

When I Was Born

To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to
make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

I was born in

Misericordia Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on May 4 1944, a Thursday. The time was in the afternoon. In Philadelphia because of my mother had been brought up and lived in there all of her life. This hospital was chosen because it was close (about 5 minutes), it was a Catholic hospital and the obstetrician, Dr. Misset, practiced there. Her brother had 2 children previous to my birth and both were born there with the same pediatrician in attendance.

which is near

or in West Philadelphia, also called "West Philly". This is a section of neighborhood of the City of Philadelphia where my mother had lived from about the early 1920', when she moved there with her mother from



My family's address was

4404 Chestnut Street. That was where my mother was temporarily living with her mother after she returned to Philly from New Orleans in 1944 to have me. A few months after giving birth to me, she then returned to New Orleans to be with her husband who was stationed at the New Orleans Navy Yard during the Second World War. The address there was 811 Alix Street in a suburb called Algiers, which is across the river from the city. When he was discharged from the Navy in 1945, they returned with me to live at 4406 Chestnut, next door to my grandmother.

My birthday is

May 4, 1944.

My parents named me (full name)

James Landreth Littlefield.

Note: At confirmation I took the saint's name John, hence the full name is James Landreth John Littlefield. (see Note 1 below)

They chose my name because

They wanted to name me after my two grandfathers, in which case I would be called "Jesse James", as in the famous outlaw. They decided that might bring some teasing, so instead they kept the James, after my mother's father (deceased at that time) and Landreth, after my father's mother's last (family) because there were no more Landreth's in the family to carry on that surname.

My nickname(s):

Because there were many named James in the family (on my mother's side, including her brother with whom we lived quite close) they decided to adopt a nickname using Landreth. This was shortened to "Lan" and then the diminutive form "Lannie" was adopted. Hence, I was called "Lan" or "Lannie" until high school and am still called such by family and long-time friends. See notes 2 and 3 below for more on this.**



THE OTHER MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY

Brothers (dates of birth):

none

Note 1. John was my father's first name, although he was called "Jay" or "J.B.". However, one is supposed to choose a saint's name. I chose Saint John, the gospel writer, because that would then give me two saint's names, James and John, brothers who were called the "Sons of Zebedee".

Note 2. There are two diminutive forms of the name spelled "Lanny" or "Lannie". How the second one was chosen and used is not certain. School papers from the early years always have the second form. However, this second form is more frequently used as a feminine form, although I never knew this until much, much later in life. Curiously, though, my Uncle Jim, my mother's brother, always wrote it as "Lanny" and I was never clear why, as if he had some knowledge of what is the proper spelling.

Note 3. I was always called "Lannie" up until I entered high school. There, the practice is to list the students alphabetically in the form: "Littlefield, James". Hence, from the first days of high school the teachers would call out "James" and I would not respond because I didn't know they were talking to me.

Sisters (dates of birth):

none

