

CHAPTER 1

LOOK! A LITTLE CATFISH

It Just So Happened that I was born at a time¹ when getting born was pretty ordinary. It happened in a bedroom. In my case in my grandparents' bedroom. Supervised by whomever happened to be around. In my case by my grandmother.

My grandmother's maiden name was Eva Gibson. She was born in Potosi, Wisconsin. She grew up there, and went to school there, and became a spelling-bee champion there, and married my grandfather (Theodore A. Calloley) there. She called him Thode--like *toad* only more affectionately.²

Also, before they got married (but not, apparently, before they were thinking about it), she conspired to keep him supplied with food while he hid from the sheriff in the hills above Potosi. As I heard the story Thode got in a fight. For whatever reason I was never told. But apparently he did a good job of it, and he was big enough for that. His antagonist was sufficiently banged up for Thode to go into hiding. Eva knew where he was and sneaked food to him every day until the report was that Thode's pugilism was not proving fatal. His opponent would survive. Thode came out of hiding and they got married.

At that time Thode worked in the Potosi lead mines, which was O.K. But apparently not nearly as O.K. as the kind of mining being done out in Colorado: gold and silver. Before long Thode and Eva were on their way to Colorado: on their way to fame, fortune, and kids--in which they were successful only in part. Gold was elusive. So was silver. Elusive even in the bonanza towns of Central City and Black Hawk and Silver Plume where they went seeking fortune--if not fame and kids. Thode found himself not prospecting for gold, but digging for silver in somebody else's mine: Not exactly as he had envisioned it would be. He was paid well, but fact was Eva made as much as he did. She ran the "Calloley Room and Board House" in Black Hawk. Not bawd--board.

Also, sometime later after they deserted mining and moved down to Denver, Eva cut into a little "fame". She became an insider in the back room of the Republican Party in Denver, which meant that, among other things, she helped determine who ran the City and County of Denver and who got patronage, including, I suspect, a Calloley "perk" here and there--never confessed.

With Kids? They did somewhat better: six in all, including my mother, Eva

¹June 11, 1918.

²Theodore Augustus Calloley was born in Bowling Green, Missouri, November 5, 1854. Eva Sarah Gibson was born in Potosi, Wisconsin, August 11, 1858. Theodore and Eva married January 16, 1879, in Wisconsin. They moved to Central City, Colorado, in 1879, and to Denver in 1884. They built a house (3020 South Lincoln) in Englewood, Colorado, in 1892.

Ruth,³ who was destined to get married and pregnant with me, and to present me to the world in my grandparents' front bedroom,⁴ with my grandmother in charge of ceremonies.

It was also in that grandparent's bedroom that I had my first encounter with the English language as my grandmother spoke it at me. Looking at me as I opened my mouth wide in my first vocalizing, she spoke affectionately: "Look! A little catfish." I don't exactly remember her saying that, but I was told so later, and she did not deny it. What effect that initial pronouncement had on me I am not sure. But it must have had some effect. At least I use it as an excuse for a number of things.

³Born February 2, 1893.

⁴Where she herself had been born a quarter century earlier.