

Robert Franc Schulkers Biography

July 21, 1890 - April 6, 1972

By Randy Schulkers, 2000

PREFACE:

Author of the Seckatary Hawkins books - wholesome children's stories of a clever little fat boy and his Fair & Square Club pals in their many terrific adventures down on the Kentucky riverbank. Robert Franc Schulkers was never a fat kid; he just used that persona to illustrate how intellect and tenacity was more important than outward appearances. Illustrating the old saying "You can't judge a book by looking at the cover", the underdog was often the victor if he played fair and square in the Seckatary stories.

Few men are fully appreciated when they are alive, but my grandfather, Robert Franc Schulkers may have been very close to it. He was blessed with a family that loved him and appreciated his talents. Fair and square was more than just a motto with RFS, it was at the core of his personality. He always did his level best and always practiced the moral and ethical ideals he espoused in his writings.

This will be sort of an ongoing, or "living" biography in that I will use the internet venue to periodically change, update, and enhance this humble presentation as more information and inspiration becomes available.



HH Schulkers,
Seck's dad, and
my great-
grandfather

The "Real" Robert F. Schulkers:

Was born on the night of July 21, 1890, in his Mother's house at 120 East 13th Street in Covington, Kentucky, in a section then known as "Hellentown". It was a hot night about 9:00PM according to his Mom and her good friend, Mrs. Schildmoeller, the midwife who delivered Robert into the world. The house numbers have since been changed to 220. The small house was a two-story frame affair with modest porch on the front and no attic. RFS writes, "The house was on the North side of the street, and was just east of the alley midway between Greenup Street and Garrard Street (some say it was "Garrett" Street in old days). This was just 2 1/2 blocks west of the Licking River. The river was to play a continuous part in the development and the future reference for the Seckatary stories." Young RFS played mostly between Covington and Latonia because the river nearest his house had dangerous towboat moorings and the site was forbidden by his father.

Never fat in his youth, he was 5 feet 10" tall with brown hair and tender, but piercing mid-summer-sky-

blue eyes. We all remember him in his later years - slightly balding in front, with pleasingly pure-white hair, and a potbelly. His earlier photos showed the slightly mischievous sparkle in those eyes too. His voice was tenor with a slightly nasal and raspy pitch. It got more nasal and high pitched with age. A 5/25/1949-radio interview done by Kay Hamilton of WSAI in Cincinnati is a prime example of a young boy's voice in a grown man of 59 years.

RFS attended St. Joseph's parochial grade school in the Hellentown section of Covington, KY.

He was a favorite altar boy these years. Pastor was Father Constantine Liber O.S.B., who later transferred to Saint Vincent Arch abbey in Beatty, PA.

St Joseph's was also his high school (Now it is called Covington Catholic High School).

He sold his first short stories to the old Commercial Tribune as early as 1904 while still in high school. A stellar student, he graduated 6/20/1906.

His teacher in the Seck stories was "Brother James", but we know he was really "Brother Jim"----- who he admired enough to include in the Seckatary books. This was a Benedictine Catholic order, ergo the "Brother" tag.

He later studied architectural draftsmanship.

Everyone would look forward to any time we could have with Grandpa-Seckatary. He brightened up the room with his jolly presence and gave his 100% undivided attention to whomsoever he would talk to, regardless of age. He would look straight into your eyes, everyone else seemed excluded, and you could feel the kinship and bond - what a polite and complimentary way to communicate with another human.

He always received the respect of everyone he interacted with, but without seeming to ask for it. He didn't have a way of demanding it like some bombastic Army general; but just seemed to deserve it - and get it. To everyone he ever met, he was a righteous champion of justice for any that might be slighted, maligned or misunderstood. You would have liked him.

FOREFATHERS:

His Father:

As an autobiographical portrait for his own descendants, RFS wrote in 1921, "Henry Herman was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, July 4, 1850. ...He was more familiarly known as 'Henry', although he signed himself always 'HH'. Both his mother and father had come from Germany... Moved to Covington before he was one year old. His boyhood was spent within a stone's throw from the edge of the Licking River on 13th Street. He lost his father at the age of 13 and did millwork in rope factories with the Teamsters because he had to support his mother, 3 brothers (twins Bill and Herman; and Frank) and 3 sisters (Lena, Mary, and Mollie).

At 16 or 17, he became a capable handler of horses, and was given charge of a 4-horse team of his own. Hauling stone and timber and heavy loads of all kinds, he went through winters and summers of hard work and many privations, so that he knew the true philosophies of life without reading books. Later he became superintendent of teams, and acquired a knowledge of horses, so that in Covington he was acknowledged an authority, and was consulted in the purchase of horses for the large mills in which he labored. Even in his later days---the days that are most vivid in my recollection---his fondest love was for horses, and the animals seemed to know him on first sight, and loved him. His was a way of kindness---gentleness that not only the horses loved, but which endeared him to the hearts of every living being who felt the touch of his hand. Stern and strict in his ways, he had a loving kindness about him that could not be denied. He was one of God's noblemen in the simplest form.

In his thirties, my father attracted the attention of those whose politics included the welfare of the community, and they chose him as an officer of the law. Within a short time he was made Lieutenant of Police, and in that capacity he spent his lifetime. As 'Lieutenant Schulkers' he grew to fame; and to this day, there are those who speak of him as the most honest, God-fearing and conscientious officer that ever donned a uniform. A fine-looking up standing man of nearly six feet, rather portly and very dignified and serious, he made a picture in uniform that struck awe into the minds of the criminals of that day. He disdained, however, to appear in his regalia. There was only one occasion, and that upon our earnest solicitation and pleading, that he consented to return home in full uniform. What a picture that remains to me even to this day! We children had been allowed to remain awake until 9:00 in the night to await his coming. It was his custom to go on duty a 6, home at 9 for lunch, and return for the remainder of the dark hours on duty. And when 9:00 struck, and there were footsteps in the yard---our hearts began a quicker beat---the door opened, and in he came, quietly, in full uniform, in the cap with the gilded wreath in front, the long blue coat, the shining leather strap--- the jeweled badge of lieutenant that his officers had given him as a token of esteem---my father! That was the only time we were to see him so bedecked. Never again did he allow us to see him in full uniform except on those rare occasions when he could not help himself, when he was on parade with the force that called him chief.

For chief he was indeed, as the titular chief of the force was one Joe Pugh, a likeable old Kentuckian, who yearned toward racehorses and the sort, and rarely paid much attention to his office. 'Henry will take care of the office', was Joe's remark when he sallied forth to the race tracks to see his thoroughbreds win laurels on the turf. And Henry did. Henry was an especial friend of Joe's, and to his dying day, Henry never failed to say a good word for Joe. Those two understood each other. And in the Valhalla where all souls shall meet, they probably have discussed these things over and over again, many times.

My father was a handsome man. When I first saw him, he wore, according to the times, a full beard and moustache. His beard was glossy black, as was his hair. His eyes were of a blue that reminded me of the tropic sky, and his cheeks glowed with the ruddiness of health. My father did not smoke. He took a drink of whiskey now and then, but never in his lifetime did he take more than one. He enjoyed a glass of beer in the mid-afternoon, with a light sandwich or perhaps a cracker... He always kept liquor in the house for emergency in case of a sickness. He was never under the influence of liquor at any time in my lifetime. He had mastered that art of self-mastery, not to take more of any one thing than was good. His watchword was "Moderation in all things". And though, perhaps, he had partaken of all that a man might partake, as would be inferred from his last statement to me, he knew that too much of anything was not good.

The last interview I had with him (Although I did not expect it to be the last) was on the Sunday before Wednesday on which he suddenly died. "Robert", he said, 'my time might come at any time. And yet I am not afraid---nor sorry. I have lived 75 years---a long time---I have seen much---one can see all there is to see in three-score and ten--- am past my time. I have lived and loved and thank God for the children who have solaced my last years---my cup is full to the brim, and I have enjoyed life. When God speaks, I shall be ready!' He was ready. But we children were not! At least I was not---I wanted him for many more years---even if it were just to worry about him---to coddle him and try in many futile ways---for every way was futile when a son tries to repay a father for everything he has done for him---and God knows how I loved him! More, my whole heart was wrapped up in the man who had done for me many things he had done for me---you will never know how I felt, when I thought back upon those earliest years of my recollection, when I was a wee bit of a kid, hardly able to talk, and he had sung to me, before I went to sleep, all those old time songs, of Nellie Gray and Old Black Joe, of old Uncle Ned and of Abraham Lincoln's soul stirring pathetic yearning to set free those of God's

children who were not free --and of My Old Kentucky Hoe--the home he loved so well-- the home to which he had been transplanted when he was yet an inarticulate infant--but which in his boyhood, passed during the soul-searing throes of the Civil War, he had grown to cherish the most beloved thing in life! 'Way down Fort Sumter---' I can hear him singing yet-- 'Way down Fort Sumter; Where de war first begun; Way down in Dixie; Wid major Anderson--.' How splendid his voice always sounded to me! I would rise from the cot upon which he had been trying to make me nap, and stare up at his very handsome face, to look at my wonderful daddy! 'There, now', he would whisper, gently, as he tucked the covers about my shoulders. 'Daddy's boy must take a nap to make him grow. Fall back, sonny, and listen while I sing.' And I would fall back, watching him closely however, while he would rear himself in that rocking chair, back and forth, and sing in his soothing voice: 'Way down in Dixie, wid Major Anderson; Who stood by de flag, wide heart brave and true; and fought like a brave man for the red, white and blue.' And so I would drift off into beautiful slumbers illustrated by dreams that only my father could paint for me. His voice--- and the clear ring of his melody--- the words that were so inspiring---fading off into a dream of my own, in which my childish imagination wove fancies that were later to produce pictures for other boys, in later generations, yet unborn--to be known, as it later developed, as the Adventures of Seckatary Hawkins--." RFS had intended to write more, but if he did before his death, we don't have the records.

Paternal Grandfather - Herman Henry Schulkers, 1816 - 1863, in Germany.

Paternal grandmother - Anna Marie "Bessie" Albers, 1826 - 1892, in Germany.

His Mother:

Maria Elizabeth Wueller, born in Osnabrueck, Germany 1/16/1850; died 10/26/42. Came to America 1866. A rather short little lady. Always wore a black dress and her hair up in a tight bun.

Seck always believed in firm family values, and the mother of the family was the true arbiter of what was to be done and when.

Maternal grandfather - John Heinrich Wueller of Hanover, Germany, died 1864. Maternal grandmother - Maria Elizabeth Tecklenburg who had 5 children.

Siblings:

Brother Ed was a paper hanger

Brother Leo was a carpenter.

Sister Wilhelmina, "Minnie", married Arthur Fromeyer.

Sister Maria, "Lizzie", married Theodore Olbert.

John was a Catholic priest, Father Giles, O.S.B., at St. Bernard College.

Brother Joe ran away from home--was never seen again - "Rolling Stone"?

Brother Henry H. was killed by a train at 16 years.

Sister Mayme lived with Seck's family on Erie Avenue. McAlpin's salesgirl.

His younger sibling was Brother Franc - a Kentucky Pharmacist.

A TIMELINE:

RFS joined the Cincinnati Enquirer in 1911 as secretary to the publisher, W.F. Wiley, a position he held for 10 years. He first wrote "A Christmas Story" for the Sunday children's page, then contributed about every fortnight to various series with animal characters (*Animal-land Tales*), stories of children of Biblical times, and several on four boys that foreshadowed the Seck series. Edward Grueninger Jr. illustrated the early stories with wash and crayon work that was truly newspaper art. RFS also wrote book reviews and sometimes the feature "Old World Chitchat". He was in charge of syndicating the "Luke McLuke" series. In 1913, taking advantage of his hobby, he was the papers only photographer, using "one huge old box". In 1918, the editor of the Enquirer asked RFS to write something weekly.

So, on February 3, 1918, the first Seck Hawkins story appeared in the children's section magazine.

"*The Snow Fort*", first appeared in the paper February 3, 1918. This was the first published story with the Seckatary character in it. Not projected as part of a series, just on its own, it was written in the third person. The story made quite a hit with the readers, so the editor, H.N. Hildreth suggested he write one story about that "gang" every Sunday. Seck was tempted, although he was also busy with Mr. Wiley's work, McLuke's syndication, assistant (1912-1920) to J. Herman Thuman - the music and drama critic; and he was local correspondent for the Musical Courier. But on 2/17/1918, he was finally persuaded by a dare from Wiley, and the first real extract from Seckatary Hawkins club diary was printed, running until 1935. 17 years on a dare. The Cleveland Plain Dealer ran them for 18 years (1923 - 1942). The early work became interspersed with a style of spelling and grammar that was indicative and ordinary to the young, even fascinating to them, but startling and alarming to some of the Puritanical elder educator. This was the realistic Hawkins' style to report exactly what was uttered; however, the Superintendent of Schools, Randall J. Condon, remarked that his children were trying to talk and write like Seck! That could only mean that the kids were reading with fervor, and Seck loved it. RFS promised Randall that since Doc Waters often looked over Seck's shoulder, that he would take more pains to advise him proper grammatical manners.

Newspaper Comic strip series ran from the 1920's to 1930's. The artist was Grandpa's good friend, Carll B. Williams (who also did the drawings for the books). Sadly, Carll died in 1928.

Second artist was another friend, Joe Ebertz (also did the drawings for the books and comic strips).

Cincinnati Enquirer coworkers have described RFS as:

The kind of guy everyone liked to know. He never met a stranger.

Dashing, affable, witty, bright, lovable - somewhat of a lady's man. (or ladies' man). He was said to be a joy to be around.

2/10/1915 - Married Julia B. Darnell and lived at 1012 Park Ave, Latonia, Ky. Where Robert Junior was born in 1917

RFS assumed the jobs of Photographer and reporter when no one else was available. He covered the tennis matches one year, and was perplexed at the girl stars that seemed to care little for their cosmetic appearance in those days. When coerced to report on tennis matches while Julia B was visiting her grand parents, he wrote that although it was great exercise, he thought it was a silly affair. He came to the conclusion that females who attended the matches were all homely, albeit fashionably attired; either because the game lures such ones or else they get homely from playing the game. This could be even more humorous since he was just courting Julia B at this time, and he was staying with her parents while she was gone on a trip. We don't have the response letter from Julia B, but imagine she noticed that he was noticing girls, homely or not.

He took a job at the Latonia, KY racetrack - worked as publicity man for the track and spent a lot of time there on his own. He loved horses and the betting.

1918 Wrote The *Rejiment* newspaper story

Worked and lived in Cuba for a short time in 1920 as a horse-racetrack publicity man.

He and Julia B took my dad and Ruth (6 months old). They leased out the Harvey home for one year, but returned early and had to rent Stacey Ave in Norwood for a while. Judy was born at Stacey Ave. They moved back to Harvey Ave when the lease expired.

1920 - RFS and Julia B' bought a house at 3029 Harvey Avenue, Avondale, in Cincinnati. Ruth and John were born here. RFS wrote the first two chapters of *Cazanova Treasure* in this house.

1921 - They went to Cuba and leased their Harvey Ave home for one year. RFS wrote the next six chapters of *Cazanova Treasure* in Cuba. When they decided to return to the good old USA early, they had to rent at Stacey Avenue until the other lease was over. Time enough for Judy to be born, then moved back to Harvey Ave.

Seckatary Hawkins in Cuba published.

1922 - *The Rejiment* published in the Seck Hawkins bi-monthly magazines which contained club news, an ongoing serial of Seckatary stories, radio news, member letters, contests for free books and Seck paraphernalia - Pins, spinners, flag banners, statue bookends, etc.

The first radio show was received on crystal radio sets as RFS read *his "Mile A "Minute Milo"* stories about a boy in a tiny automobile adventures. He got his own show, a Saturday evening half-hour on WSAI. The Milwaukee Journal's WTMJ featured him daily in the evening and for one hour on Sundays.

Some local Cincinnati businesses used RFS stories to sell their wares via boys clubs, newsletters, and give-aways:

"*Little Joe Baker*" - Banner Grocers Baking Co. pamphlets.

"*Brushboy*, a monthly R. F. Johnston's Paint Co. magazine.

1923 wrote *Boathouse Boys* bi-weekly magazines sponsored by Boathouse Coffee Co. using different characters than the Seckatary books and a boathouse built on stilts where boats were stored for 10 cents a week and the owners became club members.

Also produced "Rollman's Young Folks" magazine.

1924 - "*Mile a Minute Milo*" a fast car driving boy in and out of various adventures as he travels with his pal, Hap. (perhaps a prelude to TV's Route 66?). Pamphlets produced by Dunlop Clothes shop sponsor William Leibold, publisher, for Dunlap boy's club of Dunlap Clothes Shop.

1925 - RFS decided to become a full time writer, so he left the Enquirer.

1927 - Wrote *The Stranded houseboat*

1928 - Wrote *Cave River*

1929 - Wrote *Little Gil*

Wrote *The Lavender Light*

RFS bought a huge house on Victoria Blvd. The children went to Ursaline academy private school. Servants were Birdie and James who lived in upstairs on 3rd floor. Also employed were Oscar and Sophie.

During 1929-30 the radio shows were broadcast from the Chicago merchandise mart and RFS stayed at the Seneca hotel for the weekdays, going home on the weekends.

1930 - *The Ghost of Lake Tapaho* published; and Ralston published a 12 page comic book version of the Red Runners, 3 comic strips to a page.

1932 - Wrote *The Mystery of the Belfry*

The Enquirer and RKO jointly sponsored a real movie titled "Home Run Hawkins" with every member under 16 to be in it. Any member who showed up at the Palace Theater on Saturday morning would be considered for look-alike parts, and everyone would appear in the mob scenes. Robert JR was one of the stars. The Kemper Log Cabin at the Cincy Zoo, was used for the clubhouse and baseball scenes were shot at Redland Field (now Crosley Field). The film was quite popular and was shown to Cincinnati and Pennsylvania members. The Milwaukee Journal produced the same movie with its own club members and local settings. The Ralston Company made another movie.

1933 - Dr Drago and the Purple Light / Red Castle / Emperors Sword / Little Flower of the Sun and some short stories never published. Many manuscripts may remain forgotten in family storage. Old Jacoby, The Red and Green Mansion are two that may exist.

1934 - moved to Grovedale place behind Withrow high school in Hyde Park. The maid was Florence - a German girl.

1935 - moved to Herschell View near Ault Park.

1936 - Moved to an English Tudor house on Tremont Road in Upper Arlington, Columbus, Ohio. Girls went to Ohio State; Robert JR joined the Army; later John joined Army too. Accepted by high society, many fancy and expensive birthday parties were given for the children and some social adult gatherings too.

1942 - RFS worked as secretary (or was it seckatary) to Governor Bricker - in charge of Publicity and Development for the State of Ohio from 1942 to 1943. The family lived on Tremont Road in Columbus for those years. Seck resigned since he wanted to devote his time to something more creative than the routines of government service. The family moved back Halpin Avenue, in Cincinnati, where RFS went back to work full time for the Seckatary business.

After the business failure in 1945, he moved to more modest trappings at 3237 Observatory Road (at St. John's Place), Hyde Park, Cincinnati; then briefly to 1147 Halpin Ave and finally to 2560 Erie Avenue, Hyde Park, Cincinnati in 1946, where he worked in a third floor study, mostly at night. RFS occupied a second floor bedroom and den where he could work and sleep undisturbed for days if he felt like it, only emerging for the occasional meal. Here he contently lived his remaining years.

1943 - He returned to work for the Enquirer to conduct reader opinion surveys, and in 1945 was in charge of the library of the newspaper, he also wrote the "daily thought" for the editorial page.

THE NATIONAL SECKATARY HAWKINS CLUBS:

The first club was started by the Enquirer in 1923 at Mr. Wiley's suggestion. RFS drove around the country assuming the identity of Seckatary Hawkins grown up, and helped organize other clubs and chapters. He decided anyone could join who promises to be fair and square and live up to the rules of the club. He truly loved and understood children and how to communicate with them. RFS traveled the country attending club ceremonies and selling more Hawkins' features to newspapers.

Club Info on book dust covers shows: "several million members worldwide in the heyday". Purportedly there were 170,000 members in Cincinnati and 300,000 in Pittsburgh in 1930. Club membership applications were printed in the newspapers. Membership cards were issued and blue and white pin badges were awarded that sometimes gave admission to the wearer to movies. There were banners and flags with the motto inscribed. There were Seck Hawkins days at Coney Island. In the 1920's over 100 newspapers carried Seckatary. Combined circulation is reported at over 10 million daily.

The last date we see printed was 1954 in small Midwest papers.

Children, mostly boys, continually wrote in that they felt exactly like the characters in the stories, felt like members of the club group, and wanted directions to the real clubhouse on the riverbank so they could join up.

Jackie Coogan, child screen star of the Chaplin film, "The Kid", signed up as a member in 1923. Jackie was so engrossed in Seckatary's adventures that his father built him a clubhouse in the backyard.

There was even an actor, Ed Ritenbaugh, who played "Seck" for the Pittsburgh press in 1930 through 1950. He would MC five parties and movie outings for "Seck" club members every week. Screen stars

like Dick Powell, and Ruth Roman appeared at times. They touted 500,000 members then. He didn't look much like RFS, but the 625 chapters and multiple clubs within chapters didn't mind.

The moral message was evident in every story as well as **Club rules** that were calculated to fortify juvenile idealism and consolidate parental approval as follows:

- a) Always be fair and square.
- b) Attend all meetings, or give excuse when absent.
- c) Always leave word with your mother where you are going, so you may be found if wanted in a hurry.
- d) No loud noise in the clubhouse. Wait till you are out on the riverbank, and then shout to your heart's content.
- e) No fighting. - Members having complaints against other members must tell the captain, and the matter will be taken up fair and square.
- f) Tell the truth. A boy who lies cannot be trusted.
- g) Don't try to hide your mistakes. Look upon them as lessons and resolve never to be fooled the same way again.
- h) Never give up. Don't think you can't do a hard task just because you have failed in previous attempts. Always try again.
- i) Treat your fellow club members as you would want them to treat you.
- j) Use common sense in everything. Look before you leap. Never make a move until you have considered every angle. Better to do nothing than do it wrong.
- k) Try to learn one new thing each day, so that you will know more today than you knew yesterday. Knowledge is power.
- l) Stick to your friends and they will stick to you. And a friend in need is a friend indeed.

These principals were constantly referred to in the adventure stories. The aim was to give every boy and girl reader a sense of responsibility and worth. Critic's comments attest to the effectiveness of the material. Later the pledges were contracts with members with more simplicity:

- a. "I shall always be fair and square, possessed with strength of character, honest with God and my friends, and in later life, a good citizen."
- b. "A winner never quits and a Quitter never wins" was popular with the members.

Club colors are Blue and White. This may be an adaptation of the USA patriotic red-white-and blue as well as some relations to Catholic vestments and to the historic Germanic ancestry.

There were parades, huge turn outs to picnics, special theatrical entertainments, clubhouses were opened. Songs were written, one memorable one by George F. Ritenbaugh Sr. of Pittsburgh called "I'll meet you down On the Old Riverbank"...With the Seckatary Hawkins Club... Where each young Tom, Dick and Harry....Larry and Hank...With not one of them a Dub...For the Pittsburgh Press... We must confess... Has nurtured us from just a tiny grub...So meet us down on the old riverbank...With the Seckatary Hawkins Club."

There were prizes for members who wrote the best essays - books, pins, plaster bookend images of Seck. The bookend specialist William P. McDonald of Rookwood Company, designed the statuette. Ed Hurley, the etcher of bookplate drawings recommended him.

Seckatary, The Movie:

The Milwaukee Journal's WTMJ radio sponsored a silent movie - "Home Run Hawkins" with an all-club cast -every actor a member. True, each team had nine players and some reliefs, but the stands were filled to overflowing with members. This was filmed in the Kemper log cabin and Cincinnati Zoo surrounding grounds. My dad and Uncle John played small parts in this. The movie is lost to us. No

records of these films were ever found. What a catastrophe! Later the Enquirer made another movie and lent it to the Pittsburgh Press which showed it all over Pennsylvania.

The temporary end:

The most popular opinion is that Seck really wanted to do the radio shows, but the newspapers' leaders of the day feared the competition of radio so much that they envisioned the extinction of the printed word. The ultimatum was "love us or lose us". Radio won the battle, but Seck lost the war. Nearly all the newspapers dropped the Seckatary.

Another version was that the depression and the paper shortage killed the Seck movement. (ref: Cincinnati Enquirer article 7/19/49.)

But the Fair & Square club is still alive and well on the internet site www.seckatary.com which started in 1999. Anyone can join for free if they promise to be fair and square and live up to the rules of the club. Just like the old days.

THINGS RFS LOVED:

His Sweetheart - Julia Buckley Darnell was 5 foot 7 with brown hair and steel blue eyes. Always thin and graceful. Always strict, prim and proper. Quite a cook was she, after RFS pushed her to understudy with his mom, and grandmothers.

Julia is descended from a line of the Turkey Island, Virginia Randolphs and a cousin 6 times removed of President Thomas Jefferson whose mother was a Randolph.

Julia B' was a fair beauty who had all the boys running in many directions - but something about RFS was irresistible.

When they were courting, RFS wrote many long letters while Julia B was away on vacation - all tied with ribbons and bows and illustrated in different colors. We don't have any of the replies from Julia, but RFS complained in his letters that she didn't write "fat" letters as he did.

Married life - began with elopment - Wednesday, 2/10/15 in Augusta, Kentucky at St Augustine's Church- yes, he was a bit of a super-salesman, turning the head and better judgment of Julia Buckley Darnell, the most eligible bachelor-ette beauty to run away with him to the disdain and initial displeasure of the Darnell clan. He was 25 and she was 21. She was the prettiest ever - he the coolest ever! Julia's cousin, Mrs. Newton W. "Mag" Evans helped with the elopment and stood up for them along with her husband. Julia used the pretense of "going to the Zoo" when she left home that day. With the help of her cousin, Mag Buckley Evans, the wedding was secretly arranged. Julia notified her parents in Covington by phone directly after the ceremony - Florence Darnell heard, " Hello Mamma, this is Mrs. Schulkers speaking." Imagine the reaction of a prim and proper mother to that news. The wedding was at St. Augustines Church in Augusta, Kentucky. Reverend Romanus Van der Vorst officiating. The parents printed a "Covington" marriage announcement that was sent to friends and family. An interesting aside is that some of the more illustrious ancestors of the Darnell's had also "committed" elopments.

Her parents were not ready for them to marry - didn't think he had the breeding - even after 8 years of courting. But they quickly changed their opinion of the simple newspaperman when they really got to know him.

We have retained several love letters Robert sent to Julia B when she made some trips with her aunt to Chicago and to visit her grand parents in Paris, Kentucky. He wrote with special purple ink and made little illustration drawings. Many pages were folded into tiny booklets tied with ribbon and headed each "chapter" with red ink. This was truly one of the most ardent love affairs in history. Both these people were strong, self-willed individuals, but together they became a whirlwind force that knocked the socks

off the public. They were destined for one another - fated if you will. Nothing could stop this union of mind, body and spirit that continues today - I can still feel it!

As it turned out, the Darnell's grew to love this young man as a true son, and the favor was enthusiastically and bombastically returned. As we look at the family tree of the Darnell's, we see the art of elopement was practiced many times in the earlier generations. These Darnell, Railey and Randolph girls would have their choice of a man!

In an area of Kentucky known as Ducker's Station, in Woodford County or sometimes called "Germany", Robert made an illustrated trip booklet of a Darnell reunion trip. He was an ardent admirer of his in-laws and in the month starting September 6, 1915, Seck concocted a pleasant collection of photos, poems, newspaper articles and writing to commemorate a Darnell family excursion to the ancestral hinterlands in Kentucky. A casual reader of this treatise would think he was more related to the Darnell's than his wife. Here we see the first reference of a "Cliff Cave" on the Kentucky River bank that Charles Darnell played in as a child. This is in the Versailles area.

Fatherhood - how he loved being a father. It was my observation that he loved each of his four children in a unique and ardent way. Although you might expect that he would have a favorite child, I could never discern any inkling of favoritism. He didn't seem to push them or be critical to any of them. He just took them as they were and offered his encouragement to whatever they decided to do.

Children were:

Robert Franc Schulkers Junior, my father, 11/19/17-4/6/72 - Born on Park Avenue in Latonia, KY. Child prodigy -Artistic pianist. Composed first musical score at age 9. Also played organ, accordion, composed, etc. Nightclub entertainer. Worked with Johnny Long orchestra. Childhood sweetheart and wife Marion Holly was the singer in the "Bob Darnell Duo" band. She was the most gentle and wonderful mother who guided us all through life. Much like the Seckatary descriptions of the universal "Mother". We miss her so!

Dad Graduated Walnut Hills High School- he was the drum major and had his own 8-piece band called the "Victorians". Raised three unruly sons to their credit. Truly "always fair and square"- a gentle gentleman. (RFS dedicated *Knights of the Square Table to my dad*). We were so shocked to lose him at so early an age. It is sad to witness your father's funeral, but so much more so for a loving mother to do. Julia B was outwardly a pillar of strength, but obviously destroyed inside. He is said to be the epitome of big brother - all the siblings loved him and his gentle ways.

Ruth Darnell Schulkers - Born on 5/15/21 at 3029 Harvey Ave, Cincinnati, Ohio - Attended Ohio State University, Theta Phi Alpha. Worlds best cook and mother (7 fantastic children), member Magna Charta Dames / D.A.C. / D.A.R./ Colonial Dames of the 17th Century. She is family historian, and still "as fair as a fairy" (RFS dedicated *Ching Toy* to Ruth) -a real class act. The most eligible bachelor-ette of her time (much like her mother, but more reserved and refined), she was somehow swept off her feet by a dashing, and very serious man who made her Mrs. Willard G. Bryant. Uncle Bill was always full of energy and knew the right thing to do in every circumstance. He never took no for an answer, especially when he knew it was the right thing to do. We respected this man immensely and were sorry to lose him to father time.

Julia Buckley (really Beatrice) Schulkers - Born on Stacey Ave, Cincinnati, Ohio 1/11/22. Birth certificate shows middle name as Beatrice. Julia B wanted Buckley, and Seck wanted Beatrice. This lively little lady was the star of every show. She was, and is, a performer - what we refer to as a "Hot Ticket" in Boston. She helped her father at 10 years old by reading the parts of "Eva La Valiere of Hollywood" (pronounced Eva LA Valeer) on the Seckatary radio shows. She and RFS played together in a couple of stage productions around Cincy too. Attended Walnut Hills High School, also a dancer

of some renown during high school. She attended Ohio State; was Kappa Alpha Theta sorority. She worked in a little dress shop to earn spending \$. The most popular girl with the most beau's she was always running around in her youth and playing little funny jokes, until, one day when she least expected it, her heart was captured by an engaging young man who could play her game even better than she did. Before he has his own children, Ollie Sharman would play with my brothers and me as if he was one of the gang. We still remember the ever-present jokes and the feared-but-fun Indian burns he would give us - (we noticed that little boys love to scream with joy too, but don't tell anybody). We were so sad to lose him, but thankful for the times we shared. Judy and Ollie had 3 beautiful, model children you would have to see to believe. She is my "best girl", my real Godmother, and still a "little flower girl". (RFS dedicated *The Chinese Coin to Judy*)

John Randolph Schulkers - Born 4/6/26 at 3029 Harvey Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio, -a bit early (before the Doctor could arrive), he has always made his own timing decisions and been in a hurry. (RFS dedicated *The Yellow Y* to John) -Not "such a little fellow" any more. Top executive for the yellow pages. Great Husband, father of 3 great people, family patriarch extraordinaire', loving grandfather. He is everybody's best family friend and counselor. As we say in Boston town - "he never met a stranger". A chip off the old block, he looks and sounds like Seck and is mistaken for him on the streets of Cincy. Graduated from Upper Arlington High School; attended Ohio State U; was Sigma Alpha Epsilon. A US Air Force pilot training candidate. Later attended University of Cincinnati to be with Sue who had chosen that school. When I was little and he was a teen, he would call me "Randolfski, the Russiano" after he read to me from Seckatary Hawkins Red Runners account of Androfski. I guess he wanted the little kid to be silent, especially around his best girl, Sue Grove whom he knew I admired (and who didn't?). Sue was a very famous and glamorous child TV actress and starlet who had just one "weak moment" - when she met "Jonny", who wouldn't let her alone- that "weak moment" has lasted lo' these 60 some years! (My Dad said we should have called him "Lucky" for his dependable margin of luck that began when he first set eyes on Big Sue). He has always "stuck by me", and is, without any doubt or exaggeration, my best "side-partner" since Seckatary and my Dad died. He is my mentor, confidante, friend, and happily, my real Godfather.

Grandfatherhood - he was the best for me and I have heard it echoed around the country from all my cousins and siblings, that we have all been blessed to have spent some time with this great man and his incredible wife. The encouragement he gave me personally was a primary factor in my development. When living in Florida, I had my first child, (named Julia, of course). Great-grandma and Great-grandpa just had to see her, so, in August of 1968, they paid our way to Cincy when Julia B (B for Baby this time) was not quite two years old. Seckatary didn't emerge from his study room much in those days, but one look and a hug from Julia Baby, and the romance began! This truly ferocious little child under Seckatary's tutelage could do no wrong, and no one could correct her, and no one else could hold her when Seck was around. And she even replaced me as Grandpa's "old side partner" who met at the old Sycamore doorway in the RFS study. They spent so much time together that Julia B and I had time to go shopping - a lot. I realized then that Grandpa's first and foremost interest would always be little children. I had grown up and could take care of myself now, so it was my baby's time to get Seckatary under her skin - Which she did. We had a wonderful week that I will always cherish, and Julia Baby is well infected with the Hawkin's stories and spirit. She is somewhat of an authority on the characters, has most of the books, and is always on the lookout to add to her collection.

He loved German foods - Ghoetta; "Farmer's Mett", (a hard salami), sandwiches with a little butter and dunked in coffee with touch of cream; white wieners; Coney Island chili dogs - popularly called "Coney's"; braunschweiger; liver puddin' with white toast and butter (dunked in coffee with each bite, of course); kale; sauerkraut and mashed potatoes; etc; and, oh yes, a little red wine. Other food and drink favorites were black and brown "cows". (A kid friendly mixture of almost equal parts of root beer

or cola and sugar and milk).

Drawing: he put together many pictures and liked to construct signs on poster board, sometimes for pay. He was a part time mechanical drawing artist complete with the various compass, pencil, T-square, etc.

Words - Harbinger and arbiter and other words you never heard of. This was a well read and learned man who made benevolent sport of it. You wouldn't know it from his illiteration- "izing" of early stories like the Snow Fort and Our Club newspaper series.

Photography, both stills and hand crank home movies. He took lots of family photos and movies at numerous family get-togethers.

A typical family event was Kentucky Derby parties where mint julep's were fastidiously prepared and served with real mint leaf sprigs from Seck's home garden. Each person picked a favorite horse, \$1.00 each was put up and the winner got the pot. He loved group singing at these family gatherings. When the children were small, he would rock them in a rocking chair and sing to them.

Fishing and hiking. We have little picture booklets of RFS and Julia B in 1913, 1914 and 1915, leading up to their elopement.

Poetry writing: we have several of the poems that rival the master poets as far as we are concerned. They are filled with love and regard for those he directed them to.

He loved rabbits - Dutch's were his favorite, but he also had Himalayans. He published 1918 -but written in 1915, RFS wrote a book, *Raising Rabbits Right* on the care, rearing and feeding thereof. Since he could find no concise authority on the subject, he wrote one himself using many of his own photographs in the book. Here we learn that the name "rabbit" is a bit of a misnomer, and should rightfully be referred to as a "Cony", from the Latin name, Lepus Cuni Culus. His father-in-law was a long time rabbitier as well. RFS always had a few bunnies until his much later years. His son, John carries on that lagomorphic tradition to this day.

ORIGINS OF THE SECKATARY MATERIAL:

RFS has said his father's old stories and songs were the first stimulus for these Seckatary Hawkins stories.

About 150,000 Seck Hawkins books were printed in the 11 titles. Wonderful mystery stories of juvenile to pre-adolescent boys club adventures 1918 through the 1930's. The boys in the club stories are composites of his friends and neighbors during RFS childhood. The circumstances are sometimes true, sometimes imagined and ingrained with some stories his dad told him. Setting is a semi-fictional Kentucky River bank - near southern Covington. Watertown, or Cincinnati, was "up river". Pelham was in the Newport, KY area.

Why a fat boy? We don't really know. RFS was never fat in his childhood and was a fit figure of a man when the stories were written. He reported that his father was "portly" and could well have been the model because he had all the other heroic attributes and lived near the Licking river before RFS did (actually during the Civil War). Or, perhaps he was complimenting some childhood friend or sibling or relative who reflected the heroic attributes of Hawkins. Certainly RFS could have guessed that he would acquire a potbelly in his old age just like his father. But, the effect seems wonderful for the stories and the children who read them. The resultant moral message effect is multiplied by using a fat boy as the true-to-life central figure who has average, yet honorable abilities and insights and who succeeds through deductive perseverance and fair play. Other oblique advantages can be inferred from this phenomenon that elevate the universal image of any common boy (or girl) and promote a sentiment

toward fair play for, among, and by all children. As Seck says, "...there are no hopelessly bad boys, only boys that have been injured or bent some way in their youth and had no one to straighten them up and keep them on the right path as they grew". All children have the inalienable right and the innate ability to do better and to succeed at anything if they just try, try again.

What the heck is a Seck? - His job as secretary to publisher W F Wiley at the Enquirer may have been some spark of this origin. The "Seckatary" mis-spelling was written to have come about when the club was formed and the boys were about 8 or 9 years old. They couldn't spell too well, and so the name stuck. It was meant to reflect a young, childish mis-spelling of "secretary", of course. The name was meant to give a greater ease of identifying characteristics to the stories through a common mis-spelling of words tendency that the majority of average young target readers were imagined to have had.

The Snow Fort was the first Seck Hawkins story printed in the Cincinnati Enquirer on Sunday 2/3/1918, LITTLE CORNER FOR LITTLE PEOPLE page, titled "*Johnny's Snow Fortress*". In 1922, it was reprinted in Volume 1, number 1 of the 1922 bi-weekly Seckatary Hawkins magazine serials published by H & S Pogue's department stores. It was not titled *The Snow Fort, or Johnny's Snow Fortress* in this magazine, but simply "*The First Hawkins Story*", but it continued to be known as "*The Snow Fort*". Sunday editor H N Hildreth suggested doing a story on the gang every Sunday. Which he did, although very busy with work as assistant to J Herman Thuman -music and drama critic. RFS was also local correspondent for The Musical Courier.

On 2/17/18, the first extract of the Seckatary Hawkins club diary was printed. The stories ran 17 years - to 1935 in the Enquirer. The Cleveland Plain Dealer ran them 1923 till 1942 (record for a series of 31 years in print). At the high point, 10 million newspapers each day were delivered to anxious readers in many towns and cities in the USA containing Seckatary Hawkins stories. Daily comic strips as well as the Sunday magazine stories were obviously of high interest in those days.

RFS used the mis-spelled name "Rejiment" for the first clubhouse name. Similar technique was observed in other later stories that became nationally popular in movies, and later on TV, where mis-spellings and mirror image lettering was done for humorous or childlike effect. What would have happened if Seck's works were "discovered" by Hollywood instead? Or maybe they did borrow some of the RFS ideas? The vocabulary and tone was set to reflect realistic juvenile - adolescent speech, much of it in the Northern Kentucky - Southern Ohio vernacular. Slang words of local and foreign characters are intelligently added in pleasant phonetic style. We notice a strong increase of this phonetic usage in new, successful author's styles from the 1920's through the 1960's. (e.g. *To Kill A Mockingbird* which uses Seckatary Hawkins as the ending moral comparison).

Chapters were kept purposely short in length due to the relatively short juvenile attention span. Everything is pleasantly presented and written from the standpoint of the youth, which helps create that "identifying" phenomenon that is not always common in young readers. Likewise, the adult reader is transported back to the pleasures and anxieties of his childhood days and the resulting catharsis has been reported, time and time again, to be "most pleasant". It is easy to pick up the story line after even the lengthiest absence from any of the books. It must be remembered that the presentation is in an easy-worded format that may seem quite slow to the mature reader, but fits perfectly with the adolescent or child's level of understanding.

The River:

Is not entirely real, it was a composite of the Ohio and Licking rivers in Kentucky. RFS grew up along the smaller Licking River that does run from the larger Ohio River nearby. The stories required different sizes of river to accommodate the various situations the boys would find themselves in. There is reference in Ching Toy and Herman that the smaller river runs into the larger stream at Watertown. Of more than casual coincidence is the fact that Julia B Darnell's father grew up on the Kentucky (not

the larger Ohio) river further south at Versailles, Woodford county, where RFS made a 1913 photo record of a river cliff area with a hidden cave. The cave was so well hidden that he could not find it during that trip; however, I believe it laid the seeds of the story. Mr. Darnell, a "hot ticket" in his youth, could tell quite a lively tale. On a lucky guess, on 5/18/99 I found the Cliff Cave on Clifton Pike, Highway 1964, at Clifton, KY, with Charlie Darnell's niece, Susan E Darnell Robertson. We have photos of my wife, Bonnie at the mouth of the cave - she was the only one small enough to fit, but wouldn't go all the way in since there were too many spiders. Fortunately she was wearing gray and made the photo rather "Gray Ghostly".

Where did he get the Hawkins name?

One popular report is: When they were first married, Robert and Julia B spent much time with his mother-in-law's sister, Julia "Jewel" (or "Jule") Buckley who married Omer Hawkins where he got the stimulation for the Seckatary Hawkins name. Robert had the greatest respect for Omer and Jule.

However, there are other Hawkins's in the Darnell line - In 1850, Katherine Hawkins married Aaron H. Darnell JR, the first Pastor of the Millville church (great-grandson of the famous Aaron Darnell who founded Frankfurt, Kentucky. Of interest to some readers may be the fact that Katherine Hawkins' and Aaron's son was Judge Isham Randolph Darnell, great grandson of William Randolph and Mary Isham of Turkey Island, Virginia. (the early founders of the William & Mary college and grand parents of President Thomas Jefferson). Aaron's father was Isham Keith Hawkins; and grandfather was William Strother Hawkins, a pioneer of Woodford County and an American Revolutionary soldier. The great-great grandfather was Captain Moses Hawkins of Orange City (or county), VA. Robert and Julia B' had been married only about 3 years when the Seckatary Hawkins name was publicly born in the February 3, 1918, Cincinnati Enquirer feature story article, "The Snow Fort"; but that could have been time for him to make the name connection with all the family ancestors. Since he took such an ardent interest in the Darnell-Buckley heritage, it most surely came to his attention.

"Which we did":

The signature phrase served to announce to the reader that there was more to come, but also that everything would be OK. In this manner, the child reader would not be overly frightened about the outcome of any adventure or intrigue. The child could safely keep his bedtime appointment when his mother called, and not worry that he was missing something. Likewise, the reader would not have to wait and worry too much till tomorrow to find out if the boys accomplished one adventurous thing or another. We see this as an ingenious understanding of the juvenile attention span. We feel that it heightened the intrigue for the reader who did not want to be frightened out of his wits, but enjoyed more the challenge of finding out the "How" and "When" and "Why" of a mystery. But Seck does not underestimate his readers, it is common fact that the hero can't get killed or the game is over. In the 70's, kid's tagged this fate-tempting desire "hang ten". In the 80's it was "awesome", in the 90's anything less than full video action and lots of unsightly gore was sissy. Personally, I wish we could go back to the small town innocence and safe harbor feeling that seems lost to many children today.

In the 3/3/1918 Enquirer newspaper article, "*Johnny's Snow Fortress*" - section on page 8, we see the origin of the "Which we did" statement mixed in the second to the last paragraph; and in the 1922 Seckatary Hawkins first magazine story, *The Regiment*, Volume 1 number 2, we first see "Which we did" at the ending of chapter II = "Each Boy put in a Dime", cutting out many words from the originally printed story to cleverly end the chapter with his signature phrase.

Also seen in the second installment of the newspaper, *The Regiment* 3/18/1918. It is used in the body text of other early stories, but this is the first time it ends a chapter. It became a trademark phrase in Seck culture. It is reported that about 1926, RFS was convinced to drop the phrase because it seemed to dampen the suspense endings. He did not permanently follow these suggestions as we can see, except

that The Cazanova Treasure does not use it at all. (A few other rare instances)

In *The Red Runners*, pub.1922, we first notice the phrase in chapter V - The Woodchoppers. It ends almost each chapter in every book thereafter. Exceptions are *Cazanova Treasure*, the first published work in 1921, which did not utilize the phrase at all. It is missing in *Stoner's Boy* I, and XXVII; *Gray Ghost* IV, XXVII; and, paraphrased for effect in VII as "Which It Did", and the last chapter XXXIII uses "Which We Never Did". It is missing in *Red Runners* VII, VIII, IX, X, XI. It is missing in *Stormie* I, VII, XXVII; and paraphrased to end the story as, "Which We Never Did". It is missing in *Ching Toy* XXVI.

OTHER ASSORTED RAMBLINGS:

My dad, RFS JR, always told the story of Seck's grandfather, Henry Herman Schulkers who would regularly take RFS to Cuba on vacations. They would ride the train to Florida and boat to Cuba from the keys just like in the story. This accounts for some knowledge of Cuba.

Henry Herman Schulkers was a police lieutenant in the Covington force and he must have been the inspiration for the heroic Detective Jeckerson character. In several stories, RFS wrote that Judge Granberry picked Seck "Chief" of the junior police even though Dick was the captain of the club. A very similar circumstance to his father's career as "acting" Chief of Police while the real chief was elsewhere.

RFS had a brother Joe who ran away from home and disappeared must have been the stimulus for Rolling Stone Loomis. I wonder if he really did show up again, or was that just wishful writing?

There were so many requests for back issues of the stories that the book just had to be published. 1921's *Seckatary Hawkins in Cuba*, and 1922's *Red Runners* received excellent national reviews. Oddly, the syndicates that were originally offered the serial advised RFS that the books couldn't be sold. In August of 1923, RFS and Julia B drove their first car, an Oakland Touring, on what they told family was a "vacation". in 14 days, they traveled to 12 cities in the Midwest and East Coast, selling Seck to 9 newspapers. Then he signed with the Metropolitan Newspaper syndicate to handle the marketing. In 1927, RFS took back the marketing and did it himself. His friend, Carl B. Williams, director of the Enquirer art department, was the first illustrator for the books using clean little line drawings that became extremely important to the stories.

The statue bookends in the likeness of Seck were commissioned to Rookwood Pottery Co, and designed in plaster with wire reinforcements by artist William F. McDonald. Most were just ivory in color, but some were brown colored on the boots. Some club members painted their bookends in multi colors for realism.

Books were written on the huge old manual typewriters that were pure physical drudgery with every key-press. It seemed when I was a child, to take my whole body just to press down a single key, but Grandpa could tap-tap-tap away while we sat playing chess, as if it were easy. I wonder how many extra stories we would have if he had had a personal computer.

In May, 1926, RFS left the Enquirer to devote full time to Seck. He returned a short time the next year to edit the 80 page "Spirit of Cincinnati" special section for June, 1928 publication.

Also in 1928, Joe Ebertz drew a daily Seck comic strip for the Enquirer and more than 100 syndicated papers throughout the country that lasted till the mid 1930's.

The first radio shows were just on crystal radio sets (which he loved to build himself by the way and used to teach us kids how to make them too). The real radio series started in 1922 when he was doing a daily squib "*Mile-a Minute-Milo*" adventures of a little boy in a tiny automobile. Seck got his own half-

hour radio program on Saturday nights on WLW in 1923. Many other cities that had run the newspaper stories picked up the broadcasts. Then a Tuesday evening half-hour was added on WSAI. The Milwaukee Journal's WTMJ featured him daily in the evening and for an hour on Sundays. In June, 1930, he went to daily in Cincy. RFS wrote the script himself, but confined it to dramatic reading rather than an attempt to personify each character. Sometimes his daughter Judy (Julia Beatrice) Schulkers would read the part of Tapaho's Lavalieri. Dr. Drago was a plotline on the 1930's Ralston Chicago Network. Little Flower of the Sun; The Purple light; Red Castle; Emperor's sword; etc are also described. When the programs went to NBC, they were dramatized. We have no recordings unfortunately.

PAST-TIMES:

I was so fortunate to be living for several years at Seck's house in my early life. My parents were young idealistic nightclub entertainers who couldn't afford to pay rent and needed the free baby-sitting that Julia B' and Aunt Mayme would provide. There is another sweet story to be told here, but it will have to wait till I finish this one. I rarely saw my parents in these formative years because they worked all night and slept most of the daylight when not rehearsing. It was my daily aim to hang around Grandpa's closed door until he emerged for the bathroom breaks. Once he saw me, he would peremptorily shoved me into his work room so we could talk, play chess and read together. (No-one else was allowed in). Actually, I was forbidden by my mother to "bother Grandpa", but I couldn't help it. I completely loved the man from the minute I met him and I know he had the same regard for me. I couldn't stay away. There was a bonding of boys between us, and I wanted to be just exactly like him. Now that I realize how great and productive he was, I know I will never be "exactly like him"; however, I feel him in the back of my mind every day and always try my best. That's all he ever asked of me.

So there existed our "secret arrangement" - "meet me by the old Sycamore Tree"; (His doorway was made of wood that could have been Sycamore - wasn't it?) and we will have adventures together. In this way, neither of us was at fault for breaking the house rule of leaving Grandpa alone (his own rule), because it was always a chance meeting and "just for a minute". I am not 100% sure, but I remember that Grandpa and I would spend a few hours of every day together. Some days longer than others depending upon his energy level. And once I was inside the work chambers, no one and nothing could separate us or extricate me. I was the protected member of our "club" and it was the greatest feeling of belonging that I ever knew. I pray that someday I can give such a gift to one of my grandchildren.

Chess - he liked the game and would spend hours and days teaching to me at my ages 6 to 9. I can remember him asking one question many times, "Are you sure you want to move there?" "Keep your finger on it", he would always caution. Do you think he let me win all those times?

Glass bottle altar building on his separate bedroom / den fireplace mantle with colored and clear tiny medicine bottles topped with marbles (puries, cats-eyes, tiger-eyes, etc - he knew all the names) and angel figurines. He was quite religious, and these "altars" were a break in the action of his teaching me chess or reading his new or old stories to me. He was a devout Catholic who never missed Sunday mass. I was always so proud to walk with him to the Hyde Park Town Square and sit up straight in St Mary's church for the services. Afterwards, we would always light a candle for each of us. The walk home after church always seemed to chance by the bakery or candy or ice cream stores- and we got so hungry with all that praying you know!

Stamp collecting. He tutored me on what to look for in USA and German older issues. He gave me my first stamp album when we moved out of his house into our own down on Duck Creek Road. Sadly, I only got to see him on occasional weekends after that. How I missed him! I miss him more now as I age but realize that those happy times are not gone forever, but kept safe and sound for instant recall to my mind's eye.

Ancestry- He did extensive study, research and reporting of the Darnell and Randolph lineage. He even developed into a Randolph lineage study after a chance meeting with a famous author and past Enquirer editor, George Randolph Chester. He couldn't find a connecting line with Julia B's Randolph heritage. The Randolph's of Turkey Island, VA, on the James River, might have provided some of the ideas for Seck stories. A visit there, (now Presquille island preserve, owned and managed by the US Dept of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Division), offers a history of river pirates and other recognizable situations, not the least of which is an island formed in the middle of a river where boys could spend summers camping and exploring. He could never gather much about the Schulkers clan in Germany.

Riddles:

Although he was not known as a joke teller to the general public, with us kids, he loved to recite funny lines.

- a. What's round as a biscuit, busy as a bee, has a face, but cannot see?"
- b. What has eight wheels and flies?
- c. What is black and white and red all over?
- d. Limericks: Something like the following, (please correct it if you know how):

Once was a girl in old Mackinaw
While drinking a soda she saw
Though she tried with full steam
To dislodge the ice cream
But she sucked herself into the straw.

Newspaper story he told me: "Don't drink my beer..."

When he was a young newspaperman, all the employees would stop at the local watering hole and have a few beers. It was common that many phone calls would come in for various newspapermen, so when they left their seat, the others would traditionally drink any remaining beer. Seck would put a note on his beer "I spit in this", that he thought worked rather well; because when he returned from a phone call, his beer and note were still as he had left it. One day, however, upon closer examination, there were 3 new words scribbled at the bottom of his note, "So did I".

Good Books:

He gave me his favorites to read, and sometimes read to me: *Can such things Be* by Ambrose Bierce; *Reynard the fox*; *The Red Runners* and *Stormie The Dog Stealer*. Sometimes he would read Seck Hawkins stories to me during the chess lessons, and Oh!, what stories they became. Nobody could tell the Seckatary stories with the same passion, enthusiasm and vocal intrigue as the master himself. We would talk for hours about other things the boy's had done that he hadn't written down yet. He was always convinced that his stories were going to be read by all boys and girls someday. He wanted my big brother and me to be sure and help my dad take care of that somehow. Dad had said we would work on this when he retired at 65, but unfortunately, Dad was called to entertain in heaven earlier.

As I grew into young adulthood, joined the Service and got married with children of my own, Grandpa and I always wrote letters and stayed in touch. I have only a few of them now. He and Julia B' attended my Air force induction, my wedding, my College graduation, and any family event they could with all four of their children and respective families. They always drove the old 56' Buick because he didn't trust those flying machines. It was a bit comical to ride along with them in the old Buick and experience the rare delegation of power to Julia B Seck didn't like to drive, so he assumed the role of navigator and "back-seat" driver.

We did spend some wonderful days on the Licking River, cane-pole fishing for mud catfish and trapping crawfish with Seck, my dad, Grandpa Charlie (Julia B's dad) my Uncle John and my big

brother Bobby. The "girls" of the family having better things to do. My brother John was too young (like 1 or 2) to do much in those days. The catfish were so tough, they would stay alive out of water all day long, and be kicking even when we got them home.

WHAT WRITING CRITICS say about Seckatary Hawkins books:

Philadelphia North American: -- "If you have never met Seckatary Hawkins, you have in store a treat comparable with the genuine pleasure you experienced when you first became acquainted with 'Huck Finn'. If you like boys and dogs, if their escapades ... recall those days of your own childhood, you can fairly revel in the rich humor that fills the book from cover to cover. And it may be that somewhat of profit may accompany the pleasure in reflection of the age of innocence."

From the **Cincinnati Enquirer:** -- "There is a serious need in this country for authors who will write wholesome material for children of preadolescent age, such as the stories I was brought up on - the Stevenson books and the 'Seckatary Hawkins' stories." and "Mysterious, exciting, wholesome, and well written. The author in all of his stories idealizes healthy boyhood, and Seckatary Hawkins and his pals are fine examples for any boy to know and follow."

New York Herald-Tribune: - "Even though you are not a young boy, you read on to find out if this romantic Gray Ghost figure who appears out of the clouds and disappears into them is going to be caught and subdued. His salvation comes in a way that will delight all his readers."

The Cleveland Times: - "When the reviewer handed this book to a certain young friend of his, he heard, 'Oh! Another Seckatary Hawkins book!' as it was snatched from him; and 'Gee! That's Swell!' as it was later returned. So it evidently is a good book.

Cleveland Plain Dealer: - "The best boys stories since 'Huckleberry Finn'."

New York Book Review: - "Seckatary Hawkins should have unusual interest for youth of any age.

Fairmont West Virginian: - "So brimful of life is Seckatary Hawkins that he rejuvenates all those around him. The author has interwoven the story with the lives of both juveniles and adults, so that the book is interesting to old as well as young, and yet nowhere has he failed to write from the juvenile standpoint.

"Any youth who reads Seckatary Hawkins will arise from the perusal with higher ideals and nobler aims. It is a book that should find its place in all juvenile libraries." -- **Father Francis J. Finn S.J.** (also a Cincinnati author of over 40 books for boys). Father Finn was an old friend of RFS who also has remarked to him: "You knew what to leave in the ink well, Bob! You have the ability to create distinctive characters so real that, if they suddenly did come to life, they would not make one faint."

The reader learns to think for himself and play Fair and Square throughout life.

American Hebrew: - "The most famous boys in history are Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer, and Penrod, who never lived anywhere except in the brains of Mark Twain and Booth Tarkington. They are well known because they are so true to life, real boys in every sense of the word. Another of these jolly little fellows is to be met in Seckatary Hawkins."

The American in New York -- "The boy reader, while being entertained, will imbibe plenty of useful information. What is best, he will unconsciously catch the spirit of love and appreciation for home and parents that permeates the whole story."

The Detroit Free Press: -- "The author of this series knows just the right amount of sentiment, humor and mystery to combine."

Springfield State Journal: - "As certain to find itself besides Dad's tobacco pouch as on the shelf of

the boy."

John G. Kidd, publisher:- "As a boy, if it had been possible to narrow down a selection of my favorite books to four or five titles, those most often read would have been 'Huckleberry Finn', 'Ivanhoe', 'Robin Hood', 'Tom Sawyer', and finally 'Treasure Island'. I imagine that any boy of my age at the time would be sure to add to this some one of the various 'Seckatary Hawkins' books all good, clean stories of adventure."

An old RFS pal said of Seck's success(circa 1940) : "In 30 years he has not had to "freshen" one story or even change one line of it which is remarkable in this quickly changing world of ours. Bob takes his readers into the unchanging world of the young boy, the little primitive who must recapitulate the race by loving hurled stones and bare feet, night forays and hot feuds, makeshift shacks and small boats, terror and danger and daring, and twists of water lazying by the mysteries of willow thicketed gravel bars..."(by W.F. Wiley?)

Seckatary influenced the famous novel

TO KILL A MOCKING BIRD

1960 - Harper Lee wrote this world famous story of her childhood in Alabama. There are several references to the Seckatary Hawkins books and stories. In the first chapter, page 18, it appears that the visiting boy, Dill, and Scout's brother Jem have a mutual interest in Seckatary Hawkins due to the dare and bet of a "*The Gray Ghost*" book. Dill bets Jem a "*Gray Ghost*" against two Tom Swift's, that Jem won't get by the front gate, but later ...Dill concedes that he will cancel the dare and swap *The Gray Ghost* if Jem will just touch the spooky house of Boo Radley.

There is a very similar hollow tree-hiding place in the Seck Hawkins magazine story called *The Rejiment*, where the boys hid all their "good stuff". Rifle, slingshot,etc..

Harper Lee even chooses to end her book with the moral lessons of Seckatary Hawkins by quoting from *The Gray Ghost*, and using that parallel to make her point. Pages 254-255: "Atticus was in Jem's room, sitting by his bed. He was reading a book...'Whatcha readin?'' I asked. Atticus turned the book over. 'Something of Jem's. Called *The Gray Ghost*. I was suddenly awake. 'Why'd you get that one?' 'Honey, I don't know. Just picked it up. One of the few things I haven't read', he said pointedly. 'Read it out loud, please, Atticus. It's real scary.' 'No', he said. 'You've had enough scaring for a while. This is too--' 'Atticus, I wasn't scared....Besides, nothin's real scary except in books.' ... He took his thumb from the middle of the book and turned back to the first page. I moved over and leaned my head against his knee. 'H'mm,' he said. '*The Gray Ghost*, by Seckatary Hawkins. Chapter One...' I willed myself to stay awake, but the rain was so soft and the room was so warm and his voice was so deep and his knee was so snug that I slept....'Heard every word you said', I muttered. '...wasn't asleep at all. 's about a ship an' Three-Fingered Fred 'n' Stoner's Boy...' ...' Yeah, an' they all thought it was Stoner's Boy messin' up their clubhouse an' throwin' ink all over it an'...' ...'An' they chased him 'n' never could catch him 'cause they didn't know what he looked like, an' Atticus, when they finally saw him, why he hadn't done any of those things...Atticus, he was real nice...' His hands were under my chin, pulling up the cover, tucking it around me. 'Most people are, Scout, when you finally see them.' He turned out the light and went into Jem's room. He would be there all night, and he would be there when Jem waked up in the morning."

Curiously, Scout must have been more asleep than she thought, *The Gray Ghost* story does mention Seck's blotter having the ink bottle spilled (but not thrown all over) by 3 fingered Fred, but no scattering of papers; however, the tearing up and scattering of books around the club house appears in the first sequel, *Stoner's Boy* p51. Stoner's also describes a snow fort being "messed up". So, several Seckatary Hawkins books were obviously available to read in that household. Putting the two stories

together from book one to book four implies that their Seck interest was more than a brief fancy.

A communication Ms Lee sent to me recently reflects that she is proud to be a member of the Seckatary Hawkins Fair & Square Club.

The Mockingbird Movie

The only mention of Seckatary in the movie version was when the visiting boy, Dill bets a " *Gray Ghost*" against two Tom Swift's, in a different circumstance. This appears in Chapter one of the book, but a little later in the movie version. Jem's touch to the Radley house is also different, using Scout in an old tire that rolls to the Radley porch steps. After saving Scout, Jem runs up and touches the house.

A Hollywood editing omission is an unfortunate loss to the movie viewer because the ending of the movie makes no mention of the moral lesson of Seckatary's *Gray Ghost or Stoner's Boy* books. If one does not read the *To kill a Mockingbird* book, he will miss the final moral impact that the Seckatary reference allows - perhaps the central theme of the author!

LEGACY- A WINNER NEVER QUILTS AND A QUITTER NEVER WINS:

A winner never quits - Seck continued working until his sudden death by heart attack April 6, 1972, at home in Hyde Park. He was working on a new story that brought the boys into the next century and modern conveniences that the first boys did not know about. He died in his home, halfway through the "Old Sycamore Doorway" to his study. We don't know his last words, because he was already gone when Julia B found him in the hall. So, perhaps his last words will be the message in his books. Because he had the foresight to write his words down in such a pleasant fashion for all who share the camaraderie of the Fair & Square club, we will now remember him forever.

EPILOGUE

Seckatary Hawkins has quite simply, maybe a little obliquely, yet benevolently, challenged all of us to be our very best and reach for that brightest star time and time again. His prime desire seemed to be that we respect ourselves and love our family; our God and country; fairly and squarely; as he loved and treated us all; with the hopeful consequence of our loving him back. ... **Which we did.**

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