

John's Story



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My Life Story

What follows is my attempt to transfer to paper the story of my life as I, now 86 years old, remember it. I'm sure much has been forgotten, but I am quite confident that the people, the places, the times and the events that I refer to in my writings were significant and typical of the shapers of who I am in ways I am unaware of or can only imagine.

I was born September 10, 1931, to Adolph Rueben Anderson (always Rueben, never Adolph) and Adella (Della) Elizabeth Kuhn Anderson in Brandon, Minnesota in the county of Douglas. It was and remains an area of wooded hills, open meadows and fields, numerous sparkling lakes and frequent cattail-surrounded sloughs and marshes. Most of its inhabitants were of Scandinavian or German descent with pockets of other nationalities in the surrounding rural areas. In the hills south of Brandon was a region often referred to as Little Finland. Near Leaf Valley, Irish names were common; names ending in *ski* were frequent in certain townships. Almost all were Lutherans or Catholics, and the same is true today. This area and yes, its special people, will always be home to me and to this day continues to beckon me back.

I was the third child and the first son born to my parents. I was given the name John (both of my grandfathers were John) but grew up as Jack and remain Jack to the people who knew me in those early years. Eventually, there were five Anderson kids. Laverne Maria, born April 7, 1928; Kathleen Ann, born November 3, 1929; John Leroy, born September 10, 1931; Alice Mathilda (my dad's mother's name) born November 12, 1932, and Marvin Dennis, born October 7, 1934. I don't believe any of us were born in a hospital.

Except for Laverne, who sadly died in 1956 from complications related to juvenile diabetes, we have all been blessed with good health, remain active, and live in our own homes enjoying our children, grandchildren, and great grandkids. Blessed are we.

As our birth dates indicate, we were born into the Great Depression, which extended from the Stock Market Crash in 1929 and into the early 1940's in much of small-town America.

As a child, unlike the adults who lived in these times, I can't remember being greatly concerned about or even aware of the extreme worry and anxiety that was undoubtedly present every day of these difficult years. Unaware perhaps of their impact I suspect, like the adults who lived through the Depression and the war years of 1941-1945, they left their mark on the children of this era as well.

Compounding the dismal economic conditions of the 1930's was the severe weather that covered much of the nation. Drought, bitterly cold winters, and stifling summer heat resulted in poor crops and low prices. Many lost their farms, their businesses and their homes. The term "Dirty 30's" truly describes these trying years. Thousands of people fled the dustbowl of mid-America hoping for a better life in California. Many desperate men became hobos, or as they were often called "bums," begging their way across the country. "Riding the rails" west, south, or wherever. These poor individuals would often appear at our door asking for a handout. My mom, ever giving, would always find something to share. A few potatoes, a tomato or two and maybe an egg would become their supper, cooked in a tin can in the stockyards at the edge of our little town. So, it was.

Then the third major event of my early years began, World War II. Although war had been raging in Europe for some time, we became fully involved with the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese on December 7, 1941. Living in a house without electricity or a radio, we were told of the attack by Hazel Pladson, one of our good neighbors. With the statement "This day shall live in infamy," President Roosevelt declared war on Japan. The entire nation was quickly mobilized. Everyone was urged, was expected, to do their part. A familiar slogan was "Uncle Sam wants you."

One of the most noticeable effects of the war was the disappearance of almost all of the young men from our cities, towns, and countryside. Millions volunteered; millions more were drafted into military service. As the nation quickly moved to a wartime economy, the depression began to wane; the hardships of the depression were replaced by the stress of having sons

and, yes daughters, in the military with all of the dangers inherent to wartime service. Among the many lives lost were three young men from our small community: Earl Sletto at Pearl Harbor, Roy (Swede) Christensen in China, and Vernon (Bud) Smedstad in Italy. Others suffered wounds or injuries that continued to take their toll for many years after the fighting had ended.

Some recollections of the war years:

- Families leaving Brandon for the shipbuilding centers on the east and west coasts and to the war plants that sprang up around the nation. What happened to you, Gerald and Duane and to you, Betty and Donny?
- Rationing of almost everything: gas, tires, oil, sugar, meat – you name it. These could be obtained in only strictly regulated amounts. Every car had on its windshield a sticker bearing the letters A, B, or C indicating how much gas the owner was entitled to.
- Drives to collect scrap metal, old tires and such to support the machines of war. To find an old tire was to find a treasure.
- A weekly period in school when students could buy war stamps for ten cents each in support of the war efforts. I was never able to buy because I never had a dime.
- Middle aged and older men marching up and down the main street of Brandon ostensibly in preparation to serve as air raid wardens.
- Townspeople spending summer evenings helping farmers harvest their crops as America was called upon to feed much of the world fighting the Axis powers in Europe and the Japanese in the Pacific.
- The somber faces and voices reporting the news during the early months of the war when there was real concern as to who would 'win.'
- Endless messages ("propaganda" we would now say) designed to elicit the support of all the people to help save America from the Nazis and the yellow horde. Very

much a part of these efforts were many songs and movies designed to generate patriotism as they entertained.

- Finally, who could forget the endless repetition of the phrase “Lucky Strike Green Has Gone to War”? I’m quite sure it did little to aid the war effort, but it did give a certain tobacco company a lot of exposure as it switched its familiar green package to one of gleaming white.

My Mom and Dad

I have very little knowledge as to the circumstances that brought by mom and dad together. Details of first attractions and courtship were never discussed, and I made no inquiry. To me, as a child, it wasn't an issue. They were simply my mom and dad. They were good to me as a child and that was sufficient. I was well into adulthood before it became for me a subject of interest. Only then did I begin to wonder how this relationship had come about. What were the circumstances that brought together this man and woman separated by seventeen years and living in communities between which there was very little interaction? What brought together this man, the son of strong Swedish Lutheran parents and this equally devout Catholic woman of German heritage? In 1927, this was something that just didn't happen. I expect there were deep misgivings, disappointment, some anger and some tears among members of both families as the result of these two deciding to become one.

Kipling is sometimes cited as the author of the lines "East is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet." I think that most people in rural Minnesota in 1927 would have agreed that this marriage just wouldn't, couldn't, shouldn't have occurred, but it did. Yes, the Lord moves in mysterious ways. To this day, and perhaps forever, the answers to my "how" and "why" questions will remain a mystery. Something to muse about, still interesting, still perplexing, still unanswered. Most importantly, they were good parents to all of us. Having so little, they gave us so much. Certainly, their marriage and life together is a wonderful testimonial to their commitment to each other, to marriage, and to the children resulting from their union.

My dad was born September 30, 1887, to John and Mathilda Anderson. He grew up on a farm about a mile and a half southwest of Evansville, now bisected by Interstate 94. The Anderson family were successful farmers acquiring and raising crops on a considerable acreage. My dad was the youngest of four boys and had an older sister Manda and a younger sister Ebba. My dad sometimes would talk about the farm and the presence of numerous hired men, and the thirty horses needed to farm the many acres. At about the age of five, he stepped in

front of a mowing machine and suffered a serious wound just above the ankle. The Evansville newspaper reported that he retained the use of his leg only because his dad refused to let the doctor amputate the foot. One result was a slight limp that remained throughout his life.

Dad attended a country school, and I once heard he had attended a business school in Fergus Falls. However, I know little else about any education beyond country school. I speculate when I say Dad never had a great desire to farm or that his childhood injury might have caused him, unlike his brothers Franz and Carl, to pursue a life off the farm. He must have developed an interest and liking for a new invention of the age, the automobile. He became a mechanic, a good one, and throughout his life he showed the ability to fix or make just about anything. He had his own repair business and there was no shortage of work. But few had the money to pay for parts or labor. You might say that the longer and harder he worked, the poorer he became. Like many others caught in the depression, he lost his business.

The well to do Anderson family also fell onto hard times. A failed bank in which Dad's father had considerable money invested and was directed by the husband of his oldest daughter, like hundreds of others, became bankrupt. The failed bank, drought, and low prices brought this once well-off family to the verge of losing it all. When my grandfather passed away, followed a year or two later by my grandmother, the land still being farmed was done so by two of my dad's older brothers. I don't know the particulars and Dad never complained, but it appears he was prevailed upon to "sign off" on payments that were to be made to him. If he hadn't, in all likelihood, all would have been lost.

My dad was a gentle kind-hearted man. Kind to both my mom and to us children. He was rather quiet and certainly not boastful. Rarely do I remember him being angry, swearing, or even raising his voice. I expect all who knew him would have thought of him as a nice man. I knew little about him or his life before I became aware of him as Dad. What were his dreams, his wishes, his disappointments? What things he had done, what

he considered fun, what jobs he worked at. All belong in the realm of the unknown. Neither as a child nor in adulthood do I have a recollection of conversations about subjects such as these.

During much of my life beginning in about 1940, Dad seemed to be plagued with various health problems. Often, they seemed to defy the ability of doctors' efforts to diagnose. Terms I remember included stomach trouble, nervous stomach, nerves, tiredness, etc. I'm sure that in the present time he would have been prescribed one of many medicines used to treat chronic depression. I expect Dad was just overwhelmed with the stress and strain brought on by the times and the needs of his wife and five young children. And perhaps at some level, the disapproval, real or imagined, of family and friends because of his marriage.

My mother was born on a farm just north of the village of Millerville to John and Mary Kuhn, the eighth of nine children. (This farm has been designated as a Century Farm having been in the Kuhn family for over one hundred years. Its present owners are Ken and Mary Ann Kuhn, Ken being the son of my mother's youngest brother Fred). My mother was a great storyteller and often entertained her brood with stories of her childhood and growing up years. I can remember many of them and how much they were enjoyed by all of us. These sessions will always be part of my file of happy childhood memories. Books may have been scarce, but we were blessed with a great story telling Mom.

Although small in stature, she had both the physical strength and the mental toughness to care for us during our early years and later through Dad's health-related problems. She was the glue that held it all together. By example, by word and by prayer, she taught us that there is a difference between right and wrong, that all actions lead to consequences, and that we ourselves are primarily responsible for what happens to us based on the choices that we make. During many of these stress-filled early years, Mom suffered from severe migraine headaches. One of my earliest memories of my mother was her carrying on during these attacks with a cloth tied tightly around her head, wet - not cold, to slightly (at best) reduce the pain and nausea.

Much of her strength and ability to cope, I believe, came from her unshakeable faith in God. With her strong beliefs, she was devoted to imparting the same to her children. She taught us our prayers, and we attended mass each and every Sunday and every Holy Day and often in between. Sunday evenings were spent learning our catechism in anticipation of Monday morning instructions conducted by no-nonsense Father Kinsella. You could say that when the church was open, Mom thought we should be in it.

When I was about in eighth grade, Mom became the school cook, a job in which she remained for many years. With the school on the western edge of Brandon and our house on the eastern edge, she walked many miles getting to and from work. Mom was an excellent cook, and she liked to cook.

For several years Mom spent summers preparing meals for a very wealthy family that owned an extensive vacation site on a lake not too far from Brandon. Nervous at first because she didn't know if she could cook for such "fancy people," she found them very complimentary to both her menus and to her food preparation. For the first time in her life, cost was not an issue, but it took some time to become comfortable with spending more for the meat served at one meal than she was used to spending to feed her family for two weeks.

Mom loved to cook and to bake. Without recipes, she made wonderful meals. She often said, "If I have plenty of cream and butter, I can make almost anything taste good." Perhaps this line of thought prompted Mom's response when one of my sisters questioned Mom's liberal use of butter and cream. Mom replied, "You can't make a good chicken salad with chicken shit." For our mom, that was a strong, strong statement even when made in jest. Mom never used such words. It was a revealing example of her goal, her need, to always make things taste good.

A few years after my dad's death on one of our visits to see Mom, my Uncle Louie was there and the two of them announced their plans to marry. Uncle Louie had been married to my mother's younger sister Dora until her death from cancer several years earlier. Members of both families couldn't have been happier. After the wedding Mom and Louie moved to Clarrissa,

Minnesota where Louie and Dora had lived. Mom and Louie just became parents of a larger number of children and grandchildren. The marriage was truly a blessing that brought together two great people who enjoyed years of good times together. They shared many fun times with Uncle Conrad and Aunt Angie, also residents of Clarrissa. The foursome often traveled, fished, picked blueberries, and picnicked. I do believe these were some of the happiest days of my mother's adult life.

It is doubtful that this wonderful marriage would have come about without the 'help' given by Dora. Apparently sometime before she passed away she placed a note in the pocket of Louie's overcoat, a note that was found that fall. In her note, Dora told Louie, "Do all that you can do to care for Della." What a wonderful testimony to the closeness of the brothers and sisters of this family and the depth of their support for each other.

Sometime after Louie's death, Mom became a welcome guest of us children. She would live with each of us for a few months at a time interspersed with visits to keep her sister Nora company in a little town in North Dakota during some of the winter months. My mom passed away in early March of 1995, while visiting at our house a short time after returning from Dakota. Her death was sudden (abdominal aneurysm) and unexpected bringing an end to her plans for moving into an apartment. She was 91 years old. My wish for all children would be that they would be blessed with such loving and caring parents. Having so little, they gave us so much.

My Early Years: The Little House

Although my parents might have lived in other places for short periods after being married, the first years and until about 1942 or 1943 we lived in a little house on the east end of Brandon. The little house was indeed tiny, four rooms – two downstairs and two upstairs, with a little lean-to. Here were the kitchen stove and a table under which wood was kept. There was also a small alcove where coats and such were kept. This area was shut off during winter nights and during cold spells, the water would freeze in the water pail. There was no electricity, no running water, and obviously no plumbing. The floors were covered by clean, but well-worn linoleum. Some people had battery powered radios; we did not. During the winter the house was heated by a round, potbellied wood burner. The exposed pipe ran up through the ceiling through a bedroom and into the chimney.

It was around this warm stove pipe that we kids hurriedly dressed on winter mornings. On many nights my dad would sit in a rocker near the stove keeping it fueled and watching for fire dangers. Early in the morning he would be up to light the kitchen stove to help heat the house and to cook meals. The cook stove contained a reservoir that when burning, was our source of warm water.

One of my early chores was to bring in wood and stack it under the table in the lean-to kitchen and to make sure that the water pail was full. Much of the time our water came from a neighborhood well about a half a block away although during the really cold months Dad carried water from the city well uptown. During the winter water for washing clothes and bathing was obtained by melting snow in washtubs placed on the kitchen range. No wonder there was an expression “A woman’s work is never done!”

The dining area occupied much of one of the downstairs rooms. It also contained a cupboard for dishes, kitchen tools, silverware and a few regularly used staples. I remember crawling up onto the little countertop divider between the top and the bottom sections to get at the box of pills in a little bowl on the very top shelf (I think they were Carter Little Liver Pills). Candy

was scarce and sugar was sugar! I would suck off the outer layer of sugar and, yes, return the pill, now lacking its outer layer, back into the bowl.

It was around the kitchen table that we gathered not just for meals, but to spend fall and winter evenings. Mom would be working at something: darning socks, mending tears, or sewing on buttons. Dad would often be reading a 'western' magazine, popular at the time. We kids play cards or maybe read a library book from school. Some nights we popped popcorn we had raised in our garden. I can still remember how good this warm buttery treat tasted.

After learning to read, I developed a real liking for the stories in Dad's cowboy magazines, always being careful to avoid the occasional "hell" or "damn" that might appear. They were on the list of bad words that were never to be spoken. The adventures described in these magazines became fodder for many of my childhood dreams.

At night a single kerosene lamp was placed in the middle of the table producing light enough to illuminate a circle of about seven to eight feet in diameter. It also dictated family togetherness. You sat around that table, or you sat in the dark! Remember, no TV, no radio. We also had a gas lantern that we kids thought produced fantastically bright light, but that was used only on special occasions. Kerosene at that time cost about 16 cents per gallon.

The other downstairs room contained the parlor heater, a dresser with winged mirrors, a buffet for Mom's good dishes and linens, a rocker, and a few straight-backed chairs. Lastly, an old Edison wind up phonograph, a leftover from better days and for us kids, a treasure. It provided us with marching music ("Royal Battalion March") or singalongs such as "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen" or "Whispering Hope." Needless to say, with three or four kids vying to run things, worn records, and old needles, the sound was not great, but it was our Carnegie Hall. It provided food for the soul and fulfilled the need to own something special. It was the one item that we had that was not directly related to meeting some basic life need.

One of the two rooms upstairs was my parents' room shared with my younger brother and me who slept in a large crib. The eaves were equipped with a long rod that served as a place to hang clothes for us all. My three sisters shared a bed in the other room, which also held a large chest of drawers storing various items of clothing. One more item 'graced' this room: an enameled pail with a cover, the night jar, the chamber pot, the name usually shortened to just "the pot." With five children, darkness, and the distant outside facilities, certain necessities trumped all of the negatives associated with use of "the pot."

There was one other significant area, the cellar, accessed by way of a trapdoor in the kitchen floor. With dirt walls and floor, it contained the wooden shelving bearing the many jars of vegetables and fruits canned by my mother. This was our supermarket. I have no idea how we would have survived those years without this storehouse and the tremendous efforts of my mom and dad in raising, harvesting, and filling those jars so that we might have food throughout the long winters. Across one end of the cellar was the potato bin. Each year it was filled up with potatoes from our garden. These potatoes were not always appreciated by my older sisters and myself. Each winter we would be dispatched to the cellar to remove the sprouts that would appear about mid-winter. It was a job we hated, the bin seemed gigantic and the potatoes unending in number. Being in foul moods, arguments and a few thrown potatoes would often result in an elevated level of parental supervision.

Although some people had ice boxes and a few were acquiring refrigerators, we relied on our cellar as our 'walk down' cooler as well. Somewhat effective during fall, winter, and spring, it was of little cooling value during the summer. We used it because it was available and the best we had. No, there was no ice water, no ice cream, and no cold milk; but then, how do you miss something you never had?

Our garden, I'm sure magnified by my youthful eyes, seemed huge. Even now as I view the area it occupied, I would describe it as being impressively large. Both Mom and Dad spent many hours with the hoe, fork, and cultivator preparing, planting, weeding, picking and preserving what grew therein. As kids we

frequently spend summer mornings assisting in its care. Not always willingly did we perform our tasks. Viewed through our youthful eyes, it wasn't fair that we should be pulling this cultivator through endless rows of corn and potatoes or on our hands and knees weeding when ALL the other kids in town were in the summer rec program enjoying hours of swimming in the cool waters of Moon Lake. I recall Dad describing my efforts one of those days as being about as effective "as a fart in a whirlwind." Dark thoughts: I don't get to do anything fun. Poor me!

Along one edge of our yard was a string of sheds. Ramshackle though they were, they served to store a great deal of stuff that begged to be examined. A car shed, a tool shed, a woodshed, and a barn that housed our cow and a small flock of chickens. And the last in line: the outhouse. Visible as in most yards even if partially hidden by hollyhocks or climbing vines. These sheds became for us an elevated playground. Various games were played on, around, and in them. They were great places from which to watch the clouds above and the seemingly endless chains of black birds that in the evenings came to roost in the large cattail marsh nearby. In the winter these sheds were the perfect height from which to jump into the surrounding banks of snow.

The peaked roof of the outhouse became a special place to me. I wonder how many times I ran along the roofs of the sheds to get to my waiting 'steed' to be whisked safely away from a band of outlaws or marauding Indians. What a wonderful gift is an imagination that allows a nine-year-old to transport himself to exciting places or transform an outhouse needing paint into a beautiful horse. I think if I ever was to own a racehorse, I would choose to name it "Jack's Outhouse." If anywhere as near as fast as the horse I once imagined, it would surely win the derby.

Our yard was commonly the gathering place for many kids from the neighborhood. Together we played many afternoons and evenings until the 9 o'clock curfew bell rang, a signal to all that it was time to end our day. Ball games, using a rubber ball and a bat discarded by the local town baseball team, was a

favorite as were Hide and Seek, Captain May I, Tag, Ante-I-Over, and if we had the right ball, dodgeball or kickball. Other times we ventured up to the sidewalks nearby to play hopscotch with a ball or stones, roller skate, or one of man-made games such as Tornado in Anoka. Lois, Joyce, Duane, Jean and Sonny were among our frequent playmates. When the girls (more numerous than boys) decided to play dolls or dress up, I would often retreat to a row of trees to climb and view the scene below from my green retreat. These trees were also my favorite hideout when I felt a desire to be alone, and like the rooftops of the sheds, they were a great place where my imagination could make me the hero of many exciting adventures in many faraway places.

More Memories of the Little House Years

The following are some of the people, places and events that I remember vividly from the days in the little house. Although remembered by me for a lifetime, I'm sure they were trivial and soon forgotten by those I write about.

My Wanderings

For a few years before I was old enough to start school, I was often the guest (uninvited) of several kind and understanding neighbors. The frequency of these visits indicates I found them enjoyable; I'm not sure about the feelings of those visited. One of the stops along the route of my wanderings was the home of Matt Nelson. I would often find Matt in his wood shop, and he would give me a wood block, a small hammer and some nails and let me pound away. Another was Gladys Crovik, who would patiently remove my coat and boots and set me on a chair with a child-sized scissors and some old magazines from which I could cut out pictures. She also made good cookies. One downside to this visit was their big (really big to a five-year-old) German shepherd. Even with a name like Strawberry, I remember my anxiety in his presence. A third frequent stop was to visit Mrs. Frank Lehn. She was always welcoming and seemingly unhurried. I wonder if she really enjoyed the 'long' talks with this little intruder. She, too, made good cookies.

Gilbert's Melon Patch

One late fall day my wanderings brought me to the garden of nearby neighbors, Gilbert and Anna Evensen. Among the largely dead vines were a number of melons never harvested. I suspect the vines had been killed off by frost. My response to their presence, not a good one. By jumping up and down on them, my five-year-old feet were successful in cracking open quite a few. That was until Gilbert, without much effort, caught me and led me around to view the carnage I had committed. He was not happy. I was scared and deeply impressed by his loud voice, choice of words, and how fast he could still run! Why did I do it? I don't know as I didn't dislike Gilbert or melons. I guess the best reason was because they were there. Gilbert did not give me cookies.

We Rob the Bank.... Almost

For a number of years, a good boyhood friend, Duane Augdahl, lived just a few houses away. We spend a lot of time together, playing and exploring. On one such day, craving candy, but lacking the pennies, we came up with a solution. We would sneak Duane's bank (I didn't have a bank) out of his house and remove some money. So far, so good. We decided a good place to make the withdrawal was a sometimes-used outhouse in their yard. We thought no one would see us there. Then disaster. Somehow in our less than skilled attempts to make the 'extraction,' the bank fell through one of the holes and into the pit below. Dismayed but not giving up, we proceeded to find a few sticks. However, before we could retrieve the bank from its murky landing place, we were discovered by Ann (Duane's mother) wondering why two little boys were so busy in and out of the old outhouse. Apprehended, we received a good scolding. Duane was escorted into the house; I was sent home, hoping all the way that my mom and dad would not find out about my thievery. No candy, but lessons learned: Mothers are always watching, crime does not pay, and sometimes even well-made plans go astray.

Waiting for Richard

With money scarce and even pennies dear, I soon learned to be frugal, to spend the little I had wisely, and to seek out the best possible 'deal.' Unlike a couple of my boyhood friends, I could not come by the money required to satisfy my need for chocolate stars or a tube of BBs for my air rifle by running to my mom and dad and asking for a 'nick.' Early I learned that running errands for Emma and Minnie Johnson or one of the other neighbors would yield two or even three cents. Digging worms or catching frogs might bring a nickel or a dime and even a quarter if a certain buyer of mine had been 'celebrating' before going fishing. He liked whiskey and grub worms.

Many a time I walked the road ditches around Brandon looking for empty bottles, mostly beer and pop bottles along with others that had recently held whiskey. All could be turned into money. I soon learned where to sell as some places paid only three cents, but one place paid a nickel a bottle. The whiskey

bottles could be sold at the hardware store when kindly Pete was there, but it was wise to always avoid Walt as he was never in a buying mood. I am sure Pete bought many more bottles than he ever needed to hold the turpentine or linseed oil he sold. As I said, Pete was a kind and generous man.

When it came time to spend my earnings on candy, the place to go was Dahl's store. I quickly learned, however, to stall around until Richard was available and to avoid Alpha or Clara. Richard didn't bother weighing out those delicious chocolate stars; his scoops were generous, two to three times as big as those of the ladies. With three cents in my pocket, I knew I had more time than money. Chocolate stars are still among my favorites and so is Richard with this generous scoop.

Life's Realities

One spring when I was in first or second grade, a family friend gave me a newborn calf. With my dad's help, I learned to take care of my little roan calf and it soon became my pet. It grew rapidly and became quite frisky, dragging me about when I tried to lead it. Upon returning from school one late fall afternoon, I couldn't find my calf. My calf had been butchered and became for us part of our 'daily bread.' Sad, yes. But deeply traumatic? No. I am sure that in those days it was the common and expected end to many 'pets' of children in rural areas.

The hurt of losing my calf was soothed by the gift of an air rifle a few days later when the hide of the calf was sold. That air rifle soon became my most cherished possession. Many were the hours that Corky and I spent hunting sparrows, blackbirds, grackles, and mourning doves. A year or so later a big, white rooster I had caught and claimed as mine at a village celebration met the same fate as my calf. I think I might have gotten the wishbone at Sunday dinner in recompense. So it was, such were life's realities in small town America in the 1930's.

Christmas

Along with the 4th of July, a visit to the county fair, and the last day of school, the Christmas season was greatly anticipated. Honed by the slick, brightly colored catalogue pictures displaying many kinds of candy, windup toys, and huge

sets of Tinker Toys they, as intended, created intense feelings of want even though I was pretty sure they would never be mine. The catalogues for us were truly only wish books. Our presents were much more practical. But, the expected new mittens, socks, warm long underwear or a bright new scarf were quickly and proudly put on display later at midnight Mass (understandably, not the underwear).

My dad's sister, Aunt Ebba, never failed to send us a big box of presents and other goodies at Christmas. Ebba was the do-it-all person at Bethany Home in Alexandria for many years. An RN, she was not only nursing staff, but also the on-site administrator supervising the kitchen, housekeeping, and maintenance people. Little though she was, she was the boss. She was also good to us, generous in both gift and time. I remember with my sister Alice spending nights at Bethany Home, and the times Ebba took us kids to the county fair. The only downside was being taken to the women's restrooms. It wasn't easy 'to go' with all those ladies about. Those days with Ebba were special, and Ebba was a special lady.

I recall for us kids Christmas was a happy time. Even without a Christmas tree, who could feel sad on Christmas Eve, when there were presents to open as well as Mom's homemade candy, apples, and popcorn to eat? We would wind up the old Edison phonograph and later sing Christmas carols along with my mom and dad. Then after sleeping only an hour or two we would be awakened to get ready for midnight Mass. The reward after an often-cold walk would be a warm church decorated and full of people waiting to hear the Christmas story and listen to what I remember as the beautiful High Mass sung by the choir.

Today my melancholy recalling these Christmases of the past relate not to me, but the abundance of stress and worry borne by my mom and dad. Striving to make a good Christmas for us, they had little if anything left to gift each other. Dad would bring Mom a box of chocolate covered cherries, which she would promptly share with us kids. I'm sure my mom had something for my dad, but I don't recall just what it might have been. I do know he enjoyed the traditional lutefisk supper this German 'girl' prepared for her Swedish husband. I am sure joy was in short

supply for so many during the thirties with a certain sadness and melancholy magnified by Christmas expectations that couldn't be attained.

Special Places of My Youth

During the late 30's and early 40's my world expanded from the immediate neighborhood to the entire community and nearby countryside. These are the first chapters of what I would describe as the Tom Sawyer-Huckleberry Finn phase of my life. Many places trigger vivid memories, but four places stand out as special as my mind walks me back through these years: Moon Lake and surrounding wooded hills, the school and its playground, John Korkowski's International Harvester dealership, and the community hall.

Moon Lake

How many hours and how many miles did I log traveling to and from the Moon Lake area! Sometimes they were leisurely walks as I sought out early blooming flowers such as trillium, jack-in-the-pulpit, yellow bellwort and a little later, the beautiful yellow moccasin. Other times they were hurried trips with me quickly shedding clothes and pulling on bathing trunks before plunging into the lake's cool water. Early spring plunges were made without swimwear, without parental awareness, and dictated to be very short by cold water. They did, however, give bragging rights for having the first swim of the season. Later in the summer I was often part of many people with various kinds of fishing poles catching sunfish from the shore.

Late summer and fall were the time for stealthy approaches to several quiet woodland ponds to observe the secretive, brightly colored wood ducks. Late summer also meant a trip to the raspberry patch in an open area near the lake. Sometimes resulting in a feast, sometimes famine. In December twice daily trips were made to the far corner of the lake to check my traps. If the weather was mild and the moon bright, the dogtrot across the lake was pleasant. If dark, cold and windy, I found little pleasure in them. However, if several of my traps would yield a muskrat or weasel, any discomfort I might be feeling (freezing hands, freezing face) was tempered by the knowledge that my class ring or a cool sweater I was coveting was coming closer to reality.

I am still called to these wooded hills and sparkling lake. Almost every June finds me back. The woodland flowers still bloom, and even the giant tree that bore the nest of the Great Horned Owl still stands looking as impossible to climb now as it did then. The wood ducks in greater number now inhabit the same quiet shaded ponds, and the same birds can be heard singing. From the sheer cliff above the old swimming beach area, I stand and reminisce. From the older boys, we had learned this was a good place to spy on people below. We would sometimes lie in wait hoping to see from this vantage point young lovers steal a quick hug or a kiss. Usually, our expectations were far greater than realization. Gone are the shoreline fishers with the cane poles, gone are the splashing, laughing children, gone are the young lovers. It is then that I wonder if the watchers from the cliff had ever become the watched.

The School

I'm not sure exactly when the school was built, but I do recall that it was known as District 31 and the first class graduated in 1927. In design it was very much like many of the schools in communities of similar size. Housing grades 1-12, it was a two-story stucco-clad building. The top floor contained four classrooms and the superintendent's office (there were no principals). The bottom floor, after an addition, contained six rooms: five classrooms and a larger room containing the library and a somewhat larger multi-purpose room. Bathroom facilities, storage areas, and the lunchroom were in the basement area. Attached to the outside of the building was a fire escape, its metal steps accessible via a door on the upper level. In early grades fire drills were a scary experience for many of us.

The building was surrounded on the east and south by an extensive lawn, and as we learned, it was not to be used as a playground. To the west was a large, heavily graveled area – well packed and never muddy. Equipped with the usual swings, teeter-totters, bars, and a space for two elementary-sized ball fields, it was a great place to play. Ramps connected this area to the higher level occupied by the school building and a still lower grassy area to the north and west which was used by the PE

classes. It also served as our baseball field in later years. Flanking the sidewalks leading up to the main entrance were railings constructed of three-inch metal pipe designed to keep the yard child-free. During the winter, these railings became the teachers of a painful lesson, one remembered for a lifetime. How quickly, how tight, and how painful will be the grip of a metal pipe on one's tongue if placed upon it on a winter day.

My first and second grade teacher was Miss Herve. I remember liking her and going to school. My favorite things were reading (who could forget Dick and Jane), singing, recess, and Jean Olson. Handwriting? Not so much. Rather than printing first, we started immediately with cursive writing. I believe there were about twelve of us in each grade, almost all town kids. At this time almost all rural kids attended country schools through 8th grade. I believe about five of us – Arvid Albertson, Jean Olson, Eldred Lund, Gene Stene, and I remained classmates for all twelve years.

My third and fourth grade teacher was Miss Stenjeum, who was a favorite of many of us. She was from North Dakota, I think. Maybe Hankinson. I loved the ten to fifteen minutes before noon each day during which she read to us. How fun, how exciting were Paul Bunyan, Robinson Crusoe, and Tom Sawyer! With her help, these characters left the pages and became real, opening another door to the world of pretend. I remember liking the flashcard competition, although not always being paired against Jean Olson. The Palmer Method of drawing endless lines of O's and R's also missed my list of favorites. It was during these years I realized that I would never be an artist. Bobby Bennet could draw a redheaded woodpecker that looked like it could fly off the pages. Mine, not so much. His drawings drew much praise from Miss Hophner, who came to our room for art. Mine were damned by faint, if any, praise. I still liked recess, Jean Olson not as much; she was too smart. Gene Stene and Bobby Bennet became my good friends. Oh, yes, I loved playing Cluck, Cluck, Peep, Peep when it was too cold or wet to play outside.

Grades 5 and 6 I had two teachers, Miss Smith for grade 5 and Miss Leedahl for grade 6. Frankly, I don't recall a lot about

these years; I missed Miss Stenjeum. Some of the enthusiasm I had for school waned a bit. Perhaps long division and multiplying four place numbers required more focus than I could muster. Perhaps out-of-school activities became more attractive along with unapproved school behavior. Perhaps, perhaps...who know all of the parts of the equation. I do know with increasing frequency I heard, "Jackie, pay attention" or "Jackie, stop talking" or "Jackie, you're not trying." I became familiar with writing many sentences starting with the words, "I will" or "I will not." To this day I remember the beginning stanzas of *Paul Revere's Ride* and staying after school to recite the same before the unsmiling Miss Leedahl. This 'assignment' was the result of my shooting someone (I can't remember whom) with a paper wad. I shared these 'hurts' with many of my classmates - sometimes the shooter, sometimes the target. Tightly wadded gum wrappers made good projectiles; they were accurate and got the victim's attention. We all survived, even Miss Smith and Miss Leedahl, and I can still recite *Paul Revere's Ride*.

Miss or Mrs. Oberg became our teacher in 7th and 8th grade. I don't remember her as a happy person, and I suspect our behavior was not such as to bring smiles. I don't think she had the temperament or the strategies to deal with the antics of 7th and 8th graders, particularly the boys. Of generous proportions, she could be quite physical. I remember being the subject of her wrath one noonday. A number of us were in the room launching paper airplanes out the window contesting who would fly the farthest. Coming back unexpectedly from lunch and catching us breaking the "no fly" rule, she delivered a powerful right hand to the side of my head. It hurt. I think episodes such as this might have been explained as being the straw that broke the camel's back. More understandable now, it did not, however, foster a good classroom climate back then.

Another incident that involved the windows being closed and remaining closed was when people would bring their mares "to visit" Henry Johnson's Arabian stallion just east of the school. The horse 'talk' would cause many of the boys to exchange knowing smiles, the girls' faces to redden, and Miss Oberg to completely ignore the happenings. Such was sex education as taught in Brandon in the 1940's.

During most of my elementary school years, August Lehn was the janitor. His role, however, was much more than sweeping floors and shoveling snow. He monitored the lawn and playground, the lunchroom, the hallways, and the boys' lavatory. You quickly learned that you were not to leave the lunchroom until he said so, you better not run in the hallways, and never should you do pullups on the pipes in the bathrooms. You were to pay attention when using the urinal; pee in it, not alongside of it. Most definitely, you did not want to get caught breaking Augie's rule.

John Korkowski's International Harvester Dealership

My dad worked as a mechanic for John Korkowski for a number of years, perhaps in the late 30's and early 40's. John was a local, a big friendly man who had a hearty laugh. He was also the successful owner of the local International Harvester dealership, which doubled as a hangout for a number of retired older men and others who had no hour or two of free time, particularly if they enjoyed playing cards. It was here that I fell in love with Gopher football during the period when they were truly golden. Glued to the big Philco radio just outside John's office, I lived and died with the exploits of the likes of Bruce Smith and Bill Daly. These glory days ended when many of the players answered the call of the nation now at war.

It was in the shop I learned to play cribbage, whist, and several other card games. Being short a player, 'old' Joe Lorsung, Albert Lehn, or others would say, "Kid, we need another player." I was delighted. Correctly or incorrectly, I felt welcome and a member of the 'club.' When my bidding was questionable or I misplayed a hand, they did not hesitate to correct me. More than once one of the others suggested my head was filled with something other than brains. Effective but not gentle, they were not concerned with nurturing my self-esteem. I am sure there were frequent times during my visits to the shop that I heard language that was not on my mother's list of approved words.

If it had been a good week, John would often send one of the hangers-on down to Osakis on Saturday afternoon. Their job was to buy a bottle or two of whisky in the adjacent county,

necessary because 'hard liquor, could not be sold legally in Douglas County. Upon return in the late afternoon, the bottle was opened and passed in a circle to all the men present. I often wondered why so many of them made such an awful face when swallowing the supposed treat. I still can hear one of my favorites, old Joe Lorsung, grimacing as he drew the back of his hand over his ample mustache saying, "Kid, don't start drinking this saltwater."

Rough spoken and sometimes crude they might have been, but they were the kind to rally to help a neighbor bring in his crop, stop to help you change a tire or extract you from a snowbank. I liked them then and miss these salt of the earth guys to this day. I'd like few things more than to once again sit down with them to play a game of whist and to be a part of that Saturday eve circle as the bottle was passed around.

The Community Hall

In about 1935, the federal government under Franklin Roosevelt initiated a number of programs designed to put many unemployed back to work. One of the most successful was the Work Progress Administration or the WPA. Existing from 1935 to 1943 the WPA was responsible for the building of thousands of public buildings, schools, community centers, fire stations, and hospitals as well as constructing many bridges and miles of roadway throughout the country. Leading to its creation was the belief that it was better to employ people than to have them idle and drawing government 'relief' payments. Millions were put to work expanding and/or improving the infrastructure of the nation. Many of these projects still exist, often identified by a plaque bearing the letters WPA and the year completed.

In 1935, Brandon was awarded funds to build a community center, or as it became known, the Hall. Built of local fieldstone by local workers, it quickly became our pride and joy, and with it bragging rights to who had the finest public building in the area. Truly a community center, it has hosted hundreds and hundreds of events both public and private. For many years it was the location in which we had our school phy ed classes in the winter. It was where we practiced and played our basketball games and presented our plays as well as our choral and band concerts.

Proms and graduation ceremonies were also held at the center. Thousands came to its doors to attend the firemen's dances and to watch the Silver Streaks (a pretty darn good local basketball team in the late 30's and early 40's) play against some of the well-known semi-pro teams that traveled the country. Additionally, wedding dances, community celebrations and church bazaars were all staged at the Hall. How I looked forward to Thursday night roller skating as a teenager hoping Betty Jane would be there and be my partner for the moonlight skate. Aware of my limited dancing abilities, I wonder how many times I stood among the watchers of young dancing couples, envious and searching for the courage to walk up to one of the young ladies and ask her to dance. Wanting to, but what if she said no? Rejection: embarrassing and painful.

During our high school years, the hall was also the gathering place on Sunday afternoons in the winter for anyone wanting to shoot baskets or play a game. With the heat turned down, it was often cold, but who cared. If locked, no problem. Growing up along the north side of the hall was an old Box Elder tree easily scaled by a young tree climber giving access to the roof. From there it was only a short trip to the easy to remove cover of an interior ladder. Entrance gained.

Often the city constable would find us there as he made his check of the building. Almost always his only remarks would be, "Turn off the lights when you're through, be sure the balls are put away, and the outer doors are locked. Don't leave a mess." I'm sure Harry's benign reactions to our presence, unscheduled and without permission, had been passed upon by the city fathers, to be allowed if not blessed. I never recall anyone asking how we gained entrance; not did we volunteer this information. I'm sure many people have fond memories of the hall, this special building that has served the Brandon community so well for almost 80 years.

Today, as in yesteryear, it remains the site of many community activities, both public and private. Recently it has undergone a major renovation, much of it paid for through the efforts and money of people who share a love for this wonderful gathering place that has served so many so well.

A number of years ago a group of people from the Brandon-Millerville area banded together to save for posterity the 'history' of the area. Through dedication and much hard work, they formed the Brandon/Millerville History Center. Fittingly, it is housed in the hall and what an accomplishment. Here, to view, to enjoy and to remember old Brandon and Millerville, here to revisit through memory, the people, the places and the events that contributed to who we are. As it deserves, the hall has been placed on the National Registry of Historical Buildings.

The four places I have written about are by no means the only ones that trigger memories. When I walk the streets of Brandon, enter its buildings, visit its churches and cemeteries, there is no place that doesn't bring back a flood of memories.

Uptown Years

Sometime in the early 1940's, we made a move. My mom and dad rented a house in uptown Brandon. The move was only about four blocks in distance, but for the first time we had electricity and running water. There were three bedrooms in addition to the kitchen, dining room, and a 'front room' or living room, which was closed off in the winter. Still no indoor bathroom. I think for us kids the great improvement was we had a radio. How wonderful and exciting were the programs! Morning with the soaps, Ma Perkins, Our Gal Sunday and Kate Smith singing patriotic songs. Daily news from the war fronts, sometimes 'good,' but often worrisome. I listened with interest and concern. How we hurried home from Saturday night devotions so as not to miss any of the Hit Parade. Frank Sinatra was an emerging young star greeted by swooning fans, many but not all, teenage girls and younger women. Envious boys, parents, and older people were not as enamored by this skinny black-haired kid whose name did not end with *son*. These were the years I would hurry home from school to listen to my programs *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy* and *Flying Patrol*. The scourge of the Japanese and German bad guys, they became my heroes.

In addition to the house, the property had a barn and shed, and our cow and chickens moved in with us. And yes, there was space enough for a large garden, home for many vegetables and weeds that required pulling. During these years, the cow became more and more my responsibility. My jobs included cleaning up the barn, leading her to and from the nearby open lot where she grazed, making sure she had water, and of course, milking. She also became for me the source of considerable embarrassment. Why did this dumb cow have to decide now was the time she had 'to go' causing the teachers walking behind us to step delicately around her plop, plop, plop? I died at the sound; I did not turn to say hi. Why, why, why? Why did we have to have a manure pile in our backyard? Why? I think I knew the answer but found little comfort in it. Wasn't it enough that sometimes I had to wear hand-me-down knickers and girls' overshoes, and along with Clifford and Edward and a few others,

those overalls that shouted to all “Relief pants.” Those moments taught the lesson that life is not always fair.

During these years our next-door neighbors were Nick and Lena Schwartz. Nick had health problems. Lena made their living by boarding a number of people included many of the teachers, Father Kinsella, and a few bachelor businessmen. For me, they became a source of income. At noon during summers and weekends, I (or my sisters) would deliver a basket with dinner to an older bachelor, Frank Mandelke, and return with the dishes from the day before. For this errand, Lena would pay us a nickel, and Frank would tip us as well. Easy money. Most every late summer and fall Saturday Nick would beckon me to help catch and clean chickens or occasionally squabs (young pigeons) that lived in their barn. These became part of Lena’s Sunday fare. I welcomed the fifteen cents I was paid. I remained the frog catcher for John Renkes and a few others as well as a worm digger. A bit later I became the tree climber for a few crow hunters anxious to be on the winning side in the annual crow hunt. I could hardly believe my good fortune, getting paid for riding around the country and climbing a few trees. Sometimes a bottle of pop besides.

Mid-summer found me at my Uncle Frans Anderson’s farms south of Evansville. I would ride out Monday mornings with a farmer who lived about a mile from Uncle Frans Anderson and return Saturday afternoon so I would be home for church on Sunday. Although I doubt if I would have admitted it then, I would be looking forward to seeing my mom and dad, my brother Marvin and my sisters. Most Saturdays someone would give me a ride home, but if all were busy, I walked carrying my little suitcase stopping now and then to throw a few stones and admire the \$2.00 I had earned that week. These were good days spent with good people. Between my chores such as getting the cows, carrying lunch to the men in the field, feeding calves and chickens, picking eggs and fetching the mail, I had many hours to do as I pleased. Hours to tag along with the men; to hunt blackbirds, sparrows, and grackles; to explore the grove with the dog; or to crawl under the porch to my private retreat, a place to think and dream.

I really felt a sense of accomplishment when my tasks were elevated to driving the horses as the men loaded hay, and even more so when after careful instructions, I was allowed to mow and rake hay. I can still hear Uncle Frans say, "Yacki (Jackie), be sure you always take the mower out of gear if you have to clear a slug of hay from the cutting bar, and never step in front of the sickle." The cautions were religiously followed as I was well aware of how my Dad almost lost a foot as a five-year-old when he stepped in front of a mower just as the horses started forward.

The high point of summers at the farm was the threshing season when a number of area farmers would come together to help each other harvest their crops. A time of hard work and long hours for both farm men and women, it was also a time to socialize, to talk, and tell stories. For young men, it was a time for young men to challenge themselves and to prove to their elders that they were now men capable of doing a man's work. Food was good and plentiful, prepared by wives, daughters, and hired girls who were determined not to be outdone by their neighbors.

Predictably, with the presence of a group of young men and boys and a generally upbeat atmosphere, conditions were right for good-natured teasing and pranks. I loved it, and it soon would evolve into an action-reaction thing. They would say, I would respond, I would do, they would retaliate. Quite frequently I found myself being tossed headfirst into the straw pile or being dunked into the stock-watering tank or the rain barrel. In turn I would sneak under their wagons and tie some of their grain bundles to the rack or unhook the tug chains of their horses from their wagons. All this brought much laughter to the young and smiles to the old (those over 35).

Sometime after fall and before the next summer arrived, I reached the conclusion that I was not likely to attain my cherished desire: to drive the tractor at my Uncle Frans's farm. It was too big, an F-30 Farmall; and I was too small. They were right. With my short arms and legs and it with its stiff clutch and brakes, it wouldn't have been safe. In addition, there were three other men, all more capable drivers than me. My answer was

only about a mile away: Uncle Carl and Aunt Selma. He had fewer acres to farm and a smaller tractor. So, I said good-bye to Sandy and Dan, a team of bay geldings, and Minnie and Bessie, a team of dapple gray mares to take up with a green model B John Deere.

I quickly learned driving that tractor was not as simple as it looked in the hands of an experienced driver. Starting out cultivating corn didn't help. I drove erratically as Uncle Carl, riding an old pull-type cultivator, hollered directions. I could not hear, I would turn toward him, the tractor would veer further off course, Uncle Carl would holler louder as a lot of corn plants suffered the same fate as the targeted weeds. Cutting grain was better. I had learned and the process required a lower level of skill than cultivating corn. Uncle Carl didn't have to holler nearly as much, and I began to feel I might just have made the right move after all.

In addition to tractor driving, there was another positive that came with my switch to Uncle Carl's farm. My cousin Warren, away serving in the Air Force, had many books. Mostly books with great appeal for boys my age. How I devoured the whole Rover Boy series and others like them. How many rainy days or quiet workdays did I enter the pretend world becoming one of the Rover Boys, a part of their exciting adventures. Another memory from this summer was the radio programs at noon. Like many farmers, Carl got up early, worked hard all morning, and then took a short noon nap. During this time, I would lie on the floor with the radio tuned to WDAY and listen to Linda Lou and the Co-op shoppers. Linda Lou sang and one of her songs always involved yodeling. I thought she was great, and even though I had never seen her, she had to be very pretty!

Several other events stand out in my memory from these uptown years. My dad worked for the county highway department during this time and suffered some rather serious burns to his lower legs and to his hands. I remember how he would grimace in pain when Mom changed the bandages and how pink and soft the new skin was as these areas healed. I vividly remember the tears, the worry, and the helplessness all of us felt when Laverne suffered a life-threatening condition related

to her diabetes. How we all stood around her bed as Father Kinsella gave her the last rites and prayed. She survived but died about thirteen years later from more complications related to her longtime fight with this disease.

I remember one cold winter night when the fire whistle sounded. The Red and White Store and Courier's Cafe were burning. Both were completely destroyed, but other buildings on Main Street were saved. Thankfully, no lives were lost, and both businesses remained a part of the Brandon business community for many years. For me and a number of other scavengers, the burned-out café became an unexpected source of wealth. We soon discovered that in the ashes and charred remains there was a goodly number of nickels, pennies, and even a few more valuable coins to be mined from its ruins. It was cold and dirty work, but I remember making quite a few purchases of things important to a twelve-year-old boy with the stained and discolored coins dug from the ashes of this fire. Sometimes you have to be willing to suffer a little and get dirty to make a dollar or even a few nickels. So, it was.

Vacant buildings, old sheds, and garages were explored along with the old stockyard and tile factory west of town. All became part of our play areas. They were great places to play hide and seek, cowboys and Indians or places to defend against the attacks of the dirty Japs or the Nazis. Two events from spring and summer are well remembered: one pleasant, the other not so much enjoyed.

Sometime soon after we had moved to the uptown house, my dad captured a swarm of bees and placed them at the edge of our garden. They, like Nick's pigeons, became objects of my interest and attention. So clearly, I remember sitting on the ground in front of the hive and watching the coming and going of those busy bees. The incoming with their pollen pockets loaded with pollen and those leaving with the same pockets empty. How lucky and blessed we felt when Dad would open the hive and remove a portion of the honey for our use. How good it tasted when added to peanut butter or drizzled on oatmeal. Particularly during this time of serious sugar rationing, this honey was a real treat.

Just as clear but hardly as pleasant (certainly not for the parties involved) occurred that same spring. Marvin and I had been given instructions related to moving our chickens inside if it looked like rain and ending with “and don’t you forget!” Off we went to play. We lingered, and the rain arrived before we arrived home to find our mom working to warm up a bunch of wet and cold young chickens. Yes, she was furious. Those chickens were precious. And yes, we made a trip to the woodshed to receive one of those things the woodshed was for. It didn’t hurt much, but we didn’t tell Mom. We were grounded for a day or two as well. Thankfully, all of the chickens survived.

In the deep drifts piled up during winter blizzards, we would dig tunnels envisioning them leading to a ‘great’ snow room equipped with candles and with the floor covered with straw. Rarely if ever were these youthful schemes fruitful. We failed to realize the amount of work involved in moving that much snow, or where we would get the straw, or that tomorrow there was school, or that cave-ins might occur, or most likely that our youthful enthusiasm would wane. The days of or after a major blizzard were special days. Blocked roads, no school. Farmers from the surrounding area would bring their cream to town by horse and sleigh. How much fun didn’t we have hitching rides by grabbing the sleigh runners and letting the horses pull us about. Even more fun if the driver would put the horses to a fast trot. Was there ever a twelve-year-old boy who didn’t find fast much better than slow?

On warmer winter days some of the buildings mentioned above became sites for snowball fights between rival groups; other times those battles raged over much of the town. Often times evenings would find a group of us boys sledding down the glazed, snow-packed road that runs downhill from Brandon to the east. After a quick ride down, a slower walk back up gave us time to argue about whose sled was the best, the fastest, or who had cheated.

One other activity I remember from these days of winter was boxing in the lobby of the depot. Every so often Jacob Goering, the agent for the Great Northern Railroad, would invite us in, pair us up, put on the gloves, and let us go at it. Fun?

Questionable, it depended on whether you thought you 'won' or 'lost.' Did it hurt sometimes? Yes indeed, but would anyone admit it? Never. Even if eyes were watering and noses might be bleeding, the upper lip was stiff. Not a single Joe Louis emerged from these bouts held in the cold depot lobby, only a few bruised egos. Although never stated, I think Jake might have taught us an important life lesson. You see, by controlling the pairings he could bring into focus the fact that you might sometimes, even usually win. However, somewhere along the way you will meet someone more gifted, more experienced, with more desire and you will be 'beaten.' Life's reality: all are not created equal. But within reason, be the best you can be, know and accept yourself – both your strengths and limitations. Expectations set too high might just leave you unhappy and dissatisfied.

The House on the Hill

The uptown phase of my life ended when the house we were renting was sold. Where were we going to go? There was nothing available to rent, and the houses for sale were priced beyond our means. It was a real concern and a stressful time for Mom and Dad. Then from out of the blue, an elderly bachelor, Gunval Hansen, announced he was interested in selling his house where he was living with an old couple. Located at the east end of Brandon, it was only a short distance from the 'little house.' It just happened to be one of the places I used to stop and say hello. Regina would always say, "You got to have a cookie." They were always the same, white sugar cookies. Not my favorites, nonetheless, welcomed.

I believe the sale price was around \$2,000. At least some of this cost was covered by a timely loan from my uncle Conrad, my mom's brother and my godfather. Another example of family helping family. The house had electricity, but not running water. There was a large cistern that stored water for washing clothes and for bathing, filled by summer rains. Without a bathroom, the backyard was graced with an outhouse screened by hollyhocks. Soon after we moved in Dad connected us to the city water system that had been dug in throughout the town a few years earlier. A much-welcomed bathroom became a reality a few years later, installed with my Dad's help and paid for in part by my sisters. Finally, we had arrived.

Before we moved in Mom, Dad, and the older girls spent much time cleaning, painting, papering, and fumigating when they found bed bugs. By the time we moved into the house had lost its old people smell, and we felt quite fortunate. There was plenty space for a garden and the flower beds my mom so treasured. A small barn and a woodshed were part of the property and also a grassy meadow big enough to supply summer graze for our cow. Our cow and chickens continued to make significant contributions to our welfare. There were always adequate numbers of eggs and plenty of milk for our needs plus enough extra to sell. As I remember during much of the year, we sold about five quarts each day. Delivered to the door at ten cents a quart, it generated a welcome \$15.00 a month. For years

Mom baked us wonderful angel food cakes made possible by her efforts and the whites of twelve eggs provided by the chickens. Some we ate; some were sold at Charlie's Store for sixty cents with the proceeds becoming contributions to the church to pay her church circle dues. Remember the parable of the widow's mite and the virtue of sacrificial giving. For me, regardless of the cake's destination, there was always a frosting bowl to lick.

Among our new neighbors were Roy and Nina Strom and the Carl Erickson family. Roy was a livestock and general trucker. In addition, he fed some cattle, pigs, and sheep and kept a flock of chickens. Roy was a wonderful person. Kind and considerate, he was ever willing to help others. Many mornings he would come to our door when my dad was feeling down to encourage him to come and work on some repair project. I can still hear him say, "Rueben, why don't you try and see how it goes." Once started Dad always seemed to be able to work the day.

Roy soon found a lot of jobs for me also, jobs I really appreciated including cleaning the chicken coop each Saturday morning, bedding and cleaning trucks and holding pens, and caring for his livestock while he made his numerous trips to the Stock Yards in South Saint Paul. As I got older and learned to drive (taught by his regular drivers), I graduated to helping pick up livestock and unloading freight brought back from the Twin Cities. I was pleased to have this rather steady work, particularly at the end of the month when I presented my time sheet and received my check. I might add that the work was not always pleasant. There was nothing pleasurable about being splattered with a mixture of cold water and manure while washing out a truck in October or having your boot filling up with a solution of mud, manure, and water as you struggled out to the feed bunks with a sack of ground feed on a cool April morning.

Roy commonly had four or five men working for him; they too became my mentors and teachers. It was from them that I learned to drive a truck on good roads and bad, through mud, and on ice. And how to persuade a reluctant cow or pig to go up the chute into the of truck to keep ahead of a 1500-pound bull intent on getting into the truck before you could safely scabble

to safety or snub him down. Even more important than those lessons learned was the friendship of these men and how they made me feel – “Look at me; I can do a man’s work” and “Watch me drive this truck.”

Shortly after World War II ended, Cliff Strom, Roy’s brother, began a road construction and graveling business as well as doing general hauling. During the fall of 1949 and 1950, I worked for Cliff with the graveling crew and also hauling grain and coal. Once known but now forgotten: the number of size 14 scoop shovels in a ton of coal. It was not the kind of work to aspire to for a lifetime. It seems that during the last years of high school and beyond there were many Saturdays and vacation days that found me shoveling this or pitching that or helping unload a carload of lumber or bricks for Winston Johnson at the lumberyard.

Sometimes, I believe it was a short time after we moved, I ‘inherited’ from Herman Zabel his paper route. My brother Marvin and I became the envied deliverers of the *Minneapolis Star Journal*, an afternoon paper. We each covered either the east or west half of Brandon six evenings a week and Sunday mornings. We also sold Sunday papers to farmers at the stop signs on Highway 52 as they came into town with milk or to go to church. Customer cost was forty cents per week, twenty-five cents for the daily paper and fifteen cents for the Sunday edition. Our commission was one cent per daily and four cents per Sunday. Saturday was collection day. Weekly income from about twenty-five daily papers and sixty Sunday papers was about four dollars per week. The Zabels owned an ill-tempered water spaniel. Twice this dog bit me when I delivered their paper. Although he drew a little blood each time, I never told them. After all, even though Duke bit me, how could I ‘bite the hand’ of the one who had gifted me with this coveted paper route.

For several years the last stop on my paper route was at the home of Mark and Bernice Kelly. They were young, friendly, and fun. They were just plain good. Today we would say that they were excellent role models. I would often visit with Mark and Bernice and play with their two young boys, Jim and Pat. Mark had been a good high school athlete playing both basketball and

baseball. This gave us plenty to talk about. When I didn't have a decent baseball glove, he gave me one to use along with his baseball spikes. That was typical Mark. No wonder I think of him as one of the special people in my life.

In 1958, I was teaching in Balaton, Minnesota. I will never forget the cold winter day when I noticed in the paper the report of a tragic fire in the small community of Brandon that had taken the lives of a young father and his children. Mark and Bernice had been able to escape the burning house, but Mark died when he re-entered the house in a futile attempt to save their children. Bernice survived the fire, but how she survived her horrific loss I can't even imagine. It was one of those events that repeatedly poses the question, why do terrible things like this happen to such good people as Mark, Bernice, and their children.

Another significant job I had during the late winter and spring in of several of my high school years was with John Renkes, who owned the local feed store and hatchery. Twice a week before school I would go to the hatchery and help John and Gil Euju remove the hatching chicks from the incubators. I remember Gil as being relaxed and good natured; John was not unkind, but rather sober and not one to engage in levity or unnecessary chatter with 'the help.' I liked the job, particularly being able to haul the eggshells to the dump (the landfill of the 1940's). Since I did not have regular access to a car, I considered any job that provided me the opportunity to drive as a fun job. John would also hire me to clean out the houses wherein he raised chickens. He would almost always say about how long the job should take and that there was no need to have anyone hanging around while I worked. The "Corn Cracker," a name he had lettered on his trucks, might have been a no-nonsense kind of guy, but for many years he gifted us the 'weaklings,' those newly hatched chicks that had been determined not strong enough to be sold, but with good care, might survive. Most of these did indeed survive and became part of our laying flock or the centerpiece of our Sunday dinners in fall and early winter. It also explained why our flock of chickens included such a mix of breeds. They were a diverse lot – indeed a flock of many colors.

Weekends with the paper route, Saturday jobs, church (always Sunday and usually Saturday evening), sometimes scrubbing The Diner (a local café) meant hurry, hurry, hurry. December days, particularly the first two weeks, were demanding because this was the season for muskrat trapping. A typical day unfolded as follows: Before school a quick check of my traps, maybe chores for Roy Strom, school, followed by basketball practice, perhaps chores again, and another evening check of my traps. Prime muskrat pelts were worth \$2.50 or more with the average for all commonly \$2.25 some years. Along with a few weasels, it meant at sale time to Paul Koep untold riches; could you imagine almost \$50.00?

From previous pages it might seem the years after we moved from uptown back to the east end of Brandon that it was all work and no play, but that would not be accurate. There were many hours spent just hanging out with the guys, Gene, George, Lester, Charlie, Duane, and others. There were afternoons spent sledding and skating. There were spring days spent roaming the green hills around Moon Lake and swimming in its waters during the summer. And how could one forget the free shows in Brandon on the Saturday nights of summer during the early and middle 40's? Yes, the mosquitoes were plentiful, the ground was hard, the film grainy, the projector unpredictable, and the skies were often threatening but who cared? There was excitement, the streets were lined with cars, the barber shop and cafes were full of people, and Saturday night devotions at St. Ann's had been short enough so I could be present for the pre-show activities (precursors of today's tailgating events). These were the days that if you walked the three or four blocks of Main Street Brandon, you could hear conversations not just in English but also in Norwegian, Swedish, German and Finnish as well. Everyone came to town. Talk about America being a melting pot!

Schemes and Dreams and Some Things You Hoped Your Parents Never Heard About

The idle mind is the devil's workshop, boys will be boys, what will they think of next, those boys better watch it, if I get my hands on one of them, they need a good paddling, how could anyone be so stupid, that was just mean – I am sure each of the above and more were uttered by the town's elders as they heard or viewed some of the antics of the gang of boys of which I was a part. I expect many of the acts were spontaneous with little thought given to the possible consequences, many were the result of revenge (justified retribution in our minds), still others were inconsiderate or just plain mean, a few had unintended results and some almost altruistic.

Gone Fishin'

One spring George, Lester, and I set out to build a raft that would allow us to get out on the lake where the big fish were. Seaworthy it was not. When occupied by the three of us, water sloshed over the top. Nevertheless, we launched and paddled a short distance from shore. Crowded as it was, the predictable happened. After about three casts, Lester hollered "Ouch!" and there he stood with a red and white daredevil firmly anchored in the back of his head. Back to town we went. Lester's dad took a look and while he was consoling Lester that it didn't look too bad, his right hand had stealthily removed his pliers from his pocket. One quick jerk only enough time for Lester to again say "Ouch!" and Lester was free. Our great expectations were never realized, Lester being the only thing we ever caught from our raft. But no great harm was done. Lester lost only a small trickle of blood, a tad of skin, and a few hairs. We had survived to plan the next adventure.

Some spring days, often during April, we engaged in a more successful (although illegal) fishing activity. As the ice broke up and the creeks leading out of Whiskey Lake began to flow, Northern Pike would move into the surrounding sloughs to spawn. Most I'm sure were successful, some were not. With spear and 22 rifle we would gather the unlucky ones carrying them to town to be given to many willing takers anxious for a meal of fresh fish. They were pleased, and we had had a fun day

made even better when rewarded with a little 'gratuity' as was often the case.

Canal Building

It seems many of my memories involve Moon Lake – not really surprising considering how much time we spent there. To set the scene: separated by only a narrow ridge from the swimming beach at Moon Lake was a no longer used sand pit. Now wouldn't that spot make a wonderful swimming hole we thought. All we had to do was dig a ditch through that narrow neck between lake and pit and we would have a wonderful place to swim complete with banks to serve as diving boards. It took us only a couple of days to dig a ditch from the lake, now filled to a higher level as compared to the dry years of the thirties. First there was only a trickle, we were delighted. Then as the moving lake waters deepened and widened our ditch, the trickle became a torrent. Our delight was quickly replaced by a real concern for what we had done. As it turned out, no one seemed to be upset, and we enjoyed our swimming hole for years.

Our desire to aid the war effort and at the same time fill our pockets was the motivation of another boyhood enterprise. The supply of kapok, the plant material that was used in making life vests, had been cut off early in the war by the Japanese. Someone had discovered that the silk of the ordinary milkweed was a good substitute. So, the cry went out across America to get out and harvest the maturing pods. We responded by putting together racks for several wagons and obtaining coarsely woven sacks in which to collect and dry the pods. We scoured the surrounding ditches and fields ferreting out the sought-after plants. Each sack was to be filled with fifteen pounds of green pods which would dry down to five pounds. For each of these we would be paid fifteen cents. Actually, we worked quite diligently stopping only now and then to see who could be the first to hit a nearby telephone pole with a thrown rock or if we could hit a perching blackbird with a missile from our sling shots. These are typical examples of the unending competitions we engaged in – whenever, wherever, and always. By the season's end and miles walked we had filled an amazing number of sacks. Did we realize our sought-after riches? Fifty-six bags at fifteen cents per

bag divided by four boys = the princely sum of \$1.95 per boy. I guess for a few days we might have felt rich. Hopefully, some sailor or airman profited a good deal more from our efforts.

We Stop the Hound

Several other activities engaged in by the 'blood' brothers group that now beg the question, how could we have been so stupid, are still very fresh in my mind. One day walking back to or from Moon Lake along busy state highway 52, someone came up with what seemed like an exciting thing to try. It worked like this. One of us would lie at the edge of the highway; a second would kneel beside him acting as his grieving friend. If someone would stop, the injured and the grieving would jump up and run into the nearby woods. Our game ended when the afternoon Greyhound observed our antics and blew his horn loudly while shaking his fist. When he stopped at the bus depot, he reported the incident. In a small community with only a limited number of possible culprits, we were soon identified. Needless to say, this particular performance did not enjoy a repeat.

Two other fool hardy activities posed threats only to us the participants. One was the decision, usually by the better swimmers, to swim across the lake. Not a demanding feat for some, but a potential threat to life for the younger and less gifted. When prudent, we brought with us a floatation device, usually a log to which we could cling if we were tired, sometimes not. Thankfully we all survived, some barely winded, others tired and happy to reach the safety of the shore. All I can say is the Guardian Angels assigned to guard the lives of young teenaged boys must have been very busy.

To the Top

The water tower presented another challenge. The act was usually preceded by, "I bet you don't dare." Actually, if you could shinny up to the access ladder and heights didn't bother, it was not difficult to climb either part way or all the way to the top. Scary, yes. Dangerous, certainly. Stupid, definitely. Then why? Why do grown men climb and sometimes die attempting to reach the top of mountain peaks?

It Worked Better than Expected

One day when exploring a long unused room of the old lumber yard prior to it being torn down, we discovered a can of gun powder. I'm not positive who was all there, but I'm sure Gene was and Winston Johnson as well. Discussion led to action. We found a metal pipe and nearby the threaded spindle once used to mount the glass insulators carrying the telegraph wires. A beautiful fit. Screwed into the pipe, it provided us with a simple 'bazooka.' Charged with some gun powder with a powder trail as a fuse, it worked well. Success, but satisfaction only for a little while. If a small charge works well, why not increase the charge and elevate the pipe a little more? Done. It worked well, exceeding our expectations. Over the railroad tracks it flew striking the wall of the depot just below the window where Agent Jake Goering often sat at his telegraph key. We quickly vacated the area and from our hiding spot quietly watched Jake come out and make a puzzled look around. I don't think he ever identified the source of the 'shelling' and for obvious reasons we remained quiet as well. Just this once our realization had exceeded our expectations and we could not speak of it.

Don't Fool with Emily or the U.S. Postal Service

One cold winter day a group of us decided to warm up in the lobby of the post office. I expect it wasn't long before we had a game of horse and rider or some equally noisy, rough-housing activity underway. Emily did not look kindly on the invasion of her quiet domain and told us to quickly vacate the premises. She did not say please. We left, knowing you didn't debate with Emily. But we did return. Quietly, we deposited on the floor of the lobby several rather large blocks of snow which when melted produced an impressive puddle of water. Along with an equally impressive scolding and being told there were places for boys like us, we lost one of our best warm-up areas.

A Dog, Even a Stray, Is a Boy's Best Friend

During the months of winter, the number of dogs that called Brandon home was commonly increased by a goodly number of 'strays.' I'm sure they were the source of considerable concern and complaints from various people for a wide range of reasons. The response of the city fathers was to tell Harry Falaas, the city constable and maintenance man, to 'remove' them. Harry was a very good marksman. Most I expect had no misgivings regarding the proposed solution. We boys thought otherwise as some of these dogs had become our friends. Our response was to round up our friends and lock them in someone's garage until the day's hunt was over. I suppose our actions saved our friends only for a few days as Harry could 'hunt' any day of the week, and we could save only on Saturdays. But I'm sure our efforts left us with good feelings even if futile. Sometimes one must be satisfied with good intentions even when losing the battle.

It Just Happened

During our high school years Gene, Edsel, and I often walked past Matt Stahria's pool hall, located where Grandma Patty's Café is today. Matt was quite elderly, hard of hearing, usually tolerant, occasionally 'cranky.' If Matt was in a good mood, he would often let us play free, even though he might not have been present when we stopped in. If he was in a bad mood, our game came quickly to an end, and we were loudly shown the door. One day, Gene, Edsel, and I stopped by. Matt was in a good mood, that is until Edsel made the one in a hundred years shot. He lined up on the four ball, and with perhaps a little more thrust than necessary and less than accurate direction, he missed the pocket, the ball careening off the table and scoring a direct hit into the spittoon. Splash. Matt in a good mood quickly became a very angry Matt telling us with gestures and a loud voice where we should go. For several weeks just peeking in the window would illicit a loud "no" and a shaking fist from Matt. We were pariah.

There were many other incidents I remember from these, the Tom Sawyer-Huckleberry Finn years of my life, but what I have written pretty well exemplifies how I lived my life during those transition years between childhood and early adulthood. For the

most part they were good years. Yes, I had disappointments and concerns, unmet wants and wishes, and unmet dreams. I frequently wished I was one of the biggest rather than one of the smallest in my grade. I often wished my Dad felt better and my Mom's migraines would go away, and that Laverne would not be sick. I wished we had a car. I wished for a yellow scarf and glove set one Christmas and later a real letter sweater. I wished I could beat Lester and George in a foot race. I disliked my rooster tail and wished my teeth were straight. I dreamed of making game-winning baskets, hitting home runs, and being a war hero. I thought about being done with school. I did not think of college but rather saw myself as the driver of a big, shiny truck traveling all over the country. Even at fourteen I suspect I realized many of these wants and wishes would remain just what they were: wants, wishes, dreams. Yet wishes and dreams, even when one knows they are unlikely to ever come to realization, bring comfort. Above all, they are signs that hope is alive within us.







Young Dog Trainers



High School Years

Finally, finally, in the fall of 1945, I became a member of the class of 1949 in Brandon High School. How great it would be, how exciting. No more Miss Oberg, away from all the little kids, school parties, new kids, and the possibility of becoming a member of the basketball and/or baseball team. Life would be good and indeed it was in many ways. Much more significant than the self-centered musings of a boy not quite fifteen years old, the war had finally ended. Sons and daughters, husbands and wives were coming home. The Axis powers and the Japanese Empire had been defeated. The Cold War and the threat of the Russian bear and China had not yet fully materialized. We were the only nation with the atom bomb whose awful destructive power convinced the Japanese to surrender before a single soldier or marine had been landed on its shores. Jobs were plentiful; the tremendous American industrial machine switched production from tanks, ships, and planes to cars, trucks, and tractors. American farmers fed not only the nation, but the war-decimated countries of Europe and other parts of the world. Rationing ended, all foods were again plentiful as were gasoline and tires. Stores selling war surplus clothing and such opened in many communities including Brandon. I remember how proud I was of my army boots and jacket and how envious I was of those who could afford an air force leather, fleece-lined jacket. And last but not least, one could now walk rather than run to Dahl's store at noon and still find an ample supply of candy bars.

There still remained, however, a severe shortage of teachers throughout Minnesota. I remember Mr. Krajack as being the only male teacher in the Brandon schools during the 1945-46 school years. Mr. Krajack, served as both superintendent and principal and also taught algebra and either physics or chemistry. He coached basketball and most likely taught boys' P.E. I can still remember his annual pep talk to the basketball team about the boy he knew in high school who could run right through that wall "over there" and not to get too cocky because the boys in Evansville, Ashby, etc. had been eating their beefsteak and potatoes and would be formidable foes again this year. I remember him being frequently called to the telephone or to deal

with visitors. Needless to say, the focus of many of us was rarely on algebra during his absence. On a dare it was quite common for one boy or another to jump from a low window and hurry back to the room from the outside. I'm not sure of Mr. Krajack's credentials for teaching algebra or the sciences. Much later I learned that many of our high school teachers had provisional or special permission to teach as certified people were just not available. Brandon students were fortunate in having an excellent teacher for a number of years during this period by the name of Ann Beckman.

Miss Beckman taught high school English. She was knowledgeable, she made things interesting, and she had good classroom control. Miss Beckman was liked and respected by all and a great model and mentor for both girls and boys. Miss Beckman, now Mrs. Ann Lake, went on to teach in Underwood, Minnesota for many years after leaving Brandon. She is now well into her nineties and still resides in Underwood.

I'm not sure of how many green beanie-wearing ninth graders graced the halls of BHS in the fall of 1945, but I do know that those of us from elementary years – Arvid Albertson, Bobby Bennet, Edred Lund, Jean Olson, Eugene Stene and I expect a few others were joined by quite a number from Millerville and surround country schools. Among the new to join the old were Corrine Bettin, Mel Boeson, Joan and Cecil Ray Haiden, Roger Hockert, Marcine Hoephner, Cordy Roers, Charles Guenther, Edith Haglund, Delores Olson, Marvis Swanson, and Marlene Wagner.

Our numbers would have been greater, but as usual for the times, a significant number of eligible students declared not to stay in school after the eighth grade. Between the fall of 1945 and our graduation in May of 1949, we both gained and lost members. Some moved away, some dropped out for various reasons. Among those who joined us and became 49ers were Lois Gelling, Theresa Ledermann and returnee, Bob Bennet.

During these years the classes available were severely limited. There was no choosing, you took the four classes that were offered that year. I recall these offerings: Grade 9 – English, Junior Business, Algebra, and P.E.; Grade 10 – English,

American History, Biology, Typing, and P.E.; Grade 11 – English, World History, Bookkeeping, and Chemistry; and Grade 12 – English, American Government, Economic Geography, and Physics.

The list of extracurricular activities was also quite short. Basketball and baseball were the only boys' sports, there were no offerings for girls. Band and chorus, dominated by the girls, were available. Each year there was a school play or two directed by Miss Beckman. You could also sign up to be on the school newspaper staff and help with the annual, all directed again by Miss Beckman during her years at Brandon. All P.E. classes, basketball games and practices as well as concerts were held in the city hall about three blocks from the school. Convenient, no, but actually a much better facility than those available to many small schools of the day.

For rural students, participation in events held after school was severely restricted. Very few had cars available or parents willing to excuse them from "chores" for such things as playing a game or practicing for a play. I am sure many of the heard the words, "Just be glad you can go to high school."

During the summer between my freshman and sophomore years, I worked for Carl Haglund, a farmer living a couple miles south of Brandon. I worked there until the flax were harvested and the silo was filled, beginning school about October 1. My pay that summer was ten dollars a week. The Haglund family was typical of many small farmers of the day – hard working, asking for little, satisfied with their lot, and glad to have a place of their own. Carl could play the accordion and after noon dinner we would sometimes gather in the shade to listen and rest a while before going back to work.

Mr. Krajack and Miss Beckman remained on staff but were joined Mr. Salmi, I believe from some place on the Iron Range. Mrs. Sateran, the music teacher, also taught biology. I am sure the poor lady had little knowledge or interest in the subject. I have no recollection of anything except the cover of my largely unopened book was green. One class I remember from this year was typing. It was "hands on," something new. It had an element of competition. Did I become a good typist? No, I peaked in

speed and accuracy by about Christmas at 30-35 words per minute. My beginning enthusiasm waned and from then until year's end my skills improved only slightly.

I mention this because my typing class was to have a significant impact on my life, separated in considerable time and distance from those misspent days at BHS. In July of 1951, while on KP in the mess hall of Medical Company, 14th Regimental Combat Team, Sgt Fritz from the orderly room walked in and approached me saying, "Anderson, I see by your records you have had a typing class. How would you like to work in the orderly room and become the company clerk?" My response, "I've never done anything like that, I don't think so." He left, only to return a short time later. His words this time were, "Anderson, get over to the barracks, get into Class B uniform and report to the orderly room." A decision had been made, my wishes were overruled. The upside? I never was assigned KP again and soon found out I had a knack for the job and in six months I rose in rank from Private First Class to Sergeant. My typing speed was not an issue; I could write a coherent letter and turn out a daily morning report using the correct military jargon.

As mentioned earlier, we gained students, and we lost students each year. Among the new was Lois Gelling and I believe perhaps the Johnson boys, Philip and Vernon. Along with several students who did not return in the fall of 1947 were a number of teaching staff including Mr. Krajack and Mr. Salmi. Thank heavens Miss Beckman remained and one of the new hires turned out to be a good teacher and a fine coach. I doubt his teaching background was extensive or in the sciences, but he knew how to manage a classroom and gain the respect of students. Being a good athlete helped, and he quickly became for boys a good role model. Mr. Andrews was from West Virginia, and I expect he had relocated to Minnesota because of his marriage to a girl from Glenwood. Mr. Andrews brought with him his senior-age brother Walt whose personality like Tom's earned him quick acceptance. Without Miss Beckman and Mr. Andrews, I think my junior year would have been a complete disaster.

Under the new superintendent, a Mr. Trushenski, and several teachers lacking the ability to control classroom

behavior, chaos often ruled. When this became apparent to students who were bored or frustrated, troubled or wished to be elsewhere allied with others looking for excitement, anything resembling a good learning atmosphere disappeared. Contradictory as it seems a considerable number of us didn't dislike the victim teacher, but they loved the chaos more. Was I a member of this unruly "mob?" Yes, sorry to say. Too often I made my contribution or sat by and enjoyed it. Were we unthinking, misguided, mean spirited at times? We certainly were. Were we a bunch of tough unmanageable kids? No. We were a group of 16–17-year-olds not knowing or not caring how little we actually knew being taught too often by teachers lacking the skills and often the temperament and experience in dealing with the dynamics of such classrooms. In addition, Mr. Trushenski, who was 'let go' at the end of the year, was also sadly lacking in the same skills as these teachers. Not surprisingly, several of the high school staff left at the end of the year, including Miss Beckman and Mr. Andrews.

During the summer of 1948, I joined my cousin Dick Schnettler and bused to Braddock, North Dakota where my Uncle Tom and Aunt Nora lived. Their willingness to shepherd us was another example of the strong support ever present in this wonderful extended family. Dick again joined the family he had worked for the previous summer, and I ended up working for Ray Dietline. And work I did. He would wake me up at 5:00 A.M. to go out and get the cows and milk. After separating the milk and feeding the stock, I would sometimes return to a still sleeping house. Tilling summer fallow land, cultivating corn, making hay, and shingling a new building would fill my days until it was time for evening chores. Rainy days found me in the steer shed hauling out load after load of manure accumulated throughout the previous winter. My workday reached from dawn to dusk with supper usually after 8:00. They depended on a wind charger for their power needs, which meant minimal electricity; for me it meant no radio. My wages were three dollars a day. I had Sundays off, spent with Dick and the Marx family. These were fun days. Mondays when I sometimes didn't get back to Dietlines' until the middle of the morning, my wages were docked accordingly. After about six weeks, the combination of the work,

home sickness, and the availability of a job through the harvest season with Francis Brennen back in Brandon, I left with about eighty dollars in my pocket. The rest of the summer and early fall, I worked harvesting for the Francis Brennen and the Emil Linnard family.

The 1948-49 school year brought with it a new superintendent and several new staff members. Mr. Kassube, approaching the usual retirement age, replaced Mr. Trushenski. Gray haired, balding, generally soft spoken, not a big man. You might say in appearance and manner he was not the one to correct the obvious deterrents to teaching and learning of the previous year. During the first few weeks he was very visible in the halls. If a classroom was too noisy, he would quietly enter and with a look or a few quiet words restore order. Disruptive students soon learned he was not one to trifle with. He let it be known that there were behavioral boundaries and that crossing them would not be tolerated. We quickly adjusted to his reasonable expectation. This, along with his administrative skills (greatly needed after a year of mismanagement) and the availability of more capable staff, made the Brandon schools a better place for both students and teachers. The Brandon schools and community continued to benefit from his abilities quite a few years beyond the usual retirement age of superintendents.

Among new staff members this year were a married couple, Robert and Mildred Nordling. Unusual in as much as schools rarely hired married couples. Much later I asked him how he had 'landed' in Brandon. And that was the answer, "They would hire both of us." He was friendly, but he let you know you were student, and he was teacher. He was demanding, but not unreasonable. He was impressively knowledgeable and had good teaching skills. By year's end he had become, along with Miss Stenjum and Miss Beckman, an all-time favorite. After 68 years, I can still recite some of the lines of poetry he would have us ponder and put to memory. Many years later our paths crossed again. Mom and I were going to attend an elder hostel program in North Carolina and had become aware that he was retired in a community near its location. On contact he asked us to stop and stay a day or two and get reacquainted. During these

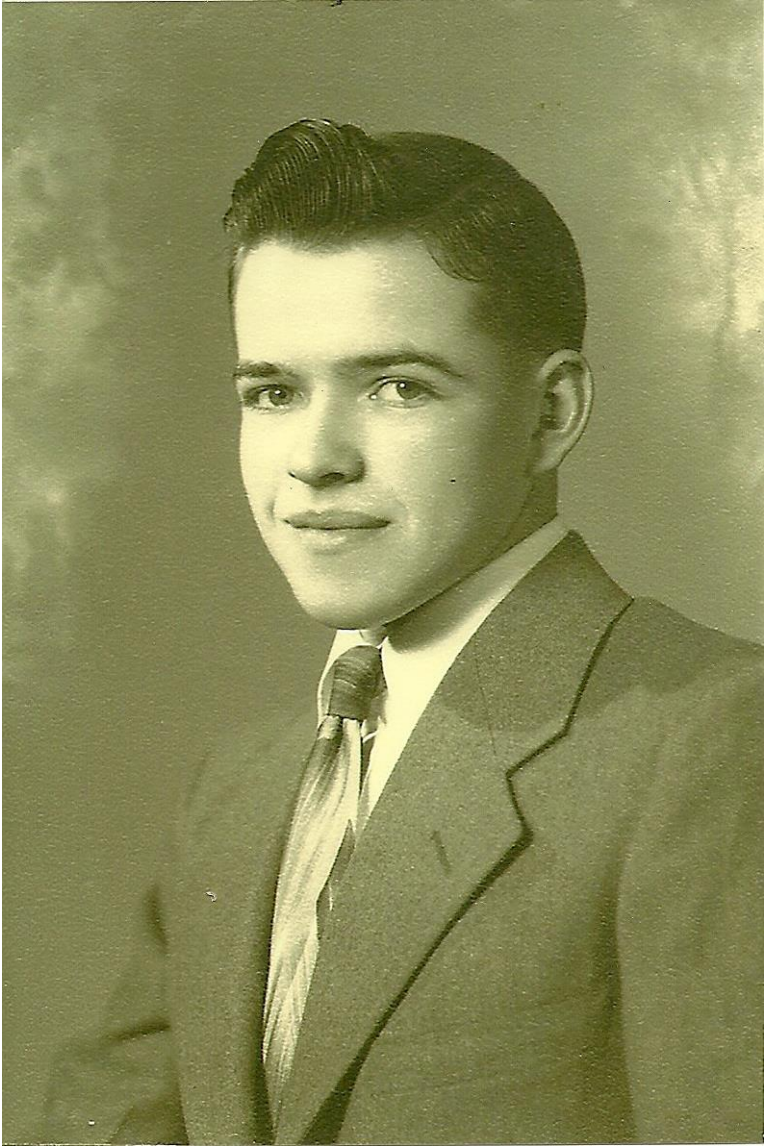
two days and on a subsequent visit, my school days' impression was confirmed beyond a doubt. He was special, a true "renaissance man." He excelled in so many widely different fields and in so many ways. As a teacher he went from Brandon to Edina and later taught in two nationally known high schools. Talk about moving from the omega of schools to the alpha of education. At 38 he became a medical doctor, taught at a medical school, and practiced medicine in places he thought would be interesting such as on the hospital ship, Hope, among the Indian tribes in the Grand Canyon and in Martha's Vineyard. He finally 'settled' in Bryson City, North Carolina. He wrote poetry; he communicated with noted government officials and medical researchers. He taught himself to sew as well as to play the piano and the organ. He became my good friend communicating by letter and telephone until his death a few years ago. He was 88.

Someone else contributed a good deal to making my senior year a good year. As might be expected, I quickly became aware of one of the new members of our senior class, a very pretty black-haired girl. I will only say that all the things said about young love are true. My mother received a letter from an old beau sometime after my dad's death. In his letter he expressed the belief that at some level these feelings would remain and that that person would remain special for a lifetime. True.

For reasons just related I have many fond memories of my senior year. Our basketball team lost about two games for each one we won, but our baseball team won all but a couple of games. Our senior trip to the Twin Cities, highlighted by the Ice Follies, was great. Our prom, hosted by the junior class with the theme "Stardust," was held in the blue and shimmering silver decorated City Hall. I'm sure it was much less extravagant than proms of today, but it has been fondly remembered because it was ours, special because I was there with someone special. I have one other pleasant memory of that spring: walking hand in hand on those gentle days in mid-May during noon break. The blooms of the tulips and daffodils were pretty, the ice cream was good, but the greatest joy came from, again, just being with this special person. These strong feelings continued through the summer but about the middle of October (it was a Sunday

afternoon) we had a long talk, and this first great romance in my life had ended. We were each fortunate to find to find a second love. She was to marry a boyhood friend Bob Lanners, and I got that wonderful feeling for a pretty curly haired nursing student with whom I have spent 63 years. They became our friends. Sadly, he passed away much too soon.

Late in May of 1949 that day finally arrived. Graduation Day for the nineteen members of the Class of 1949. I don't remember it as being a day of great elation. Rather, it was one more long-awaited event that did not bring the expected feeling of relief or joy. I expect I, and I expect others, were wondering "What now?" A few of the girls were married during the summer, a few more of them would be going to school in the fall. The majority would join the work force. I don't remember any of the boys with plans to go on to school although some would eventually attend college after a stint in the military. Unusual? No, it was typical of the times. High school ended your formal education.



A Jack of All Trades

I spent the summer after graduation working for a farmer, Joe Roers. Sunday meant playing baseball with the town team, maybe taking a swim after that, and then looking forward to a date – generally a movie. It was a good summer, Joe was fun to work with, I liked baseball, and best of all summer evenings. I was young, life was good.

My pay was \$90 per month. After harvest and silo filling, I worked for Cliff Strom graveling roads or hauling grain or coal. I have forgotten how many number-14 scoop shovels of coal would be close to a ton. My wages were five or six dollars a day. Enough money to buy my first car. It was a 1935 or 36 Ford V-8. Purchased from Myron Severson, it had been about “used up.” After ten miles of driving, the oil pressure would drop close to zero, and the almost absent brakes were beyond additional adjustment. Its only redeeming feature, it would start even on the coldest winter days. The price was \$150.

After Christmas my uncle Hubert Roers, who rarely missed a day in the fish house, fell while walking to the lake and hurt his shoulder. Unable to do the chores, he asked if I could help out for a few weeks. I cleaned barns, fed hay, and chopped silage. Often on cold, snowy mornings I would start my trusty Ford and with the aid of tire chains I would take Alice and Dennis to school.

Two events are well remembered. One Saturday Wally and I ground feed. Hubert referred to us as Amos and Andy because we had a problem keeping the belt on the pulleys, but we got the job done. But something was forgotten. We put the tractor back in the shed but forgot to drain the radiator. Thankfully, Wally remembered later and with the aid of hot water, he was able to thaw out the radiator with no damage to the tractor. Hubert never knew. I'm sure he would have called us much more than Amos and Andy (two fumbling, stumbling characters from a popular radio show of the day) if he would have known.

The winter of 1950 is remembered as one of much snow and frequent blizzards. I clearly recall one of them. A number of recently graduated young guys entertained themselves by playing similar basketball teams from other communities. We

had a game scheduled with Evansville on an evening when one of these Alberta clippers struck. It didn't seem to be too bad in the sheltered area and my Ford with chains would have no trouble with the snow. I found that "no problem" in the tree protected yard turned into "white out" in open areas. Turn around? No way, there was a game to play! I would stop the car and walk ahead a ways then return to the car and drive until I was no longer sure where the road was and repeat – walk, drive, walk. I made it into town, but as you and I could have guessed, the game had been canceled.

In February of 1950, I joined my cousin Dick Schnettler and a couple young guys and headed for Pickstown, South Dakota. Pickstown was a new town built to house and take care of the needs of several thousand men and family members who composed the workforce constructing the Fort Randall Dam complex on the Missouri River. In many ways the town had the appearance of an army base with many barracks-like buildings around a downtown consisting of a big cafeteria, bowling alley, snack shop, and washeteria. It was not much to look at, but it served its purpose. Arriving in February before most building actually began, I was lucky enough to get a job with the company constructing the tunnels that would carry the water to drive the turbines when the dam was completed. My job title, mucker. With my primary tool, a shop vac-like unit, I was responsible to do the final clean up before that section was given its concrete lining. It was dirty, damp, and cold with no redeeming features. But it paid the rent, and I needed to eat.

As soon as the spring construction started, I left that job and went to work in the saw shop for McCarthy Improvement Company as a saw man's helper. The function of the saw shop was to saw out the hundreds of individual pieces needed to construct the outlet area of the power plant. I liked that job. I liked working outside and the crew of saw men. Best of all, I liked my check. My check would be at least \$70 a week and sometimes near \$90. The usual work week was six days, but our crew and some others often worked Sundays as well. By today's standards, making \$90 a week is not all that impressive. However, for an eighteen-year-old in 1950 it was a lot of money.

With all of the hustle and bustle, with people of all kinds from all over the United States, I'm sure it had many of the characteristics of the boom towns of the earlier west. There were Oakies and Arkies, Finnish hard rock miners from Michigan and Native Americans from South Dakota. The person sitting across from you at Shorty's Diner at noon might have been from Mississippi and the one beside you from Kansas or Nebraska. Some were there for a season, some only a couple of weeks before drifting. Among them was a roommate of mine who left after about two weeks taking the wristwatch he found while rifling through my possessions.

Needless to say, the Pheasant Taproom and all of the watering holes in nearby Lake Andes and other communities were kept very busy. Young guys need a place to go where the girls go, and we found two that met this requirement: the Rest Haven Ballroom where dances and roller skating were held weekly and a little café in Ravena, South Dakota where on Sunday afternoons we would get together with a group of local girls. I remember more than once, more than twice vowing when waking up tired and facing a twelve-hour day that the only place I was going that night was to my bunk only to find myself later that evening at the Rest Haven, the Pheasant Taproom or some other hangout. An eighteen-year-old has a very resilient body and a short memory!

As the construction season sin late October, my foreman Fred Willard from Nebraska asked me if I would care to stay on through the winter as part of a skeleton crew. We would work shorter hours, but we could still meet expenses and would be assured a job the following summer at a boost in pay. I was tempted to say yes and pleased to have been asked; however, after the war in Korea started in June of 1950, I began to give considerable thought to joining the military. First the Navy and then the Air Force. My plan was to go home for a while and after the Christmas season go into the service. Pickstown, the go-go atmosphere of such a large construction site and the great variety of people I encountered was exciting and had a good deal of appeal for me. I'm glad I was there, I grew, I learned much, but in many ways, it was a life for a young man or

vagabond rather than for a family or someone who feels a need to put down roots.

You're in the Army Now

When I got home, I joined with three or four of my former schoolmates in making plans to enter the Air Force. We had talked to a recruiter, taken our pre-entrance tests, and set an induction date for early January. But we were not destined for the “wild blue yonder.” The recruitment center at Lackland Field, Texas was so swamped with recruits that the Air Force halted taking any additional people. After waiting around awhile, a time during which I worked with the Minnesota Department of Resources seining rough fish from nearby lakes. Finally on February 13, I became a member of the Armed Forces. Along with Vince Korkowski and a group of other young Minnesotans, I was sworn in to become the ‘property’ of the U.S. Army for the next twenty-one months. After a trip by train and a short stay in Fort Lewis, Washington, we were assigned to the heavy tank company of the 14th Regimental Combat Team at Camp Carson, Colorado for basic training.

There Sgt Allred, Sgt... (I can see his face but can't remember his name) and Cpl Lynch assumed the task of making us into soldiers. Sgt Allred was a little older and the senior NCO of the group. He had an extensive vocabulary of swear words which he used to describe our ineptness. Red-faced and ranting, he would begin our day each morning. We frequently heard we were hopeless; and if he had his way, we would be in a rifle company in Korea at the end of basic training. He, of course, used more colorful language.

The cadre Sgt whose name I can't recall fulfilled the role of good cop. Not your friend, not easy going, but somewhat reasonable. Cpl Lynch was definitely the bad cop. He never smiled, never spoke unless to berate, embarrass or belittle. Woe be the rookie who missed a whisker shaving. Cpl Lynch would stop to see if he could pull it out. Woe be the one who forgot to button a pocket flap. Cpl Lynch would say, “Do you want that button, soldier?” If the answer was yes, he would jerk it off and hand it to the soldier. If the answer was no, it went in his pocket.

A cardinal sin was to call your weapon a gun. For this infraction you would find yourself in front of the company reciting with gestures familiar to many veterans what was a rifle and

what was a gun. The unfortunate who dropped his rifle was assured to have a bed mate for the next several days. Cpl Lynch would make it a point check at night to see if the perpetrator was in compliance. We quickly learned that "lights out" meant quiet. Violations disappeared after one or two instances where someone's talking or laughing resulted in the lights being turned on at 2:00 A.M. with the order to fall out and 'enjoy' a three mile run in the cold foothills of the nearby mountains.

By the end of basic training somehow or other we had developed a certain pride in our unit and even if not a liking, a certain satisfaction that we were tough enough to have survived Sgt Allred and Cpl Lynch. As was customary, after basic training we were assigned to various other companies. As expected, many of us wanted to stay in Tank Company for advanced training. I was one of them. Vince and some of my other new friends stayed. I found myself now a member of the Medical Company. Disappointed, yes, but like the World War II song stated, "This is the army, Mr. Jones." As things were to turn out; "serendipity."

Sometime in the spring a number of us found out we were being sent to Brooke Army Medical Center for medical technicians' training. San Antonio was hot and humid. I remember the swimming pool as being the most attractive place to spend free time. The course work was rigorous but not overwhelming. At the end of the course, I was called to the Battalion training office and notified that I had been selected as the honor student of that training cycle and as such would be presented to the commandant of the Brooke Army Medical Center, Major General James W. Martin. I received a special diploma and an autographed picture with the General as he offered his congratulations. All this came as a complete surprise with no awareness that there even was such a practice and certainly no expectations that its designee would be a little boy from a little town in Minnesota.

A letter of commendation was also sent to my company back at Camp Carson and I now suspect, along with typing class referred to earlier, contributed to my selection to be company clerk. After enjoying a week or so at home, I reported back to

Camp Carson and shortly after assumed my clerking duties. Our company commander was Captain John P. Mitrega. From Pennsylvania, he was commissioned as an officer after serving as a 1st Sargent in World War II. He was a great CO. By his actions and his words, he was largely responsible for the esprit-de-corps of the company and earned respect and loyalty of the men of his command. For instance, when Corporal Lopez would be missing Monday morning after a weekend pass to his home in nearby Trinidad, he would say, "Carry him for a day rather than report him as AWOL. I'm sure he'll check in sometime today." Lopez would. The captain would have a 'talk' with him, but there was no court martial, no reduction in rank meted out.

Before I left for a Christmas furlough in 1951, one which would have me leaving home the day before New Year's. He said, "Andy, the weather in Minnesota is often pretty bad. It might be good if you let it be known that a short extension was needed." I enjoyed the New Year's Eve celebrations at home. When we received the order in January of 1952, indicating that almost all the company would be shipping out to Korea, he stopped by and told me to prepare a list of everyone in the company who was eligible for promotion. He then added, "Andy, this order means that Sgt. Arendt, our 1st Sargent, and most of the officers will be gone, and there won't be anyone left who knows the office procedures. I think I can get you off the shipping order, but it's your call." I decided I would go with the others, and after a short leave, I again found myself at Fort Lewis, Washington.

A few days later along with about 4,000 others, I boarded the troop ship, the General William Walker, for a twelve day 'cruise' to Yokohama, Japan. It was not a fun-filled trip, but I think typical. It was crowded. There were several days the sea was so rough no one was allowed on deck. A lot of guys were seasick, and some would remain on their pallets neither eating nor drinking with resulting dehydration. As medics, it was our job to locate these and get them to treatment. We also had an outbreak of diarrhea. For a day or two quite a number of fatigue pants were thrown over the side marking our passage. As an NCO, I and others were assigned as time keepers in the "heads" or latrines. Our job, to keep the lines moving and to prevent

“camping out” on the ‘throne.’ So many minutes and it was someone else’s turn. Many would reluctantly give up their perch and immediately get in line again. Fun, fun.

After a short stay at Camp Drake, we boarded another ship that would transport us to Inchon, Korea. Upon arrival we were off loaded onto LST’s as the shallow harbor would not allow for the docking of large ships. From there we trucked to the receiving center at Yong Dong Po where we were picked up by trucks from the units to which we had been assigned. After passing through heavily damaged Seoul and the badly scarred bridge over the Han River, we hit the main supply route (MSR) that took me to my destination, the Medical Detachment of the 204th Field Artillery Battalion. Throughout my deployment in Korea our battalion was located in central Korea just south and east of the Imjin River in a region referred to as the Iron Triangle a short distance north of the 38th parallel that marks the boundary between North and South Korea.

Like much of Korea, it was a region of steep hills and ridges separated by narrow valleys. The mission of the 204th was to provide artillery support for the 45th Army Division and a unit of the Marine Corp. Our guns were 155 mm “long toms” self-propelled and capable of firing a 100-pound projectile for over 15 miles. Neither the Chinese nor the North Koreans had such long-range weapons or significant air power making us quite safe tucked away in our narrow valley. In late October and early November of 1952, we were ordered to make an overnight “blackout” move to the Sniper Ridge area to help repel a major Chinese move against the 7th Division and some South Korean units. Usually, the front was quite static as by this time both sides had apparently determined that a given hill was not worth the price of numerous casualties and material resources. After all, behind that hill there was just another one just like it. I didn’t know it then but in reading accounts of the Korean War in 1952, I learned orders from the highest levels stated that only local, small-scale actions were permitted without permission from on high. As a result, the front was stable with largely local probing activity and/or artillery fire, mostly our outgoing.

Our detachment was small consisting of a doctor and seven or eight enlisted men. Most of the time we lived in a tent which also served as our aid station. Names I remember are Doctors Newman and Krieger, Sgts Nadreau, Ben Rycheck, Fred Beliel, Ned Day, Ed Sajecki, Wesley and Nellie. They were all good guys, even though in many ways we were different. Some were from large cities, some from small towns, some from the north and some from the south, some were white, and some were black. The army had become fully integrated only a few years earlier. I believe it was in 1950. Within our detachment, I can't remember a single incident where these differences caused a problem.

Much the same could be said for the entire battalion. There was one other member of our detachment, Chea Song Oak. Chea could have been 12, he could have been 15. He himself was not sure of his age. He was there when I arrived, he was there when I left. He was like many Korean kids either without parents or with parents unable to provide for them. He lived with us, he ate with us, and he slept with us. We teased him, and he teased us. He was intelligent, unschooled, and ambitious. When he had accumulated enough "won," he would hitch a ride back to Seoul and use his earnings from washing clothes and other chores to buy rice for his destitute family. Chea loved movies, particularly westerns. I often wonder how and where he is today and how wonderful it would be to talk with him.

Other than for a few weeks when I went with a group building gun pits and powder storage areas at what would be our positions in case of a retreat, I had little contact with the Korean populace. All civilians had been removed for miles immediate to the front lines. Even here, contact was limited by the barbed wire strung around our area. I remember well, however, a few events from those days. One was how people would gather around the garbage pits scavenging for food and anything they thought might be useful. Another was of a Korean mother who brought her toddler son to me to "doctor" his burned buttocks and an evening with a bunch of Australians. I never learned their mission, but I do know they had a lot of beer, and I did not feel very good the following day.

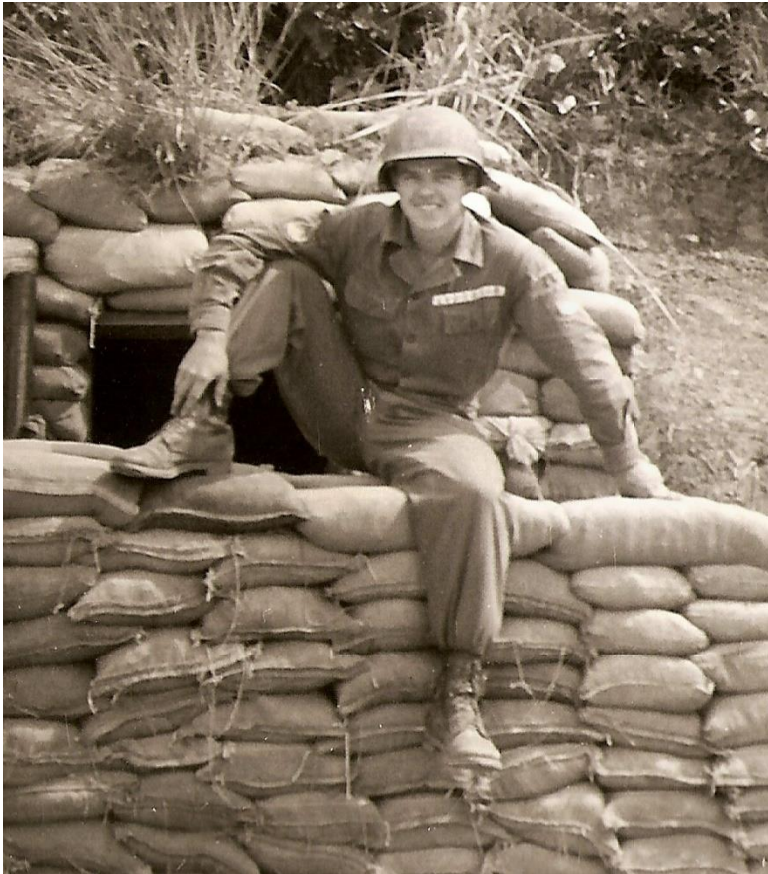
The final memory I would entitle “We Capture the Enemy.” It unfolded as follows: Shortly after we arrived, one of the guys in the party checked in with an STD. A few days later there were a few others. We found out that an enterprising pimp and his girls had been using our newly built gun pits as a brothel. Doc Krieger’s response was, “Tonight we pay them a visit.” Actually, the pimp found us first and led us to his place of business. He smiled when he saw *touxon* GI’s (“many” in Korean) and said his girls were good. He did not smile when the doctor showed him his bars and placed him and his “girls” under arrest. The poor girls were so young and so scared. We marched them in and the next day they were hauled back to some rear area. There were no new cases of VD in our party. A few weeks after returning to our forward position, a visit to the gun pits revealed all the timbers used as the framework had been carried off. Trees for which the U.S. government had bought at a price of \$100-\$150 per tree all gone.

Sometime in November, Sgt Nadreau was rotated home, and I became the ranking NCO of the detachment. my life nor my duties changed very much. Christmas came and went; we had snow, and some days it was cold. In January the orders arrived sending me home as my enlistment time would be over in February. What followed was pretty much the reverse of the trip over. From Inchon to Japan for a couple of days and then a fourteen-day boat ride to Seattle on the “Marine Phoenix.” Rumor had it that the two-day longer trip back was because they didn’t want us to dock on a weekend. There was no band, no welcome home speeches and as was commonplace to Seattle in winter, the day was overcast with misty rain.

After a few days in Fort Lawton, I received my discharge and hopped aboard the Empire Builder that would carry me over the last segment of the “big circle” I had traveled the past two years. It had been quite a ride. I arrived in Minneapolis in the evening and caught the Greyhound heading to Alexandria. The problem – that was the end of the road for that bus. I grabbed my duffle bag and headed for the highway. It was cold and dark, the traffic almost non-existent. Fortunately, one of the first vehicles, a semi-truck, stopped and carried me that last thirteen miles. Brandon was “locked up,” even Frank’s Standard. So, I and my

duffle bag walked the remaining few blocks along streets I had walked hundreds of times. The house was unlocked. I quietly entered and went up to my room. I was home.

I am really not aware of any problems adjusting from military life to civilian life. In just a few days, my life in many ways began to closely resemble what it had been before I joined the Army. People knew me and I knew them. Old friends were still friends, the old haunts were still there. Cliff Strom hired me to drive school bus, and I had various jobs to fill the hours between. Old friends, schoolmates, and others from the area became regulars at the Hillside Club each Saturday night where we listened to music and danced. We talked about school days and the old days, of where we had been and where we would like to go. They were fun times. I think there is a special relationship that develops between people who get to know each other when they are teenagers that lasts a lifetime. I know I have a special feeling for my classmates, schoolmates, girlfriends, and guy friends from those years. Each meeting is an enjoyable one. Each letter, card or call so welcomed.



My Roaring 20's: College, Work, Marriage, and Babies

Among the topics discussed by some of the veterans in the group was going back to school, now possible because of our GI benefits. The result was Fritz and Larry Wettstein and I enrolled at St. Cloud Teachers College. Yes, one who had been a frequent thorn in the side of teachers had set out to become one of them. We found housing including meals with a wonderful family in St. Cloud, the John Kampas. After a serious health issue that left John in a wheelchair, they had moved into St. Cloud and began a board and rooming house. Mrs. Kampa was aided with all the hard work by a working daughter, a son in college, and another in high school. They were a wonderful example of commitment and what could be achieved by working together. That first summer I found a job with Murphy Music Company, primarily delivering appliances which included pianos (heavy) and helping to install TV aerials. We were kept busy.

I liked school, I discovered I liked learning. The professors were mostly good; the class demanded such that I was soon confident that I could make it. For much of my time in school I was able to schedule my classes in the morning with two afternoons per week devoted to labs. With this schedule I was able to work weekends, some afternoons, and evenings. I had bought a 1951 Chevy soon after I had gotten out of the Army and pretty much needed to work to go to school, pay off my car, and do a few of the things a man of twenty-two feels are very important. Sometime late in the fall of 1953 as the season for installing TV aerials slacked off, I started thinking about a new job. The end result – I got a job at the St. Cloud Hospital as an orderly. A title which at the times some would argue should have been a “disorderly orderly.”

The first couple of weekends I really debated whether it was the job for me. Positives: many young female aids and student nurses, interacting with patients, work hours that could be tailored to fit my school hours and were available throughout my college years. Negatives: carrying bed pans, giving enemas, an assignment of morning care that included giving four bed baths, cleaning up messy beds after patient “accidents,” and feeling rushed because I still had not mastered the skills needed.

I think I would have bailed out if not for Sister Sylvester, nursing supervisor on 2 North, whom I came to like and greatly admire. She encouraged me to wait a little longer before deciding, and I agreed. Little did I know how profound the results of her advice and my acceptance of it would be.

She was right. I soon became familiar with the routine and lost that feeling of always being rushed. My attitude towards bed pans, enemas and the like became one of "If the others can handle it so can I." Perhaps one of the greatest factors was getting to know the people I worked with and their getting to know me. During this break-in period I developed a long-lasting friendship with another orderly Paul Alfeltt and a young patient who introduced me to opera. His room was also a good place to hang out for a few minutes out of sight of the seemingly always suspicious, Sister K....

One of the responsibilities of anyone working with the elderly is to be sure that all are eating. Many required a lot of encouragement or feeding. Such were the needs of two gentlemen in Room 256, Ed and Nick. As I mentioned earlier, one of the positives of my work environment was the presence of a lot of neat, nice-looking young ladies. One of them was a curly brown-haired girl with a friendly smile. We soon found out that feeding Ed and Nick afforded a great opportunity to get to know each other better. I soon found myself frequently writing her name in my notebooks at school surrounded with a heart. Cupid's arrow had struck. I will always remember how great she looked in her crisp white nurse's uniform.

Our first date, a double date, I enlisted an old Brandon friend, Fritz Wettstein, and Betty Blattner, a nursing school classmate. Later I found out they had made arrangements whereby if they found us "unsatisfactory" they would tell us they had to be back to the nursing home by 10:00, but if we passed muster, they would stay at Betty's home in Sauk Rapids overnight. They stayed overnight at Betty's. Although Fritz and Betty never dated again, it was just the first of many for Martha Konietzko and me. The attraction grew into an affection and progressed to when on the night of September 10, 1954 – my

birthday – I asked this intelligent, pretty, curly haired girl from Litchfield if she would marry me. As I was hoping, she said yes.

Afterwards we had the opportunity to see a good deal of each other. We talked, we planned, we became acquainted with each other's families, and we determined a wedding date of May 31, 1955. Why didn't we wait until June? Well, Marty had graduated in May and had been hired by the hospital to begin work in early June. I needed to begin summer school classes to keep on schedule to complete my college days in three years. And so, on the morning of the chosen day at St. Phillips Church in Litchfield, Father Foley said the words that made us man and wife. It was a nice day and surrounded by family and good friends, it was a good day. The pictures in our wedding book trigger many fond memories and some sadness when I realize how many pictured there have passed away.

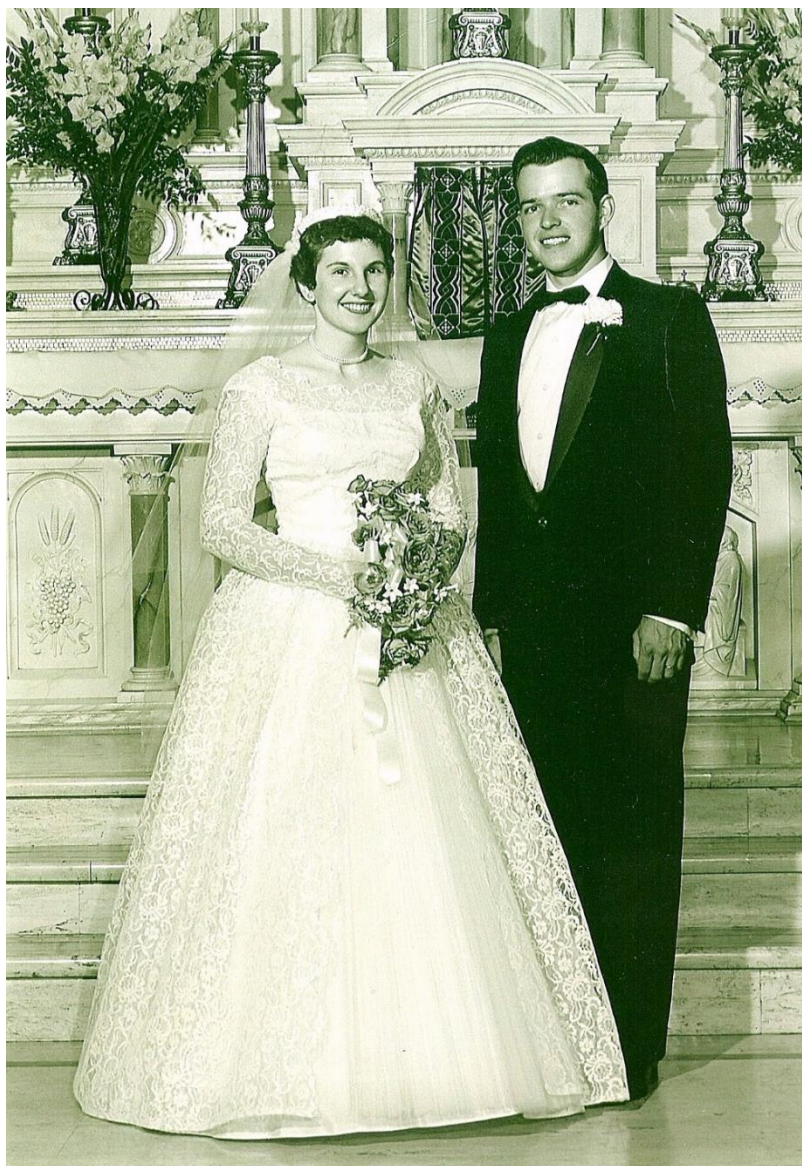
After a short trip to Duluth and the North Shore, we moved into an apartment, I believe, at 825 8th Avenue North in St. Cloud. Marty began her job as an RN on 2 South at the hospital, and I began my last year in college. A good summer followed. With Marty working, with my GI allotment and job at the hospital, we began to save for the day we needed to furnish our first place. Sometime in August the words commonly spoken by young wives of the era were heard in our little house – "I think I might be pregnant." Dr. Reif confirmed. Our little rosebud, as Dr. Reif described her, arrived sometime after midnight on March 13, 1956. She was to be named Lynn Marie. She was a good baby and had her parents well trained in how to care for a new infant in less than six weeks.

This was a busy time for us. I was doing my student teaching in Foley, MN at the time and working several evenings a week at the hospital. As I mentioned before, they were always willing to adjust my working hours to fit my school schedule. Sometime earlier my working assignment had changed to where I had become a "floating" orderly, going where called, working with the urologists and prepping patients for surgery, etc. I found this role more interesting than the repetitive bed baths, enemas, etc. of a geriatric floor. With the reduced staff at night, I sometimes became the doctor's assistant dealing with

emergency admissions. Martha went back to work soon after Lynn was born, working the 3-11 shift. About the same time, I completed my student teaching assignment and began my last quarter of classes. Lucky for us, we lived across the street from George and Lucille Courier, former classmates and longtime friends. Mom would take Lynn to Lucille when she went to work, I would pick her up when I got home. Somehow it worked; somehow with a lot of help from a lot of good people we survived.

May and graduation day arrived. My diploma said I was qualified to teach biology, history, and other social sciences. I had reached my goal of graduating in three years rather than the four years usual for completion of this degree. Upon looking at the class annual I noted that yes, I was John Anderson, but my degree was in industrial arts and my hometown was Anoka. I did not buy an annual. I enrolled in summer school as I still had unused GI benefits, and both of us continued working at the hospital.





Balaton: A New Beginning

Sometime during the summer, I applied for a teaching position in Balaton, Mn. I was happy and relieved as there was not an abundance of openings. After an interview trip to Balaton, I was offered the job. I would be teaching Science 7-8-9, Biology and World History. Starting salary \$3350 plus \$300 because I qualified as head of household. Monthly pay after deductions, \$256. We were able to rent a very adequate upstairs apartment from a very nice older couple. For this rent, all utilities except electricity was included. We felt fortunate. We moved in with our paid for new stove, fridge, and bedroom furniture. There was not a lot of extra money at the end of the month; but owing nothing and with very favorable living expenses, we were able to buy a new automatic washer that first year.

My school duties kept me busy. Classes were big, and I had four or five class preps each day. Evenings were spent attending school events and/or at the kitchen table preparing my next day's lessons. In addition, as was common in many schools, I was informed on the first day of school I would have a number of extracurricular duties. In my case, ticket sales at all home football and basketball games, coaching junior high basketball and baseball, and sophomore class advisor. With being the new kid on the block and a rookie teacher with a full plus schedule, it was a go-go year. Thankfully, I was a little older and with my Army experiences I was able to avoid some of the difficulties that sometime severely challenge new teachers.

Being new to the town, Mom had the more difficult adjustment to make that first year. Being new in a small town wherein social circles are often pretty well set, it wasn't easy for a mother and a baby to avoid a certain feeling of isolation. I know that throughout that first fall and winter we really looked forward to our trips to the farm at Litchfield. Just after midnight on January 31, 1957, Mom woke me and said it was time to go. And very early in the morning we became parents of another little girl, our Patty Rae. That afternoon after school a teacher friend and I took Lynn to Grandma Konietzko, and a few days later she was joined by Marty and her new baby sister.

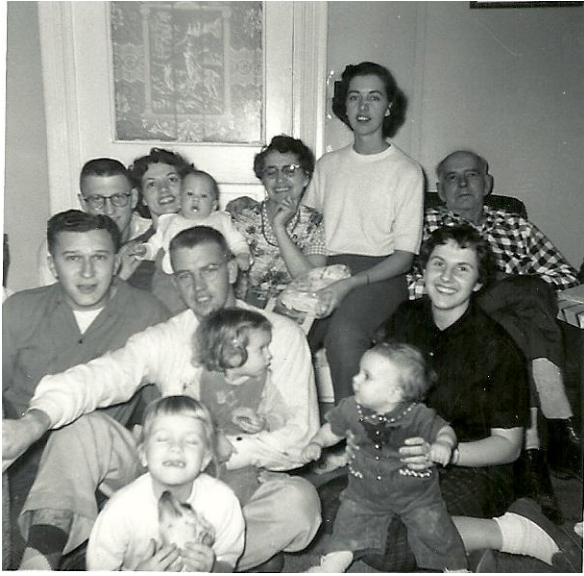
Busy days were to become even busier. The end of the school year was marked with the resignation of a number of teachers, an event repeated the following year. It was the beginning of an enjoyable three years. The new teachers were young, we were young, we had much in common. They were fun to teach with and fun to socialize with. We remain good friends with several of them to this day. By this time, we had also made friends within the community, and life after the first year was good in so many ways. I think it was during our second year in Balaton that we moved from our upstairs apartment to a house. Living upstairs with two little ones who wanted to be “side” (outside) was not an ideal arrangement. Our new spot with its backyard swings and partially surrounded by a hedge and fence was an ideal place. Rent was \$65 a month, we paid all utilities. But with raises, I was now paid \$4350 per year and with some summer work, we managed. We were also able to rent the upstairs to the one city police officer for \$30. The resulting rent for us was \$35.

There were other significant events during these years. On December 6, 1958, another little person joined our family, Kristin Elizabeth. A little girl with an abundance of black hair now gave us three little girls under three years old. Thankfully, they were healthy, Mom was a very good and capable mother, we were young, and we did, to the best of our ability, care for these little people. Mom read to them, played with them, and kept them close as she worked. When asked how we made it, I sometimes answered that Mom spent afternoons sewing or canning; I spent my evenings gardening instead of golfing.

The other big event was moving into a new school. No longer was it necessary to teach Biology in the lunchroom or my science classes in a study hall, the only place large enough to hold them. Now we had real labs and what’s more, some of the larger classes had been divided into two sections. When I began the 1959-60 school year, I had no reason to think it was to be my last year in Balaton. We had settled in, with the new school, a good faculty and good friends...why would we think of leaving? Then the something happened. Mr. Adams, our principal (and a very good one) suggested that I should think about applying for a National Science Foundation Academic Year Scholarship. I did

and sometime later I received acceptance from both the University of South Dakota and the University of Wisconsin. It included all tuition costs and fees, some money for travel, and a stipend greater than my teaching salary. I favored the institute at USD as it seemed to match up better with my undergraduate work and teaching experience. Always being a good deal more comfortable with the known rather than the unknown, I spent some uneasy moments dealing with the “what if’s” and contemplating the wisdom of leaving this place that I was feeling so good about. The opportunities being offered, however, prevailed and in August we began another significant event on life’s road.





Vermillion

The beginning was not promising as housing was scarce, rents were high, and for whatever the reason, the attitude of many landlords was “they will be here only for a year so...” We found the first place and the first person we rented from to be like that. The house was very small, the lawn was a weed patch, the air conditioning did not work, access to the basement was like a ladder, and we had to slide the mattresses through the upstairs windows. The rent was twice what we had been paying, the house was half the size and run down, and there was no garage. The first night was a real downer. We sat in a room filled with “stuff” and no place to go with it. Even with having lived in far from elegant quarters, I just didn’t see how we could spend a year in that house.

Then fortune smiled. The gas man arrived to turn on the gas, and I asked if by chance he knew of anything available. His answer, “Yes, I do. My renter, a college instructor, had just received a sabbatical and had just moved out.” The rent was less, the house was bigger and in good repair as well as in a better part of town. We had to make a quick trip back to Minnesota, and I was unable to reach our current landlord before leaving town. When I was able to make contact the next day, she was very unhappy to say the least. She threatened to put our belongings out on the street and to sue. In both tone and in words she let me know what she thought of me. I remember telling her that I had no control over what she chose to do, but having paid the rent, our things had better stay right where they were, and we would return the next day and move out. I never met her or saw her afterward. We moved and spent a very comfortable year in the other house. Thankfully, we had never signed a lease.

Soon after classes began, it became apparent that there would be little time in my day for much beyond classwork and studying. The library became almost like a second home. The competition was intense and the work demanding. The AYI (Academic Year Institute) was made up of forty-eight students selected from almost eight hundred applicants. There were twelve students in each of the following areas: physics

chemistry, math, and biology. The biology classes included both pre-med and other medical students. I never used Pat's revealing words "She is so competitive, I'm going to beat her," but I think I was driven in a similar way. When handing back tests, our professors would often give the range of scores or sometimes hand them out in order from high to low. Obviously, this left some elated and others deflated. The practice seems rather cruel, but that's how it was. I frequently felt good and sometimes very good.

Sometime during the second semester we began working on our research for our thesis. My mentor and director would be Dr. Benton Buttery, whose primary area of interest was protozoology. He was both helpful and demanding. I wonder how many hours I spent peering through a microscope at slides determining the species of protozoa in the cloacal contents of various species of frogs. Its purpose was to determine the enteric protozoa of four species of frogs sharing the same habitat and at times the same ecological niche. The results would then be used to interpret the host-parasite relationship and the degree of host specificity exhibited by the parasites. The finished paper was accepted, and later I presented it at the South Dakota Academy of Science. I don't recall exactly when I was one of a number asked to submit an application to the American Association for the Advancement of Science for a three-summer fellowship. We were told if some were successful there would be sufficient funds for all AYI members to complete the requirements for our MA's. Our reward: we would be funded to receive two additional summers at our chosen institution.

Sometime in the spring I was notified I had been awarded a fellowship. I would spend the first summer at USD and the following two summers at the University of Minnesota's Biology station at Lake Itasca. During the last summer I passed my oral exam, the last hurdle. In August I was graduated from USD with a Master of Arts in Biology. About the same time Dr. Buttery, my thesis advisor, asked if I would be interested in becoming his teaching assistant at Iowa State as he was moving on from USD. It was tempting, but asking Marty and three little girls to move again to a new place for what could amount to two years with little family time seemed too high a price. I also

thought my "weak" math background would cause some problems in a PhD program. For all these reasons and my discomfort posed by all the unknowns, I declined. There was one other important issue that had to be settled that summer: I needed to find a job.



Moving on to Morris via Hancock

During the summer of 1961, I sent out letters of inquiry to various schools in Minnesota seeking a vacancy. The telephone rang one evening and the caller identified himself as Superintendent Oscar Miller from Morris. He asked me if I would be interested in coming to Morris to interview for a position at the Morris Junior High School. I wasn't real enthused about teaching at that level but did go for an interview. The long and the short was I became a member of the staff at Morris Area Schools. My original idea, to remain in Morris until I could find a more attractive high school assignment, was soon forgotten; and I began a twenty-eight-year career at Morris.

One of the real positives I did not immediately grasp was just how important the presence in Morris of the new University would become for our family. Its first impact on us, however, was an almost complete lack of available housing. Fortunately, we were able to find a house to rent in nearby Hancock. Beginning the first hour after our arrival the people were most helpful and friendly. The drive to Morris each day did not present much of a problem. The following year we bought a house in Hancock, a comfortable home that served us well for six years. Just like Balaton, we will always remember the Hancock community as a good place to live.

My teaching duties kept me busy although it was a relief not to prepare for four or five different classes as I had in Balaton. Beginning in the late 50's, there was a new and vigorous emphasis put on improving science education in our schools. Money became available to fund new programs, buy new equipment, and remodel facilities. After a year in Morris and with this groundswell of support, I was able to sell my principal on changing the science program in the Junior High to a full year of science rather than just a semester in grades 7 and 8. There would now be a full year of Life Science in grade 7 and a full year of Earth Science in grade 8. Grade 9 would be devoted to the Physical Sciences.

Mrs. Weikert, my principal, was most supportive of the new program and instrumental in getting additional funding for supplies and new equipment. My room, the recently remodeled, was more like a typical classroom without lab stations for individuals or groups. However, by moving tables and chairs around and stringing electric cords and the like we were able to engage in a lot of "hands on" activities. There were always many volunteers to help with demonstrations or to bring in things living or dead that they had to share. Gerbils, chipmunks, snakes, mice, toads, fish and frogs, sometimes in jars, sometimes in cages, shared our classroom.

Almost all middle school students enjoyed living things and liked to share this liking with others. They loved demonstrations that went "bang" - loudly, that produced "bad" smells or the unexpected - cool. Yes, sometimes a "critter" escaped; sometimes the air was a bit "pungent" or hazy, but overall, its positive impact on focus and interest made it all worthwhile. Often Room 104 would be full of kids before school to play with the "livestock" or witness something as exciting as feeding the corn snake its weekly mouse.

With the support of Mrs. Weikert and various community members, I was able to acquire enough good microscopes for every two student pairs along with other lab equipment. Bob Rose, the hospital administrator at the time, gifted us with a variety of outdated but very usable medical devices. Now we heard heartbeats, took blood pressures, viewed eardrums, and watched blood cells circulating through the capillaries in the veins of fish and frogs. Old X-rays gave us interesting looks at skeletal joints, broken bones, and internal organs. The students loved our skeleton whom we named Billy Bones.

Miss Weikert was a believer in the value of Science Fairs, and each year after many after schoolwork sessions the gym would be filled with students' efforts. Among the many there were always a considerable number of quality projects advanced to regional and then the State Fair. Busy it was but the student interest it generated, and the resulting parent and community support made it well worth the effort.

I presume our success and the regional and State level was a factor in my being invited to apply for the post of president of the Minnesota Junior Academy of Science. I felt honored, but if by chance I would have been selected, it would have required a good deal of travel and a lot of time away from home, wife, and kids. I was happy and secure where I was and once again opted out for the status quo rather than the different and unknown. I expect someone who knew me or of me would have without hesitation said, "He will stay put."

During the summers of 1962 and 1963, the second and third summers of my Fellowship grant, I attended classes and continued investigating the questions asked in my thesis at the U of M Biology Station at Lake Itasca. It was a most satisfying place to study and to enjoy the beauty of the area. The only drawback was being away from Mom and the girls. Compounding this negative was the impending addition of another little one. The arrival occurred, thankfully, after the summer session ended. On August 25, 1962, the three girls were joined by a baby brother. We were elated, they were happy, Mom was very busy. We considered a number of names but decided on "John" after his grandfather, Rueben, who had never before involved himself in naming any of his grandchildren, said, "It should be John" - the name of the baby's two great grandfathers and his father.

A lot of other things were happening during those Hancock years. Lynn and Pat started school, we bought a house across town, Mom started working at Dr. Eide's office, I worked at Hancock Concrete and then became part of the painting crew at the Morris Schools during the summers. The additional income meant money to buy some new appliances and in 1966 our first new car, a station wagon.

These Hancock years were also a time when pheasant numbers were high, and vast flocks of northern mallards would raft on nearby Lake Emily. My shotgun and a pair of jeans were commonly present in my car, and my after-school trip by backroads to Hancock would often yield a bird or two. My hunting partner Bill Krump and I enjoyed some of the greatest possible duck hunting experiences in the picked corn fields north

of Lake Emily. I'll never forget the sight of hundreds of mallards overhead as we lay hidden in our 'nests' of cornstalks or under our white sheets in the snow. One Saturday in late fall we witnessed large flock after flock of ducks flying southward. In every direction they were visible. Thousands of ducks moving out in front of approaching bad weather. The great migration was on. Unforgettable were the morning hunts, not so enjoyable was the evening duck cleaning. Plucking feathers - tedious; hand in the body of a cold duck - also unforgettable.

Each succeeding year found me more involved in school, church, and community activities. I served as president of the Morris Teachers Association and co-chair of our Salary Negotiation Committee, I taught religion classes for grade 7th and 8th grade students at Assumption Church in Morris, and I joined the Hancock Lions Club. I also coached 7th and 8th grade football and baseball and timed varsity basketball and wrestling events. It was go go go.

In 1967 I was selected as Morris Teacher of the Year. That same year I was recognized as the Outstanding Young Educator of Stevens County and the runner up for the Outstanding Young Educator of Minnesota. It was during this same time that I spent several weeks with a writing team put together by the science consultant of the Minnesota Department of Education to write hands on science activities for middle school students. As part of a group studying inner city schools, I visited schools in both Milwaukee and Chicago. I must admit it was exciting, and frankly, very satisfying to be recognized and to be part of all of this "action."

Nevertheless, I was never really comfortable telling others "what to do" or "how to do it" as I was in my own little domain, Room 104 of the MJHS. The awards were fine, the congratulatory words were welcome, but I think the most satisfaction came when the Junior High students would make their annual choices as to which teacher was the most respected or most interesting or their favorite of the year, and my name would make the list. After all they knew me best. They were there to observe the good days, the bad days, and the in between days. With all of this time together, they knew me and

were most capable of judging me and my teaching. When they said I was okay, I felt I had passed the test as to how successful I had been as a teacher.

As I became more and more involved in school activities and the Morris community, I often found myself eating supper alone in one of the Morris cafes. Leaving before eight in the morning and not getting home until nine or later in the evenings was just too long for all of us. Sunday mornings found us in Morris for church, Wednesday evenings during the school year again at Morris while the kids attended religion classes. The result, we started house hunting. We didn't look long or at many houses. Sometime in the late winter we found a house that seemed to fit our needs. There were five young ones now. A little curly haired girl, Carla Jo, had joined us on January 31, 1968, exactly 11 years after number 2 daughter Pat. That spring Carla would often accompany Mom and me to Morris in her basket to 'help' us paint up and spruce up the house we had bought.

This was the year we were on split shifts at school - grades 10-12 had school in the morning and grades 7-9 had school in the afternoons. That left the mornings pretty well open for other activities. I would remember the many mornings when John B would bring his little chair into the bathroom while I was in the tub and play either "state officers" or "county seats." He still remembers playing, and he still remembers the answers.

I believe this was also the time Mom started working at the hospital in Morris several days per week from 3 to 11 P.M. We were lucky to find a wonderful little lady in the neighborhood to take care of John. She became our Grandma Koch, premier nanny and donut maker. I wonder how many games of concentration she played with John or how many orange "fizzies" she mixed up to satisfy his 'thirst.' Those were good years in so many ways. The kids were healthy, those in school were doing well, we had good friends and even our finances allowed for a few extras. I can remember sitting around the supper table with everyone present and thinking how good we had it. No wonder we felt some sadness when we left Hancock.

One other memory still green in my memory from those Hancock years is the numerous winters of heavy snow and blizzards. Many were the days when the radio would announce no school today - no travel advised. Certainly, Marty remembers the March 17th blizzard of 1967. And oh yes and thank heavens it was about this time I quit smoking.

In June of 1968 we moved to our house in Morris at 5 Ridge Road. Today, 48 years later it is still "home" to Mom and me and I expect to the kids as well. How could we have been so blessed, so fortunate after such a short search to find a place that has served our needs so well? Price: \$17,750. Close to the schools including the university, close to the hospital, close to the church, wonderful neighbors, a big backyard, ample space for a garden and bunches of other kids for our kids to play with. Again, how could we be so lucky? The unrest related to the Viet Nam protests and the "anything goes" of the hippie era for the most part had little impact on how we lived our lives. Unfortunately, drugs found their way into many schools including Morris, and some kids with real potential "lost their way."

On December 23 of 1968 my dad passed away. He had been hospitalized a few days earlier, but his condition did not seem critical. Like so many days that winter the weather was stormy, and my trip to Brandon to be with my mother was not an easy one. My dad, whose life I have often thought had more than its share of dark days, was now at rest. After my dad's death my mother continued to live in Brandon and being only about 45 miles away, we were able to make frequent visits. The kids got to know their Grandma Della, the Strom livestock, and Charlie's ample supply of penny candy. Charlie, who had waited patiently while I as a little boy made my selection, now waited patiently as my kids made theirs. Mark up another positive point for life in Brandon and I expect many other small towns in the Midwest where young children walked safely uptown to the store, made their purchases, and walked home along quiet streets. They did so without concern and as a parent I did not worry either.

That is not to say all was serene or that life was without stress. I remember the threats posed by the Cold War, the Berlin Wall, the emergence of Red China, Russian expansion, the

Cuban Missile Crisis, Viet Nam, student riots, racial unrest and cities on fire were part of the scene also. As a nation we celebrated with pride various achievements in space, medicine, and technology, but mourned the loss by assassins' bullets of John and Bobby Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King. Within any given time, frame there seems to exist both serenity and chaos, both Mother Teresas and individuals capable of unspeakable acts.

With the advent of the 70's we became parents of teenagers. Evening meals no longer meant everyone would be gathered around the table. Sometimes someone would be babysitting, sometimes there were school activities, and both Lynn and Pat had evening hours working at the drug store. Soon they were joined in the work force by Kris and John. Kris at the Country Kitchen and John at Perry's Super Value. I was quite frequently absent or hurrying to leave also. Mom's hours at the hospital covered the evening hours. It was a go-go-go time. Go, Go, Go, for all. I remember them as good times but a little too busy.

The kids were good students, honor roll students with good work habits. The good comments of their teachers far exceeded any negatives. All were members of the National Honor Society, and all graduated with honors. With five involved students Mom and I were kept busy trying to keep up. There were band concerts and trips, cheerleaders to watch, football games and basketball games to attend, and reports on Student Council activities from Council President Carla. Our school involvement covered a lengthy period in as much as Lynn graduated the same year Carla started school.

The pace of life slowed only slightly during the summer. At one time or another they worked as babysitters and lawn mowers, strawberry pickers and vegetable sellers at the nearby Grandview Apartments. After all it was nice to have a stash of cash when fair time rolled around. From these jobs they moved into the ones I mentioned earlier. I'm proud to say most of these jobs began by their being asked to work rather than the result of a job search.

When Carla was 4 or 5, she sometimes asked, "When will summer come, I mean real summer, camping summer?" Her question pretty well describes our summer vacations. First it was resorts on Big Chippewa or Lake Ida, then tenting followed by a lot of togetherness in a tent camping trailer and finally our first trailer, the Mallard at Devil's Lake near Brandon. If the weather cooperated, they were fun times with swimming, hiking, fishing, and campfires. With extended rain or cool weather, however, a tent or popup camper leaves something to be desired. The good memories have lingered as in later years as family units, we made repeated trips during "camping summers" to various state parks and the North Shore. Beginning in the early 80's, Kamp Kappy on Devil's Lake became our base - Brandon again beckoned. New friends became good friends, and old friendships were quickly renewed. The young ones who shared our days were now our grandchildren. We heard them cry as infants, like ours they sometimes slept on the floor. They swam, they hunted for pretty stones and shells, and they learned to fish. We grew close.

In 1995, we bought a new trailer, our Golden Falcon. The Mallard had served us well, but both Mom and I soon felt now we had the best trailer ever. Although my little Lund boat, my first boat, will always be special, we bought a new boat, a little bigger, more stable and with additional positives. Unfortunately, but predictably all things, including good things, come to an end. Ray and Sharilyn, owners of Kamp Kappy announced they had sold the resort. With new ownership came many changes. Lots were no longer to be rented. It was buy or move. The new owner's vision for Woodlawn, the new name for Kamp Kappy, was never realized for many reasons. After a number of years of few sales, he was in financial difficulty. A number of lots were sold at new and more realistic prices, but it was not enough, and Woodlawn became the property of the mortgage holder. Along with almost all others we moved.

Our new spot was on Little Pelican Lake near Glenwood. This resort became the new home for several of our friends and fellow campers from Kamp Kappy also. Even so, I never developed anything like the feelings I had for Devil's Lake. We

were some distance from the lake, the lots were in the sun much of the day, the fishing fell far short of that on Devil's and Little Chippewa, and the lake was green and full of weeds. But most of all - it wasn't Brandon. The result was a few years later we sold it all: the trailer, the deck, the dock, the boat lift, keeping only the boat. Our summer days at "the lake" were over or so we thought.

Our hiatus from "the lake" lasted a number of years until son John bought a lot and then an adjacent lot on Devil's Lake. It should come as no surprise that these lots encompassed the site where our trailer had stood for so many years. The saga continues and at the persistent urging of his son John Carl, we were moved to buy another trailer which now occupies our original area at old Kamp Kappy. Since then, our youngest daughter Carla and husband Karl have joined us. Family days at the lake, shared meals, fishing forays, and campfires have become again good days at the lake for Mom and me.

In 1974 Lynn graduated from high school and following in her mom's footsteps enrolled in the Nursing School of the St. Cloud Hospital. In 1975 Pat graduated having gained recognition as a National Merit Scholarship finalist and enrolled at the University of Minnesota Morris. Just two years later she was joined by number 3 daughter, Kris. How many times haven't I been thankful that my response to Superintendent Miller and his job offer at the Morris Area Schools was a yes! The kids had little choice as to where they would be continuing their education, but their willingness to buy into this plan and their contributions via scholarships, work study and job earnings enabled all to graduate debt free.

The year Kris graduated from college John graduated from high school. As a National Merit Scholarship winner, he had a considerable number of opportunities elsewhere, but he too enrolled in UMM. After two years and being recruited by the US Navy, he transferred to the University's Institute of Technology. Two years later he graduated as an electrical engineer. There followed more education at various places eventually resulting in his being commissioned as a Nuclear Propulsion Officer in the Navy. Carla, who had been recognized as a Commended Student by the National Merit Scholarship Program, spent her

first two years at UMM and then transferred to the Twin Cities Campuses where she graduated with a degree in Technical Communications. The nest was now empty.

Through these years much of our attention, our hopes and wishes and sometimes our concerns were focused on our family; yet many other situations and obligations that vied for our time and our attention as well. Mom became director of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at the hospital and assisted a local cardiologist inserting pacemakers. The phone would ring, or someone would deliver the message, and Mom would be off to the hospital. For many of these years I taught 6 periods a day. I can truthfully say there is always more a teacher could do to enhance learning. Seldom is there the time, the resources, the energy, or the abilities to meet the needs of all. In attempts to improve, more and more 'specialists' joined the scene, and principals attended more and more meetings seeking the "holy grail." Among the results: many more meetings. Meetings before school, meetings after school, meetings during prep time. They were doing their job but in frustration I would sometimes say, "After the meeting you go home; I go back to my room and prepare a worthwhile day for the 150 students I will see tomorrow."

I was also to blame. Many of the activities that claimed my time were worthy ones, and like many other volunteers I had difficulty saying no. For more than thirty years I was a member of the Lions Club. During these years I served two terms as president, two years as secretary, was on many committees and chaired many events. For years I held one or another position in various teachers' organizations including president of the local teachers' association, a member, including chairman of the Salary Negotiation Team, and the head of the Professional Rights and Responsibilities Committee. Sometimes these meetings were quite contentious and likely to occupy my mind for a considerable time before and after.

I also became quite active in my church, the Assumption of Mary, in Morris. I taught 7th and 8th grade religion classes for a number of years, served as a lector and usher, and was on several fund-raising groups. With another couple, Marty and I co-chaired the Fall Bazaar Committee. With the advent of Parish

Councils I became a member of this group and eventually a parish trustee. This period was highlighted by the completion of a major renovation and decorating project which resulted in the present beautiful interior of the church. We also hired a pastoral assistant. From several good candidates we selected Sister Christelle, who some years earlier had been a member of the Franciscan Sisters serving our parish. Sister Christelle was a great addition and successfully 'wore many hats' doing much for the parish and the Morris community. How the road of life twists and turns: Sister Christelle had been Evelyn Watercott in my Biology class in Foley when I did my student teaching in 1956.



Retirement and Beyond

Sometime during the 1988-89 school year I made the decision to retire as a full-time teacher after 33 years, taking advantage of an attractive retirement plan available to those whose age and years of service totaled 90 or more years. Major changes were also occurring in teaching or were looming on the horizon. So, considering all the factors I decided not to answer the bell in the fall of 1989. I left teaching with mixed feelings. Sometimes I thought, go another year or two. At other times - get out and try other things; enjoy the opportunity to say no to a particular offer or request. I quickly found there would be few idle days. For the first 4 or 5 years I frequently worked as a substitute teacher as well as a supervisor of student teachers for the University for several years. I also continued to work at sporting events at the Morris Area Schools. There were days when I had my choice of jobs and times when I thought I should take a full-time job so I had some time off.

Some fall days I farmed, hauling corn, digging, plowing or chopping corn stalks. I worked several seasons at the green house selling trees, bedding plants and the like. During the summer I split my time between my garden, the lake and painting a few houses. Late October and November days you might find me along the Pomme de Terre River "making wood." There were many dead American Elms along its banks just the right size, not too big and not too small. They were free and as they say about wood you make yourself, it warms you twice - once when you make it, and once when you burn it. On sunny days I truly enjoyed it. The geese overhead, the crowing of pheasants, the glimpse of a deer, the antics of the chickadees. It is such moments that lead to contemplation of the beauty in the simple things around us. Thankfully along with the clamor and stress of life, there exist these pockets when feelings of peace and serenity hold sway.

Just before leaving teaching we bought our first van, a 1989 Dodge. We selected a model that offered seating that could be arranged to make up very comfortable sleeping quarters. During the summer of 1989 after a few overnight trips, we headed to Yellowstone National Park and other points west. Yellowstone

was nice but crowded. If you wished a camping spot at night, you reserved it in the morning. It was wise to keep your eyes on the vehicles ahead of you as upon seeing something of interest they would suddenly stop. Old Faithful appeared a little tired, the height of the vapor plume rather subdued. The Grand Canyon of Yellowstone was impressive and the boiling paint pots gave apt evidence of the turmoil lurking below. We did see some wildlife, but the animals were greatly outnumbered by the human species. With all the people, restrooms were not quite up to their mission. The upside was no one lingered; the downside was clearly visible on their faces when they emerged. My advice would be to plan your visit early in the season to hopefully avoid the deluge of people later.

Jackson Hole and the Tetons were still rather crowded, but the scenery was beautiful. On the trip out we stopped at the site of Custer's Last Stand, Theodore Roosevelt National Park and the North Dakota Badlands. There were vast and lonely spaces, lovely in a way. But, when driving through the Dakota, Crow, and Northern Cheyenne reservations it was apparent that life does not touch all people gently. We took a different route heading home. We left through the east entrance to the park and made a stop in the Big Horn Mountains. A ranger we had met there told us they were a well-kept secret, and I would certainly agree. We spent a delightful day at "Dead Swede" Campground. Few people, spacious campsites, more wildlife than we had seen at Yellowstone, and yes, the restroom facilities were much kinder to our senses. The ranger also told us the fishing in the nearby mountain lakes was fantastic, but without time or equipment we were unable to check it out.

A little further down the road we stopped, I believe it was in Buffalo, Wyoming to join the crowds celebrating a summer get together - fun. One other notable stop on the way home was Devil's Tower. There were climbers on its sheer walls giving Mom a bad case of clammy hands and leaving me wondering why would you do that. There remain several places in the American west I would have liked to visit - Glacier National Park, the Red Rock area of southern Utah and a return visit to the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming.

Our trip to Yellowstone was the first of other trips we made during the 90's and the first years of the new century. We greatly enjoyed our bus trip to Washington D.C. with Ralph Angen of Utopia Tours. Along with a memorable group of people, we walked the fields of Gettysburg, Jamestown, Mount Vernon, Monticello and Williamsburg. We toured the White House, several Smithsonian Museums, the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. The Korean War Memorial and the black wall of the Viet Nam Memorial with its names of those who died there quietly shouts out the message, "Freedom is not free." And who could forget the Arlington Cemetery complex with its acres and acres of white crosses or the nighttime visit to the illuminated monument recalling the flag raising on Mt. Surubachi after the bloody battles of Iwo Jima. That it was springtime and the trees were greening and flowers were blooming everywhere including the cherry trees make this my favorite trip.

Another trip we made during these years was to New Orleans, a little disappointing, maybe during Mardi Gra and at age 25 I would have found it to be more exciting. As it was Bourbon Street and much of the rest seemed a bit worn and tired like it was trying too hard to convince that it was fun, fun, fun. I did enjoy Vicksburg, and on the way home our visit to the St. Louis Arch and museum. Our trip to Alaska, gifted by our children, was both inspiring and overwhelming. Although it was July, we had considerable cloudy weather. Anchorage and Fairbanks were great. Fairbanks in February, maybe not so much. The sun did emerge for an hour or so when we were at Denali, but wildlife sightings were meager and the forests of northern Minnesota more attractive. Highlights of the trip for me were the vegetable gardens, the farmers markets, and the wonderful buffets featuring salmon and halibut. And yes, the mountains are majestic.

We also attended several elder hostel offerings, which might be described as being "school for older people." Offered at hundreds of locations and covering a wide variety of subjects, we really enjoyed them. We combined our attendance at one in North Carolina with a 2-day stop at Bryson City to visit the now Dr. Robert Nordling who I was lucky enough, although not

always appreciated, to have had as a teacher in my senior year of high school. Later, along with friends John and Renae Paul, we attended a session in St. Louis, where a principal topic covered was the life of Mark Twain. Truly a great time with wonderful friends. Can you imagine, walking on the hillside where Tom Sawyer played or being in Becky Thatcher's room? Certainly, it never entered my mind while sitting and listening to my 3rd grade teacher Miss Lillian Stenjum read to us little people about Tom, Huckleberry Fin, Becky, Aunt Polly and Injun Joe. Who knew Life's Journey - long yet short, with twists and turns and many blind corners would include a delightful day in Hannibal, Missouri.

During our decade of travel, we made two trips motivated by John Brian's Navy service - one to each coast. Mom, Carla and I flew to Newport, RI to attend his graduation from Naval Officers Candidate School. The ceremony was impressive and so were the young men being commissioned. We were proud. Several years later Mom and I flew out to California to spend some time with John while his ship, the aircraft carrier Enterprise, was in dry dock for a significant refurbishing. While there, we visited Napa Valley wine country, dined at Fisherman's Wharf, toured San Francisco, walked on the beach and had a close up look at the size and complexity of this famous ship guided by our now, 1st Lt Anderson.

Mom and I also made several trips to see Pat in Detroit. My mom came with us on one of them, marveling at the size of the Great Lakes and the green beauty of the Upper Peninsula. Never to be forgotten recollections of these visits - an outdoor concert by the Mitch Miller Choral, seeing the off Broadway plays "Fiddler on the Roof" and "Joseph's Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat" at the Ford Theater, fishing Lake Erie (the walleyes were plentiful), Frankenmuth during the Christmas season, a Pistons game, a stopover in the Door County area of Wisconsin.

After going east and west, to the Northwest and the Southeast, we decided to take a look at the Southwest. Our destination, to visit friends, see the Sedona Desert and the Grand Canyon. Although we had black ice in New Mexico on the way down and drove over snowy slush covered roads through

Nebraska on the way home, we were treated to ideal weather in Arizona. The sun was warm, we had great visits with friends, the Sedona area was beautiful and the Grand Canyon truly grand.

Our travels continued - with passports in hand, Mom and I stepped off a plane in Frankfurt, Germany on our way to spend a week visiting Pat and Bernie and his parents in Wimsheim, a village near the city of Stuttgart. It is located near the Black Forest of Germany and like many similar sized towns, it was very pretty with its red tiled roofs and well-kept yards and little gardens. With Bernie as translator, we were able to communicate quite well with his parents and other people of the village. Bernhard's family had "deep" roots in the village, established over a period of 400 years. The term "old country" has greater meaning when a visit to the well-manicured cemetery revealed graves dated from the 1700's. With Bernie and Pat as guides we made several trips to nearby cities. We had dinner and drank a beer, maybe two at the famous Munich beer garden. We visited a historic cathedral in Ulm, the city square in Stuttgart with its many animated life-sized figures a part of many of the buildings like so many giant cuckoo clocks and "crazy" Ludwig's castle with its beautiful formal gardens. Another high point was the Wimsheim annual street fair - an abundance of good German food, beer, music and friendly people. I came home a bit envious of the great variety of sausage and freshly baked loaves of bread in the village market and the presence in many residents' yards of a rabbit hutch or a coop housing a half a dozen laying hens. Something I have often wished our town would allow.

In the late summer of 2001, Bernie's parents paid us a return visit. I expect they found the landscape of west central Minnesota with its seemingly endless fields of corn and beans rather repetitious but impressive by their immensity. I think they found the visit to the lake country near Brandon more appealing even though it was made on a rather gray, rainy day. Alfred and Edith were also here the day the kids surprised me with a 70th birthday party at the city park. It was a good day, many people, much food and even a rousing game of dodgeball. And then that day always to be remembered - September 11, 2001, the Twin

Towers, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania. Terrorist attacks had come to America.

We made one more trip, a bus trip to the east coast with the featured destination of the Cape Cod area with a ferry boat trip and tour of Martha's Vineyard. We visited Hyannis Port and did see the Kennedy compound but only from a distance as the access streets to the area are understandably blocked off. We were, however, shown the church attended by Rose Kennedy and the pew reserved for her - front row. We also visited Oceanside Park with its well-known beach. Nice, but no swimsuits, no swimming. The park did contain, for me at least something I would rate "best of the trip." A memorial honoring the 1.9 million veterans of the Korean War, the forgotten war. Not as large as the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C. On that day I found it to be just as impressive. And then the unexpected - surrounding the base bearing the statue of a combat infantry man were a number of photos. Almost immediately one caught my eye. It was captioned, "The big guns of the 204th Field Artillery firing on enemy positions." The 204th FA was the unit to which I was assigned while serving as a medic in Korea. How many times I had heard the sound and seen the recoil of these 155 mm "long toms." What were the odds that 50 plus years later I would "see them firing again" but this time in a peaceful park in Massachusetts - Memories.

Our trip to Cape Cod turned out to be our last bus trip. Mom experienced some aching legs and back pain on the way home and for some time afterward. Whether it was prolonged sitting or something else or a combination of causes, we decided we wouldn't chance another.

We did make one more long trip. This one via Amtrak to Seattle to visit Kate and Drew after the birth of our second great grandchild. Mom had never traveled by train, and I remembered riding the "Empire Builder" between Minnesota and Seattle several times during Army days, the spectacular mountains as this then crack train raced the sun. Our visit was great. We enjoyed our trips to various parks and the seashore as well as meeting Baby Crosby and his older brother Jack. The train trip, however, was a disappointment. Gone were the neatly attired

porters and dining car waiters. Gone were the clean restrooms, the pillows and such. Slow: track conditions, sitting on sidings as freight trains rumbled by, more frequent stops. Overcrowded: observation car seats were used to accommodate the overflow, meals were served in shifts and the restroom facilities were overwhelmed. And then a malfunctioning air conditioner on the return trip had us wrapped up in everything warm we had along. Glad to be home eight hours late, our kindest comment: never again. Next time we fly.

In 1992, Mom retired from her long stint at the hospital. No more weekends, no more calls to quickly come over to the Intensive Care Unit to deal with an emergency situation. Now the quilting and sewing could begin in earnest, and no schedule dictated her coming and going. It was also the year I began working at the funeral home. The ownership had passed from the Pedersen Brothers to the Vertin Management Group from Breckenridge, and I guess they had been told that I might be someone who knew the community and might be of help in the transition from the old to the new. I said that I would give it a try. This 'try' was to last for over 23 years. Through all these years I can truly say I worked with a great group of people. They were professional in every way. They were sincere, dedicated to the families they serve, attentive to the details that made their service special, calm when the unexpected happened, understanding and easy to work with. They were and will always be special to me.

In many ways this was an ideal work situation for me. Unlike substitute teaching when the notice of a workday might come at 7:30 in the morning, I would often know two days in advance when the funeral home needed me. There were periods when it was almost full time and periods of quiet. There were days to garden, go to the lake, visit kids, or work at another short time job. I tried to make myself available, if at all possible, but if I was locked into another commitment, there was never a problem. The very nature of the services offered by funeral homes means there will be night calls and weekend calls, cold and stormy days, snowy and icy roads when they must be available.

Because of my many years with the funeral home, I now count as friends many people throughout the area including the clergy who serve the region's churches. Numerous now are the times when someone looks once, then looks again with a smile and says, "I didn't recognize you right away without your black suit." For me, working at the funeral home often included the reward of meeting again with former students. These occurrences often involved a lot of hugs, fervent handshakes, much reminiscing and laughter enough to raise a few eyebrows. Such joy filled reunions more than made up for the cold and threatened frostbite of a January day in a windswept cemetery.

The Ebb and Flow

As the years passed I began to note that in increasing numbers there were events occurring that would bring back to mind lines of poetry from Mr. Nordling's 12th grade English class; in particular these of Longfellow: "Thy fate is the common fate of all, Into each life some rain must fall, Some days must be dark and dreary." The anxiety, the stress, and the sadness of most of these "rains" last for relatively short periods of time while others linger for a longer time. The deaths of parents, close relatives, friends and acquaintances become more frequent. Moms and Dads and special others live only in our memories. More often, visits that rekindle friendships with relatives and childhood friends take place at the funeral of a loved one.

These days of dreary rain also come to our children, and any parent will tell you that the hurts that come to their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren affect them as well. Fortunately, most of these events have been more like a summer afternoon storm: there may be darkness, wind, and rain; but it is soon over and the sun returns. Illnesses, troublesome situations, and threatening possibilities that darken the sleepless night appear less so in the morning light. After a short while we may ask the question, "Why did I worry so much?" Actually, worry is in many ways our friend if it doesn't overwhelm us. Worry is what often causes us to take action, to seek a resolution. I suspect it is basic to the evolution of the human species, and as thus - though uncomfortable - worry contributes to our survival.

As I close out my 80's, I often choose not to dwell too long on the worries of the present, and instead, to fondly reminisce about the 'worries' of my youth. As a child I always looked forward to the holidays. Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, July 4th, and Memorial Day. How great was the anticipation! The days before passed so slowly that I had plenty of time to entertain my 'worries.' What would I find in my presents? Did Aunt Ebba get me the shiny caterpillar like I had seen in the catalog or would it be a pair of mittens? Would Dad have bought Mom a box of chocolates that she would promptly make available to us kids? Could I wait for the last hour of Lent to pass so that I could get into that cache of candy I had built up over the

previous weeks? Would I be one of the boys who got to carry a flag during the Memorial Day parade? Would Richard Dahl have a fireworks display again this year, and would he let me hold a Roman candle? What if it rains? Will there be a big gathering of the Kuhn families at Hubert's and Emma's with a big fish fry? In retrospect, these thoughts better resemble wishes than worries, and they have become the foundation of the many memories I have of these holidays along with the laughter of the adults, the games played with cousins, and the many good things to eat. Those close ties remain intact to this day.

For years after our marriage the holidays meant trips to our parents and more memories were made for both Mom and me and for our children. Quite often the winter time trips were made over "white and drifted snow." With Mom and Dad as anxious as the children, you can be assured the effort to travel would be made despite the weather. Our children, now hovering slightly above or just short of 60 years of age, still talk of these trips. Of trying to be the first one into Grandma Konietzko's bed in the morning for story time or of Grandpa Carl's ritual of dressing on Sunday mornings, beginning with his hat and working his way down, and then racing Henry Wick to church. Memories of cleaning the playhouse, getting locked in the chicken coop, and riding like parade queens on top of the bales neatly stacked by their dad as Grandpa drove his Alice Chalmers through the hayfield. And who could forget the smell of Beemans chewing gum when Grandma opened her pocketbook at the Dairy Freeze?

My mother was a great promoter of summer gatherings that involved all of us "Anderson Kids" and our kids. For them the kitchen pump was a fascination, the dining room grate over the furnace was a danger, the basement with its ancient wood-burning stove and the hayloft above the garage were places of great adventure. There was toad catching and swimming with the cows at Little Chip. There was the noise of the trains and the neighbors who called to warn Grandma Della that her grandkids were playing on the railroad tracks again. There was the clothesline strung across the big bedroom upstairs that became part of the treatment for whichever of the cousins had been

diagnosed with “stinkfeetitis.” And, of course, no one could forget the smells of Grandma Della's kitchen and the taste of her chicken and dressing! Eventually our children's children joined these gatherings. Della liked nothing better than those years when there were several new babies to hold and admire. Every child should be blessed with caring grandparents and get the opportunity to know their love.

As the years passed the site for these holiday celebrations moved from our parents' homes to our home. With our five kids, their spouses and their children, things at 5 Ridge Road may have been crowded and hectic at times, but we were a family and we enjoyed it. So what if a few had to sleep on the floor and all had to wait their turn for the use of a bathroom. There were sledding and Easter egg hunts, winter walks and gag gifts, games and card playing, bird watching, a memorable horse drawn sleigh ride, and much more.

The venue has changed once more with the holiday get-togethers now hosted by our children. Still crowded, boisterous, still enjoyed. Thankfully, many pictures have been taken that chronicle these events and the changes that we undergo over time. Those who were once the babies in the pictures now have babies of their own, toddlers appear later as teenagers and young adults with girlfriends or boyfriends. And yes, the pictures show others of us with graying or vanishing hair and an extra pound or two - visible testimonials of the advancing years.



