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Summer Mornings

May there be many summer mornings when,
With what pleasure, what joy,
You enter harbors you're seeing for the first time'
May you stop at Phoenician trading stations
To buy fine things,

(from C.P. Cavafy's "Ithaka" [1911], translation by Edmund Keeley and Phillip Sherrard)

It was always in the mornings of a summer's day that Menelaos, Gus and I would be off to the market. These trips were not frequent, and they occurred during two of my many summer visits to Wooster, Ohio. We were still children, older children, but still in short pants. The years most likely were 1937 and 1938.

For me, the memory of our trips evokes the freshness of those summer mornings, the adventurous voyage and the arrival at an unusual market located in the midst of a small town residential neighborhood.

We would walk in a carefree manner, from my cousins' backyard into and through other yards, maybe setting a trail by way of Bealle Avenue Primary School. We traveled downhill. There ahead, within an environ of fences and the gravel alley off the backyard, the brick asphalt streets, the home and their lawns, (but mostly seen at first from the back) stood the market. As we approached, our first sightings were of wooden orange crates and containers of colorful produce waste. Walking around from the back to the front of the market, we found ourselves in world of active shoppers, grocery clerks, butchers and helpers. Upon mounting what for our short legs were giant concrete steps, we entered an open façade and in passing through we encountered food stalls: a meat counter, produce tables, shelves of canned goods, and a bakery case.

When I read the lines quoted above from Cavafy's poem, **Ithaka**, I think of the three children on their way to the adventure of "harbors you are seeing for the first time" and the exhilarating experience of shopping "...at trading stations to buy fine things."

Other images recalled in reading the poem are the summer mornings, much later in my life, when walking out the front door of my son, Jack's apartment building, through a small scruffy yard and out the gate onto East 94th Street in Manhattan to find "fine things" in the New York City shopping areas; leaving my cousin Sofia's apartment in Neo Psihiko to begin the day's "pleasure" of touring museums and the "trading stations" in Athens.

And yet, the clearest image in my memory is still of three little boys setting off in the "summer mornings" and the joy I still experience in remembering.

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