

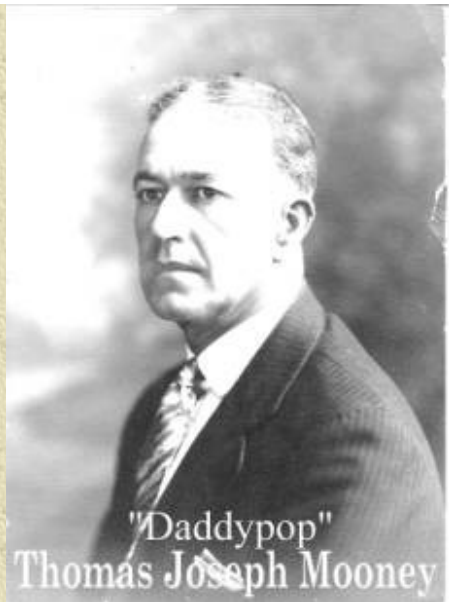
## Chapter 5. Daddypop

**I** don't remember much of my grandfather or "Daddypop" as we called him. He died during the war. As I have said, that war of my youth touched everyone, including the old, the young, men and women alike -- no one escaped. Although my grandfather was too old to be in the service he participated in the war effort by working long hours on the railroad as our soldiers and war materiel crisscrossed the country to staging areas or training grounds.



I have some faint recollections of sitting in his lap as a child and remember, vividly, the acrid smelling medicinal cigarettes he smoked when his heart began to fail -- a strange cure indeed. I also have a few memories of the time I took a trip with him to Wyoming and of riding with him in the baggage car of a small train called the "Motor". I believe it was on the "Motor" that Daddypop and a baggage man first introduced me to the delights of eating freshly picked summer tomatoes. "All you need is a salt shaker and a tomato," they said. They were right.

Sadly, my most vivid memory of Daddypop was the circumstances of his death. I have already mentioned the medicinal cigarettes. He smoked regular cigarettes heavily until his health failed. It was then that the medicinal cigarettes were prescribed. It is strange that the smell made such an impression. Years later when I was out of high school I arranged a date with a young woman and picked her up at her home. The minute I entered her house I recognized the smell that had been imprinted on my memory so many years before. She explained that her father had heart trouble and smoked special medicated cigarettes. I told her no explanation was necessary.



Daddypop died not long after he started smoking the special cigarettes. This was a personal death that took place at home with all of us present. Uncle Bill (my grandmother's brother) had traveled from Wyoming to shepherd my brother and I through the experience. It was almost like watching a play in slow motion. I think nature shields the young from the gravity of such events contrary to what is believed by present day counselors.

I sat with my brother and Uncle Bill on a small built-in bench that was part of a bay window in the dining room. In order for anyone to get to my grandfather's bedroom from the living room it was necessary to pass through the dining room first. Our old family doctor arrived at the house and warmly greeted my family. I saw him walk by carrying the familiar black bag that was the signature of the physician. He disappeared into the bedroom for a time, then reappeared and walked to the living room where my grandmother was sitting. In a kind but firm voice he said, "Tom is dying, I think you should send for a priest." My grandmother wept but expressed her concern about having the right religious articles to support the last rites. A flurry of activity ensued and the crucifix, candles, and the rest were found in time for the arrival of our parish priest. We watched quietly as he put on the long purple stole and entered the bedroom. I heard the familiar drone of the Latin prayers and the prayers of my mother and grandmother. After a short while, the priest left and the doctor reentered the bedroom. It was not long when he emerged again. I overheard him tell my grandmother that he could hear a rattle and that the end was near. My grandmother wept profusely and a few moments later Daddypop died. My uncle took my brother and I outside as the hearse arrived to take my grandfather away.

I have sometimes thought of that event and my recollections of it. It is so different from what we see today. No one in my family tried to conceal or sugar coat what was taking place. I do not remember being

sad except that I felt bad at seeing my mother and grandmother crying. I was struck by the kindness of the old family doctor. He stayed with my grandfather until he died and consoled the family. We often hear of the art of practicing medicine. I think that somewhere in our quest for science and efficiency in medicine we have mostly lost the art. It is a difficult thing to put your finger on, or describe. It cannot be bought by any amount of money and I'm not sure it can even be taught. However, I think I am richer for having seen it.

Our neighbors on Lake Street rallied around my grandmother and mother and we were overwhelmed with food, flowers, and other offerings. But we were still at war and with so much death in the community and Country; mourning was of short duration.

My memories of Daddypop, and the events surrounding his death, were eventually replaced by a small, faded, black and white photograph of a partially balding man with a thin smile and sad eyes. I would like to have known him better.