OUR LEGACY

“Echoes of the Past”

by

Laura Wilken Roers

Acknowledgements

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TO. . . John Nelson for the history of the Hockert and Wilken families
TO. . . "The St. Cloud Register" dated September, 1939
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Forward

A word of warning, never open a door unless you know what may lie behind it. So here is a bit of advice. If you are looking for a gem, go to a jeweler; if you are looking for a banquet, go to the Hilton; if you are looking for gossip, go down to the local cafe. But if your desire is for an ordinary "meat and pataters" meal, then you're welcome to stay and enjoy the contents of this book.

How the writing of this book came into fruition lies largely with John Nelson. John and his mother, Millie, were visiting us last summer and my mother, in her usual fashion, was rattling off one story after another of past events. John said, "You should write a book!" Ma was flabbergasted, to say the least. At age 94 to write a book? Well, the winter months are slow in Minnesota and I began to mull over the possibilities of such an undertaking. But as is usually the case, I procrastinated from week to week. The Lenten Season was approaching and I thought this season of perseverance and penance could provide the necessary impetus "to get the ball rolling. " Ma was enthused with the idea too! I also became acutely aware of the circumstances here and that one never knows "how much fuel is left in the tank. " So I began assembling the material and ideas for what I thought would be a monumental task, but instead it proved to be a labor of love. Much credit is due to John Nelson for his excellent and careful sleuthing of the early history of the Hockert and Wilken families. John lives in Alexandria, Virginia and works for the U. S. Government. Because he lives there and is a student of history, he had access to records of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the US Census, and the Library of Congress. So heaps of thanks ,John! Mother was a great storer of past obituaries, news
clippings and retaining old copies of "The St. Cloud Register," our former diocesan newspaper. I wrote most of this material during a four week span. This I say, not to boast or as an excuse, because if errors are discovered, my mea culpa to anyone slighted. I wished to record as much of the past ancestral history of our family so that the reader may have a better and more complete
knowledge as to who we are and where are our roots.

Adeline Wilken Brozek wrote me a few years ago requesting information about Grandpa and Grandma Wilken her grandson needed for a class project. I'm grateful that his younger generation is being exposed to past family history. History is only interesting when it can be connected with the present.

The first part of this book is factual material gleaned from John's findings. The history of William and Bertha, the aunts and uncles and other relatives relies on my mother's

interpretation as she remembers her mother's (Bertha) and father's (William) accounts of events. The years from 1902 onward are true to and written in mother's idiom so that her nieces and nephews can
actually hear her telling these stories and events as if they were sitting beside her on the sofa in our living room.
I had some difficulty with the German expressions. Some of our German has become Americanized which makes the translation even more challenging. Then too, the syntax splinters during the process. It becomes "The farmer threw the cow over the fence some hay. "Father Strasser called this Stearns County German.
There are nine generations of Hockerts either mentioned in the body itself or in the listing in the back of the book. I'm providing four pages for notes at the end of this edition for you to, perhaps, add
memories of your own or to extend the family tree to include the present generation in each individual family. I know the number of offspring are humungous. Charles and LaVerle Wilken had a reunion a few years ago of the descendants of his parents, Carl and Annie, and there were over eighty present.

I wish to thank my mother for repeating to me the stories of her parents and her own personal life's
experiences. Because I had heard these stories on numerous occasions, I was able "to wing" them down without bothering her for each detail. I'm most honored that my mother has carried on the
tradition of the storyteller, a noble profession throughout the history of human kind and popularized in more recent times by such notables as Hans Christian Andersen and the Grimm brothers. And finally, I also wish to thank all my cousins for their contributions and sometimes humorous antics you have provided me to write about. So have fun and good reading to all!

Sincerely yours, James William Roers dated March, 1994

The History of the Hockert Family

How fresh, O Lord how sweet and clean

Are Thy returns! Even as the flowers in spring,

To which, besides their own demean,

The late-past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.

Grief melts away

Like snow in May,

As if there were no such cold thing.

"The Flower" by George Herbert (1593-1633)

These words by the 17th Century poet, Herbert are a fitting prelude to the story of my parents, William Wilken and Bertha Hockert, as this poem vividly suggests the cycle of nature's renewal -death and once again a new birth. A story as old as time itself. A story that will be told and re-told throughout the generations - we mourn the death of a loved one, and rejoice at the birth of a child . . . for "the seed must die that there may be new life. "

The early immigrants had arrived in a new land with its hostile environment. They had left behind relatives, friends, neighbors and the knowledge of community. Their homes were now of rough logs and a dirt floor; a complete contrast to the beautiful homes in Germany. There was little to eat and much hard labor.

Why did these early pioneers sacrifice so much for an uncertain future? Perhaps it was as Tennyson wrote, "To reach beyond one's grasp, or else what is a Heaven for!"

I will begin this story of my parents with a brief account of each families' history, beginning in Germany; how and when they came to America and the common circumstances which brought them together.

The curtain opens on the family of Hockerts, starting back about eight generations. To preserve simplicity, I will pass through the early generations relating to only one child, namely the important name pertaining to the family history. The names of the children were often duplicated, not only from family to family, but even within the immediate family, which would add unneeded confusion for our purpose.

The Hockerts were an old family of Löffelgiesers (spoon casters) from Tintingen, in Madern parish, Saarland. Peter (Johannis Petri) Hockert was born in Tintingen, Saarland and he married Susanna Mettendorf to which Ludwig was born in 1738. [for more information on the early Hockerts, including additional ancestors discovered since this was written, see my Hockert Page]

Ludwig married Barbara Schmidt and their son was Laurenz (1765).
Laurenz married Barbara Kinger and their son was Johannes (1795).
He in turn married Magdalena Weiten and they had eight children:
Joseph (1814), Anna Maria(1816), Maria(1819), Barbara(1822), Magdalena (1824), John (1827), Nickolaus (1830) and Magdalena (1836).

These children now become the focal point of our discussion of the Hockert family, particularly Nickolaus and to a lesser degree John. Nickolaus married Anna Boesen in 1858 and to this union were born Bertha, Anna Maria, Nickolas, Anna, Michael in Germany and Barbara in Jefferson County,
Missouri. My mother was baptized at St. Gongolph's Church in Trier, Germany.

Their home was a two-story structure. The main level had oak flooring and it was a meeting place for the men of the area to play cards and drink wine. Bertha would go to the basement to bring up a "buttle" of wine. The family quarters was on the second floor. A statue of St. Nick stands above the house overlooking the Saar River. My mother had vivid memories of her home even though she was but
seven years old when she left Germany. Her recollections must have been accurate because both Msgrs. Lorsung and Renner (my cousins) visited the area and found all to be true.

The Nickolas Hockert family immigrated to America in 1866, arriving in New York where my mother tasted her first piece of pie, and she enjoyed it so intensively that she determined, right then and there, to bake lots of pie in America and it remained her favorite dessert until she died. From New York they traveled by boat to New Orleans, then up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, Missouri. Nicholas's sister, Barbara, had immigrated to America in 1866 and had married Mathias Heil and lived here. The family then settled here for about two years. My mother wished to attend school, but since it wasn't "Catlick" her father forbid her to attend. This denial rankled my mother for the remainder of her life. It was here too that Barbara was born.

A tale of an unusual occurrence needs to be inserted here. Nickolas' father, Johannes who remained in Germany, evidently was a very religious man. As the story goes, every time the clock struck he would make the sign of the cross. One day the Hockert clock in America kept chiming, not in its proper intervals, and remained doing so for several minutes. Anna Boesen Hockert exclaimed, "Jetzt ist die Grosspop gestorben" (just now Grandpa died). He passed away June 29, 1869, the date the clock struck.

An older brother, John, immigrated to America in 1854 (the date varies from document to document) and established land holdings near Millerville. At this same time, a missionary priest, Father Francis X. Pierz had been asked by his Bishop (Cretin) to establish parishes in the

Minnesota territory. Father Pierz walked from St. Paul, established a parish at St. Cloud and aided German settlers in finding good soil. He was also a friend of the Indians, concentrating his time and effort among various tribes from New York state, around the Great Lakes and eventually the Chippewa tribe of Minnesota. It is,
therefore, possible to speculate that Father Pierz may have been instrumental in convincing John Hockert to locate at Millerville. Although records show Father Pierz's initial efforts in the Long Prairie, Millerville, Rush Lake area were in the late 1860's.

After Nickolas' family left St. Louis, they traveled by boat to Minneapolis and then, perhaps, by covered wagon. They arrived at Millerville and "set up camp" on the eastern shore of Lake Moses, a spot selected by John. This site is the present farmstead of Dennis Hockert. Soon after arriving here, the mother passed away leaving Bertha, now age ten, to become the mother to her siblings. Her father
refused the aid of willing neighbors to bake bread, wash clothes, etc. , saying, "Ich wille keine frauen im haus. Bertha (German pronunciation is Bearta) kam alles tun. " (I don't need a woman in the house, Bertha can do everything.) He would arouse her from sleep at 5 a. m. "Bertha, stay uff, mach mir etwas zu essen. " (Make us something to eat.) So she got up to prepare breakfast for the family and would, at times, complain that Anna never had to take a turn. Life was very difficult during the next few years. Her father tried to provide a meager livelihood through farming and helping other farmers.

The History of the Wilken Family

Little is known of my father's past generations because records are scarce and he seldom spoke of his parents or early family life. My recollections of his family comes from his brother John and his two sisters, Mary who married Hetzel in Racine, Wisconsin and Elizabeth (Aunt Lizzie) who married Gustav Goehner, a photographer in Chicago.

The Wilken family originated in Grabow, Mecklenburg, Germany (near Berlin). [for more information on the origin of the Wilken family, including additional ancestors discovered since, see my Wilken Page] William's father Johann F. Wilken (1815) married Wilhelmina Hildebrandt and to this union were born Maria, Winna and John in Germany and William (July 16, 1853) and Elizabeth in Racine, Wisconsin. (One of the difficulties in tracing the Wilken ancestry is due to name changes, as is also true of other European settlers. The name fluctuates between Wuche, Wilke, Wilkin and Wilken. The family immigrated to America in 1851, leaving Hamburg, Germany on July 18 and arriving in New York on August 29. Then on to Racine.

After the passing of his father (1867) his mother remarried (Krieger) and moved to Minnesota with her son John in the early 1870's and homesteaded 160 acres half-way between our farm and Johnny's farm. We own the parcel where the buildings stood and have picked up pieces of pottery. John was in search of good soil as he wished to farm. Meanwhile my dad was working for his brother-in-law, Goehner, developing film in a dark room, and his health began to deteriorate. His doctor advised him to find outdoor work so his brother asked my dad to join him in Minnesota (1874). They purchased land from the Buse's who wished to return to Sweden where Mrs. Buse's relatives lived. This parcel of land totaled about 300 acres which was later divided between the two brothers.

[Note from John Nelson, May 1996: Wilhelmina Hildebrandt married Henry Krieger on April 13, 1857. The entire family, including 17 year old William, was in Millerville in 1870 according to the census records. Henry Krieger and Martin Buse were also from Mecklenburg]

Coming Together in America

To assist the reader in understanding this period of time, it becomes necessary to describe for you the early history of Millerville-a series of events, dates and names which will play an important role in the development of the area and its people.

The parish of Millerville was started in the year 1867 by the Rev. Francis X Pierz. He said his first Mass at the home of John A. Miller, leader of the first German settlers, after whom the town was named. The little mission was then named Seven Dolors of O' Chippewa station. He would marry, baptize and counsel the Catholics of the area before moving on. Mrs. Miller donated 40 acres to the Church for buildings: the church, school, rectory and cemetery.

The first church was built of hewn oak logs in 1868. The name Millerville was first mentioned in 1876 at which time there was only one resident pastor in Douglas County, namely the Millerville pastor, Father James E. Schneider with two missions, one at Osakis and the other at Belle Prairie.

The second church was built in 1883 under the administration of the Rev. P. Edward Ginther, O. S. B. It was a frame construction with the seating capacity of 400. Later it became the parish hall after the construction of the basement church in 1922.

The first parish house was built in 1873. The Rev. Ignatius Tomazin was then pastor. At the same time he lived in Millerville, he also took care of Elizabeth, Breckenridge and Perham. The first parochial school was built of logs and formed a wing to the first church in 1881. The sisters of St. Benedict's taught at this school. The next school building was of brick and erected under the administration of Rev. Ignatius Wippich in 1913.

The following is a listing of the priests who served the parish through its formative years: 1867-71 Father Pierz; 1871-74 the Rev. Tomazin who was the first to leave records of baptisms, marriages, etc. at Millerville. 1877-81 Rev. James Hilbert; 1882-88 Rev. P. Thomas Borgerding, O. S. B. ; 1888-95 Rev. Ginther (second time); 1895-1899 Otto Wiest (buried in Millerville cemetery); 1899-1905 Rev. Alois Raster; 190540 Rev. J. B. Brender; 1910-21 Rev. Wippich; and from 1921-1930 Rev. Victor Siegler.

Some of the early settlers were: John A. Miller, Frank Weber, John Buscher, Nick Hockert, Joseph Wagner, George Dobmeyer, Joseph Hopfner, Wolfgang Zwack, Joseph Lorsung, and August Wilm all German. The Irish included John, Math and Patrick Kelly, the Mullen's and Lanigan families. Among the Polish were Constance Cichy John Freske, and August Koeplin. The Slavonians included Joseph Stariha and Matt Kotschevar. Until 1921, the language used

for the sermon was German.

My parents were married in 1878 at the Catholic Church in Millerville by the Rev. James Hilbert. Dad became Catholic “as a requirement for parental consent.” My mother was glad to get away from her domineering father. Her wedding dowry was a horse named Fritz (which later became a lap robe) and 40 acres of land (east of Johnny’s farm). They lived in a log house about 1000 feet west of our present brick house (section 34, Millerville twp. , Douglas County). Around 1888, the folks decided to build our present brick house. This house was the first of three brick homes to be built in the area-the others are Uncle John’s across the road from us and Fred Meissner’s to the east of us.

My sister Carrie was just a baby at the time. Ma’s sister, Aunt Emma Kotschevar’s husband had recently passed away leaving her with two daughters, Ann (Lorsung) and baby Barbara (Pischke). So she came to live with my mother who at this time had four kids of her own. She did the extra housework, fed the carpenters, and in the afternoon, she went out to mix mortar. She was so determined “to get ahead” and to have a beautiful home again with oak floors and plastered walls after living in a log shack with dirt floor for the past 18 years.

My mother’s mother trained her children to walk erect by placing a book on their head; instructing them to be the very best! This fierce pride was ingrained in all her offspring. This house brought back happy memories of her youth in Germany. Annie, Willie, Johnny, and Carrie were born in the log house while Della, Carl and I (Laura) were born in the new house.

Our family home is a two-story brick structure formed in the shape of a “T”. The top of the T has a smaller living room on the north half with a large bay window facing east. A larger living room was south of this room and this room was used for entertaining. The furnishings included a Victorian love seat with matching chairs, several oak rockers and a piano. The first floor covering was a large braid rug. The leg of the T was a large 16’ x 18’ kitchen containing the wood stove and a large oak table and chairs.

The upstairs contained three large bedrooms and one small bedroom called “the little room. “ The west room was the largest and this is where Willie, Johnny and Carl slept and also where the threshers slept on straw ticks. The “little room” was the warmest because it had the one outside wall. Della and I had this room while Annie and Carrie had the southeast room. My parents slept in the north room. (Included below is a diagram to help understand what I’ve just said). The left diagram is of the original floor plan. The diagram to the right is for the remodeled plan. The house was so very cold and dad’s furnace worked so poorly that I had them move the kitchen to the east where there was a basement underneath and divided the room so that we also had a dining room. The large bay window was taken out of the small living room and that room became a guest bedroom. Both floor plans show the house facing the main road north as you remembered it “from your younger days. “ The basement walls were 2’ square hand chiseled stone held together with mortar. These walls are still perfect today, no cracking or chipping visible.

Dad heated the house with a “Bovee” wood furnace and hot water radiators. However, the furnace never warmed the house sufficiently, especially the kitchen area which had no basement beneath because it housed the cistern which held the rain water for washing clothes and bodies. All winter long I would sit on my legs to keep them warm.

Later, Dad built a summer kitchen (a lean-to) onto the house, just south of the regular kitchen. In those days most farm places had summer kitchens and often built them away from the main house. It had a door on the east side and an open platform porch on the west. The south wall had cupboards and above them, Ma would have large round wheels of the best homemade cheese. The main reason for a summer kitchen was to keep the rest of the house cooler during the hot summers. The cook stove was constantly fired with wood and gave off a tremendous amount of heat-it was going from early morning till late at night for meals, baking bread, heating up wash water and there was always the whistling tea kettle of water ready for an emergency. The tea kettle would build up with iron inside from the hard water and it would need to be chiseled out or a mixture of soda and vinegar was put in and then boiled up.

I would be asked to “go git” wood from the wood shed which was in another building northwest of the house. It had three divisions: a sort of garage or work shop on the south, an ice house on the north and the wood shed in the middle. One of Ma’s neighbor ladies came over for a visit. She had so many humorous stories to tell and the way she told them. She wore a shawl around her shoulders and she kept pulling this shawl right and left and throwing her arms up in the air and talking excitedly while pacing the floor. I would have to laugh to myself so hard, and I was ashamed to do so in front of her, so I would go out to the shed for wood and laugh myself out and then return with a few pieces of wood. This continued all afternoon. Needless to say enough wood was carried in that day.

I was too young to remember the barn (1900) being built or who built it. There was a man by the name of Neitzel who built the granary some years later, so maybe he constructed it. The barn was all timber, 24’ x 60’ with a hip roof and a large hay loft. The hay was lifted by slings to a carrier which deposited the hay in the loft. The cattle and horses were in rows the short way across. Dad had a manure carrier installed and the “pile” was formed on the east side. The west side had a 12’ x 60’ lean-to, open on both ends for machine storage. As I was growing up, my brothers and sisters held barn dances up in the hay loft. The floor became very smooth from the hay being pushed around and I often skated up there when I went to gather eggs (hens loved to hide them). So the floor was ideal for dances.

In later years we milked but eight cows. After milking, we had to carry the milk to the summer kitchen where we separated it. The cream went into a smaller can and the separate milk into larger pails. This was then fed to the hogs and some was saved for cottage cheese and occasionally for “shtink kaess”. Whole milk was saved for drinking and cooking and the cream was cooled and stored in a water cooler in the pump house. The house cream and butter (which was hand churned), plus the house milk was kept in the ice house. I was the “go-for” for Ma when

she need something and to take it back again. I can, to this day, still taste the buttermilk from the churn, the thick sour milk sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon on bread and the fresh cooled milk and peanut butter sandwiches for supper. We fully enjoyed the simple pleasures we found in everyday life.

The granary (approximately 1910) was built by Neitzel and was a very sturdy building. It was constructed as an elevator, a two-story building 22' x 40' with one large bin on either side holding about 2000 bushels each. The bins had three sides of the floor sloping towards the center where the grain dropped into an elevator shoe. The shoe was in the center section of the granary which also housed the grain shoots for sacking grain when sold.

A windmill was erected from the center room to power the elevator. Four huge wooden beams 35' long provided the main support. On top of the roof was a platform just beneath the wind mill machinery. Pearl and I crawled up there to watch fireworks one 4th of July in Millerville. To get up there, we had to climb the ladder, then crawl out of a side window and reach backwards and upwards to reach this platform. It was very tricky and scary procedure and I still cringe when I think back today.

From the fans, a long wooden tail (beam) stuck out which turned the blades in the wind. Below in the middle room was the brake to stop it from rotating after a job had been completed, or in case it was too windy (to keep it from flying apart). The mill was also used to grind grain, pump water and saw wood. Lightning struck the tail several times, perhaps because of the iron rods supporting it, but it never damaged the mill or granary.

William and Bertha's Family

My sister Annie (1880) was the oldest of the family. She was baptized at Seven Dolors, Millerville by Rev. James Hilbert and she married John Schwartz in 1901. They had two daughters: Laura and Louise. As a young girl, Annie was robust and energetic. She loved to ride horseback and would challenge herself forth and back to Millerville (about 3 miles each way) in less than 20 minutes. She also rode the bicycle so vigorously that she turned red in the face. She would harness up the four horses and spend the day plowing. After finishing grade school, she stayed with Uncle Goehner in Minneapolis for several years working for rich families.

Annie was an excellent cook and a hard worker when well. She and John had a huge flower garden east of their house containing many varieties of roses, peonies, irises, plus Sweet Williams, Canterbury Bells, delphiniums, fox-glove etc. John was also raising bees at the time and these bees loved the flowers too. One time while I was visiting them, I went out to pick a bouquet and a bee stung me between the eyes. The pain was unbearable for some time. The bees were also the cause of John losing the barn. They had nested in the hay loft and John wished to evict them by using a torch and smoke. The flame got away from him and as a result the barn burned to the ground.

John also had a prize herd of Jersey cattle which produced very rich cream. Annie made good use of it: homemade ice cream, cream on berries, cakes and hot cereal. Annie made the first angel food cake and often canned 300 quarts of berries, plums, peaches, pickled apples, plus jams and jellies. Most of this was home-grown produce.

She also made the best candy: chocolate covered cherries, carmelized Mexican fudge, divinity and the lightest crescent rolls one could eat. John loved them too. One time I said when you come over I'll make them for you. They came for church on a Sunday (-20 below) and stayed for dinner. I had just baked a batch and John ate seven of them. They all had huge appetites. John and Annie raised strawberries to sell. The Juneberry variety, Senator Dunlap, was enormous (17 made a pound) and rightly so because John would spread a generous amount of barn manure for the new patch and then if it didn't rain enough, he placed a water tank on a wagon, filled it with water and the horses pulled the wagon to the patch.

Willie was born in 1883 and married Hulda Scheidt. They had three children: William, Rosemary and Cordelia. Willie (I'm told) carried me around as a baby and always remained very close to me throughout our adult lives. He had little love for farming and began working in the Evansville bank. After this he went to school to sharpen up on the banking business. He then became the banker at KuIm, North Dakota where he met his future wife, Hulda, a minister's daughter and a teacher. He worked for a mortgage company during the early days of

the depression, trying to collect on past dues. This depressed him so, because most of the farm families didn't have enough money to buy food and clothing, let alone paying off their debts, so Willie left Kulm for the state of Oregon (1936).

Willie would bring his family home for a visit unannounced for several weeks when they lived at Kulm and I spent some time there too. One day I baked an angel food cake and as you know after the cake comes out of the oven, the pan is tipped upside down unto a bottle to cool. Young Billy looked at the process and said in German, which was the only language they used, "Venn das falt runter und brecht, denn aber:" Which means if the cake tips over, you'll be in trouble. A lot is lost when the German is translated into English the humor of the idea dissipates.

The last time the family came to Minnesota was in 1941 after Hulda had passed away. The three kids were so happy to see us again. I remember we took them to a movie in Alexandria-"Caught in the Draft"-starring Bob Hope in peak performance. Rosemary and Cordy laughed so hard they almost fell out of their seats. Young Bill helped Joe shock grain and we spent some time at family gatherings and picnics. The two girls cried so when they left for that long trip back to Oregon.

Johnny (1885) was baptized by Rev. Heider and he married Anna Hopfner at Seven Dolors, Millerville by Rev. Wippich. Their children are: Evangeline, Helen, Florian, Cresy and Claude and their home was about 1-1/2 miles straight north of us.

When Johnny was dating Annie, it was the custom of the time to offer your date a stick of gum. So after Johnny came home, I would sneak into his room upstairs and steal a stick of gum for myself. I didn't dare take more or he might have noticed something was going on. He was always good-natured at home. I, at a very young age, would drive the horses for the bundle team. He would pitch several bundles at a time and kept talking to me all the while. If I got off too far from the windrow, he never complained which was not true of someone else.

In later years he served as County Commissioner, chairman of the Millerville town board, the Millerville school board, the first president of the creamery and the Runestone Electric Association in Alexandria. It is interesting to note here that three consecutive generations served on the Millerville town board - my dad, his son Johnny and my son James.

As youngsters, Vange, Helen and Florian would walk up to Grandma's house. On this particular occasion it was the day before Easter. I had set out three Easter Egg nests and I was in the process of dying the eggs when they arrived and had only put eggs into two nests. This really bothered the kids that only two nests were filled, so when they left for home, Florian took one last sad look toward these missing eggs and said, "Armselig Grossmum, sie hat keine eier!!" Claude had a very deep voice as a youngster. At about age 4, he was sitting near the kitchen range with his feet up on the handle of the oven warming himself. Ma always made home-made wine and evidently he must have had some in the past, because he said in that deep voice, "Grandma, do you have any of that stuff in those blittzery glasses." My dad got a chuckle out

of Cresy too. We were there for dinner and she had baked a sour cream peach pie for us and she warned us that it didn't turn out as she would have liked. To which my dad replied, "I'll eat it if it kills me."

Carrie was born in 1888 and baptized by Rev. Thomas Borderding. She and John Hopfner were married in 1908 by Father Brender. To this union were born: Blanche, Rueben (Bill), Mildred and Philip. The family lived about 5 miles southeast of our farm, near "Big Chip" lake. Carrie was perhaps, the happiest of my sisters. She would and joke and, like my mother, was a fast worker. She also taught me to play the piano before I took lessons from Anna Dahl in Evansville. The family lived in Brandon from 1921-27, while her husband was county maintenance superintendent, at which time he resumed farming. John had two recreational loves-fishing and playing cards. Albert Ketter would call up, "I'm coming over to go fishing, can you make it?" John would always manage! As for the second love one time my dad was there and they played until 8 o'clock in the morning. Dad would say, "Gosh it's getting late, I'd better get home." And John would kid him into another game and keep on laughing.

I remember having to cook dinner for the Hopfner men who were stacking grain. 1 was but 12 years old at the time. Carrie had Blanche, 15 months old and a new-born baby, Bill. I didn't know much about cooking by myself. I had a kettle of cut corn on the stove and had poured too much milk in, so it didn't want to boil. The men were soon coming in for dinner, so Grandpa Hopfner came to the rescue by splitting me some smaller pieces of wood to induce the fire to burn better. The corn finally cooked and I passed it around saying, "Would you like some corn?" It was closer to soup than a vegetable. But the men didn't complain. People weren't very fussy in those days. I also managed to bake 8 loaves of bread that day, and the wood chunks were too large so the oven wouldn't get hot enough for the bread to brown.

Carrie would bake eight loaves at a time and would call me several times during the week. I always treasured hearing her voice. Carrie and her two boys came over, while they were in that 10-12 age bracket, and they wished to help Grandpa. He left them cultivate corn with a horse and one row cultivator. As kids would be, they were out more for fun than work, so they tore through the corn rows as fast as the horse would travel; tearing out some of the corn in the process, which didn't sit very well with my dad. "Get out of there you rebels." When Carrie heard her boys were rebels, she went home with them immediately.

Millie often stayed by us for a week or so at a time. She loved to eat Grandma's apple dumplings and pancakes. She still remembers the taste and how it looked coming out of the steamer-and oh the aroma of the apples and cinnamon and raisins-we made one for her this fall (1993).

Carrie had a difficult experience as a young girl. She was riding the horse and buggy and the horse went crazy and Carrie was tossed out of the overturned buggy and broke her leg. People weren't very thoughtful in those days, and my folks got an inexperienced quack doctor to set her leg. He used a board with paint chips on it and the paint caused infection in the leg. Finally the folks got Dr. Mathieson from Evansville to save her life. He discarded the board, cleaned out the

large open wound and dressed it properly. He drilled a hole in the foot of the bed, placed a cast on the leg and then hung a pail of sand out the end of the cast to keep this leg the same length as her other one. She came through this ordeal okay, but it kept her in bed for several weeks.

Joe, Jimmie and I were in bed this summer evening. Around 11 p. m. a car drives into the yard and someone blows the car horn; then someone gets out of the car and comes to the house and knocks. We thought, who could it be? Must be someone who knows us and is in some kind of trouble. Joe was the first down the stairs; Jimmie and I following. It was our pastor, Father Wilkes and my brother Johnny. They came into the kitchen area with somber faces and a troubled look in their eyes. Father Wilkes first walked to the wood stove and struck a match to light his famous pipe. He then said, "We have some sad news to report. John Hopfner and Carrie have been in an accident. John was killed instantly and Carrie is in the Alexandria hospital in very serious condition from severe head injuries." What devastating news! My sister Carrie in the hospital and John dead? When one is hit so suddenly with something so tragic, the mind refuses to accept it. I had just talked with her on the phone this afternoon. "What happened?" Well, John and Carrie were taking some furniture to Alexandria for their son Philip and a big transport truck hit their pick-up head-on. We didn't sleep anymore that night. Carrie recovered slowly after a long struggle and before she could completely regain her strength, Bill was drafted into the service.

Della (1891) was the last of our family to marry. She began her teaching career at the "ripe old age" of 17 in a country school east of Urbank. She boarded at the John Thoennes family (father of John, Nick etc.). When the weather was cold, she would go early to build fire. In the evening, Papa Thoennes would gather his family together and they would sing German "Lieder" for several hours and the children developed beautiful singing voices and a love for music. From here she next taught near Miltona where she had 52 pupils, grades 1-8. Ma and I would take her there Sunday afternoon and pick her up again Friday afternoon. The distance must have been about 20 miles one way.

Next she taught in Millerville for 4 years in what was later called "The Legion Hall." The school had a reputation of harboring troublemakers. Two of the rowdies were Elmer Stariha and Mark Buscher; they would hop from one desk to the next and disrupt class. Mr. Buscher was on the School Board and he told Della to crack down hard on them and she did. The very first minute she took over they were told to behave "or else." She always had a powerful voice and military posture which aided in getting the message across.

After leaving Millerville, Della taught in my home district #72. This school was located about 2-1/2 miles northwest of our farm, in a woods now owned by Harvey Jante. Some of the children attending school at the time were: Mike and Frank Korkowski's, Renkes', Carlson's, and Wagner's.

Della would teach during the school term, but during the summer months she attended Moorhead Normal School to obtain a full teaching certificate so she could teach in town. Upon receiving this certificate she now taught in Waubun, Erie, Sentinel Butte (way off in western North Dakota).

When Della taught in Waubun, she just had an operation before school started. The people where she was to board, met her at the train with a lumber wagon and proceeded home over rough fields. Two of her students were boys who ate fresh garlic every morning for breakfast. They smelled so strongly that she had to put their desks in the farthest comer of the room.

The desolate environment of Sentinel Butte and the continued hardships of small town schools convinced Della that there must be more to life than this. She headed West in the early 1930's to teach in Oregon, but before they would accept her she needed to attended one of their colleges for six months. This she did at Bellingham, Washington. Then it was off to Forest Grove, Oregon to teach and this is where she met James B. Benoit, an electrical engineer with the Bonneville Electric Power Company. Della continued teaching full time and in later years, substituting.

In the earlier years we would take and get Della from her country schools, and later to catch the train. She spent the summer vacation time with us on the farm, continuing to do so even after marriage. Jimmie and Della would motor by car each summer, taking in new sights as they traveled different routes. They would describe how beautiful the mountains were and the prairies with waving ripe grain. How I wished to experience this Myself!

In later years, I appreciated her summer visits even more so because it removed a burden from my shoulders. Ma was getting up in years and she needed special attention which I couldn't always provide when there was other responsibilities. Della was most thoughtful of her Minnesota relatives at Christmas time. She would send us a huge box of neatly wrapped gifts for my folks, for us, Carries' and the Schwartz's. These gifts were a blessing and greatly appreciated because of the depression and drought years that plagued us at the time. One of the educational gifts she gave to my son Jimmie at age six, was a globe of the world In a matter of a few weeks, he knew where each country was located and no one could stump him.

Carl is my youngest brother (1893) and he married Anna Pfieffer at Seven Dolors, Millerville by the Rev. Wippich. They had eight children; Elmyra, Adeline, Florence, leona, Charles, Margaret, Beatrice and Donald. Their farm was to the south and adjacent to our farm place. In fact, it was a piece of the original purchase of my dad and his brother John.

My sister Annie and John had left baby Laura with Carl and I while they and our parents went to Alexandria shopping. We both were still quite young-I about 10 and Carl 15 or so, anyway we got bored sitting in the house watching the baby. It had recently stormed and a huge snow bank had formed just west of the house, maybe 8 or 10 feet high. We grabbed a scoop shovel as a sled and took turns sliding down this bank. When we returned to the house, we discovered, to our dismay, that baby Laura had fallen off the bed and lay on the floor. We never told anyone what had happened because Ma would have given us a sharp scolding.

Just as Carrie helped me learn to play the piano, I wanted to help Carl play the violin. He had ordered one from Montgomery Ward. I told him the various notes from a whole note down to a sixteenth note. He said, "If there is that much to it, I'm quitting right now. " And he did. John

Hopfner taught me the notes and I tried to continue, but the piano was my first and only love. Carl enjoyed hunting, fishing and playing cards (Skat). On one occasion, he must have been spearing or netting fish illegally in the spring. He had several of his young kids along in the Model T truck. Carl must have spotted the Game Warden in the area. He tucked the fish under the seat, ordered the kids to jump in and away they flew from Lake Moses south toward their home. The road was only a trail, full of holes and bumps. Carl drove like crazy and the kids were flying up more than down. Luckily all arrived home safely and the Warden didn't find Carl.

At another time, Carl and Joe had left about 6 a. m. to go duck hunting. They stood in their blind for some time and one or the other said, "The ducks aren't flying, maybe we didn't come early enough. " In the distance they heard a reply, "I was here at four o'clock and they didn't flew then either. " It was John Pischke, a neighbor and avid hunter too.

Carl and Annie would leave the older four girls with us while they went shopping in Alexandria. I was peeling potatoes for supper and the girls were eating the raw potatoes as fast as I could peel. They enjoyed coming to Grandma's and Taunt Laura's. Elmyra came one day alone with the understanding that she would remain over night. But when night came she wanted, very badly, to go home. So she said in German (which was the language spoken by all my first nieces and nephews). "Du kanst mich schon heim hollen mit Flory. " (You can nicely take me home with Flory) the horse. I said, "First, we'll lay down a bit and then we'll go home. " She fell asleep and was okay till morning.

Annie was a very devoted mother and loved each child intensely. She was a wonderful housekeeper and a joyful person too. She would sew each girl a new dress every spring and they were always neatly dressed and spotlessly clean. Annie loved Lemon Pie and made it many times during the year, even though Carl didn't care for it, especially the "white stuff on top. " She became ill from a ruptured appendix and after a long and painful period passed away leaving a huge void, especially for Beatrice and young Donnie who was 2.

I was born on January 3, 1899. My life's experience will be explained in greater detail at a later time in this book. However, for now please be content with a brief introductory. I married Joseph A. Roers on December 29th, 1925.

His father, John Hubert, had given Joe 100 acres about six miles east of us on the shore of Big Chip, a neighbor to his older brother Hubert. The farm had only an old barn and granary; no house. He had planted a grove of evergreens m anticipation of building a house and settling there. However, my mother was ill, and dad was getting up in years too and unable to do the necessary farm field work. So we decided to stay and make my parents' farm our home.

Our farm had been rundown and was full of quack grass and wild oats. My dad was very perturbed with Northrop-King seed company. He had ordered Brome grass seed from them and both Brome and quack seed look very much alike. So dad got a "free" bumper crop of quack which was most difficult to eradicate with primitive machinery. To restrict its spread throughout the farm, he

elected to work around the spots, but this proved futile as the quack continued to gain the upper hand. So when Joe arrived on the scene, he spent many days digging the quack with a horse drawn harrow which he had to lift up by hand every few feet because the roots would plug the teeth. The east field had piles of roots resembling hay cocks. After the piles dried out, Joe would burn them and they disappeared completely because the roots contained a type of oil. He also planted checkered corn to cultivate out any remaining quack or wild oats. It took several years to bring the land back to full production again. It was only through the back breaking effort of my husband that my parents were able to remain on the land for which they in turn had sacrificed so much.

The Nick Hockert Family

Anna Marie (1860) was my mother's oldest sister. We called her Aunt Emma to distinguish her and Anna Renner, a younger sister. Others may have called her "Ahmee" which is a derivative of Anna Maria. Anyhow she was married to Matt Kotschevar and at the time of their marriage they lived in Evansville where Matt was in the mercantile business. He died in 1886, 50 Aunt Emma came, with her two daughters, Ann Lorsung) and baby Barbara (Pischke) to stay with my parents until she could again be on her own. She then moved into Millerville with her family, occupying a small house just as you enter town. She remained here through my early childhood and later lived with Barbara and Frank Pischke.

My Grandpa, Nickolas Hockert, stayed with Aunt Emma and Barbara in Millerville too. He was a portly man and not at all active. It was the custom of some European's to drink wine instead of water. Evidently, Grandpa had to much of the former and one night he fell out of bed. Poor Aunt Emma and Barbara were unable to hoist him back into bed, and I suppose he wouldn't exert himself either, so they called my dad to assist them. He had to harness up a team and drive into town to get Grandpa back into bed. What a circus!!!

Aunt Emma also cared for Uncle John Hockert who lived in a small house just north of Stariha's Hall. They would take food over every day as he was a bachelor and a war veteran. When I would visit with Aunt Emma and Barbara, they would ask me if I would be so kind as to take a plate of food to Uncle John. He was huge in stature and wore red underwear, and besides this, he was gruff in his mannerisms. I was so scared of him, I would set the plate down and beat it as fast as I could back to Aunt Emma's.

They had a large garden east of the house and also a barn for the cow. Barbara would milk the cow, saving some for their use and selling the rest. One of their favorite vegetables, and ours too, was sour green beans made with grape vines. The beans were first cooked, then cooled. Next they were put into 1/2 gallon jars and the grape vines or leaves were stuck on top of the jar. The process would ferment much like cabbage for sauerkraut, and then we would cook this by pork. Food was simple and every garden item had to be preserved to add variety to the meals.

Barbara made a living as a seams tress to support herself and her mother. She made the wedding dresses for Johnny's Annie and also for my sister, Carrie. The bodice was a series of small rows of tucks followed by rows of lace. Aunt Emma would do the basting by hand and Barbara did the intricate sewing on the machine. The types of cloth available in those days were: cotton, taffeta, wool and satin.

When Aunt Emma's daughter, Ann Lorsung (Mrs. Tony) died, Aunt Emma and Barbara went

over to Tony's to help raise the family of youngsters; Msgr. Lorsung, Matt (Fats), the twins Marcella and Hildegard, Jerry and Adelbert. Later, they moved in with Barbara and Frank Pischke in their house. Jerry and Hildegard's husband, Bill Gappa, later worked for Barbara as her husband had too passed away.

One interesting story to relate here. My Joe had a new car, a Maxwell I think, and we picked up Barbara and Millie Hopfner to see "Ben Hur. " It had rained and the roads were mostly trails anyway. The mud and ruts were so deep that Joe burned out the car snaking through the mud. Millie and Barbara cried so at the movie that both of them had several handkerchiefs soaked. After we got home, Millie and I talked till morning. No matter how hard and difficult Barbara's life was, she always found "the silver living" with a good hearty laugh.

Nickolas Hockert (1862) was my mother's only surviving brother. He married Caroline Dobmeyer and they farmed the original home place. Diptheria hit the family early on and my dad went many times there to help them. Only Nicky and Barbara survived the disease. Later Annie, Ferd, Math, Tillie and George were born. They were very frugal. One time Uncle Nick's came to our house and it was the custom to look at people's gardens for pastime and perhaps to grab a ripe tomato or pull a carrot to eat on the spot. He looked over the garden and saw bushels of ripe tomatoes lying on the ground. He said, "Shunt das Laura kanned keine tomatoes, alles lagt full. "I had already canned 70 quarts. In later years, they moved into a new home just west of Millerville, on property they owned and remained there until they died. He and his wife were my only Uncle or Aunts who continued to speak the German language.

Anna Renner (1864)was Ma's second oldest sister. She married "Uncle Joe" Renner as we called him. He was a plumber and they lived in Alexandria. They had four children: Joe, William, who became a priest and later a Msgr. and first rector of the St. John's Seminary, Collegeville, Minnesota, Clara (Flanigan) and Michael who died in his teens from TB.

Before he died, Mike was bed ridden for several years. Aunt Anna took care of him. She carried food up the stairs three times a day, bathed him and the bedding was always fresh and wrinkle free. He prayed the rosary all day long. He, too, had wished to become a priest.

Aunt Anna was a rather stout woman, but this never interfered with her work habits. I had never seen a house so clean! Each morning she would take a fresh white rag to wash up the floor. After it dried, she took a fresh white dust mop, put oil on it and then would polish the floor vigorously. It just shone! When her son became a priest, beggars would come to the rectory door for handouts, so she canned around 300 pints of a mixture consisting of potatoes, carrots, onions and meat to he heated quickly so they would have a hot meal. This was the forerunner of "Meals on Wheels," ha!

A few words are necessary here about Father Renner. Father Renner's first parish assignment following his ordination on December 17th, 1917 was the parish at Brandon. Brandon had previously been served once a month by priests from Alexandria and Osakis. Father Renner came

to Brandon in 1919. At the time of his appointment, the parish did not own a rectory. Shortly after his arrival, he purchased the Theo. Olson home for $4,500. In 1922 he became pastor of St. Mary's, Alexandria and his Bishop allowed him to remain there for many years to help care for his mother who had a broken hip as the result of a car accident. She never had the hip "set" and as a consequence never walked again.

During Father Renner's early pastorate the following was added to the church: new marble alters and wrought iron ornamentation, a new pipe organ (donated by Mrs. F. R. Noonan) was installed. She also donated a lot adjoining the church grounds giving the property a very attractive setting. Under Father's able administration, the parish had seen its full development in the diocese.

It was during Father's pastorate in Brandon that he visited us on the farm many times on a Sunday afternoon. He also knew his folks would be there too. So about 2:00 p. m. there would be knock at the door, and he'd be standing there with a big smile and a happy "Hi, I'm here again. " He would also compliment my mother's cooking, "Aunt Bertha, your dinner was most delicious. " One of the many characteristics Ma's mother passed on to her children in the few years she lived was to always be polite and courteous. This trait was now being passed on to the second generation.
One time Father came to the farm unannounced. We were doing the evening milking at the time. Here comes four priests into our barn. I had on an old dress and these priests were all dressed in new black suits and stiffly starched white collars. Well, we finished milking, I washed and changed and then played the piano. Three of them joined in singing, but one that they jokingly called "Caruso" couldn't sing and so remained the audience.

After Aunt Anna's hip accident, they still came to the farm and Father Renner and my Joe would carry her into the house on a chair. This was quite a load and Father's back finally gave out. I loved to visit her too and she would always make me feel so welcome. One time it was the Lenten Season when we were to refrain from lunches in the afternoon, but she had just baked fresh bread and so she cooked coffee for the bread and homemade jam. Her eyes just twinkled while she ate. I came to visit her shortly before she died. She was suffering from Dropsy (a condition where water is retained in the body) and when I came into the room, she wanted to say "Laura" but could only get the "La" before she choked. The fluid had gotten into her lungs and she could no longer take even a half-breath. She passed away shortly. I missed her so. When I would be in Alexandria, I would say to myself, "there is no one to see here anymore that Aunt Anna is gone. "

Barbara (Sister Jerome, O. S. B. from St. Benedict's, St. Joseph, Minnesota) was the youngest in the family. She was the only one born in America Jefferson County, Missouri). Her mother died shortly after giving birth and this is perhaps the reason she became a nun. She lead a most austere life teaching regular classes and music in the following parishes: Pien, Luxemborg, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Lake Henry, Perham, New Munich, Dumont and Browerville. The life of a nun in those days was one of extreme self denial. I'm now recalling her days while at Browerville because this is when I became old enough to appreciate a difference in how people lived. Her room was worse than a prison cell. It contained a simple cot, no mattress, a bare unpainted floor, a wash stand but no mirror and no closet to hang her clothes. The "habit" she wore consisted of

layers of woolen garments, long underwear, a heavy slip, undershirt, robe, and a stiffly starched whimple. In the heat of the summer while visiting her sister, Emma and Barbara, her clothing would become soaked with sweat, She was allowed to come home for a visit once every ten years, but wasn't allowed to sleep at her own father's house.

The food at the Browerville Convent was of a poor quality as most of the Sisters lived on what food the parish people brought them. We were there one time and for dessert they had Huckleberry pie; Sr. Jerome shook no to me as not to take any because it tasted so awful. She wrote one time that I should write her saying that my mother was ill so she could have an excuse to come home, she was so homesick for her earthly family. I was too young to understand the circumstances of her desire and never wrote back to her. This bothers me to this day, "how I could be so stupid. "

When my father died, she came for the funeral and after the Mass and lunch at our home, it was time to leave. She cried so hard that it was almost a scream.

A Woman's Work is Never Done

My mother was "chief cook and bottle washer" as the saying goes. She was always instrumental in initiating a project that needed attention. As an example, she dug a 2' deep trench, filled it with barn yard decomposed manure, then more ground, to plant her asparagus roots. This bed remains to this day. She planted a grove of evergreens north east of the house and these trees are alive yet today also. The folks planted a large apple orchard in our back yard, mainly Hybernals, a soft tart variety. She would hire the threshers (usually John Boesen), took food dozens of times by buggy to Skiles seven miles. She spent many hours washing clothes over a wash board and she had a large garden from which came all the vegetables for the family table. In those days nothing was bought at the store.

When the reaper was introduced, she stood on the platform. As the horses pulled the reaper, the standing grain would fall on the platform, she quickly grabbed an arm full of grain, pulled off a few strands to make a tie (no twine available) wrap it around the arm full of grain and make a knot and throw it away and grab the next one. Even before they had the reaper, the men would cut the grain by hand. After this, the bundles had to be shocked. I remember shocking grain on Carl's farm near their house. The bundles were mixed with wild pea vines and the bundles clung together, so it took two of us to pull them apart. In the fail, I helped her shock corn. We used a saw horse to set the first bundles against so they wouldn't tip over. The bundles were so heavy, I could barely lift them, but I got orders to help!

My mother was an excellent cook. This was most remarkable because her mother died when she was 10 years old and she had no one to train her in how to keep house. She did have one great advantage though. My dad had lived in Chicago as a young man and had eaten different foods. He would tell her how something looked and tasted. She then would experiment until it look and tasted just right. From this cooperative endeavor grew such delicacies as: apple, prune and Kaess kuchens, Flatchen, donuts, cookies, wheels of different cheeses, and a variety of pies. My mother never wrote down a recipe. Everything was done by memory. And most of it by a sense of feel and touch-a scoop of flour, a pinch of salt, a chuck of lard, etc. Some of her recipes will be included at the end of this book. Her recipes never contained amounts of flour or shortening, but as a class project at District #72, Della had us write out a recipe book. So I wrote out Ma's recipes, plus some others from neighbor ladies and inserted approximate amounts where ever I could. Dad had turned Catholic, and so as not to make the Friday's of no meat less taxing, she always baked him a pie. And of course, pie was her favorite dessert because she tasted her first pie in New York when her family landed in 1866.

Ma boarded teachers who taught at our school District #72 such as: Madge Nichols, Georgia and Belle Cutten (from Evansville who in later years stopped in to see my mother) and John Kelly, my second grade teacher. Ma was denied an education, so she wanted her children to be

exposed to as much learning as possible. She boarded them for $8.00 per month, packed them a lunch and in the winter or inclement weather, took them by team to the school which was about 2-1/2 miles away.

One time she took a full wagon of our apples to Schwantz's store in Evansville and got rid of the whole load. Speaking of apples, a band of Gypsies would often camp between us and Meissner's in a grove of wild plum trees. A Gypsy lady and a small girl came to the door and asked if they could have a chicken; she had a sick Grandma in camp and wished to make her chicken soup. To which my mother replied, "Chicken soup isn't good for Grandma's. " Then she wanted to know if Ma would give her some bread. Ma said, "you can bake your own bread. " Then she looked Out at the orchard and saw the apples hanging on the trees and asked if they could have some. Ma said, "If you pick them yourselves." So the lady and the child started to pick, but they tore in so vigorously that the branches and all came down and Ma said, "GET OUT OF THERE. " And they did!

Before I leave the subject of apples, I wish to include here that ma's mince meat was the best I've ever eaten. It was made in earthen jars and had the best aroma When I lifted off the covering, the mixture of apples, raisins and spices would make my mouth water. I've tried to imitate her recipe but never the same result. I now believe the apples made the difference. The Hybernal is a very sour, tart, mealy apple, giving the mincemeat a tang and yet the apples cooked up quickly because they were put into the mincemeat raw. Ma's grandson Charles Wilken, has continued with some of her recipes. He has made her mincemeat and has given us an ample supply of homemade sauerkraut Both turned out to be of excellent quality!

Another big project of farm life was butchering in the fall, usually several hogs and a steer. The butchering was done in the fall when the daytime temperatures dropped because there wasn't any easy way to preserve the meat and we needed meat, especially for those in hard labor to sustain their energy. After the animals were slaughtered, the fat from the hogs got rendered and the resulting lard was kept in large 20 gallon stone jars. The rendered lard was very white and had a sweet rich smell to it. This lard became a food staple in baking bread, cake, frying donuts, in a pan for frying potatoes, etc. But never on bread, although some families did.

As a young girl, I helped strip the animal casings; not too pleasant a job! The intestines first had to be emptied and flushed out with water. Then they were turned inside out and scraped until they were white and almost transparent. These casings were used to make sausage. Carl and I would make the sausage rings and after awhile we would get silly. He would crank the sausage stuffer real fast; I would hold the casing end as it slid off the metal tube and ZIP a "long wuscht" of sausage would scoot out on the table. The sausage was then hung in the smoke house to be "cured. " The hams and bacon were put into a strong salt brine for many weeks and then also smoked. Sometimes they were left hanging in the smokehouse, or if the weather turned too warm, they were dug down into the grain bin. Remember, this meat had to last us during the spring and summer months until the next fall season. The beef was canned, or as some families did, fry it down and place it in stone jars.

One other event I wish to relate about the hard times in the "good old days. " As I said previously, ma hired the threshers. This event took place later in the fall, after the grain had been cut, shocked and stacked. Then the threshers came into play. I was about 12 years old at the time and I told ma the night before that I would get up in the morning to help her make breakfast for the crew, as I felt sorry for her to get up so early and work so hard. However, I was more like my dad, a night owl, I loved to stay up late at night and hated to get up in the morning. Well, at 4 a.m. ma calls me to get up and I was so sleepy I just floated around. The men were sleeping in the west room upstairs and would be up for breakfast at 5. Especially the fireman who had to build a fire in the steam engine to produce the steam to power the rig. There were potatoes to peel and fry, meat to cut and fry, table to set, etc. During the day forenoon lunch was brought out to the men, dinner to make for them, afternoon lunch and again supper in the evening. While all this was taking place, she baked bread, made two dish pans of donuts and two pies for dinner along with washing the dishes, etc.

The first day the threshers were by us, ma and I went out to the fresh straw pile to gather straw to fill the ticks. The straw pricked my arms and the chaff dust got into my hair. I hated this job!!! The ticks were then carried upstairs into the west room where the men were to sleep on them. What a life!

Ma possessed an uncanny talent to appreciate value and quality. This is evident in the choices she made. She bought a new set of dishes for Annie's wedding from Tony Lorsung's store, a complete set of twelve, including teeny butter dishes. The design of the dishes is white and around the edges of the plates and bowls are small bluish-green garlands intertwined with small bows and flowers etched in touches of gold. The vegetable bowls are very irregular and ornate in shape. We are using the set yet today (over 90 years old). She purchased a roll top desk with a library above enclosed with glass paneled doors from Jake Tamble in Brandon and also the oak table large enough to seat twelve comfortably and the six chairs from him too. While in Minneapolis, visiting the Goehner's, she purchased a white oak bedroom set and my Ivers and Pond baby grand piano. For the large living room she bought a Victorian love seat and matching chair and rocker and a woolen Wilton rug. This rug lasted at least forty years until Jimmie and my ma played basketball in the living room one Christmas season and wore a path going to and from the basket retrieving the ball. While in Chicago, she got an Astrakhan coat from Marshall-Field's and hats and dresses from St. Cloud. During my "teen years", if I saw a dress that I liked in a shop window and I knew it was too expensive, she'd say, "Try it on." And if it fit, she'd buy it for me. Ma was very strict in disciplining her family, but she was very sensitive to beauty and very loyal to us all.

Her health improved during the late 1940's and she became more physically active, especially with my son, Jimmie. They would play ball and at the age of 85 she could hold out her arm shoulder high and kick her leg up to touch her hand. She helped husk corn for canning and "knip" beans. She used a butcher knife to dig out weeds from her "pride and joy" the asparagus bed.

The only song she remembered to sing was "Zu Lauterbach abt ich mein strumpf forlorn; unt onne

strumpf geh ich nicht heim. “ Della had a trained voice and ma would listen intently when she sang such favorites as: “Du, du liegst mir im Herzen,” “Wenn die Schwalben heimwartz ziehn,” “Die Himmel riihmen,” “Grosser Gott, wir loben dich,” “Stille Nacht” and “O Tannenbaum. “

She loved the outdoors and the out door air. Even though it may have been -20 below, her window would be open a foot high. Eventually the eyes must close some day. Two weeks before her death, ma suffered a stroke. The lighted candle Bertha Hockert had received in baptism as a baby at St. Gongolph’s Church, Trier, Germany was extinguished. Ma passed away June 3, 1956 at age 97.

Mass of Christian burial was sung at Seven Dolors Church, Millerville on June 7th, 1956 at 9:30a. m. Officiating were Msgr. William A. Renner, nephew of the deceased and our pastor, Father Lawrence Botz The pallbearers were: William and Philip Hopfner, Florian, Claude and Charles Wilken and James Roers. Internment was in the Church cemetery.

You can take the Man out fo the City but you can't take the City out of the Man

My dad was not "cut out" to be a farmer. He was born in Racine, Wisconsin and as a young man he worked in Chicago for his brother-in-law Gustav Goehner. Because he was indoors so much, he developed poor health and his brother John invited him to join him in Minnesota where they purchased land. He had but a second grade education, however, he educated himself through his reading the Minneapolis paper, books, and magazines. He also had a deep interest in people and what they were doing. Even at age 80+, and in failing health, he would ask for the Daily to see what the Japs and the Chinamen were doing.

Dad served on the town board and also the school board as clerk. The men met at our house and their papers were stored in my folk's upright desk which was partially bought for this purpose. He developed a neat and fluid handwriting style and was very articulate in expressing himself. I am including here, as an example of his language skill, a letter he wrote to Jimmie Benoit. It was custom in those days for a man to ask the father of the future bride for his approval oft he marriage. So evidently Jimmie had written my folks and this is the letter my dad, at age 82, wrote in return:

Brandon, Minn. July 8, 1936

Mr. James T. Benoit

Forest Grove, Oregon

Dear Mr. Benoit

Your letter dated July 4th in which you express the desire for our consent in marriage was received today. We agree with you that this is an old established custom, but since we belong to the older generation it is natural for us to like it. Therefore, we want you to know that we appreciate the formality and give our whole hearted consent to what we hope will be a happy union.

We are getting old and we will miss our daughter very much but we will know she will be happier with a hind and devoted husband!

Mrs. Wilken and myself wish you both a long and happy married life.
Sincerely,

Bertha and William Wilken

Dad was very brave, nothing phased him. We never had a lock or even a hook on the doors. The front outside door was directly in line with the upstairs, and one night Della and I could hear the outside screen door go “squeeeeak” and we called to dad in the next room. He got up, went down to look who was there. The person had already left and we later thought it was a piano tuner (Froelund) who was kind of a bum and was looking for a place to sleep.

On another occasion, I accompanied my dad to Skiles and we had to stay overnight in “the shack. “ When we went to bed, my dad said, “We may have tramps trying to get in tonight, so I’ll take the ax along side the bed. “ Sure enough, shortly after crawling into bed, someone was at the door, but whether dad said something or not, I don’t remember, but the tramp left and went to sleep in the barn instead. And we were safe!

Speaking of tramps. At this particular time we milked eight cows-ma and I three each and dad two. Ma would zip Out the milk and the pail would get a big head of foam. Dad would drip, drip ever so slowly. He was getting older too and didn’t always clean the barn daily, and so as the saying goes, “the work piled up. “ One evening, as we were milking, a rough looking tramp came into the barn. He was about 6’ 2” and well built. My mother was afraid of both tramps and the Gypsies, but always put on a brave front. The tramp asked if he could stay over night. Ma said, “If you sleep in the barn. “ He said, pointing, “HERE” meaning behind the cows. Ma said, “If you wish!!” Did he ever get angry and grumbled loudly to himself and left.

I’m mentioning the name Skiles quite often. This farm was about seven miles southwest of our place and that my folks bought in 1903. They almost paid for it in one year with a good crop of flax. This farm was homesteaded by this man Isaac Skiles during the 1860’s under a signed document from President Andrew Johnson which we still have in our house. So the transporting of machinery, horses, hay, grain and food forth and back was a real chore and consumed much valuable time. Ma spent many hours going by buggy with Dewey (the horse) taking kettles full of cooked potatoes for the men to fry, a large ham, eggs, bread, dozens of donuts, pies, etc. to last for several days. I would have to harness the horse and bring him and the buggy to the house.

On this occasion, dad was going to Skiles to get hay with two racks. Carl was elected to help, but he offered me 25 cents if I would go along instead. So I went, but now dad had to load both loads alone, so it was dark before we left for home. On the way home, we had to go down a very steep hill and over a narrow bridge at the foot of this hill. Dad was in the lead, but it was so dark (no moonlight either) I couldn’t see his load just ahead of me. Now down this hill, I hung onto the reins with all my might, but dad didn’t have martingales (a leather strap beneath the horse’s harness to the neck yoke) on his harness. The horses, therefore, had no assistance in holding back the speed of the wagon because the neck yokes would climb up over the horse’s faces. The wagon continued to gain speed the further along we went. Somehow I got down the hill and across the bridge, but I was shaking all the way home!

Dad was also in on the butchering in the fail. The hog blood was saved for “blut” wurst. It had to be cooled down quickly or it would coagulate. After the pig was dead and gutted, it was dropped into a barrel of boiling water so as to loosen the hair which had to be scraped off. One time my dad had John Hopfner to help butcher a steer. I suppose we couldn’t waste a bullet, so John was to hit the steer over the head with an ax. The blow wasn’t sufficient to kill or even stun the animal, so it broke loose and started to run all over the yard; bellowing and with its tail in the air. Over and through fences it ran, through the garden and around the house. The two men in hot pursuit with the ax raised in the air. The steer finally petered out and collapsed in our summer kitchen platform porch. There John gave it the final blow!!!

Dad also cooked up the soap which was used for washing clothes and bodies. The used or discarded fat was placed in a large black kettle outdoors. The kettle hung on a type of tripod for support, leaving enough space underneath to build a fire. After the fat had melted, lye was mixed in and left to boil. The mixture was poured into pans to cool and solidify. After it was cold, the soap was cut into blocks and stored for future use.

During the winter months, there wasn’t any field work to do, so this gave dad an opportunity to sack up grain to take to the elevator in Brandon. A sleigh load was usually about sixteen sacks which was heavy enough for the team of horses to pull to Brandon seven miles away. If the roads were too heavy with snow, it meant breaking a new trail over fields and around woods. It was on these occasions that dad joined with three other area farmers who were known as the BIG FOUR: John Wilken (dad’s brother), Fred Meissner (our neighbor to the east) and Ernest Meissner (northwest Lake Moses). They would meet after unloading their grain, resting and feeding the horses, to quaff a few rounds of beer and to brag how much each one had thrashed. One day a Ketter joined them “at the watering hole” and he too began to brag how much grain he had obtained form this years’ harvest To which Ernest Meissner replied, “Uh, er will schon auch mit sprechen. “ Which means, listen he thinks he belongs up here with us too!!!

There were many difficult and arduous tasks the early pioneers had to battle. None was worse than the making of ice. The neighbors and families would cooperate in a “social” making ice after the lakes had frozen very hard, usually at least two feet thick. They used long saws and by hand cut through the ice, creating big square blocks which were pulled out of the open water with ice tongs. These blocks surely weighed 100 pounds or more and as the men handled the blocks; the water would splash on their clothing. Pretty soon their pants and jackets would be frozen stiff. The blocks were loaded onto sleds and the horses then pulled the load home where they again had to be lifted off the sleigh and placed side by side in the ice house where they were covered with saw dust to keep them insulated. This ice had to remain throughout most of the summer as one means of preserving some of our food supply such as milk, butter and cream. Some farmers had a well pit which kept these items at about forty degrees, but we didn’t have a pit.

This ice also came in handy for the making of ice cream. Dad would come to the door and say to ma, “If you stir up the cream, I’ll chop up the ice. “ The ice was chopped usually be placing

chunks in a gunny sack and hitting it with an ax or hammer until it was finally crushed. The ice and several hands of salt went into the bucket and he would turn the crank. At first, you could hear the cream mixture sloshing around and after maybe twenty minutes, the cranking would go harder and finally-the ice cream-the most delicious stuff imaginable. The biggest treat was to see who got to lick off the dasher. Ma just took the cream, eggs and sugar raw. Later I would cook a custard like pudding. This produced more body to the ice cream and a richer and smoother texture. We would whip up a chocolate cake while dad was churning and then we'd feast on huge plates of ice cream and the fresh hot cake. The sight of ice cream coming out of the canister and the smell of fresh cake makes me feel it was just happening today. (But, oh for the calories.)

One characteristic of my father that served him well was his physical toughness. He could be out in -20 degree weather and have both his shirt and jacket open at the collar. In the very early days, I was told, he drove a team of horses to Perham (30 miles one way) to buy a supply of flour. And he would get and take Sr. Jerome to Meir Grove where she taught. Sometimes if we drove some distance in the winter with the team, he would heat bricks in the oven, wrap them in paper, place this in a sack and put it into the sleigh for me to put my feet on to keep warm. The last years found my dad in steadily declining health for which there wasn't any cure at the time. If he felt well enough, he would sit by ma's bed and talk "a blue streak" to her. They were very much in love all their married life and their devotion to each other remained till the end. My dad was not much for church or religion. He firmly believed if a person kept the Ten Commandments that would suffice. I'm sure God was pleased how he had conducted himself in life and he died in his sleep on October 18, 1939.

A Solemn Requiem High Mass was sung by Father William A. Renner, the celebrant, Father Peter A. Lorsung, deacon, and Father John B. Wilkes, subdeacon who preached the sermon. The pallbearers were: William and Philip Hopfner, Florian, Claude and Charles Wilken and Harvey Brozek. The cross bearer was Carl C. Nelson.

The Neighborhood Families

The following area families are some of the people my parents visited and whose children were friends and/or acquaintances of my brothers, sisters and myself as we grew up:

The Gustav Guenther Family: Barbara, Dolly, Minnie, Annie, Mayme, Gertrude, Frank, Gustav, Andrew, and Rudolph

The Mike Korkowski Family: Agnes, Mary, Rosalia, Barbara, Elizabeth, Justina, August, Mike, John, Frank and Martin

The Frank Korkowski Family: Frank, Katherine, Rose, Cecelia and Aloys

The Fred Meissner Family: Emily, Lizzie, Elfa, Albert, Charlie and Frank

The Beckman Family: Albin, Jennie, Annie and one died of TB

The Pete Wagner Family: Joe P. , Math, Elmer, Aloys, Peter jr. , Lena, Rose, Barbara, Mayme, Theresa and Annie

The John Wagner Family: Mayme (Sr. Aloysia), Pauline, Minnie, Agnes (Sr. Agnesia), Evangeline, Agatha, John, Wendlin and George

The John Bitzan Family: Tony, August, Frank, George, Mike, Tillie, Annie, Mary and Barbara (Bobbi)

The Frank Bitzan Family: Frances, Pauline, Alice, Bertha, Martha (nun), John, Albert, Peter and Joe

The John Wilken Family: Otto, Walter, Etta, Clara and Aaron

Early Childhood

Now, to use baseball terminology, we're rounding third base. The preceding pages were a brief biographical sketch of the ancestral and generational accounts of our family. I will now complete this Wilken saga by relating some of my own childhood memories; a few of which are as dear as if they happened yesterday.

At age two I stayed overnight at my sister Annie. She had recently married John Schwartz. For breakfast they had huge oranges, bigger than any I had ever seen. Annie peeled me one and I began to eat it. John, teasingly said, "How about giving me some too?" I said, "Die sine nicht gut fur dich, die haven wurm. " (They aren't good for you, there's worms inside.)

One of my first memories of a neighborhood gathering was a barn dance held in our hay loft. The barn must have been relatively new and barn dances were the rage of the day. I was perhaps four years old. Adults love to tease little kids, especially if they don't appear to be bashful. Johnny's Annie told me of this event many years later how cleverly I answered the Kelly and Mullen ladies as they teased me. I failed to write down what Annie said I had answered, but I do remember running around the hay loft and having a good time with all the guests.

When I was five, a teacher at our District #72, Madge Nichols, taught me a song for a program she was putting on at the school. I came on stage and sat down in a rocker and rocked my dolly. The song I sang had these words "Hello central, give me heaven cuz my mommies' there. " After I finished, the crowd burst out with thunderous applause and I couldn't figure out what all the fuss was about. I had sung the song several times before at home, as this wasn't any different. Oh, the innocence of youth!

I suppose I was about the same age when suitors would come to see my sisters. In those days a young man would come to the home of the parents on a Sunday afternoon to visit and try to "make a hit" on their daughter. Well, Joe Hagedorn came on this particular Sunday afternoon and all he did was sit on a chair near the outside door and say nary a word. My brothers and sisters often received a little bag of candy from my parents after church. I seldom got a treat of my own. However, on this day, my folks had gotten me a bag of peanuts. My mother instructed her kids to pass around to the guests and other family members whatever food given us. Oh, I just loved peanuts, they were very precious to me. Now I got orders to pass them around and I hated to waste any on Joe Hagedorn, but I had to comply with ma's command. He took some, but offered no word of thanks. After a quiet moment or two he said, "Tony Lorsung's peanuts aren't baked enough. " That really got my dander up and I snapped back, "You aren't baked enough either. " Johnny laughed so hard, his legs stuck straight out and he left out a tremendous hoot. I failed to see the humor of it. I was too ticked off!

Another barn dance at age nine found me passing around a layer cake with nut filling. This was fun, something to do and I loved mixing with people. During the course of the evening, I kept making the rounds offering refreshments. A Mrs. Rosengren said, “You’ve been here once before already. “ This hurt my feelings as I just wished to be a useful hostess.

The Teen Years

I took piano lessons in Evansville from Anna Dahl from age 11-14; she then married the banker, Alfred Lofgren, and moved to Hoffman. The piano lessons were 35 cents and sheet music was a dime. The Dahl's had a grocery store where we traded our 15 dozen of eggs for groceries. Before giving me a lesson, the Dahl's usually treated me to a fancy lunch-something I was unaccustomed to at the time. A little dainty sandwich, a cookie, a piece of cake and coffee. If the weather was very cold, Anna would heat up water and pour it into a large white bowl and I could warm my hands so I could play better.

Anna Dahl gave a piano recital of her pupils and I won first prize. Mrs. Wahien gave a reception at her house for all of Anna's pupils. As I was the winner, I was asked to lead the rest around the buffet table. Carl Linnard won the speaking contest at this same event.

Some of the businesses located in town were: Bristol's Harness Shop, Dahl's and Schwantz's grocery stores, Ostrom Hardware, two banks, Cowden Drug and Hilda Johnson's hat store where ma and I bought some of our hats too. The Mathieson brothers lived in Evansville. One was an excellent M. D. and the other a dentist who filled my teeth. He married an actress and after leaving Evansville, they located in Chicago and practiced there.

Helen Kuhn Lane (sisters Julia, Mary and Frances), the wife of Alden Lane and a cousin to Emma (Kuhn) Roers operated a restaurant and above the restaurant sleeping rooms for railroad men. She was a bundle of energy, always laughing and joking with her customers. She would get up at four a. m. to bake eight pies, dish pans full of donuts, cookies and very tender cakes to be served during the day. At night, when we attended a dance there, at eleven p. m. she would set out huge platters of sandwiches and cake for 25 cents per person and would still be full of the dickens. Up again at four the next morning.

One scary happening I had during my many trips to Evansville with ma's Dewey. When I got into town near the railroad tracks, there was a coal shoot high up in the air where coal was elevated into the train's coal car to fire the engine. As I approached this area, a coal bucket was going up in the air and Dewey saw this and panicked. He reared up on his hind legs and kept pawing the air. I didn't know what to do! Luckily, a Mrs. Klien, wife of the blacksmith, saw what had happened and she grabbed Dewey's bridle to pull him down and got him quieted. On another occasion, as I was driving home, I was singing one of the popular songs of the day "When we two were Maying" as loudly as I could. I was just passing a tall field of corn and an Ellingson man jumped out of the corn, hands behind his back and with wild eyes looked me over. I got so frightened and I whipped Dewey to trot faster, but he refused to obey me. He would trot for ma because he liked her and he knew I was a kid and nothing had to obey a kid. Needless to say, that was the last time I sang while traveling to Evansville.

A brief word about “my home town” of Millerville and its environment. Tony Lorsung sold groceries and dry goods. Ma bought Annie’s wedding dishes from him. We also traded our eggs for groceries too. So Aunt Emma Kotschevar would ask me every time she saw me, “Lagen die henner gut?” Implying, if they did, that we would buy more groceries from Tony because he was Aunt Emma’s son-in-law. I was getting fed up with this question, so I finally answered, “Die lagen alle zwe’s eier. “ That was the last time she asked, so she got the message. Peter Lorsung had a harness shop and also sold shoes. Another Lorsung (Dicka) operated a saloon and butcher shop. Matt Stariha had the dance hall and saloon. Another saloon keeper was Valentine Thoennes. Frank Buscher owned the bank (father of George in Alexandria) and Jacob Thoennes was the blacksmith.

It was at Millerville where we attended church and where our relatives are buried. It was at this town’s Catholic Church that I was baptized and received my catechism instructions. My parents spoke mainly English, but enough of the German language remained with my older brothers and sisters. However, German was the only language spoken in church and I was admonished to learn the prayers in German, namely the Our Father, Hail Mary and the Apostles’ Creed. I refused to learn the catechism in German, so Father Wippich labeled me “sauer kraut Yankee. “ I got orders from ma to learn the Apostles’ Creed in German and OH it didn’t make any sense. I would try to go as far as I could “Ich glaube im Gott der Vater, die allmechligist schiffels Himmel und die Erde” and then I’d get stuck. I didn’t want to let on to ma that I was still having difficulty, so I’d go into the next room and beckon

Carrie by wiggling my finger for her to come and help me out. “How does it go again?” I finally got it tight, but have long forgotten the words or the meaning.

Another silly incident I remember from Catechism. We were sitting at our desks. Ahead of me sat Annie Gluba and she always turned around and looked at me. She kept repeating this for an extended period of time and I had enough of this nonsense. So I said to her, “Du bist verruckt” meaning you are crazy and she began to cry. Father Wippich calls out “Gluba, was ist verkehrt” (what’s wrong) and she replied in Polish which I couldn’t understand. He said, “Sauer kraut Yankee, kumm raus. “ I got a patsch, patsch on each cheek! Then I said “Well, she keeps turning around and looking at me!!!” So it was “Gluba, kumm raus” and she too got a patsch, patsch on each cheek. This was the first equal opportunity program.

When I was fourteen or so, ma sent me with a supply of food to Skiles. Balthazar Wagner and Andrew Brozek were to build our barn there and I was to cook for them. Well, after the initial bottom frame had been secured, Balthazar said he needed someone to help raise the rafters. I didn’t have any means by which to drive home seven miles for help, so I was involuntarily drafted. The sill from which we had to work was fifteen feet in the air, so somehow I had to clamp one arm over this sill to keep from falling to the ground below. Andrew Brozek was on the opposite side of the barn. The two of us had to hoist the rafters so Balthazar could nail them in place. What a job for a young girl! When I wasn’t needed as a carpenter’s helper and cooking, I did fancy work (crocheting and embroidering) and have the dresser scarf to this day (1994). The

barn stood for many years on the open prairie, withstanding many storms, so we must have done a sound job.

“School days, School days, oh those golden rule days . . . “ The main thing I remember about my school days at District #72 was that I loved to sleep in the morning. In fact, I remained in bed until the very last minute. I didn’t have time to eat breakfast. All I had time for was to wash, dress and fill my lunch pail (a syrup pail) full of sandwiches, a dill pickle, cake, donuts and, in season, an apple. Then I would run full speed, making those long legs go as fast as possible towards the school 2 1/ 2 miles away. Most of my older nieces and nephews should remember this route. From our farm place west to where Walter Wilken later lived, northwest through this yard and woods, north to the Johnson woods and then again west to the school yard. Sometimes I would hear a lone wolf howl, it sounded so eerie, but they never bothered me.

Then at lunch time, I would be starved, so I stuffed down as much as I could without anything to drink. On this particular day, I was stuffing myself as usual as fast as I could, but I also wished to play “pum-pum-pol-o-way” a game where the students line up and race to the road and back again to the school to see who’d be the winner. The rest of the gang had finished their lunch and I was still chewing away. Well, what to do? I still hadn’t eaten a piece of rhubarb pie from my lunch pail, so what did I do? Iran outside, took the rhubarb pie and threw it against the school wall above the door. To my embarrassment, the pie clung to the wall, the evidence remained for a long time afterwards.

Mike Korkowski and I were good at playing ball and also at running bases. The bat we used was a wide board with a hand-chiseled tapered end to grip. We also played “anti-i-over”. The teachers I remember having were: John Kelly, Amanda Rosengren, Anna Lund and my sister Della.

Learning was quite easy for me. I like language, spelling and physiology. I hated history! What did I care who had lived, what date they had done this or that and what their names were. Arithmetic did prove to be a challenge at times. We had a White’s Arithmetic book and it contained many difficult problems to solve. If I got stuck, I’d ask Rosalia Korkowski to help me out and she’d zip, zip it down for me. The answer often consumed a whole page! I enjoyed problems that dealt with yards of cloth or bushels of grain-that made everyday sense, but not numbers which covered an entire page.

On the way home from school, I suggested to the Frank Korkowski girls, Katie and Rose, if we could exchange sandwiches left over from noon lunch-to see how each other’s choke-cherry jelly tasted. Etta, my cousin (who later married Dr. Victor Eastman, a dentist), and I would pick choke cherries, wild plums and even sumac to eat playfully on the way home too. We weren’t in any rush to get home.

I also walked to school whenever I stayed at my sister Annie’s home. One morning it was

raining heavily and Albin Beckman was taking my teacher, Amanda Rosengren, to school with a single buggy with a top. He picked me up and she put me on her lap. This surprised me because one day in school, I felt something crawling behind my ear. I reached for it. It was a wood tick and I was deathly scared of anything that crawled, so l left Out a horrifying scream! She grabbed me and shook me so hard that she tore my blouse.

I graduated from this school by passing the County Board tests which all students were required to pass if they wished to continue their education. I'm including my report card for you to see the difference between then and now.

Barbara Bitzan (Bobbi) was my friend from the Millerville area, I was at their farm place many times and she and her brother would come to our place too. They lived northwest of Lake Moses "in the hills" and very stony soil, but the family was exceedingly warm and friendly. They all loved to giggle a lot. One time I stayed overnight and Mrs. Bitzan was in the process of making "shtick cases". As the very dry cottage cheese ripens, it smells terribly awful. So thinking I didn't know anything about the making of this type of cheese, Mrs. Bitzan tried to hide it so I wouldn't smell it. First, they hid it in the bedroom under the bed. Then when they discovered I was to stay overnight, she had to retrieve it again and store it somewhere else. In the morning she mentioned to me what she was doing, and I said "Oh, I know all about it, my mother makes it too. " And they laughed and told me how they tried to hide it around the house, attempting to conceal its odor so I wouldn't think it was their house that stank so.

Their house was always spotless and Mrs. Bitzan always placed oodles of food on the table. Behind the house was a huge garden surrounded with cut grass. There were rows of strawberries, raspberries, gooseberry plants, a high-bush cranberry grove and of course apples and a patch of melons. If I had already taken one kind of sauce, she'd say in German, "Maybe you'd like some gooseberry sauce?", or if I was eating a melon, "If it isn't sweet enough, put some sugar on it. " Always smiling. always good-natured.

Bobbi was an exceptional self-taught artist. She painted many beautiful pictures of which I have one hanging in our house. It's an oil painting about 2 feet x 1 foot in size of a pine tree against the lake with the sun setting in soft dark shades of green and black with touches of gold for the setting sun.

Bobbi and Tony came to see me one Sunday afternoon with the intention of teaching me how to drive a car. I got behind the wheel of their car. The route chosen was around the block-a four mile trip down the mile stretch, passed where Math Hockert's lived, passed Carl's farm, Pete Wagner's and home again. Well, I started out not knowing the first thing about steering a car. I would turn the steering wheel too much and I would then head for one edge of the road, then to compensate, I'd overturn to the opposite direction and head for that edge (thank goodness there were no steep ditches). The two Bitzan's would giggle and laugh at each mistake and the more they giggled, the worse I drove. Even passed Carl's farm, I was still going edge to edge. But we made it home and I did learn to drive. My dad never learned nor did he show any interest in learning, so I became

the principle driver to church, visiting relatives and taking the cream and eggs to town. Our first car was a little Buick that my brother Willie "hung" on to my dad. It was an awful excuse for a car. All it had was two seats and an engine. No door or windows. In later years we had an Overland, and a Paige. Both cars didn't have much power and needed to be shifted for any incline. However, in the early years of our marriage, we had a blue 1929 Pontiac. One night my dad and I drove to Carrie's farm to celebrate Blanche's birthday (April 1). We left for home at one a. m. and this car just zipped up Landa's hill so effortlessly. The ride and the feel of this car was so exhilarating. I could have driven all night.

One more of my driving experiences. I had taken my folks to Annie's and Carrie and John Hopfner were there too. John had recently bought a model "T" Ford and the urge hit me if only I could take it for a spin. So I asked John and, he being a good sport, said, "Sure, but be careful!" I took off and drove to Bobbi Bitzan's and visited for a bit and then started back again to Annie's. As I was driving past a Meissner farm, they were herding cattle in the field. It was the practice of farmers to run cattle in the fall to glean young grain shoots left from the harvest or to graze along the road. However, as I was approaching this area, this herd of cattle saw me and they, not being accustomed to seeing a "hors-less carriage", made a mad rush towards me. I thought, if I "step-on-it", the car would outrun the cattle. But the car didn't have any pep and a young steer ran underneath the Model "T" and held it up so I couldn't move. Well, what's a young girl to do? I tried to get the car to move, but the wheels were off the ground and the more I tried, the more the young calf wiggled beneath the car. So I sat there, stunned as to the predicament I found myself in. Luckily, Bobbi and her dad came along and they helped lift the car off the calf. When the poor calf was finally freed, it gave out a loud bellow, and with its tail in the air, ran for dear-might to catch up and to the safety of the rest of the herd who were standing a short distance away observing this commotion. I returned to Annie's. John could see something had transpired since he last saw his car. I never did confess to any happening, so this may be the first time any of you hear about it fresh from the press.

Cattle seemed to be my youthful nemesis. When I was much younger, I stayed by Annie's a lot. Instead of walking the long way on the road, I'd take the shorter path through a neighbor's pasture. When their cattle would see me, they'd come charging full speed. I would run for all I was worth to the fence line, throw myself on the ground to crawl under the barbed wire. Sometimes it was nip and tuck that I made it.

We had company almost every Sunday afternoon. My brothers and sisters would often stop after church services to visit their parents and to play cards, usually "500". My dad could play all day long, especially if he got the Joker frequently. Then they'd pound the table so hard, the whole house would shake. Ma insisted on using a white linen table cloth that fit our table setting for twelve. Then she'd wash the cloth and it was my duty to iron it, starting at age 12. Ironing in those days was a real backbreaking job. The irons were heated on the cook stove and with a wooden handle and a metal plate below, I'd slip this into the iron and carry it to the ironing board. You could iron with it until it cooled off. Then you reached for another one. If the irons were too hot, the cloth would scorch; if too cool, the wrinkles wouldn't come out. This table

cloth was also very long and awkward to handle and I would wrestle with it until “it had to be perfectly smooth”, only to be dirtied up again the following week. The company didn’t help with the dishes, leaving after the 5 o’clock meal. So I wasn’t enthused about having company every Sunday.

In later years, we had company and ma, at this time was no longer able to help with the house-work. I was busy most of the afternoon getting food ready and they also left me with a stack of dishes. I thought, “the heck with it,” I’m just going to leave them until morning because I’m tired. I had barely relaxed when it went bump, bump, bump on the door. It was my cousin Barbara with her trademark, giggling. All the cake had been eaten by the afternoon’s company, so I whipped up a cream cake for lunch. They stayed, laughed and visited till three the next morning.

Before I continue to other subjects, here are a few bits and pieces on the food that I liked or disliked. I hated “poten” (hog hocks). Dad did an excellent job of scraping the skin void of any hair bristles, but we each got one huge “potion” with the skin and all. And it looked ugly! But I got orders to eat it. I also had a deep dislike of chicken noodle soup. To make the eating more exciting, I decided to slurp the noodles into my mouth with the ends slapping against my nose. This, too, came to quick stop. But I loved donuts. One day while helping ma in the old summer kitchen, I fried while she rolled out the dough and cut them ready for frying. I ate seven right from the hot fat. I would put cream on ginger snaps and because they disappeared so fast, ma put them high above the cupboard. Now, I had to climb up and stand on the work shelf to reach them. Ma made the best Chow-chow in a small black stone jar and I would help myself during the day. Shtink kaess was my favorite food, and Johnny’s too. After the dry cottage cheese finishes fermenting and has turned transparent, it is cooked with cream to make a very smooth textured body. None of the original odor is left; just a soft creamy spread. I’d cut several pieces of bread and slap on generous amounts of the kaess and eat to my heart’s content. No wonder I was seldom hungry at mealtime.

Perhaps the main reason we traded in Brandon was because no one was going to get the best of my mother financially. We had taken our cream to the Millerville creamery first and the price was good. After a month or so, the price kept going down. So ma said, “Take it to Evansville. “ In Evansville, the same scenario, so to Brandon where we got a good price and it didn’t change. We stayed with the creamery, as did my husband and son Jimmie until we no longer had a dairy herd.

Some of the businesses located in Brandon during my youth were: Annie and Kappy Pehan’s restaurant. Annie was a good cook and baker and they had a successful business. Repeelius’ had a dry goods and excellent grocery store. Here ma bought fresh peaches. Peaches and cream were a new and popular dessert at this time. Bill Meissner was the grain buyer and later Joe Lorsung. Dr. Meckstroth, MD saved many pregnant ladies during the flu outbreak, but he couldn’t save Mrs. Tony Lorsung (Ann Kotschevar) and Mrs. Ferdinand Dobmeyer (Adelaide

Roers' mother) because of a fierce snowstorm. He didn't have the means to travel to their homes. In these harsh times of poor roads and cold temperatures, doctors made house calls all hours of the day or night, either on foot or by horse and buggy, before the event of the automobile. My cousin, Fr. Renner, was the pastor of St. Ann's in 1910. Also Emily Seidlinger married George Drexler (brother of Joe at Millerville) a banker, and she a teacher. She later became the postmistress at the Post Office. Young George chummed with Bill and Phil Hopfner while they lived on the farm.

During the summer months, whenever I took the cream into town, I would stop off on my way home for a swim in Little Chip. The road then followed the western shoreline and this was the original site of Old Brandon. My dad pulled an old elevator building from Old Brandon home to the farm where it became our chicken house. The outside walls were made of 2x6's laid flat and with long spikes (12 inches) driven into the boards. It also had a second floor for storage. WAnyway, this spot was also the gathering place for Sunday afternoon picnics. My relatives would get together here; the men would catch a mess of fish, clean them. The women would fry the fish; some brought bread, cake etc. And we went up to Lund's for coffee water because the Lund cattle also used the lake for their natural habits.

John Hopfner's had moved into Brandon during the early 1920's and they lived in the house that Irvin Meissner and still later Ted Olson owned. Anyway, John became seriously ill with a large boil on his neck. Carrie had been caring for him day and night, so she asked me to help her out I went into town with my brother Johnny and a wagon load of wheat. The weather was cold and windy, the road being frozen, added to our discomfort. I got to Carrie's house and she asked me to take the train to Alexandria to see Dr. Haskell. Doctors office was above the drug store. He asked me how the boil looked, the coloring and if there was a pus head forming. He thought my report over and said, "Good! Now I know what to do. I think I'll wait two days before it's ripe enough to lance. If I lance it too early, he could die from the poison spreading into his body. " He waited two days, then took the train to Brandon and did the operation in the house. The house was so cold, Carrie got up several times during the night to keep the stove burning. John's bed was in the living room close to the stove so he'd be a bit warmer because of his infection and fever. Our headboard was next to the window and Carrie and I froze like puppies. In two days, after Dr. Haskell lanced the boil, John was walking the street!!!

The Joy of Music

Undoubtedly, the happiest period of my life was the months I spent in Fargo, North Dakota attending the Conservatory from January to June. For this culturally deprived gal a new day was dawning, the sun was rising over a grand musical horizon for me. I was embarking on an exciting and interesting journey into something wonderful! A new world filled with challenges and opportunities awaited me.

I loved to play the piano and classical music was my second nature. I had played Haydn, Mozart and had started some Beethoven with my Evansville teacher, Anna Dahl. Because of this advanced training, the head piano teacher, Mrs. Aslaug Olsen-Wright, wanted me as her pupil. Lessons were $1.50 each!

Besides learning the piano pieces, I took courses in Harmony, Ear Training and Musical History. There were about sixty students in my class when we started the classes, but after a few weeks, this number dwindled to sixteen; Harmony was the culprit. Each day a new rule was given; if you play such a note, then only this note can follow. All these rules had to be memorized because we were required to write music as a class assignment. In Ear Training, a note is sounded and from this note you should be able to read the remainder of the piece. Musical History dealt mainly with composers of the different musical periods: Baroque, Classical and Romantic. I was assigned a young pupil to practice with on becoming a piano instructor.

When Father Renner celebrated his first Mass and reception in Alexandria, I stayed with the Augustine's. Tracy was the organist at the church and the choir wished to sing a particular song. She had the song, but in the wrong key. She said, "I'll have to walk 10 blocks to Mrs. Leach's house (her teacher) and have her transpose this song for me into the requested key. " I said, "Oh, I can do that for you because of my training at the Conservatory. " She was much relieved because it saved her from venturing out in -20 below weather.

All music had to be memorized-Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelsohn and Chopin-each hand alone, and when totally perfected, then both hands together. I practiced at least 4 hours daily and some times more. Because of my advanced training, I could have completed the four year course in 2-1/2 years. All the students were required to listen to records once a week and in the spring the advanced students would present a recital. I played "Polonaise Militaire" by Chopin.

All pieces were by memory. If I had stayed to complete the full course to graduate, I would have had to travel with the orchestra to different towns and cities as their accompanist. If the orchestra conductor decided to play a selection in a different key than the notes written, I would have to transpose the new notes in my head as we moved through the piece. This would have been most difficult. Also as a requirement of graduation, the student must give a recital

and play a Concerto of at least 70 pages all by memory!

The Conservatory was located in Stone's Music Store building. The store was on the first floor, the second was empty and my school was located on the 3rd floor. This is where I received my class instructions and practiced the piano. The other orchestra instrument lessons, plus singing lessons were also given here. Off to the side, looking down through large doors, was a ballroom dance area. We would sometimes watch the couple whirl around the floor.

My teacher insisted that all her pupils attend the musical concerts in Fargo. I was only given $5.00 spending money per month, so in order to make this money stretch, I bought the cheapest stockings and I was too proud to wear overshoes. The Conservatory was just off Broadway and the Dormitory was a good mile to the south. I had to walk this distance several times daily as breakfast, dinner and supper were served at the dorm and classes and practice time was at the Conservatory. In the process of walking without overshoes, I froze my toes!

Several names come to mind from my Fargo days. Viola Larsen was a piano student from Fargo. She would buy a bag of chocolates and eat them on the way home, and if I was walking with her, she'd share with me. Dora Dyer was another piano student I knew quite well and a Clara Eaves who had a beautiful Soprano voice. Mr. Albert. Stephens taught the string instruments, was the president of the Conservatory and the Conductor of the school orchestra.

No name is more etched in my memory than that of Pearl Levitz. Pearl was a violin student at the Conservatory at the same time I was there. It amazes me how well we hit it off together. I was just an ordinary farm girl with a love of music and this perhaps framed our relationship. Her father owned a furniture store on Front Street. My folks told me later that a Mr. Levitz had walked by foot through the Millerville area peddling shoe laces and sewing thread. He later had saved enough money to buy a horse and buggy and then sold kitchen utensils and cloth. This frugality afforded him the chance to venture into the furniture business.

I'm going to be bouncing around a bit in telling her story, but this incident fits while I'm talking about the store. Pearl bad a terrific gift of gab and a real sassy, twangy voice. She was clerking. Two men came into the store wishing to purchase two folding chairs. Now, in a Jewish store, prices are not marked on the item. They asked "How much are the chairs?" She said, "$1.50 a piece." The men paid for the chairs and left, she laughed. She knew there was a circus in town and these men were visitors. If they had wanted more chairs, she would have charged them the correct price of 75~ each, but since they only wanted two chairs and she also knew they wouldn't store hop, she hit them for double the price. Then she laughed and held the money up high in the air and danced a happy jig, "See, I made an extra $1.50!!!"

Another example of her "in-your-face-style". Pete Schirber from Millerville and friend of my future husband, Joe, came to Fargo and called me to see if we could spend the evening together. We met at church for Devotions. Then he took me to a movie. I told him I needed to be back at the dormitory by 9:00 p. m. or the door would be locked. We left the movie before the end and

he walked me to the dorm. I tried the door and since it was a few minutes after 9:00, the lady had locked the door. So I called to Pete, who already was half-a-block away, to come to my aid and walk me over to Levitz's house. When I got there and told Pearl what had transpired, she grabbed the phone and called the lady at the dorm and let her have it with both barrels!!! I couldn't help laughing to myself how Pearl could shrink this lady down to size. I got into the dorm and had no more problems with her after that.

The Levitz' lived in a beautiful stucco house south of Front Street. I spent many interesting hours there, in fact it became my second home. I seldom saw Mr. Levitz-but on one occasion I saw him sitting in a chair and he was always jerking his neck. So I asked, "Does Mr. Levitz have arthritis?" Pearl and her mother just "hooted" because that jerk is an indication of a Jew thinking over a business deal.

Pearl had three sisters: Della, Etta and Jenny and two brothers, Albert and Jacob ~a key). Her mother had a deep voice and distinct brogue. One time Pearl had become angry during a family dispute and said, "Honestly, I'm going to take poison. " The mother said, "Listen Laura dear, she's crazy. " Pearl played the violin well and I would accompany her. Etta played the piano too. The Conservatory always posted notices of upcoming musical attractions. I didn't have much money and Pearl never refused a bargain. She suggested we get 50~ tickets to see and hear the New York Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of the noted Walter Damrosch with Joseph Hoffman as guest concert piano soloist. We were perched way up in "the nigger heaven," but I didn't care where we sat. I was too emotionally enthralled with the orchestra, maybe 60 violins all in sync and the musicians in their black suits. What a treat!

Onetime I was at Levitz' when they were entertaining guests. I had Harry Lashowitz, an attorney, on one side of me and Jakey Levitz on the other side entertaining me in conversation. I felt so honored for an 18 year old girl to be receiving so much attention from such learned people. Harry Lashowitz married Etta Levitz and my brother Willie, while in the bank in Kulm, read about a case involving Harry. He was the defense attorney for the accused. A man involved with murder. The man's finger prints were on the gun, his blood on the victim, and yet Harry was able to get him freed. He became the best noted lawyer in the area. His son, Hershel, became mayor of Fargo in more recent years. Jake became the owner of the family furniture store.

The Levitz' family, being Jewish, were very loyal to their kind. I remember a sickly man given breakfast at their table. And Mrs. Levitz would prepare a plate of dinner daily for a poor lady who lived close by. Pearl and I took her the food one day and all she had to sit on was an apple box. However, the family was honored to have me, a Gentile, as a guest in their home and a friend to Pearl.

Pearl visited me at our farm place and we have a picture of her milking a cow out in the pasture east of the house. She liked my dad, for he too had a gift of gab and loved to tell stories. She was very true to her Jewish faith, so no pork or pork products. Ma had baked a Lemon Pie for dessert and because lard is contained in the crust, Pearl would not partake. After dinner, the pie

was stored in the stove oven and during the course of the afternoon, while the rest of us were in the living room, Pearl was overcome by temptation-the oven door went squeeeeek-and she snitched herself a piece.

Through the years, I lost contact with Pearl. She called once a long time after I had married. She had married a wealthy man who, at the time, was a manufacturer of men's trousers and they lived in Cleveland, Ohio. A lady friend of Millie's, Greta, knew of the family. Pearl and her husband donated large sums of money to the Synagogue in Fargo. There is a large portrait of Pearl and her husband as you enter their place of worship. I talked to Greta on Millie's and Carl's 50th wedding anniversary (about 10 years ago) inquiring what she knew of the family, but I'm sorry to say I never wrote down her husband's name nor any of the enterprises in which he was involved.

Meanwhile, Della had been teaching in the country schools and taking summer classes to upgrade her certificate. This went too slowly, so she enrolled at Moorhead State Teachers College at the time I was at the Conservatory. She wished to complete her degree so she could teach in town. She had joined the Glee Club at the College and wished to develop her voice more fully and to do so, also took voice lessons at my school.

While in Moorhead, she met a soldier Bill Rasmussen and I had met Phil Nelson, a pharmacist at Christiansen's Drug. Bill invited us to a Military Ball given by his unit. I was his partner, and Phil took Della. We marched in procession into the ballroom and we were treated to a grand evening of dancing and a smooth, rich sounding orchestra. Phil loved classical music and had a trained voice.

While in the company of the Levitz', I met a dentist by the name of Leo Vogel. He could sing well even though he didn't have a trained voice. Leo took a liking to me. He loved music and I was at ease with the piano. Well, after I had returned home to the farm, Leo continued to write me letters. But I never received them. Dad would sit by the south window and look towards Math Hockert's for the mailman to come. When he saw him coming, he would get the mail. Ma would say, "Is there a letter for Laura?" If there was one from Leo, in the stove it went. I asked her, several years later if she ever destroyed Leo's letters and she did confess. "It would have been just terrible for you to marry a Jew!" How did she know we would necessarily get married, we were just good friends interested in music. Anyhow, Pearl would write to me, hoping I would drop Leo because if he and I had gotten married, it would have been her fault and the Jewish community would have ostracized her. "And so the ball bounces!!!"

When I began relating the story of my Conservatory days, I said that I started in January and the classes continued till June. I came home for the summer months to help my parents on the farm with the full intention of returning to Fargo in the fall. However, when fall arrived, and I was to return to Fargo (I was ready to board the train), my mother cried so pitifully. I was the last of her children to leave home, the rest having married (except Della who was teaching) and established families and interests of their own. She was already in failing health and the weight of all the

years of her struggle to survive and succeed in life had sapped her energy and she knew she no longer had the will to cope with the dark days that lie ahead. She felt alone and abandoned. She was about 60 and dad 66. I stepped back off the train and returned home to assist my parents in their declining years. My parents had made great sacrifices in their time on my behalf. Now it became my duty, as I saw it, to return “in full measure” what they had given our family. Now the sun began to set on my musical journey and a dark shadow surrounded me as I contemplated my future.

Back to Square One

A year or two after returning home, I heard that Alma Gluck, noted soprano, and Efrem Zimbalist were coming to Fargo. This was in the dead of winter. Joe took me by team to Brandon where he left the horses in Hopfner's barn and Carrie accompanied us to Fargo. After returning home to Brandon, Joe and I went home by sleigh. I froze so, I begged him to stop at Guenther's, but I knew they had a big house which would be cold too. We got home where I still froze and then the next day we attended Mrs. Meissner's funeral at the German Lutheran Church northwest of Millerville. I never thawed out till spring.

I started giving piano lessons during the next few years. Some of my students were: Blanche Hopfner, Helen Wilken, Evangeline Wilken (John's), Viola and Elfa Meissner, Annie Hockert, Helen Jones (a teacher), Eleanor Koeplin and Melvin DeBuzan who was an excellent student. A Conrad Knarel brought his daughter and said she could take lessons if he could hear what I could play. So I played "Rondo Capriccioso" for him and I passed the test.

In later years my son and I played duets together. He advanced through the second grade level, but lost interest when the field and yard work took up more of his time.

When I was still in Fargo, I saw a picture of Enrico Caruso on the wall. The most handsome man I had ever seen and I thought If only I could see him in person let alone hear him, I would be so happy. Well, I saw an ad in the Minneapolis paper that he was coming to the city. I asked my sister Annie if she'd go with me because she also loved classical music. He was the greatest tenor that ever lived. She had some of his recordings on their Victrola, so we knew what a grand experience we were in for.

The auditorium was a new building at the time. When we got into the building and showed our tickets to the ticket takers, he would say further down and further down and further down. Annie said, "Oh my, we should have gotten better tickets. We'll never get close enough to see him. " We kept on moving and low and behold we wound up on stage sitting on kitchen chairs. Caruso came out from a corner of the stage and stood about 25 feet from where we were sitting. We could see his side view and his chest would expand eight inches. He was a heavy set, well proportioned man. He could hold high notes until you'd think he would burst (and later he died because of the strain on his vocal chords). His voice was powerful, yet rich, sweet and tender, so much so that I cried so that the tears ran down my cheeks. It was fun watching his accompanist too. Before he sat down, he would flick his coat tails up. A violinist played several numbers to spell Caruso. The ladies were dressed in fancy evening gowns and wore corsages. This was the greatest treat and experience in my entire life. Annie and I stayed at Delia Levitz' house. Her husband was a fruit broker and he gave me the heartiest hand shake I've ever received. Oh yes, ticket prices for the concert ranged from 50~ to $20.00 for the box seats. Our tickets were $4.00.

The day after the concert, Delia served us breakfast and then we had to wait for the train to take us home again. We should have asked Delia where there was a restaurant, but I had no thought of food, I was filled with the music from last night's concert. Annie kept saying, "Oh my, I'm so hungry, oh my, I'm so hungry!!" Finally I spotted a little place that looked as if they served food. They only had teeny fancy sandwiches cut in triangular shapes on a plate. Annie woofed these down and looked for more. On the way home, we finished some of our lunch we had taken along, but this didn't quench her hunger either. All the way home she kept saying over and over again, "Oh my, I'm so hungry!" When she got home, I think she must have eaten everything in sight.

Joe and I attended the Eucharistic Congress in Chicago the summer after our wedding. We stayed at Annie Woida and her husband's, a Maroteck acquaintance from Millerville, home. Went by street car to the Celebration. We never got into the Stadium proper because we didn't get up early enough. If you wished to get inside, you would have to get up at 3:00 a. m. to be included in the Stadium itself. One day a young man, a relative of the Maroteck's, said he would take us because he knew Chicago like the back of his hand. Well, he got lost and drove into the Negro district. Big, fat mama's sat near the curb with a flock of kids roaming around. He got scared and so did we!

We stood outside the entrance to the stadium to watch the dignitaries arrive. There was a long impressive procession of Cardinals, Bishops, priests and nuns, plus an honor guard of 4th Degree Knights and members of the Order of Foresters of which my husband was a member. Then there were the usual banners, flags, canopy and the main celebrant carrying the Monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament. The whole ceremony consisted of the Mass, Sermon and Exposition. We had to stand for hours at a time in the hot sun. One day, as the procession was approaching, Joe lifted me up so I could see. When he let go, the crush of the crowd was so intense that I was stranded in mid-air and couldn't touch earth again for the longest time.

One day we heard there was to be a parade, so we went to see it. We had a good spot to view the parade, but the buildings were very tall and the humidity extremely high, plus a huge crowd of people around us, causing me to faint. Joe grabbed me and carried me into a store when the owner gave me some water to drink. And I revived.

While in Chicago, we also took the opportunity to see a Major League baseball game between the Cleveland Indians and the Chicago White Sox in old Cominskey Park. The seats were rough wooden planks. Joe had played baseball in Millerville and loved the game. I played ball in grade school and my brothers played ball east of our house on the farm. So I too enjoyed the game and still watch the Twins on TV. I couldn't stay for the entire game as we had been invited to Horken's. She was Della's teaching friend and she came with Della one Thanksgiving to the farm and remained for a week or so during school vacation. To return our hospitality, she asked us to their home which was beautifully furnished. Her two sisters owned a hat store and Horken wanted to "doll" me up by getting me a hair appointment and a new hat. Well, I had to leave the game for my appointment; took a taxi alone through Chicago and got to the hair dresser a few

minutes too late, so she refused to take me.

Before we left for home, we had dinner at Marshall-Field's. The dining room was several floors up a spiral stair-case and the room itself had a charming atmosphere. The customers looked to be mostly business people. We had plank steak (very juicy and tender) and stuffed green peppers with a hot filling. In Minneapolis, Joe looked up a Roers relative who had fourteen children. He worked for The Great Northern as a switchman.

Before I continue on to another subject, I need to say something about my going to dances and what I say will cover the span of several youthful years. I could hardly wait to go to dances, but my mother wouldn't allow me to go until I was sixteen. My brothers and sisters had been going and I was impatiently awaiting my day too. Most of the dances I attended were either in the upstairs Brandon Hall or at Matt Stariha's in Millerville.

As a young girl, I met Henry Satterlie from Evansville. He being Scandinavian and I German, he asked me to teach him German. All the German he knew was "Ich habe em lange nase. " (I have a long nose) which was indeed true. I danced with Odell Johnson who lived half-way from our place towards Evansville. He took me home once. A polished gentleman! I knew a Peterson (Alexandria drug store pharmacist) who was considered to be an excellent dancer. There was a dance contest at Matt Stariha's hall to see who was the best couple. He came like a bullet to get me as his partner. As he was certain we would win. But Clara Stariha was the niece of Frank Buscher, the contest's judge, and her partner was Lloyd Schwantz of Evansville. They won, which proves that politics was already at work in those days. Anyhow, Peterson was disappointed that we didn't. The Hands Orchestra provided the music.

A Borgin (can't recall his first name) lived close to Evansville and he continued taking dance lessons in Minneapolis. His dancing was far different from any I had ever witnessed. The foot work was extremely fancy with intricate steps, dips and whirls. I could follow him flawlessly. One time later, at a dance at the Brandon Hall, Johnny's Annie said to me, "There's one in the back who is eyeing you. " in her soft slow drawl. It was again Borgin and I was the only one he danced with that evening which made some of the Brandon gals green with envy because they thought they were hot stuff compared to me, a farm girl!

The biggest community work project was our annual Church Bazaar (total slavery). The meals were prepared and served in the old wooden frame church which most of my nieces and nephews should remember. Father Siegler was the pastor at the time and he demanded a dinner to be served on Sunday noon; a supper served that evening and another dinner the following day. Now mind you, the ladies cooked on wood-fired stoves in the heat of summer. The kitchen work area was located in what was the sanctuary of the former church and was jammed with stoves, tables and bodies. Not only were the stoves used to cook potatoes, vegetables, coffee, etc., but also to heat the water to wash the dishes.

Each family was requested to donate a given amount of food: homegrown chicken (10 lbs.),

cream, butter, pies, cakes, bread, a bingo prize and kitchen money. Ladies came the day before, ground up the giblets for dressing and stuffed all those chickens. Remember too, this in the day of no refrigeration!!! The chickens were taken to various parish homes in the morning for roasting and then returned to the hall for serving. Some were kept hot in the kitchen ovens until used. The work was divided into different departments. Some did the potatoes, cut the chicken, cooked coffee, cut pies, etc. The younger girls of the parish waited on tables. The service was family style.

Immediately after the dinner food had been served, dishes washed and tables cleared for bingo, the ladies preparing the evening meal, warming up leftovers and adding fresh to make enough for the next crowd. The following day, the same ritual for dinner. Thinking back to those days, I don't understand why no one got ptomaine poisoning because how could we keep the food from spoiling in all that heat and no means to cool it. Truly, the good Lord must have been watching over us.

My folks wished to visit the Hockert relatives at Freeport, Minnesota. I drove the car for them. These Hockert's were cousins of my mother. To get this straight-Joseph and Nickolas (Bertha's father) were sons of Johannes Hockert. Joseph was the father of Peter and another Nickolas Hockert and these two Hockert men married and lived at Freeport.

Peter Hockert had two daughters, Della and Lena. This Hockert family dressed commonly and spent everything on food. Della married Mike Reiter. They were both short in stature and as wide as they were tall. Mike went into the country one day and came home with a whole car load of watermelons for two people. They had a shallow cellar beneath their house, hence the steps to the cellar was also shallow. There was an oak beam across the opening as you descended the steps. Mike would hit his head on this beam and leave out a loud "Grrrrrrr." He and dad visited together and instead of answering yes, Mike would lean forward, raise his eyebrows, stick out his lips and make a "Ummmmmrrrr" sound. I laughed myself silly just watching him. Later when Della died, her sister Lena married Mike.

Nickolas Hockert had some of the following children (I can't recall them all, but the ones that we associated with over the years) were: Srs. Nickolas and Harvette, Fritzy (hardware store), Dr. Harvey (dentist), Clara and Annie. This family was dark skinned and thin. They liked fancy clothes. Their mother was a cousin to George Herberger of the clothing chain. Sister Nickolas came to our house before she became a nun, in a sailor hat with a veil and fashionable suit. She tossed this aside to become a nun. But before becoming a nun, she kept house for her parents until they passed away. Because she was older, the order of St. Benedict didn't want to accept her. She didn't have training as a nurse or teacher, but they accepted her anyway and she was the receptionist for the Motherhouse at St. Joseph, Minnesota for many years.

We had no electricity until 1929. Our house light was first a kerosene lamp by which to read books at night and I often read a story to my mother. Ma couldn't see well enough to read. She had gone to several eye doctors for help. They would give her a pair of glasses; she'd wear them

a few weeks and then discard them because they made matters worse by giving her headaches. I now believe she had cataracts and there wasn't any method of correcting that problem. But she enjoyed my reading to her. Later we had gas lights and they sooted up the glass chimney surrounding the flame. Della, who was home only during vacations, objected to cleaning the glass. So she and ma insisted we get electric lights. Joe and I had just bought a new car that year, so we weren't in the mood to spend $500.00 for Otter Tail Power to provide us with electricity. Della said she's pay $75.00 and ma promised $60.00 and we got hooked for the rest, Otter Tail wanted four families to sign on before they would build the line. A neighbor to the east wouldn't allow Otter Tail to build the line through their woods, consequently, they had to come up from Uncle Nick Hockert's (one mile to the north of us which made the line more costly). I believe Gabriel Wagner, Mike Korkowski, and John Schwartz joined in with us. A few years later the price dropped to $130.00 and still later free of any charges. Then one day, Otter Tail came to us with a proposition. If we signed our line over to them, they would maintain us service; if we didn't, then we'd be stuck with any repairs on the line. Since we didn't have the tools or the knowledge to repair electrical equipment, we donated (as it were) our line over to them.

Our son, Jimmie, was born September 30, 1931, just before the days of the Great Depression. Luckily for him, he grew up happy and full of energy because he had no way of understanding our circumstances. I'm not going to spend much time on the depression because most of the next generation experienced it even though, as youngsters, you may not have felt the full emotional trauma and financial impact. Joe and I had been married six or seven years when the banks closed and we lost whatever savings we had. The closing of the banks and people losing their money had a lasting effect on people's lives-they no longer trusted the financial institutions with their money and because of this, their money was hidden somewhere at home. This is where the saying "cream can" comes from. The cream can was buried in the ground behind some building or in the woods to be unfound by snoopers.

To make matters worse for the farmers, a severe drought took hold in '34 and again in '36. Joe had to sell most of the cows because there wasn't enough feed for them. Lots of farmers were in the same fix, consequently a deluge of cattle hit the market, depressing prices even further. The government then offered to buy the cattle for $12.00 a piece. Willie Lund was our trucker at the time and he told Joe his cattle were too nice and they should bring more than the government price-he should sell them instead on the open market. If they didn't bring the $12.00, he, Lund, would make up the difference. Lund had to make good on his promise. Hogs at the time were $2.00 and eggs 6~ per dozen.

The wind blew constantly and the land was parched. The temperature remained over 100 degrees for days on end. The dust came into the house and literally inundated the place. You could write your name on any piece of furniture. Some people hung wet blankets over the windows to keep the dust out. The only spot I could hang out wash was west of the granary where it was somewhat sheltered from the wind and usually hung it out in the evening when the wind subsided slightly; left it hang overnight and took it in the first thing in the morning before the wind picked up again.

Joe tried to save the growing grain by hauling straw pile manure over the field to anchor the roots. He purchased hay for $20.00 a ton, which was mostly cattails and rushes. We never bought anything during these years so as to save the farm. I had raised a few turkeys and sold them for $17.00 hoping to buy some clothes with the money. In the fall Joe said, “I need the money to pay the real estate taxes.” Somehow we pulled through this difficult period by personal sacrifice and self denial; two important virtues lacking today.

The Concluding Years

I cannot conclude this book without mentioning something about the Goehner family. Aunt Lizzie was dad's sister. Another sister, Mary, married a Hetzel and remained in Racine. However, we had more contact with Aunt Lizzie and her three sons: Julius, Gus and Willie. They would come to the farm and remain for an extended period. One time little Gus was by us, ma caught him drinking cream from the can in the well house. She swatted him on his seat. He said, "Aunt Bertha, what'd you do that for? This is good stuff"

The Goehner's were allergic to work but loved the good life and music. One time Mr. Goehner was taking part of the family to a concert and young Gus wanted to go too. "Well," Mr. Goehner said, "here's my last 50t, he might as well come along. " The family moved to Petaluma, California. In the early 1950's, Willie, his wife and mother-in-law stopped in to see "the Wilken clan" in Minnesota on their way to visit their daughter in Michigan. In the evenings Johnny's Carrie and maybe some others gathered for a concert. Willie played violin with a local Civic Orchestra. His folks had spent thousands on him for music lessons. Anyway, I accompanied him as we played "The Holy City" and then he played several pieces by himself, which was enjoyed by all.

The ladies wished they could experience a thunderstorm while in Minnesota. It just happened to be unbearable humid this summer night. I suppose we went to bed around midnight. The lightning and thunder kept creeping closer-finally ZIP-CRASH. The lightning flashed-followed by a fierce jolting of thunder. This continued all night till morning. The ladies had had enough!!! This was the last major contact we had with the Goehner family. I wish to include a letter young Gus wrote me in 1920 from California, written with a distinct fluency and humorous expressions that were the family trademark.

Petaluma, Calif. Feb. 15th, 1920

Dear Cousin;

Well I have no excuse to make for not answering your nice Xmas greeting to us all. But I really thought you owed me a letter, and did not answer because you had lost interest. Well we are all still in the land of the living but mother is sick with a bad cold. We have the "flue" here in Petaluma quite bad Churches, schools, lodges, in fact all meetings of any kind are closed. Up to date we have been free of it and hope we don't contact the malady, as yet there have been no deaths. I hear it is quite bad back East and hope you all stay free of it. We sold our ranch some few months ago, and are living in Petaluma now.

It was either you or Laurita (he means Etta Wilken my cousin and neighbor) who promised to send me a picture of some good looking old maid of 25 or 30 years not more or less. I am

still in the market, and this is leap year too, the “fates” save me. I hardly know how to write to a young lady, as men folks are more in my line, so if I don’t write just right, you might put me right, and ask all the questions you wish, wise or other-wise, silly, funny or indifferent.

We have had quite a cold dry winter here, only about four inches of rain up to date, it is the driest season we have had in twenty years, dry inside and out. Only water to drink and it is not good. And Oh! My! the prices of things. Eggs at almost a dollar a dozen, butter at 75t a pound, potatoes at $5.00 per sack’ apples at $3.00 per box, and vegetables are a rich man’s luxury a poor man ‘s jewels. Hail the “great President, “ who was to make the World free for “Democracy, “ he meant, A-dam-mock-er-acy. I think it seems it is only free for the big profiteers and improving daily. The slogan up to date seems to be down with the one who toils and up with the dollars and the rich-man’s laws.

I suppose you have had a hard winter too. We are having regular Spring weather here now. Flowers are springing up everywhere in spite of the high prices. God makes all things perfect and good, and selfish man undoes all that is good, even stealing the plenty which the good Lord provides. The doctrines of religion are only a disease of the mind nowadays. Most every one has it, but don’t practice it much, at least it is not over-worked, as far as honesty and justice, here on earth are practiced.

We are all making a living and that is about all but have hopes for the future. Will and I took a trip into Oregon last summer; gone three months, covered 1800 miles in all What we saw of that State did not impress us much. We thought of buying a small farm there, but excuse us, no Oregon for us, too damp and cold, and not much good soil. Some parts are all right, but land is high where it is any account. We like Monterey, Calif. about the best of any place we have been. Will is straining every gut to make a living giving violin lessons, making violins and playing out. Julius also is making violins, and helping now and then in the Photo Gallery. It sometimes keeps Father, Mother and brother busy. I am repairing all stringed instruments, phonographs, cameras and player pianos. Our house rent is $15.00 per month for a small house of five rooms, lights and water extra.

The styles here are the same as in Minnesota, the women wear clothes and the men trousers, only there is quite a rage here in low cut necks, and high skirts, you can’t tell from the rear, and at a distance, the age of the chicken, it might be an old hen. Yes, Petaluma is some town for chickens, they have them on Xmas trees even. So you can see by the movies if you are lucky enough to see our Xmas street celebration. The “Boy Goats,,, excuse me I mean the Boy Scoots, no that is not right either Boy Scouts, have a time here, they are our health officers, marking the corners of each block’ “Don’t Spit, - burn all rubbish How on earth are you going to spit when the blooming country is dry and rubbish to burn, who ever heard of such a thing rubbish is worth money nowadays. We wear rubbish, eat it, and pay high prices for it If they had said burn all luxury, that would have been different, some of the rich men of the town could have had a fire then.

I would very much like to visit you all and get reacquainted, with all you big folks as my last impression is a rather old one, some 20 years or so and of some rather small and noisy kids, red cheeked, and full of "pep." I still like to hunt, fish and wander in the fields and woods, as I love beautiful nature, good books, music flowers and little children. Will enclose in this a picture of Will and myself on our start to Oregon last summer. And other pictures of interest as well Will says I sent you some before, I think not. Did I? Well I think if you answer this letter word for word I will receive some letter from you. Will say goodbye for now. Hope this finds you all in the best of health and spirits. With love from us all to you all have some of the others write also, it will pay them. I am as ever you loving Cousin.

As Ever

Gust R Goehner

1017 B. St.

Petaluma, Calif.

In the years following the 1940's, I visited Della, Carrie and Willie five times in Oregon. Della lived in Forest Grove near Portland so all were close together. She had many of her teaching friends in town, and they extended a warm welcome to me too. In 1949, Della and Jimmie took my son and myself on a trip through central Oregon, down to Crater Lake and then along the coast homeward. We were up to Mt. Hood, Portland's Rose Garden and the Grotto of Our Sorrowful Mother, a breath-taking adventure of beauty and reverence. Oregon is a magnificent state. Oh, how my dad would have enjoyed the beautiful scenery, mountains, the ocean and the landscaped yards! Carrie did housekeeping for priests before retiring and concluding her years with Blanche and her husband Joe Smith. Willie remarried in 1951 to Ruth who proved to be an excellent addition to the family.

Della would come to Minnesota nearly every summer, especially as long as ma lived. I would play the piano and she would sing. I asked her one time, "what is your favorite type of music?" She thought for a while and said, "Sacred Music." I had though so because she put her heart and soul into every note. . . she sang in her church choir into her 80's. the last time I saw her was February, 1976 when she and Carrie came to Minnesota and I was already living in Fergus Falls with Jimmie. My husband, Joe, passed away February 1975 and I left my farm home to live with my son.

I have to the best of my ability at age 95, tried to remember these stories and happenings from 1902 through the 1930's. This period is the most important part of my life, historically, because it carries forward the perseverance and dedication of our family's legacy which I, in turn, now wish to pass on to succeeding generations.

Music remains my primary love, but seven operations, including two hip replacements, a broken wrist, cataracts and high blood pressure keep me away from tinkling the ivories. I look forward to concerts on PBS which are getting less each year. My favorite artists are Itzhak Penman, Zubin Mehta and of course the Van Cliburn piano competition. I've kept old concert programs in a box and yesterday I counted how many I had attended throughout the years, 66, and I know some must be missing. I look forward to visits with my remaining nieces and nephews and I try not to complain too much to them and say I'm fine. Jimmie clipped out a poem from an old "The Echo" which describes my condition perfectly.

There's nothing whatever the matter with me.

I'm just as healthy as I can be,

I have arthritis in both my knees

And when I talk, I talk with a wheeze. My pulse is weak and my blood is thin.

But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

It think my liver is out of whack And a terrible pain is in my back.

My hearing is poor, my sight is dim

Most everything seems to be out of trim, But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

I have arch supports for both my fret

Or I wouldn't be able to go on the street.

Sleeplessness I have night after night

And in the morning I'm just a sight,

I'm peacefully living on aspiring

But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

The moral is, as this tale we unfold,

That for you and me who are growing old,

It is better to say, I'm fine with a grin

Than to let them know the shape we Ire in.>

(author unknown)

As I stated previously, I'm "95 years young" as this account is being written. Although I have visual memories of much of my childhood, this task was both pleasurable and at time5 exhausting to think back clearly and recall how something really happened and all the names of people I once knew. I'm still living with Jimmie in Fergus Falls and he has been most helpful to me in my declining years. So I take leave of this task with the works of the song from "The Lilies of the Field. "AMEN, AMEN, AMEN, AMEN, AMENI!!!!"

These are Thy wonders; Lord of love,

To make 'us see we are but flowers that glide;

Which when we once can find and prove

Thou hast a garden for us where to bide.

"The Flower" by George Herbert

Eulogy

We pray that the faith the early settlers brought to this community continue to be nurtured and grow. We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer

We pray for our families, for the sick and elderly relatives that God may comfort them in their trials. We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer

We pray for the residents in Nursing Homes that they may be cared for. For the staff and caregivers that they may provide continued love and assistance to those in need. We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer

We pray for the Wilken, Hockert, Roers and Koeplin families that they may feel the presence of God's love. We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer

We pray Our Lady of the Hills will continue to guide our actions and to protect this area from harm. We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer

We pray for Laura that she may witness Christ's welcoming embrace and eternal peace with the faithful departed in heaven. We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer

I'm glad to see so many familiar faces in attendance this morning. You honor us with your presence. Thank you for coming.

I wish to thank your pastor, Father Lemm, for his generous hospitality and gracious consent to my Mother's desire to be buried from her home parish. Thank you also for assisting in the many details and answering my questions concerning the service. Your help has made this a beautiful occasion.

Thanks to Father Joe Korpf, our pastor at Our Lady of Victory in Fergus Falls, for taking time from a busy schedule to assist in celebrating the Mass for my mother and delivering the beautiful homily. Father brought communion to our house many times, twice a month he says Mass at Pioneer Home. He anointed Ma after her first stroke in January of 1995 and again the Friday before her last one. The morning of her stroke, he came and said the prayers of the Church for the dying. One hour before she was to pass away, Father came without being called, and said the concluding prayers for someone who has died. He stayed with me until she passed away. last night he conducted the prayer service at the Olson Funeral Home. You certainly took good care of mother and she always responded with a big smile when she heard you were coming to see her.

Thanks to our soloist, Pam from OLV, for singing ma's favorite religious song "The Holy City". She-would play the piano and Della would sing it until the walls vibrated.

Thanks to your organist, Rose, and to the choir for leading in song. Your music filled the church with warmth and joy. Thanks to the pall bearers for your presence today, Thanks to our relatives on both sides of the family for your many invitations, family gatherings, prayers, visits, calls, flowers, food and friend-ship throughout the years. Ma loved you all.

And finally, thanks to this parish, the surrounding community, our neighbors at the farm, especially the Allie Korkowski family, and those at RusDic Manor for your kindness, help and friendship shown to my parents and to me during these many years. May God bless you all.

We are gathered here this morning not only to pay our last respects to the mortal remains of my mother, but also to witness the passing of the last of the 3rd generation of Hockerts who immigrated to his country in the 1860's from the little German village of Schwemlingen in the Saarland of western Germany. Only surviving member of this generation is Tillie Hockert Reynolds.
According to the late Msgr. Lorsung who spent many hours tracing family history, Nickolaus Hockert's wife, Anna Boesen (I'm using the German pronunciation) is presumed to be the 3rd person buried in our church cemetery. The reason for this uncertainty surrounding her death and burial in 1869 is that no church records were kept until the establishment of a permanent pastor in 1876. A Rev. Francis Pierz (for whom Pierz, Minnesota is named) was instructed by his bish-op, Bishop Cretin, to walk from St. Paul to Millerville where he then heard confessions, baptized infants, held marriages etc. Also the first Mass was celebrated at the home of the John Miller's. From Millerville Fr. Pierz walked to what is now St. Lawrence near Rush Lake and from there to Long Prairie where he remained for several years ministering to both the settlers and the native Indians.

A question we may ask of ourselves this morning is - what motivated the Nick Hockert family and other like families to leave their native land and to come to America? Was it because they heard of free land and that money was scarce in Germany, or were they denied the freedom to dream of a better life for themselves and their children and that opportunity lay across the ocean? Whatever their reason, it must have been a heartwrenching decision for them to leave behind aging parents, brothers and sisters whom they would never see again and to journey across a vast ocean and to spend 7 long weeks on the water before reaching New York with a wife and 4 small children. They must also have been aware that many could and would die during the passage from various diseases. In fact, Historians tell of whole families perishing before they arrived in New York. They sacrificed their privacy as each family huddled together in cramped quarters. Also what provi-sions, what family treasures would they be allowed to bring along. But "Wenn der Papa sagt, Mir gehen zu America, mir gehen!!: Kinder mach shnell."

And so the family came up the mighty Mississippi and spent 2 years in St. Louis where Nicholas's sister, Barbara, had arrived 2 years previously. Then it was on to Minnesota where they settled

on the east shore of Lake Moses, the present home of Dennis Hockert. There was no Welcome Wagon Hostess to greet them, but rather the harsh reality of frontier life. There was no church, Mass or sacraments, no school or country doctor, no roads but trails through the woods - and for neighbors, total strangers bound together by a common language (German) and faith (Catholic) and the need to survive. After erecting their log houses, their first priority was to build a church and a school as the hub of their new formed community. They also reserved time for duty, responsibility, commitment and a love for family, church and community. We here today are mightily blessed because of the strong faith, courage and commitment of these early settlers of our area whether their names were: Hockert, Wilken, Miller, Weber, Buscher, Wagner, Dobmeyer, Hopfner, Zwack, Lorsung, Cichy, Freske or Koeplin.

What guided these immigrants to leave their native land and endure the hardships of pioneer life? Perhaps, just as a star once guided the Wise Man to Bethlehem, a star of destiny must have guided these families to this peaceful area of good rich soil and void of earthquakes, floods, hurricanes and war and where their seed, long planted in the earth of our cemetery, has grown and blossomed. And we today are the fruit of their labor and sacrifice. Our journey's today are often taken with the aid of brochures which spell out in detail what we are about to see. Theirs was not a journey of sight, for they ventured forward into the unknown, theirs was definitely a journey of faith, a faith not only in themselves as individuals and as families, but more importantly, a deep and abiding faith in Cod that His guiding hand would see them safely through.

The Wilken family originated from Mecklenburg, near Berlin, and Johan Wilken and his wife, Hannah, and 3 Kinder came to America in 1851 and settled in Racine, Wisconsin. William was born in this country and came to Minnesota in the early 1870's. He married Bertha Hockert in 1878 in the little log church here at Millerville. To this union were born: Anna(Mrs. John Schwartz), Willie, Johnny, Carrie(Mrs. John Hopfner), Della(Mrs. James Benoit), Carl and my mother Laura(Mrs. Joe A. Roers). The descendants of Annie - Laura and Louise - have passed away and never married, Della didn't have any children, and Mother's branch of the family is also rather bare, being I'm the last twig. But the descendants of Willie, Johnny, Carrie and Carl have made up for these deficits and we are indebted to them for doing so.

John Donne in one of his sermons written in the 1600's says "No man is an island unto himself, but is apart of the main. When the Church baptizes a child, that action concerns me because that child is here connected to that body of which I am a member, and when she buries a man, that action concerns me too, for any man's death diminishes me. Therefore1 when the bell tolls, ask not for whom it tolls, for it tolls for thee." When the bell tolled for Anna and Nickolaus Hockert, it was already tolling for our Grandpa William, for our Grandma Bertha, for my dad Joseph and my mother Laura, but also for me. I was wondering, as I was writing this down, what Nickolaus and Anna would say to us today as they view this response, beautiful church, music and a concelebrated Mass. Perhaps it would be a simple "Ganz schon". But they may also add the idea that hope must triumph over adversity. For this is a wisdom tutored by life itself, about the seen and the unseen, about things that change and things that are changeless.

I believe we have all heard the expression “the fork in the road or the road not taken” - a time at which we make a choice that will ultimately change the direction of our lives. Mother was presented with this choice in her teen years She began taking piano lessons at age 13 from Anna Dahl in Evansville and at about 18 she attended the Fargo Conservatory for 6 months. The following fall she was to return to Fargo to continue her musical education. However, her parents were getting up in age and her mother was ill at the time. So mother, already at the train station, turned back and returned home to remain with her parents. She cared for her parents until Grandpa died at age 86 and Grandma at age 97. Again the theme of duty, responsibility, commitment and love enters the picture. Why? The answer is quite simple - for many of us gathered here this morning - God doesn’t ask for volunteers to perform a task. He hands us the ball and whispers, “Go for it”. So we, in the lives of our various families have our own instances of “the road not taken” because we too have heard and listened to the “voice of the distant drummer”

On the eve of August the 9th, 1996, Jesus entered Mother’s room and stood at the foot of the bed and said “Laura, you have labored long and faithfully in my vineyard, now come with me to your new home - an eternity with me in heaven”.

May Laura and all the faithful departed rest in peace!