

REAR VIEW MIRROR INTO THE PAST DARKLY

What it is. What it isn't. A note from the Editor -

Mike Urseth.

Through my life, Mom's stories have provided a foundation that gave me an idea of where I came from. She painted images of life on the farm, living through the Great Depression and the trials and tribulations of raising children. (She certainly couldn't be thinking about me!)

Mom's life has spanned most of the momentous events of the 20th Century, from her birth in 1910 through her ninety-first birthday recently celebrated. World events touched her life as the economy crashed in the Depression and several of her brothers shipped overseas to fight in World War II. However, most of her life was molded by family and friends, or faith and community.

We all learned a lot from Mom. The importance of standing up for what you believe; the value of friendship; the worth of home and family; and the significance of doing your share. She was a good friend to many, as attested to by the crowd that attended her ninetieth birthday party on April 9, 2000. She has been a wonderful mother to Elaine and me, building solid foundation in our youth and continuing to edify us with wisdom and good humor as we move through life.

She had help along the way. Of course Dad did his best to teach us. And the neighborhood gang in St. Louis Park was influential in many ways. But Mom was at her best when the need for a creative response arose. Whether a humorous skit for the Cub Scouts

or a grass roots political response to a shady mayor's re-zoning proposal, Mom could be counted upon to come through with the goods.

One of Mom's contributions has always been the interesting stories of her life. Whether tales of Grandpa's drunken turkeys or her days as a "flygirl", Mom had a way of crafting a tale that made it interesting, even if you had heard it before. After many years of nagging by family and friends, she began to write down some of these stories. Like a fool, I agreed to put them into a book form. Of course I hadn't reckoned how many stories there were! I guess it makes sense that ninety-plus years of living makes for a lot of tales.

As I write this introduction in April of 2001, I'm confident that more stories are on their way. What I've put together here is not assembled in precise chronological order. Some of the stories have a way of jumping through time as Mom's "rear view mirror" flicks and flashes a long forgotten memory.

There are many more stories about Mom and her life as seen through the eyes of her friends and family. If you have some good ones, please get in touch with me. No need to agonize that you're not a "writer". Put it on tape, scratch it on an old grocery sack, email me or call on the phone. Get the stories to me and I'll do what I can to add them to the book.

GLANCES INTO MY REAR VIEW MIRROR

Short stories of my long life

There are no canvasses - no easels - no tubes of oils - no brushes - no palettes - just a long string of words, strung out as far as the eye can see, yet the pictures are as clear to me as an artist's best paintings.

My hope is that I can translate these



*Wedding day for Pete Geurts and Rose Oderman.
This day had a profound effect on my life, since
they soon became my parents.*

words into clear pictures of short stories of my long life.

My family, my extended family and some of my friends, who have heard some of my stories have been encouraging me to write them down for posterity.

My life has become a little “discombobulated”, so I will just write them down as they appear to me in my “Rear View Mirror”. Some may be joyful, some funny and some very sad. (I’ll try not to dwell on the sad) and some may be only of interest to me.

Let’s Have a Little Family History

I have gathered a few interesting facts about my paternal Great Grandparents’ life from Antona and Johanna Geurts, who were daughters of my grandfather Peter’s brother Cornelius. Conn, as he was known in the family, had a homestead near Brown’s Valley, Minnesota in 1862. Antona and Johanna both have passed away, but lived well into their nineties, so I’m sure we can rely on the authenticity of their words.

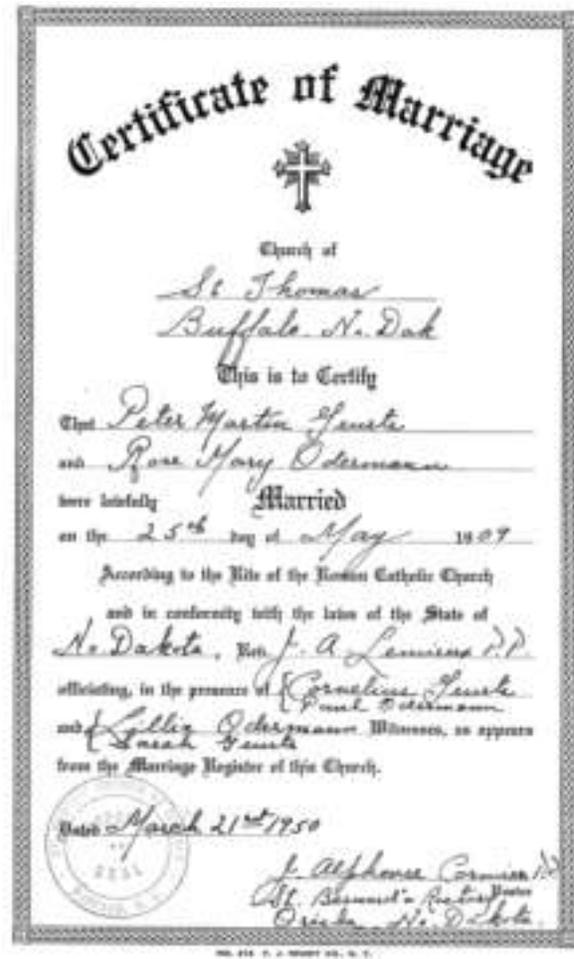
My Great Grandparents migrated with their family to the U.S. by sailboat from the town of Vierlingsbeck in the province of Noord Brabant in Holland. My grandfather Peter was about 10 years old. He was the oldest of the six brothers. They were Peter, twin brothers John

and Arnold, George, Cornelius, Jacob and little sister Mary.

An epidemic of cholera broke out on their boat. Little sister Mary and their mother died and were buried at sea. Over half of the people aboard died. They had been at sea for 21 days when their boat was quarantined on the island of Livochasook for another 30 days before they could continue their journey to New York. They travelled by train from New York to DePere, Wisconsin, where they bought a 40 acre farm.

In 1878 Cornelius (Johanna and Antona's father) homesteaded on a farm near Brown's Valley, Minnesota, where one of his grandsons still resides. In 1892 South Dakota opened up some land for homesteading near the Minnesota border (Roberts County). Cornelius, my grandfather's brother, persuaded his brother Peter (my grandfather) to come homestead there. He had scouted the land ahead and found what he thought were the best spots.

When it came time to issue the land, soldiers were in charge. Everyone was to wait on the Minnesota side and no one would be allowed to move until the soldiers shot off a cannon. But old uncle Con was ahead of that game - he had made friends with an Indian who lived on an island on Lake Traverse, which was a good shortcut to the homestead area. Grandpa Peter, his oldest son John and daughter Lizzie were the only ones in the family old enough to claim a homestead. Each got on a horse and, when the cannon fired, swam their horses the short distance from the island to South Dakota shore, well ahead of



Mother and Father were married at St. Thomas' Church, Buffalo, North Dakota on May 25, 1909.

everyone else. They had no problem finding their spots, which they had checked out beforehand. They had to stand with one foot on the marker until the soldiers came by and gave them their papers. Then they had register in Watertown, S.D., which was quite a distance and proved to be a much more difficult task for them than acquiring the land.

Grandpa Peter had married Clara Van Stratten, also a Hollander. She had a sister Catherine, who was a widow and lived with them.

Grandpa Peter and Grandma Clara had a family of five sons, John, Peter

(my father), Bill, George, and Cornelius (Con) and four daughters; Lizzie, Mary, Katherine (Katie) and Sarah. Grandma Clara died before I was born, so sadly, I never knew her, which I have always regretted. I grew up knowing and loving all my aunts and uncles except Mary.

Another Word-of-Mouth Story From Antona

It seems Mary was engaged to be married. The Banns of Marriage had already been announced in the church when he finally told her that he was a married man and could not marry her. She was so embarrassed and wretchedly unhappy that she fled the family and evidently the country, or so they thought. She never had contact with the family again, and years of searching for her by



Aunt Katie was Dad's sister. She passed away when I was quite small, so I remember little of her.



Unfortunately, Grandmother Clara Geurts passed away before I was born.

the family was to no avail. A very sad incident in the lives of their family. She had left the family before I was born.

I remember very little of Aunt Katie. She died when I was quite small. I recall the day of her funeral. Mother and Dad hated to leave me because I had the measles and was not allowed to get out of bed. They got a neighbor girl to come and stay with me, leaving strict orders that I was not to get out of bed. She decided to go home and left me. I didn't feel sick, so I got up and went out to play with my brothers. They were playing in the cool, damp dirt in our grove. I was with them a short time and Clarence said to me, "Your measles are all gone!"

"Oh goody! Now I can play all day!", I said. As it turned out, a short time later I began to get a fever and got very

sick. When my parents came home, they got me into bed with hot water bottles and quilts piled high. It seems that the measles had gone inside. I don't understand to this day what really happened - but old Doc Ewing was called. When he came in I can remember him saying "Oh you measly kid". I don't know what he did, but the next day I had more "measles" than before. I haven't forgotten how sick I was, and I recovered slowly. I'm glad you only get measles once in a lifetime.

I know my Mother and Dad were angry with me, but they were very gentle because I was very sick and I guess they were afraid about what could have happened to me.

I remember our weekly "family reunion" every Sunday outside the church after Mass with all the Geurts clan. We all attended St. Anthony Church in Brown's Valley, Minnesota and always had a nice chit chat after church. Of course the kids would have a chance to play around and tease each other.

After my Uncle Con (Dad's brother Cornelius) was married, he took over Grandpa's homestead farm, where one of his grandsons still resides. Grandpa, Aunt Lizzie and Aunt Sarah move into a big house in Brown's Valley. We often had our weekly reunion at their house after that. All our families were "growing" and I had many cousins and also



St. Anthony Church in Brown's Valley, Minnesota was the site of our weekly Geurts "family reunions" after Sunday Mass.

many brothers!

I was the oldest of ten children in our family — eight brothers followed me in rapid succession, then my little sister followed twenty years after me in 1930. She was a complete surprise to me and I think also to my mother!

I was working away from home at the time, and the family was going to keep it a big secret from me until I came home for a visit. When the big day came, my Dad -who was so thrilled at finally having another little girl - was warning everyone, "Now don't say a word about the new baby until she comes in and sees her!" And what do you think happened? I no sooner got out of the car when he said excitedly, "We've got a little girl in the house." I wasn't paying much attention because I surely wasn't expecting that. All my brothers were standing around giggling. I still didn't get it. I was really surprised. My Dad never heard the



St. Anthony's was later destroyed by fire.

last of that - his "big surprise" for me and he was the one who couldn't keep the secret!!

She was such a cute baby that she immediately claimed the name "Dolly", which she was affectionately called all her short life. She died of cancer at the early age of 56.

In order of birth, this was our family: Evelyn (a.k.a. Sally, that's me), Clarence, Laurence, Glenn, Joseph, Peter Jr., Raymond, Robert (Bob), James (Jim) and Rosemarie (Dolly) some five years after Jim. Surprise!!!!

Mother's Family

I don't know as much about my Mother's family background as my father's because I've not had as close contact with them as I did with Dad's family. We all lived close and I knew all of my aunts, uncles and cousins very well, at least while we were growing up. I have lost close contact with many of them in later years.

I hope to gain more information on Mother's family before I finish this saga and possibly add an addenda.

At present all I can recall is what Grandfather Joseph Oderman told me as I was growing up. He was born in Alsace-Lorraine, France. When he was a young boy, Germany took over the territory and he recalls that all the French books had to be burned and replaced with German books. Some years later the French reclaimed the territory and all the German books were burned and replaced with French books. This turnabout happened several times, and at present, this area is French territory again.

(See Notes about Alsace-Lorraine in the end of this chapter.)

At the time he talked to me about it, the area was German. He could remember a little of the French language, but he spoke mostly German and he always spoke English (American) to me. He was a very quiet man and didn't talk much. It was hard for me to understand him, but he was very patient with me and we had many conversations when he came to visit our South Dakota farm. I remember well the one whole summer he spent with us. I enjoyed him so much. I was very saddened when he died. I was in high school at the time.

I don't know anything about my Grandmother's background, except that she was German. Hopefully, I can find out more about her, too.

I got to know her pretty well, although not as well as I wish I had. I remember one time she came to visit when I was a very little girl. She baked bread for us and let me make some little loaves for myself. I don't remember how old I was, but I remember how thrilled I was when Santa brought me a set of small bread tins! After that I had many "little loaves"! It prepared me for all the big loaves I have baked in my lifetime.

Trip To Tower City, ND

My brother Clarence was about two years old and Laurence was on the way. Of course I didn't know that until later, when I heard stories about it. It was over the 4th of July. I remember because I was frightened by the firecrackers. I was only about three years old and we went to visit my Grandparents in Tower City, North Dakota. Can you believe this? We went in the "Surrey With The Fringe On Top" drawn by a team of horses.

I don't remember very much about the ride — except for the mosquitoes when it got dark — and I don't really know how far it was. (There are two Tower Cities in ND. One is 129 miles by modern roads. We don't know the distance to the other.) I remember we stopped a farm house - Dad watered the horses and asked if they knew of a place we could stay for the night. (Hoping they would say we could stay with them, no doubt.)

The man said there was a school house nearby. The door was open and we



My Father: Peter Martin Geurts

could stay there. We were just glad to get in anyplace. I remember we all slept on the floor and the mosquitoes were just as bad inside as outside. I guess they didn't have screens on the windows.

Dad unhitched the horses and fed them oats in their "nose bags". I don't remember eating anything, but knowing my Mother, I'm sure she had brought plenty of food along. It had been a long, hot day and I hoped the horses could rest and that the mosquitoes didn't bother them like they did me. I don't remember much about our visit except that there were a lot of people there. My Mother came from a larger family even than my Father. There were a lot of kids there, too, but the only one I can say I really remember is my cousin Violet. She was a year or so older than I and we played

together. She has been gone now for quite a few years. I did see her a time or two after we were a little older.

My Mother's family consisted of — (picture?)

MoreWord of Mouth Stories

I have a few word of mouth stories not reflected in my personal "Rear View Mirror" — I was evidently too young to cast a clear reflection.

I was born April 9, 1910. My Mother's Mother (my Grandma) was a midwife, so my mother went to Tower City, ND where my Grandparents lived to "birth me".

Evidently everything went well, because — Here I am!

I was taken home to a farm about ten miles from Rosholt, SD in Roberts County. It was a ramshackle place with an old

house and run down farm buildings. At that time my father was still farming with his father and his brothers. Their family consisted of Grandpa Peter Senior, (Sadly, I never got to know Grandma Clara. She had died before I was born.) sons John, Peter Jr. (my Dad), Bill, George, and Cornelius (Con), and daughters Lizzie, Sarah, Katherine (Katie) and Mary (Who I never got to know. She had left the family before I came along.)

It seems that Mary was engaged to be married. The Banns of Marriage had already been announced in the church when he finally told her that he was a married man and could not marry her. She was so embarrassed and wretchedly

unhappy that she fled the family and evidently the country. (Or so they thought.) She never had contact with the family again, and years of searching for her by the family was to no avail. A very sad incident in the lives of their family.

The next year Dad started farming on his own place.

The first thing they did was to build a beautiful new, big red barn. The new house came about three years later. That's where the reflections in My Rear View Mirror begin to kick in. I was about three years old. I can recall play-

There was the "outhouse" out back, with outdated Sears-Roebuck catalogues for "toilet paper".

ing in the sand used for making cement, with my neighbor's little girl, Mae, who was about a year older than me. One incident clearly comes to mind — she wasn't wearing pants! I remember running into the

house to tell my Mother, "Mae doesn't have any pants on!!" My Mother came out with me and took her into the house, cleaned her up and put a pair of my pants on her. I was so relieved.

There were no cement mixers in those days. The men were using garden hoes to mix the cement and carrying it in buckets to pour into the forms to build the foundation of the house.

My next picture is the varnishing of the stairway leading to the upstairs of the house. One of the men working there who was a friend of the family, was doing the varnishing. His name was Slim. I must have been a big pest, but he was very patient with me. He would varnish every other step and he would

place me on the unvarnished steps, and as he worked down the stairs, he would move me down each time he finished a step, with the admonition, “Now don’t you move!!!” I was so happy and excited. It doesn’t take much to excite a three year old child. When the varnish was dry in a day or so he called to me, “Come on! It’s time to finish our job!” What a thrill Ha! Then I was put on those beautiful, shiny, smooth, varnished steps. I remember how I loved the feel of them.

It was a beautiful house — four bedrooms upstairs and one large one downstairs, a large parlor, dining room, a big kitchen and a really great pantry with shelves up to the ceiling all along the whole long wall. How I envy that pantry today. Of course there was no bathroom, which I do not envy today!! There was the “outhouse” out back, with outdated Sears-Roebuck catalogues for “toilet paper”. One low hole for the kids and a high one for grown-ups. For some reason the door would not stay closed, and in winter the seats were covered with snow. I would have to scrape it off before I sat down. What a shock to a kid’s little body! And “big kids”, too. We never did get rid of that headache. Of course there were the pots (slop jars) in the house which were used at night. Here my “Rear View Mirror” flicks a memory of one of my jobs as I was growing up. “Empty the pots!”

A furnace in the basement warmed



Our Model T Ford was one of the first cars in our part of the country. It looked a lot like this one.

the house with hot water heat through old-fashioned cast iron radiators. We even had “carbide lights” and a small three burner carbide gas stove, which was really handy for “quickie” meals. We didn’t use it for our everyday “big meals”, but it was great for breakfast cereal or eggs once in a while. I had never seen carbide lights in a home before and have not seen them since. There was a big tank out in our yard where carbide was put in one side and water in another part. When they mix, acetylene gas is formed. It was brought into the house by underground pipes. The residue left over from this process was a thick, white liquid. We used it to “whitewash” the chicken coop. It kept the bugs down and kept the coop smelling fresh.

Our first car was a 1915 Ford. It had acetylene gas lights with a tank on the running board. I can remember Dad opening up the front of the lights and lighting them with a match. It was too



I still miss our big, beautiful house on the farm. Standing on the front porch are: Rose, Grandma Odermann, Evelyn, Pete, hired man holding baby Lawrence and Clarence

much for a five year old to understand, and I guess I really don't understand it all today.

Several years later both porches had been screened in. No more flies or mosquitoes. (Not as many, at least.) On rainy days the big porch was our playground. The large porch was on the East and South sides of the house, and on hot summer days we could escape the heat in the shade of our screened-in porch, play games, drink our lemonade and ride the squeaky big porch swing. Clinging memories, indeed. (Picture of house.)

The kitchen porch was sort of a catch-all; overshoes in the winter, rubbers in summer, sitting on old newspapers. Sometimes baskets and pails of vegetables harvested from our large garden. I remember a large, old-fashioned rocking chair, where my Mother would sit oft times and nurse the babies (It seems like there was always a baby!) or just rest a few minutes and watch the

pies cooling on the wide porch railing.

I remember one day a wasp's nest suddenly appearing on the screen door, of all places. Dad told us to use the front door until he could get rid of it. He put his jacket over his head and knocked it down. They swarmed all over him. He dashed inside porch, bringing a swarm with him.

We got the fly swatter and sprayer and finally got rid of them. The next day they were back again. They built a new nest in the same place. This time he sprayed them with kerosene and they didn't come back again!

An Early Thanksgiving Memory

The next "Big Picture" I see — the house was almost completed — the big Thanksgiving dinner. I remember people bringing in the sawhorses and long boards to make a huge table. More boards and nail kegs were used to make benches. All the cooking was done in the old house. Everybody was busy — turkey and all the Thanksgiving dinner trimming.

Even the carpenters and my friend Slim were there. I don't remember any little kids. I guess I was the only one in the family at that time. (But that soon changed!) I don't recall much else of that day, except sitting on Grandpa's lap and playing with his beard. He was a dear,

patient old man, I think he loved me very much — I was his first grandchild — and I loved him, too.

One other picture I enjoy reflecting on. He used to come visiting me in his one-horse chaise. It was a beautiful single-seated buggy with a top — just made for him alone, I guess. I would see him coming and run to meet him at the end of our driveway. He would lift me into the buggy and he always had candy for me. Those are the kind of things that a child always remembers. No need for a Rear View Mirror for that. There are many more reflections of Grandpa Peter, the old mirror keeps flashing at me.

Emergency Repairs

I recall after he moved to Brown's Valley, our visits after church to their big house. I remember running down the hill to visit with Slim, the man who "helped me" varnish the beautiful stairs in our house. I also remember the day that my little cousin Theresa stuck her finger in the lawn mower when one of the kids was playing with it. Aunt Lizzie worked for the Doctor in town (Doc Bates). She retrieved the finger and her down to the Doctor's office. Thankfully they were able to save the finger! I saw Theresa a short time ago and we reminisced about this day. "A little crooked, but it still works fine", she said.

My Family

Another flick comes from my trusty mirror —my last visit with Uncle George, who was slightly ailing at the time. He said to me, "When I'm gone, you are the oldest!" Shock set in. How can that be. I'm still young (or so I thought.) George was the last of my Father's family. He didn't live too much



Uncle John Geurts

longer after my visit and I became the "Matriarch" of the family. I felt my shoulders slump, but not for long!. I straightened up and stood strong. "I'm still young and I can take it." And so I have these many years since.

Three of my brothers (Clarence, Pete and Joe) survived World War II. Clarence and Pete both had horror stories to tell, but never really cared to talk too much about it. Clarence survived a bout with Spinal Meningitis while still in training at Fort Benning, Georgia. It was so serious that his clothing had already been put with the dead soldiers to be shipped home with his body, and my parents even received word that he was deceased. My family was in shock, and my parents prepared for the worst day of any parent's life — the burial of one of their children. Then the word came that he was alive and expected to live. That was another shock, but what a happy one!



*Uncles Cornelius and George Geurts
mug it up with an unknown dandy.*

He did survive, and would've been discharged, but his doctor decided it would be best for him to remain in the Army where he would get the "therapy" he needed for a full recovery. What therapy did he receive? He was shipped off to General George "Blood and Guts" Patton's division, where he fought in the Battle of the Bulge and all the way through to VE Day and the defeat of Germany.

I can't forget one story he told after

he finally returned home. I don't recall if he said where this occurred, but he his partners were all pooped out, their Jeep was out of gas, so they crawled under the Jeep and went to sleep. When they awakened they were all alone. There had been a sudden attack and the whole regiment had been captured and become German prisoners. They considered themselves lucky that the Jeep quit and that they didn't wake up. They walked for several days and many miles before they found a U.S. camp. And that was only part of his "therapy"! When the Germans surrendered, Patton's 3rd Army held a large part of what became the American Zone. When he finally returned home he needed no more Army therapy, but still suffered from back problems.

He soon married his lovely wife Dorothy, started farming in the Graceville, Minnesota area and adopted two lovely children, Gene and Rosella. He was a very successful farmer, but finally had to resort to back surgery at the Veterans Hospital in Minneapolis, MN. He quit farming and went into a bowling alley business in Glencoe, Minnesota. (Pla-Mor Lanes) After several years there, they moved to Black Duck, Minnesota where he operated a service station.

He later developed emphysema and he and his wife moved to Arizona, where he died in 1982. He led a very normal and successful life, after once being declared D-E-A-D. This is one of my Rear View Mirror Happy-Sad-Happy-Sad stories.

LOOKING BACK AT LIFE ON THE OLD FARM

A way of life that today's children will never know.

VISIT TO THE OLD HOMESTEAD

Several years ago my daughter Elaine, son Mike and I went to Graceville, Minnesota to the “All School Reunion” of my alma mater, St. Mary’s Academy. Sadly, I was the only one there from my class (1928). Everyone else had passed on or was too disabled to attend. It was an enjoyable occasion, but also very sad — I was looking forward to renewing old friendships and reminiscing over our old school days, some 64 years past. That wish was not granted.

The old school has been burned

down and a church hall has been built in its stead. That is where church activities are held and where our reunion was held. A nice addition to the community.

We visited my Grandfather’s old homestead. One of his grandson’s still resides there with his wife. They have retired from farming and one of their sons in working the land. They have a beautiful modern house. The old house has been moved across the road, but it’s in a sad state of disrepair. All the rest of the old farm buildings are still standing, including two beautiful silos that were built in later years.

I wanted to visit my old home, but there was nothing left there. Even our beautiful grove of trees was gone — destroyed. It was a sad experience for me - all those happy days — and some not so happy — of my childhood and growing up days flicked into my Rear View Mirror was really flashing overtime. I had a hard time containing the flood of tears that build up while seeing what had happened to my past.



First Communion. I'm in the second row, second from the right among the girls. Clarence is in the third row, in the middle.



One of the busiest times on the farm was when the threshing crew was on hand to harvest grain.

As we drove around the countryside, it was unrecognizable to me. The old “Sunnyside” country school was gone. We drove miles without seeing farm buildings or the groves of beautiful trees that used to surround them. Just wide expanses of farmland. Big business has taken over our family farms. It is said we can’t stop progress, but is nothing sacred? My tears are flowing as I write I’m sorry my son and daughter aren’t able to see the same bright flicks and flashes of my Rear View Mirror and I’m wondering how it’s possible for “sadness” and “joyfulness” to be so synonymous. Truly my mind’s eye does not need an optic nerve to see!!

ANOTHER WORD OF MOUTH

STORY: THE CYCLONE

My Mother and Father related this story to me, because I was too young to reflect it in my Rear View Mirror.

A big cyclone (what we now call tornado) struck the area and our neighbor’s nice, big barn was scattered all over the neighborhood. Our old house had an outdoor entrance into the cellar, and also a trap door in the kitchen floor with

a “ladder” leading into it. When the cyclone struck, the outside entrance was torn away and the wind came into the cellar with such force that it blew the trap door off and swept through the house, scattering everything — including me. I was picked up and tossed into the air and let down, more or less gently. My exclamation was, “Papa, don’t scare me like that!” My Dad used to pick me up and playfully toss me up in the air and catch me. I always enjoyed it and he evidently enjoyed doing it. (How trusting a small child can be!!) My baby brother Clarence, less than a year old, was also picked up off the bed where he was napping. He also was not injured, but was terribly frightened.

In those days there were no tornado warnings. In our case, possibly it was for the best. If we had gone down into that cellar, we may well have been history. The force was much stronger down there and there was considerable damage. (Just think what that would’ve done to the world population!! Ha!!)

I’m glad my Rear View Mirror has no

recollection of that phase of my young life. The horror stories I have heard about that day while I was growing up are still scary enough to chill me through and through. I remember one day years later. Dad came home from plowing the fields carrying a scrap of old lumber. “Look”, he said. “This is a piece of Swenson’s barn.” This could’ve been the end of our



This is not our family, but this is how my father used to plow the fields.

new big red barn, too, but it stood strong and firm, even though it had moved slightly on its foundation. We were all thanking God again after all those years. I’m thankful to be here without having to remember it all.

MY PETS

Most kids growing up have a pet dog, cat, bird, fish or even a rat. (Ugh!) This is a short story of my pets on the farm.

One morning my Father came into the house from the barn, carrying a little lamb. She had been born on a too cold spring night. He thought she was dead,

but when he picked her up there was a slight movement in her legs. He handed her to me and told me to try to warm her up to see if she was still alive. I took his old sheepskin coat, wrapped her up in it and placed her in the oven door of the kitchen range. As I watched, her legs began to move and soon she was trying to lift her head. Soon she was looking around and trying to get up. I picked her up and stood her up on the floor. She couldn’t stand up on that slippery hardwood floor — all four of her legs spread out and she flopped down on her belly. I was afraid she was hurt, so I quickly picked her up and put her back on the oven door. Then I found a rag rug and let her stand on that, but she was really wobbly. I finally got her to lay down on the rug while I found a nipple. There

were always nipples around the house, what with all the babies.

I found an old beer bottle, filled it with warm milk and from that moment on, I was her mother. After a few days, my Dad tried to give her back to her real mother, but she rejected the little lamb, so he brought her back to me and said, “I guess you are her mother now.” I was quite happy with the idea, but was really surprised — she would follow me around and “Baa! Baa!”. All I could do was give her the bottle and play with her. I guess that is all she needed — she really grew

fast and before long she was a sheep still following me around. I had named her Sheepie and when I would call her she would come running.

One night she wasn't around and when I called she didn't come. I went looking for her and couldn't find her. I thought maybe she decided that she was a sheep and didn't really need me any longer, and rejoined the rest of the flock. I felt rejected. I checked, but she wasn't there. Dad told me not to worry. She was getting up and exploring the land, etc. When it got late and she didn't come home I was really worried. I went to bed, but I couldn't sleep. Finally I got up and went out to look for her. It was a really dark night. I kept calling her as I walked around the farm. Finally, I heard her crying at a distance. I followed the sound in the quiet night air and finally found her at the far corner of our huge pasture, caught in a roll of barb wire which had been left there after a fencing project.

I tried to console her and help her out of the wire, but could not release her. Finally, I had to go wake up my Dad, he took his wire cutter out and we got her out. Her leg was cut quite badly, but we doctored it up and in a few days it was pretty well healed. I was relieved that it wasn't any worse than it was. She didn't get out of my sight again for a long time.

Time marches on, and my pet grew into a real sheep, but she didn't know it! She wouldn't join the flock, but had the run of the whole place. Finally the day arrived when I went off to boarding school at St. Mary's Academy in Graceville. I was working there for my

room and board, so I didn't get home many weekends. But "Sheepie" always remembered me and greeted me wildly. She still didn't believe that she was a sheep and was a pet to the entire family.

Then it happened. One weekend I arrived home to find no Sheepie to greet me. I was surprised. Finally I asked, "Where's Sheepie?" Nobody heard me!! The subject was quickly dropped and it got real quiet. I could see my Mother's "look" and she suddenly got very busy at the stove.

I knew immediately that something was wrong. Finally my brother Clarence broke the news by bluntly declaring "Sheepie is dead!" My worst fears have been realized. I learned early what it was like to lose a loved one.

"How did it happen?", I cried, tears flowing.

During the grain harvest season they had a grain elevator that carried the grain from the wagon into the granary for storage. During the process, a certain amount of grain is spilled on the ground, and my greedy little Sheepie ate too much of the oats she found there, became "bloated" and died. I found myself wishing she had realized she was a sheep and joined the flock behind the fence!! She would not have come to this sad end and left me grieving.

ANOTHER PET STORY: MY PET PIG

One day my Dad again came into the house carrying a tiny, squeally little pig. It seems he had been born in an unusually large litter and being the runt of the litter (and runty he was) the huskier little porkies wouldn't let him eat. The just kept

pushing him out of the way.

So of course my Dad handed him to me. This time I was to be the mother of a P-I-G. Dad had named him “Humpy”. He seemed to be a little humpbacked, but I didn’t like that name, so I called him “Gyp”, because I felt he had been gyped!!! It didn’t take him long to learn his name.

I followed the same procedure I had used with Sheepie and it didn’t take long for him to recognize me as his mother. Whenever and wherever he would see me he would come a-running — “Squeal! Squeal! Squeal!” It was rather nerve-racking. He could even climb the steps into the house... much to my Mother’s dismay.

The worst problem I had with Gyp was that the cow’s milk didn’t seem to agree with him. He had diarrhea **all the time**. It didn’t seem to bother him much, but it sure did bother me. Mother suggested I thin down the milk with water. That really helped a lot, but it didn’t cure it entirely. I tried washing him up sometimes, but he sure didn’t like that at all. My Dad was real disgusted with him and that “D-A-M-N D-I-A-R-E-E!!!!” as he called it.

He kept telling me that he was going to get rid of him, but of course I would not hear of that at all. Dad was a big tease and I knew he didn’t really mean it. He would say, “You must like being the mother of a dirty little pig.” The more it bothered me, the more he loved to tease me. “Don’t pay any attention to him.” But I had the feeling that she really wouldn’t have minded very much if Dad

did get rid of him.

Gyp seemed to grow and be quite healthy in spite of that D-A-M-N D-I-A-R-E-E! Soon I was feeding him “slop” just like the big pigs and regular pigs diet.

I found an old pan which used for his trough and he soon forgot about his beer bottle and nipple, but he would still follow me and “Squeal! Squeal! Squeal!” He liked it when I would scratch his back, and his squeal would turn into G-R-U-N-T-S!!! and love punches with his snout on my legs. It was surprising how fast he grew after I started the “slop” routine. By that time he was another family pet. Even Dad scratched his back and would say, “I’m glad you got rid of that D-A-M-N D-I-A-R-E-E!!!”

Just like Sheepie, he wouldn’t join his kind in the pen. He enjoyed being a family pet and have the run of the yard. Mother managed to keep him off the porch and out of the house most of the time, but he still didn’t quite know he was a pig.

When I would come home from school for the weekend once in a while, he had not forgotten me. And my how he had grown! I would call to him “Here Gyp!”, and he would come running. No more squeals, just hog grunts and snout love punches.

One day I came home and didn’t see him around. I called, but he didn’t come running. I began to worry — “Oh no! Not again!”

Dad said, “He’s in the pen with the rest of the hogs where he belongs.” Then teasingly again he said, “He’s about ready for South St. Paul (the Slaughter House).

I cried because I wasn't sure whether he was just teasing me or it was a fact. I think my Dad had a little mean streak in him. He was such a big teaser!

I went out and called "Here Gyp" and he came running to me. He brushed up against me, gave me a few love punches and walked away, just as much as to say "I'm a pig now. I don't need you anymore." I felt rejected, but I had realized that it would be that way someday. He was being fattened for market.

The next time I came home no one mentioned Gyp. I didn't either, knowing that the worst had happened. Finally, when I thought no one was looking, I took a walk and a peek in the pig pen. I called "Here Gyp", but no answer. There were very few hogs left there. I knew that the worst had come to pass. My Mother had that "look" again. I'm surprised that my Dad didn't make a few wise cracks, but he was very quiet and actually avoiding my eyes. I think he missed Gyp, too.

We always had dogs (usually one at a time), but they were more friendly with my brothers and were never allowed in the house.

There were always many cats in the barn, but never in the house. In fact they very seldom left the barn. When we

milked cows, the cats were given lots of milk, but were expected to catch mice for their main food. We called them "mousters", but I don't recall any of them having a special name.

When I would milk the cows there was one cat that would always come and



Another borrowed photo that shows how we prepared the fields for planting.

watch me. I would squirt milk into her mouth. She would get up on her hind legs and "beg", meow, meow, meow. One evening I was milking and of course she came for milk. She didn't think I was paying enough attention to her wants, so she started climbing up the cow's leg with her claws. You might know, I went sailing, the milk pail went sailing, and the poor Bossy panicked. I wasn't hurt much, but I was a milky mess! I had a hard time calming the cow down so I could finish milking her. In fact, she wasn't going to give me any more milk — not another drop could I get out of her. The next

morning she was okay, but I didn't let that darn cat near her again!

JOBS ON THE FARM

My brother Clarence and I had the job of morning milking before we went to school. We also separated the milk. The cream separator was one of the marvels of that age and I could never understand how it worked. Of course I never did think much about that until later years. We would strain the milk into a large bowl on the top of the machine. There was a small bowl down below. We cranked a long handle and when we got it "up to speed" we would open a spigot on the large bowl and milk would flow into the smaller bowl. The cream would be separated from the milk by centrifugal force and poured into a separate container. I didn't think much about it at the time. I didn't understand it. I just did it. I guess I still don't understand it now, but then I don't understand a lot of things. I just ENJOY! Then came telephones, TV., radio, etc. Now computers, internet, web, email, etc., which I may never get to enjoy, but my great-grandchildren are learning and using it in school. I'm glad because that seems to be the coming thing for the Twenty-first Century. I feel like I'm really being left behind. I never felt that way before, because I always managed to keep up with progress — at least managed to enjoy it. But this stuff... I'm not too sure of. I would love to follow it. Maybe I will!

My chores on the farm were many and varied. My brother Clarence who was about 1-1/2 years younger than me was usually assigned to work with me on any

"outside" jobs. They weren't really hard jobs, but it was the monotony of every day, the same old thing. Each day after school we would have to measure and fill the feed boxes in the barn with oats for the horses when they came in from a hard day's work in the fields. We had been pitching hay down from the hay loft into the mangers, but one day I fell down into the manger and hurt my leg. After that Dad wouldn't let us do the hay job. It wasn't very hard to do, but I was relieved after that happened that I didn't have to do it any longer and neither did Clarence. I suppose Dad did it. I never asked.

Another job that Clarence and I had was to keep the house supplied with water. We had a cistern tank which collected and stored rain water for most household needs except drinking and cooking. It was handy to have a cistern pump in the kitchen sink and saved us from carrying all that extra water. We had a windmill and most of the time we could turn the windmill on and it would pump the water for us. If the wind wasn't blowing we had to pump the water and that was a pretty hard job. I remember we had to stand on a milk stool to reach the handle to pull it down. We just hung on it to make it move and we went down to the ground. We got the water back to the house by putting a broom handle through the bail of the bucket and carrying it between us. It worked fine if kept our steps in rhythm, otherwise we would have an empty pail by the time we arrived at our destination. We soon learned that technique!! Mother was usually there to

empty the pail for us. The crock was set up quite high on a stand and she had a cover on it. One day she was out in the garden, so I tried to empty the pail by climbing on a chair. Of course I fell and spilled the whole pail of water. I didn't really get hurt very much—only my pride—and having to mop up the mess. And, of course, carry in another pail of water. Live and learn. I didn't try that again!! Next time Mother wasn't around to empty the pail, I just sat and waited!

OUR FIRST CARS

With the help of my Rear View Mirror's flicks and flashes, I can vaguely recall our first car. About 1914 my Dad became the first in our area to become the proud owner of a Model T Ford, a "Tin Lizzie" as it was affectionately known as in those days. It was a far cry from the autos of today!!

It had a crank in the front which had to be turned very fast to start the engine. I don't know the mechanics of the machine, all I know is that it "kicked" as Dad called it with a strong force. He had a broken arm twice from cranking his Tin Lizzie.

It also must've been hard to steer, because he tipped it over several times. He was a lucky man to have survived his Tin Lizzie!

I recall the lighting system. It had a carbide gas tank on one of the fenders that supplied acetylene gas to the headlights. I remember Dad opening the glass covers on the lights and lighting them with a match. It must've worked okay, because he did sometime drive at night. I remember the "put up and put down" top

which required several people to manipulate.

I recall our next car a little better, about 1916. It also was an open car with "top". I remember the side curtains, folded in a pleat-like bundle and tied to keep in place, which were hanging in the rear corners on each side of the car. There was a wire or some sort of slide, so that when it rained they could be pulled across the sides of the car and hooked up to the top. Curtains had small "isinglass windows" so that we could get a little light on the subject.

In about 1918 we got another car, a Dodge, which was a bigger, heavier car. It still had the crank and the side curtains, etc., but must've been simpler to use. I don't recall any broken arms or tipovers with that one. It had a different transmission and braking system than the Ford. I recall the day he brought it home. We were all thrilled except Mother. (She loved the car, but was worried where the money was going to come from.) We all got a trial ride, and after that Dad was going to put it in the "shed" and forgot to brake in time. He rammed into the back of the shed. I don't recall how much damage was done, but he never heard the end of that!

This is a very dim flicker from my Rear View Mirror, mostly word of mouth from Dad and neighbors. They talked about frightened horses were of the early automobiles when they were passed on the road.

Horses were used to having the roads to themselves, so when automobiles started using them, they were so frightened

that their drivers couldn't control them. The horses would run wild across country — anything to get away from those “monsters”. Several people were hurt and some even died in these “runaway” accidents. It was the talk of the countryside and people with cars weren't exactly loved anymore.

I don't recall just how long it took, but the horses did eventually get used to the idea of sharing the road as cars became more common and people with cars were very careful when passing a team on the road — slowly and as quietly as possible.

I recall one run-away my Dad had. He was plowing the field just behind our pasture and I used to like to walk along behind the plow with my bare feet in that nice cool, moist soil. One day I was doing just that when suddenly the plow hit a wasp's nest. Thousands (It seemed like!) of wasps swarmed out all over me, Dad and the horse. Dad tried to rescue me as I ran wildly. The horse took off — plow and all— across the field towards home. They ran right through the closed wooden gate and into the barn. Dad carried me crying home, handed me to Mother and went out to try to calm those “damn horses” down. They were more scared than hurt, even though they ran through a closed gate. I guess I was more scared than hurt, too, although I had many stingers left in me. And did they hurt!!! Mother got out her trusty old Arm and Hammer Soda box and treated me. Later Dad came in to be treated, too.

I guess I still don't understand it now, but then I don't understand a lot of things. I just ENJOY!

He was more **angry** than hurt, but he had a few stingers to be removed, too. I never walked behind the plow again!!

The plow had to be repaired and he had to build a new gate. Dad was an unhappy man for a long time. I wasn't happy, either. There is always enough to do on a farm without these interruptive catastrophes.

ONE SHOCKING DAY

Clarence and I got in on shocking the grain with my Dad. I recall one hot, humid day were shocking at our field several miles from home. We had taken our lunch with us, and when it came time

to eat, we sat down in the shade of one of our “shocks”. It was much help in keeping us cool. During the course of our “eating” I casually announced,

“I can hear our phonograph playing way out here!” Dad looked at me startled, but didn't say anything. I asked Clarence if he could hear it, and after he listened for a minute, he said, “Yes, I can hear it, too!” Dad looked at us but didn't say a word. I asked him if he could hear it, too, but he just looked at me and didn't say word.

When we had finished our lunch, Dad casually announced, “I think we should go home. It's pretty hot out here today.” I think he got a little worried that the sun was getting to us!! He took us home and asked if we would like to go into town. Of course we always liked that. Dad took us into Rosholt and bought us a nickel ice cream cone— a big treat for us in those days!

REFLECTIONS OF MY SCHOOL DAYS

Readin', 'Riting and 'Rithmetic

MY FIRST HAIR CUT

My parents were so very proud of my straight, dark, thick, long hair. Each morning before school I would have to sit quietly while my mother parted my hair down the middle and made two long braids (so long I could sit on them) and tied them up somehow with ribbons and big bows. (To this day I can't imagine why.) She seemed to enjoy it, but I squirmed and wriggled with impatience all the while. Finally I decided that it was a fact of life and accepted it. I also began to enjoy the compliments and praise I

was receiving from so many of my adult family and friends. I can't say I really ever liked my very straight hair. I always envied my cousin Verona's beautiful curls.

Then one day "tragedy"!!! The mean school bully sitting at the desk behind me, cut through the strands of one of my braids. I didn't realize that he had succeeded as well as he had until the next morning. When Mother unbraided my hair for the day's "hairdo" and lo & behold she had a handful of falling hair! Shock and consternation set in. I was in shock, too. Braids were bad enough, but

a half a braid would be even worse!! After she recovered her senses she said, "I can still braid it. I don't think it will show much." She moved the part a little to get more long hair into that braid. I did work pretty well, but there were "stickers" where the hair had been cut. It was not very noticeable, but was self-conscious of it nevertheless. We didn't tell Dad and he never noticed it, but I told that old bully that my Dad was really angry with him. The bully replied, "Oh yeah! What did I do?"



Evelyn (before her "pageboy" hair cut), riding herd on little brothers Clarence, Lawrence, Glenn and Joe.

I still had my braids for several more years. Then one day the girls began to get “bobs” (short hair cuts). I begged my parents for a bob - no way - I kept nagging, so finally Dad said okay. Then, of course, I had to get Mother to agree. One would think she would be happy to be rid of that daily chore, but she didn't seem very happy about it.

Dad took me to the barber shop and told him to cut my hair. He left me there and went about his business. I told the barber what I wanted - a boyish cut that was all the rage at that time and that Mother wanted to save my hair. I felt embarrassed to have to say that, but he didn't look surprised. He cut it off very carefully, laid it out on newspaper and rolled it up. “Beautiful”, he said, “What a waste.” I didn't catch the meaning of that at all! He went about the business of finishing his job. I was watching every clip in the mirror - thrilled!

When Dad returned he paid the man twenty-five cents and handed me the carefully wrapped package. He gave me one look, but didn't say a word. I don't know what he really expected, but I don't think we was very pleased.

When I got home, Mother threw her hands up in the air and shrieked with consternation and shock. She had a house full of boys and now I looked like one,



Sunnyside School was where I learned my A-B-C's. I still have fond memories of my days and teachers in the one-room schoolhouse.

too! She was almost in tears. I handed her the package. She took it but didn't open it. Later, she found a big shoe box, carefully laid it out on tissue paper and put it on the highest shelf in our pantry. I don't know if she ever looked at it again or not, but a year and a half later it went up in smoke with our beautiful house.

Mom didn't mention it for a long time, but said one day that she had intended to have it made into “switches” (for spanking naughty children) for me when I grew up. When would I ever have use for a “switch”?? I didn't miss my braids, but was sorry that Mom still missed my long hair.

MY REAR VIEW MIRROR KEEPS FLICKING AND FLASHING

My mind's eye does not need an optic nerve to see, and should my eyesight fail in my “old age”, my rear view mirror will continue to “flick and flash” the memories of my childhood and B-E-Y-O-N-D!

Good and bad and I shall be content with that.

OLD SUNNYSIDE SCHOOL DAYS

I remember my first day of school. My teacher was to be boarding at our house, so I went to school with her. I remember her as a stern, elderly lady. (Of course every adult seemed elderly to me at that age) I had never been in a school room before and didn't know how to manipulate the turned up seats. I thought the top of the desk was the seat! I managed to get up there, but didn't know how to get down. The teacher came to my rescue and had a good laugh. So did my parents when she told them the story. I didn't see anything funny about it. I was just glad that I was the only kid there at the time.

We had some real exciting games: "Pump-pump-pullaway" and "Duck on a rock". I don't know if "Duck" was an official game or if we just made it up. There was a big rock in our school yard, and we would put a small rock on it and throw stones at it. The "duck" was harder to hit than one would suspect. We had to knock it off the big rock to score. Exciting? Ha!

Pump-pump-pullaway was more exciting. One kid was "it" and stood in the middle of the school yard. The rest of us would line up on the end and when "it" would yell "Pump-pump-pullaway", we would run all run across the school yard. "It" would try to tag one of us and then he or she would be the next "it". This was our fifteen minutes of recess diversion. At least it was good exercise.

Of course baseball was our most

exciting game. That was the way we spent our noon hour recess. Each captain would choose up sides. A toss of a coin (if anybody had one) would determine which captain would have first choice. I don't recall how our captains were chosen. We had a large school assembly, all eight grades. There were plenty of older boys for a "real team". Sometimes even I would get called into play. I remember one day my brother Clarence was catcher and got hit in the face with a pitched ball. (No catcher's mask in those days!) I took his place behind the bat. It wasn't my favorite position to play, especially that day after seeing what happened to Clarence. His nose had been broken and he had trouble with it the rest of his life. No casts for broken noses!

Some of my fondest memories are of the Friday afternoon baseball games. Two other schools in our district had baseball teams. One was two or three miles north of us and the other about the same distance to the southeast.

Friday at noon my brother Clarence would go home, harness up a team of horses, hitch them to a hay rack wagon, pitch some hay on it and come back to school. The whole school would pile on and we would head for one of the other schools for the Big Game!

They would do the same and come to our school, exchanging home games. At the end of the school year we would have our big tournament. I don't remember now who were winners or losers. All I can remember is the joy of it all.

We had the hayride parties as well as the excitement of our "Big Games". I was

sorry to hear that it had been discontinued after I left. I guess they didn't have the "manpower" to continue it. We had two years of these game/hayrides — my 7th and 8th grade years. I still enjoy baseball, but not even the Minnesota Twins can create that same kind of excitement for me. I was sorry to see the season end.

OUR SPELLING BEES

One would think that after an exciting baseball season, a spelling bee would be dull, but our teacher made those exciting, too.

Every Friday afternoon would be spent with a spelling bee. Much like our baseball games, the captains would choose up sides. (The teacher named the captains for the duration.) A flip of a coin determined first choice. All grades were included and the teacher would be the caller of the words. She would choose words that had previously been studied for each grade. That in itself was a big job for her. Sometimes the captains would be the first to go down. Then they would really be booed. It was all in fun, so they didn't really mind. They would be on the sidelines cheering their teams on. The team with the last person standing was declared the W-I-N-N-E-R! Almost as exciting as baseball and it made learning spelling fun. When I see how some of our kids are spelling today, I think they could use the good old spelling bee! Spelling can be fun!

I think Alice Peterson was the best teacher I ever had. At least she is the one I most remember. She was only about three years older than me. She had gone to teachers college 1 year after 8th grade

and had already taught one year before coming to our Sunnyside school. She had discipline and also the respect of all her students.

MY SADDEST DAY AT SUNNYSIDE: THE BURNING OF MY BEAUTIFUL HOUSE

One day during our noon recess we had a baseball game going on, when suddenly someone noticed smoke coming from my home about 1/2 mile away. Panic set in and I started running across the fields. Everyone else at school followed, including the teacher. My greatest fear was realized — it was our beautiful house. I feared for my Mother and my little brothers who were at home. (Peter Jr., Ray and baby Bob) My Dad wasn't home at the time. He was shocking corn at one of our fields about two miles from home. One of the neighbors saw the smoke and quickly drove out to the field with his car and yelled at him, "There's fire on your place Pete, and I think it's your house!" They came as fast as they could. I'll never forget my Father's face — it was ashen. He was standing on the running board of the car. I don't know if he rode there from the field or if he was just getting a "jump start". There was nothing anyone could do. It was one of those windy South Dakota days and the place burned like wildfire.

There wasn't much saved from the house. Some of our good neighbors had heard the three long rings of the telephone which was an emergency alert and they immediately came to help. They carried out a few pieces of furniture. I remember that I pushed the piano to

the front door all by myself (across the rug). Where I got all that strength, I still wonder. Luckily, some of the neighbors arrived in time to get it off the porch and we saved it. We stored the piano in the granary for a while, and finally moved it to the school. Our teacher was also a beautiful musician, so we had music when we sang our Christmas carols, etc., making it much more enjoyable.

None of our clothing was saved. All we had to wear was the clothes we had on. I remember so well the dress I was wearing. It was my beautiful Confirmation dress that my mother had made and had been dyed a beautiful golden color. It had been a white voile with lovely lace trim and took the dye so beautifully. I was so proud of it, but in my haste to get to the fire, I got it caught in the barb wire as I was trying to get through our pasture. The whole back was ripped out and I was unable to wear it again. Another sad loss for me.

The fire started in the kitchen. Mother was cutting doughnuts in the pantry and had a hot fire going in the kitchen range, with a big pan of hot grease ready for frying. Evidently a gust of wind caused the stove pipe to fall down in the grease and started an uncontrollable fire. Luckily she was able to get past it into the dining room, where little baby Bob was sitting in his high chair, so she grabbed him and got out the door. Peter Jr. and Ray were outdoors.

By then the entire kitchen was ablaze and she knew that our beautiful house was history. I think I was in 7th grade at the time and our beautiful house was

only ten years old. What a tragedy! What a setback for our whole family!

We found out what “good neighbors” means first hand. Everyone pitched in to help. The Ladies Aid Societies from the different churches around the area brought us clothing, made us quilts and even canned foods. All of Mother’s hundreds of jars of home-canned fruit and vegetables were gone.

We moved in with my Uncle who lived a couple of miles down the road from us, until we had our old house back in shape that we could move back into it. It had been divided and part of it had been made into Father’s blacksmith shop. (Another story just flashed in my rear view mirror!) Everything was moved out to the machine shed. It was cleaned and painted as well as possible. There were two rooms downstairs and one upstairs with a pull-down ladder. It was quite a letdown from my beautiful varnished staircase. The other part of the old house also burned. It had been used as a “wash house”, housing its double washing machines. It was quite close to the new house, so now it was back to the old “washboard” again. “Woe is me!”

The cleanup and rebuilding began immediately, again with the help of our good neighbors. What neighborly spirit! Hard times had set in, so my parents had to cut the fire insurance in half, so there wasn’t much money available to rebuild. One doesn’t really ever expect to use insurance!

When the new house was finished, except for the room partitions, it presented a nice smooth floor and a great

place for a party. All the neighbors, relatives and friends were invited to enjoy an evening of fun, dancing and relaxation. It was an “In Appreciation” party. Everyone seemed to really enjoy it. I know I did!

Hopefully things would soon again be back to “almost normal” For me it would never be really normal — I would always miss that beautiful house, but I’m so thankful that no one was hurt, and I thank God for that!

JACK RABBIT HUNT

Suddenly the Jack Rabbits were taking over the land. They were destroying crops and even gnawing the bark off our trees, killing many of them. They are a rather homely animal, not at all like the cute little bunny rabbits. They have long ears and long, strong hind legs. One day there was one in our yard when I came out of the house. He stood up on his hind legs and looked me right in the eye. I was almost afraid he was going to attack me. I made a jump at him, yelled a loud noise, and he turned tail and ran. That was the first one I had seen up close. I was relieved. I had heard stories about what pests they were becoming, but hadn’t thought much about them until then.

Someone got the idea of having a Jack Rabbit Hunt. Get as many hunters together as you can, divide into two teams, decide on territories, set a start and finishing time. When time expires, everyone meets at the starting place. The team that brings in the most of the “beasts” would be declared “winners”. A party (called the “Bunny Hop”) was held at Winans Hall, a township sponsored facility. I didn’t get to go to any of these

parties. I guess it was a “stag” for the hunters only. I understand that a good time was had by all! Thousands of Jack Rabbits disappeared and another plague was all but eliminated.

Many of the local Indians offered to skin the animals for the meat. (I don’t think I would like to eat it myself.) They were also given some of the skins for their own use and I guess the rest of the hides were sold. I can’t say much about that because I never really did hear.

Many such hunts were organized around the state and the destructive Jack Rabbit was turned into a profit.

1918 FLOODS

I remember the big flood of 1918. A great part of the road and a large portion of our field was flooded. A big pond which was there for years, was almost up to our school yard. The road was detoured through our field and was still that way when I left home. Here comes another flash from my trusty Rear View Mirror!

One day my father had taken a load of grain to town to sell. On the way home he decided to swim the horses across the pond instead of taking the detour. Everything was going along “swimmingly”, when suddenly the wagon boxed floated off the frame. The horses kept swimming along, not paying any attention to Father’s demands and left him floating around in the wagon box. The team just went on home, right into the barn, without the box or my Dad! We didn’t know what had happened. Mother went out and unhitched the team. I had never seen that before — she never did



Potpourri

From the Past

70 years ago
January 1928

From Review files

The neighbors held a very successful "hen party" at the Emil Nyrberg home Monday evening. They were to bring a hen and as each one complied, quite a number were added to the flock. Mrs. Madsen and Mrs. Chelgren furnished the lunch. A very pleasant time was had by all.

The Beet Growers Associations all over the country are asking for tariff increase on sugar from \$1.76 to \$2.25 per 100 pounds. They assert this much differential is necessary to equalize the difference in cost of producing sugar in Cuba as compared with this country.

About 12 young ladies were entertained at the home of Anna and Minnie Moeller Tuesday night to a Flinch Party. It is reported as a very enjoyable affair.

Harold Grummons took five passengers to Fairmount Sunday by team and sled. It was quite a trip but no bad effects were reported and they got there safe and sound. It was students and teachers who had to return to duties.

Lester Sheldon was in town Tuesday with a team. He wanted a road to town, so he broke one. Others followed.

Quite a few farmers were in town Tuesday and opened up a few of the roads again. Sleighing is claimed to be the best now for a good many years.

Rube Martin had his hair cut Tuesday, the first time this winter, so he could go to the card party, and then the affair was called off. You could almost sue the ladies for damages, Rube -- anyway, the price of a haircut.

One of the most delightful

proved real amusing.

Mr. Antone Herding was a pleasant caller at the Review office Friday. He lives just across the line in North Dakota, but Rosholt is his trading point. He is a good, thrifty farmer and Rosholt is lucky to have so many of the same kind coming here to trade.

Mrs. Manfred Olson was taken to the Graceville hospital last Monday and was operated on Tuesday, a double operation and a very serious one. Mr. Olson was with her, getting home Wednesday. Mrs. Johnny Magnuson is taking excellent care of the children while Mrs. Olson is in the hospital.

The rabbit hunters of Harmon and vicinity celebrated Sunday afternoon, Jan. 22, by holding their annual rabbit hunt. From the Interstate Bridge to the furthest boundaries of Dry Run and Cottonwood Lake and south to the shores of Traverse the air reverberated with the booming of many guns. Capt. Henry Pistorius led in the number of rabbits brought down with his trusty Winchester but was beat by Lt. Peter Geurts for high score, as Pete shot a greater number of jacks, which received more points for score than cottontails. Two sides had been chosen to start, the losers to give a "Rabbit Hop" at Winans Hall for the winners. The score was exceedingly close by a margin of one cottontail. Capt. Pistorius conceded defeat to Capt. V. Swenson. The date set for the Bunny Hop is Wednesday night, Feb. 1.

50 years ago
January 1948

Grover Voss, son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Voss, was critically

proud parents of an 8-pound baby girl born last Wednesday at the Veblen hospital. Mother and babe are fine and Mr. Weinkauff is passing out the cigars.

Hammer: Misses Bertha and Christine Kolsum, who live on their farm a little more than a mile northwest of Hammer, being practically snowbound in that they are unable to get to town with their car, have initiated a new method of getting their cream and eggs to market. One day last week their hitched their trusty shepherd dog to a sled, loaded the cream and eggs onto the same, and came marching into town. The pooch seemed to enjoy the task.

Kermit Pederson left Friday for some town in Michigan, where he will take a course in radio mechanics.

15 years ago
January 1963

Carolyn Hansen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Hansen, Hankinson, has been selected the December "Student of the Month" at Rosholt High School. She received a trophy and a certificate and is now eligible for the Student of the Year award.

The Rosholt Corner Bar bowling team captured the championship of the Men's Bowling Association Holiday Tourney at Lakeland Lanes in Sisseton. They are Ken Rohde, Larry Eggers, Kevin Petrick, Dan Swartz and Steve Johnson.

Dayton H. Alsaker, a Rosholt native, has been named manager of the Miles City, Mont., office of Hoskins, Western, Sondregger, Inc., a consulting engineering firm.

Those Rosholt Rams continued their winning ways by winning

This page from the Rosholt Review of January 1998 relates the tale of the 1928 Rabbit Hunt, as well as a few more tales of life on the prairie in the 1920's.

the farm chores, being busy enough with our flock of kids!

We saw that the horses were all wet, very nervous and glad to be back safe in their home. We didn't know what was going on, but were worried that something had happened to Dad. About the time we were taking off to look for him when he came along looking pretty sheepish and also soaking wet. We were glad to see him, tried to refrain from laughing, because we could see how embarrassed he was!!! The wagon box had sunk — groceries and all — ruined!

I don't know how they got the wagon box out of the water, but several days later Dad hitched the horses to the wheels, and a short time later returned with the dirty wagon box (minus groceries). After it was cleaned up, it was as good as new. Mother and I didn't mention it too often, but the neighbors weren't about to let him forget it. They always had a good laugh about it and soon Dad was laughing about it, too. I ever heard him telling my Uncle Con about it one day, and they were having a good laugh about it too. I guess he knew that Con would hear about it sooner or later. Ha!

This was the same pond I celebrated my ninth birthday in, but mine was a much "colder" reception. Ha!

MY NINE YEAR BIRTHDAY

Another "Flick" just "Flashed", this time the laugh is on me — if you can call it that!

April 9, 1919 — It was my 9th birthday. It had been a hard winter, but spring had sprung and the pond was thawing. There were spots of "rubber ice" we were warned not to cross. In winter it was a short cut for us to and from school.

There was sort of a tradition in our school (for the girls at least) to dress up on our birthdays. This day I had really dressed up in my best pretty maroon velvet dress, trimmed with Irish lace collar and cuffs.

Mother had made if for me and I was so proud of it. She had put my long hair up in "rags" the night before, so I had long curls instead of my usual "pigtails". One other way we celebrated birthdays at our house: The rest of the family would have to take care of all your chores. No dishes to wash! No "pots" to empty! We cherished our day off, and didn't mind doing extra chores when it was someone else's turn. (My story got detoured there — just another "Flash" in the Rear View Mirror.)

I had a great day in school — lots of loving greetings from my schoolmates and the teacher gave me a cut out paper doll with a cut out wardrobe to dress her up. I was ecstatic! In my haste, I decided to take a short cut home across the rubber ice. I almost made it across when "Whooooosh" down I go! I tried to climbing out, but each time another piece of ice would break off. I just kept yelling and hanging onto the edge of the ice. Luckily, some of the kids saw me and ran in to tell the teacher. She came out and saw me, but didn't dare get too close. The ice was pretty firm where she was standing. She encouraged me to keep trying, but each time the ice broke. One of the kids was sent into the school to fetch a broom. The teacher pushed the broom as far as she could in my direction and I kept breaking the rubber ice until I could reach the broom. I hung on and finally worked myself up enough so she and some of the kids could pull me out. I was frozen stiff, but I was alive! My worst thoughts were for my beautiful dress. "Oh no — it's ruined!" And it was, of course. Velvet and water don't mix. She wrapped me up in a lap robe she happened to have and went home with me.

Needless to say, I was terrified to meet my parents. Happily, Father wasn't home and Mother was more frightened than angry. After I got warmed up and dressed

she gave me a little “what for” but not what I deserved. I guess she knew that I had suffered enough. Mother said, “We won’t tell Papa until tomorrow.” This allowed my birthday to go on as if nothing had happened. No chores — happy songs — and nine candles on my birthday cake. I was happy, but thinking about tomorrow when my father would find out. When Dad found out he said, “I hear you took a dip... serves you right. Maybe you will listen better next time.” Relieved, I told him that I would listen better and I did. No more rubber ice for me!!!

Luckily I had forgotten my paper doll and all her clothes at school. I was happy that she was safe, but to this day I grieve about my beautiful dress. What a waste!! I thought about it when I made one almost exactly like it for my own daughter all those many years later.

It was a birthday I will never forget!!!!

DAD’S SHIRTS AND SUITS

When Dad dressed up he always wore his three-piece suit — always with the vest (No matter that it was 100 degrees) and his Derby hat. He wore Derbies until they were so long out of style he couldn’t buy them anymore. Always a white shirt with stiff starched collars and cuffs. (How I hated ironing them!) I remember so well all the old “sad irons” heated on top of the kitchen range. Imagine on hot summer days heating up the wood-fired range to do the ironing!

After we got a gasoline iron it was much better and easier to control the heat. The gasoline iron had a small tank on one end where special gasoline went (high test, I suppose). Then a small hand pump was used to pump air into it. We had to pump the air many times during an ironing session to keep the correct air pressure. It was ignited with a match and produced a blue flame and a hissing sound. I loved it, but was afraid

to light it and always made Dad light the burner. It was much more pleasant to iron with than the old “sad” irons, not to mention not having to keep the kitchen range burning at full speed all the while. Needless to say, we had a lot of ironing at our house. All those little “waists” took as much time to iron as Dad’s starched shirts! We even ironed the cotton bed sheets and dish towels! How foolish we were in those “good old days”!!

We had an Edison phonograph with the cylinder type records. I practiced ironing shirts so I could iron one with each record I played. Each record lasted about three minutes. This made the ironing less monotonous.

All the boys wore white shirts. Waists, my mother called them. She made most of them from the shirt tails of Dad’s worn out shirts. When his collars wore out, she turned them inside out to make the shirt last longer, but the tails didn’t seem to wear out.

What a job to get them all dressed for Sunday morning church! When we got each one dressed, he would have to sit on the “bench” until we were all ready to leave, otherwise he would be pretty well messed up. Of course this happened more than once before that rule went into effect. Dad was always so proud of his little boys marching down the aisle to our pew near the front of the church. Many people remarked how nice they looked and he almost busted out of his vest, just like he was taking all the credit. Ha!

It was eighteen miles to church and in winter we had to go by horse drawn sled, so it was no easy task. I doubt in this day and age that anyone would make that kind of effort to get to church. When Lake Traverse was frozen over, we could cut across instead of taking the long way around. That saved quite a few miles.

No matter what the weather was like, we

would get to church! Bricks and rocks were heated in the oven of the kitchen range and place amid the hay and blankets we were all cuddled together. In the winter, the wagon box was removed from the wheel base and placed on a sled base. That was our winter transportation. Even after automobiles were quite prominent, the roads were unnavigable. No snow plows in those days, at least in our part of the country!!!

MORE SHORT-SHORT STORIES OF MY LONG LIFE

As my mind's eye travels back through the highways of my long life, my Rear View Mirror keeps reaching into the coves, cracks and crevices, bringing forth many forgotten memories. Some delightful, some not so happy. Short stories which I will try to relate as they appear. Some of these stories appear while I'm performing my daily chores, some while I am daydreaming and some just jump out at me while I'm watching my favorite TV shows. I immediately turn off the set and watch the Flicks and Flashes of my life in my Rear View Mirror. Just like TV, some are interesting, some are sad and some are just plain disgusting! I will try to relate them as I see them

SATURDAY IS BATH DAY

Some time during any Saturday afternoon, we would hear a voice call out to us, possibly interrupting a game of "Old Maid" or even some unfinished Saturday chore.

"First bath!", Mother would call out. Then "Second bath!" And on down the

line. Everyone respected the line of succession.

In came the big old galvanized wash tub. It was set in the middle of the kitchen floor. The old wash boiler was filled with water heating on the kitchen range and everything was set for the big job of getting our large family cleaned up for Sunday morning church. The bathing process was one of my Saturday jobs. While Mother was busy laying out the Sunday wardrobe I was busy washing heads, backs, etc. After three baths, the water was dumped and fresh put in. By the time all the boys had their bath, I was pretty well beat, but felt great satisfac-

tion seeing all those "squeaky clean" bodies floating around. This was their "naked time" and they seemed to enjoy it.

Mother and I, being the only girls in the house, enjoyed our bath in the privacy of her bedroom after all the boys had been cleaned up. Dad hauled the tub and water into the bedroom. He had his bath after we were all in our beds. He hauled the tub and water out in the morning after the farm chores were finished. There was no sleeping late on Sunday morning on the farm. Then he got dressed in his dark suit, vest, white shirt and tie, ready for breakfast and church. Mother and I were busy dressing the boys for our trip. It was the busiest morning of the week, but a very exciting one. Neither snow nor rain nor sleet, nor hail would keep us away from performing our Sunday duty.

It was eighteen miles to church and in winter we had to go by horse drawn sled, so it was no easy task.

AWAY FROM HOME: MY FIRST JOBS OFF THE FARM

Leaving the nest for the first time

MY FIRST JOB AWAY FROM THE FARM

I had just finished my Junior year of high school. Times were really getting hard for all the farmers. The big Depression was on its way. We knew my senior year was going to be more expensive — more books to buy, even though I always managed to get used ones. The



Graduation day from High School.

Sisters were very good to me and helped a lot. I could still work for my room and board, so that wasn't the problem. How were we going to pay for prom dress, cap and gown, pictures and all those things that go with high school graduation?

I decided I wanted to get a job off the farm. To this day, I can't recall how I got the job at the only cafe in the town of Wheaton, Minnesota. My trusty old Mirror has let me down on this one.

I started my job, glad to get away from the farm for a while. The boss and his wife were lovely people and so patient with me. I think Mother had talked to them to explain why I wanted to work. I was determined to graduate! It wasn't a very busy place. I guess the Depression was hitting everyone. They showed me how to make ice cream sundaes, malts, sodas, floats, etc. We didn't have bottled pop there in those days. It was easy for me. I didn't even have any trouble making change, but I was more at home in the kitchen. When I asked if I could make some pies, they were more than happy. I made three apple pies and they were a big hit with the boss and also with the patrons. That was one of my jobs from then on.

One Sunday my folks came to

Wheaton to church and to see how I was doing. I asked Mother how she made her lemon pies. I had made them at home, but I didn't remember just how much of everything went into them. Mother had a hard time writing it down — she did so much from memory. Anyway, I tried just one at first. I turned out delicious and made a big hit, so I made a few more. I mostly stuck to my apple pies. I was more adept with them and everyone liked them.

My boss and his wife were so kind to me. When the time came for me to go back to school, I hated to leave, but was determined to graduate.

Here's another big flick, or should I say F.L.A..S.H. from my Rear View Mirror. It was a day I will never forget.

My boss and his wife had to leave the cafe one day to attend a funeral quite a distance away. It was "soup and sandwich" lunch day. We had big kettle of delicious vegetable soup made, and I thought I could handle the lunch time. Evening meals were short order, and it hadn't been very busy lately. So they left about 9:00 a.m. They didn't expect to return home until late that night.

Everything went well at lunch time — no problems — and I was congratulating myself. Lo and behold about twenty bearded men walked in the front door.



I helped pay for my school by working along with other girls to keep the place spic-n-span.. That's me on the left.

I would've fainted if it would've done any good!

I found out later that they were the House of David baseball team, heading somewhere for a big ball game. I had heard of them, but had never seen any of them before. Dad got a big kick out of that. Of course he knew all about the House of David team, being a baseball player himself.

I walked "bravely" up to them and asked "can I help you?"

"We are hungry. What are the chances of getting something to eat?"

I explained the circumstances to them and said, "If you're in no hurry, I'll see what I can do." They had time on their hands and were in need of relaxation — they were staying. I was hoping



The House of David was a barnstorming Jewish baseball team based in Benton Harbor, Michigan. They travelled around the country playing All Star teams made up from the best of the "town ball" leagues.

they would leave. They were so nice and friendly and they said they would help me if they could. Some of them wanted sodas. One guy said that he knew how to make sodas and would make them if I showed him where things were. Okay, I decided. So he took over the sodas. I explained that I had some good soup and if they would be satisfied with hamburgers and soup, I could manage that. (Trying to look confident...) That would be fine. When I went to the kitchen, there was only enough ground beef for about five hamburgers. What to do? The butcher shop wasn't too far away. I told them I had to get some more meat. "If anyone comes in and wants a soda, will you make it for them", I laughed. "Certainly I can do that", he replied. They were having a great time!!!

I got some money out of the till and locked it. I still wasn't sure if I was doing the right thing or not. I bought ten pounds of ground beef, stopped at the bakery and got three dozen buns. I was in business, but I was still very nervous. When I got back, the team was having a great time. Some of them were playing the pinball machine or playing cards. Everything seemed to be going okay, so I got down to the business of making their sandwiches. There was a big grill on the kitchen stove, so the frying was fairly easy.

A lady from town came in. I didn't know her very well, but she had been in before. She came out to the kitchen with a shocked look on her face. "Where are Bill and Dorothy?" When I explained what was happening, she offered to help. I was very happy to hear that and put her to work chopping onions and buttering buns. She was really a great help to me. I got the grill heated up and started making up the burgers. I made a few without onions first. I hadn't asked, but just to be safe I made some.



“The Long Haired Boys” were quite the attraction wherever they played.

I heated plates in the oven so the sandwiches would stay hot. As they were made, I took them out and set them on the counter and they helped themselves. My lady friend stayed until they were all served. The soup all went I don't know if they all got some or not. I just dished it out until it was all gone. What else could I do?

They were all very pleased and gave me some money. I don't remember now how much it was, but I'm sure it was quite a bit more than they ate. They thanked me profusely and also gave me a nice tip. They had at least two hours of

fun and relaxation and no one bothered them. Before leaving they said how much they had enjoyed themselves and assured me that they would come again someday. “Oh Lordy!” Then they were on their way. “Whew!”

When they left I breathed a sigh of relief and began the job of cleaning up. I locked the front door and put the “closed” sign out I decided I had done enough cooking for one day. Besides, there was nothing left to cook!

I was hoping that Bill and Dorothy wouldn't get back before I had the place back in order. When I was finished I went up to my room and fell into bed.

I heard them come home. It was quite late. Dorothy came up to my room, but I pretended to be asleep. She didn't want to wake me up and I didn't feel like talking about it until morning.

I'm sure they were wondering how I managed to get that much money in the till. I was just beginning to feel a little proud, and also a little worried about what they might say.

The lady who came in and helped me spread the news around town and my name came to be associated with the House of David baseball team.

The boss was very proud of me. He even told me that he couldn't have handled that. (He didn't give me a raise, though. Or even tell me how much money was in the till.) I was wishing I

had counted it, but I had been too tired!

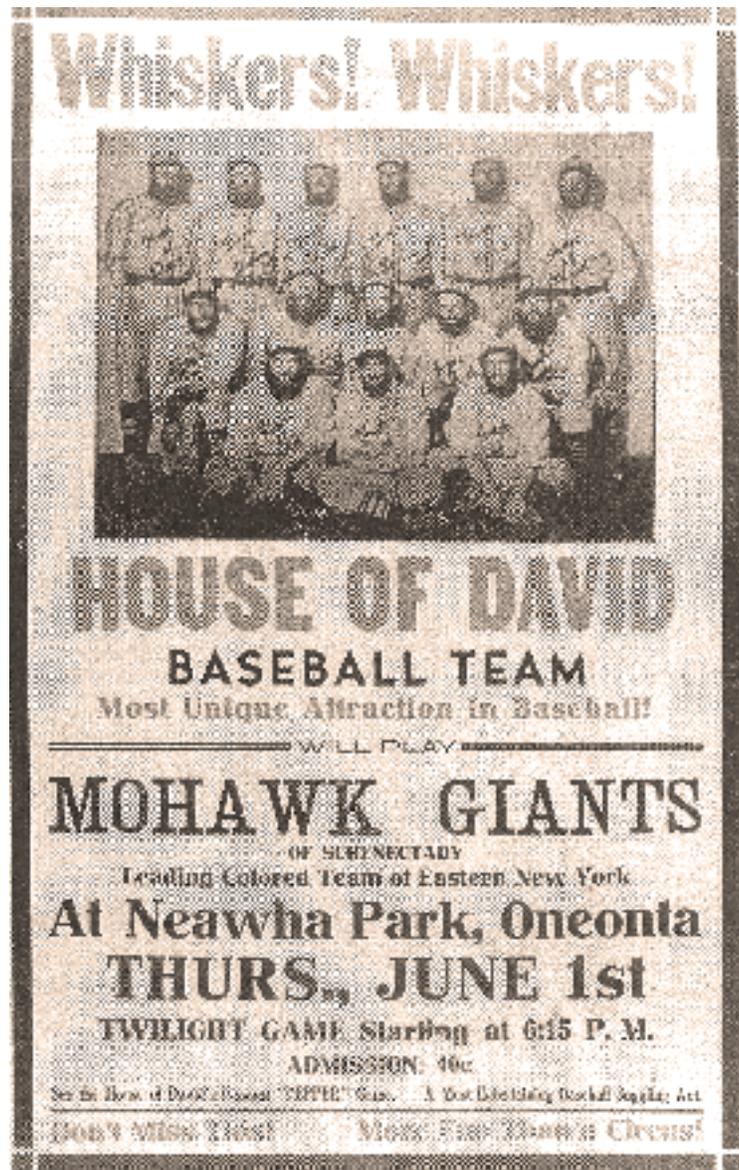
AFTER GRADUATION

Finally the Big Day arrived. The struggle my family and I had gone through during the grueling four years of hard work and hard times befalling my family and the rest of the country. It was 1928 and the Depression had grown its wings and was descending fast upon us.

I was very proud and so was my family. I was the first Geurts to graduate from high school. All at once, the struggle seemed worthwhile. Many of Father's family and even some of Mother's family travelled many miles to help me celebrate. I was overcome with joy and the importance of it all.

Now came the important decision: What am I going to do? Jobs were scarce, but I made up my mind I must work somewhere. I spent most of the summer at home, stewing because I couldn't get a job. I enjoyed being able to participate in the fun and games. I had "outgrown" my farm duties, but my brothers were now old enough to take over. But my life seemed incomplete, because I had been looking forward to working at a good job after I graduated from high school.

Mother was on the School Board in our district. One of the jobs was hiring teachers. This year she had hired a man teacher, the "first" anywhere around our area. He was a very good teacher and did a good job teaching and disciplining our growing school's population. Whenever he needed anything for his job, he would come to my mother and she would see that he got it. One day I met him and explained my predicament and frustration.



This poster announces a game with a "colored" team. Here a big draw seems to be the "whiskers".

His home was in Sisseton, South Dakota and he knew the people who ran a resort at Red Iron Lake near there. He said they were looking for help for the summer business. He agreed to talk to them and recommend me for the job. I was thrilled when he came back after the weekend and said, "The job is yours if you still want it." I couldn't believe my luck. I had no idea what was expected of me, but I didn't really care. I could do anything!

I spent the week worrying and wonder-



Grover Cleveland Alexander (left), hero of the St. Louis Cardinals' World Series victory in 1926 shown here as manager of the House of David baseball team.

ing what would be expected of me. I had never even seen a resort before. On the way there, Francis (the teacher) tried to explain some of the jobs I might have. I thought, “I can do that..... I hope.” Anyway, I was going to give it a try. After all, I was eighteen years old and a high school graduate. I should be able to do anything and everything. Oh boy! Talk about an ego!

Well, as it turned out, it was “anything and everything” that I had to do. I did everything from cleaning the cottages, to washing the boats. I helped with the cooking and serving the customers. I dug worms and seined minnows for fishing bait. And more. I enjoyed every minute of it. Everyone was so nice to me and I got to know every job there was to be done. I met many nice people and made many friends. I hated to see the season end. Again, I began to worry about my next job.

There were several apple trees on the property. One day when I wasn't busy, I got

the inspiration to bake an apple pie for my boss and his wife. It seems like I was always making that mistake! Well, anyway, the season was soon over, so I didn't have to bake too many of them!

One day an elderly man stopped by. I had seen him there before but hadn't gotten acquainted with him. It happened that I served him a piece of my apple pie. I didn't tell him that I had baked it, but he was excitedly telling me how delicious it was. I felt proud, but didn't say anything.

I started talking about how sad I was that the season would soon end and I didn't know what I would be doing next. It turned out that he was a lawyer in Sisseton and he thought he could find something for me to do. I told him I couldn't type (the one thing I regretted about my education) He said that didn't really matter. He wasn't really a very active lawyer anymore. He was retiring from the law soon and going into some other business. I don't know how old he was, but I thought he was **very old**. Of course at eighteen years old, even Mother and Father were **very old**.

After the season at Red Iron Lake was over, I went to work in the office of my lawyer friend. I can't recall his name now. I really didn't have very much to do, and after Red Iron Lake, it was like a vacation for me. I did type a few letters (hunt and peck). It wasn't nearly as hard as I expected, but of course I had plenty of time — no rush jobs. I was getting bored with my job. He paid me

more than I made at Red Iron Lake, but I had to rent a room and do my own cooking, so it amounted to about the same money to me.

I rented a one-room “apartment”. It had a smelly kerosene stove to cook on, a few dishes, a bed, a chair and a folding table. The dishes went on a shelf under the stove. For the time being, it was home to me.

After a short while the lawyer’s nephew, Ken, came to town. He wanted to start a business and asked his uncle for help to finance and run it. He wanted to start a weekly newspaper. I didn’t think that was a very good business for him to go into, because there was already an established paper in town: “The Sisseton Standard”. Ken’s uncle agreed to go along with the plan and the “People’s Press” was born.

Instantaneously I became a “newspaper woman”. Ha! Well at least I can’t say I didn’t have variety in my life!! As usual, I did a little of everything in this job. I really enjoyed most of the job and it proved very educational to me. The only thing I didn’t enjoy was trying to sell subscriptions or advertisements to the town’s business people. If it had been the only paper in town I think it would have been easy, but many of the businessmen acted as if they resented the new paper. The first few issues were sent free to every business in town and also to all the rural routes around the countryside, offering good rates for subscriptions and ads. There was some response, but not enough to make it a paying business proposition.

I mostly enjoyed writing up weddings and different events and happenings in town and around the countryside. I was very surprised and proud to see my name on the byline of my articles!!!

I recall one worrisome evening. Ken asked me if I would attend a boxing match and write it up!! I had never seen a real box-

ing match. I had read some accounts of various matches, but I surely didn’t feel capable to do justice to an accurate account of a blow-by-blow, round-by-round of a boxing match. I tried to decline, but he insisted I could do it. He couldn’t be there because he had another assignment that night. He told me to take notes of each round, get in a few of the good punches and (of course) get the outcome. He would then help me write it up. I thought maybe I could do that.

I found the match quite exciting, strangely so, because I hated boxing. But trying to keep track of what was happening helped and I found I was actually enjoying it. (I still hate boxing matches!) Ken was pleased with my notes and helped me put them into boxing language. When I saw my byline on the article, I was sure whether I liked that or not. I sent a copy of the paper to my folks and they got a B-A-N-G out of that, and so did all the neighbors.

I got my first hair permanent at one of the beauty parlors in Sisseton by agreeing to let them give me the permanent in exchange for an ad in our paper. I didn’t know if I should do that or not, but I liked the idea, so I said “Okay!” I think Ken’s uncle thought I had a lot of nerve, but Ken said, “Well, we got the ad and isn’t that what we want?” I was relieved and his uncle had to agree.

I don’t recall now just how long we struggled along with the “People’s Press”, but finally they had to throw in the towel. Again I was out of a job.

While all these “exciting” things were happening to me, my family was going through a critical time. They had lost the farm and had to move away. They found a vacant house a few miles from the old farm and were able to move in there until they could find another farm to rent. The following spring they rented a farm near Wheaton, Minnesota. I don’t recall how long they lived

there. They moved again shortly after that. The moved several times before finally moving to the town of Beardsley, Minnesota.

Father bought and demolished an old store building there and built a small but comfortable house with the lumber salvaged. They always had a huge garden, beautiful flowers and bird houses to keep them busy. Dad died in July of 1961 at the age of 80 years. Mother passed away January 1965 at the age of 76 years. Although they are no longer with us, they are very much alive in my Rear View Mirror. Many more stories are flicking at me!

BACK HOME!

My sojourn in South Dakota being over, I wrote to my parents and asked if I could come home. I wasn't sure if they had room for me. The day after they received the letter Dad was there to pick me up. I didn't expect him that soon, but it didn't take me that long to pack up all my earthly belongings and be on my way H-O-M-E. I didn't know what to expect. I tried to talk to him, asking him questions. He more or less ignored them, and I could tell he wasn't anxious to talk about it. I felt so sorry for him. He looked tired and haggard, not at all like his old confident self. I didn't press him to talk.

When we arrived, I was shocked. It was a rundown, ramshackle farm with tumble-down buildings. Of course I still compared any house to the beautiful home we lost to the fire. I just cannot ever forget that beautiful house and what a great loss it was to our family.

It was wonderful to be with my family again, under any circumstance. Several of my brothers were already away working.

Mother was holding up well under the circumstances. I was happy to see that she had not lost her sense of humor. After a hug, kisses and a few tears, she said, "I hope

you weren't expecting a palace." We all laughed and it was like old times.

It was good being with the family again for a while, but I was getting antsy. I wanted to get a permanent job someplace, and I knew that would never happen while I was at home. I had a great time and got acquainted with my parents new friends and neighbors. We didn't have any house parties, the house was too small for that, but it was fairly comfortable. I wanted to get a job so that I could help my family through those hard times. I gave them some of the money I had saved but knew I would need to keep some because I wanted to get to the "Big City". I was sure I could get a job there. My folks wouldn't hear any of that! "You don't know a soul there. How are you going to manage?" I didn't know, but I was determined. I wanted to try.

One day I heard that one of our neighbors had company from Minneapolis. The might be my chance! Immediately visited my neighbors and got acquainted with their company. I talked about how I would like to get to Minneapolis to find a job. They were such lovely people and also knew my folks, but just by association with our neighbors. They even suggested that I come home with them and they were sure I could find a job. I didn't have much luck and was about ready to go back home. My folks didn't like the idea of me being in the "Big City". I guess they worried about me.

Suddenly out of the blue! One day my prayers were answered! My friends and host were visited by a relative from Wanamingo, Minnesota who happened to own a restaurant there and came to Minneapolis in search of a "helper". His wife was recovering from surgery and wouldn't be able to work for some time. My friends gave me such a good recommendation that I was worried I would never be able to measure up to it. The

thought occurred to me that maybe they were eager to get rid of me! Ha! I had been there for quite a while and wouldn't have blamed them very much, but they never gave me any hint that might be the case. I had tried to be helpful and didn't expect anything special from them. I tried to show my appreciation every way I could — maybe too much!

I felt Mr. Nelson's eyes on me. I don't think he was too impressed. I was too young (just 18), although I had some experience in a restaurant before. Both of my friends were really talking me up. When they said that I baked "wonderful" pies, he gave me a second look. Maybe that changed his mind. At last he said, "Let's try it!!" I was surprised and thrilled, but really a little scared. I had never even heard of Wanamingo, Minnesota before. I had no idea of what to expect, but I was young and adventurous. I'd go anyplace to get a job!

We took off the next day, and I got to know him better on the ride to Wanamingo and learned more about what to expect from my new job. When we arrived, I was pleasantly surprised. Wanamingo was a nice little town and I was glad to get out of the "Big City".

His wife was a very lovely person and very good to me. They were both very patient with me and explained what was expected of me. They were a little surprised at how much I knew about restaurant work. The place was very much the same as the one I had worked in the summer before, only somewhat smaller. They didn't have a very big dinner trade — mostly short orders or sandwiches. There was usually a kettle of soup, which always seemed to go well. Hard times had set in for the restaurant business, too.

As I became acquainted with the customers, I really began to enjoy my job. It

was just like one big, happy family. Everyone enjoyed baseball, including me. There were no TV's in those days, but the radio would always blare out the Minneapolis Millers baseball game. There was always a gathering to listen to the games. They had a pool on the winning scores at a dollar a throw. Someone wrote the different combinations of possible scores on slips of paper and put them into a hat. People would draw as many slips as they wished at a dollar each. The person who was lucky enough to have the winning numbers won the whole thing. Sometimes they would change the rules a little to give two people a chance to each win half the pot. Whoever had the winning score at the fifth inning would win half the pot. Sometimes the score would stay the same through the ninth. Then the same person would still win the whole thing. It really made the game much more exciting, no matter which team won.

It wasn't only the Minneapolis Millers that our customers were interested in. They had pools on many other games, too. There were no night games in those days, and before the evening news, the scores of all the games could be heard over the radio. I would listen and get all the scores for all the games. I would write them all down and after their work shift or whenever they had time they would come in and ask me the scores. This got to be one of my hardest jobs. I did have other work to take care of!!! They seemed to expect it of me. Of course it was my fault... I started it.

One day I was writing the daily menu on the blackboard. (I had to climb up on the counter to reach it.) The menu was also written out on paper. The thought struck me: Why don't I write the scores on the blackboard instead of the menu? People rarely looked at the blackboard menu, because each table had a copy of the menu, and it

seemed that everyone was more interested in the baseball scores than our menu anyway. Everyone could see the scores and wouldn't have to bother me about them. One day I tried it and everyone thought it was a good idea. Even the boss liked it. He was just as interested in the scores as everyone else. He always had a few dollars invested in various pools. He usually bought the ones that weren't sold and he often had the winning numbers. I was happy that he approved. "Why didn't I think of that?", he said. After that, each day I listened to the scores, wrote them down and climbed up on the counter to write them on the blackboard. I could forget about them and go about my business.

It seemed that everyone in town came in to read my scores and it got to be the busiest time of the day.

Bill (the boss) did most of the cooking. He was a good cook. His wife (Hattie) slowly recuperated and soon joined us for short period of time each day, but she tired easily and couldn't work very much. One day she told me how glad she was that I had come to help her out. The she suddenly said, "Bill said you were going to bake pies." Surprised, I said, "I really haven't had much time for pies, but I would love to if that's what you would like." So a day or two later I baked apple pies. They turned out beautifully and the next day I noticed on the menu, "Sally's Home Baked Apple Pies". That really scared me, and rightfully so. I spent most of my time baking apple pies. I didn't venture into the lemon or any other, because I wasn't too sure of how they would turn out and I didn't want to spoil my reputation with a failure.

The summer went by so fast, the baseball season was over and the menu went back up on the blackboard. I began to get homesick for my family, Hattie was feeling much better, business had slowed down and I was wishing I could go home. As much as I enjoyed my work there, I was tired. I worked seven days a week doing whatever had to be done.

I had saved my money. Although I wasn't paid a lot, but I got room and board so I could save. Nobody made much money in those days. I had made many good friends there, and I felt good that my work had been so much appreciated.

One day their relatives, Walter and

Marie, who had befriended me in Minneapolis came for a visit. I asked Bill and Hattie if they still needed me. If not, maybe I could ride back to Minneapolis with Walter and Marie and could take the Greyhound home. They said I was welcome to stay as long as I liked,

but they thought they could get along okay, so I finally went home. I kept in touch with them for years, but finally my letters came back to me. I had lost my very good friends. I never did get in contact again and even to this day I wonder what happened to them. Even Walter and Marie seemed to disappear. By that time, my folks had moved away from that area, so I never saw those neighbors again, either.

*They turned out
beautifully and the
next day I noticed
on the menu,
"Sally's Home Baked
Apple Pies".*

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

With 8 brothers and a sister, my life has been filled with wonderful family moments.

I was blessed with a large family. When all was said and done, there were ten of us - eight boys and two girls. Since I was the first-born, it falls upon me to tell the stories, but I've asked for help from some of their children – my nieces and nephews.

Since much of this book has been going on about ME, I won't talk much here about my life.



*Above: Clarence came along right after me.
Right: Brother Pete and baby sister Rosemarie at
Clarence and Dorothy's wedding.*

I was born April 9, 1910. For a short while I was an only child, but I actually can't remember that. Then the "mob" showed up.

Clarence

In short order came Clarence, first of the Geurts brothers. Clarence was born (dates). Since he was closest in age, we always had a special bond. In another place I wrote about some of his experiences in WWII. Mike always talks about visiting Clarence's family on the farm when he was just a little guy. Clarence's wife Dorothy was a really sweet woman with a hearty



laugh and a twinkle in her eye. Their children, Gene and Rosella, were adopted as babies. Gene was close in age to Mike and they enjoyed running in the woods and fields on the farm. Later on, the farm was the site of many a Geurts pheasant hunting expedition.

Although Clarence was quite successful in farming, his back problems finally convinced him to seek another career. So they sold the farm



G.I. Clarence



Gene and Rosella: They've grown up now!

and purchased the Pla-Mor Lanes, a bowling establishment in Glencoe, Minnesota. I recall this was around 1960 or so. After a few years in the bowling business, they made another change of direction. Clarence took over a little service station in the northern Minnesota town of Blackduck. He remained there until retirement in Arizona in the 1970's.

Mike's favorite Blackduck story involves the time he dropped in for a visit during a motorcycle trip. Although Clarence and Dorothy were expecting him at some time, Mike didn't give them an accurate schedule. (No surprise... Hah!) So, when Mike pulled in to town, there was nobody around to meet him. Spying the picnic table, Mike just plopped himself down and took a little nap. Soon a neighbor came over to tell him that Dorothy would be home shortly. When Dorothy arrived, she could barely contain her glee. The neighbor lady had called out to the golf course to tell Dorothy that "... a hippie is sleeping on your picnic table!" It didn't take long to figure out who that hippie might be! Clarence and I laughed about that one for years.

We lost Clarence around 1982. I was fortunate to travel to Arizona a few months before he passed. We had a nice Thanksgiving with



Bob, Jim, Ray, Rosemarie, Clarence and Evelyn - Thanksgiving of 1981. Six months later we lost Clarence.

brothers Bob, Jim and Ray and sister Rosemarie. No matter how long you live, the losses are still difficult. I've missed him often. Dorothy passed away a few years back, after moving back to Minnesota.

Gene lives in Hazen, North Dakota. He's worked for years installing insulation in power plants and big industrial installations. Rosella was living in northern California the last time I heard from her.

Laurence

Laurence was one of the brothers who heeded the call to "go West, young man" and wound up living most of his life just north of San Francisco in Marin County. He was married to Ivy and they had daughters LaVonne and Sandra.

For much of his working life, Laurence was a truck driver. He worked for some time at the North Bay Lumber Company in Corte Madera. I recall that



Above: Laurence as a baby.



*Left:
Laurence,
Ivy and baby
LaVonne in
their Sunday
best.*

he was a member of the Las Gallinas Yacht Club, but I don't imagine he had real "yacht", but I

know he had a lot of fun.

Since we lived so far apart, I missed out on most of his life. But I did manage to get together over the years, including a couple of visits to his home on my travels. I'd like to hear more about fun things he did in his life.

We lost Laurence in 1978 to a heart ailment. He was only 65 years old. That seems so young to me, now that I'm in my 90s!

Glenn

When Glenn's name comes up in conversations, two things always come up. The first thing people remark upon is the size of his family...



Glenn and Evelyn

sixteen children! Wow! That's a houseful, even in the Geurts family. The second comment was always along the lines of, "They sure did move a lot!"

Somehow, Glenn and his wife Evelyn managed to keep that brood fed and clothed, though I'm sure that it must have been a struggle. Most of their homes were in the Little Falls/Motley area of central Minnesota. And most of these homes required a fair amount of fixing up. It seemed like every time Glenn would get their home ship-shape, it would be up for sale and they were moving on to a new home and a new



This is the full set! All 17 children. What a handsome bunch!

set of projects. It was almost like a second job for Glenn - probably the only way he could keep the growing family in shirts and shoes.

Aside from sheer numbers, there were two other comments always heard about Glenn's kids. People marveled at how well-behaved they were (although I'm pretty certain Evelyn may have had a different view of that, at least at times...) and what a good-looking bunch they were. I recall that both Glenn and Evelyn were willing to take credit for both of these qualities, and I'm sure that they're correct.

Ron is the oldest of Glenn's kids. He told me that Glenn was the least judgmental person he had ever met. I think that sums Glenn up pretty well. He always took people at face value, accepting them for what they were. He was loved by everyone who knew him, especially his children.

Glenn and my husband Morrie were great

buddies. They both looked forward to those Geurts pheasant hunting trips back to the old neighborhood. Actually, neither of them were that interested in the hunting, but they loved getting together with family to eat, drink and tell tall tales around the kitchen table.

One of the famous pheasant hunting tales had Glenn, Morrie and brother Jim deciding to leave the rest of the hunting party to trade in shotguns for a case of beer (or two) to go "road hunting". While the pheasant hunters trudged through the fields of Clarence's farm in search of the wily ringneck, the road hunters ranged far and wide in Jim's pickup. Their hunt must have been pretty successful because when they returned to the hunters, they made a spectacular entrance. Jim was racing his pickup across the plowed field at speeds that would have curled Morrie's hair (if he had any - Hah!). Glenn was hanging precariously out the passenger side

window, Morrie was in the middle seat, hanging on for dear life. Jim bounced to a stop near the line of hunters and called out, “Bonanza!!!” I’m pretty sure that road hunters had more fun than the pheasant hunters.

In later years, Glenn and Evelyn had some rough times with their relationship and went their separate ways several times, but managed to get back together again. I don’t recall if they were “on” again when Glenn passed away, but their marriage had been quite a wild ride.

Joe

Joe was another of the California brothers. We sometimes joked that he was the only one of our family who went to prison. Although he did spend many years at San Quentin Prison, he did his time on the right side of the bars, as a prison guard. In fact, his family lived on the prison grounds for many years – outside the walls, of course!



Brother Joe, looking sharp!

People were often surprised that Joe was a prison guard. (Mike tells me that the politically correct description is now “correctional officer”. Hah!) Joe was such an easygoing guy. He didn’t fit into the tough guy image of a prison guard. In fact, he got along pretty well with the prisoners. Brother Jim joked that it must’ve been all the practice dealing with his “outlaw” brothers that prepared Joe for his career. A lot of the guards thought it was their job to be tough on the inmates – like adding insult to injury. Joe’s philosophy was that being in prison was the inmate’s punishment and he didn’t need to do anything to make matters worse for them. If the inmates didn’t give Joe trouble, he wouldn’t give them trouble. In the end, they respected him for it.



Joe and Olive enjoying a musical moment.

My favorite story about Joe at work goes like this: Joe was at his station, high up on the prison wall, keeping an eye on the inmates in the yard. It must have been pretty boring duty, because Joe fell asleep. As Joe snored away, one of the inmates saw guard supervisor heading that way and ran over to wake Joe. Other guards who had nodded off on duty found themselves awakened by their superiors with a crowd of inmates gathered to enjoy the show!

Joe and his wife, Ivy, had a nice family. Sons Joe Jr., Peter and Paul and daughter Rosemarie. I’ve lost touch with them and feel bad about it. It’s hard when your family is so spread out. The last I heard was that the kids were all living in the San Francisco area.

Joe lost Olive when she was only 64 years

old. The loss was hard on him and it seems like he didn't live too long after that. I don't recall exactly when Joe passed away. Some of flashes in my rear view mirror are a little dim.

Peter

Pete was one of the brothers who was in World War II, fortunately they all came home alive! After the war he returned to the Midwest with the goal of becoming a farmer. He married Dorothy Frey (everybody called her "Dot") and eventually got a farm going near Graceville, Minnesota.



Pete and Dot's wedding. Little sister Rosemarie stood up. I'm sorry that I don't know who the fellow is.

Like all farmers, Pete found the going a little tough, so he looked at ways to make a little extra money. Thus was born the "Blue Goose", a barn/dance hall right on the farm. We went out to enjoy the fun and frolic at the Goose. Although a lot of people enjoyed the barn dances, it wasn't enough to make the whole



Pete and Dot on the occasion of their Golden Wedding Anniversary.

operation profitable and Pete, Dot and the growing family moved to Chaska, Minnesota.

And the family was indeed growing, eventually numbering eight. First born Leo has entered the religious life and is now known as Brother Leo. He has been located in the St. Louis area for several years, working to help poor people. Then came Carol, Peter Jr. (known as "Buddy"), Janet, Dennis, Phillip, Dori and Paul. With the exception of Buddy, these kids have married and have families of their own. Buddy apparently



*Pete and Dot's children:
Back row - Phillip, Dennis, Leo, Peter and Janet.
Front row - Doree, Carol and Paul.*

prefers the bachelor life.

The little house outside Chaska was busting at the seams with the family, but Pete and Dot made it a wonderful home. Pete could never completely escape the farm. His huge garden helped to feed the brood, with Dot canning, freezing and cooking up a staggering array of produce each season. There may not have been a lot of money around, but the family ate well!

In later years, Pete and Dot retired to a senior living place in LeSeur, Minnesota, near youngest daughter, Dori, who has been a god-send to them. Pete eventually developed some form of dementia, slowly losing touch with reality. It was sad, and very hard on Dot and the kids, but he mostly seemed to be in good spirits while living in his own world. Like all the others, he's gone and is missed by many.

With Pete's passing, I am the last of our big, happy family left alive.

Bob

Bob came along to brighten up our family. He had some difficulties in his childhood, especially a bout of polio. He was lucky that the case

was fairly mild, meaning that he didn't die! That was a terrible, scary disease. I guess that it's just about wiped out now, but too late for Bob. At any rate, although Bob survived, he was left with damaged feet that plagued him until the end of his days.

Bob met lovely Marjorie Saunders from Beardsley, Minnesota and they hit the road for California, like several of his brothers.

They first settled down in Pine Grove, up near Redding. Bob Jr. tells about his memories of sitting on the porch while Bob played guitar and he and Marjorie sang. They were really good! Talk about some great memories!

Brother Jim was already there and he got Bob a welding job in the San Francisco area. It was a good job and Bob hung on to it until his damaged feet made it impossible to continue in that line of work. According to first born son, Bob Jr., his dad had several surgeries on his feet, but the operations only made matters worse. Eventually, he was pretty much disabled by this. I don't remember when this went on, but it must have been in the 1950's.

The family lived mostly in the Santa Rosa,

California area. And quite a family it turned out to be, with nine boys and one girl. The story goes that Bob really wanted a little girl, so they kept trying until lovely Linda came along. Then they figured they were on a roll and tried again, winding up with three more boys! They sure were a good-looking bunch of kids.

Bob Jr. describes his family as being close when they were growing up, but they've sort of lost touch after their parents passed away. Three of the boys have died: Richard, Dennis and Phillip. Mike and Pat live in the moun-



Bob, Jim and Ray celebrating the end of another day. I can almost hear the tall tales spinning now!

tains of northern California. They sound like “back to the land” types who don’t spend much time with other people and don’t have tele-phones, so it’s hard to get in touch.

Bob Jr. worked for years as a plumber pipe fitter. He’s recently retired and moved from Washington to Silver Springs, Nevada, right near Aunt Pearl. It sounds like they’re enjoying retirement with travels to see grandchildren and a cruise to Mexico lined up for the fall of 2007.

I don’t have much more information about Bob’s family. Sometimes the rear view mirror gets a little fogged up!

James

James was the ninth of the family. He was born while I was away at school in Graceville. Because of the age difference, I missed most of his growing years, but as adults we were as close as it’s possible to be when you live on opposite sides of the continent. Jim was a bright kid, but he always had trouble in school. As it turned out, an ear infection had damaged his hearing and made it hard for him to keep up in class, but this was not diagnosed until later. He proved to possess a keen mind and was good with money.

Jim lived much of his life in the Bay Area



Bob and Marjorie's children: The Picture From Right To Left Are : Robert Francis (Bob) 10/31/44 Born - Seattle, WA; Thomas John (Tommy) -7/2/46 - Born - Redding,CA; David Lawrence 8/23/47 Born - Redding, CA; Richard Charles - Born -5/16/49 - Redding, CA; Dennis Peter - Born-10/6/50 - Redding,CA. Bottom Right To Left: Michael James - Born 11/10/52 San Francisco, CA; Linda Carol - Born 11/9/53 San Francisco, CA; Anthony Joseph - Born 1/29/57 San Francisco,CA; Donald Clarence - Born 1/5/56 San Francisco, CA; Patrick Allan - Born 12/13/54 San Francisco, CA.



*Jim and Pearl, probably in San Francisco.
Sharp dressers in those days, eh?*

near San Francisco. When he was only 15 years old he hopped a freight train in South Dakota and headed west. He landed in San Francisco where he found work as a welder in the shipyards. World War II was on and there was plenty of work for a smart young guy like Jim to do. He worked mainly on building Liberty Ships, the workhorses of the merchant fleet that had to be built faster than the German U-boats could sink them.

After the war Jim worked for a time in Alaska. To hear him tell it, he made more money lending to the gamblers in the crew than with his regular paycheck. When the project ended,

bought himself a brand new car and came back to South Dakota to do a little hunting. There was a small problem. Hunting season wasn't open yet. Not one to let minor details stand in the way, Jim managed to bag a few roosters. Apparently somebody tipped off the local warden and they came looking for Jim.

Not being born yesterday, Jim wasn't driving around with a bunch of illegal birds in the trunk when the warden pulled him over. There were, however, a few feathers and the warden figured that was sufficient grounds to write him up.

I need to regress a bit here. Jim had the prominent nose, black hair and dark coloring that made him look like an Indian. (In those days, nobody had ever heard of Native Americans!) Sometimes the kids at school would tease him about this. One time (and



Jim and Pearl with Jimmy Jr.



Jim in his element. He loved pheasant hunting and drove back to the Midwest nearly every year to hunt and catch up with family. I think this was around 1955.

ONLY ONE TIME) he teasingly asked Mother if she had sneaked over to the Reservation before he was born. Once was enough! Boy, the look he gave her!!!

When the time came for Jim to go to court, he walked into the room and was confronted by the only Indian judge in South Dakota. The judge took one look at Jim and said, "I'm sure that James would not hunt out of season. Isn't that right, James?" Jim nodded his head and the case was dismissed.

"That was the only time in my life that looking like an Indian paid off for me!"

One reason we were able to remain close was that he came back

almost every year for pheasant hunting in South Dakota and Minnesota. Hunting season was like a mini family reunion, with several of the Geurts boys showing up to gather at Mom and Dad's little place in Beardsley. Morrie, Mike and I would drive out from Minneapolis on Friday night, usually arriving after midnight. Mike still talks about the sensation of walking into Grandma's kitchen and seeing the counters filled with homemade bread, cake and pies, all laid out at his 8 year old eye level.

In those days the South Dakota season began a week before the Minnesota hunt, so Jim had already been in action. There was always a good supply of birds ready for Saturday night supper, and pheasant never tasted better than when Mother cooked it up. After dinner we all gathered around the kitchen table and talked until late. Mike and Gene Geurts (Clarence and Dorothy's son) always claimed the area under the kitchen table to roll out their sleeping bags. That's where the best stories could be heard, as long as their eyes could stay open.



Jim, Jimmy and Pearl at home in Nevada

They moved to California and eventually settled in San Rafael, a little town north of the Golden Gate Bridge after Jim got a job with the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, working as a pipeline welder. He wound up as a supervisor in charge of welding crews in a large section of the Bay Area.

Although San Rafael was nice, Jim was a country boy at heart. He longed for the open spaces, especially an area of northwestern Nevada that he had seen from that freight train while traveling west. He acquired 40 acres of unpromising sagebrush, invested in a 600-foot deep irrigation well and purchased a big mobile home. All this with the goal of retiring before he was 50.

As he talked about his plans for early retirement, the guys at work just laughed at him. "You'll be here until they drag you out feet first, just like the rest of us." Jim paid no attention and kept moving ahead with his plan. He moved Pearl and son Jimmy out to Nevada while he still worked in San Francisco, just so Jimmy could start high school there. He gave notice that he was leaving and when the day came, turned in all his keys and tools. Then he headed for Nevada. After several weeks, he still hadn't seen his final check from PG&E, so he called his former boss. They hadn't sent the check. They didn't believe that he wasn't coming back. He wasn't. In honor of his former coworkers skeptical attitude, Jim named their Nevada home "The Last Laugh Ranch". (Editor's Note: The first time I encountered the name was while on a motorcycle trip in the late 1970's, after years of hearing the tales of his co-workers laughing at his plans. I saw the sign as I pulled into the driveway and laughed so hard that I nearly crashed my bike!)

Jim and Pearl transformed that scraggly patch of sagebrush into an oasis of green, with a variety of trees, vines and pasture. Pearl and Jim were often asked what they planned to do in their retirement. Jim's simple response: "Anything we damn well please!" And that's just what they did. Hunting. Fishing. Camping out in the mountains or desert. Working on the

"ranch". Enjoying the fruits of his years working and investing in real estate.

We lost Jim in several years ago. He was hit with some sort of infection that knocked him down and wouldn't let go. It happened so fast. I miss him. We all miss him.

Ray

Ray was another of the California brothers. I think he went out there because Jim and Joe were already there, or maybe it was the other way around. It's been a long time...

Ray and Viola lived much of their time in California in the Santa Rosa area. The last time I was out there,

he lived quite near Bob and Marjorie.

They both had large families, and they would often visit back and forth. Seeing the same faces at both houses left me pretty confused. By the time I was off to my next stop, I had no idea which kids belonged to who!

I didn't do a good job getting photos of the kids, either. The only photo I have of his kids are the twins, Rick and Ray, when they were just little babies. If any-



*Ray with the twins:
Rick and Ray.*



Ray in his CCC days.

one has some good pictures of Ray's kids, please send them to Mike. His address and information are in the front of this book.

Like the rest of us, Ray grew up during the Great Depression.

As so many young men did, Ray signed up with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC was one of the New Deal programs that President Roosevelt put in place to help the unemployment situation. The young men lived



In his barber days, Ray gives a close shave to "Pop" Geurts.



Viola and Ray in good spirits.

in military-like barracks or even tents. They were paid the grand sum of one dollar a day for doing all sorts of useful work like planting trees, building parks, and generally cleaning up the environment. Each month, \$25 of their pay was sent home to their families. I'm sure that Mother was really happy to see that check coming in!

At one point Ray did a little barbering. I can't remember now where he had his shop, but I do have a photo of him giving "Pop" a close shave with a straight razor. Talk about trusting!

We lost Ray in 1981. Gone way too soon, now a flickering image in my rear view mirror.

Rosemarie (Dolly)

The baby of the family was Rosemarie. When she was born, Dad thought that she was so pretty that she looked like a little dolly, and that name stuck, at least with the family. Dolly grew from a

pretty baby to a beautiful young woman. Unlike most young women, she had a different agenda. Early on she heard the "call" and after high school left home to join the Maryknoll sisters, a missionary order based (I believe) in New York.

For eight or more years she was away from the family, with exception of brief holiday visitations. As part of her course of study, Sister Rosemarie took up medical laboratory work,



Rosemarie was the baby of the family. Here she is growing up on the farm.



Grade school days for Rosemarie.



Sister Rose during her days with the Maryknoll sisters.

learning the ins and outs of testing blood and various bodily fluids and tissues. These skills would be invaluable once she was assigned to the foreign missions.

As the time approached that she was to take her final vows, something happened. Sister Rosemarie was no more. Dolly was coming home! It was never completely clear to us back in the “civilian” world what had happened. Either she had come to the realization that the convent life was not for her, or the higher-ups at Maryknoll had decided that she was not right for them. At any rate, she returned to the Midwest and stayed with us for a while in St. Louis Park. It was nice to have her around.

Before long she found work in the medical field and was able to move out on her own. We were a little sad to see her go, but it was for the best. I think all those years in the confines of the convent had left her with the wanderlust and she did a bit of traveling. One of those trips took her to St. Petersburg, Florida where she decided to put down roots in the warm and sunny Gulf Coast region.

A few years after my husband Morrie passed away, I finally took heed of her invitations to

visit. In the course of that trip I made up my mind that it was time for a change and put some money down on a little 2-bedroom unit in a place called Tyrone Villa. I moved to St. Petersburg in the Spring of 1971, only a 10-minute drive from Dolly’s home.

For most of her life, Rosemarie was a single woman. Although quite attractive, she always seemed (to me) to be uncomfortable around unfamiliar men. So it came as quite a surprise when she announced that she had been married. As much a shock as the news, was the fellow himself. He turned out to have a litany of



Dolly all grown up and looking like a lady. I think this picture was taken around 1980.

problems, including a weakness for drink. The marriage was doomed from the beginning and didn’t last very long. As far as I know, she never seriously considered marriage again.

We lost our Dolly to breast cancer. Although it seemed to go very fast to us, it turns out that she had been diagnosed quite some time before and had either been in denial or was treating herself with a regimen of vitamins and such. By the time I knew what was going on, the end came quickly. It was hard for me to lose my sister, especially one who was 20 years younger than I. Little did I realize that this trend would continue and I would be the last survivor of the entire family.

REFLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH MY FATHER AND MOTHER

A stern but loving upbringing

MY FATHER

Father was a lion of a man in the fullest sense of the word — wild when angry, but a pussycat when tamed. He was the king of our “jungle”, stronger than any lion. He could pick up a 50 pound sack of grain in his teeth and throw it over his shoulder!! He was well-known for his enormous strength.

He was also well-known for his violent temper and his short fuse. We kept out of his way if we could, but we all felt his wrath quite often from the old razor strap! You had better listen and M-I-N-D and do your chores — or else! I guess it didn't hurt us, though. We all grew up to be quite reliable people. Sometimes I think if there was more use of the old razor strap we wouldn't have the problems with crime that we have today. Or maybe if there were more old-fashioned farms left for kids to grow up on the world would be a different place., too.

Dad was a professional wrestler in his

heyday, which for some reason he never talked about. I never knew about his wrestling until I was grown up. One day we were visiting Uncle John (Dad's oldest brother) and he began talking about it. Uncle John was Dad's “manager”. Ha! We had a few good laughs, but Dad wasn't enjoying it very much. Maybe he was a “loser”, which would have been hard for him to take.

*Sometimes I think
if there was more use
of the old razor strap
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problems with crime
that we have today.*

I know that he knew about wrestling because he had us kids wrestling —even me— until Mom stepped in and said it was a no-no for girls to wrestle. I got to know many of the holds and moves, all of which I eventually forgot. Clarence and Laurence got to

be the wrestlers in our family, mostly for family fun and pastimes.

Dad was also a baseball player, a fact of which he was proud. He played with the South Dakota Red Legs, which I suppose was some sort of a minor league team. We had his red uniform with the knickers and long red socks preserved in a trunk in our attic, along with Mother's



This team from Nebraska is dressed a lot like Father's team. His photos were lost in the fire.

beautiful wedding dress (which was supposed to be mine one day). Sad to say, it was all destroyed by fire on that fateful day we lost our beautiful house.

Dad always wanted Mother to go to his games. I guess he needed a rooster! My Rear View Mirror has just a short flick for me on this subject. I recall my mother having Clarence (maybe a year old) and me (about three) sitting in the surrey with the fringe on top. I wanted to get down. Finally Mother let me out, telling me to stay close. Of course, I saw my father out on the ball field, so the first thing I did was run to him, calling "Papa! Papa!"

I stopped the ball game!!! My father was really embarrassed. He picked me up

(none too gently) and took me back to the surrey, with an admonition to Mother to keep me with her! I don't remember any more Red Legs ball games. Maybe Mother didn't have to go anymore. If not, I know she was happy. Or maybe he just quit playing. I'll never know now.

He was also known for being fleet afoot. He beat the fastest Indian and the fastest white man in South Dakota in foot racing.

One day we went to the circus in Rosholt — Dad, Mother, Aunt Lil (who was living with us at the time), brothers Clarence and Laurence, and me. Dad bought the tickets and as he walked away noticed that he had been \$10.00 short-changed. He had given the carnies a twen-

ty and received change for a ten. Dad went back and demanded his ten dollars back. The carny kept on selling tickets, ignoring my father. His temper flared! “Give me my ten dollars or I’ll go across the street to that blacksmith shop and get a crowbar. Then I’ll wreck your G—Damn circus!” A crowd gathered, hearing the commotion. “Ahh, a fight!” The carny thought better of it and Dad won his case again. He walked away, still fuming, with us following. We were all relieved that it hadn’t gone farther. I think that every time Aunt Lil came to visit for many years after that, the story was relived. She never forgot it and still laughed about it just as hard as she did when we got home that night. None of us were laughing at the time, though!

Dad didn’t mind hearing this story repeated. I think he felt proud of himself. I think maybe we were proud of him, too. I remember this mostly from hearing about it all those years.

In the days when I was growing up, parents were held responsible for any damage to property caused by their offspring. I remember an occasion when my brother Clarence hit a foul ball when we were playing baseball at school, and it went through one of the school windows. When we got home, we told Dad what had happened. It wasn’t intentional, malicious vandalism, but Dad thought he should take care of it. I thought that was “big” of him. I was a little surprised.

He wasn’t happy about it, but we were surprised that he didn’t make a bigger fuss than he did. I guess he was just proud that his son could hit a ball that

far! Ha! He went and measured the window and then to town to pick up the glass and putty. Clarence and I went with him to mend the window.

I steadied the ladder and Clarence helped hold the glass from inside the school house. It was a big window and he helped steady it. I couldn’t see much of what they were doing. I was just glad to be on the ground, steadying the ladder. When it was finished, Dad and Clarence were both proud and bragged about the good job they had done. It was a big job and I was getting pretty tired holding that ladder, but didn’t dare let go for fear that Dad would come tumbling down. That would’ve been a catastrophe for all of us!!

DAD’S HOME BREW

Dad made home brew a few times in his life. I think the following episode was possibly his last batch. He evidently bottled it before it completely fermented and the CO2 pressure built up dramatically. After a few days we were awakened by loud popping noises one after another. We didn’t know what it was — it almost sounded like someone shooting at our house! When we finally discovered it was coming from our basement, we went down for a look. What a mess we found! Beer was all over the place, broken bottles, shattered glass. Even a basement window had been broken by a flying piece of a beer bottle.

No one dared to pick up the unbroken bottles for fear that they would explode in our faces. Finally, Dad got several large horse blankets from the barn to cover the bottles so he could get them

outside somehow. Next came the cleanup. He didn't ask any of us to help. Mother wasn't too pleased with his brewing project from the very beginning. She didn't say a word, but she had "that look". No words were needed! Needless to say, Dad didn't say a word either!! I don't recall, but I don't think there was any more home brew.

DAD'S CHOKE CHERRY WINE

Dad was also noted for his Choke Cherry wine. Unlike the homebrew episode, his Choke Cherry wine was very successful. He enjoyed his success and the publicity he received. He was very generous with the wine because of this. There were always plenty of Choke Cherries at the "Dry Run" about a mile from our house, and he had plenty of help from all of us kids when it was time to pick. We would take a picnic lunch and enjoy the day. Mother was even enthusiastic about this project!

He had two huge crocks and made gallons of wine. He gave much of it away to neighbors, relatives and friends. Even old Doc Ewing would stop by on his rounds about "wine time". Doc was generous with his praise and Dad really thrived on that.

Well, this is what happened one day....

Dad would never tell anyone exactly how he made his Choke Cherry wine, but he used many oranges and lemons sliced up with the rinds left on them, along with the Choke Cherries. There was plenty of "mash" left after the wine had been bottled. Dad would take the leftovers out and discarded it in the

grove. We had a large flock of turkeys at the time and they discovered the mash. They found it very much to their liking. Before long the whole flock was lying on their backs with their feet beating the air. They didn't know which way was "up"! Dad got really excited. "The whole damn flock is going to die!" He even killed one of the birds before it would die, thinking that we could get at least one meal. It really was a funny sight, but no one was really laughing. Dad was walking among the birds, trying to get them on their feet, but "No Way José".

After quite some time they did struggle to their feet staggered drunkenly around with their wings dragging on the ground, making very unturkeylike noises. By nightfall most of them were walking almost turkeylike again. They did not show up for their evening feeding — they either had hangovers or didn't know what time it was. They didn't do their regular roosting in the trees or on their perches, but slept on the ground. The next day they were almost back to normal — much to Dad's relief. From that point forward, he still made his wine, but buried the mash.

We ate the turkey and enjoyed it, but if the flock had died, I doubt that we would've eaten it, or if Mother would've even baked it!!

Our family, friends and neighbors still enjoyed the wine and also the story that went along with it. The word got out and travelled fast. Eventually Dad began to see the humor in it and really enjoyed it too — because it had turned out all right and into a memorable story.

I don't know how long he kept his legend alive, but after we moved from our farm there was no more Choke Cherry picking or wine making. But I still like to keep the story alive. It's still always good for a laugh. Ha! Ha!

MY HAMMOCK

One day when I was about six or seven years old my dad and I went to see one of our neighbors. He had to see him about something or another. There weren't many telephones in that country in those days. We never had one on the farm. These neighbors lived a few miles away from us, so I didn't know their kids very well. They went to a different school. Their daughter, Dora, was about my age. She took me out to their grove and showed me her hammock hanging between two trees. I had never seen one before and thought it was the greatest thing ever. When Dad came looking for me to leave for home I showed him the hammock and he liked it too. He looked it over and said he would make me one. I got really excited about that and wouldn't let him forget.

When we got home I told my mother about the hammock and said, "Papa is going to make me one!" Mom looked at him and said, "Why did you tell her that? You know you can't do that!" I guess that got Dad's goat. He never could be challenged. He didn't answer her, but he evidently had made up his mind then and there that he would show her!! A little while later we noticed he was roaming around in the grove. We wondered what he was looking for. I didn't tell my moth-

er that he might be looking for a spot to put the hammock. And that was exactly what he was doing!! I had not thought much more about it, maybe he couldn't make one.

A few days later he came into the house and asked Mother to sew together some "gunny" sacks that he had taken apart. He needed a larger "sack" he said. Mother didn't question him. She had made sacks for him before. She put the largest needle in the sewing machine and got out the big spool of "linen thread", she called it, and followed his directions. When he came back he seemed pleased and had that "smirky" look that Mother noticed, but I didn't. I didn't care what he was going to do with that big sack!!

About a week or so later, I had put the hammock out of my mind when he called to us from the grove. We followed his voice. "Over here". There he was, lying in a hammock and grinning like a "hyena".

He had taken several lengths of chicken wire, put them together and interlaced lengths of pipes or iron rods through the holes at each end, making a perfectly balanced hammock with gunny sack pad filled with hay and tied up with rope between two beautiful shade trees. He couldn't have picked a better spot for it, so close to the house, too!

"Oh, Papa! My hammock!", I cried. He pulled me up with him and we lay swinging happily in our hammock among the beautiful shade trees. The smirk was gone from his face and Mother stood smiling down at us.

It wasn't the beautiful golden-colored,

Summer Place

A HAMMOCK is the best place to spend a midsummer afternoon. When you climb into a hammock, you are linked to reality only by the narrowest of cords. Suspended in time and space, you shed any sense of weight or corporal substance. As you sway with the gentle rhythm of the breeze, you drift and dream between heaven and Earth, glimpsing the blue truth of sky beyond the wagging treetops.

Then suddenly the spell is broken by a dog's snout poking you, a rumble of thunder or a child's cry, and you are brought back to a world you temporarily left behind. But the hammock's solace is not forgotten. Its gentle crescent lingers.

—Robert S. Kyff in Hartford, Conn., *Courant*

This little clip from Readers Digest took my mind wandering back to my hammock in the grove.

fringed hammock I had seen at Dorá's, but to me it was much more beautiful!!!

Mother went into the house and came back with her big spool of "linen thread" and a big darning needle to stitch up the open end of the gunny sack, as Papa and I still lay enjoying the moment and each other. It was a beautiful day and a beautiful job completed.

The whole family enjoyed "my" hammock. I had laid claim to it, but quickly found out that didn't "hold water". Clarence and Laurence had been in on the secrecy and had been warned by Papa not to let the cat out of the bag. They were standing back snickering as we found out and soon joined us by jumping on top of us. I was afraid it would break down, but Dad wasn't a bit worried, so I felt better about it.

I found out that my claim didn't help one bit. It was tough to find "my hammock" vacant — except at night — so I would often sleep there. Laurence was afraid of the dark and Clarence didn't argue about it. Mother wasn't too keen

about the idea. She said that she had heard coyotes howling at night!! For some strange reason, I wasn't at all afraid, even when I heard the howling. I felt safe in my hammock.

I had the hammock all to myself, except for the mosquitoes. I took newspapers and covered my face. Mother's contribution was an old oil cloth that had been used as a table cloth for our big kitchen table. We used it to cover the pad in case of rain. Every once in a while Dad would hang the pad over the fence to let it "air out". It seldom, if ever, got any sun in our shady spot.

"Whoa!" My Rear View Mirror is flicking wildly! Another hammock story. My dad used to tell us all kinds of weird stories about where babies came from. Usually, the doctor brought them, but sometimes one-horse chaise of old Doc Ewing didn't make that arduous trip of at least 18 miles in time and we would hear the baby cry before he would arrive. Dad had performed another one of his miraculous feats.

We were questioning him about the baby crying before Doc had arrived. Dad evidently didn't want to give the stork credit, so he claimed to have found him down by the old slough. One other time he heard him crying out in the grove. At that age we never questioned Dad's explanations. We were very naive.

This is the "flick" or you may call it a "BIG FLASH" of my life. I was sleeping in my hammock and all at once I was awakened to hear a baby crying — no mistake — it was a baby. I listened for a while — for sure it was a baby — then I ran into the house and awakened Mother and Father. "I heard another baby crying out in the grove!" The last one Dad found was not all that old! Dad was irritated about being awakened. "It's only a bird. Go upstairs to your bed and go to sleep." Mother tried to talk me into going to bed, too. "It must be a bird", she said.

"I'm going to find it, and when I do, it's going to be mine. You have enough babies! I hope it's a girl!" Then off I went into the dark night following the baby cries. I would think "I must keep looking.", but when I came near it, the cries moved to another part of the grove.

I finally gave up. It must have been a bird since it could fly. I sneaked into the house and into my bed, hoping that Mom and Dad were sleeping. I doubt if they were, but they didn't call to me.

The next morning when I came down the stairs, Dad said teasingly, "Where's your little girl?" I answered sheepishly, "I guess it was a bird." I saw Mother giving him "that look". He just said, "I told you so", but luckily he didn't propagate that

story. My guess is that he was afraid that I would tell how he had heard a baby cry in the grove and found one there. Ha! Those were my thoughts in later years after I found out where babies really come from. I can't believe it took that long! Naive!!

I recently found this excerpt in Readers Digest and once more my thoughts reverted back to my childhood. At that time my mind was not mature enough to put these interpretations to those words, but as I read them now I find my mind yearning once more for "my hammock". Sometimes "second childhood" isn't so bad.

MY FATHER "PETE THE SMITHY"

When our new house was built, the old house was divided into two parts. One room was left near the new house for a wash house. It had a double washer powered by a one-horsepower gasoline engine, an ingenious contraption my Dad dreamed up. There was also a huge boiler with a wood burning stove attached to heat up the water and where we boiled the clothes. This room also served as our smoke house. Dad made delicious sausages also smoked hams, ribs, etc. Just thinking about it brings back that juicy smoke taste.

The other part was two rooms plus the upstairs (which was not being used). The downstairs was turned into a tool shop and blacksmith shop, complete with forge and set of bellows. Father would shoe all his own horses and many of our neighbors' horses as well. A fire would be started in the forge and he would put the horseshoes into the fire until they

were red-hot. Then he would take them out with a pair of tongs and shaped them to fit the horse's foot by pounding with a big hammer against an anvil. I don't know how he determined the fit, but he knew what he was doing.

My job was to work the bellows which blow air into the fire to make it hotter so the shoes could be worked. Sometimes he had to re-heat a shoe several times because it cooled off too fast. I remember my arms getting tired, but I felt pretty "important".

I recall the day he brought home a "blowing machine". He called it the "hog". I never figured out why he called it that until later years when I realized that it had a snout like a hog. It was meant of replace the bellows. It had such a long handle that both Clarence and I had to work it. We needed to jump up to turn it over. It had to move fast in order to get enough "wind" to have an effect on the fire. We couldn't manage it, so Dad would have to take over or get me back to the bellows (which he did quite often). I didn't really mind the work, but it did get pretty tedious and monotonous.

I worried about the poor horses when he started pounding those BIG nails into their feet, but they didn't even flinch. Dad said they didn't have any feeling in that part of their foot, so I felt better.

I was always surprised at how still the horses stood while the process was going on. It seemed hours to me, but maybe it was only minutes. The neighbors horses were strange to me, but seemed to know me. At least they weren't afraid of me. Most of them were cooperative, but once in a while one would be a little nervous

(maybe a first shoeing) but would calm down when Dad talked to them. I still marvel at his patience with them, much more than he ever was with me. Well, of course they were much bigger than he was, even though he was "strong as a horse".

I can also remember Dad sharpening plowshares, but he didn't need my help with that, except my advice. Ha! I don't recall any other activities in the blacksmith shop, except it being cleared out and cleaned up for the family to move into after the fire. Somehow we managed. We were all happy to move into the new house which was finished before winter set in, but it was never home to me. I really loved that beautiful big house!!

MY MOTHER

My Mother was a jewel with so many facets that she will be hard to explain. She was firm, but I don't recall her ever slapping me or any of the boys either. Of course she didn't really need to — all she had to say was "I'll tell Papa when he comes home!" That was enough to put the chill in any of us.

CHICKENS AND EGGS

Some of Mother's main projects, besides having and rearing this big family, was raising chickens, gathering eggs, churning butter and selling them to the grocery store in Rosholt in exchange for groceries.

We had hundreds of chickens which we raised from baby chicks. We had two incubators in one of the upstairs bedrooms. I don't remember how many eggs they held (one was a double-sized unit) but it was a lot.

The eggs were on trays which could



We always had some chickens around, much like these people. The photo is nobody we know, but rather an image taken around 1915 from the Ontario rural life archives.

be removed twice a day — morning and evening. The eggs were removed, turned around, and aired out — just like hens do in the nest. That was to prevent deformities in the baby chicks. It must've worked, because there were very few. The heating was done by a kerosene burner which kept the eggs around 100 degrees. After about three weeks the baby chicks would hatch. They would peck through the shell until it finally broke, then they would emerge all sticky and gooey.

We put the chicks in big cardboard boxes on blankets heated in the oven and covered the box to keep them warm. They would soon dry off and be beautiful, fluffy baby chicks. It was a busy time when they all started hatching. There were many clucking hens nesting. We would gather their eggs daily when they

left their nests and fool them with glass eggs and maybe a few real ones, which we would mark with red food coloring to distinguish them from the real fresh eggs.

Then one day, suddenly, they would find their nests full of baby chicks. The hens were very happy and took over the job of mothering. We had a lot of chicken coops in an area fenced off with chicken wire. The chicks always seemed to find their mother when they needed her. They were taught the chicken ways by their mothers and all we had to do was feed them. It was surprising how fast they grew and began to replace the fluffy down with real feathers. After a while, when the chicks were strong enough, the mothers were let out of the coops and the chicks would follow them. They would always come back home to be fed and

every night back to their coops for shelter.

Every once in a while a hen would show up with a flock of baby chicks from a nest she had hidden away someplace where we didn't find it. We would sometimes find these stray nests, but never disturbed them. We allowed it to run its term. Soon she would proudly come strutting, showing off her family. I always loved that time of year.

As the chicks grew into hens and roosters, many of the roosters became our Sunday dinners and some saved for posterity (canned) and if there were any left they were sold. When the hens became of egg laying age, the older hens that had quit laying eggs were sold or made into delicious chicken soup or chicken and dumplings and many other chicken dishes. Of course, after our house burned, no more incubators and the chicken business slowed down. The hens were depended upon to raise a few chickens. No more wholesale baby chicks. I do remember Dad buying a few baby chicks once in a while, but it wasn't like raising them from scratch. Another one of my daily jobs was to help gather the eggs. We had several thirty-dozen egg crates, which we would exchange for groceries at the Rosholt store whenever we filled one.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE PARTIES

Winter time was party time for our neighborhood. It seemed that each week there would be a Friday night party. I enjoyed the ones at our house the most. Everyone brought their kids. That was

the only time our parlor was open to us all. Usually it was used only when company dropped in. It was always kept in apple pie order, and one of my Saturday jobs was to dust and polish the furniture. Before the party was over, most of the kids were cuddled together asleep on the rug which covered most of the beautiful hardwood floor.

The big dining room table was carried into the bedroom to make room for the dancing. All the chairs were brought from upstairs and the kitchen benches came in handy, too. There was always someone with a fiddle and accordion to play the music, and several square dance callers. There were a lot of square dancers in the crowd. I even got into the act once in a while. Everyone was patient with me, but I had the feeling that they were wishing I would go and play with the rest of the kids!! I just happened to be the oldest kid there and I felt pretty grown up.

Dad was no dancer. He mastered the two-step: One-two. One-two. One-two. No matter what kind of music was played. Waltz, polka, one-step. He would dance the two-step. I recall when I was very little, he used to stand me up on his shoes, hold my hands and go into his one-two, one-two dance. I recall how I loved it and didn't want him to stop.

Mother was a wonderful dancer and just loved to dance. She was the life of the party. I remember one night they were having a square dance and she kicked off one of her shoes — right through the window! Luckily it didn't go through the storm window. That

could've put a real chill on the party, as it was cold winter night. That was a laugh and the story was brought up at every ensuing party. Dad didn't even complain about having to fix the window. He really enjoyed the parties, too.

He didn't enjoy square dancing one bit, but every once in a while he was coerced into joining the fun. He never did get anything right — "gentlemen left" and he would always go the wrong way!! I think the men would talk him into it so they could tease him!!

Many of the men enjoyed their card games more than dancing. Whist was the game mostly played around the country in those days. Sometimes "Sixty-six" — I used to play that one, but don't remember much about it now.

The kitchen was taken over by the men for their card playing. That's where Dad spent most of the evening, but he didn't really mind moving out when the women came in to take over for lunch time!

After lunch there was a little more music and dancing, but everyone was getting tired. Time to wake up the kids, hitch up the horses and head for home.

"Good-by until next time."

BUTTER AND CHURNS

The first churn I remember was a large crock with a cover that had a hole in its center. Through the hole went a pole with a wooden dasher or "stumper" (as I called it) on the end. This was used to pump up and down in the cream until the butter was formed. The next churn I recall (after the fire) was a barrel type, with a crank that turned the churn end

over end. We knew we had butter when we heard (and felt) "clunks" instead of "swishes". Mother would work the butter with some salt in it and put it in crocks holding about five pounds. She had her own personalized seal which she pressed into the tops of the butter in the crocks. I remember one day I went to town with Dad. We took crates of eggs and crocks of Mother's butter. Mr. Stavig the grocer said, "Pete, I'm so glad you brought some of your wife's butter. People have been asking for it." I was so proud! And so was Dad!

REFLECTIONS OF MY EARLIEST CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

Santa comes calling

SEARS ROEBUCK CATALOGUE

When I heard recently that Sears-Roebuck was discontinuing their mail order catalogue, my Rear View Mirror went into high gear. I couldn't keep up with the flicks and flashes. While I was growing up, Sear-Roebuck was our main source of purchases, most of them deliv-



The day that the mailman brought the Sears "wish book" was exciting for us kids.

ered to our mail box at the end of our driveway or even to our door. We even ordered our piano from Sears. (I don't recall how that was delivered.) Everything from our sewing machine to our long underwear, Mother's corsets to Father's Derby hats, cream separator to nuts and bolts — you name it, Sears-Roebuck had it.

I remember how we anxiously awaited their special Christmas catalogue. We spent hours deciding what we would ask Santa to bring us!! Needless to say, it didn't always work out the way we wanted, but I recall one great year. I got a beautiful doll, with real curly hair, sleeping eyes, beautiful long lashes and it said "Mama". Also a beautiful doll buggy for her. I was saving my doll and buggy for a daughter I hoped to have one day, but like so many of my treasures they went up in smoke with our beautiful house. Clarence got a tricycle, which I would rather ride than play with my doll. I guess I must've been a tomboy even then.

I would have appreciated these gifts more, had I known that hard times were coming up and we were lucky to get our long underwear and stockings from Santa Claus. There was always a good supply of candy and nuts which did help make

see him peeking in the windows. Of course Dad was never in the house at any of those times, but we always excitedly told him about it when he came in “from the barn”. Ha! He kept his Santa suit well-hidden somewhere in the barn.

My old mirror keeps on flicking!
Another Christmas story pops into my head...

Aunt Lil was living with us at this time. I don't remember how old I was, but I know I was going to school. It was a few days before Christmas and suddenly there was a racket on the basement stairs. I was a little frightened. Dad went to open the door. “Well, look kids. Santa has come to see us.” We were scared of him. Maybe he had come to tell us that we were bad and he couldn't come on Christmas Eve! At least those were my thoughts.

He came in talking to us, patting us on the head, and asking if we had been good kids, etc. Of course we said we had. He asked what we wanted him to bring us, and suddenly our fear left us and we started reciting our lists.

Aunt Lil suddenly spoke up and said to me, “Why don't you speak the piece you are going to recite at your school Christmas Program?” I was hoping he didn't hear her, but Santa became all ears. By all means, he would love to hear it. Of course I wouldn't dare to decline. He surely would not be bringing me anything for Christmas if I did. I stepped “upstage” scared stiff, and started.

*‘Twas the night before Christmas
When all through the house
Not a creature was stirring*

Not even a mouse.”

It was a very long poem but I didn't quit. He kept bowing his head as if in appreciation, but I think he was wishing I would stop. I saw Aunt Lil and Mother standing behind him, trying to control their laughter with their hands over their mouths. I was scared that Santa would turn around and see them, but I just kept on until I finished. He clapped his hands and thanked me profusely. I was happy and hoped that I would get everything I asked for.

I don't remember now if I did or not. This was a night I long remembered and I'm glad that my Rear View Mirror flicked it back at me today. I didn't find out until years later that it was my Uncle Con playing Santa and that Dad had helped him sneak in through the kitchen while we were all busy in the other room. We had all made up our minds that he had entered the basement through the “coal chute”.

I don't know how old I was when I finally decided there was no Santa Claus. I really felt stupid and deceived. The kids in school tried to tell me, but they couldn't convince me — “Mama told me!”, and besides, I had seen him! Mama told me not to pay any attention to them.

These are just some of the memories delivered by the old Sears-Roebuck catalogue and flashed to me by my faithful Rear View Mirror.

WHOOPEE! WHEE! THE “SCOOP”!!!

My brothers Clarence and Laurence each received a sled from Santa Claus one Christmas. I felt slighted because I didn't get one, too. I don't recall what he

brought me that Christmas, but whatever it was, I would much rather have had a sled! My brothers would let me ride “once in while” but I didn’t enjoy standing by and watching them have all the fun. That’s when I got the idea of “the Scoop”.

I went to the granary and took Dad’s big scoop shovel to our sliding hill, sat on it and scooted down. It worked fine, so long as I could “stay the course”. It was pretty hard keeping it going straight unless I could get it into a rut. I really enjoyed it and my brothers wanted to try it too. In fact, they liked it so much that I got a chance to use their sleds much more. Dad didn’t mind me using his scoop. In fact he even tried it a few times and got a kick out of it, even though he didn’t fit on it very well. I recall him telling the story a few times. Just another of my Rear View Mirror flicks.

Behind our great grove of trees was a gently sloping hill. It was never cultivated in those years. Maybe it was too hard for the horses to pull a plow uphill. We had no tractor in those days. It wasn’t the Alps, but it was just right for our clan to enjoy our days of sliding. We ended up in a line of pussy willows which prevented us from sliding into the road behind our home. At that time there wasn’t much traffic to worry about. I don’t think my scoop would have gone that far anyway.

In the spring I would anxiously await and watch the budding of the pussy willows. When they were just right I would pick several “bouquets” one for Mother and one for my teacher. They both were very appreciative of them and I felt very “important”. (A child’s mind!)

This was the “scoop” that my reliable old Mirror flicked me today.

It also reminded me of another sled story (many years later) when my daughter Elaine was just a little girl. (I saw to

it that she had a sled, but there were no hills nearby for sliding.)

One day my neighbor and I put our two little girls on the sled and pulling them, we walked several miles to Powderhorn Park (Minneapolis). There were gently sloping hills there, and Elaine’s Grandmother

Bestamor lived right across from the park. (We could go there and rest up before we started out trek homeward.)

I enjoyed a few rides downhill myself, but I didn’t really fit too well on her sled. Ha! Not any better than Dad fit on my scoop!!

Both of the kids had a ball and didn’t want to quit, but both us “moms” were really “pooped” from enough exercise to last us for at least a year. And we still had to walk home, pulling the kids on their sleds. Phew! But when I look back now, though, it was really worth it!! Flick! Flick! Flash! Flash!

In the spring I would anxiously await and watch the budding of the pussy willows. When they were just right I would pick several “bouquets” one for Mother and one for my teacher.

REFLECTIONS OF MY HIGH FLYING DAYS IN MINNEAPOLIS

Off to the “big city” for adventure and romance

Nokomis Cafe - Cedar Avenue
and Lake Street

In 1933 the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution was repealed along with the Volstead Act. These had prohibited the manufacture, import or selling of alcoholic beverages in the U.S.A., more



Big changes came around after I met H.M. "Morrie" Urseth while working as a waitress at the Nokomis Cafe in Minneapolis.

commonly known as “Prohibition”.

It was found to be unenforceable as the days of “moonshine” and other often poisonous liquors appeared on the horizon. Much home made and many imported or clandestinely manufactured products were sold illegally. The result was a growth in organized crime and a disrespect for law enforcement in general. Finally in 1933 the amendment was overturned and alcohol became legal again, and many restaurants and bars opened or reopened. One stipulation of the Minnesota law (where Prohibitionist tendencies were still strong — Minnesota was the home state of Representative Volstead, for whom the hated law was named) was that a food serving license had to accompany the liquor license. That opened up many restaurants and gave jobs to many jobless waiters, waitresses, cooks and bartenders. In fact, it was a lift to the general economy and the Depression was on the run.

I immediately found a job at the Nokomis Cafe at Cedar Avenue and Lake Street in south Minneapolis. A friend of mine was working there and got me in. We rented a one room apartment a block from the restaurant. She kept her day shift and I worked the late shift. Before

beer came back, the restaurant closed after the dinner hour was over. Now it was open until 1:00 am, the legal time for beer to be sold. That was my shift. It was while I was working there that I met Morrie, my future husband.

His brother Al was a rather regular customer, coming in for a quaff before going home from his job. He lived within walking distance from the Cafe. One night he brought his brother Morrie along. He introduced us and soon Morrie also became a regular evening visitor.

One evening the subject of airplanes came up. I had a been interested in flying since I was about nine or ten years old. Morrie had tried to take flying lessons, but hadn't passed the eye test. He was far sighted or near sighted — I forget which. He offered to take me out to the airport and introduced me to some of the pilots and other personnel. I was ecstatic! From that day on, my interest increased and I more or less made up my mind that someday I would fly an airplane. I didn't know how I was going to manage that,



With Morrie's encouragement I began to take flying lessons at the Minneapolis airport. I flew this Stinson Commander, although the little Waco was my favorite.

so I kept the thoughts on the subject to myself.

These thoughts bring a flicking and flashing in my Rear View Mirror. They just won't stop, so here comes another story.

My High Flying Days

I recall the day I first got interested in flying. I was about nine or ten years old when there suddenly appeared in our pasture — an airplane! Our pasture was a great landing place — large, flat and easily visible from the air. I immediately ran out to see it, and soon the area was filled with people. This was an unusual sight in those days. Someone had rung the three long rings on the telephone — the signal for all to listen in! There is an airplane in Pete Geurts' pasture! Everyone was interested in seeing what was going on.

The pilot was offering rides for twenty five cents for children and fifty

cents for adults. I begged my mother to let me go, but she wouldn't hear of it. Dad wasn't home or I'm sure I could've convinced him. Possibly, he would've even gone with me! I asked him about it later, but he wouldn't give me a yes or no answer. He just laughed at me!!

The pilots in those days were called "fly-boys" and I thought that was a great name.

Some time later, Mother and I were talking about what I would like to be when I grew up. She was expecting me to say something like teacher, nurse or telephone operator, I suppose, because that was about all that was available to girls in those days. Imagine her surprise when I announced that I was going to be a "fly-girl"!!! Consternation and silence set in.

I don't recall that the subject was ever brought up again, but I kept it firmly in mind.

My Rear View Mirror is interrupting my story again, so back to the Cafe! Morrie continued to come into the Cafe and we continued our visits to the airport.

In those days, it wasn't only an airport. It was also a race track. We used to go to see sulky races and even some auto races. It was an exciting time for me.

I kept the idea of taking flying lessons, and one day I had the opportunity to meet one of the flying instructors. I casually mentioned that I was interested in flying lessons, but I knew it would be a long time before I could afford it. The instructor became interested and began making offers. I kept them in mind, then all but forgot about it. I knew I



My flight instructor Miller Wittig with his Stinson.

wasn't making enough money to afford it. I decided to join the Union, hoping I could get a better job. I immediately got a better paying job and also much better tips. It was a regular bar where they served liquor. (The Cafe only sold beer.) The "Pig and Whistle" was in downtown Minneapolis on Hennepin Avenue and about Third Street. I still worked the late afternoon shift and night shift. They didn't serve regular meals, mostly sandwiches, soups and short orders. I did get in on the late night cooking, but it wasn't a "full time" job, mostly french fries and sandwiches. I never mentioned pies there — I knew I wouldn't get tips for that!!!

I really didn't expect to see much of Morrie after moving away from that area to another one room apartment on 12th and Hawthorne Avenue. I called it my "hole in the wall", but it was home to me, with a gas hot plate to cook on and a bathroom down the hall.

I could walk to and from work. Things were different in those days. Now I wouldn't dare to walk in that area late at night.

I was surprised one Saturday evening. Morrie walked into the bar. He hung around and asked to take me home. I was surprised at how happy I was to see him. He would drop in sometimes after his workday, but naturally couldn't stay until closing. He had to work early in the morning. But usually he would show up on Saturday night. The bar was closed on Sunday, so we could make arrangements to get together. Mostly out to the airport!! That is how our romance began and we were married the next spring, March 3, 1934 at the Basilica of St. Mary.

In those days of the Depression, married women were "discriminated" against and often were even fired from jobs they had for years, because they were taking jobs away from M-E-N!!

I was afraid to tell my boss or anyone else that I was married, so we decided not to tell anyone except Morrie's old time buddy and his wife, who were witnesses



This Waco biplane is similar to the one I loved to fly in the 30's.

at the wedding. They kept our secret until we decided to send out announcements.

I got a little ahead of my story! Shortly after I began my job at the Pig and Whistle, I decided I wanted to fulfill a lifelong dream to fly an airplane and becoming a "fly-girl". I got in touch with the instructor I had spoken with before. He was elated! "I've never had a lady student before!" I saved my money, putting all my tips into a piggy bank, and went for it. Morrie was as excited about it as I was. He saw to it that I got out to take my lesson every Sunday — the only day I had free. We never told anyone — not his family nor mine, or even the people I worked with. I was afraid they would all think I was "nuts". Everyone except Morrie. I guess that was one of the reasons I fell in love with him!!

Morrie was even allowed to go up with us sometimes when I was getting my instructions. I felt pretty proud and "important". After a very short time I was allowed to take "solo" time. I was

very confident. I had met and admired Florence Klingensmith, the only lady pilot I knew. She lived in Fargo, North Dakota, but would come to our airport on weekends to take passengers for rides. There were several other pilots doing the same thing, but she was the only one who was really busy. I became acquainted with her and we became good friends. When it came time to take my solo time, she offered to let me use her plane at a lot lower price than the Stinson Commander I had taken instructions in. Florence's airplane was a Waco biplane, much smaller than the Stinson. She took me up several times and showed me the "ups and downs" of it, sometimes she even let me take off and land all by myself. She said, "You are ready for solo time." I was so excited. I loved the Waco. It was so much easier to land and I got the feel of it the very first time I took hold of the stick.

(Editor's Note: A Waco biplane very much like the one Mom flew is displayed in one of the concourses at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. It had been used as an early Air Mail plane.)

The next weekend I did my first solo trip. Everyone was on hand watching, including Morrie. I made a safe "three point" landing! What a hand I got!!! My instructor had tears in his eyes and so did Morrie. I was very proud, but found myself shaking. I don't know why. I wasn't a bit afraid. Happiness I guess. From that time on, I began logging my time and it seemed no time before I had passed all my tests. I was a private pilot!!

Shortly after that, something disastrous happened. Florence was sponsored

by some Fargo businessmen to fly in the Chicago Air Races. She was very excited about it and everyone else was, too. We were all pulling for her and encouraging her. I believe it was her first air race. She was determined to win and she flew the plane so hard and fast that she flew the skin right off the fuselage. The plane crashed and she was killed. In a moment I had lost my good friend and the beautiful Waco.

From time to time there was a trimotor Ford airplane around the airport. I don't know who owned it or much about it. I had never been in it, although I had looked inside several times, wondering if I could fly one like that. I think it was about a five or six passenger plane. I finally got a chance to ride in it. The pilot offered to take some of us to Fargo for Florence's funeral. It was such a sad occasion, I don't remember much about the trip or the airplane. I never even looked inside it again.

I didn't do any more flying. I didn't like any other planes after the Waco. My mindset, I guess.

My Mirror is flashing a few more airport stories at me. It was in happier times. Everyone was excited about the air show that the manager was planning. He was trying to find a parachute jumper and was having a little trouble locating one.

Adventurous me said, "I'll do it!!" He looked at me and laughed, and so did everyone else. "I don't want you to 'splat-ter' up my airport", he said. I'll have to admit that I was relieved!! When I think back now — "How stupid can you get!!!"

One more flash from my flying days...

It happened while I was taking my instructions. We were flying around the area — Minneapolis, St. Paul and even Lake Minnetonka

were in my excited view. Round and round I go, where I stop, nobody knows. But I did know that our next stop was to be our landing. I cleared my head and started concentrating on that task alone. Everything was going along swimmingly when suddenly underneath us appeared the big trimotor Ford! “Take her up!!!”, my instructor yelled. I did what he said and we sailed off again. We made a few more rounds until I calmed down. I sometimes wonder what would’ve happened if I had been alone. I really think I would have coped with it. It was a good lesson for me. In those days there were no towers to direct and warn, no radar or radios, either. Eyes and instincts were our only guides.

I didn’t get into the navigational end of flying. All I had to direct me were railroads, rivers, lakes, highways, etc. I picked up on Highway 12, the route to my home territory, but I’m not sure that I wouldn’t have gotten lost along the way. I’m still sorry I never had a chance to find out. I hadn’t told my parents about my



*I nearly had a mid-air collision with a Ford Tri-Motor like this one.
If I hadn't pulled up, you wouldn't be reading this now.*

adventure, because at that time, they were having enough worries. It was years later that I finally told them. Mother wasn’t exactly surprised. I think her sixth sense told her that I was foolish enough to try it. Ha! She evidently hadn’t forgotten the day I told her I was going to be a “fly-girl.”

I look back at my short flying “career” with pride and enjoyment. I often wonder what would come of it if I had been able to carry on.

Years later I heard that my flying instructor, Miller Wittig, had established a flying school at Willmar, Minnesota. I don’t know how long it was in operation, but when I heard he was killed in a plane crash, I was saddened. But again my mind flashed back to my happy days of flying and I thought maybe it could’ve happened to me. Then I wouldn’t be here writing about my Rear View Mirror flicks and flashes, something I am thankful to be able to do!!!

REFLECTIONS OF THE NEXT GENERATION

Looking back at life with my children

MY IMMEDIATE FAMILY

We need to remind our kids, our grandkids and great grandkids (and on and on) how life used to be “once upon a time”. We all have riveting family histories, but you just can’t tell these stories at



Elaine grew into a beautiful young lady and was a great help when little brother Mike came along.

ten minute intervals or on the run. The fast lane our kids are traveling in these day is too speedy for me. That is why I have decided to write them down, and if they ever have the time to read them I hope they will find them interesting. As I look back at the reflections in my Rear View Mirror, I still find them interesting, if not always joyful!

These are a few stories about my two children — Elaine and Mike — as they were growing up. My Rear View Mirror makes them plain to me, but possibly they were too young to cast a clear image in their own mirrors, so I will relate them as they flick by me.

ELAINE

Elaine was born June 10, 1935. She gave me a hard time giving birth to her, but we both survived. My Mirror is flicking at me, but I’m going to ignore those flashes and go right to the joyous ones. Of course she was the most beautiful baby I had ever seen. Seven pounds eight ounces. She was the first grandchild for both sides of our families, so she was a very important little girl. Her maternal grandmother (Bestamor) and Aunt Ethel (Morrie’s sister) were so proud of her. Ethel wanted the honor of picking the

new baby's name. Her name was Ethel Adelaide. She didn't like either name very much, so she decided to be satisfied with her initials, and decided on Elaine Adair. I had never heard the name Adair before, but I liked the sound of it. So Elaine Adair it is.

Elaine grew into a beautiful child with a variety of interests that changed as she grew. One of her adventures was learning "acrobatics". We took her to classes where she learned all manner of flips and tumbles. She got to be good at it and



*Elaine practicing her acrobatics.
It hurts just to watch!*

her group were invited to "march" in the Aquatennial Parade, a big summer festival in Minneapolis. The parade features floats and marching bands and the route was quite long. Well, it's one thing march for a couple of miles, yet another to flip, cartwheel and tumble over that distance! The poor girl was totally worn out, but recovered before we knew it. Ahh! Youth!

Elaine was a well-behaved child and studious. She seldom gave us any trouble and always got good grades in school. (This left me totally unprepared to deal with Mike when he came along, but that story comes later.) When Elaine was in grade school she went to Holy Rosary Catholic school, near our south Minneapolis home. As she approached high school age, Elaine wanted to go to the public school, South High, where most of her friends were going.

We moved to St. Louis Park in 1951 and Elaine transferred to Park High and graduated with good grades. After high school she took some classes in medical technology with the idea of working in a hospital or doctors office. When this was complete she and a friend decided to take a train trip, I think it was to Phoenix, Arizona. From that point forward her life would change quickly.

On the train returning to Minneapolis, Elaine met a young man, a sailor just mustering out of the Navy and heading back to his home in Minnesota. As luck would have it, he lived in Wayzata, just couple of miles from our home. One thing lead to another and soon she was engaged to R.G. "Gene" Stangohr, late of the United States Navy.



The wedding was held at Our Lady of the Lake Church, just down the road from Gene's family home, on October 15, 1955. The young couple were on their way!

Gene found work as a salesman, and by all accounts he was good at it. He sold maps. He sold fire extinguishers. (I think...) Eventually he wound up selling televisions and telephone systems, mostly to the motel/hotel industry. Like most salesman, Gene was a talker. He was always ready with a joke (corny!) or humorous comment. For some reason he could get away with saying things to customers that would get most salesmen thrown out on their ear. Some have speculated (unkindly) that people only bought from him to shut him up! At any

rate, his technique worked.

And as such things happen, soon a baby was on the way! Holy mackerel! I was suddenly a grandmother! A perfect little boy was born – Steven. Flick! Flash! My rear view mirror is gleaming with the memory of this blessed child!

Since little Steve turned out so well, it wasn't long before a little brother was on his way. When Mark rolled into the light of day it became clear the we were all in for an eventful future.

Since daddy was a State High School Wrestling Champion, it was easy to see that the boys would have a rough go of it. From an early age Gene coached them in the finer points of the rough and tumble sport and had them going at it in the yard or on the living room carpet. In fact both excelled in the sport and each made his way into the State Tournament. Quite an accomplishment!

As a salesman, Gene had to move around quite a bit. Morrie once suggested that he had been run out of town,



Mark and Steve in Florida. At this time they were moving so often that they lived in a mobile home!



Julie and David in front of the house at 111 City View Drive.

and bad for our family. We lost our beloved husband and father on July 1st. Elaine was pregnant with a baby that

turned out to be Julie. It was extra sad that Morrie and Julie never got to know each other. He absolutely loved little girls and we know how much she would've loved him.

Apparently, Gene and Elaine were not quite finished with babies. Soon came little David, a beautiful baby who grew into a handsome young man.

By this time, Elaine's family was back in Minnesota, living on City View Drive. Gene's sales career was going well. Every time there was a sales contest, Gene would win some kind of prize, often a trip to an exotic location. These trips took them to Argentina, Paris, London and more.

The older boys grew into men (so fast - it seems like just yesterday they were



Here I am with Grandson Steve Stangobr at the big 95th Birthday party.



Uncle David loved to play with his nephew Lance.



Luke Stangobr: High School Photo



babies) and before long they were married and had families of their own.

Steve married a lovely young woman named Karen. They had two fine sons: Lance and Luke. Lance was my first Great-grandson. I always tell him, "I was pretty good before, but you made me Great!" Both are grown now, Lance graduated from St. Cloud State University in May of 2007.

Grand-daughter Julie helped me celebrate my 95th in style, complete with fancy tiara!



Lance Stangohr: High School Photo

He is looking forward to a career as a firefighter/paramedic. His mom and dad are very proud of him. Younger brother Luke is doing well as a student at the University of Minnesota. He's taking a variety of business courses, but he really wants to be a rock and roll star.

Mark and wife Joanie have two children. Jamie was first. She has the red hair from Morrie's family. Jamie is a smart girl,

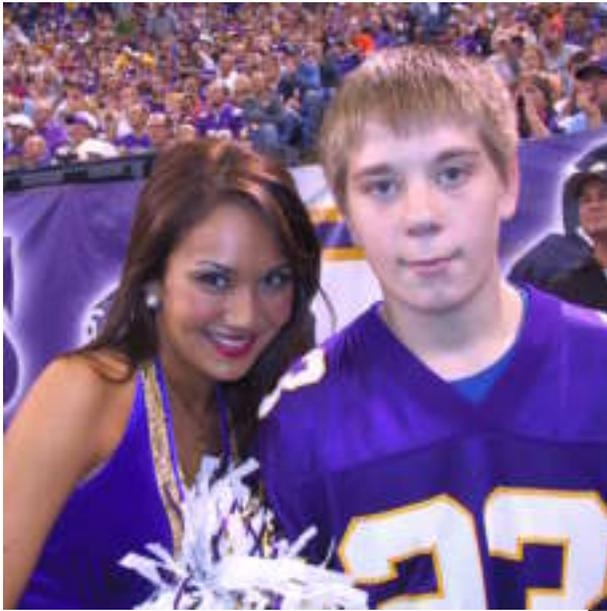
but she's not always serious about school. (Sounds like Mike!) I have a feeling that she's on a better track lately as she matures. We all love her. Little brother, Shane, is not so little anymore. He's a Freshman in high school and has just shot up so he's as tall as his father. Shane loves to play baseball and is an avid hunter and fisherman. He's also a very nice young man.

Julie has also married. Husband Tom Fasching is a truck driver and they have two lovely children. Shelby is going into 3rd grade next fall. Hunter will be in 1st grade. They are both beautiful and well-behaved. We're proud of what a good mother Julie has become.

My rear view mirror flashes first brightly, then darkly, when I think of David. Elaine's youngest always showed so much promise, but we lost him to chronic depression at the age of 29. He tried to medicate the



*Elaine with first Grand-son, Lance.
My baby is a Grandmother!!!*



Top Left: Shane and Vikings cheerleader

Top Right: Mark and me

Center: Happy Vikings Fans!

Bottom Left: Cute Cousins - Jamie and Shelby

Bottom Right: Four generations at my 90th Birthday!



pain in his soul with alcohol, driving him ever deeper into the darkness. The world is a little darker place without our David in it.

It's 2007 and hard to realize that my "little girl" is over 70 and my "baby boy" is pushing 60. Where does the time go? There! I can see it all in my rear view mirror.

MARTIN LAKE

One day a salesman came to my door in Minneapolis with some coupons for selling lake property at Martin Lake. I had never heard of Martin Lake before. (Minnesota is the land of 10,000 lakes, after all!) My neighbor was there with me at the time and we sounded interested, so he left us each a coupon with his name and number on it. We showed them to our husbands, but they didn't show much interest in it. About a week later the salesman came back in the evening when our husbands were home.

I called the neighbors over and before the evening was out, we were the "owners" of lake property — with a \$10.00 down payment! We put the \$10.00 down with the understanding that we would get it back if we didn't like the property. It was a new development and we could have the choice of lots that were left. The price was very reasonable and we all enjoyed fishing and the outdoors. Plus, it was not a great distance from our homes.

There were only a few lakeshore lots left and they were much smaller and also much higher in price. I didn't want a lakeshore lot anyway. Our son Mike was about two years old, and I was having a

hard enough time keeping track of him, without the worry of him walking right into the lake!!!

We found two nice large lots quite near the lake access with a nice view of the lake. I liked the location very much. The men got very interested and began thinking of building the cottages. They decided to build ours first, but before it was finished, our neighbors decided to buy a house and they couldn't afford to build a cottage at the same time. So we bought their lot which was adjacent to ours. Morrie finished building the cottage on weekends — it was a busy time for all of us. I got the job of doing the painting. We did take time out to do a little fish-



There was always plenty of work to do while we were building the Martin Lake cabin.

ing for a few hours of relaxation on the weekends. It's a big job to build and keep a weekend hide-away. Always something to do. When most of the work was done, we really enjoyed the place. We had many family gatherings and neighborhood picnics at Martin Lake. We would bring one or more of Elaine's friends out for weekend outings, and it was a very enjoyable time for them, too.

I also got the job of laying the tile flooring — a messy and gooey job. The “glue” used to hold down the tiles was like thick, black tar. We called it “gook”.

We had two bedrooms in the cabin. Elaine shared one with Mike in his crib. One weekend Elaine had a girl friend along. She shared the bedroom with Elaine and Mike. Her girlfriend was in the teenage throes of growing up and figured she needed a bra. She also wanted to be “stylish” so she was wearing a “black” brassiere. Mike (not missing a thing, even then) was watching her from his crib as she dressed one morning. He looked at her in shock and said, “Did you get gook on your brass-zeer?”

She came out in the kitchen, choking with laughter. She could hardly tell me, “Do you know what Mike just said to me? He asked me ‘Did you get gook on your brass-zeer?’” It was a very funny question coming from a two-year old. We all had a good laugh and that story had a life of its own for quite a few years. I don't know if Mike remembers the story or



I always enjoyed a day of fishing at Martin Lake.



We enjoyed many a picnic at Martin Lake with friends and neighbors like Harriet Remus. This picture taken in 1955.

not. I'll let him read it here!!

A few more Mike stories connected to Martin Lake...

PROFESSOR

One day on the way home from our weekend at “the lake”, we discovered Mike in the back seat playing with a baby turtle he had found down by the lake. He was determined to keep it. He was enjoying it so much we let him keep it for a while, thinking he would get tired of it in time. Not so! He loved it and so did Morrie. They had fun with it and Morrie even helped him contrive a pair of “glasses” for the turtle. They made the frames out of copper wire, and to this day I don't know how they got them to stay on, but they got to be a pretty permanent fixture. They must have fastened them to its shell. Anyway, he looked like a professor. Hence the name, “Professor”.

I was surprised at how much Mike and all the neighbor kids enjoyed playing with Professor. I'm not sure that Professor was enjoying it quite as much though.

I didn't know what to feed the poor thing. I tried bread crumbs, cereal and meat. He nibbled on the meat a little, but didn't seem to like it much. One day I saw him snatch a fly. I told Mike and the neighborhood kids that they had to catch flies to feed Professor. That kept them busy for a while. I finally told them to let Professor play around in the grass. Maybe he would find insects he liked out there. He seemed to like the freedom, but the kids didn't let him out of their sight. They also kept on catching flies for him and he seemed to thrive on it. I felt sorry for him, because I didn't know how long

he could live like that. He didn't seem to be suffering and the kids were very gentle with him. Maybe he was enjoying it — I couldn't tell. He seemed to like to sit in the water. I put a pan out for him to drink, but he mostly sat in it.

Professor was very hard to keep track of in the house. Mike wanted to keep him in a box in his bedroom, but the little reptile would somehow find ways to get out. Or Mike would let him out and forget to watch him. Then we would have to search for him under the furniture and all through the house. He was good at hiding. Mike decided one day that he had an easy way to keep track of Professor. Taking a spool of thread from my sewing basket, Mike tied the thread around Professor's shell and then returned the spool to my sewing basket. Professor was free to roam around the house and all Mike would have to do is rewind the spool and locate the turtle.

Well, it so happened that I had some sock darning to do. (In those days we still darned socks. Ha!) I picked up the basket and set it on my lap. Something inside the basket began to move! I threw the basket up in the air and yelled, “Snake! Snake!” Morrie came running. But no snake was found. Suddenly the spool began moving on the floor. Morrie picked it up and began rewinding the thread. After moving almost every piece of furniture in the house — the davenport was wrapped around several times — he finally came to the end and wasn't exactly surprised to find Professor. It was funny then, but I recalled our neighbors had found a snake in their toilet a short

time before, so that was my first thought. I dislike snakes with a passion. In fact I am afraid of them, even though they run away from me.

(I didn't tell Mike about the snake bit for some time. I'm sure he would have had a good laugh at my expense. I don't remember if I ever told him about it. He can read about it here!!)

We just told him that his method worked, but the recovery was pretty hard to do. If that was the way he wanted to keep in touch with Professor, he had to keep the spool in his room and keep the door closed!!

PROFESSOR TAKES A WALK

One day Professor managed to sneak out of the house somehow and we thought we would never see him again. That evening, one of the neighborhood boys from about a block away came across the street carrying Professor, still with his glasses on. He had found him in their yard. Of course he recognized Professor because of his glasses. Mike was happy to see him again, and I guess I was too!

Professor seemed to be living a normal and happy life, even with his glasses on. I wished he could talk and tell me how he really felt. I really wanted Mike to take him back to the lake and let him go, but he was enjoying him too much. Mike wouldn't hear of it.

PROFESSOR TAKES A TRIP

Around that time my brother Pete and his family lived on a farm in western Minnesota, near the town of Graceville. One day a big wind storm came along and blew his barn away. After he had replaced it with a beautiful, huge new barn, he began to have barn dances there on Saturday nights. They christened it "The Blue Goose". When he held his first barn dance, Morrie, Mike and I drove out from Minneapolis to encourage them in their new effort.

Mike, of course, had to bring Professor along. He left him in the car that night to keep him safe, but somehow he managed to escape. We don't know how or when. Maybe we opened the door to take something out or put something in and he just tumbled out... glasses and all. Just hope that if someone found him, they removed the glasses.

We searched for him around the farm, but even though he moved slowly, he got a long ways away. Just like the story of the Tortoise and the Hare. He man-



Brother Pete's barn was, for a time, transformed into the Blue Goose, a dance hall..

aged to outrun us. We hated to leave him behind and I have to say now that I missed the little guy. When I talked to brother Pete later, I asked if perhaps they found him after we left, but nobody ever saw him again. I just hope he grew up to be a big turtle!!!

Oh! Oh! Another turtle story just flashed by my Rear View Mirror. A short while after the loss of Professor, Morrie, Mike and I were out fishing, trolling for a “big one”. Suddenly, Mike’s line went down. He tried to haul it in, but he couldn’t handle it. He almost went overboard. It was just like dead weight — no action. Morrie took the line and said, “You must’ve hooked a log.” When he finally got it up to the boat, it was the biggest snapping turtle I had ever seen. Morrie said, “It’s a turtle”. Mike got excited — he was expecting to see another little Professor. When he saw it he was so scared. I think he would’ve jumped overboard if Morrie had gotten it into the boat. He couldn’t get it off the hook and finally had to cut the line and the turtle swam away. I worried about the poor thing with that hook in his mouth, but Morrie said that he would get it out okay. I don’t know if he really thought that or if was just trying to make me feel better about it. Mike was relieved to see it swim away. It was almost as big as he was! After I moved to Florida I saw bigger turtles. Giant ones.

One day I went with some of my friends to one of the entertainment parks. There they had a children’s entertainment center and the kids were riding around on these huge turtles. They must

have weighed 300 pounds or more! I doubt that they even grow that large in Minnesota. And I thought the one in Martin Lake was huge! Ha! Ha!

Just like a cork in the water my Rear View Mirror keeps bobbing flashes at me — sometimes so many at once that my mind can’t comprehend them all at one time. I have to turn the flashes off and try to sort them out — one at a time.

Sometimes it is difficult to do. Have I told you I am getting very forgetful? Sometimes I forget what I’m doing while I’m doing it!!! Not to worry. My trusty Rear will come to my rescue and I can expect to get a replay of the flashes. These replays are mostly short stories of the many incidents of my long life, not necessarily in the order in which they occurred. Hopefully, you can sort them out.

MY SON MIKE

It’s hard to know where to begin with Mike, but I suppose the best place would be the day he was born: April 10, 1948. He weighed in at eight pounds two ounces and was over 23 inches long with big feet. He was born with a broken collarbone and two black eyes, so you can see he was fighting all the way, which made it no easy task for me!!! The only way to set a collarbone is to secure the arm to keep it from moving, so his arm was firmly wrapped to his body. Only his hand was movable, so he was almost continuously waving.

Morrie came to visit me in the hospital. When he came into my room he was laughing almost uncontrollably. I couldn’t imagine what was so funny. I wasn’t feel-

ing too funny at that point.

He told me he had stopped to see the babies and there was a crowd of proud fathers and relatives admiring the newborns. When they brought Mike to the window he was “waving.” One woman spoke up, “Look at that one. Look how smart he is... he’s waving at us!”. I also had a good laugh, even though it hurt a bit.

Mike continued to give me a hard time after we came home. He was a colicky baby. He kept me up walking the floor at night. When he finally went to sleep, I would put him in his crib and he would wake up and start screaming again.

Elaine had been such a good baby, I wasn’t expecting this. I kept calling his doctor and he finally got disgusted with me and said sarcastically, “Isn’t that too bad!! Put him on his stomach and let him cry. He’ll work the gas off much sooner by himself.” (Needless to say I didn’t call that doctor again!!)

It was very hard for Morrie and me to listen to him scream, but in time it did work better and he did outgrow his colic. Then he was a much better and happier baby. I began to realize it wasn’t all pain!!

I think that part of his problem was that he was getting spoiled and wanted to be “walked”. When he found out it wasn’t working he finally gave up on it. I guess he really was smart. Ha! I had to learn to cope with the cunning!

RUNNING TERRIFIED!

Morrie said to me, “Those hormones the doctor gave you must’ve come from a monkey!” That became a running story in our family!

One day when he was a little over one year old, I was washing clothes and I put him in his play pen out in the front yard. When I came out to check on him, he wasn’t in the play pen. I didn’t worry because I thought the upstairs neighbors had taken him out. I finished hanging up my clothes and went upstairs to collect him. No one was home! Frantically I went around the neighborhood asking about him. No one had seen him. Everyone went out looking and calling for him. I had really begun to panic when a little boy going back to school after lunch asked, “Are you looking for a little boy wot’s lost?” The he told me there a little boy at one of his neighbor’s



Here's Mike strutting along 24th Street in front of our home. It was about this time that he made his escape and had his first run-in with the police.

house a block away from our home. He had crossed the busy 24th Street in front of our house. I was frantic as I rushed over there to claim him, only to find that the lady had called the police and they had already come over to pick him up. She had never seen him before and he couldn't tell her where he lived. When she went out to get her kids in for their lunch, she had an extra one!! She gave in lunch and finally called the police.

I immediately call to police and when I finally got the right place, the policemen said, "Does he have big brown eyes and is he wearing a dark blue sweater, etc?" I immediately breathed a sigh of relief. "Where do you live? We'll bring him to you." When they arrived, two policemen were sitting in the front seat of the car and Mike was standing up in the back seat — eating an ice cream cone!!! He didn't want to come to me — he was having the best time of his young life. I couldn't imagine two grown men letting a baby stand in the back seat of a moving car! I didn't complain, though, I was just happy to have him back home.

We still can't figure out how he got out of the play pen. We finally decided that some kid coming home from school at lunch time must have helped him out. I suppose Mike stood there with both arms up — as he usually did when he wanted to be picked up — and some kid helped him out, not realizing the danger. After that, no more play pen outdoors unless I was with him. He doesn't remember any of that. He was too young to reflect this into his Rear View Mirror, but it still flashes bright to me!!



Cub Scout dinner for Pack 283. Scout Tim Remus in front of the Den #9 centerpiece that proclaimed "The Moon: 51st State". Den Mother Sally appears in full uniform

He used to stand at the big window in the front room and wave to his Daddy every morning as he walked across the street on his way to work at Minneapolis-Moline. When I asked Mike where he was going that day he said, "Daddy's wok."

When I thought of the dangerous route my baby had travelled, all I could say was "Thank you God!" "Thank you Guardian Angel!"

The Den Mother - Den #9

When Mike got to be the age for Cub Scouts, guess who got volunteered to be a Den Mother? Soon, Den #9 of Pack 283 was placed in my hands. Our Den consisted of nine active nine-year old boys. I guess most boys that age are active — we had no problem getting all our required projects finished. In fact we did a few extras. I think I was enjoying it more



One of the Cub Scouts' skits involved a weight loss group where a group of fat ladies got thin and fat again by opening and closing umbrellas.

than the boys were.

“Den Meetings” were held in our basement every week. We worked on craft projects and learned “Cub lore”. One of the projects was to create a skit to be performed in front of all the Scouts and their parents at the monthly “Pack Meeting”, which was held at nearby Lennox School. A different den was responsible for a skit every month. I came up with the following skit which was very well received by the Cub Scouts and their parents. We were invited to perform at other Pack Meetings and always got a big hand from the crowd. The original script is shown on following pages.

I also wrote the following song which was so well received that the Scoutmaster was going to have it added to the Cub

Scout song book. I don't know if that ever happened or not. Lyrics are on a following page.

MORE MIKE STORIES

I sometimes looked at Mike a little sideways — yes, even a little disdaining. Wondering, just wondering, especially after coming from a visit with his teachers on open house or report card day. I'll give you just one “for instance”. Sister Mary Eugenia, a sweet, patient soul, greeted me kindly (even a little sympathetically I thought).

“Michael seems to be a very bright youngster, but he is just not working up to his capacity. He is living in a little dream world all of is own.”

“But Sister, I thought he was doing great — he reads to me and I'm surprised at how well he does!!”

“I'll show you what I mean”, the nun said as she handed me some of Mike's half-finished papers, decorated with rockets, missiles, submarines, etc. Morrie and I stood stunned — our high hopes dashed.

“Now let's look at some of these workbook covers”, Sister said. She showed us books on the desks up and down the line. The children worked very hard designing and decorating these with flowers, birds, geometric figures, etc. Sister beamed with pride as she showed her students' handiwork.

“But not Michael! Look what he dreamed up!”

Morrie and I both were stricken mute,

Continued after Cub Scout Skit

"CUB SCOUT SKIT"

"DEN 9'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPACE AGE"

Announcement by Billy Eigen

Players: Billy, Barry, Brad, Harland, Mike, Kenny, Tim and Irving

Billy: Den 9 of Pack 282 is now ready to give to the world its contribution to the Space Age "A Super Personnic Space Man".

Each boy in the den is putting his "best" into our specially designed "Super Personnic Machine" in order to produce perfection in a space man.

Now let us watch the Machine in Action!!!

Open Curtain

Barry: I'm Barry Zoss - My contribution will be - 92 of my molecules, which will be broken down into atoms, which will be smashed by the super atom smasher in our machine into unbelievable power.

Goes into Machine; lights flash - much noise prevails

Brad: I'm Bradley Smith - I will contribute my I.Q. which, when put through the Super Personnic Machine and mixed with Barry's Molecules, will produce a brain so tremendous that it would be dangerous for anyone except our Super Personnic "Space Man"!!!

Goes into Machine - again, lights flash and much Noise Prevails

Harland: I'm Harland Durkin - My contribution will be my "Intestinal Fortitude" in plain English "Guts". My only hope is that the "Super Personnic Machine" can do enough with it to bring it up to the level of a "Super Personnic Space Man" !!!

Goes into Machine - More lights flash and noise

Mike: I'm Mike Urseth - Even a Super Personic Space Man needs motivation !! I'm willing to contribute all of mine -- I sinerely hope that the Super Personic Machine will have enough power to do something with it -- and generate enough motivation to give the Super Personic Space Man plenty of that Go, Man Go!! Take me to your leader ~~st~~ff!!
u

Goes into machine - Lights and noise again prevail

Kenny: I'm Kenny Nilsestuen - For the cause, I'm willing to contribute my funny bone and my repertoire of Jokes -- Some are pretty corny -- I know, but I hope our "Super Personic Space Man" will be able to slay a few Martians with them.

Goes into machine - More noise and lights

Irving: I'm Irving Balto - OH! mighty machine - I have a lot of energy I never use -- I hope you can expand it into the tremendous energy you will need to conquer space --

Enters Machine - More lights and noise

Tim: I'm Tim Remus - I'm the littlest boy in our Den -- I do not know what you need -- Oh, mighty Super Personic Machine, to produce our Super personic Space Man - - So - - why not take all of me !!

Enters Machine - Again more noise and flashing lights

Billy: (The Announcer)

Our boys have now completed their contributions. The mighty machine has been grinding away and our Super Personic Space Man is now in the making. I will now furnish my little bit by adding my Magnetic Personality, which will set off the last stage.

Please stand by for the unveiling of our Super Personie
Space Man!!

Goes into Machine - Unbelievable, extreme noise and
flashing of lights

After a time, the boys stagger out -- one by one -

"Very Beat Up"

(All in Unison) -- The mighty machine has done its work well -
"Behold!! The Super Personie Space Man"- -

(The Unveiling)

Out of the machine comes little 4 year old Pat Durkin -- Dressed
like a little cub scout.

(All in Unison)

OH! NO! Something must have happened to the machine!!

DEN 9 - PACK 282 CUB SCOUT SONG

AS WE GO MARCHING ON!

Our eyes have seen the wonders of the Cub Scouts in our land --
They are busy growing up, and working hard with heart and hand.
To be a loyal Boy Scout is the aim of every Cub --
As he goes marching on.

Chorus

Hail! Hail! to Akela
Hail! Hail! to Akela
Hail! Hail! to Akela
Our cubs go marching on.

II

Akela, we will follow you
Wherever you will go
From our wolf, and bear, and lion, and then on to Webelo.
Doing good and helping others, as we trudge along the way --
And we'll go marching on.

Chorus

"As We Go Marching On"

Tune -- "Battle Hymn of the Republic"

Composed by: Sally Urseth

Den Mother Den 9 -- Pack 282

not believing our own eyes. It was a picture of a grave!!! With one drooping daisy and tombstone reading:

*Mike Urseth —
Born April 10, 1948
Died October 14, 1957
Darn it. I knew this was
going to happen.*

The latter date was the day of our open house. I reeled back on my heels, but recovered quickly as the irony and humor struck me and we all had a good laugh!!

When I arrived home I had a mouthful of words, but I couldn't get them out. Another facet on my little gem? Well, yes, but my gem was turning black — obsidian, no doubt. Black and not very valuable.

Close upon the heels of this little diversion, another bombshell exploded. (Via U.S. Mail) A letter from Holy Family School, signed by Mike's teacher. The letter stated, among other things, "THIS NEEDS AN EXPLANATION!!!"

My heart sank as I gingerly opened the neatly folded paper — another "work of art" entitled "The Haunted Beer Joint". Skeletons were seated on stools at the bar. Bottles of blood (Types O and AB Negative) lined the back bar. Menus of purely cannibalistic taste — "Eyeball Soup" and "Lady Fingers". A fly buzzing around the room carrying a large "Human Swatter".

Horrendous sights!!
Explanation, she said!!
Explanation!! Considering the authen-

ticity of the bar detail, would the Sister believe me if I said, "Sister, Michael has never seen the inside of a beer joint."

The next day I was called home as my father had suffered a stroke. It turned out to not be life-threatening, but I stayed with Mother for several weeks. Morrie's brother, Clem, happened to be visiting with us at the time. He was a bachelor shepherd in Montana, so a good cook. He kept an eye on Mike while I was gone.

And Sister, if you should ever happen to read this... "I still can't explain!!!"

Facet?? I doubt if this one can ever shine with the brilliance of an exquisite gem. Father Time, this is definitely a piece of work for you!!

This is one of the brighter facets on my gem (which is changing from obsidian to diamond)

The little boys of the neighborhood — ages six to nine — had formed a club. I was very flattered because I was the only mother permitted to join. (I was given the "secret word" because Mike's room happened to be the club room, and I more or less insisted on knowing what was going on. What was going on? They did very exciting things like burying their "dues" (pennies) like pirates and making maps showing their whereabouts. And probably digging them up the very next day when the ice cream man came around.

One evening at dinner, Michael (I called him that when I was especially pleased with him.) was talking about his club and said very seriously, "Daddy, can you think of a good name for our club?"

Morrie chuckled and said jokingly, “Why don’t you call it the Sewing Circle”.

“Hey, that’s a great name! ‘Soaring Circle!’ Like flying saucer... get it?” Apparently he had misunderstood.

From that day forward, the club was called the Soaring Circle. I don’t know how long it was in existence, but someday that back yard may yield buried treasures for future generations.

MIKE GROWS UP

As you can tell from my stories, Mike has always marched to a little different drummer. I used to think he just did it to be contrary, but now I think he just sees the world in a little different way and it doesn’t look like that’s going to change!

One of Mike’s activities that has always had me worried is motorcycling. I’ve had to worry for a long time, because he’s been doing it since 1966 and he ain’t dead yet! Hah! He’s gone all around the country on the crazy things and has never been seriously hurt.

I’ve often worried about his taste in women. He married (too young!) at age 20, and it didn’t work out. Since he’s been involved with a number of ladies. (Probably more than I know about!) Some have been nice. Some not so. But about ten years ago he met his match. Kay, as I’ve been telling Mike since I met her, is “the right woman”. They live in the country in Northwestern Wisconsin. Kay runs a busy Title Insurance agency called Hometown Title Co. in Rice Lake. Mike does a variety of publishing and graphic design projects from his home office.

One of the many reasons Mike loves Kay is that she is a great traveler. During their first summer together, she jumped on his motorcycle and they rode all the way to the Bighorn Mountains in Wyoming and then on to Sturgis, South Dakota for the big motorcycle rally – camping all the way! She loved it and they’ve been at it ever since. Other travel destinations (not always by motorcycle, of course) include Mexico, Jamaica, Florida, New Mexico, Arizona... The list goes on.

One of the recent ventures has Mike as the “Mangling Editor” of MENZ Tournament Hunter Magazine, a project begun by his cousin Bill Urseth. He also designs signs for the Minnesota Vikings. He was able to take me to a Vikings game in the fall of 2006. We sat right down on the field level at the goal line! Very exciting. Shane, Mark, Julie and Kay were there, too. I think Shane thought the cheerleaders were kind of cute!

I’m certain there are a lot of Mike stories that he’s never shared with me. For that I am truly grateful. In spite of some of his more colorful exploits, Mike is a happy flash in my rear view mirror.



Kay and Mike in Jamaica. No problem, mon.

THE URSETHS: MY WONDERFUL IN-LAWS

The story of my life would not be complete without some information about my husband's family.

The Urseth Connection

My husband "Morrie" was born in Minneapolis in 1900. His parents were immigrants from Norway. His father, Hans Andreas Urseth, was a Lutheran minister and a professor at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. Mother was Martha Susag,



Martha Susag Urseth

born in Steinkjer, Norway, April 30, 1868.

Hans went to seminary at Augsburg and was ordained in 1895. He ministered to a flock in Rochester, Minnesota from 1895-1898, then served as a professor of theology and English at Augsburg, finally serving as Dean. He authored hymns #247 and 332 in the Concordia Hymnal and was the English translator of Luther's "Little Katekismus" (1904), Sverdrup's "Forklaring" (1906) and Voget's "Bibelhistorie" in 1909. He died April 3, 1909 at the tender age of 42 of sarcoma, a form of cancer. Unfortunately, I don't have any photos of him.

His passing left Martha to care for a household of children.

They were:

Ethel Adelaide - 11/15/1896 -

Clemens Oliver - 5/11/1898 - 3/30/1968

Halfdan Moritz - 9/5/1900 - 7/1/1965

Milton - 2/5/1908 -

Alvin Gerhard - 7/15/1908

Ethel

The first-born and only daughter of Hans and Martha, Ethel set to the duties of helping to raise her little brothers. Her mother was always grateful for her help, especially in later years when age led to failing health.

Ethel never married, the common wisdom being that she had already raised one family and had seen quite enough of



Here's Ethel standing in front of our house on Kentucky Avenue.

that side of life to suit her. Ethel worked in offices most of her career, for many years she was employed by the Minneapolis-Moline Company, first at the Minneapolis plant and later at their factory in Hopkins.

Through the 1950's, Ethel lived in an apartment on Powderhorn Terrace. Her building overlooked Powderhorn Park, which was the site of one of Minneapolis' best July Fourth fireworks displays. The hills in the park were also great fun for sledding and the next generation of Urseths often took advantage of them.

Ethel was proud of her Norwegian heritage and spent considerable effort in tracing the family roots back in "the old country". She communicated with some Norwegian cousins and traveled overseas to visit. At some point she seemed to become disenchanted with the

Auntie Ethel's Coffee Cake

This was Auntie Ethel's only real food specialty. Everyone looked forward to her bringing it. Although it's not a true Norwegian delicacy, it still turns the heads of the Urseth clan. Niece Julie was entrusted with the recipe and we share it here for future generations.

CRUST

1 cup of flour
 1/2 cup of butter Mix like pie crust, press onto cookie sheet in two 4 inch strips
 1-2 Tblsp. water

TOPPING

1 cup water Heat water and butter to boiling. Remove from heat. Stir in flour.
 1/2 cup butter Beat in eggs ** ONE AT A TIME**!! Add almond.
 1 cup flour Spread over crust.
 Bake at 350' for 45 minutes.
 3 eggs
 1 Tsp. almond extract

ICING

1 cup powdered sugar
 1&a1/2 Tblsp. cream Beat and spread on top
 1 Tblsp. soft butter
 2 Tsp. almond extract

* Sprinkle sliced Almonds over icing *



Ethel (on the right) is here with one of the Susag twins. I could never tell them apart!

search, leading to speculation that she had encountered some skeletons in the Urseth closet. (Mike says that she discovered a lute-fisk rustler...) This was never confirmed and she took to the grave any secrets discovered.

Although childless, Ethel loved and doted on her nieces and nephews. She loved having them visit and was happy to feed them, even though she was not the world's greatest cook. Her one surviving specialty is known as "Auntie Ethel's Coffee Cake". (sidebar)

Clemens

Known to one and all as Clem, he remains a bit of a mystery to the family. He left home at an early age and went to Montana. He spent most of his time there

working in the ranch lands as a sheep herder. All summer long he would live out of a little wagon in the mountains, pretty much away from human contact.

Why Clem went out west is part of his mystery. Always the black sheep of the family, there's been conjecture that he ran into legal troubles in Minneapolis. Others think his personal demons chased him there and that he was happier in a more solitary life than associating with people. Another theory is that he skipped town ahead of the draft for WWI. He turned draft age just about the time the U.S. entered the "war to end all wars" and it's possible that he didn't fall for the hype about the glories of war. At any rate, his contact with the family was sporadic after that.



Ethel went to visit Clem in 1967. He wasn't looking too good. The years of hard living had begun to catch up with him.

Ethel did her best to keep in touch, dutifully writing letters. We suspect that she also helped him out with money from time to time. Once in a while he would jump on the Great Northern train and roll in to Minneapolis to reunite with his family.

These visits sometimes ended badly.

Clem was a drinker. A hard drinker. Was he an alcoholic? From our vantage point it seems likely. At any rate he tended to overindulge, a fact that made his big sister uncomfortable. This made his visits a little shorter than otherwise might be expected.

Clem's longest visit to Minnesota happened literally by accident. Around 1958 he was injured in Montana, allegedly as the result of a fall from his horse, but given his history, who can say what really happened? A serious blow to the head resulted in a half-dollar size hole in his skull. He was stabilized in Bozeman and put on a train to Minnesota. Doctors at the University Hospital performed surgery to relieve pressure on his brain. Once released from the hospital, he stayed with us at our St. Louis Park home for a few weeks. He was supposed to go back to the hospital to have a plate inserted to protect the brain. Mike took to calling him "Hole-in-the-head Clem" and drew "wanted" posters offering big rewards for the capture of this notorious outlaw! Nobody today can remember whether he ever got the plate or not. He got the urge to go and headed back West. I can't recall that he ever came back to Minnesota.

Although not formally educated, Clem was well read and possessed real talent in caricature. He delighted the youngsters with his tales of living in the mountains, some of which may have been true. Sometimes I thought that his brothers were a little jealous of his life in the wide open spaces.

Halfdan

He was born Halfdan Moritz, but hated his name. He eventually changed his name to Harold Moritz, keeping the "H" for consistency. He had long before taken to signing his name as H.M. Urseth. The Urseth family always referred to him as "Huff" or "Huffy".



Morrie and I in Minneapolis, around 1934.

In the rest of the world he was known as Morrie, and it was under that name that I came to know him.

Morrie was only eight years old when his father passed away. His death changed the family's life from a fairly comfortable, middle class situation to one of economic hardship. Morrie quit school after the 10th grade, going to work to help his mother make ends meet. He often said that his father would've cried to see him drop out of school, but there was no choice at the time. He became eligible for the WWI draft just months before the war ended. I think that he actually was drafted, but the Army stopped taking people in before they got to him.

As a result of his limited education, Morrie's career choices were limited to the



Cutting the Silver Anniversary cake.

“blue collar” world. Most of his working life was spent at Minneapolis-Moline’s Lake Street plant. He did a variety of jobs there, eventually winding up as the lead man in the tool crib.

Morrie’s favorite place was the cabin at Martin Lake. We had built the place with help from our friends. Morrie loved sit-



Morrie on the dock at Martin Lake. This must have been early on. The dock got a lot better!



I don't know who took this photo of Morrie at work, but I'm really happy to have it.

ting out in the boat. It didn’t matter to him whether the fish were biting or not. For him it was just as much fun to watch the clouds go by or enjoy the big Blue Herons fishing along the shore. To this day, his grandsons Mark and Steve cherish their memories of going to the lake with grandpa.

Morrie and I married in Minneapolis during the Depression. At first we kept the marriage secret for economic and family reasons. I was afraid of losing my job. (There was a prejudice against married women working outside the home – like we didn’t really NEED the money!) We were both a little afraid of telling our families. The reason for the concern was religion. I was Catholic and his family were very Lutheran. We figured that neither family was going to be too happy. Morrie agreed to “convert” to Catholicism, so that took care of my family. When he broke the news to the Urseths it

was not a pretty picture. Fortunately, once they got to know me, it didn't take very long for them to realize that things would work out just fine.

He was a good man. He had many friends from his working life at Moline and from the Kentucky Avenue neighborhood. He was especially close with Ronnie Durkin and Frank Remus, fathers of Mike's best friends. Regular house parties were a feature of our life in St. Louis Park and Morrie enjoyed each and every one of them.

He passed away in his sleep at the Martin Lake cabin on July 1, 1965. I still don't believe it. He had never been in a hospital and never missed a day of work due to illness. It must have been his time.

Milton

Milton came along in 1908. He was always known for being a smart kid and was



Milt, the young businessman.



Milt, Mary, John and Martie.

River School District. I think he later was some kind of administrator. His first marriage to Marcia brought forth three children: Ellen, Heather and Craig. Ellen and Heather have married and had children. Craig seems content to live the bachelor's life, with a serious passion for golf.

Martie married and moved to California



Ellen, Heather and Craig. I know they're all grown up, but this is how I remember them.



Here I am with Bonnie Urseth Koch, baby Emily and Martie Urseth. Emily is now 16!!

where she pursued a teaching career. She's had no children – maybe she's had enough of them in the classroom. Both Mike and I have managed to visit with her on our trips to California.

Milt and Mary passed away several years ago and John has also left us. They were wonderful people who are part of those flicks and flashes in my rear view mirror.

Alvin

The baby of the Urseth family was Alvin, known mostly as Al or “Big Al” to his children. In his younger days, Al had a bit of a wild streak



Here's Al with Bonnie on her wedding day. The back of the photo says July 13, 1975. It can't be that long!!!



Bea Des Saints Urseth, wife of Al - mother of Bill and Bonnie.

in him. He was blessed with the “gift of gab” and was known to tell a story or two, some of which were even true! Al was considered the storyteller of the Urseth boys, which was some pretty tough competition.

When World War II broke out, Al was in California. As I recall he had somehow wound up singing on the radio – probably with hopes of becoming the next singing cowboy on the silver screen. When the news of the Pearl Harbor attack came, Al did the most logical thing. First he went out and got drunk, then volunteered to enlist in the Army.

His military service sent him into the Pacific theater. I think that he was at Guadalcanal. He was wounded and nearly died in the Philippines, possibly in Manila. The leg wound was serious enough that he was sent home on a hospital ship. I think that wound may have saved his life, because the war only got worse after that.

After the war he returned to Minneapolis to be with his wife, Bea. They had married before the war, about the same time as Morrie and I. Bea was an amazing woman. She was tiny, almost bird-like, but she had a spine like an iron rod and a will to match. Al often cracked wise that she kept him in line, but I don't think he was joking. Bea had an entrepreneurial streak to her, a trait that we think came from her grandfather, Solomon Juneau. He was considered to be the founder of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Solomon established a trading post there and became a leading real estate developer.

Al and Bea were blessed with two children. First came William, known to most as Bill, but to the family he was often called "Chief". His great grandmother (Solomon Juneau's wife) was Native American and Bill took this as a matter of great pride. Early on, Bill showed a flair for two things: Business and hunting. He was a



Mike (left) with cousin Bill comparing their loot. Christmas 1959.

wheeler-dealer, buying and selling, trading and swapping all manner of goods, including fishing and hunting equipment, and Lifesavers Crysto-Mints.

Hunting was another matter. Big Al's war experiences had left him so marked that he could not tolerate even the smell of gun smoke. As luck would have it, neighborhood friend Billy Peterson's father, Bob, was an avid hunter and took Bill under his wing. Today Bill owns



Bwana Bill on African safari.

the Minnesota Horse and Hunt Club, publishes *MENZ Tournament Hunter Magazine* and is the co-host of a TV show called *Quest For the One*, that takes him around the world hunting exotic game species. He and wife Kathy live in Prior Lake on property adjacent to the Club.

Then came Bonnie Bea, the apple of Al's eye. (and Morrie's, too!) She was a beautiful child and blessed with a number of talents, especially music. Bonnie became quite an accomplished musician, playing piano and violin. She also has a wonderful singing voice and is accomplished as an actor on stage and screen. She's appeared in a number of television programs, including a situation comedy series called "We've Got It Made".

Bonnie lives in California with husband Gerry Koch and their lovely and talented daughter, Emily. Emily seems to be following in Bonnie's footsteps, currently attending a "magnet school" for performing arts where she recently had a lead role in *Les Misérables*. Even more important, she's a sweet young lady. Mike is nuts about her!



Silver wedding - May of 1959.

We're certain that Al is proud of his children and grandchild. I sometimes imagine Morrie and Al looking down from heaven and smiling about their children.

I was blessed to have married into such a wonderful family as the Urseths. In spite of the differences in our religious and cultural backgrounds they accepted me as part of the family.



*Bonnie married Gerry Koch in 1975.
I can't believe that it's been that long.*



Al, Ethel and Morrie all dressed up.

THE VILLAGE: THE KENTUCKY AVENUE GANG

**Mike wrote this for Bea and Ron Durkin's Golden Wedding.
It sums up our wonderful life on Kentucky Avenue.**

In the 90's there has been much talk about how it takes an entire village to raise a child. For some, this concept is controversial. For those of us lucky enough to be raised in the "village" of Kentucky Avenue, it's hard to understand what the fuss is all about.

Perhaps the world was different then. To the crew of ragamuffins inhabiting our little universe in St. Louis Park, our village was a wonderful place. Wonderful because we had all those great places to play (most of which were off-limits... but that's another story). Wonderful because of the people who lived there. Of course it was great to have all those other kids to play with. God, we had fun.

But we also learned a lot from the adults. We learned about hard work. Honoring commitments. Laughing with friends. Helping those in need of a hand. Big lessons for little kids.

Bea and Ronnie Durkin were central to our village, both geographically and in a more spiritual sense. Since they were located smack-dab in the middle of the block, they got more than their share of the comings and goings of our little gangs. More importantly, they taught us by their actions.

Ronnie was the go-to guy when one of us broke something. Or when we were "fixing" something and got in over our heads. (An all too common occurrence.) It seemed like he was never too busy to lend a hand. In spite of our more flagrant foul-ups he managed to

smile while setting things right. I don't know if he realized that he was packaging a lesson with his repair work, but he made a strong impression on several young minds in the process.

Bea somehow managed to maintain a sense of equilibrium in the face of chaos. How else could you describe the thundering herd of kids that roved across the Kentucky Avenue tundra? Although we meant no real harm, even a casual observer could see that we were never more than a hair's breadth away from catastrophe. When we got out of line (I'd like to think it was a rare occasion, but ...) Bea had a way of getting our attention. Sometimes we thought she was really mad at us, but only for a moment. Looking back, I suspect that sometimes she had trouble keeping a straight face while attempting to maintain order.

Bea and Ronnie were part of the conspiracy of adults. Most of the parents on the block were each other's eyes and ears and we knew it. We kids suspected that the dads got together and swore some sort of blood oath over ice-cold bottles of White Label beer. "You nail my kid when he screws up and I'll catch yours". They had Dad-radar, it was widely believed, and busted us on a regular basis. Of course, the reality was that we really weren't all that good at being sneaky. Didn't have the genes for it, I suppose.

The children of the village were a spir-

ited lot and we tested our limits on a regular basis. Somehow it seemed that our inevitable failures were not as severely punished as our successes were praised. We were picked up, dusted off and sent back to try again.

I can only recall Ronnie failing at one thing. He tried to teach me how to play baseball, a game for which I had little or no aptitude. He had enormous patience, but as a naturally gifted athlete himself, it was hard for him to understand that I was just a lousy ball player. I clearly recall him coaching me to improve my throwing, a futile gesture at best. Harland and I were playing catch on the sidewalk in front of their house and Ronnie kept encouraging me to adjust my throwing style. It just wasn't happening. If anything, I was getting worse. Rather than getting frustrated, he kept at it. In the end, I was the one who got flustered and in a moment of distraction, lowered my glove a split-second before the Harland's throw arrived.

According to witnesses, the ball bounced about 25 feet straight up in the air after a

short conference with my head. As anyone who remembers Harland's throwing arm can attest, I'm lucky to be alive! Ronnie was going through a roller coaster ride of emotions. At first he thought I was going to die. Once he realized that I would survive, (The ball hit my head, after all.) he tried mightily to resist laughing. He failed. His laughter became so contagious that I quickly forgot about the pain in my head and the larger problem of embarrassment in front of my friends. I knew that he wasn't laughing at me, but at the humor of the situation.

The kids of Kentucky Avenue were lucky. We were allowed to be kids, but were treated with respect, both gifts denied to many a child. If the lessons learned in youth serve a lifetime, the kids who grew up in the Kentucky Avenue village were well served by many, especially Bea and Ronnie Durkin.

Happy 50th Anniversary

Mike Urseth

Bon Voyage

**We lost Mom on June 8, 2007.
She was 97 years old. Loved by
everyone who knew her. She
touched uncounted lives and
brought goodness into them.**

Some knew her as Evelyn.

Some knew her as Sally.

All knew her as friend.

**She passed peacefully, without
pain, and in the company of
people who love her.**

We should all be so lucky!

She is missed.



MY CRUISE DIARY - 1977

An example of my post-retirement days

(Editors' Note: I came across this diary of Mom's cruise and thought that it would be a great addition. As you will see, after she moved to Florida, Mom did more than sit around a watch the grass grow.

One of her adventures was a trip to Rome, Greece and Israel. Unfortunately, all of her photos were destroyed by the security X-ray machines at the Tel Aviv airport. Even without the pictures, she had a wonderful time.

One of her epic journeys was a bus trip from Florida through Minnesota, out to the Portland area, down to San Francisco and on to Los Angeles. She visited with family and friends all along the way. I believe that she was pushing 80 at the time.

She also travelled to Minnesota frequently, often for the Christmas holidays.

Delores, her traveling partner on this cruise was the mother of Candy, my girlfriend at the time. Candy was going to Florida over Christmas to visit her mother, who also lived in St. Petersburg, and volunteered to deliver Mom's Christmas present. Once Mom and Delores got together, they became friends and did a lot of fun things. As nearly as we can figure, this trip was sometime in 1977.)

This was a triple-A escorted cruise. Thirty-one of us met at the triple-A parking lot on a beautiful, sunny Saturday morning. We boarded a chartered bus for Port Everglades. Had a very nice luncheon en route and a very nice get-acquainted bus trip to our destination.

We boarded the T.S.S. Fairwind at about
*Wedding day for Pete Geurts and Rose Oderman.
This day had a profound effect on my life, since
they soon became my parents.*

7:00 pm and were off on a beautiful fourteen day, six port cruise.

Sunday and Monday were spent at sea. The Fairwind is a beautiful ship – a floating hotel – and we spent a lot of our time exploring the decks – three of them – swimming pools, saunas, game rooms, card room and plenty of lounges with entertainment available at different times of the day and night. Casino gambling was available at all times of the day and night and the food was out of this world! It was great to go into a beautiful dining room and be served anything your heart desired – and in style! No paper napkins here!

We spent a lot of time, at first, looking at the wall maps by the elevators trying to decide where we were. We also spent a lot of time waiting for elevators because Delores - my friend and cruise mate had broken her foot a few days before we were to sail and couldn't take the stairs. Of course, I'm not too keen on stairs anyway, so it was a good excuse for me. Those of you who know Delores know that I would've had a hard time keeping up with her had she not had broken foot. She didn't miss one shore tour or very little else on board ship, either!

The crew was Italian and very hard to understand, some of them couldn't speak any English. There was one blonde, Swedish boy amongst them, who couldn't speak anything but Swedish! If you heard a commotion outside your stateroom it was the Italian steward trying to explain to the Swede what he was supposed to do! Sometimes it would get a little loud.

Fourth Day Out

Tuesday morning about 10:00 am we docked at San Juan, Puerto Rico. We had early lunch and were off on our escorted tour of San Juan.

San Juan is really two cities – historic Old San Juan and new San Juan. New San Juan is a modern, fast-growing metropolis. The things I seem to recall most vividly are the old forts – El Morro and San Cristobal, the beautiful old San Jose Church, one of the oldest and most beautiful in the New World and the gracious old Spanish houses.

Being a patsy for beautiful scenery, I became a shutterbug and took far too many pictures. I have trouble putting them in where they belong.

The old San Jose Church was being restored and there were workmen inside, but I was intrigued by the beautiful architecture and the unforgettable quaint statues. Ponce de Leon was buried there, but in 1908 the remains were removed to beautiful marble tomb in the San Juan Cathedral.

I would've loved to have more time to see more of the beautiful Gothic architecture - and I almost forgot about the old cemetery behind the church. It was really quaint. Many of the graves were crypts deteriorated by time, sunken and cracked. There were also new graves from the 1970's, many with the same family names as the old tombs from the 1500's.

The University of San Juan is a beautiful, modern campus. We didn't tour it, but the guide made many interesting comments about it.

Fifth Day Out

In terms of beauty, St. Thomas far exceeded the other ports. Our tour took us to the highest of the four hills - the sight was breathtaking. I don't recall the height above sea level, but I know that my ears were popping!

We followed the beautiful shoreline, visited Bluebeard's Castle. I was too taken by the beauty of the place to visit many of the shops at the Bluebeard's Castle Hotel. We went up the mountainside to visit Drake's Seat and stopped for a drink at the historic Crown House.

We came back down the other side of the mountain, and those who wished, left the tour. Then we came to the main shopping area - and of course everyone shops when they are in St. Thomas. The guide was very generous with information. I wish that I had taken my tape machine and recorded the things he said. I'm sure I would better be able to recall more experiences of my trip.

It was somewhere along this route that I had my first donkey ride. We had stopped again to admire the view of the harbor, etc, when suddenly appeared this native fellow with his donkey. He saw that I had a camera and I really didn't have much choice. I kept saying "I'll break your donkey!", but the next thing I knew I was on top of the donkey having my picture taken. And I have the pictures to prove it!

Delores and I stayed in town that evening and had a nice dinner of some kind of native fish. I can't recall the name, but we enjoyed it. It was hard to decide to give up the wonderful grub aboard the ship, but we wanted to do some more shopping and exploring. If I recall correctly, I believe we passed up the night life on board ship that night.

Sixth Day Out

The next day we were at sea again. I woke up early and went out on the promenade deck about 5:30 a.m. Already the coffee and delicious hot rolls were there. Early risers were promenading and the three swimming pools, whirlpool and saunas were busy. There is a non-stop round of activities planned by the cruise staff - shuffleboard, trap shooting, table tennis, exercise classes, dancing in three lounges every night and every day a variety of games of all descriptions aimed at getting the passengers acquainted. The horse racing was a very interesting game. Bets were made and played with the throw of the dice.

This was the day we began our "friendship bingo". Each passenger was given a bingo card - as many as he could use or wanted. You put your own name in the "free" space, and as you mingled with the passengers, had them sign the

rest of the squares. On the last day at sea, the bingo was played by calling names from the passenger list. They kept calling names until there were about twenty winners. I couldn't even win that! Prizes were bottles of champagne to be shared with the winning names on the card - a get acquainted gesture. Then there was the talent show. I didn't enter because I couldn't decide which of my many talents to use!

I did join in the masquerade party. It was a lot of fun. Many of the passengers came prepared, some with beautiful costumes, some with humorous ones, but most of us just winged it, using whatever we could find to wear. Some of the masqueraders showed a great imagination - we even had a "flasher"! I went as a Gypsy and went around with a deck of cards telling passengers' fortunes.

Seventh Day - Barbados

The Barbados population was predominantly Negro. Our tour took us past a monument to Admiral Lord Nelson, beautiful government buildings, the Barbados Hilton, many American plantations of mangos, etc, and marketplaces. Along the coast are many American-run hotels. We did stop at one of them and had a Planters' Punch with fresh grated nutmeg. Delicious!

Bridgetown is the capitol, a very heavily populated city. Trafalgar Square is the site of many historical landmarks, including the statue of Admiral Nelson, (evidently one of their national heroes) and a beautiful fountain built from the Barbados coral stone. The fountain was built to commemorate the piping of water into Bridgetown.

Their greatest sources of pride are the beautiful gardens and the fact that they are one of the smallest independent nations of the world and have recently taken a seat at the United Nations. The island is only 21 miles by 14 miles!

Eighth Day Out - Trinidad

The thing of interest to me was the incredible squalor we saw along the main road, the rural housing districts attached to the cocoa, citrus and banana plantations. We stopped at the

botanical gardens, once the home of the governor general, which is now a museum. We also stopped at the Trinidad Hilton and had a delicious banana Daiquiri.

The shopping center here was set up near our ship and the competition was very keen. Calypso dancers and bongo drums were everywhere - a very exciting scene - but the flies were horrible. We were many mile out to sea before we finally got rid of them.

Ninth Day Out - Caracas, Venezuela

If I were to pick a favorite day on my cruise I would have to say Caracas. We had an early breakfast and started out on an all-day tour. We drove over a super highway into Caracas, along the way seeing such squalor in housing - it was unbelievable! There were huts and shacks up and down the hillsides, almost on top of each other. We saw some oil fields that I hadn't known about before. In Caracas we visited the birthplace of Simon Bolivar and the capitol building. The life of Simon Bolivar was depicted in art all through the capitol building. It was fascinating. I took a lot of pictures, but I had camera failure for some reason.

Bolivar is their national hero. He won independence from Spain and is called the "George Washington of South America". We were to have had a "refreshing drink" at the famed Officers Club, which would have shown us more of Bolivar's life, but they had suddenly changed their schedule and refused tourists on Sunday. Our guide was very upset, but he ordered a drink for us all at the Hotel Tamanaco where we had our lunch. We also had some time to browse in the hotel shops.

After that we continued on into the rich man's territory. The impact of the contrast between the shacks and huts and estates was almost more than I could comprehend with just minutes separating them. These were estates like I have never seen in the U.S.A. Not just a few, but miles and miles of them.

We saw many beautiful and churches and fabulous architecture. We went inside the Santa

Capilla, situated right in the center of the metropolitan area. There was little in the way of parking available, yet the church was filled to overflowing. Sunday Mass was being said in several different areas of the church - it was that large.

We were supposed to have a ride on the world famous cable car to the top of Avila Mountain, but it was out of order, so we got gypped out of it. They say it is very beautiful because you can see so many miles in every direction - all of Caracas and its surrounding countryside. This was such a fascinating city that I would love to go there again.

Oh yes - I almost forgot the horse races. We were only there for two races and I couldn't understand the announcer speaking Spanish, but I love any horse race.

Tenth Day Out - At Sea

We were at sea all day again, with the usual ship's activities, and don't forget the food! I don't even want to talk about it. I can gain weight just thinking about it. I went to Midnight Snacks only twice while on board, but the pounds were piling up.

Eleventh Day Out - Panama Canal Day

This was especially exciting to us, because we were there at the time of hotly debated vote on the canal. You could feel a tension among the passengers, but very few spoke of it. Some expressed fear that it could be blown up while we were there. I wasn't really expecting that myself. *(Editor's Note: President Jimmy Carter and Panamanian Chief of Government Omar Torrijos signed the Panama Canal Treaty and Neutrality Treaty on September 7, 1977. This agreement relinquishes American control over the canal by the year 2000 and guarantees its neutrality. This ended the old treaty that was signed on May 4, 1904, Panama granting the United States the right to build and operate the canal and control the five miles of land on either side of the water passage in exchange for annual payments.)*

We entered the locks from the Atlantic side. Our cruise did not continue on through to

the Pacific. We turned around and sailed back through the locks from Gatun Lake, but locks operate on the same principle through the next leg of the Canal. We ent through three locks which raised our ship 85 feet to enter Gatun Lake, each lock raising us about 28 feet. Small electric locomotives called "mules" run on tracks on both sides of the locks. The locomotives run up or down an incline at the end of each chamber to reach the next higher or lower level. Our ship used four mules. Larger ships use more.

The ship's engines were turned off and the mules, with tow lines, pulled us through the locks. After we went into the first chamber, it took about 15 minutes to lower our ship to the next level. Larger ships take less time because it takes less water to fill up the chamber.

When we reached the second level the mules pulled us through and the locks again close. The process is repeated until we reach Gatun Lake.

On the return trip, the procedure was reversed and we were lowered at the same rate. If we had continued on we would have gone through several more locks and about 32 miles across Gatun Lake and another 40 miles through the Canal which flows into the Pacific Ocean.

While we were floating around on Gatun Lake, awaiting our turn in line to make the return trip through the locks, what else was there to do but have a party? You wouldn't believe what the crew did with the promenade deck! When we returned from dinner, our ship was a floating Hawaii. The crew had gone ashore and cut palm fans and we had palm trees, gala lights and Hawaiian music. Everyone was asked to dress in gay Hawaiian costumes if possible, and leis were passed out to all. There was a sumptuous Luau, Hawaiian drinks, participation games and Limbo (which I DID NOT participate in). It was a beautiful evening.

When our turn came to go back through the locks it was pretty late in the night, but most everyone was on deck again to watch the operation. As we entered the Canal, a Canal Pilot came aboard and took charge of the operation. Small electric locomotives called "mules" run on tracks on both sides of the locks. The loco-

tives run down an incline at the end of each chamber to reach the next lower level. Our ship used four mules. Larger ships use more. Before long, we were back on the sea.

Things really seemed to go smoothly with the Canal. Once built, the Panama Canal is considered one of the most trouble-free major engineering feats in history.

Twelfth Day Out - San Blas

We went by launch from our ship to the San Blas Island, for a visit with the Cuna Indians. They still live in their primitive society, at least on the part of the island we saw. It was strictly a tourist attraction, with everyone looking for the almighty American buck. We had a heavy rain that day and it was very muddy. We spent a lot of time in the tents with the Indians. They cooked in open pits, slept in hammocks and dressed in primitive clothes. Many of the boys wore no clothes at all. Many of the women wore very little also. They had many beautiful things to sell and there was a lot of hawking going on. Anyone with a camera was welcome to take pictures for a quarter. One woman had parakeet on her finger. After I snapped the picture she said, "Twenty-five for me and twenty-five for the bird."

Even though they spoke very little English, they certainly understood the American money and had no trouble making change. All of their clothing was beautiful, hand made in what is called reverse appliqué. They also sold panels called molas for decorations. I wish now that I had bought one, because I understand that it's the only place in the world that you can get one.

They were cooking special "native" foods, but I didn't have the "guts" to try them. It was a very interesting day and I hope someday to get back there when it's not raining.

Thirteenth and Fourteenth Days Out - At Sea

We were homeward bound and also sea bound, which was not at all unpleasant. It was a

busy time for the cruise staff, trying to keep over 900 passengers entertained and fed. There came the culmination of the friendship Bingo; the final Horse Race; Bridge contests; Table tennis and all the other contests that had been in progress during the course of the cruise. Trophies were awarded in all categories, making some happy people and some disappointed ones.

There was the usual with an accumulated pot of over \$3,000! I was just as lucky as usual with my gambling. It was a cover-all and the pot was divided between four winners. If I had won that prize I would've taken off on another cruise!

We made landfall back at Port Everglades and cleared Customs. That was actually the only hassle of the whole trip.