

**MEMORIES**

**PINE COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**





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NEUBAUER'S BLACKSMITH SHOP  
submitted by Joe Neubauer

Blacksmithing in the past was literally and figuratively vital to the forging of our nation. Julius Neubauer set up shop in Pine City sometime during the middle 1870's after serving Germany in wars of 1866 and 1870. Aside from combat duties, he was a military blacksmith artificer much needed for the mobility of armies of those days. The property in Pine City was that encompassed by the present liquor store and that part of the parking lot north of the south wall of the liquor store. The brick veneer home was typically German, almost square, part basement, two full stories and steps up to a large attic. A narrow porch platform fronted on the east where Highway 61 was to run. Many circus parades were witnessed here with the clowns, elephants, lions in cages and calliope parading by. A back door with a couple of steps led to a platform upon which were the hand pump for fresh water and wooden water barrel to catch rain water. Early cooking recipes sometimes specified soft water, preferably and necessarily strained as my first biology interests were the mosquito wrigglers in this barrel. Soft water was also preferred for washing clothes.

The house sat where the southeast corner of the liquor store is. To the west was a large garden, then a building called the warehouse, probably built for over the county merchandising but never used except for storage. This building was about 24 x 40 feet, fronting to the north with full stone masonry basement and two stories above. Right up against this warehouse stood the timber and plank storage building about 20 x 30 feet in size. This building contained the large bandsaw with the narrow blade of about 22 feet in circumference, only two wheel, used for sawing things like sled runners out of Brunswick road white oak planks. To the southwest was the barn and north of this an open space containing wagon tire setting paraphernalia. Next came the blacksmith shop and then about five feet to the wagon and sleigh making shop. Both about 24 x 32 feet with a west door on the blacksmith shop and an east door on the wagon shop to get access to each other as the iron work had to be made in the blacksmith shop and installed in the wagon shop.

Julius died during WWI and son Albert continued. In sixty years, this operation reached its hey-day before WWI and declined after the war to extinction in the 1930's. Buildings were gradually torn down and eventually what was to be done could be managed from the blacksmith shop proper. My father was a master craftsman and fully recognized as such. No degree of skill could forestall the economic ravages of no more logging, drought, depression, hardware merchandising and the automobile. Progress is now measured by a liquor store and a parking lot.

COOK BOOKS OF THE PAST  
By Ann Vach

Given the selection of cookbooks now available, the modern cook finds no difficulty in preparing various appetizing dishes. The cupboard is filled with a large selection of ingredients, spices, herbs, and other accouterments or they can be readily purchased at the local supermarket. In the cookbooks of the past, a person could not only find instructions for preparing pickled pigs feet, fish, hickory nut cake, cookies, or steamed sweet pudding, but she could also find a formula to cure wrinkles, to make soap, to cure pain, and to remedy a cough.

Most recipe instructions read "a dash or pinch of salt" "sugar to taste" "lard the size of an egg or a ball." Of course, ovens in those days did not have temperature regulators, so recipes gave instructions about oven, temperature in general terms, such as, "do not have your oven too hot." If the cook had a wood



burning oven the test was if the cook's hand could be held in the oven for 20 to 25 seconds, it was a "quick" oven, meaning a very hot oven. If the cook was planning to bake bread, the oven needed to be moderate, so the test was to be able to keep the hand in the oven for 35 to 40 seconds. This was a "moderate oven." If the recipe called for a "slow" oven, the cook was presumably able to keep her hand in the oven for 50-60 seconds without the hand turning to charcoal.

Miss Beecher's Domestic Recipe Book, published in the later 1800's instructed cooks to, "Tie up your hair so that none can fall, put on a long-sleeved apron, and have your kitchen in order." Her cookbook required following the instructions exactly and she stated her rules for better housekeeping.

Miss Beecher's comments dramatized the merits of bread making. She noted that "breadmaking may be drudgery"...but it is worse drudgery to have sickly children and a grumpy husband, made so by having all the nerves of their stomachs rasped with sour heavy bread, the fault of a negligent housewife.

Miss Beecher's cookbook was not made for my family, since many times we did not have ingredients required. So, we substituted an ingredient or two, and the recipe became ours. Our breadmaking required a sour dough starter, notwithstanding Miss Beecher's negative attitude about the same!

We lived miles from town, and over the winter months, only a trip, or maybe two, to town were made. Many times supplies were exhausted and substitutions were used. In bread-making, a substitution for yeast was sour dough starter, which was made from the last of the yeast, lukewarm water, sugar and enough flour to make a light and foamy batter. This was placed in a warm place to rise. Part of this mixture was placed in a jar, sealed and stored in a cool place, such as the basement, for the next batch of breadmaking. Salt, lukewarm water, sugar and flour were added to the remaining mixture.

This was kneaded smooth to an elastic dough, which was stored in a warm place to rise. It was then shaped into loaves and allowed to rise again. Finally, it was baked one hour in a medium oven. When it was time to make the next batch of bread, the sour dough starter would be brought out of storage, more hot water, sugar and flour would be added to it, and again a part of the mixture would be saved for the next bread making.

The town church women would make a cookbook for their church picnics, which would contain their favorite recipes or helpful hints of every day methods of cleaning utensils or clothing. The country housewife would exchange her recipe or ideas with her neighbors at gatherings. Recipes would be written on scraps of paper, the backs of calendars, or whatever paper could be found. Some were tied with a string of ribbon.

Rinds of oranges or lemons were grated, dried, and stored in jars for later use as flavoring in cakes or cookies. Home dried fruits, like prunes, raisins and apples were used in cakes, pies or cookies. Fried bread dough or biscuits were the quick bread of the day.

Meat was stored by canning. Pork was fried and covered with lard, then stored in crocks. Over the summer, venison was stored by washing it and placing it in a large wooden barrel. A brine of salt, vinegar, spices and water was poured over the venison. A deep pit was made on the north side of a building, which was lined with straw, and the barrel of venison was lowered into the pit with ropes. The barrel was covered tightly and straw was placed over the covered barrel. When the meat was needed, the barrel was uncovered and raised to the surface. The needed amount was taken, and the barrel was lowered and covered until the next time. The venison was soaked overnight before it was used. When



the supply of venison was exhausted, fresh venison was hunted and a fresh brine was made.

Acres of potatoes were planted, and large gardens were a necessity. Potatoes, carrots, rutabagas and cabbage were stored for winter use in root cellars or basements. Sauerkraut was made in large barrels. Lard was rendered for use in frying and baking. Most farmers had rye and wheat ground for flour.

A 1907 cookbook has special instructions for drowning, sunstroke, poisoning, and other emergencies. A few of the hints found in that tattered book included the following:

BURNS AND SCALDS - Cover with cooking soda and lay wet cloths over it.

CINDER IN THE EYE - Roll soft paper up like a lamplighter and wet the tip to remove the cinder. Rub the other eye.

MAD DOG OR SNAKE BITE - Tie a cord tight above the wound. Suck the wound and cauterize with caustic or white-hot iron at once or cut out adjoining parts with a sharp knife.

COUGH - Put onion juice on teaspoon of sugar.

POISONS - (1) Send for a physician; (2) Induce vomiting by tickling the throat with a feather or a finger; (3) Drink hot water, strong mustard and water, sweet oil, whites of eggs or soap suds.

A long list of actions to be taken to aid a drowning person was given, and the reader was advised not to give up too soon. The cookbook even included a death test. "Hold a mirror to the mouth, if living, moisture will gather. Push a pin into the flesh, if dead, the hole will remain, if alive it will close up."

We cherished the old cookbooks of the past, for their helpful hints and remedies that helped us daily in our crude way of life.

#### WASH DAY AT THE BIG SPRING

By Douglas Mahnkey, Branson, Missouri

I was eight years old the year we moved to an old farm place south of Kirbyville in Taney County, Missouri. It was a dry summer. The well furnished barely enough water for drinking and limited household use.

The chore of doing the family washing was solved in pioneer fashion. Father loaded the big black kettle, the zinc tubs, the washboard, and a wooden bench onto the wagon and moved the whole kit and kaboodle the half mile to the big spring under the hill. He laid large stones in a circle and set the kettle on them so a fire could be built under and around it. He then strung the clothesline among the chinquapin and scrub oak.

The spring of clear water came from a limestone bluff. The little stream ran over smooth stones and shortly cascaded over a rock cliff about twelve feet high. Beneath the cliff stood a pool of bright water big enough for small children to bathe and paddle in. Shade was plentiful and nothing disturbed the scene except once in a while when a traveler passed on the country road some fifty yards to the west.

Mother prepared food and father took all of us in the big wagon down to the spring. My sister, Roberta, and brother, Reggie, were younger than I. Father drove on to the field for his day's work.

I helped mother fill the big kettle with water from the spring and gathered wood for the fire. We soon had water boiling for washing. Father had set the tubs on the wooden bench against a big cedar tree. Mother washed and scrubbed our



clothes and by mid-morning, the lines among the trees were gay with bright-colored calico dresses and shirts. Father's overalls and blue shirts added dignity and strength to the array.

Our noon meal at the big spring under the trees highlighted a merry day. Mother raked hot coals from around the kettle and prepared warm food for us. Sometimes she began early and boiled a pot of beans and made hoe-cakes on the fire. Mother spread a red checked tablecloth on the clean white limestone near the spring and called father in from the fields. Soon we were all hunkered around the red tablecloth, hungry as bears, our plates filled with plain but wonderful food. The dogs, Colonel and Rex, waited patiently nearby for a crust of bread to be thrown to them.

The meal finished, father and mother sat in the shade and visited quietly as father smoked his pipe. Looking back now, I realize how young they were and the burdens they were carrying: the growing family to feed and clothe, taxes to pay, and no land of their own. There was no government help in those days. The terrible drought plagued the Ozark farmer that year and the future must have appeared dark indeed. However, we children paddling in the bright waters of the spring branch, were not troubled and the long summer day was all fun for us.

After mother had placed the lunch things in the basket and hung out the last of the clothes, she took us for walks in the woods or down the little spring branch. She had little formal education but was an avid reader. She could identify for us the wild flowers, the shrubs, and the trees. She told us wonderful stories of faraway places. She instilled in us a love of God and our country and a pride in ourselves.

Along about sundown, the rumble of the wagon told us that father was coming from the fields to pick us up. The dried clothes had all been folded in two neat stacks. Soon the clean clothes, we children, and the lunch basket were all in the wagon. Stepping nimbly, mother climbed upon the hub of the front wheel of the wagon and then, quick as a flash with a hand from father, was on the high springseat beside him, and off we went up the hill.

A rural electric cooperative brought electricity to this old farm place many years later. No one has to wash at the big spring anymore. However, I do hope the mothers of today will find time for taking walks with their children, to play with them, and love them, as those mothers of long ago.

FAMILY NAME - ESPOINTOUR/BEYER

by Elizabeth Espointour

Anthony Espointour      Born Dec. 20, 1888, France  
                                 Died Dec. 31, 1952, Minneapolis, MN  
                                 Interned Askov Cemetery

Elsa Beyer Espointour, Born Dec. 19, 1891, Germany  
                                 Died July 2, 1967, Moose Lake, MN  
                                 Interned Askov Cemetery

Walter Beyer              Born Nov. 15, 1887, Germany  
                                 Died Jan. 8, 1963, Sandstone, MN  
                                 Interned Vilstad Cemetery

Catherine Beyer          Born Jan. 31, 1854, Denmark/Germany  
                                 Died Jan. 17, 1933, Bruno, MN  
                                 Interned Vilstad Cemetery



Elsa Beyer Espointour's family was from Germany. Her mother, Catherine, was born in what was at that time Denmark, Schlesvig-Holstein. When she was 6 years old, this became a permanent part of Germany. Her father, Karl Beyer was from Germany, the Berlin area. They were married and raised 7 children. Five boys and two girls. Karl Jr., Hugo, Arthur, Walter, Paula, Elsa and Arnold. In the early 1900's, Walter went to art and design school, from 1904 to 1907. After that he traveled. He took ships around Italy and Africa. Shortly after, in 1909, he came to America and settled down in New York working as a designer. In 1914, the First World War broke out in Germany. Karl Jr., Hugo, Arthur and Arnold all were drafted into the army and served in WWI. As was my mother's fiance. The war years were very difficult for people in all European countries. Food was extremely short and all other hardships that war entails were suffered by all. Karl Jr., Hugo, Arthur and Arnold all survived the War. Arnold was injured and lost a leg. Elsa's fiance did not survive the war. The war ended in 1918, at which time the German dollar became worthless. During the war years Karl, Sr. in his 60's, passed away from a heart condition. The remaining children were married and raising families in Germany, with the exception of Elsa who was single and working. Walter was employed as a rug designer in New York during the war years.

Shortly after the end of the war he had left New York for Minnesota. One of the reasons was a condition that was diagnosed as leading to TB, and the Dr. recommended that he get out of the City and into the fresh air. This prompted him to come to southern Minnesota and seek work as a farm helper. By 1919 he had purchased a 40 acre parcel near Bruno, MN and moved onto it, building a small cabin and making his living by farming. After WWI with all the hardships and money crash in Germany, he felt his mother should come to America to live with him. She was 65 years old at this time. Elsa did not feel that her mother should make the trip alone, so in November 1919, she accompanied her mother to New York, and then by train to Minneapolis and Bruno. Elsa was 27 years old at this time. Her first impressions of America were that she would have returned to Germany after seeing New York, but couldn't because of the money crash.

Elsa was raised in Germany in a middle class family with the advantages of that day. They were raised in Berlin and had the advantages of what city life in Europe at the time had to offer, such as education and cultural opportunities. Elsa was somewhat of a rebel and a feminist for her time. She went to school after public schooling for office management and worked for several years in Germany. Her father was a traditionalist and didn't believe she should or could continue her education. She clashed with him in this area, and showed her good German stubbornness in finishing her schooling against his wishes and belief that she could do it. She lived away from home in her own apartment in a city some distance from Berlin. She was very independent.

Bruno was a mixed immigrant community. There were several other German families. Elsa decided that she very much wanted to learn the English language and went to the local school and read all she could. After a couple of years she was able to speak quite well and went to Duluth to seek employment. She ended up becoming a Governess for some of the very wealthy families in Duluth, including the Hartley's and the Congdon's. There she met friends and became acquainted with American life. After several years she decided to go to Chicago to take a job as Governess for a family there. It was during this time that she met Anthony Espointour through mutual friends. Their courtship lasted approximately 6 months and they were married in Sept., 1928. In 1929, Judy was born. They lived in Chicago for about a year, as this was at the beginning of the depression and living and jobs became very difficult. Tony got a job in Minneapolis, which Elsa wanted because it brought them closer to "home", since her mother had a stroke and was not well. In June of 1932 Maurice was born, and in Jan. 1933 her mother died. She had wanted to be buried on the farm of her son Walter, where she was living, and this wish was carried out. In 1990, when



the "homestead" was sold out of the family, her grave was moved to the Vilstad Cemetery between Askov and Bruno.

Anthony Espointour came from a poorer family. A rural farming family near Versailles. His mother died at an early age, when he was about 8 years old. His sister, several years his senior, raised him. She married and had one daughter. Anthony spent 7 years in the French army, 4 of them during the entire World War I. He was in the artillery division. Very few men survived four years in the French army during the war, and he came out of this experience very much a pacifist. Although when it came time for his son to enter military service during the Korean conflict, he was accepting of it.

At this time work dried up in Minneapolis and Tony was offered a job in Dayton, Ohio, I (Elizabeth) was born in Dec. 1934 and by June the work had become non-existent there as well. They decided to come to the Bruno area and try to farm. For a few months they lived with Walter, but this did not work out good. They also purchased 40 acres in what was part of rural Askov. Walter and Tony started building a house at this time while we lived a couple of miles away in a rented home.

Askov had been a Danish community until the depression caused many people to lose their farms and land, and the land then was sold to any comers. Our house was put up in the summer of 1936. My first memory is the following winter when I would have been 4 years old. I believe it must have been later winter as the kittens had been born shortly before. We had two cows at the time, and one day both my folks were out milking and I was sitting by the hollowed out hay where the kittens were and playing with them. We also had a rooster that my sister had teased unmercifully over the year. I believe she was afraid of chickens and the rooster, but apparently had teased it nevertheless. At any rate, I loved all animals of all types and was totally happy if I had any animal around and especially to play with. To this day I remember the rooster coming up to me as I sat on the floor playing with the kittens, he looked me over and cocked his head from side to side and walked up to me and pecked me hard in the lip. This of course resulted in a scream out of me, followed by blood dripping down my mouth and face. That was followed by my Dad running what was probably less than a 4 minute mile a couple of times around the outside of the barn until the rooster was caught and had his neck rung. We had him for supper the next day, I think. I also recall my swollen lip for a few days.

We were poor during this time, and my folks worked very hard and worried about day to day living. Us kids, and maybe me even more because of my younger age, didn't know it though. We always had enough to eat, as we raised large gardens, raised chickens and cows, my dad cut wood for the fire, and my mother sewed clothes. So we were well fed, warm and comfortable, in spite of the hardships they had in providing it. We also had the advantage at that time of not having TV to show us what the rest of the world may have had (or not had), and all our neighbors seemed to have about the same, so we didn't have any way of knowing we were poor. In our home we also had the advantage of education and cultural opportunities and exposure, even during these very lean years. My dad played the mandolin and we had a phonograph with many beautiful records. My most memorable one being Ava Maria, and to this day I still love to hear that song. Reading was a favorite pastime of both my folks and soon became one of mine as well.

We did not, as most of our neighbors, have such things as electricity or running water. We did have a pump and a good well on the porch of the house, and water was brought in with pails and a large (probably 30 gallon) crock in the kitchen was filled where we used the water from. At this time the upstairs of our house was not insulated and in the winter we all slept downstairs, wrapped up in blankets. I also remember in the winter when skim ice would form on the crock



by morning because the house got that cold during the night. It didn't bother me as I was well wrapped up in my blankets and it was my folks that had to get up in the morning and stoke the fire.

FAMILY NAME: Beyer, Walter

After his mother arrived from Germany, Walter farmed in the Bruno area, Catherine kept house, and Elsa worked as a governess in Duluth.

Walter always planted and "grew" too much. He would sell what he could of the excess and his mother would can the rest and give it away, to the chagrin of Elsa, who thought her mother worked too hard.

Walter's early neighbors were Evan and Bess Hammer, Fred and Gertie Saastad, S.O. and Christlanna Saastad, Snelsons, Wilhelm Pearsons, August Hanson, Jackmans, Claude Hammers and Prathers. They worked together and visited together. Later neighbors were Albert and Myra Petersen, Harry Pearson, William Bull, Mayfields and Duncans.

In the early years, Walter butchered and canned his horse. Although Walter was not one to push his ideas onto other people, and would not have decided that his neighbors had a hard time containing themselves when Fred Saastad said, "Whoaa, Nellie!" at the dinner table while threshing at Walter's place.

In 1924, Walter had his leg cut nearly off when he was standing between his horse and mower and the horse moved. He was in the hospital in Sandstone for two weeks. His house also burned. His neighbors were a great help to him and his mother during those times.

After his mother's death, Walter farmed until about 1952. He canned his own vegetables and meat. Once he raised capon chickens and when the market fell, he canned them all and ate them for several years. His homemade rye bread was delicious.

After retiring from farming he began a greenhouse business. He also kept bees and sold honey. He continued the nursery business until cancer forced him to quit two years before his death in 1963.

In later years when he wasn't so busy, he began painting again. Though his work was good, his later works did not compare with his early paintings which he brought with him from Germany. He loved flowers, and planted more than he could take care of properly. He also had time to take up photography, set up a darkroom and developed his own pictures which he took on many trips to Kettle River. He was a great reader and self educated. What may have seemed like a lonely existence to others, was not for Walter. He had good friends always and a good relationship with his sister and her family.

Walter never married and leaves no descendants.

### MY MOTHER

by Nina Rupp

My Mother's parents were from Prussia and although this was never stated, I think they were, not necessarily well off, but not really poor either. I remember my sisters telling me that when they were young and visited them, Grandpa and Grandma Doege had peacocks in the front yard - because that's what they had in the old country. At any rate, after Grandpa's parents died, the inheritance, whether by custom or by law, went to the oldest son, which Grandpa was not. If he didn't chose to live under his older brother, his other choice was the Army - or go to America - which is what he chose.



My mother, Emma Wanda Marie Doege, was born in LeSeuer on February 4, 1884. Shortly thereafter, Grandpa moved his family by covered wagon to Colorado, sight unseen. (Story was that Grandpa had heard you could plow a mile without being stopped by a tree - which was quite true!) My Grandparents house was a sod hut. What they did for water, I don't know. My mother said that she and her brother had to go out and pick cow "chips" (buffalo "chips") to collect for fuel. She also said they were so hungry for sweets that in the fall they would eat the seed pod of cactus for its sweetness, even getting cactus thorns in their mouths. The first years my grandparents lived there, they apparently had enough water to raise what my mother called "broom corn." The drought made that no longer an option, so my grandfather went to work in the gold mine. A fire in the mine ended that so they headed back to Minnesota. They had a cow for milk and a horse. My mother, then about 11, and her brother, 4 years younger, were to herd the cow and take turns riding the horse. My mother felt sorry for her young brother so she walked more than she rode. So she walked more than half the way from Colorado to Minnesota that summer.

She said she was able only to go to the 3rd grade in school. I assume that was probably when they came back to Mankato. That was enough schooling to enable her to enjoy reading, to successfully keep her family fed and clothed on a minimal income, and to have an almost desperate struggle to have them get as much schooling as possible, to make them realize the blessings of whatever education they could have.

In the early '40's, my uncle had to go to their old home area to have an old neighbor, who remembered him, sign a statement of his birth, which he needed for Social Security. He asked my Dad, and sister and me to go with him. Well there were not trees, nor much of anything else! There were deep arroyos, dry hills, some cactus (broad flat leaves with yellow flowers). Should you care to locate it - Yuma County, Eastern side of Colorado adjoining Nebraska and Kansas. Wray was the County Seat on the North Fork of the Republican River about 10 miles west of the Nebraska border and 25 miles northwest of St. Francis, Kansas. Between 30 or 40 miles south of Wray is a small white building and granite marker for the Beecher Island Battle Ground, an Indian battle, I guess, and I seem to remember that was about 6 miles south of their land. The home of the very gracious people we went to see had been built by his father. I don't remember the outside, but the inside walls were simply whitewashed and it was so neat and clean. I also remember a lovely China cabinet with beautiful dishes which contrasted sharply with the simplicity of the rest of the house. There were lilies blooming outside and a big mulberry tree loaded with fruit stood almost protectively next to the house.

I also remember when I was still going to school, thinking probably there would never be a time when one life time would be able to see such DRASTIC CHANGES from covered wagon days to airplanes and cars taking one on journeys which once took weeks - even months - now just days or even hours. Well I guess I was wrong.

#### MY PARENTS

By Bertha Jorgensen

My father, Tom Van Dyke, was born in Wageningen, The Netherlands, on November 22, 1885. There were eleven children in the family and at that time all the property went to the eldest son, Therefore, my father decided to go to the United States. He arrived in Twin Brooks, South Dakota, in 1912 and worked on a farm there. In 1913 he returned to The Netherlands, met and married my Mother, Grace Bertha DeVries, on February 6, 1914. The government did not recognize a church ceremony so they had a civil ceremony followed by a church ceremony. My mother was facinated with the adventure of going to "America", so they boarded a ship for 30 days and arrived in the United States. My mother was sea sick for



the entire time on the ocean, so it was not a pleasant trip for her. When they arrived in the United States they took a train to Twin Brooks, South Dakota. My mother had never lived in the country, because she was born and raised in the City, where there was indoor plumbing, street cars and close neighbors. She thought the wooden houses were barns because she had always lived in a brick house, as everyone in The Netherlands did. She did not speak any English and none of the people she met spoke her language. In order to learn English she would go into the grocery store and ask the grocer what the various things in the store were called and thus she was able to communicate and speak English. In those days there were no radios, TVs, or phonographs, so she would beat on kettles in order to have some kind of sound.

She had been trained as a seamstress so she was able to sew for the neighbors and did a great deal of reading. (as a child I can remember her reading a book in an evening.) On January 4, 1915, my oldest brother, William, was born. He weighed 3 1/2 pounds so she carried him constantly to keep him warm and was also so happy to have someone when my father worked away from home. There wasn't money to purchase the baby baptism attire, so she cut up her wedding dress and made a christening outfit for him.

After a few years in South Dakota, they heard the farming was more profitable in Iowa so they placed their belongings on a wagon and drove the horses to Rock Rapids, Iowa. (There were no cars in those days.) On the trip to Iowa a drawer on one of the dressers fell out, without their knowledge, and all of their important papers and photographs were lost. On June 7, 1920, my brother John was born in Rock Rapids, Iowa.

My father had a sister living in Bakersfield, California. She was the only other family member of the family of eleven to leave The Netherlands. She wrote and told them she could get my dad a really good job as an Engineer in the oil fields in Bakersfield. So they sold out and took the train to California. He did get a very good job as Aunt Ella had said. They were able to live well on half of his wages and save the other half. But in those days there were no air conditioners and the heat was so intense they could not handle it. My mother spent her days in the bathtub and did her housework at night, when it was cooler. Because of the heat they decided to go back to Iowa, so they purchased a new Model T Ford, a tent and camping supplies and drove back to Iowa. Those cars did not have fuel pumps and were gravity fed, so when there was a high hill, they had to back up the hill in order for the gasoline to get to the motor. It took three weeks for them to get back to Iowa. They rented a farm southeast of Sheldon, Iowa, and on August 23, 1925, I, Bertha, their only daughter, was born. In 1933, after the depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt came up with a farm program and each farmer was required to slaughter his pigs. Well, my dad had more pigs than he had ever had, so decided to quit farming and move into Archer, Iowa, in 1934. Since Bill was so interested in trucking they started a trucking business, which proved very successful. When my brother John graduated from High School in 1938, the funds were not available to further his education, so he joined the Navy. During the 2nd World War he was asked to re-enlist and my brother Bill was drafted, so my dad continued the trucking business. My brother John's ship was destroyed in North Africa. He was in the water for several days with a back injury before he was rescued. He was in Oran, where he met his future wife, Marie, who was French. Her father had fled from France because of the war and took his family to North Africa, but they did not escape the war there either.

During the depression I had two dresses and they were worn to school and church. We always changed our clothes as soon as we got home from school. Our shoes were purchased several sizes too large. By the time we grew into them the soles had holes in them, so we would place cardboard in them. There just wasn't money to purchase new ones.



We got our first radio in 1929, but could only listen for an hour or so, because it was battery operated. The battery had to be taken to town to be re-charged and we only went to town once a week.

There are many memories about the depression days. The one that comes to mind is a Christmas when my brother John rode his bike in the fresh snow to the main road and back about the width of sled runners, so I would think Santa came during the night. (I only realized the tracks were made by his bike after I became an adult.) I had one orange in my stocking. We did not get much for Christmas because again there just wasn't any money. Most of our gifts were made by our parents. They would work on them after we had gone to bed, so we would not know about them until Christmas Day. The only candy we had, was the bag of candy we would get in church on Christmas Eve.

A BACKWARD GLANCE AS THE DOORS OF THE RURAL SCHOOLS CLOSE  
by Ann Vach

Memories of years spent in our rural schools as pupils, teachers and parents, creep back as ghosts through the closing doors. To many communities, the rural school was the only formal education we had. In spite of its many drawbacks and disadvantages, it was a part of a way of life, and thus, tugs at the heart strings when we know it is no more.

We shiver as we recall the (pre-bus) days when we were bundled in scarves, mittens, long stockings (wrapped inside with paper to keep the warmth within) and overshoes to face the wintry weather on the long hike to school on drifted, unplowed roads, alone or with your schoolmates, had a therapy value missing today. It was a time to forget or a time to reflect on the pleasures or frustrations of the day as you hurried or dawdled along the road under the open sky.

Biology, science and art were silent teachers along the way. None knew better than a rural teacher or child, when the first May flower, cowslips or violets bloomed. Pussy willows, cocoons and frog eggs hatched and grew in quart jars on the window sills as reminders of life's every changing round. There were many firsts: The first robin (in spring), first blade of grass turning green, first dandelion, in fall we wait for the first yellow pumpkin, first southward flight of geese, and later the first ice over streams and first snowfall. So many firsts and also many lasts.

Eight grades in one room has been called a calamity by some, but there was much good in this assortment of ages. Older pupils learned self reliance and concern for the younger ones as well as the pride in being trusted with chores to help the teacher. How much remedial teaching was done in a rural school each day! How many older pupils first "caught on" to the phonetic sounds and "families" as they watched them being taught to the first and second graders. If we missed fractions or long division due to days of illness, we learned by watching our classmates or the grade lower. We presented our work on the black board. Beauty of words and sounds as the older children recited from Longfellow, Whittier and Lowell always left a lasting interest in poetry in many of us younger children.

From the walls of every rural school hung pictures of Washington and Lincoln. Respect for our flag, chosen leaders and law was expected and taught in those days. We truly loved our country and were proud to be a part of it.

The dipper in the water pail, (frozen in winter, if not emptied the night before) was used by all children. Later the dipper was used to fill the row of tin (named) cups. The chore of filling the water pail from the outside pump was



usually done by the older boys. Later the crockery container replaced the water pail and dipper. An old wash basin and soap and towel were placed near the water pail.

Two outdoor toilets, swing or (teeter) seesaw were a part of rural school needs. Most schools were built on an acre of land. Many times donated by the farmer who wanted education in his community and for his children.

The syrup pails were used to carry our lunches. They were lined up on shelves in the entry hall, weather permitting. In cold months the pails were placed near the pot belly stove. On rare occasions a girl would own a decorative (purchased) lunch pail - she was the envy of every girl in all the grades in school. Boys thought that was being a sissy, so the syrup pail was the only way to carry their lunch. Lunch consisted of everything from pancakes, potatoes, soup, and very rarely a fresh fruit. "Pint Jar" method of bringing food from home was popular. It was heated in water on the stove, was forerunner of our hot lunch program in those days.

Kerosene lamps and their reflectors, gasoline lanterns or lamps with fragile mantels had their place on walls or ceilings in every rural school. They were never lit to help us study, only for special occasion such as basket or pie socials or Christmas and Halloween programs. How exciting the school looked with its windows gleaming at night and inside flickering shadows from the light and warmth of excitement. Christmas program night there were teams of horses blowing steam from their nostrils pulling sleighs. Children and their mothers covered with blankets and robes sat on hay, their feet warmed by heated bricks or flat-irons. Father sat in front with his horse-hide overcoat and gauntlets as he guided the horses through the dark. When they arrive at school, father buckled heavy horse blankets over the team to keep them from being chilled during the long wait for the program to be over.

Inside, excitement ran high as we all were dressed in our Sunday best and got ready to recite and sing or act the plays we had practiced so long. The stage which had been set up by the big boys (sometimes the fathers), took up one end of the room. It was covered with rugs to muffle the sounds of excited children jumping on and off the stage before and after each act. Lucky were the two tallest children for they were always chosen to pull the curtains made from sheets, which children would bring from home for this big occasion. I could never bring a sheet. One reason was that we just had enough sheets for our beds and the second reason was that our sheets were made out of flour or feed sacks. From the smallest preschooler lisping their piece, to the self-conscious eighth grade boy who would have a part this special evening of the year. Usually from 35 to 45 pupils would close the long program and would await for Santa to arrive with his sack of goodies purchased by the teacher, (sometimes the school board paid part of the expense). It was hard to know which shown the brightest -- the eyes of the children, the light of the tree (candles), or the glow in the hearts of our parents, as they watched us waiting for Santa to give us our treat -- which was a bag filled with candy, peanuts, nuts, popcorn ball and apple. The teacher was not forgotten by the children, as each family scraped their pennies to buy a present for the teacher to be given by their children. After the last package was given to the teacher by Santa, we all were bundled on the sleigh and taken home. After father unharnessed the team, and came inside we sat around with our sacks emptied on the table. Mother and father helped us to end a perfect and happy night, by enjoying our treat from our teacher. After a two week vacation, sad memories followed -- taking down the Christmas tree at home the first day back at school. Recalling the cold and stormy days that followed, there were days when only five or seven pupils and the teacher came to school. On those days we would go home about two o'clock. Those were sad days. You waited for your classmates to be back to school so "forts" out of snow could be made by two sides for attack fired by a mountain of snow balls. Again all 35



to 45 pupils had a part. I truly believe that January and February were months dreaded by every rural school child and teacher because attendance was small and we missed our classmates. School picnics in spring was another day of gathering. Fathers left their field work to join in the potluck dinner. There was lemonade by the milk can full and ice cream -- all you could eat (another treat from the teacher). Men folks played ball, while the teacher conducted races and games for the small fry and sometimes for the parents. Mothers talked in genial groups and cleared away the debris of the day.

Much can be written in favor of the courageous men and women who tackled to teach in a one room school with 35 to 45 pupils. They were overworked and underpaid. They often walked more than a mile from their boarding places to school, did their own janitor work or paid the older pupils to help. In winter months they would enter the cold school room only to find a stove with a small flame or the fire completely out. The temperature in the room was below freezing. The teacher would try to make it comfortable before the first child arrived.

Teachers were respected, often they stayed many years in a school and devoted their lives and molded the habits, character and education of an entire family generation. They grew to know the parents with their problems and shortcomings and were able to cope with the children's problems because she understood and was a family friend as well as their children's teacher. Every rural teacher received help from the county superintendent and supervising teachers. Young teachers were encouraged and guided in methods of teaching. Older teachers were brought up-to-date methods. Visits from county superintendents or supervisors required good behavior from all of us in school. Teacher had to be proud of us -- we hoped?

As the rural schools, as we knew and loved them, pass into history, our gratitude goes to all from the past to the present who made the rural school what it was. May the new school system, as it replaces our smallest form of democratic government, carry on the role that this government "of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from this earth."



## A DIFFERENT WORLD-CLASS REUNION

Submitted by Ann Vach

Class reunions can be a competitive sport. At early reunions classmates compete with each other about jobs and incomes; at the 25th, it's spouses and children. After that they brag about their grandchildren and vacation homes while regarding with envy or glee classmates' waistlines, hairlines and wrinkle-lines.

It is said that there are Three Ages (of women). Youth, middle age, and "you haven't changed". However change is the name of the game. Consider, graduates of the Class of 1936 were before the pill and population explosion, which, inexplicably, went hand in hand - so to speak.

We were before television. Before penicillin, polio shots, antibiotics and frisbees. Before frozen food, nylon, dacron, xerox, Kinsey. We were before radar, fluorescent lights, credit cards and ball point pens. For us, time-sharing meant togetherness, not computers; a chip meant a piece of wood, hardware meant hardware, and software wasn't even a word.

We were before pantyhose and drip-dry clothes. Before ice makers and dishwashers, clothes dryers, freezers and electric blankets. Before Hawaii and Alaska became states. Before men wore long hair and earrings and women wore toxedoes.

We were before Leonard Bernstein, yogurt, Ann Landers, plastics, hair dryers and the 40 hour week and the minimum wage. We got married first and then lived together. How quaint can you be.

Pizzas, Cheerios, frozen orange juice, instant coffee and MacDonald's were unheard of. We thought fast food was what you ate during Lent.

In our day coke was something you drank, grass was mowed, and pot was something you cooked in. We were before day-care centers, house-husbands, baby-sitters, computer dating, dual careers and computer marriages.

In our time there were 5 and 10 cent stores where you could buy things for 5 and 10 cents. For just one nickel you could make a phone call or buy a coke, or buy enough stamps to mail one letter and 2 postcards. You could buy a new Chevy Coupe for \$850, but who could afford that in 1936? Nobody. A pity, too because gas was 20 cents a gallon.

If anyone in those days had asked us to explain CIA, MS, NATO, UFO, NFL, SATs, JFK, BMS, ERA or IUD, we would have said "alphabet soup". We were not before the difference between the sexes was discovered, but we were before sex changes. We just made do with what we had. And we were the last generation that was so dumb as to think you needed a husband to have a baby.

Is there any doubt in your minds now that 50 years have elapsed since we thought we had it all?

## THE GREAT DEPRESSION

taken from Stories by Rita Van Amber

During the 30's, which were some of the most difficult times in recorded history, there was little cash, especially for the farmers or anyone in a like situation. My mother used to pride herself on trading in her eggs for an equal amount of groceries, seldom if ever, having to come up with any cash.

As I grew older, I appreciate more than ever, the difficult times she must have encountered, trying to make ends meet.



Paying for a farm during a depression, as well as dust dry years, would serve as a hard task master for the very hardiest.

She used to tell me that one of her lowest points, was when she had to can (preserve) weeds. The garden didn't do well at all during the driest time, but the weeds, lamb's quarters, still flourished, so she canned them, for something on the cellar shelves against the winter coming on.

We must have eaten a lot of lamb's quarters in those hard years. Yet she was such an innovative cook that to this day I still love those greens.

My husband had eaten dandelion greens as a kid in those same dreadful years, but had never heard of eating lamb's quarters, which are much more mellow. But he came to relish them, and now each spring reminds me to hunt for some for a meal.

He also tells me that one year during the 30's there were no presents for Christmas for lack of money, and he spent a sad Christmas eve entertaining himself cutting pictures from old magazines. I could cry at the thought. I guess my parents had more imagination, for we perhaps were poorer than that, but for one of my most memorable Christmases I received a tiny cupboard made from three wooden cheese boxes, and inside the little shelves were doll dresses my mother cut out for me to sew together by hand.

Just by that little gesture alone, she wisely gave me something to do, rather than sew them herself, thereby stretching out Christmas a little more.

I never knew we were poor. My mother had original ideas both in cooking and in sewing, that I wasn't aware that we ever went without. Oh, the difference in "making do" and making a "to do" in what you don't have. A positive attitude made all the difference in your outlook.

As a result of her maintaining a balanced diet of foods she could magically make taste so good, my brothers and myself have for the most part, maintained healthy bodies all these years. We've never had a broken bone, never been seriously ill. And a good share of our good fortune, I'm certain, is due, in part to wise imaginative parents, who did their very best to bring us through unscathed, the bleakest years in history.

Everything was very inexpensive, but no one had any cash flow with which to buy it.

A spool of cotton thread cost 5 cents. A lot of it was needed to sew all those feed bags into wearing apparel and bedding. The bags came in a variety of printed patterns so more than one could be purchased when making clothes for adults or for quilts or other bedding.

We had sheep so we always had wool batts for quilt making, combined with the all cotton feed bags, we had good quilts.

#### THE WARDROBE

All discarded old clothing was recycled into new items. The seams were carefully ripped apart and the pieces washed, ironed and the basic pattern was used on the reverse side. This side was always colorful and looked like new. The basic pattern was used for everything. Generally cut out of newspaper, you made your own changes to suit the style.

Old overalls were made to fit the smaller children and bits and pieces were used to make mittens. They were lined with the bottoms of Grandma's old flannel nightwear. The cuffs were made out of the ribbing of Dad's old socks which



could no longer be mended. The ribbing was extra nice and tight, being made of good quality all-cotton. The wristlets were made long to fit well under the coat sleeves. Long walks to school called for good, warm clothing.

Women helped the men in the fields and with chores. At noon and in the evenings the women also made the meals and did other household work almost never sitting down. The chickens were women's sole responsibility needing feed three times a day. They put many a good meal on the table.

#### THE WAY IT WAS

This compilation is a documentary of the experiences and domestic history of the Great Depression of the 1930's. The time is right for it to be recorded, before it is forgotten. Children, already, don't quite believe it, which is not surprising. This country has changed so dramatically in the past 50 years it is hard to believe we were in such desperate straights so recently.

The present generation cannot begin to understand the strange changes which went through our country at that time; it was a turning point in history.

First banks became worthless. Then businesses and factories closed their doors one after the other when consumer-buying came to a virtual standstill. Farm prices had dropped out of sight and jobs became nonexistent. There was no money flow. The structure of American society had disintegrated.

Unfortunately, the stories one hears about those times are true...we know they are. Our large population of Senior Citizens is that generation, and they remember all too vividly the experiences of that decade of poverty. It was a time when the middle class was reduced to being poor. We had only two classes, the haves and the have-nots.

You are a survivor of the Great Depression if these little ditties ring a bell in your memory: Mairsey doats and dosey doats and little lambs eat ivy; or the three little fiddies and mama fiddy too, fim said the mama fiddy, fim if you can. The latter reminding us of mothers giving pep talks to their children as they went out into the world into a jobless society. People found something to laugh at with the arrival of the light-hearted songs and lyrics.

Then adorable Shirley Temple made her appearance when we needed someone to take the gloom off our daily lives. About this time the Walt Disney characters became popular. Mortimer Mouse soon became a favorite. His name was changed to Mickey and they loved him more.

Our Senior Citizens have every right to be proud of their accomplishments. They pulled our country through World War II and they kept the fighting from our shores. And when they came back they built this country up again from the convalescence of the poverty years and of the war efforts. They didn't stop there: they built other needy countries up as well and put them on their feet. And now this same large population of citizens continue to protect our economy by pouring the dollars they saved into consumer buying, supporting our system from faltering when recessions occur.

This is not a bad record for kids who had to put fresh cardboard in the soles of their shoes every morning to keep from wearing socks out. They only had one set of underwear which had to be washed every evening and hung over the warming oven to dry for the next morning's school.

But, the SALUTE goes to the parents, our elderly now, who weathered the long storm as young men and women. They had the same rosy dreams of a bright future everyone begins their young lives with. Their's was the "epitaph of shattered



dreams", as they called that decade.

While those parents made the best of a bad situation, they still kept their standards high and taught their children strong values, passing on a priceless heritage.