1988

MARION ELLEN COURTNEY

She was born in San Francisco on January 27, 1907.
She regards herself as an "earthquake baby", having been conceived during the month of the great San Francisco earthquake.
Her parents were Cornelius Daniel Courtney and Julia Spillane.
The parents residence at the time of Marion's birth was 349 Precita.
Marion was named after her aunt, Marian "Mollie" Wall...although there was a slight variation in the spelling of the two names.
She had two brothers: Leonard, born in 1905 and Edward, born in 1909.
Three weeks after brother Edward's birth the children's mother died of typhoid fever.
(The children spent eight years without a mother.)
Then Con remarried...Margaret McMenamin.
Marion attended high school at Presentation.
One of her classmates was Cecilia Dwyer (later Baker), daughter of Charles Dwyer.
The class graduated in June, 1925 whereupon Marion went on to further her education at Munson's Business School on Sutter.

In 1928 Marion married Hugh Maguire.
The happy event brought the entire family into the picture.
Marion's brother, Leonard, served as best man.
Rose and Connie were flower girls.
And four year old Jimmy was ring bearer.
For the reception two apartments were taken over at the Edgemont.
After the ceremony the newlyweds took up residence in one of the buildings larger apartments and sometime prior to 1930 they moved into a house of their own.
Hugh was employed for a time as a plasterer.
(In the late 20s or early 30s he applied lath and plaster to the interior walls of the newly completed, lower rear addition to Jerry Shea's house at 536 Girard.)
Hugh also became a milk man, delivering milk bottles by wagon.
On the quiet side he distributed beer in the same manner...thus avoiding the Prohibition, current during that period.
His most advantageous employment was as a fireman.
He worked his way up the ladder and became Captain.
Hugh Maguire is remembered fondly as the one who would start the family singing during the various get-togethers at Dennis Courtney's house, 1014 Treat Ave.
The "Rose of Tralee" and other old Irish standards were sung.

Marion and Hugh's marriage was to produce four offspring: Patricia, born in 1931 (later married in 1949), Margaret "Micky" born 7-28-'32, Gerald Oct. 4,1935 and Thomas on Dec. 15, 1945.

(Thomas attended St. Ignatius High School at the same time as Brian Shea.)

Micky became a teacher and taught for a time both in Newfoundland and in Italy.

Gerald Edward Maguire is noted to have been an excellent football player.

While still in his teenage years he enlisted with the Air Corps.... and was subsequently stationed in England.

One day he and four companions, two young women and two young men, went for a drive in the English countryside.

Gerald was a passenger in back.

The driver had taken a few drinks, and things weren't going too well with him and the girl he had chosen to get affectionate with.

He was getting angry at being rebuffed.

Nor had he completely gotten used to driving "on the other side of the road."

One of the other men told the driver to slow down.

He tried to take an approaching turn, but the car didn't make it.

The vehicle smashed into a tree.

Four of the ~~five~~ six passengers were killed.

It was a terrible shock.

The ~~sole~~ (2) survivors was the girl who was in the back seat. were females from Leicester.

And the only reason she survived was that Gerald had placed himself in front of her and acted as human cushion to protect her.

During 1950 Con Courtney's six surviving children took over full obligation of the Edgemont Apartments.

Among them they agreed to take turns running the place, one year per turn.

Marion volunteered for the first round.

She and Hugh and the family soon settled in.

Marion managed the business affairs while Hugh functioned as building maintenance supervisor.

The concept of running the place in turns soon fell through, and Marion and Hugh found themselves running it full time.

In time the couple moved to 127 Genebern Way.
For a time during their high school years Marion's younger sisters, Connie and Rose lived with Maguires on Genebern.
Their stay amounted to about four years.
It was also at that address where Fr. John Griffin stayed a few times.
Fr. Griffin was a Catholic priest from Ireland who spent thirty years of his life administering to the congregation in Australia.
He was also the son of Con Courtney's sister Nora and thus uncle to Marion.
It was midway between commuting from Ireland to Australia that Fr. Griffin would stay with the Maguires.
Interestingly, he would plan his travel routes to and from Australia in a manner allowing him to circumnavigate the globe.
Most of his tenure "down under" was served in Tasmania.

(Evidently there had been some personality clashes in the Courtney family for Marion had been cut out of Con's will. But being of generous and equitable mind her five siblings unanimously voted to include her with an equal share.)

In later life Marion and Hugh were seperated.
Marion moved to Almaden near San Jose to be closer to her daughters' families.
Both Pat and Micky had established their residences there.
Somewhere in the period 1974-1976 Hugh Maguire passed away at age 70.
Marion had suffered from colon cancer and had the problem surgically corrected.
Then a gall bladder operation was required during which proceedure fragments of sponge were left inside which added increased difficulty to the burden.
Blessed with a hearty constitution she recovered from all of this.
Afterwards she endured a heart condition.
Marion Courtney Maguire passed away in 1987.

Thomas Maguire had spent years as a Jesuit priest but later left the order.
He now spends part of the year in the family home at 127 Genebern and the remainder in Vancouver, B.C.

MOLLIE WALL

Marian Courtney was born approximately May 4, 1875 at Knocknasartnett her father's home near Killarney in County Kerry.
Her parents were Daniel Courtney and Mary Crowley.
She attended "Killarney Presentation Convent."
Her father, being a farmer, had it set for her to marry in kind.
He is known to have said, "No daughter of mine need go off to America; there's enough here to take care of her."
About 18 years earlier, Mollie's half sister Bridget ran away from from her father's farm and settled in Worcester, Massachusetts.
Mollie had that as a reminder in the back of her mind.
That, tied to the fact that she was possessed of an independent nature was enough to inspire her to sail for the new world.
She made her way to the Klondike Gold Rush which was at that time approaching its peak.
She settled in Nome, Alaska.
Specifically she boarded at the Golden Gate Hotel.
She also worked there.
It wasn't quite a house of ill-repute, but special favors could be purchased there.
Mollie provided some of those special favors.

In the meantime Mollie's younger brother, Cornelius "Con" Courtney, had also departed from Ireland.
He sailed for San Francisco, the location of an earlier migration by brothers James and Dennis.
Once there he had hoped to rendevous with Mollie as well, but he didn't learn she was in Alaska until he reached California.
As a loyal brother would, he followed after her..in attempting to talk her back down to a normal life.
The persuasion worked in the opposite direction, however.
Con became a gold-seeker in 1898 and remained in the "fields" for almost two years.
Mollie persisted with her chosen profession.

In time she met a widowed seaman named "Capt." Wall.
abt 1899-1900 ?

Grama's Uncle (Thomas) dispute this info - ??? would be interesting to know if this is factor "Reform".

The two took kindly to each other and were soon married.
Together with Con they found themselves in Portland, Oregon.
Capt. Wall had some nice momentoes to spur reminiscences of his tenure at sea.
Among these were a nicely carved cane and a walrus tusk elaborately decorated with scrimshaw.
He also owned a finely made buggy which his brother-in-law took to admiring.
"Sixty dollars if 'ya want 'er, mate!" was Capt. Wall's observation.
"I'll have it then," was Con's reply.

Mollie was set to stay "up north;" she'd found things to her liking.
But Con reminded, "It doesn't matter how much money a person could make up there; it's just too damned cold!"
He furthered that all his fellow laborers in the fields had been Scandinavians, and he didn't even understand what they were talking about!
Mollie was finally convinced to make a try of it in San Francisco.
(In later years she was known to say that if it hadn't been for Con she would have remained in the northern territory.)
Together with Con's newly purchased buggy they extended their adventure to San Francisco.
Capt. Wall remained sailing for some time but died relatively young, leaving Mollie as a widow.

Having saved some of the profits from their previous endeavors the two siblings at least had a nest egg with which to start their new life on.

Mollie continued her connection with hotels and later apartment houses...just as she had in both Nome and Portland.
One of her earliest arrangements in San Francisco was with the Clift Hotel.

Next she managed an apartment building on Ellis (which is still there, next to Glide Memorial Church, and across from the airporter terminal).

She ran a hotel named "Greens."
By that time Con had married, and his oldest son, Leonard, was given employment as a desk clerk.
Lawrence Courtney, another nephew of Mollie's, through her brother Dennis, also worked at that hotel.

During the early 1930s Mollie made her connection with the St. James Hotel at 87 3rd St., between Mission and Market.
The hotel engaged in normal traffic, but extra-curricular activities suggested by the phrase "ill-repute" were also offered.

Mollie had aged into her late fifties but was still trying to run the establishment.
Boarders were making off with furnishings and not even bothering to pay the rent they owed.
There was a widespread Merchant Marine strike going on during the 30s, and Mollie was kind enough to "carry" various seamen through it.
She kept a list of all those who were in debt to her...along with the precise amounts owed.
Just prior to World War II she convinced Frank Courtney, another of Con's sons, to seek out the debtors with hopes of gaining remuneration.
The chore was a fruitless one.
Still, for the remainder of her life it was always on the back of Mollie's mind that she was owed money.

Mollie retired from the St. James and sold the place to a man named Benjamin Blumenthal.

She stayed at a home called, peculiarly, The Pennsylvania Iron Works for awhile.
Then she was at a home on Gough near Clay.

Finally she moved into the Laguna Honda Home where she was to spend the remainder of her life.
On Dec. 13, 1948 Marian (Courtney) Wall expired at the age of 73.
Her body is interred in a Crowley (her mother's maiden name) at Holy Cross Cemetery in Colma. ^plot

(The following article applies to Con and Mollie's time up north prior to the turn of the century.)

"Although San Francisco was not depopulated as it had been by the gold rush to the Mother Lode or, to a lesser degree, the later rush to the Comstock, its civic pulses were nonetheless fluttered excitedly by the Yukon gold rush of 1898.

Overnight San Francisco became the great entrepot for Alaska, the por of entry for ships laden with the first adventurers who took train and ship to the Northland.

The Argonauts of 1898 ranged from skid road loungers to such socially irreproachable Nob Hill habitues as Wilson and Addison Mizner.

Notable among the emigrants to the new bonanzas were scores of denizens of the Barbary Coast, gamblers, pimps, thimble riggers, green good artists, con game promoters and madames and their stock in trade, the girls.

Many of these young women achieved in Nome and Dawson City the ambition of their profession, a husband and respectability, and returned to a life of irreproachable domesticity in San Francisco after the excitements were over."

(Excerpted and slightly modified from "San Francisco's Golden Era" by Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg, 1960.)

Cornelius James Courtney was born on April 24, 1924.
He was more commonly known by his nickname, Jimmy.
He was born on Hampshire St., the last child sired by Con and Maggie Courtney.
During the time of his birth his father was serving a six months' jail sentence for the part he played in the bootleg liquor enterprise described elsewhere in this volume.
By the time Jimmy blew the candles out on his second birthday cake the family had relocated to the Edgemont Apts. on Pine St.
From there Jimmy attended grammar school and proceeded partway into his high school studies.
Then World War Two flared up to disrupt the human condition.
Jimmy left high school and took up a job with Johns Manville Corp.
At age 17 he was too young to enlist in the armed services.
Not far away from the Edgemont there was a cafe-cum-general gathering place where the younger Courtneys used to congregate.
Also in attendance were teachers and students from the Elizabeth Holloway School of Theater.
The School was addressed at the Fairmont Hotel, a block or two up the hill from the Edgemont.
Jimmy apparently showed a natural flair for acting and thus caught the attention of those representing the school.
He was invited up for lessons.
Soon thereafter, the theatrical group determined to head for the big time in Los Angeles.
Again Jimmy was invited.
His father fought the idea for a time but finally conceded.
As Jimmy was still "underage," even for this sort of venture, Con had to sign his permission.
Once in LA, Jimmy received training in both television, which was conducted "live" at the time, and theater.
In time he finally did enter the armed services.
He was fortunate enough to be assigned to the "Special Services" branch of the U.S. Army.
While stationed in Beaumont, Texas, he specialized in putting on dramatic programs.
It all served to further sharpen his acting skills.

Soon afterwards he found himself in the New York City vicinity.
At the time he married a young woman who served as a nurse with the Army.
The marriage dissolved in two or three years.
In New York Jimmy received more theatrical training in the same prestigeous school attended by Van Heflin.
Afterwards he performed in a series of plays.
The early 1950s proved to be the peak in Jimmy's acting career.
He was cast in a stage production opposite the famous, or infamous, Mae West.
He played the part of a dandy.
The company toured every major city in the country.
In March of 1951, their production of "Diamond Lil" starred at the Curran Theater on Geary St. in San Francisco.
Many of Jimmy's immediate family attended the premier.

Jimmy also performed on the the New York based Private-I show, "Martin Cane."
Various episodes were produced LIVE for television and starred William Gargan in the title role.
Jimmy normally played juicy roles...gangsters and "bad guys."
He was doing that for two or three years.

Soon he was back in LA and co-starring in a number of movies.
Between such prominent engagements he tended bar to make ends meet.
Later in his life he became an automobile salesman....through contacts he had made in the Hollywood movie business.

Cornelius James "Jimmy" Courtney passed away circa 1984.

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