse for not spanking me.

Many years later, I went home for a surprise visit. As I drove up in front of 122 East High Avenue, I noticed that the Bobby and Bunky flower beds, named after the boys who dug them and planted the first flowers many years ago were still there, although in mid November, nothing was blooming. The front porch where we had played "bottle caps" was as it had always been. At my knock, my mother came to the door, smiled and kissed me on the cheek.

Sunday we went to church together and early that afternoon went to the cemetery where my Grandmother and Grandfather Cade were buried. To their left were my Uncle Jim, Uncle Charley, and my father; to their right, my Aunt Stella, who for many years ate with us each Sunday. She was diabetic and used saccharin to sweeten her iced tea. She always got the chicken breast, but since my sister liked drum sticks and I liked the back and the neck best, we were all happy. Next to her was my Aunt Pearl. An oak tree which had been planted when my grandmother died was now large enough to shade them all. It was a moment between an Adagio and a Largo.

That afternoon, my mother went to a meeting with some of her church friends and I went for a ride to see the town. I found myself on the northwest side of town near Old Medina Lake Road. As the road left town, it was still a two lane, black top route with only a few more houses than were there the day I rode by on my bicycle. Stone fences, still standing 120 years after the German farmers used the rocks they cleared from their fields to build them, separated the fields from the black top. In the distance, the hills, rising ridge above ridge, beckoned me on. They were beautiful. The closer ones, green with cedar and live oak trees, the more distant veiled in a hazy blue. And behind them another ridge so distant and indistinct I couldn't be sure whether it was hills or clouds.

I drove around the majestic curves I had followed so long ago on my bike, came to the little two tire path I had bumped over on my previous visit, drove a way and stopped. A hike through the woods and I found the old grey stone I sat on so long ago waiting for deer. A large gum tree was at my back. As I looked out over the meadow, I wondered if it had been a small bush at the time of my first visit. I sat for at least an hour watching white puff clouds pass slowly by on a warm south wind, then walked back to my car and headed home. On the way I saw a doe standing behind a fallen tree. I stopped and we looked at each other for several minutes. I wondered if she was a great, great granddaughter of the deer I watched

disappear into the bushes so many years ago. When I reached the paved road, I stopped again, got out of the car and watched the sun descend the final few inches before it disappeared behind a distant ridge. I was glad that this time I had a warm jacket.

Driving around the curves on the way home, I stopped several times to look for the headlights of Lee Schuhardt's old pick-up. When I got home, my mother kissed me; she made no mention of my pitiful bottom. I thought of God's fingerprint over my day and over my whole life and was thankful for the gifts of beauty, love and sweet memories.