"Coach Squires certainly is one of – if not the – best marathon coaches of all-time. He was a powerful force in the first running boom in the United States, which might be his greatest contribution to the sport."

BILL RODGERS, *FOUR-TIME BOSTON MARATHON AND NEW YORK CITY MARATHON WINNER*

BORN TO COACH

THE STORY OF BILL SQUIRES

THE LEGENDARY COACH OF THE GREATEST GENERATION OF AMERICAN DISTANCE RUNNERS

Foreword by DICK BEARDSLEY,
National Distance Running Hall of Fame Inductee

PAUL C. CLERICI

MEYER & MEYER SPORT

Born to Coach

For their inspiration, laughter, support, love, and random goofiness, I dedicate this with much love and gratitude to my late parents, Frank Clerici Sr. and Carol Hunt-Clerici; my late brother, David Clerici; and my brother, Frank Clerici Jr.

–Paul C. Clerici

I dedicate this to my family—Sally Squires, Mary Susan Squires, Bill Squires Jr., Gerry Squires; and to all the athletes I have been blessed with—from the greats to the almost-greats—who all paid the price for improvement. I tried to give my best each time, as they did in their performances. Amen.

–Bill Squires

PAUL C. CLERICI

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FOREWORD

I first met Coach Bill Squires in August of 1980. As an elite athlete, I'd been getting shoes and running gear from the New Balance Shoe Company, beginning in November of 1979. Other than a sales rep for NB, I'd never met anyone else there. NB brought me out to meet them, and since it was the weekend of the Falmouth Road Race, they thought I might want to run it. I had heard of Coach Squires before, but had never met him. On the plane with me was a runner from Minneapolis named Mike Slack, who NB was trying to sign. When we got to the gate, there to meet us was Coach, who worked with NB. Mike knew him well, but I was awestruck! I schlepped all our bags while Coach and Mike were talking and walking in front of me. We dropped Mike off at his hotel and now it was just me and Coach! What a treat! We headed for the NB office, where Coach introduced me to everyone.

We then got into his car and headed for Falmouth, where Coach said he knew some folks who said we could stay at their place which is what runners often did then. I was nervous because I had the Falmouth race the next morning and the house was full of non-runners partying. I finally went upstairs to find a room to sleep in, but they were all taken. I found an extra pillow and blanket and found a spot on the hallway floor to sleep. About 2 a.m., Coach apparently got up to use the bathroom and saw me sleeping there and woke me up and told me to go take his bed and that he'd find another place to sleep. I told him I was fine, but he insisted. I fell back to sleep right away in the bed and got up around 4 a.m. to use the bathroom. I walked in and flipped the light on and there was Coach, sound asleep in the bathtub with a small towel over him as a blanket! I couldn't believe it!

After the race, Coach took me to the airport and told me that if I was interested, he'd be happy to coach me since I was now part of Team New Balance.

I couldn't believe that he wanted to coach me! Before he got his final word out of his mouth, I said, "Yes!" I had never been so excited in my life. Here I was, going to be coached by one of the greatest distance-running coaches in not just our country but around the world.

We started working together right away. We had only two months before the New York City Marathon, but Coach had me as ready as I could be under his tutelage for such a short period. I'd never gone out with the leaders before, but Coach gave me the confidence to do so. Halfway across the Queensboro Bridge, I made a long, hard surge and came down onto First Avenue, leading the race by about 150 yards! The crowd noise was deafening. I then noticed someone off to my right, sprinting to keep up with me. I looked over and it was Coach! His next words were, "Dickie, what in the hell are you doing?" I said, "Coach, I'm winning the New York City Marathon!" I didn't win, but finished ninth and ran a new PR of 2:13:56. I knew after that race that great things were going to happen with Coach Squires coaching me.

I was in the NB office one day, chatting with Coach and a few other runners, when Coach said he had to go run some errands. About an hour later, we happened to be looking out the window when Coach drove up and got out of his car. When he got out, we noticed he had a full head of hair—apparently he had got a toupee. As he walked across the street towards the NB building, a gust of wind came up and his toupee turned sideways on his head, but Coach didn't know it. He walked in and came up to where we were and when he walked in and that toupee was sideways on his head, I've never heard a group of guys ever laugh so hard! Coach was great about it and laughed along with us.

Coach Squires is one of the most giving people I've ever met, and in my opinion the best distance coach in the world. He knows his athletes and cares for them dearly. When I worked with Coach, iPhones and home computers were not even thought of yet. With me in Minnesota and Coach in Boston, we communicated via phone and slow mail. Coach would send me my workouts once a week and we'd talk once or twice a week via phone. When I ran my first Grandma's Marathon in Duluth, Minnesota, in 1981, Coach sent me a note with another note that said, "Don't open till after the race." I was fortunate to win the race and ran 2:09:36. When I got back to my room, I opened the envelope and Coach had written, "You'll run between 2:09-2:10." Talk about a coach that knows his athlete!

In late summer of 1981, Coach and I decided it was time for me to run the Boston Marathon. From that point on, every mile I ran and every race I ran was to get ready for Boston. About two weeks before Boston, I flew out and stayed with Coach so I could do some training on the course. After I arrived at his home, he said, "Dickie, help yourself to anything in the fridge if you get hungry." I was training so hard then that in the middle of the night I'd always have to get up to have something to eat as I'd be hungry. I went to the fridge and the only thing in it was a jar of pickles!

Coach took me up to Hopkinton one morning to run the first 15 miles of the course as he was driving next to me in his car. At one point as we were about to go down a hill, he slowed down, stopped, and dropped a tennis ball out the window and said, "Follow that ball. It will give you the quickest way to run." I still remember that run vividly! I felt like I was floating the entire time. Coach kept telling me to slow down, but it felt so effortless! To have Coach in his car next to me was amazing.

On race day I was nervous and excited, but also knew I'd never been more ready for a race than at that point. Coach instructed me to not lead or do any surging for at least the first half but to be in that lead pack. He also gave me a white NB painter's cap to wear so it would reflect the bright sun. He had instructed me that if I was in that lead group when we got to the hills to run up and down them as hard as I could. I honestly trusted Coach so much that I would have banged my head against the wall 10 times if he told me to! Well, at 17 miles, when we got to the hills, it was just me and Alberto Salazar. And I did exactly what Coach told me to do, but I couldn't shake Alberto. It finally came down to a hundred-meter sprint and I got out-kicked. Alberto and I both broke 2:09, which was the first time that two men had ever done that in the same race. Alberto ran 2:08:52 and I ran 2:08:53.6 rounded up to 2:08:54. Coach was so proud of me and I was so proud and honored to have him as my coach.

I retired from high-level training in 1988 but continue to run every day. I can't begin to say enough wonderful things about Coach Squires. He is a great coach. But as great of a coach he is, he's even more of a caring person. After I retired from competitive running, I moved back to my Minnesota dairy farm and milked cows and continued my fishing guide business. On November 13, 1989, I got into a terrible farm accident. I almost lost my left leg and had numerous other broken bones and injuries. I was in the hospital for multiple weeks. Coach was

one of the first people to reach out to ask how he could help. He even sent money out of his own pocket to help with my medical bills. Then, after more surgeries and other accidents, I became addicted to narcotic pain pills and once again Coach reached out to offer help.

I'm so happy that now the world will know about this remarkable man through this book. He brought me to a point in my running that I had only dreamed about, but more importantly, he helped shape me to be the person I am today; and for that I'll be forever grateful. Coach, you're the best of the best!

–Dick Beardsley
Marathon CR-winner—Grandma's, co-London, Napa Valley
Hall of Fame—National Distance Running, and Road Runners Club of America

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Websites included *Athens News* newspaper; Athletics Canada, especially director of public relations and corporate services Mathieu Gentes; Athletics Ireland; Athletics Ontario, especially communications and public relations manager Anthony Biggar, technical services director Roman Olszewski; *Athletics Weekly*'s gbrathletics.com; Atlanta Braves; Baseball Digest; Bill Rodgers Running Center; Biographical Directory of the United States Congress; Bob Hodge Running Page; Boston Athletic Association (B.A.A), especially former communications manager Thomas "T.K." Skenderian; Boston Bruins; Boston Celtics; Boston College Athletics; *Boston Globe* newspaper via boston.com; *Boston Herald* newspaper via bostonherald.com; Boston Public Library; Boston Red Sox; Boston State College via the University of Massachusetts Boston; Boston University Alumni *Bostonia*; Boston University Athletics; Bowdoin College; Brookline High School Alumni Association; Cambridge Running Club; Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC); Canadian Masters Athletic Association (CMAA), especially the late Ed Whitlock; CBSSports.com; *Chicago Tribune* newspaper; CNN.com; College of Optometrists; College of William & Mary Athletics; Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF); Concord-Carlisle Regional High School; Dartmouth College Athletics; Dave McGillivray Sports Enterprises (DMSE); Debbie Reynolds Official Website; Delhi Police; Dick Gregory Global Watch; Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships (DANFS), Department of the US Navy, Naval Historical Center; Digital Deli Online; Drake Relays: America's Athletic Classic, presented by Cowles Library, Drake University.

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Is Heaven, I Am Going to Be a Good Boy: The Tommy Leonard Story by Kathleen Cleary (iUniverse, Inc., 2005); *Images of America: Greater Boston's Blizzard of 1978* by Alan R. Earls (Arcadia Publishing, 2008); *Improving Your Running: 52 Weekly Sessions from Jogging to Fun Runs to 3-mile to 6-mile to Marathon Runs!* by Bill Squires (Running Systems, Inc., 1979); *Long Distance Log* magazine, the Official Publication of the United States Track and Field Federation.

Bill Squires would like to acknowledge and thank his late parents, Florence and Murt Squires, "who taught me to respect all people; and to be true, honest, and kind"; the late Dr. Edward Carroll Sr., "who saved my life when I was a kid"; the late Charlie Leverone, "who was the one in school that got me into running"; the late coach William "Doc" McCarthy, "who taught me to warm up, get out fast, own second place and hold it until your sprint to the finish"; the late John "Deke" DiComandrea, "the one who got me back into the sport"; the late Rev. Thomas J. Brennan, "who taught me things at Notre Dame I still use today"; all his coaches, "who gave me a chance to use my ideas"; Fred Doyle, Mark Duggan, Scott Graham, Kirk Pfrangle, Lou Ristaino, the late Bruce Lehane, "former athletes of mine who have all stayed close over the years"; and Paul Clerici, "with the guidance of a fine writer, the world can now read how the old coach ticks."

INTRODUCTION

"I'll clue ya!" Anyone who knows—or has met—Bill Squires has heard this declaration from him when he's about to dispense knowledge. And it is true. He will clue you. He will tell you something you didn't know and need to know.

Bill Squires is truly an enigma—puzzling; mysterious; contradictory; difficult to understand; a genius; possessing exceptional and natural ability; distinctive; a guardian spirit; and much more. This is a story of a man born with a late-diagnosed defective heart who suffered great childhood hardship and stunted growth, yet remained focused and determined enough to blossom to the world arena and who touched many lives with his coaching talent and selfless benevolence that despite successfully sacrificing his own fame for those of his charges, nevertheless is rightfully revered and honored to this day.

The process used for this book to capture decades of living was a journey unto itself. It began pedestrian enough with countless interviews, calls, follow-ups, editing, and over 124 hours of detailed conversations that unearthed everything contained "between [his] ears." It was immensely revealing—previously forgotten tales from his youth; hidden stories of greatness; training secrets and myths—some even he had thought lost; an emotional catharsis; and the humorous and comical. To prepare for each interview, I would explain the time period we were going to cover next so he could focus and prepare for that time frame. His attention would be laser-pointed. But throughout this adventure of revelation, he lived with an uncertain future in regard to his health, which he at first kept to himself. He grew weak. He was in a hurry. He was so focused on 80 years' worth of details that this endeavor consumed him. So intense were our talks and so intent was he to get all of this on record that within a month after we finished our initial last interview, he suffered a stroke. When I visited him at the hospital the day after he was admitted, I asked about the last thing he remembered. He recalled that the

night before the stroke, he was thinking of how the book could end. The irony of his own comment lost on a stroke-affected mind, I asked if we could have a different ending. He laughingly agreed.

It amazes me still that the funny, gregarious, outgoing, boisterous man he is today grew from a weak, sickly, shuttered, shy presence of a boy he once was. That he survived an early undetected (then misdiagnosed) heart malfunction, and physical, social, and emotional pain as a child, to grow into adulthood and flourish as a teacher and instructor of international champions is beyond the scope of possibilities most—he included—would have predicted. And, of course, there were more stories, anecdotes, happenstances, and comical situations that one person should have had the pleasure of in a lifetime. I wanted him to open up and opine, which he did with great honesty, emotion, and candor. He is such a fount of wisdom that I decided to feature only his voice instead of also that of others. I thought it best to hear it all from the horse's mouth. And that was bountiful, too, as my original draft was around 235,000 words!

As he often prophesizes and is quoted in his 1979 *Improving Your Running* training book, "Success is that place on the road where preparation and opportunity meet, but too few people recognize it because it comes disguised as sweat and work. Have a good sense of humor, a big dose of patience, and a dash of humility, and you will be rewarded many-fold throughout your running career." It is hoped that the serious and the humorous convey the totality of the man in such a way that not only will you be entertained, but perhaps you will unapologetically also learn something. Because through it all is an amazing person who has affected many lives. It doesn't matter who a person is—rich, poor, male, female, famous, common, talented, novice—they're all important to him.

Also important to me—as a former newspaper editor, no doubt—was the accuracy of every fact and story herein. Originating from a man in his eighties, every effort was then made via official records, sources, websites, and published coverage and reports, to verify, confirm, and corroborate all names, locations, dates, events, times, records, and anything else featured. If any of that research failed in any way, I then relied and drew upon the recollections of that man in his eighties in the hopes it is understood from where it came. In addition, there are some events included about which have been previously dissected and widely written. Such events are not rehashed in an effort to repeat what has already been described, but rather to offer a fresh view from a man whose own presence and

opinion had yet to be fully mined. I once joked to him that he has forgotten more about coaching than most of us will ever know ourselves; to wit he responded with the Squireism, "Yeah, but I'll remember it later." Fortunately, he remembered it now.

CHAPTER 1

"BULLCRAP! WE WANTED TO BEAT THEM ALL."

To date, 1975's Boston Marathon field was the largest ever recorded in its historically-massive canon. Within that field were five former champions and a handful of writers and historians of the sport. It was Patriots' Day, the Massachusetts state holiday named in recognition of the start of the American Revolutionary War in Lexington and Concord between British soldiers and the local Minutemen. It was Monday, April 21, the 79th edition of the race, filled to the brim with 2,340 runners. There was a semi-seasoned future national Hall of Fame coach eyeballing his local charge—a relative "newcomer" who belonged to a relative new club—wearing bib number 14 for his place in the previous year's Boston. While this was the runner's sixth overall marathon start, which included a pair of course-record (CR) victories, it was also his third attempt at Boston, of which he dropped out in 1973. Along with a new brand of running shoes on his feet from Oregon Nike rep Steve Prefontaine—mailed to him two weeks before Boston; five weeks before the legendary Pre's untimely death—a 27-year-old Bill Rodgers also wore dark shorts, white headband, white gloves, and a short-sleeve T-shirt. His blue-collar outfit stood out among the slick singlets and bare hands and foreheads of the favorites. He also stood out as a member of the budding 20-month-old Greater Boston Track Club (GBTC), coached by 42-year-old Bill Squires, already a proven commodity in the world of running.

Squires knew there was great potential in Rodgers, of course. Six weeks prior to Boston, Rodgers returned from the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Cross-Country Championships in Morocco, as the third-best 12K runner in the world, and also just set a 30K CR in March. The Thursday before Boston, Squires last met with Rodgers and offered him the final pieces of advice before Marathon Monday. "I told him there's a carbohydrate diet, so stick with it. No beer, no mayonnaise crap—geez, he used to like mayonnaise—no pickle juice. None of that stuff. Just carbohydrates, like pasta. And forget the meatballs. No salad, no juice the morning of the race. A pancake and a half, a waffle and a half, is good. No coffee. Just water." As for the race itself, "I told him I want him to feel loose and to *use* these people. *Use these people*! They're better, they've been down the road, and usually they are *going*! I told him if he sees some crazy guy and he sees the other flock of foreign guys going, you know, be smart! I told him that's how he got his 14th—he picked off better guys who over-raced the course. He's run this course enough, there was no problem with that, and he's run it quick."

For the benefit of the local media and competitors, Squires downplayed expectations. He did not want a target on Rodgers's back, so he often informed the press that he thought Rodgers would be in the top 10, perhaps top five. He kept glossing over his runner's talent, despite the 34:20 a month earlier at the IAAF 12K, and the two CR wins at the 1973 Bay State Marathon and 1974 Philadelphia Marathon. "I said to the press we were kind of aiming for fifth. Bullcrap! Aiming for fifth? We wanted to beat them all!"

Sealed in an envelope and locked in the glove compartment of his car, Squires prior to the start scribbled on a piece of paper his prediction for Rodgers. It simply read "First place. 2:11:05." This was quite ambitious, since it was more than eight minutes faster than the personal record (PR) Rodgers set at the previous year's Boston, and just 35 seconds over the current CR of 2:10:30 set in 1970 by Ron Hill, who, in 1975, was wearing bib number one alongside Rodgers. During the race, Squires planned to first see Rodgers in Wellesley at around 15 miles, and then again six miles later at the bottom of the Boston College (BC) hill, near Lake Street, at the Chestnut Hill campus in Brookline where GBTC trained. "I didn't care about seeing him at 10K because I knew he'd know enough to just float. And I had told him to listen to what I tell him each time I see him."

Just prior to Newton Lower Falls, at around 15 miles—and the first of the little rumblings of hills before the big ones in Newton—Squires saw Rodgers as the runners exited Wellesley via the Route 128 highway overpass and headed toward the Newton-Wellesley Hospital at around 16.5 miles. "He was in fourth or fifth place then, and I think Jerome Drayton was in first. He was cruising then, and I yelled, 'Good, good, good, Bill!' and did the illegal thing and I go out there with water," recalled Squires, whose delivery of water at the time was technically against the rules as coaches and their athletes weren't to interact during competition. However, at this point in the race, Rodgers was running alone, just behind the small group of leaders, which afforded Squires the accessibility without interfering with other runners. "I always tell my runners how many seconds back they are. You always see me with a fresh watch." This was a strategic place on the course for Squires because he trained his runners to begin their race near the overpass. After mile 16, there is a slight incline over the highway, followed by a flat recovery period near the hospital and along the Woodland Golf Club in Auburndale, which leads to the right-hand fire-station turn onto Commonwealth Avenue and *the* hills. "I'd give the times there because that's when my guys can start to beat the other people. That's where we do the surge-and-pickups in training. The minute they get over that hill at Route 128, I'd have them bang away from the hospital to the fire station. Then a cool hill, and then *bing*, *bing*, *bing*, up the big ones."

Rodgers dug in on Commonwealth Avenue and the Newton Hills, particularly Heartbreak Hill, the 88-vertical foot, 600-meter rise at the most inopportune location between miles 20 and 21. He was in a zone, all race long, having carefreely stopped to drink water and to tie his shoelaces. This was his moment. "At the bottom of the hill, he's flying. He's coming off the hill, and I go, 'Cruise! Cruise! Put it in cruise control. And then roll over the remaining smaller hills.' We had talked about the rolly hills; to roll in there. I had hoped he would be in first place by then or be no more than third. I told him he would be in control by then and be able to know from the crowd how far back the runners are because that's when they didn't have crowd control. It was crazy."

Rodgers fed off the crowd. He was a local runner with many New England ties—born in Connecticut; graduate of Wesleyan University; resided just outside of Boston; and was about to receive his master's at BC. So he felt right at home on these roads. And fortunately, as Squires hoped and planned, all eyes were on Hill

and Drayton. Since Squires last saw Rodgers with about four miles to go, and he himself made his way to the finish, Rodgers continued to create more distance from the rest of the field. He was in total control and on record pace. Due to the fact the race's homestretch of Boylston Street—and its location to the entire area of the finish line—was obviously closed to vehicular traffic, Squires illegally parked his car several blocks behind the finish line, near the Eliot Lounge, part of the historic Eliot Hotel at the corner of Commonwealth and Massachusetts avenues. The lounge, which featured its own separate entrance on Massachusetts Avenue, as well as an entryway from inside the hotel, was a popular runners' cathedral of libation with a name not reflective of its running memorabilia-laden interior décor. It's where Squires often frequented and occupied his well-worn Coach's Corner seat at the end of the bar from where he routinely dispensed his words of wisdom.

"There weren't any credentials for the finish area, but I knew enough to wear my AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) jacket with the shield on it, which meant something. And I was already head of the officials association, so I could get myself right out to the finish line." In 1975, however, although police and officials tried their best, crowd control was still at a minimum. On Boylston, cheering spectators stood dozens deep, which created a boisterously noisy funnel to the finish. It was equally congested at the finish line for the leader, who oftentimes barely recognized when to stop running until he was nearly on top of the painted line. Police on motorcycles and horseback added to the thickness of the masses, as spectators and officials blended together like an ocean of humanity and equine, pointing the way to the end of the race.

"I heard on the radio he had broke away, but I didn't know by how much. Then, at the fire station on Boylston that was near Hereford Street, the firefighter guys got out there and they started getting all the people crazy, with their bells and sirens," noted Squires of the point in the race several blocks from the finish where runners turn onto Boylston en route to the finish. "They were listening to it on the radio." Rodgers indeed broke away, so convincingly and resoundingly, that he set a new CR and an American record (AR) in 2:09:55. He chipped off 35 seconds from the four-year-old Boston mark. He also destroyed his previous PR. Having only about 18 months with Rodgers—as he eagerly prospected what he could do with even more time together—Squires watched with great pride as his pupil became only the ninth different American to win Boston since Clarence DeMar's record-

setting seventh and final victory 45 years earlier in 1930. "I was in the back row and I saw Billy finish, and I think I watched the top 10 finish. I congratulated him. Then," Squires recalls with a laugh, "they put on these frigin' horse blankets—they were old surplus army blankets. They were the itchiest bitches in the world."

Rodgers won by just under two minutes over second place, and by more than three minutes over Hill in fifth, whose CR he just broke. Squires ventured toward the lower-level parking garage under the Prudential building where runners were directed after finishing. After a brief visit, he exited the celebratory hoopla, as was his wont. "When I was leaving, a radio guy wanted me to talk to him," said Squires, who while live on the air was asked what he was going to do now and where he was headed. "I said that I left my car down by the Eliot. And of course, the Eliot went nuts [to hear him mention them on the radio]. Billy also said that on the radio [in a separate interview]. Then Billy came in later and ordered some drink, a Blue Whale, whatever that was," he recalled of the cocktail of vodka, Blue Curacao liqueur, rum, gin, and a cherry or two that he recollects was the creation of Eliot bartenders Fran Coffey and Ed Jones. "The regular TV people came in, and then it became *the* place."

Squires avoided the post-race media attention and awards ceremony, and eventually returned to his car, which, thankfully, did not have a parking ticket. The early exit was typical of Squires, who rather than for himself, preferred his runners receive the attention. "You know what? If I go there, that means *I* get press. I'd get as much press as them. But I want the story to *be* them." And Rodgers was certainly *the* story. But he was so new to the majority of those covering the race that in the newspaper he was incorrectly referred to as Will Rogers. Even more confusing was no one seemed to have understood what was written on his T-shirt. Just prior to the start, his wife handwrote with a marker the word BOSTON in large uppercase letters and below it the initials GBTC for the newfound running club.

Squires sat in his car after the long day, which began early in the morning, and reflected upon his young club. He reached over to the glove compartment and dug out that piece of paper that read: "First place. 2:11:05." While off by 70 seconds, he was spot on about the place.

CHAPTER 2

"I'VE GOT WINGS NOW!"

William Joseph Squires was the first of his family to have bestowed upon him natural United States citizenship when he was born at Carney Hospital in South Boston, Mass., on November 16, 1932. Several decades earlier, in 1898, was born his mother Florence, the eldest of nine children of the Trainor family, in the city of County Cork in Ireland. Those from *Corcaigh*, on Ireland's southern shores, are infused with the rebellious, survival, and hearty nature from the creation and evolution of their land, as legend purports it was founded around the turn of the sixth to seventh centuries upon the search-and-destroy mission of St. Finbarr to kill the last dragon in Ireland. Following similar dreams of generations before her, Florence, in 1902, was four years old when the family traveled to England. After a year of work, they could afford only the storage-class level of a coal ship for the seven-day trip to its first stop in Newfoundland.

The first name of William came from Florence's father, a trained carpenter who in his early twenties, with two other men, built the chapel in his village. The middle name of Florence's first born was in recognition of St. Joseph, husband of the blessed Mary, mother of Jesus. A patron saint of many designations, St. Joseph is the patron saint against doubt and hesitation. Florence's father, known to most as Captain Bill, had also built a 50-foot freighter to assist Newfoundlanders caught in the rough, icy waters of the Atlantic Ocean, and to move families to other parts of the island. These waters are marked by the majestic daggers of floating chunks of ice seared off of glaciers from nearby Greenland to the north. Icebergs silently glide along the eastern shores of Labrador and Newfoundland for thousands of

years, so steadily and dependable that the passageway along the coast is known as Iceberg Alley. "My mother said…sometimes she'd see animals on them. And from the first of May to the last sighting sometime in June, the radio station would have a contest that if you could pick the time it would go by here or go by there, you'd win a prize. They also had a contest for the last one of the year. If you guessed when it was, you'd win a grand prize."

Florence's family moved to the fishing community of Admiral's Cove in Cape Broyle Harbour, just south of the Newfoundland capital of St. John's, on the Avalon Peninsula, the most southeastern portion of Newfoundland. One cold, April evening when Florence was 14 years old, she and her family of five were asleep when they awoke to the penetrating, alarming wails of warning sirens along the shore. It was April 15, 1912. Four hundred miles to the east, three days after sailing from Southampton, England, for New York, the Royal Mail Ship (RMS) *Titanic* hit an iceberg and telegraphed distress calls to the Marconi wireless station on Cape Race, on the Avalon Peninsula. These calls, which reportedly began at 10:25 p.m. Cape Race time—12:15 a.m. on the passenger liner—were to be relayed to her originally-scheduled destination of New York City. Florence's father and his five-man crew took his freighter, with food and assistance, to the chilly Atlantic. The current was strong in that area, and some of the sinking ship's debris and victims made their way to the shores of Newfoundland. The Canadian Navy advised him to "pick up any remains of anything" and bring them to the dock. It was soon realized that his main purpose was recovery. "He never told my mother if he brought back bodies, but there were tons of them in the water. The children were not allowed to go down to the docks because they [bodies] started floating in," Squires recalled being told of the hundreds of victims.

Around this time, Florence, after the eighth grade, attended a separate school and learned to be a nanny. Squires's father, coincidently, also learned a trade or two—carpentry, fixing motors—in a similar school, run by the Congregation of the Irish Christian Brothers. "They were poor, but the Irish Christian Brothers were over there, and they knew that these were the poor Irish people who would probably never leave there. And they all had big families of eight, nine people."

Murt Squires, in Ireland, was born two years after his future wife, Florence Trainor, in 1900, and settled as a youth in Renews (later known as Renews-Cappahayden), a small fishing village south of Admiral's Cove in Newfoundland. Florence, who by her mother, a nurse, was named after women's nursing pioneer

Florence Nightingale, had not met Murt, but knew of him because he played in a band. Murt played since the fifth grade. His school held musical instruments tryouts and students tried different ones until they found one they could play. Murt played the accordion, saxophone, and trumpet, all by ear. "In those days, the people in the band would play at the dances. And the dances were big. I mean, what else did they have? They didn't have movies then. They had them in America—the silent movies—but they didn't have them there. So they would have the dances, and the girls would make little sandwiches and decorations, and they'd have tea and whatever. The junior band would play between 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., and then get home to mind their brothers and sisters. Then the senior band, which were the older guys, would play. And what they did was, as the older men got better, everyone passed down their instruments to the school."

Just prior to Murt's 16th birthday, his father, a heavy smoker, died. He was in his 50s. When Murt did turn 16, the age at which work papers could be obtained, the teenager worked 10-hour days on a whaling ship for five months. "They go right out until the thaw lets the ship back in. They were big—like factory ships. He said they'd catch the whales and he'd have shears and they'd be there cutting it up. Whatever was left, they'd throw over the sides and other fish would eat the stuff. The minute the light came up, he was working. And he put in a few hours late at night just to get the stuff always settled for the next day. For lunch, they'd carry it on their person because they were working and working and working. But that was a big sum of money when he came home. That took care of the family for way more than a year for the five months he was out." When Murt's brother opened a grocery store and became the family provider, Murt traveled to the United States. He sailed through Ellis Island en route to New York, where he became a trolley car driver in Brooklyn. Still in his late teens, he was on his own. "He finds a one-room place to live where there were a lot of Irish in Brooklyn. I mean, the brogue! Anywhere else, they'd correct the way they'd speak. But not where there's all these Irish. So their brogues intensified."

Eighteen-year-old Florence, at around the same time as Murt, in 1916, left Newfoundland for New York. She became a nanny on upscale Fifth Avenue. While not a live-in nanny, she found a room within the Irish community in Brooklyn, and attended the social occasions put together by those immigrants from Ireland by way of Newfoundland and environs. At one local dance, this petite woman from County Cork noticed this handsome man from a town outside of Dublin, and they

began to talk. "Both of them were kind of shy people, but somehow they go, 'You from…?' 'Yeah. You from…?' 'Yeah.' And he played his accordion in the band for food or some drinks, and everyone sang along to the Irish songs because they all knew them." Prior to their encounter in Brooklyn, the paths of Florence Trainor and Murt Squires had previously been near hits, as they lived no more than 140 miles apart in Ireland, and less than 20 miles from each other in Newfoundland. Within a couple years of when they first met, they married in Brooklyn in the fall of the start of the Great Depression. They moved to the heavily Irish settlement of South Boston, Mass., and lived atop a drugstore pharmacy on Broadway. Located along Dorchester Bay, *Southie* is dense with Catholic churches, Irish pubs, and Irish-American social clubs. Its Irish residents were well represented by a fire and police force filled with fellow countrymen. And political offices in Boston City Hall and the Massachusetts State House also held their ear. Their most well-known political representatives included Fitzgerald family patriarch John Francis "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald, Boston's mayor and the state's governor; Honey Fitz's grandson, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, a House representative, United States senator, and the 35th president of the United States; and James Michael Curley, governor of Massachusetts and four-time mayor of Boston.

Florence for years worked as a nanny for a direct-descendant family of Declaration of Independence signer Robert Treat Paine. Murt became a Merchant Seaman and found work on freighters. With South Boston an ideal port, there was plenty of work for a man who did not mind the sea and did not mind the work. "And whatever it was, he wanted to finish it off. That was one thing he always said to me—'You start something, Billy, you finish it.' And I have." And so respected was Florence that upon her departure from the Paine's, she received $500 from the family. "That was during the Depression! You buy houses with that!" He joked of his own arrival, "It was a goodbye present that was given because Sir William was born."

For her son's entrance into the world, Florence on November 13, 1932, made her way to New England's first Catholic hospital with her first cousin, Madeline, her maid of honor. It was a dangerous birth, as the boy was a breech baby, having turned himself around to greet the world bottom-end first. After a second day of labor, and since Murt was a seaman and out to sea at the time, counselors from the Chelsea Naval Hospital were summoned. "She said they all came in with their white uniforms on and everything. She said she was so weak; and she weighed

104 pounds. She said I came down the wrong way." He laughs. "At that time, they didn't do the C-section. They were afraid she'd bleed to death. They didn't know what to do with my mother. So, they cut her to get me, and held on that she wouldn't bleed to death. My aunt said they extracted me after just under 74 hours, and she looked just like a ghost. She said I was all rosy cheeks with big, blue eyes, and everyone in the nursery goes, 'Oh, he's the cutest little thing. And he looks so healthy.' That's how I came in." Two-and-a-half weeks later, the Squires clan returned home as a family of three. They later moved from South Boston to the Dorchester section of Savin Hill, where the young boy prepared for first grade as a typical seven-year-old. At the required school physical examination, however, the doctor, who visited the school to perform exams one class at a time, detected a heart anomaly. "After the test, he told my mother we'd have to see a doctor on Beacon Street in Boston. We had to go see a specialist. He told my mother that I had a bit of a problem. I had something wrong with my heart. It wasn't working right."

There was not an immediate conclusive diagnosis, but it was advised that the boy stay home for four months with little to no activity in an attempt to rest his heart. Four months in the top of the three-story house in which they lived turned into eight months, his entire first grade of school. He was now home-schooled. "Then the doctor said to don't have me walk too much, but we could use the [baby] carriage. Geez, I can imagine what I was like then. I was above average in height, and just imagine the kids looking at me in the carriage. I remember my mother would take me down to get an ice cream, and the kids would look at me." It was a lonely, difficult time for a young boy to be so confined to a baby carriage or his room. No social or physical interaction or development with other kids his age, no fresh air or skinned knees. No real kid-oriented entertainment on the radio at that time. And, of course, no television then, circa 1938 to 1940. It was a punishing, solitary existence for a boy who could not feel what was ailing him. All he knew, as it was explained to him, was that he had a weak heart. "I'd listen to the radio, and I'd look out the windows. I watched the kids coming home from school and wanted to be out there. Now and then [as an adult] I can go back in my mind, I can go look at that window, and I swear to God I have flashbacks at the frigin' boringness of my life." He recalls taking a well-known cure-all at the time called Father John's Medicine, billed as cough medicine, but whose legend grew to possess great healing qualities for many ills. "I'd drink this crap all the

time. There was a picture of this priest on the bottle, so you'd probably think this guy was a straight arrow. Any minister, rabbi, or anyone in those days—a pious person—you didn't question anything."

In school he was behind as well. He lacked math and number skills, and an example of his spelling being for the longest time cat would be spelled with a *k*, as he focused more on the phonetics than the spelling. Second grade was similar in that Florence picked up the lessons from school to be taught at home. They soon moved to Arlington Heights, near Symmes Hospital in Arlington, Mass. "A lot of hospitals were way up on hills. They looked at it as fresh air, but they didn't realize more people got heart attacks going up those hills, for crissakes! And that's why where we lived was called Cardiac Hill. They had chairs as you walked up so you could sit down and rest. From Arlington Heights, I'm looking down at all these buildings in Boston. We were that high up on the hill." On September 21, 1938, Squires experienced the most devastating hurricane to hit New England in nearly 70 years, known simply as the Great Hurricane of 1938. While those around him understood the inherent danger—with reported 100 mph winds and heavy rain that left nearly 700 people dead and 100,000 homeless—this young, sheltered boy viewed the natural disaster as fun and excitement. "We're up on the third floor, and from my room I watched the hurricane. Trees were coming down, shingles were coming off—this was the most entertainment I had since I lived there, and I told my mother I didn't want to leave! The landlady of the place was banging with pans, saying, 'Come down, Flo, and bring the boy! And bring some pillows and clothing!' We all went down to the cellar. We kept hearing the wind and lots of noise, but we didn't know what we were hearing. Then, no lights. To me, it was adventure. We go out the next day and, *wow*! All the big trees were banged in, houses were damaged, and the playground I used to look at [from the window] to see the kids play was filled with all these massive trees. And I said, 'Good.'" He laughed, since he was unable to play there anyway.

Within a year, a second boy, John Leonard Squires, was added to the family. And two years later, the United States entered World War II. Similar to when Florence heard the sirens in Newfoundland about the *Titanic*, her firstborn while he retrieved foul balls for 10 cents at town baseball games, heard an alarm in Arlington. "We heard the siren from the fire station and wondered what was going on. One of the cops comes by and says, 'We're at war with the Japanese.' I didn't know any Japanese. We knew the Chinese. The only guy we knew was the