

# UPHILL - BOTH WAYS



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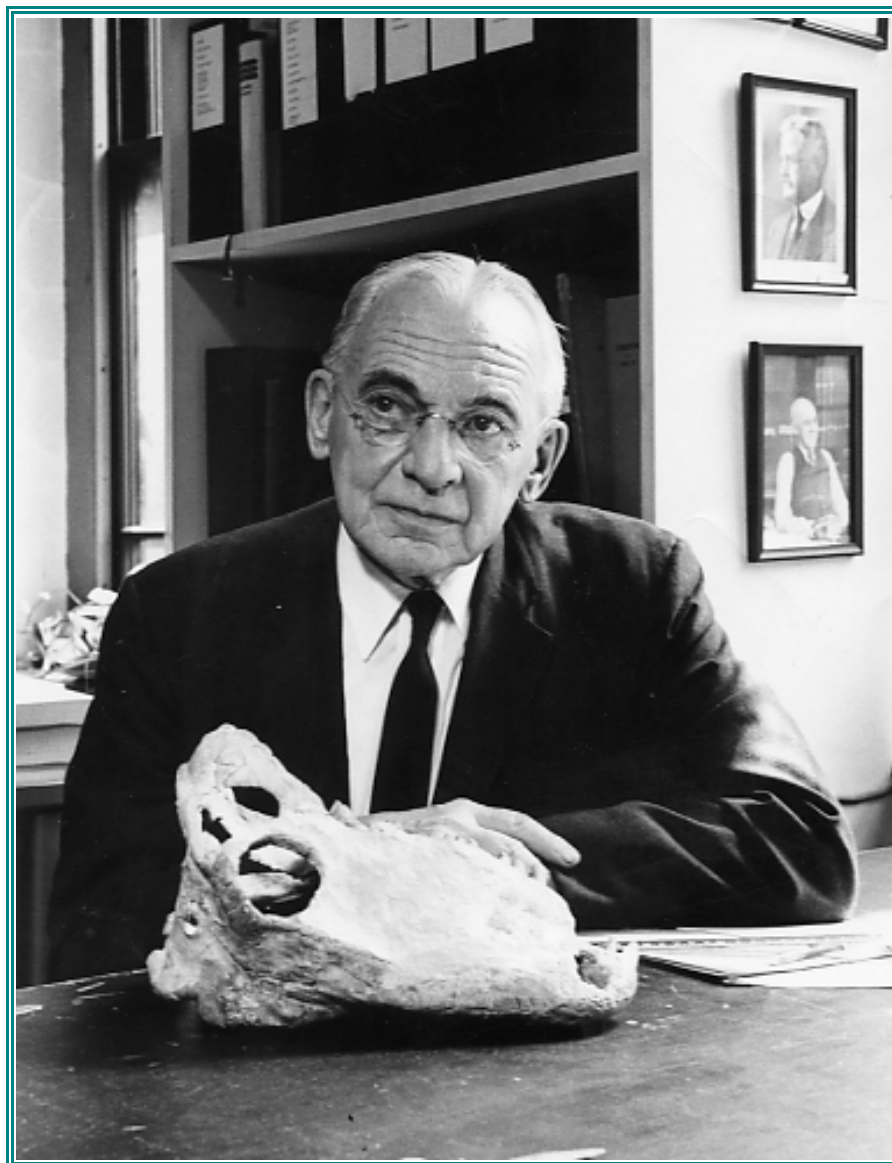
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Dedicated to Alfred Sherwood Romer, Ph.D.



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## Part 01 Introduction

### Explanation for why this volume is so small...

As you all know, I've had a terrible year in terms of my health. I was stupid so fell 16 feet out of a tree in March, broke my back, spent 3 weeks in two hospitals, developed pneumonia, developed an almost untreatable pseudomonas bladder infection, during the summer developed diverticulosis that turned into diverticulitis, developed fistula between colon and bladder, had radiological procedures that broke everything loose, had to have emergency surgery, etc. No end of health disasters that have sapped my strength and will. One evening 2 weeks ago I think death walked through this house. I remember it clearly and didn't care. If Deanna had not nagged and prodded me to take care of myself, I may well have let go. She would not. So I did not, and I survived. Bless her.

As a result of 10 months of being out of commission I was unable to complete even half of this volume. I regret not being able to provide you the complete thing this year because that was my plan. But the remainder will follow next Christmas - which, as Julie told me, is also history. Onward into the portion I will be able to provide for 2004...

### Introduction

I don't know. I just can't decide. I look back from the (unfair?) vantage point of 62 years of age to the move in 1956 from Seward to Boston and wonder which impresses me more about the move:

- A) The incredible emotional trauma which was piled on top of my concurrent recently erupted pubescent storm,
- OR
- B) The incredible stretching of my mind caused by the move that put me in personal contact with Harvard, Boston, art, science, powerful and famous people.

I don't really know. Actually, I am being chicken here. I'm setting up a straw man, aren't I. In the first place, it's fruitless to try to sort that kind of thing out, and in the second place, the consequence of the experience is an amalgam of both. I benefitted in both respects. The athletes are right: "No pain, no gain." The first bestowed on me independence that only comes out of a fiery forge like that. The second permanently opened up my remarkable mind and annealed it so it could not re-close. One may argue that the latter harmed me because I could not be contained in the fold, but it's no point in trying to make that point. What's done is done and here I am, and here you are benefitting.

This extraordinary creation called UBW is only possible because of Boston. I have no fear of an intellectual challenge of any dimension. One thousand, two thousand, five thousand pages. Who cares. I will take it on and enjoy it, thanks to my exposure to men and women who undertook enormous intellectual challenges. My folks and these men and women -remember, women- encouraged and stimulated me to step up to the plate and swing for all I'm worth at this dang project - *in their absentia*.

This makes me think of an E-mail I recently received from Bobbie, one of our legal assistants at the office: [jwallace98@netscape.net](mailto:jwallace98@netscape.net). She sent this email:

"I found this quote and it made me think of you . . .

"Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming--'WOW, what a ride!!!"

I love it. I am touched that another person can see into the inside of me and can tell that I'm in fact spending all I have on this gamble. That is indeed how I hope to end this trip. I might be completely wrong in the end, but I will have spent all I have in the project called 'life'. It will not be possible to say that I stood aside and watched. The corollary is that if I am wrong, I will be thrilled to discover the 'truth', whatever it is because it has become such a squishy concept to me now that I scarcely believe it exists. Please prove me wrong, someone!

Anyway, it was pretty rough. Moving that way. Going from a tiny, pre-modern, run-down, dirt-road, dirty, isolated, frontierish, longshoring, railroading town to toney, metropolitan Boston. At 14 years of age. Don't ever do that to your own kids if you dare have any. It's really crappy. Everyone treats you like a freak - while they acts cool or smart-aleckey. Just don't do it.

Oh, I think it was a grand thing to be able to learn and see and do and experience and understand things like I was able to do in that bedlam of torrential talking and being different. But I am not persuaded that the benefits justified the price I paid. I understand at one level that's it's immaterial at this point in my metamorphosis to pine and ponder and wonder and wish. Doesn't stop me, however. I wonder if I would have experienced less stress and agony had I been left in Alaska or in a small town. I suspect that I would have ended up being a mechanic and welder like my dad, marrying and driving old cars that needed lots of attention. Looking across the back yard that needed mowing with a few kids screaming around the place, the wife wearily putting them to bed while I looked at the stars, scratching an unreachable scratch.

The first two years -I'm going to be beating on this for a long time, so get used to hearing it repeated- were just pure agony. You have no idea. Part of the agony was the nature of the experience, the other part was the duration. Two full years it took to get over the bulk of the experience, but tendrils trailed across the next two years in Belmont.

We moved into a minuscule two story house in the manufacturing, Irish-Italian suburb of Waltham for two years. That's it on the cover, the four of us standing in our Sunday best in the yard under a tree called a "skeleton maple." Then we moved to a larger 2 story house with a liveable but unfinished attic, covered with slates on the roof and a full basement in Belmont. Two more years it went on after which I vanished forever from Boston. Alone. The day after graduation I climbed into a panel truck with dad and drove away, never to live there again. I briefly visited Boston two times since then.

I sought refuge the only place I could - in my head. My folks were remote and inaccessible and Dick and I fought as much as we talked, neither knowing how to communicate, how to talk about what needed talking. Indeed, I don't think that either of us even realized that there WAS anything that needed talking, that there might be something going on that could be ameliorated if we could get a grip on it, understand something about it, share part of it. Nope, people in those days didn't go to counselors. They just "got over it." That's what we'd hear if we whined. At the best, we would be reminded again that things will get better. But when? When?

I think my folks were terrible to me and Dick. Am I wrong? I am open to the possibility that I am, and indeed can even try to turn the telescope end-for-end to get a new view. But having done that, I see that the only difference is that the image is of a different size, not that the image or perspective shifted.

Nothing we did was right. They were never happy, they were tense, judgmental, critical. They just didn't seem to genuinely like us. The best we could hope for was to be ignored and left alone. At the time I didn't understand why, and the fact that I do now doesn't change what it was like.

In defense, now, of mom and dad, I have to say more. I do know that that they did not intentionally inflict harm on me. My anxiety about them is that they focused more on themselves than on us, that they didn't care much about the impact of their punishments, didn't measure the punishment against the crime. Further, in their defense, I want to point out that during the research and consideration of UBW information, I have made a major discovery that I've already alluded to several times. I discover that THEY were going through their own hell - yes, H E L L- and they had no resources left to tend to the needs of a confused, disoriented-by-the-move teenage kid. That is an important discovery.

But it is, unfortunately, after the fact - like 40 years after the facts and no amount of intellectualization or "understanding" of the facts will change their impact at the time on my poor inner child. As I pointed out in Volume 1:

"That sort of forgiving and healing requires me to get back emotionally to a point and place in my soul and development where I would have access to the raw data of those early interactions with him. That is the only place one can possibly alter what happened and how it was interpreted and incorporated into one's psyche. But the raw data are sealed up from me today, as they are for all adults, concealed and buried by the amalgam of confusion and pain that was formed of them, ironically concealed from ourselves by ourselves."

Think about mom's and dad's lives in Boston. Neither of these people had even finished high school. Both were farm kids who had never lived in a real city, never attended a university, yet there they were, hob-knobbing with blue bloods, big shots and big names in the colonial city of Boston at Harvard University. That would make my blood run cold in retrospect if I had taken a job with the same background and qualifications they had. Truly. I would not have presumed to take a job with their background at Harvard. They were remarkably brave - or stupid? I don't know about that, but I am persuaded today that a large share of the irritation that we felt constantly radiating from them wasn't irritation at all, at least not irritation with us. It was more likely anxiety about their own experience, inferiority in that prestigious setting. And not enough money.

The most vivid example I have of their struggle was something mom told me

several years ago. We had been talking about how difficult it was for dad to be at Harvard. She told me that there were nights when dad came home from MCZ (Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard where he worked in the Department of Paleontology) so depressed about how things had gone that he'd cry during the night and she'd hold him and get him to sleep. I had never heard that.

No wonder I got nothing from either of them to help me adjust and adapt to an extraordinarily different, difficult universe. I moved from levis and hip boots on the edge of civilization to sport coats, white shirts and ties in an enormous, overwhelming city. Mom and dad shot their wads in defending their own psyches, trusting I suppose that I'd be able to handle it. Well, I suppose I did. I'm here today.

The first inklings of this struggle appeared in Waltham when I realized that I was cut off from anything and anyone familiar. Trauma of both an emotional and psychological sort ensued, treated internally by a sort of hibernation. Who was this faintly disgusting showman with the extravagant name 'Elvis Presley'? Where did all these people come from? What were those sloppy "submarine" sandwiches filled with pungent Italian meatballs? French Catholic churches attended by hefty Italian mommas with flamboyant athletic sons with names like Alfio Graceffa? Not understood, but obviously lewd gestures with fingers and arms. Cuban immigrants in the fields throwing knives at each other, and their uncles who exhibited distinctly disgusting habits -e.g. literally flailing their whangers at anyone who came near them while they fried their whipped eggs for lunch. No kidding. I wasn't used to that kind of behavior - nor to the miserable dirty shacks that were provided them to live in.

But the second two years were much better -socially, that is- when friends with comparable values were found. Girl friends followed each other, the most prized being a lovely, petite girl of French Catholic provenance, who stoutly refused to cross the threshold of my church when our young people's group met before taking in the Boston Pops. Her eccentric, shy elder brother is a world-class mathematician at MIT today (Guillemin). Dances and parties every weekend and emotional roller-coaster rides in between. Those years compensated for the previous pain.

Our lives in Boston were dominated by two families and two institutions:

The Romers and the Coxes, and

Harvard and the LDS church

I'll tell you a great deal about both later, but mention them at this point to set out the structure of what follows. Of course, the umbrella over the whole experience was Boston itself, embedded in the oldest portion of these United States of America. Amazing history. Houses that had 1830 on the doorway weren't advertising their addresses. Those were the years the houses were built.<sup>[1]</sup>

### Arnie Lewis

I haven't really explained about Arnie although I've referred to him at several points along the way to this date. Since he was the person who created the circumstances that took us to Boston, I'll give you the background here. The story starts back around 1925...

**Part 1:** Remember the story in Volume 2 - Leamington (dad's childhood) of his learning taxidermy? He had seen the little ads in the back of magazines advertising correspondence courses that claimed to teach you how to prepare and mount birds and animals. In his state of mind, his natural I-want-to-try-it mode, he was a sucker. He leaned on his dad Samuel, probably more than once, and in the end, Sam agreed to fork over the dough for the course. So Alvin send the form and money to the address, waited impatiently. When it arrived it turns out that Sam was as interested in learning the art -hence the agreement I suppose- so together they learned how to mount critturs, starting with specimens of the abundant local population of pigeons. That's how dad learned taxidermy.

**Part 2:** Sam took Alvin out in the desert and up in the mountains with some frequency. On these outings Sam taught dad about stratigraphy and they collected fossil specimens. Dad took them home and eventually had to be moved out of the house into an old chicken coop because he had accumulated so much 'stuff'. His interest in and knowledge of dinosaurs were cultivated by his dad from early on.

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<sup>1</sup>I need to add a note to put those remarks into a perspective that was only possible after I had done some traveling. In Kyoto, Japan in 1994, I visited the temple known as "San-ju-sangen-do", a 400 foot long structure that was constructed in the 1200's about the time the Magna Carta was being signed in England. Man alive. That was amazing. But there's more. That particular structure was the "new" one. The original which had burned down around 1000 AD was built clear back in the 700's. So now when I look back at the time in New England I see that my reaction, while valid, was pretty parochial, wasn't it...

**Part 3:** There was a new fieldhouse in Vernal, right in the center of town on the park. It was dedicated to a full range of wildlife, but given its location in the middle of dinosaur country, fully half of the building dealt with dinosaurs, dad's lifelong weakness. The director was Ernest Unterman and his wife Billy helped run the operation. Dad spent considerable time there and knew Ernest and Billy as personal friends. Billy gave me small books about dinosaurs for my birthday. It was like I had personal friends in the fieldhouse and I had a proprietary sense about it. That's how integrated dad was in the operation. We got to go through the doors marked "Employees Only" into the labs with their characteristic odors and disarray. When I went there with Mrs. Schofield's third grade class, I was smug because I had the inside track and Billy talked to me and used my name but no the names of the other kids.

At some point the Fieldhouse hired Arnie Lewis as a preparator. Arnie was from Myton, a tiny town to the west close to the Indian reservation where Grandpa Merrell and his family had lived years before. I have no information about Arnie's background other than this, but whatever it was, he was qualified for the job. Someone gave Arnie a golden eagle skin and another large bird skin that needed to be mounted. That was something he did not know how to do. In talking with Ernie and dad, it came out that dad knew how to taxidermy, so the agreement was made and I expect the birds are still there. That's how Arnie got to know dad personally, how he worked and of his interest in dinosaurs.

Arnie left the fieldhouse around 1950-51, the same time we pulled up stakes and headed up to Seward.

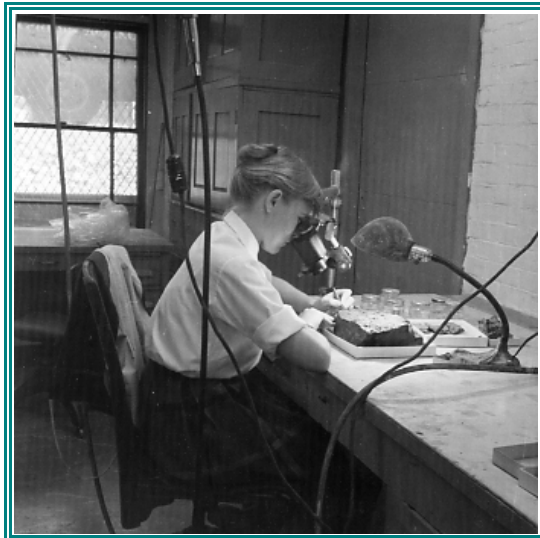
The friendship between dad and Arnie continued. Here's a photo of Arnie and dad that was taken around 1957 in front Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology. Dad would have been 39 years old. The original photo is out of focus but this shows the two of them in their prime at Harvard. Arnie always smiled and treated me like a human



being. I always liked to be around him because he was actually courteous, and he

joked with me, a kid.

I remember the time I was in the lab and dissected an odd looking mass out of a slab of shale, using the low-power binocular microscope. This photo shows the one I used. This lady is using a needle in a hand-piece with a Jeweler's vice to hold the needle. Her face is at the binocular eyepiece. She's working out a fossil embedded in a thick layer of shale, probably a fern or a fish. This photo gives you a sense of the primitiveness of the lab, dusty and old. The right-most line hanging across the bench is a compressed air line attached to a manifold that supplied all of the work benches. The left most one is just a power cord and the other is the cable to drive an old-fashioned dentist drill to was useful in removing the matrix -stuff holding the fossil quickly when you were sure you weren't going to gouge the fossil.



I was pretty excited to be doing paleontology in the lab with this microscope. Dad or Arnie gave me a block of shale to work on which I did anxiously. The odd inclusion I found was half an inch across, and was waxy, round and tan colored. I worked it out almost entirely and finally showed it proudly to Arnie. Arnie was always a gentleman and treated me with great courtesy. He explained with a gentle smile that what I had found was a coprolite. Wow, I was thrilled. A coprolite! I had found a coprolite! I didn't know what that was so asked him about it. He then explained with a grin that it was a piece of fossil dung.

**Part 4:** You remember that the school in Seward was a single building. Twelve grades in a two story building. The population of 2,000 actually didn't have that many kids so they fit for many years, but the school population was growing as the baby boomers came on line. Church basements were pressed into service to handle the excess and this affected quality to some degree. Seward had little revenue at all, so education didn't receive substantial support, for which reason the quality of education was marginal. Mom and dad spoke various time about the need to return to the "lower 48". They had decided that the proper time to make the move was when I entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Serendipity is a real thing. In late 1955, Arnie contacted dad from Harvard

where he was working at the time. I don't know whether he went directly to Harvard from the Vernal Fieldhouse or worked somewhere else before ending up there. In any event, that's where he was, and he needed to hire a preparator to work with him in the Department of Vertebrate Paleontology. Dad and Arnie corresponded several times, but there was a fly in the ointment: we had been planning that amazing expedition down the Tanana and Yukon rivers for months and our hearts were set on it. We had the canoe stripped and re-covered with red fiberglass, etc. The problem was that the new hire was needed in the Nova Scotia expedition that was to be mounted around June 1<sup>st</sup> that year, about the time we embarked on the Yukon. So dad and Arnie negotiated and in the end, dad was given a dispensation and allowed to take the river trip. So we did the river trip and the next four years of my life are set out below.

### Summer Interregnum 1956

I want to do the usual geography lesson to fix the location of this volume for you because physical context illuminates any story. Before I do, I need to describe explain the peculiar interregnum in which we -the four of us- lived from the end of the Yukon trip until we were reunited in August. This 3 month period consisted of these items:

- 1) The 4,000 mile trip over the Alcan Highway from Anchorage to Naples.
- 2) Upon arrival in Utah, dad immediately left us and flew to Boston and then Nova Scotia to join the expedition.
- 3) While he was in Nova Scotia, the three of us lived with in Naples with mom's parents for the summer. It was in Naples that mom traded-in the '53 Chevy for a 56 Chevy that was to be picked up at the factory in Dearborn, Michigan in the fall. Uncle Ted worked at the dealership and helped arrange the deal for us.
- 4) At the end of the summer, mom drove the overloaded Chevy pickup across the US to Boston.
- 5) Dad returned from Nova Scotia in late August at which point we

reunited and rented a house in Waltham.

In a text which is a linear one-block-after-another sort of thing, it is impossible to create a real-time sense of the flow of several different threads, but there's no choice. So after I talk about the geography of New England and metropolitan Boston, I will go through these 5 items in that order and then pick up the story in our rental home in Waltham.

### New England Geography

Boston was a city filled with extraordinary things and places. It is the center of New England. This map shows New England and also includes Michigan and Indiana, just to give you perspective about where some of you also lived.



Figure 5 [http://www.netstate.com/states/maps/images/usa\\_states.jpg](http://www.netstate.com/states/maps/images/usa_states.jpg)

The six states that comprise New England -the part of the US that is east of New York state- are :

Connecticut (CT)	5,544 sq. mi.s
Rhode Island (RI)	1,545 sq. mi.s
Massachusetts (MA)	10,555 sq. mi.s
Vermont (VT)	9,615 sq. mi.s
New Hampshire (NH)	9,351 sq. mi.s
Maine (ME)	<u>30,865 sq. mi.s</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>76,475 square miles</b>

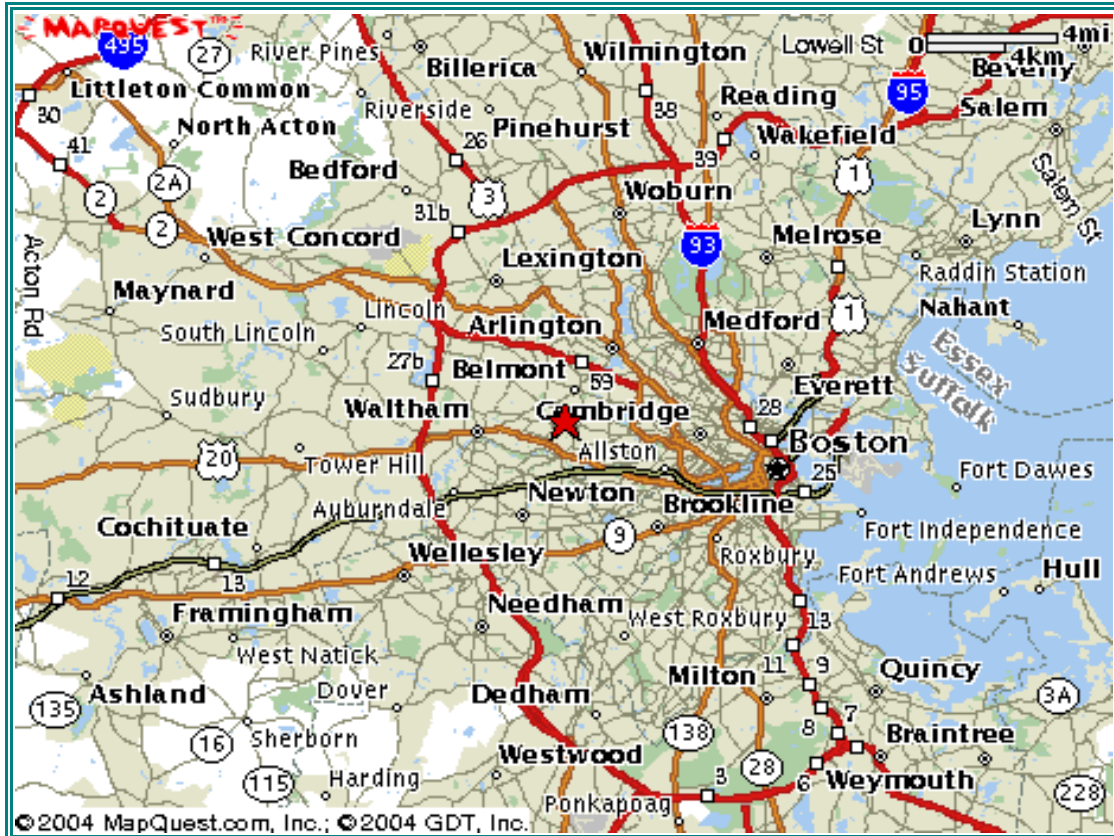
To give you some perspective, compare the total area of these six states to the area of several individual western states you know:

Oregon	98,386 sq. mi.s
Washington	71,303 sq. mi.s
Idaho	83,574 sq. mi.s
Wyoming	97,818 sq. mi.s
Utah	84,904 sq. mi.s

Each of these states contains more territory than all of New England. That gives you a sense, then, of how small the New England states are. Massachusetts, the longest of them all is only 150 miles long and is about 45 miles wide at its widest point on the east. How far was Ontario from Boise? 60 miles. You would have driven north-south across the state and half way back by the time you put in 60 miles. That should give you a sense of proportion. New England states are small and the only thing that makes it take a long time to travel is the traffic in the larger cities. Even New York state which is much larger than any of the New England states is 330 miles by 283 miles, about the dimension of Oregon which is 360 miles by 261 miles.

But New England is densely populated. For example, Oregon has 3,421, 299 people while Massachusetts by itself has 6,349,097 people. It is also filled with history, the beginning history of our country, being settled by the pilgrims around 1740.

This map gives you a more detailed view of metropolitan Boston: As you can see, the entire countryside around Boston is settled. There is a dense web of



streets and suburbs that run into each other, indistinguishable from the next except for road signs telling you that you've gone from Dedham to Needham. You find Boston proper, Cambridge where Harvard and the church were located, Belmont, Waltham and North Acton where we spent a short time awaiting dad's return from Nova Scotia. During our stay we visited most of the cities with bold text identifying them.

Back to the story: I'll start now with the five items listed above that are part of the Interregnum, going back to the trip out from Alaska that summer.