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SMOKY JOE WOOD

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SMOKY JOE WOOD

The Biography of a Baseball Legend

GERALD C. WOOD

University of Nebraska Press • Lincoln & London

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Set in Minion by Laura Wellington.
Designed by Roger Buchholz.

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First thanks go to Robert K. Wood, Joe's youngest son and keeper of the Smoky Joe flame. Bob shared his archives and, despite suffering from emphysema, courageously endured a rainy, exhausting trip to Shohola, Pennsylvania, and the Baseball Hall of Fame. While deeply concerned for the health of his wife, Connie, Bob supported this book, providing essential information and images. Baseball lost a warm-hearted advocate when Bob died on May 31, 2009.

Once oriented in my research, I retraced the path of Smoky Joe's career. Good friends Andy Hazucha and Emily Hester offered their home in Lawrence, Kansas, as a launching pad for my side trips in Kansas and Missouri. Traveling west to Ness City, Kansas, I enjoyed a day at the Ness County Historical Society and places associated with the John F. Wood family. Michele O'Toole at the Ness City Public Library provided pictures and articles from local papers. In Hutchinson, Kansas, Barbara Ulrich-Hicks of the Reno County Museum introduced the town and its baseball. Crucially, in Kansas City, after visiting the Kansas City Public Library, I met Jim Swint. After we explored baseball sites, including Blues Park, he shared his seminal research on Joe Wood. Thanks, Jim, for your generosity.

In anticipation of a trip to Ouray, Colorado, I contacted the Ouray County Historical Society, whose members invited my wife and me to the dedication of Joe Wood Park there. Alas, we missed that ceremony

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by two weeks, but when we arrived in Ouray, representatives of the County Museum had rounded up local artifacts, including the *Ouray Times*, edited by Joe's father. (Years later archivist Glenda Moore and director Maria Jones kindly answered further inquiries.) On our way to Ouray, we visited Durango, where Duane Smith, history professor at Fort Lewis College, shared his expertise on Joe's days in Colorado.

Trips to Boston and New England were essential to understanding Smoky Joe's Red Sox years. Dick Johnson, author and curator of the New England Sports Museum, opened the Bill Carrigan scrapbooks and talked brilliantly of Smoky Joe. At the Boston Public Library, Roberta Zonghi and Aaron Schmidt gave access to the McGreevey collection. Geoff Zonder, former sports archivist at Yale, kindly granted access to Joe Wood materials at the university. While I was in New Haven, Leo Cooney, chief of geriatric medicine at Yale Medical School, described Joe's final illness. Connecticut's Smoky Joe Wood Chapter of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) and its president, Steve Krevisky, gave unqualified support.

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Phone interviews aided immensely. Crucial were Fay Vincent Jr. on his father's Yale years under Coach Joe Wood and the 1926–27 controversy and former Yale secretary John Wilkinson on the honorary doctorate. Frank Durham remembered summers in the Twin Lakes area; George Fluhr re-created the history and myths of Pike County, Pennsylvania;

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Tim Gay discussed the Speaker-Wood relationship; Ken Berg shared his enthusiasm for Smoky Joe's legacy; and Roger Angell reflected on his visits with Smoky Joe. Joe's appearance in *Field of Dreams* was explained by writer/director Phil Alden Robinson, and John and Tom Begin reminisced about life with Joe Wood on Marvel Road.

Many others helped remove specific roadblocks. Kevin Johnson of Sports Artifacts and Drew Boyd of CMG aided initial contacts in the Wood family. Robert T. Lord gave useful directions to the Wood family cemetery. The Kansas Historical Society researched Logan Galbreath and the Kansas City Bloomer Girls, and I profited from the sage advice of Leslie Heaphy, Barbara Gregorich, and Deb Shattuck on the Bloomer Girls. The Levi Travises, senior and junior, helped me locate Indian Camp and referred me to Mike McConnell, who brought the camp alive. The Chicago History Museum helped find the Wood family in the Windy City. I also appreciate Dorothy Moon, archivist at the Zane Grey Museum, and author Thomas Pauly for background on Zane Grey. In Milford, Pennsylvania, Lori Strelecki opened files at the Pike County Historical Society, and Reverend David A. Repenning and Carolyn Krejmas introduced me to Milford United Methodist Church, where Joe and Laura were married.

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Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, California, with the assistance of Kristine Krueger. Similarly, I thank Nancy Miller of the University of Pennsylvania Archives and Liz Hibbard, associate director of development at Wyoming Seminary, Kingston, Pennsylvania, for information on John F. Wood as a lawyer.

Some helped more personally. Kathleen and Harvey Brandt offered reminiscences in Ness City, as did Bob and Pauline Duda about Joe in New Haven. Bill Hickman led me to Pat Flaherty and his daughter, Frances, who was taught golf by Joe Wood. Roger Abrams sent me primary materials on the 1926–27 hearings before Judge Landis. Statistics and convincing interpretations of Joe's career by Doug Roberts, Dick Thompson, and Frank Williams were inspirational. Matt Gladman found Joe Wood–related material at Ohio University. Carl Vogt remembered Joe and John Wood in Shohola, Pennsylvania, and Roger Henn resurrected early Ouray for me. Similarly, the late John Jamieson of Greer, South Carolina, shared memories of Joe and Charlie Jamieson, John's father. I also briefly talked with Tris Speaker Scott in Hubbard, Texas.

I am obviously indebted to interviewers — particularly Bob Wood, Richard Wood, and Lee Goodwin — who kept Joe's voice alive for me, a late addition to the lineup. At the Cleveland SABR National Convention in June 2008, Bill Nowlin discussed Joe on religion, and Dave Bohmer offered valuable opinions on the Dutch Leonard accusations. Most helpful with various reproductions were Donnie Newman, Glenn Cragwall, Bruce Kocour, Ami Hartsock, and Shelia Gaines. Linda Gass performed magic in genealogical research, Shawn O'Hare was always ready with nonsense about the Mets, and Jim Burke shared his love of Smoky Joe stories. Special thanks to baseball scholars Glenn Stout, Charles Alexander, Peggy Gripshover, and Rick Huhn for vital suggestions on the middle chapters. Jane Winton of the Boston Public Library helped with images. Rob Taylor, Courtney Ochsner, Kyle Simonsen, and the staff at the University of Nebraska Press handled the manuscript expertly.

Final thanks go to my wife, Edra, and our children and grandchildren. You are my emotional home base.

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Introduction

Bart at 90 Marvel Road

History, experts, and all the instruments agree. It was an unusually pleasant day on Thursday, January 3, 1985, in New England, Connecticut, and New Haven itself. The nice suburban neighborhood of Westville was quiet as usual, except for the lines of cars on both sides of Marvel Road, in front of number 90. The house was, as it is now, unpretentious, comfortable, and thoroughly middle class, like all the homes on the surrounding streets. The front door was, and is, on the right side, facing, opening onto a small porch, which is a couple of easy steps from the small driveway.

The living room, to the left, was crammed with friends, relatives, reporters, TV cameras, and some medical people, including attending physician Leo Cooney, stationed unobtrusively. The dignitaries kept the path to the wheelchair open. Nothing was missed by the family, especially Bob, the child most committed to his father's legacy. Steve, the middle boy, had been dead for ten years. Laura, the beloved wife, had been gone for more than five, though her picture as a fiancée stood sentinel on the mantel. Her ashes were there as well. Bob's twin sister, Virginia, and her husband, Clarence, were vigilant, always looking after the honoree and this home, one of two. The other (in the family for 140 years) was in the foothills of the Poconos.

The subject of all the hoopla sat in the wheelchair, slightly slumped to his right, in glasses that didn't do much good anymore. His right

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arm, the one that Walter Johnson had praised above the Big Train's own, rested in his lap. The left worked better, as Red Sox fans observed when he had thrown out the first ball at the second old-timers' game at Fenway Park the previous spring—May 27, 1984. That day, sitting in a golf cart, he had lobbed the pitch southpaw. Reduced to a spectator was the right arm, which had fired fastballs past Fletcher and Crandall in the last inning of the first game of the 1912 World Series. Crandall probably didn't even see it, the aging pitcher once suggested with rare bravado. But this day failing health claimed such heroics, even as memories, along with nearly every other sign of dignity.

At this unique event in baseball history and that of Yale University, the celebrant was mostly emotionally absent, hard of hearing and visually impaired, often confused about his surroundings. It was a time when both son Bob and the legend himself admitted, neither with bitterness, that he "shouldn't have been alive." But those who crowded into that room could remember, even if he couldn't. He had been so great that the president of Yale, having heard his father's wondrous stories about the Smoke King, had been afraid to approach such an idol of Bart's beloved team, the Boston Red Sox. Truth to tell, even on this day he was a bit hesitant, still in awe of the man seated next to him. Not yet the commissioner of baseball, not yet the man who banned Pete Rose, Bart Giamatti forced a practiced smile while standing to the right of the ex–Major Leaguer. Gazing at the declaration in his hands in order to hide deeper emotions, he began the ceremony.

Under the leadership of Richard Lee, the mayor of New Haven, and the secretary of Yale, John Wilkinson, this was only the second honorary doctorate given outside the hallowed walls of Yale (the first given to composer Cole Porter in his New York apartment). With these words A. Bartlett Giamatti hooded the legendary baseball player: "Best known as 'Smoky Joe Wood,' a name synonymous with baseball, your life has paralleled the development of that noble sport. You became one of the game's greatest pitchers, one who 'threw smoke' for the Boston Red Sox, with the remarkable achievement of thirty-four games won

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in 1912. Lured from the professional ranks by Yale, you coached Yale baseball for twenty years, 1922–1942, beloved by your players and an inspiration to New Haven youth. Yale is proud to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters."[1] Miraculously, those words returned Joe from the profound absence of Alzheimer's to the drama of the moment, and he cried, his upper body shaking as he adjusted his glasses with his left hand.

Such a sadly beautiful scene demands a series of questions for even the most casual observer, then and now. The first is the most obvious. Why would Yale give an honorary degree to this high school dropout, born in Kansas City and raised even farther West, in places like Ness City, Kansas, and Ouray, Colorado? Joe Wood was no New England Yankee, and though a man of strong conviction and disarming directness, he was no intellectual like his father, John F. Wood. But Joe's baseball skills were legendary and thus familiar to anyone at Yale who followed sports in the early years of the twentieth century. And Wood's friendship with teammate Tris Speaker, from the plains of central Texas, was portrayed by Hub sportswriters as a gathering of attractive roughnecks. Though the stories were often exaggerated, Smoky Joe had observed white settlers wrestle with Indians and bandits, and Wood's father twice panned for gold, in the Yukon and the desert Southwest. Shades of the Joe Wood persona—a mad, bad, and dangerous cowboy—haunted the 1985 proceedings.

More obviously, Joe received such a prestigious award because for twenty years he successfully coached Yale baseball, grooming a half-dozen players for the Big Leagues, including his son Joe Frank Wood, who played briefly for the Boston Red Sox in 1944. But not all was sweet during the Yale years. After some soul-searching by the administration, the university decided to retain Joe's services in 1927 following accusations by a former teammate, Dutch Leonard, that Joe conspired with Tris Speaker and Ty Cobb to throw a baseball game in Detroit, just days before Chicago White Sox players fixed the 1919 World Series. Even the commissioner of baseball, Judge Landis, stood ready to travel to New

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Haven in support of Joe, but Yale's final decision made intervention unnecessary. More difficult was the dismissal of Smoky Joe Wood in 1942 as part of retrenchment for World War II. Despite the support of alums, he was released with only a limited pension. That action left Joe somewhat bitter because he had retired from professional baseball at thirty-two for the security of college work. Yale and Giamatti, aware of the uneven past between the Elis and Wood, wanted a happier ending.

But why, so many years after his boyish love of this star, would A. Bartlett Giamatti, a brilliant man comfortable with making melodramatic flourishes in public, be intimidated by this frail, sick man? From his father and research, Bart knew the mystique of the man first tabbed "The Kansas Cyclone" and later "Smoky Joe." Endearing is the true story that Wood earned his first paychecks as a member of the Kansas Bloomer Girls. Within two years, having quickly journeyed from Hutchinson, Kansas, to Kansas City, eighteen-year-old Wood was pitching in the Major Leagues alongside Cy Young and Tris Speaker. At twenty-one he won twenty games for the Red Sox. At twenty-two he enjoyed one of baseball's greatest years, winning sixteen consecutive games and going 34-5. He capped the year with three wins in the 1912 World Series, the last against Christy Mathewson. Plagued by injuries, including a torn rotator cuff, Wood still threw whenever he could lift his arm, posting the lowest ERA in the American League (1.49) in his final season as a pitcher, 1915. Maybe those amazing eight years with the Sox made Bart Giamatti shy.

But there was an equally compelling second act in the story of Smoky Joe Wood, familiar to students of baseball like A. Barlett Giamatti. After a year away from baseball — in 1916 a salary dispute with the Red Sox management left him free to experiment with rehabilitating his arm — Joe Wood was sold to the Cleveland Indians. But 1917 wasn't a comeback year. The injury made it impossible for Wood to pitch. Then in 1918 a suggestion from an Indians official inspired his shift to the outfield. A naturally gifted fielder, Smoky Joe dedicated himself to

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hitting and made himself into an excellent everyday player. Platooning as a member of the World Champion Indians of 1920, Wood joined Babe Ruth as the only players to start a World Series at both pitcher and outfielder. In his next-to-last year in the Majors Joe hit .366, and in his final one, 1922, he had ninety-two RBI, in the top ten in the AL. By then his courage and resilience made him once again famous, with fans and sportswriters. Wood's return with the Indians, when added to his remarkable time with the Red Sox, made Joe an imposing figure for President Giamatti.

After the Yale years Smoky Joe Wood retained his residence at 90 Marvel Road, near the Giamattis. But he wasn't always at home. Contributing most to his later security was a six-year excursion to Los Angeles from 1946 until 1953, where he and his brother Pete ran a Wilshire Boulevard golf range that catered to the rich and famous. Profits and financial tips from that enterprise allowed Joe and his wife, Laura, to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle when they returned East. Eventually he sold the Pennsylvania home he had built for his bride in 1913, but he and Laura continued to use the family homestead only a few hundred yards away. Joe didn't often reconnect with baseball, except over radio and television, but he became a scratch golfer and an outdoorsman. While Bart didn't know all these details, he knew Joe lived, and thrived, well into old age.

Ironically, the hated Yankees were first to rediscover Smoky Joe Wood. In Joe's time he was known as a Highlander (later Yankee) killer. He regularly beat them when pitching, and his greatest game as a position player was at the Polo Grounds in 1918 when he hit two home runs, the second in the nineteenth inning, to give Stan Coveleski a complete game victory, 3–2. By the seventieth anniversary of Fenway Park and the advent of Red Sox old-timers games, Smoky Joe Wood's history and celebrity were recovered in Beantown as well. Bart, by then president of Yale and still a passionate fan and brilliant interpreter of baseball, was well aware of the revitalized legend of Smoky Joe Wood. A literature teacher, Giamatti read the references to Wood in baseball

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writing, from Ring Lardner to Eric Greenberg, from James Farrell to Roger Angell. But Bart most likely didn't know all Joe's losses, for example, the deaths of brother Pete, son Steve, and Laura. But, intuitive and sensitive, Giamatti must have felt the devotion of Virginia and Bob, twins and youngest of the Wood children, as well as oldest son, Joe Frank Wood, on that January day in 1985.

Even if he knew that Joe's wife, Laura, was from a family of Irish and Catholic background, Bart Giamatti most likely didn't investigate the Boston press's linking of Joe to the Protestant side in sectarian squabbles, displaced from European countries to the Massachusetts Commonwealth. Lacking intimacy with his hero, Bart had no way of understanding the impact of the sudden loss of Steve Wood, the charming, fun-loving, but finally self-destructive son. And then there was the onset of dementia, another drama surely unknown to Bart. Many details of Joe Wood's professional life were also lost to Bart. For example, Wood had a complex understanding of Babe Ruth, who played a major role in Joe's final at-bat in the Majors, facts accessible to only the most dogged baseball scholars. Only in tapes preserved by son Bob does Joe tell of his visits to Bonesetter Reese and an illegal chiropractor as he became desperate to heal his injury. Equally unavailable to Bart that January was Joe's influence on 1930s baseball films and the homage to granddaughter Durinda in *Field of Dreams*, released much later, four and one-half months before Bart's own death.

Also remote from Bart's experience were the everyday affairs in Shohola, Pennsylvania, where the Wood family first settled and Joe's life became a part of local folklore. The family's interest in lumbering and the religious zeal of Joe's grandfather, Bradner Wood, were distant from Bart's city ways. Even more removed were the dreams of Joe's father, John F. Wood, a brilliant lawyer, who practiced in Chicago for ten years and then took fits of gold fever in the Alaska Yukon and the Southwest. After John brought the family back to the family acres in 1910, stories of fishing trips on the Delaware River between Pete—Joe's brother—and the author Zane Grey as well as nighttime card games

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between Joe and Babe Ruth were whispered across the Parkers Glen area. Joe's real hunting trips with his baseball buddies from a cabin called Indian Camp refueled such myths across the woody hills of northeastern Pennsylvania.

Such stories served as background for that day at 90 Marvel Road in January 1985. By the end of the following summer, Joe Wood was dead, of old age, dementia, and dehydration doing their ugly final business. He died in Soundview Convalescent Home in West Haven, Connecticut, a suburb of New Haven not far from the Wood and Giamatti homes. The man born Howard Ellsworth Wood, who legally didn't become Joe Wood until almost 1950, was buried in a private ceremony at the Wood family cemetery near Shohola. Soon afterward Bart Giamatti exited academia for baseball, first as president of the National League and then in 1989 as the commissioner of baseball. A champion of fairness and integrity, Giamatti was responsible for banning Pete Rose. Bart knew similar charges had been leveled against Joe Wood in the Leonard/Speaker/Cobb controversy of 1926 and 1927. Although Bart didn't argue the case in public, in private he strongly advocated Joe's innocence. Despite historical documents implicating Wood in betting on baseball and Wood's admission that he was an agent for bets, Bart was a loyal defender of the idol he shared with his father.

As commissioner of baseball and a man of intense desire for justice, Giamatti, like his predecessor Judge Landis, could see the need to protect the game and preserve the heroic image of players like Speaker and Cobb . . . and Wood. For Bart Giamatti, who loved Edmund Spenser and parables of transcendent order, Joe Wood's story seemed a paradigm of talent, desire, perseverance, and courage. Consequently, the man who conferred the honorary doctorate in that early January, usually a gregarious and expansive soul, hid his deepest feelings in the business of the ceremony, knowing much of what had come before and sensitive to what was being lost. He stood a bit rigid in the presence of such a hero, carrying the sadness with a willed grace so that he could serve the man in a wheelchair beside him. Some of what follows in this biography A.

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Barlett Giamatti knew well. Other facts and stories were unavailable to him and much of popular American culture. But the history recorded here was all there, directly or indirectly, that day on 90 Marvel Road, and it made Giamatti, the president of Yale University, speechless in the presence of such a bittersweet and arresting scene.

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ONE

John F. and Howard E.

They talk about this being an on-the-go society today, what with the automobile and super highways and all that, but it seems to me that Americans were always a restless people. Back then those wagon wheels were always grinding, and wherever you went you met people going in the opposite direction.

—JOE WOOD, quoted in Honig, "Joe Wood"

It is a truism of psychology and a cliché of popular sports writing that a boy's identity is traceable to his relationship with his father. That certainly was the case with Joe Wood. Smoky Joe Wood's father, John F. Wood, was brilliant. He was a lawyer and two-time newspaper editor, as well as a politician, gold rusher, chicken farmer, wood- and metalworker, even a bit of an inventor. His eccentricities even outstripped his intelligence. A schoolteacher for one year, he eventually married one of his students. John F. made a lot of money in land speculation. Then he lost it all the same way. Joe's father felt no need to learn to drive when he bought his first automobile. He named his cows after characters in Shakespeare plays. Refusing to change with the times, John kept his wood-burning stove and shunned electricity. Such stubbornness eventually drove his wife away. She took their daughter and retreated to rooms above the streets in a nearby town. The couple was only reunited in the Wood family cemetery near Shohola, Pennsylvania.

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Young Howard Ellsworth Wood, the second child and middle of three, loved this man, though often from afar. He proudly and repeatedly asserted that his father never lost in a juried courtroom, rubbed elbows with future governors, and was the companion of Death Valley Scotty. John F. was, the son asserted, an atheist who knew more about the Bible than the righteous Christians. Even as an old man, Joe Wood became prickly if anyone suggested there was something unfinished, dark about John F. Joe's combativeness on the baseball field grew naturally in imitation of his father. But it is equally clear that Joe's defensiveness toward John masked the hurt of a boy orphaned twice by his father's lust for gold. Joe's letters to his father in 1898 while John F. was in the Yukon are sad and a bit desperate. The absence of John F. left Joe insecure, isolated, and preoccupied with routine. Luckily, when John F. took off again three years later, leaving his family in Ouray, Colorado, Joe was diverted and calmed by his necessary chores and, most crucially, a newfound passion for baseball.

Brainy John F. Wood and his athletically gifted son descended from pioneers deeply rooted in Orange County, New York, bounded by the Delaware River on the west and the Hudson River on the east, at the southern tip of New York and just above New Jersey. Originally the land of the Minisink Indians, from the Munsee tribe of the Lenni-Lenapes, the county (one of the original twelve in New York) was named for the Prince of Orange, husband of England's Princess Mary. By the eighteenth century the Indians had been displaced by a diverse group of English, French, Dutch, German, and Swiss colonists and African slaves (emancipated between 1791 and 1827) on small, modest farms. During the War of Independence, when the British forces tried to seize the area and cut off the New England colonists from their brothers and sisters to the south, the Delaware/Hudson Valley, especially the hills at West Point, became hotly contested. Once West Point was secured, the Americans made east Orange County, New York, a strategic center of the war, a place from which they could monitor, and implicitly control, the Hudson River.

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The decisive major offensive of the revolution began at Newburgh, Orange County, New York, just north of West Point. From there George Washington engineered the entrapment of the British at Yorktown, Virginia. After the war Washington and the victors returned to Orange County and established permanent headquarters that winter in New Windsor, between Newburgh and West Point.[1] Fighting for the victorious insurgents as a member of the Orange County Militia was Jonathan Wood, Joe Wood's paternal great-great-grandfather. Jonathan, the proprietor of Lapstone Tavern, and his wife, Mary Durland, were both from Orange County, where all nine of their children were born.[2] Although he didn't fight at the Battle of Minisink Ford on July 22, 1779, where the Americans were soundly defeated up the road from the future home of the Woods, Jonathan died there in 1801, when it had been renamed Greenville, in western Orange County, New York.

The key figure in the exodus of the predecessors of John F. and Howard E. from Orange County was Charles, the sixth child and fourth son of Jonathan and Mary Wood.[3] Although all six of his children with Phoebe Cole were born in New York, in 1830 Charles Wood bought land just across the Delaware River and the Pennsylvania-New York state line, in Pike County, Pennsylvania, an area the Lenni-Lenape Indians called Shohola, "Place of Peace." It had been peaceful when William Penn controlled the land, but in 1737 his heirs used a questionable 1680s agreement to seize Lenape-Delaware Indian land at the junction of the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers "as far west as a man could walk in a day and a half." After provincial secretary James Logan hired three runners, who set out on September 19, 1737, and stopped only for a night's rest, the whites gained seventy miles and over a million acres, including Shohola.[4] Most of the early colonial settlements supported travel along the Wyoming Road and the turnpike between Milford and Owego, which featured the Shohola House Inn and Tobias Hornbeck's hotel. By the nineteenth century sawmills appeared in the area, and the opening of the Delaware and Hudson Canal in 1829 led to a ferry crossing at Shohola, which certainly aided Charles Wood.

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When the Wood family crossed the river, they found a heavily forested, rolling terrain dotted with lakes. After purchasing acreage from Hornbeck and David Case, Charles helped his son Reeves build a sawmill on Brush Creek. On the cleared land they established farms, where they raised cattle and chickens in addition to their crops. Reeves eventually left the area, but Charles stayed on land later inherited by Decatur Wells, Charles' son-in-law. Meanwhile, a younger brother of Reeves, Bradner (born on February 1, 1816), purchased adjoining property, on which he built a fanning mill.[5] The fourth child of Charles and Phoebe, Bradner, Joe Wood's paternal grandfather, purchased the land, which became the Wood homestead. The deed notes, "William Phillips and Archibald McCall of the City of Philadelphia Gentlemen of the one part and Bradner Wood of Milford Township Pike County Pennsylvania Farmer" exchanged a parcel of "240 acres" on the "14th day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty three" for "480 dollars."[6] On October 28 of that year, Bradner married local girl Elizabeth Middaugh and built a cabin on his property. A staunch abolitionist, Bradner profited from selling firkins of butter during the Civil War. In Joe's words, he "didn't realize automobiles would turn the country right around" and gave valuables, including Twin Lakes land, to those who shared, or pretended to share, his religious notions.

The first of the seven children of Bradner and Elizabeth was Jerusha, born July 7, 1844, who eventually married William Cortwright, from whom Joe's brother took his middle name. The third child, and the first male, was Joe's father, John F. Wood, born June 28, 1854, into a changing Shohola. Just two years earlier, on September 25, 1852, the township had been incorporated by sectioning neighboring townships: Milford, Lackawaxen, and Westfall. But during John F.'s early years, the greatest catalyst for industrialization was the Erie Railroad, especially after a suspension bridge was constructed over the Delaware River in 1855, making most points in the new township accessible. The price for such progress was horrible train wrecks: during the Civil War, on July 15, 1864, 300 soldiers were wounded or killed, and in April 1868, another

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120 were killed or injured. Despite the tragedies eventually more than twenty small villages were established in Shohola, including Shohola Falls, Bee Hollow, Pond Eddy, Twin Lakes, and Woodtown.

John F. Wood, Joe's father, was the most educated of the children of Bradner and Elizabeth Wood. He attended Wyoming Seminary, whose records show him as a second-year student in 1874–75; he most likely graduated in 1877. Although family oral history says he took a law degree from the University of Pennsylvania, there are no records of his attending that institution as an undergraduate or a law student. Most likely he apprenticed with a lawyer, still a common practice in the 1870s. By John's own description, he began law in 1878. Soon afterward (local history says 1879), following the path of his uncle Samuel and Sam's adopted son, John (formerly a Williams), John F. Wood ventured west to Ness City, Kansas, a small town on the threshold where middle Kansas hills give way to the tabletop flatness of the Kansas plains.[7] Today it radiates a few blocks in every direction from the intersection of roads 96 and 283. The demographics of Ness City changed in the last twenty-five years with the discovery of oil. But signs of the Old West remain at establishments like the Cactus Inn and Trails End.

In Ness City John F. Wood practiced law, representing, as Joe remembered for Lawrence Ritter, "the Missouri Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads."[8] On January 22, 1880, John F. Wood also started a newspaper, the *Ness City Times*, calling himself "editor and proprietor" and charging $.50 per copy or $1.50 for a year's subscription, which soon included the eight-page literary journal *Monthly Nation*. In his paper, which he called the "Official Paper of Ness County," John regularly advertised his law business, land "broken and ready for crops," and "improved Homestead and Timber claims." He added a third profession to his résumé that fall as the teacher in the first Ness City school, inside the temporary courthouse.[9] Among his students was Rebecca Stephens (sometimes spelled "Stephans"), who, according to family oral history, received high marks for deportment, not attendance. She turned fourteen that fall.

John F. Wood also ran for county attorney in late October 1880 and

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lost by a mere eighteen votes — 262 to 244 — to George Redd. The loss brought out a bitterly competitive side, later inherited by his son Smoky Joe. In the spring of 1881, John F. attacked, declaring Redd was tied politically to a sheriff implicated in record-keeping controversies. Then, in the political wrangling over the establishment of a county seat, Ness City won easily. But folks from Sidney objected that land given for the new county buildings by Ness City's Ross Calhoun (a friend of Wood) amounted to a bribe of the voters. When sitting county attorney George Redd took up the prosecution, John F. wrote in his paper on May 5, 1881, that Redd had "succeeded in saddling several hundred dollars cost upon the already burdened county of Ness, by one of the most insane prosecutions that could be well conceived of." Two weeks later he called Redd "altogether unfit" and "a tool in the hands of men more cunning that himself." Still enraged, John F. directly challenged Redd "to prove, take back, or eternally shut up."

Finally, on February 9, 1882, the county seat was settled in favor of Ness City, with district judge Peters decreeing that there was "nothing in the donation as made by Ness City which could amount to bribery." By then John had solidified his position in the Kansas Republican Party by becoming a delegate to its Judicial Convention at Kinsley. And he continued his land speculation, offering over 1,300 acres for sale, in claims of 160 and 320 acres (with and without houses) priced from $25 to $650. That fall Wood's friend Sam A. Smith was elected county attorney, by a vote of 372 to 5, and Sam Sheaffer (also spelled "Sheffer"), who would play a major role in the life of the Wood family, became secretary of the county Republican Party and the clerk of the court for the Third District. For his part John F. Wood was named secretary of the Building Association. In a lighter vein the *Times* noted on December 14, 1882, that the drive for a city Christmas tree would include a committee on music, including Mrs. Ross Calhoun and two others, named in a Freudian typo slip as "Miss Beckie Stephens John Wood."

As the family Bible records, John Wood and "Beckie E. Stephens were married at Ellis KS, evening of Dec. 25th, 1884." He was thirty, she

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eighteen. The Stephens family that John married into was influential in western Kansas. John Stephens was one of the first settlers in the Ness City area when he built a dugout on Sunset Lake, and over the years Stephenses acquired significant tracts of land.[10] As Joe later explained, Becky's father owned a six-section (almost four thousand acres) ranch, with between two hundred and three hundred horses; Joe rode a bicycle to the ranch for baseball games. Significant for later Irish-Protestant wrangling in Boston, which implicated Smoky Joe, Beckie claimed Irish heritage, telling Tim Murnane, in the 1913 article "It Is the Simple Life for Farmer Joe Wood in the Winter Time," that her grandfather (named McDowell) owned a country home in Ireland and her Massachusetts bloodline included Benjamin Butler, a Union general in the Civil War and a U.S. congressman from and governor of Massachusetts.

In the mid-1880s the couple remained in Ness City, Kansas, where John F. practiced law and edited his newspaper. For the most part John became a less controversial figure after marrying. But in June 1885 a Sidney, Kansas, newspaper famous for opposing alcohol reported that John F. Wood had been seen drinking whiskey. Wood responded in his paper that such charges indicated the "cussedness, deceit and hypocrisy" of publisher Joseph Langellier. Eventually the controversy faded, and John F. retreated from the limelight as the *Times* merged with the *Ness City News*, run by J. K. Barnd.[11] The following summer, in 1887, the Ness City baseball team (supported by Beckie's family) became western Kansas champs.

But John and Rebecca were focused less on baseball than on the birth of their first child, on September 7, 1887, a boy they named Harley Cortwright Wood. Although it isn't clear why or exactly when John and Becky relocated to Kansas City over the next two years, it seems likely that it was business of the lawyering kind that required the transition. Whatever the cause, they were in Kansas City, Missouri, when their second child, also a boy, was born on Friday, October 25, 1889. The Department of Health record file A 351, number 3334, says that Howard Ellsworth was born at 2512 East Eighteenth Street. The parents are listed

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as John H. [*sic*] Wood, whose birthplace is identified as Pennsylvania, and Becca Wood, born in Iowa.[12] Remarkably the first home of Howard was within two blocks of where he would play in 1908, the year he was called up to the Boston Red Sox.

Within three years the young family moved again. This time John F. took them to Chicago, where he established himself as a lawyer and reconnected with Rebecca's brother-in-law, Samuel Sheffer, who later claimed to have taught Joe to pitch on the South Side of the city. The *Chicago Tribune* notes the filing in superior court of a ten-thousand-dollar case between Paul Wolfom and Max Monhehner, on March 23, 1892, with John F. Wood as an attorney. And Samuel A. Sheffer is listed in the 1890 census as a "driver" who lived at 3658 State Street. Also a John Wood is noted as working at 3900 State and living at 5349 Dearborn. Although not definitive these details suggest Joe correctly remembered that his father had an office on State Street, where Joe would meet John F. for ice cream. It also seems true, as Sheffer claimed, that Smoky Joe Wood first played baseball in the Windy City.[13]

While in Chicago the Wood family attended the World's Columbian Exhibition (commonly called the Chicago World's Fair). Named in honor of Christopher Columbus and located on 686 acres south of downtown, the exhibition opened on May 1, 1893, and entertained over 21 million visitors before it closed on October 30. Although it ostensibly celebrated world cultures, the exhibition sang the praises of technological progress, including electric lights, ballooning, and the Yerkes telescope. Most impressive was a Ferris wheel, 264 feet high, which dominated the skyline. The main entrance was called the Midway Plaisance, stretching for a mile from Jackson Park to Washington Park and including a water-driven railway. It is probably along this pathway, congested with seedy characters, from belly dancers to pickpockets, that John F. and Rebecca met clowns Joey and Petey, whose antics recalled their rambunctious boys, at the time aged six and three. When the couple returned home, they rechristened Howard as Joe and Harley as Pete, names that took root as if they were the originals.[14]

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Next to the Columbian Exposition was the Wild West Show of Wild Bill Cody, where the parents and boys welcomed Rebecca's brother, Rattlesnake Pete, one of nine riders in the Great 1,000-Mile Cowboy Race. Wearing a headband of rattlesnake rattles, Stephens rode from Chadron, Nebraska, in pursuit of first prizes: two hundred dollars, a Montgomery Ward saddle, and a Colt pistol. Forty miles from Sioux City, Iowa, one of Pete's horses developed colic, and Rattlesnake started spitting up blood. But he continued by riding another horse, General Grant, while brandishing a whiskey bottle for the cough. When he finished on Tuesday, June 27, 1893, in front of ten thousand spectators, Pete claimed the winner had cheated. But, alas, Rattlesnake was declared fourth by Cody.[15]

All seemed well as the family became more settled, establishing domestic rituals in Chicago that included clowning, ice cream, and baseball, as Joe told Lee Goodwin, "out on the lots there." Then, just before the end of the decade and the century, John F. Wood caught his first case of gold fever. Never a man to let his family stand in the way, he took his wife and children back to the family homestead near Shohola, Pennsylvania, and then headed for Alaska and the Yukon. Though the home itself hadn't changed much since John left for Kansas twenty years earlier, the surrounding area had begun to embrace commerce. In 1879 Chauncy Thomas, who had constructed the Shohola suspension bridge, the Shohola Glen Hotel, and the Shohola depot on the Erie Railroad, started planning an amusement park. When Thomas died in 1882, the property was purchased by John Fletcher Kilgour, who in 1886 added the Shohola Glen Switchback Gravity Railroad to facilitate passage to the new Shohola Glen Amusement Park, which attracted the affluent from New Jersey and New York. Kilgour also mined bluestone, earning the title of "Blue Stone King" and modifying the demographics of Shohola.

For the young Wood boys, the area was no longer primarily a place for farming and logging. As Joe later told his grandson Richard, most everyone had become stonecutters, some walking fifteen miles round-trip

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to jobs. But the old Wood homestead remained primitive, with just a wood-burning stove and no indoor water. To get to school Pete and Joe walked two miles along a hard-top road to Walker Lake, a trip of half to three-quarters of an hour. When snow rose above their knees, Pete and Joe would ride a bobsled, a single-horse cutter for six to eight passengers, also used to pick up their grandmother in nearby Parkers Glen or retrieve flour from a gristmill in Milford, Pennsylvania, twelve miles to the south.[16] More thrilling was the twenty-mile mountain express train ride to Port Jervis, New York. Though a skilled hunter as an adult, when given his first gun in these years, Joe felt lost about how and where to use it.

Meanwhile, as John F. Wood's journal records, he missed his family but never let an adventure pass him by. His notes begin on March 16, 1898, when he "Set Sail from Seattle on schooner Lily and Maud." By April 8 his schooner had anchored at Alert Bay, Cormorant Island, British Columbia, where the next evening, Easter eve, he attended church with "3 whites & 34 indians" and heard scripture in Siwash, the Indian language. Smitten by Hope Island, on the fifteenth John F. "Sold interest in Schooner for $130 & left party" to stay at a cabin there and three days later traveled in an Indian chief's canoe to Galiano Island, where he spent a "day & nite in wigwam with 12 indians." The next day he was "Picked up by riverboat Courser," which the following day anchored at Port Rupert, British Columbia.

Taking a few days in Port Rupert, John F. Wood had time to catch up on his mail, including a letter from Joe, with the inside address "Parkers Glen, February 16, 1898." A dutiful son, the boy reported, "Manuel may [*sic*] is going to make a new handle for my axe," and explained why he hadn't worked the woodpile: "It is awful cold here to-day it is to [*sic*] cold to go out and chop wood to-day." Not wanting to appear a slacker, Howard/Joe wanted John to know that he had "washed the dishes to-day." Though just nine, he was well aware of issues with the hired help, noting to his father, "Butcher got drunk to [*sic*] times since you have gone." Imagining his father concerned over his mother's health,

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Joe declared, "Grandma [about to turn eighty] is better now." Caretaker Joe reminded him: "Grandma says the next time you write you must write to her she said she would be very anxious to hear from you." It is signed "Howard E. Wood."

After a week in Port Rupert to rest and write his family, on April 27, 1898, Joe's father crossed into Alaska. He stopped at Ketchikan for water on the twenty-eighth and then continued to Wrangell Island, where he boarded the steamer *Alki*, out of San Francisco. After arriving in Juneau, at 2:00 a.m., on May 2, 1898, John ate a "good dinner for 25 cents," boarded a tug to Dyea, and quickly moved on to Skagway, the popular staging point for gold seekers. After three days on the summit trail, he reached Bennett, the launching place, on May 7. In the company of nearly ten thousand residents, mostly in tents, John F. Wood reported on May 10 that the snow was still five feet deep. With no railroad links completed yet, he took two weeks to build a sailboat. As soon as the ice broke, he was sailing on Lake Linderman, the river to Lake Bennett, and then Lake Tagish on June 7, where the trees and flowers bloomed but mosquitoes had become "a problem."

The hard prospecting began when John F. passed customs at the foot of Lake Tagish, entered the Yukon Territory on June 8, 1898, and "camped halfway down 5-Mile River." In less than a week, he moved down Marsh Lake and Twenty-Five Mile River, camped at the head of Miles Canyon, passed through Whitehorse, and headed northwest. After crossing Lake Labarge, John tested for gold at the mouth of the Teslin River and staked a claim at Lake Creek on June 19. Two days later he passed through Little Salmon Lake and Five Finger Rapids. He prospected below the Tatchum River rapids and on the south branch of Lake Tatchum, then zeroed in on Dawson, where he expected "letters from wife and boys." But he diverted again, turning west to Selwyn Creek, then up to Stewart River and the mouth of Indian Creek, where he set up base camp on July 3, 1898. Unable to celebrate the Fourth of July because they "could not afford to waste any ammunition," for the next three weeks Wood prospected south of Dawson, in Irene Gulch,

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Squaw Creek, Nine Mile Creek, and Nugget Gulch. On the fifteenth of July, he was mesmerized by "French Gulch with its fabulously rich hill claim." After unsuccessful prospecting July 16–21 "around French Gulch," John made Dawson on the twenty-second at "5:30 a.m."

In Dawson he had time to receive the expected letters, including surviving notes from Howard. Though not dated, they were written near the end of the school year, following reports that Howard E. (alias Joe) was doing well, especially in arithmetic and spelling. In addition to casting doubts on the accuracy of the spelling scores, the boy's words indicate that his anxiety over money had increased that spring. Joe barely got beyond the direct address when finances jumped into his fearful head: "Dear old Father Will you send me sume [*sic*] money have you any money? Howard Wood." In another note he was calmer; aware of his father's respect for learning, Joe reported, "Dear pa, I thought I would write you a few lines tonight before I go to bed. I got put up in school and Mary is going to get me a knife for passing." Controlling his sibling rivalry, he added simply, "Pete got put down," before noting, "I went to swimming pool with Marshall Myers."

By the end of July, John F. had decided to build a cabin "near Dawson." But the Yukon diarrhea put him down for two weeks. Finally, on August 15 and 16 he began cutting logs and "fording down river" "to cabin site." He laid the foundation on August 22, had built the walls and rafters by September 2, and added a roof of dirt and moss on September 5, 1898. His final push began on September 12, when he started up the Klondike River to the mouth of Rock Creek ("50 miles into the wilderness primeval") in search of meat. But on October 2, when he declared, "Hunt ended in failure," the final chapter was predetermined. He "Sold rifle and ammunition for $22" and headed back to Dawson, where he witnessed the famous fire on October 14: "Fire broke out in Green Tree Saloon about 6 this a.m. and before it could be stopped, burned the whole block." (Lost were the post office, the Worden and Vancouver hotels, the Empire Bakery, and the New England Saloon.) The next day John F. Wood began work at the Chicago Hotel for lodging and $7.00 a

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day, until October 21. By November he had given up and sold the cabin for $77.50.

When John F. finally trudged back from Alaska to reconnect with his young boys, he had stories to tell. Most memorable to young Joe was John F.'s bout with Yukon diarrhea and his thirty-miles-per-day exit with legs covered up to the knees in gunny sacks for protection against snow and icy water. As John F. reported, and Joe explained in later tapes, those leggings would "save his life." But the reunion was only brief. As the new century began, John F. Wood loaded up the family and headed for Colorado, via (once again) Ness City, Kansas. At times Joe later gave material for a romantic view of this journey, portraying himself as riding high on a prairie schooner, already deeply in love with baseball, a ten-year-old exhibiting his ball glove on the front seat to, in his words, "show anybody who was interested where he wanted to go."[17] But the trip from Kansas, across Colorado, and into Ouray was much more complicated.

In his interview with grandson Richard Wood, Joe reported that they picked up Becca's youngest sister, Allie, and her husband, Doc Barker, along with a Ruth Barker Veranda, Doc's sister, in Kansas City.[18] After they had negotiated the 350 miles from Ness City to Denver, the exciting part began when the party boarded prairie schooners, drawn by two horses, for the trip to southwest Colorado. From Denver they would have followed one of two passages. To the south they might have turned west at the village of Symes, below Mount Evans and above the Tarryall Mountains, through Coal Branch Junction to Fairplay, then negotiating Mount Sheridan, through Buena Vista to the south, and then on to Leadville. The northern route to Leadville passed through Golden, south of the Boulder Pass and Bald Mountain, turning south through the Loveland Pass to Dillon, and then almost directly south through the Tennessee Pass to Leadville.

Then they had another choice. They might have followed the southern, more direct route south of Red Table Mountain above Aspen, turning back north at Emma to Glenwood Springs. Or they could also have

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journeyed north out of Leadville, through the Mountain of the Holy Cross and Redcliff, where they would have angled westward below the Red and White Mountains and then west to Glenwood Springs. From there they followed the main highway down. West below The Great Hog Back through Rifle and Balzac, they turned to the southwest, along the Grand River (not the Colorado until 1921) to Grand Junction. Then it was southeastward along the Gunnison River to Delta, sixty miles north of Ouray, where the Doc Barker party exited to start farming. John F. and his family continued along the Uncompahgre River on to Dallas, Colorado, which Joe remembered being "5 or 10 miles from Ouray" (actually almost thirteen miles).[19]

They stayed the winter there in a place Joe called "a shack," actually a small house that was part of the hastily reconstructed ranch of David Wood (not a relative of John and Joe).[20] It was on this property that the John F. Wood family ushered in the new century, with John and Pete working the hay crop for their room and board. When the spring arrived, John F. and family moved into town. Ouray, surrounded on three sides by the San Juan Mountain range (east of Telluride and north of Silverton), in 1900 was a rough and exciting town. In *The Glory of Their Times*, Joe explains, Ouray was "in the southwestern part of Colorado, not far from places with names like Lizard Head Pass and Slumgullion Gulch. And every day I'd see these big stage coaches go by, drawn by six horses, two guards sitting up there with rifles, guarding the gold shipment coming down from the mines."[21] Although there were barely two thousand people there, its frontier ruggedness supported fifteen to twenty saloons, wide-open gambling, and whorehouses with main attractions Stringbean Annie and Loco Lil.[22] Declaring his total property one clock valued at eighteen dollars, John F. Wood found work at the Ashenfelter Livery, where he honed skills he would use later back in Pennsylvania.[23]

But Alaska hadn't cured John F. Wood's itch for adventure and riches. Joe's father again rushed for gold — this time in the deserts of Nevada and California. Partially financing his trip by selling his home back in

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Ness City, he left the family in a safe Ouray house, just up the hill to the east of the main street, the third house behind 342 Seventh Avenue (no longer in existence). John had an amazingly creative justification for his new venture. He claimed an Ouray doctor told him that to recover feeling in his legs, injured by frostbite in the escape from the Yukon, he needed to go barefoot in sand for long periods. The prescription was obvious to Joe's dad: walk the deserts of the Southwest. Although there is no logbook of this trip, John claimed that he traveled with Death Valley Scotty, described by Wood as entering cities with money but never leaving with any. Unlike Walter Scott, John periodically earned money from legitimate sources, usually lawyering, so eventually he and Death Valley Scotty parted ways. The result of this trip was the same: no luck, gold, or security for his family.

Those years, 1901–3, were tough in Ouray. In Joe's words, "We did everything we could do to make a dime or a quarter, and we got by with what he [John F.] could send us."[24] As Joe remembered, Harley (Pete) went "in cahoots with George Holmes with a laundry service, where they shipped laundry in a basket out to Denver, and it was done there and shipped back—they then would collect." He also washed dishes at the Bird Mine and eventually drove rigs to Silverton for travelers at three dollars a trip.[25] In another scheme Pete brought burros from Ridgway to sell in Ouray. Joe picked raspberries, which he sold to drugstores at one dollar a bucket, carried "special deliveries for the post office, 10 cents a piece after school," and worked "in a butcher shop for $4.00 a week"—as he said, "anything I could to turn over a little money, here and there," including selling popcorn and shining shoes. The boys even scavenged "up and down the alleys before school in the morning, picking up bottles [they] could sell, and old copper and brass and rubber."[26] And Joe at twelve made five to seven dollars with the baseball team.

As Joyce Jorgensen summarized years later, "When [Joe's] father returned to Ouray after a couple of years' fruitless search for gold in the desert country, he resumed the practice of law." Reflecting the younger

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son's worship, as well as the influence of family stories, Joe proudly declared, "He [John F.] put in all his days then as a criminal lawyer, and he never lost a case in front of a jury in those years. A judge at that time was Judge Henry Rathmell, who was rather a tricky bird as a judge, and my Dad kind of showed him up, sometimes."[27] Beginning in 1903, when John F. Wood decided to start another newspaper, Joe set type for his father and other papers, the *Ouray Herald* and the *Plaindealer*, sometimes skipping school to do so. Strategically John F. Wood established his new business across from the city hall and the library, named after Camp Bird Mine owner Thomas Walsh. Joe's summary is accurate: "Dad started the paper himself, got the press—and the fellow who made up the paper and did the job work at the time was named Grant Turner."[28]

John F. called his Ouray paper the *Times*, though there had already been a paper called the *Ouray Times*, first published in 1887. As Wood made clear in the first issue, on Thursday, May 21, 1903, this version would be controlled by a single individual; it headlined "Published and Edited by John F. Wood." In a long editorial Joe's father explained that this was his second venture in publishing, following "a calling" "most remote" from his "intention." He then explained that after taking his law degree in Pennsylvania in 1878, he had traveled to Kansas to practice law, but "within a year, besides attending" to "professional business" he found himself "in charge of a county newspaper" because "the people of the town" had selected him "to own, operate and control it." As John remembered, he "for seven years labored for the upbuilding of the Ness City Times and the community in which it circulated." In his humble estimation, his Ness City "newspaper grew and prospered" under his "management."

Continuing, John F. declared his motives were not just the improvement of the writing and the uplift of his Colorado town. With the support of the "Citizens party Committee," he intended to oppose boss politics in Ouray. In an obvious reference to the other two papers, he planned to establish "a newspaper to be run without fear or favor,

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backed by sufficient courage to advocate what it conceived to be true and right and to denounce what it believed to be wrong, and any and all interests to the contrary notwithstanding." After bragging that there would be "not a better equipped newspaper and job office in Colorado, west of the Continental Divide, than [the *Ouray Times*]," John F. Wood got into politics. He claimed the Republican reformist tradition: the paper "will be Republican in politics, because the doctrines and policies of the Republican Party are more in harmony with our own notions than those of any other party. We will stand true to that party so long as, in our humble judgment, it stands true to the best interests of this great Nation." Remarkably, after five years of risking his life and his family's well-being and (according to Joe) gambling heavily himself, John then took a righteous stand against gaming.

Less than a week after the first issue of the *Ouray Times*, gambling was banned in the city, on May 26, 1903. Wood immediately declared victory, printing as the headline for Thursday, June 11, 1903, "The Games Ended!" In John F.'s words, "Part of the gambling dens removed their gaming paraphernalia last Saturday at noon. At noon Monday the edict went forth that the police would seize and destroy gaming devices to be found in the city. Thus Ouray is rid of the greatest evil that ever afflicted her people." Reveling in the moment, John F. expressed concern about gambling's effect on the disadvantaged, who were more likely to become addicted: "There is no degradation so degrading, no humiliation so humiliating, no slavery so servile as that into which public gambling hurls its victims." After attacking the other newspapers for public stands that contradicted their private dealings, Wood declared on Thursday, July 23, 1903, "Gambling has practically ceased both in Ridgway and Ouray. In Ridgway its passing was comparatively tranquil and peaceful. In Ouray it died hard and with many struggles accompanied by much agony."

Unfortunately, the next month, August, was cruel to labor and its Ouray supporter, John F. Wood. The battle lines between owners and workers were drawn in Idaho Springs, thirty miles west of Denver, where

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workers had struck for an eight-hour day. Governor James H. Peabody exacerbated conditions by banning the unions, which were reinstated by a district judge. And then a supporter of the workers blew up the Sun and Moon Mill there. In the August 6 edition of his paper, Wood expressed no "sympathy for the dastard who did [the bombing], or with his advisers, if he had any." But in Wood's opinion the response of authorities — the wholesale arrest, without cause, of citizens who supported labor — was equally despicable. Two weeks later, on August 20, 1903, the editor developed his position: "Until the methods of handling capital and carrying on gigantic industrial enterprise in this country are radically changed, it may as well be set down as a fact that the labor organization is here to stay." Attempts to discredit unions drive a wedge between "capital and labor" when "friendly relations" are "necessary to the prosperity and happiness of both."

For John F. Wood these principles had obvious application to Ouray, where local workers were considering striking in sympathy for issues "back East." He felt "self-serving leaders" and "a short sighted press" led to irresponsible "independence" among capitalists and reactive "hostility" by labor. Wood's alternative: recognize the unions and negotiate peace. His approach was both logical and philosophical, he said, because (1) the "organization [of unions was] inevitable," and (2) since "Colorado's population [was] largely made up of wage earners, Colorado's employers of labor must deal with labor Unions." Locally, the "owners and operators of Mines, Mills and Smelters" must "treat with the Western Federation of Miners for an adjustment of existing differences." Wood predicted a peaceful conclusion if both sides proceeded without "arrogance." On August 27, 1903, John F. Wood argued that since there was "a real grievance" against "eastern smelter interests," local workers would be "less than true men" if they did not follow the union, which he trusted would take a reasonable position.[29]

As politics started to turn against his views and the paper began to lose its urgency, John F. Wood sold an interest in the *Times* to Amel Lundberg on September 5, 1903, but Joe's father and Grant Turner

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apparently stayed involved for a few more months. In the meantime the paper didn't totally ignore local news. In a lighter moment John F. noted a request by the Women's Christian Temperance Union for advertising space in his paper. Despite being an atheist, Wood said he was glad to accommodate them, in the spirit of equality, but he couldn't avoid the sly comment that the Bible says wine might be good for indigestion. (Homemade wine was also regularly advertised in the *Ouray Times*.) In the Local Mention section of the *Times*, baseball (which was organized and supported by Wood's partner, John Barnett) was portrayed as an expression of civic pride and economic progress. The *Ouray Times* happily encouraged "a base ball club" because "this harmless sport" would "make possible many gala days in this and adjoining towns the coming summer, with the profit to the business of the town."

Baseball in Colorado had not always been so easily tied to festival and financial packages. Initially, "most adults were too busy pursuing gold nuggets to have much interest in chasing bouncing baseballs." Free time "was dominated by more earthy pursuits: drinking, gambling and whoring," "horse racing, cockfights, boxing, foot races, billiard and ten pins."[30] Nevertheless, organized baseball was established in Colorado by the Civil War, in imitation of eastern sport for gentlemen who "dressed in neat uniforms and engaged in only mildly competitive, genteel 'matches.'" Such civil ideals were most valued in Denver, where in March 1862 the Colorado Baseball Club was organized.[31] The Civil War initially reduced the number of players, but eventually returning veterans declared that "baseball had been very popular in the army camps, where soldiers often had to entertain themselves for weeks at a time between vicious battles. In friendly competition with easterners, they practiced some of the emerging fine points of the game, and they also learned that in some eastern cities the game was being taken more seriously, even becoming commercialized." Indicative of the revived interest, the Colorado Baseball Club was reestablished in February 1866 as the Young Bachelors Baseball Club of Denver.[32]

In Colorado, as elsewhere, the game was interpreted as an invigorating

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activity in support of community standards. The Young Bachelors believed it inspired "that healthy tone and vivacity to the physical system, so necessary to the perfect working of the mental." Better yet, baseball inspired "an open, honest manhood . . . without that hypocritical trade and dicker spirit." It was, simply, "a matter of hygiene."[33] Before the year was out, the club was playing other teams from the territory, ten years before Colorado became a state. The following year there was even a championship between the Bachelor's Club and the victorious Rocky Mountain Club, with the final score 79–43.[34] During the 1870s Colorado baseball welcomed gamblers and professional players, known to play to win and throw curve balls, without warning or guilt.[35] Driven by the nostalgia for *their* game, between 1877 and 1881 gentlemen incorporated the Denver Brown Stockings, Queen City Baseball Club, Eclipses, Metropolitans, and Athletics. More influentially, in 1882 moneyed people established the Denver Baseball Association and the Colorado Baseball League.[36] Inspired by the success of the Leadville Blues, Denver initiated the Denver Baseball and Athletic Association, eventually calling their team the Athletics and featuring David E. Rowe, who played in the National League both before and after his time in Denver.[37]

By the mid-1880s professional baseball had arrived in Colorado with the Rocky Mountain League, which featured recruited players and played exhibitions against such distant teams as the St. Joseph Reds, the St. Louis Enterprise, and the Chicago White Stockings (later the Cubs), with as many as four thousand in attendance.[38] Among the players was George "White Wings" Tebeau, who two years later played for the Cincinnati Red Stockings of the Major League American Association (and would later own the Kansas City Blues when Joe played for them in 1908). Looking for more financial stability and a wider representation, the Rocky Mountain League morphed into the Western League in 1886. But the national depression in the 1890s was especially hard on silver economies like Colorado, and bicycling became a serious competitor of baseball.[39] The turnaround came in 1900, when Tebeau resurrected

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a Denver team in the Western League. Called variously the Grizzlies, Cubs, Teddy Bears, and Bears, it featured Joe Tinker, "Kid" Mohler, Henry Schmidt, and Charles "Babe" Adams.[40]

More than three hundred miles from Denver, Ouray didn't sponsor clubs "for the purpose of making a profit. Players received no salaries [and] were local men who held other regular employment."[41] But their history was almost as long as Denver's: "Baseball had arrived almost on the heels of the first prospectors who ventured into the towering, craggy San Juan Mountains back in the 1870s. The little mining camps, nestled in canyons and valleys, wished to give visitors the impression of being settled communities with many of the refinements and entertainments they had known at home. They also wanted to build community pride for all."[42] By the beginning of the twentieth century, such villages were implicated in the emerging belief that baseball captured "many of the finest traditional American qualities," "competitiveness, honesty, patience, respect for authority, and rugged individualism" developed "on the frontier over many generations."[43] Thus Ouray offered a double dose of myth. Like a natural ore those values remained in frontier life. They also came secondhand in the baseball baggage carried by the easterners encountering wilderness for the first time.

But as Joe Wood himself later clarified, "community pride" could hide less-than-refined impulses. What Joe said, in words shaped by Lawrence Ritter, about games in Kansas also applied to the more contentious battles in the Rocky Mountains: "The smaller the town the more important their ball club was. Boy, if you beat a bigger town they'd practically hand you the key to the city. And if you lost a game by making an error in the ninth or something like that, well, the best thing to do was just pack your grip and hit the road, 'cause they'd never let you forget it."[44] In places like Ouray the "teams carried, with their bats, the town's honor," followed by a "lot of local money," which was "bet on them, too."[45] Baseball thus had a complex identity in Ouray. For those nostalgic for past joys, it became a rural idyll. For others it became the occasion for raw competition, fueled by pioneer aggressiveness.

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As Joe later described it, in the previous years, while he wandered the streets longing for the return of his father, he had been mostly a mascot for the Ouray team. In 1903, the year his father was resurrecting the *Ouray Times*, the game had evolved into something approaching a job for the young Wood, as it was the following summer, when Joe was nearing fifteen years of age. But it was in 1905, the last year the Wood family lived in Ouray, that Joe first hit stride as a baseball player even though he was still not sixteen. That year "the Ouray boys had the easiest times with those 'cornhusker' nines from the farm country north of them — Olathe, Montrose, and Grand Junction. They had the most trouble, losing four out of five games, with Silverton, a team sponsored by the noted politician and saloonkeeper, Jack Slattery."[46] On the Ouray team Joe Wood played shortstop, third base, and outfield, but not pitcher, almost always against much older players.

Early in the season Joe was a marginal player on a team that, as reported in the *Plaindealer*, struggled. When Montrose won on Sunday, May 14, 1905, by a score of 16 to 5, there were rumors that Ouray had thrown the game. In the May 28 rematch, the whiny chronicler noted that the only break in the monotony came when "a fierce snow storm ensued and kept up for two hours." Unfortunately for the locals the snow quickly melted, and Ouray lost again, 5–4. When Ouray finally won a game, on June 4, there was almost nothing to report except "Peeping Toms" getting to watch the game free from a hillside. Still no Joe Wood sighting. That came on Sunday, June 11, 1905, when Ouray fell again, this time 28–18 to Hotchkiss. But the *Plaindealer* found hope in the play of "Young Joe Wood," "the only one who [did] not deserve a good roast. . . . He did fine, but could not win the game single handed." The rest of the Ouray nine played a game that would "go down in base-ball history as one of the rankest travesties on an inflicted public." On June 25, in a game won 16–5 over Montrose, "'Little' Joe Woods [*sic*] played a good game on short — his throwing to bases was perfect. Joe also drove a hot one through centre [*sic*] field for a home run."

On July 7, 1905, the *Plaindealer* noted that in a Fourth of July game

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Wood batted seventh at an unnamed position, going 1 for 4 while scoring two runs. The writer declared Joe "the 16 year old wonder of the San Juan" (though he was only fifteen) whose performance "endeared him to the hearts of every 'fan.'" On Sunday, July 23, he played left field, where he threw out a runner at home and doubled against Silverton. As the *Ouray Herald* explained, "Our little man Woods came to the front and made the hit" that drove in Ouray's first run in a two-out, ninth-inning rally. He also scored the second run, but Ouray fell short and lost 3–2. The August 4 report from the *Herald* praised him for "catching a long fly." He was in the outfield again, according to the *Plaindealer*, on August 20 and 27, and made a good catch as he joined Pete in "the brotherly act in Ouray's outfield," where "they [could] sure eat 'em up." The *Herald* apologized for Joe's error on Labor Day, September 4, 1905, speculating that he was "thinking of the new home in Kansas and the girl he left behind." Maybe that was the same malady that got him the "collar," 0 for 7, in his last two games. He is not mentioned in the final game the next day, made noteworthy by a $250 bet between managers of the Ouray and Denver teams.[47]

Today there is still a park in Ouray where Smoky Joe Wood played his games. A ball field remains as well, on the only large flat grounds in the town. As longtime resident Roger Henn clarifies, home plate then was deeper into the southwest corner, with a grandstand that would seat about one hundred people made from remnants of an old lumberyard. Instead of the 1905 watery enclosure made from a quarry, with a fountain and goldfish in it, Ouray now has a pool, opened on July 4, 1927, sporting a water slide and other updates. Baseball is still played, and swimming remains big, along with basketball, skating, and volleyball. The Fourth of July celebration is, as in Joe's time, a major event at what has become Fellin Park. But there is a significant change: the ballpark is Smoky Joe Wood Field, so dedicated in May 2007.

As the 1905 summer came to an end and the John F. Wood family prepared to return to Ness City, Kansas, Joe Wood filed away images that enlivened later interviews. As Duane Smith has explained, "Wood

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later remembered that, after a winning game, fans would push money through the backstop for the players, and they would get free drinks at the saloons. Being too young to drink, Joe would get a meal at one of the restaurants." Joe added: "Chase and Hebler had a saloon and gave me a meal ticket at the restaurant—at so much a game according to the gate receipts." Ouray was where Joe first played pool. Hiram Herr, Joe explained, "started up a pool and beer room" where Joe "learned to play pool . . . so well Hi let" him "play for the house." When six-horse teams of big buck horses, with armed men atop, brought gold bullion down from the mine, the town got, in Joe's words, "wild and wooly." But only on weekends, when the miners sought "hooch" and the town got "boisterous." Once it even snowed on a Fourth of July up at Camp Bird Mine.[48]

Joe preferred discussing such literal details about Ouray. But in rare moments he left hints of his emotional life. Off-balance from poverty and the wanderlust of his father, Joe Wood often walked the streets of Ouray feeling orphaned. In his words he was "a little snot-nosed kid" who "knew who all the people were, but they didn't know" him. Such invisibility freed him to observe the condescension of the wealthy, as when rich Thomas Walsh "along with his daughter, Evalyn [who would later own the Hope Diamond], would throw out nickels and dimes to the kids who would follow their rig up and down the street."[49] Not surprisingly the catalyst for his transition from isolated critic to engaged citizen was baseball. In 1940, during the Wood family's last grand tour of the West, Smoky Joe vividly recalled "the feeling of importance" he got when he received "$5 for a game and walked with the rest of the team to eat a meal furnished by Barney at the Office Café."[50] The game allowed Joe to earn his share, join a surrogate family, and be fed, both physically and emotionally. No wonder years later Smoky Joe Wood insisted that he would have played baseball for nothing. In Ouray, Colorado, the game at times became his best home.

During his formative years Joe knew firsthand—from his father—the American restlessness he described in the epigraph of this chapter. As

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difficult as it was for Joe when John F. set off for Nevada and California with Death Valley Scotty and others, at least it was the last wild hare of the father. The remove of the Wood family to Ouray would be as far west as they would locate. When times got tough, the boys rose to the need, working at many jobs essential to their mother's well-being and the family finances. Joe, always loyal to his father (as he would later be to Tris Speaker and Ty Cobb), didn't get angry or rebel. Instead he admired John F.'s risk taking and filled the void with baseball. Joe's success on the town team offered acceptance and prestige while his father roamed the Southwest, trying to get rich quick. Although not yet smoking on the mound, Howard E. (most often called "little Joe") proved himself as a boy among men. The effect of this drama, centered on his relationship with John F., would be revealed as the Wood family packed up to move back eastward.

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