Bye George

A Life Story

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George

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CHAPTER I

It all began early in the morning of August 23, 1922 in a doctor's berthing room above a grocery store on the main street in a little western Iowa town called Manning. The doctor said it was a difficult birth because my head was so big. He told mother that she was lucky to have a live baby. Probably, in the years that followed, she has had occasions to question the accuracy of that statement, but that's what this story is all about. If you're brave and tenacious enough to stick with this to the end you will be qualified to make your own judgement.

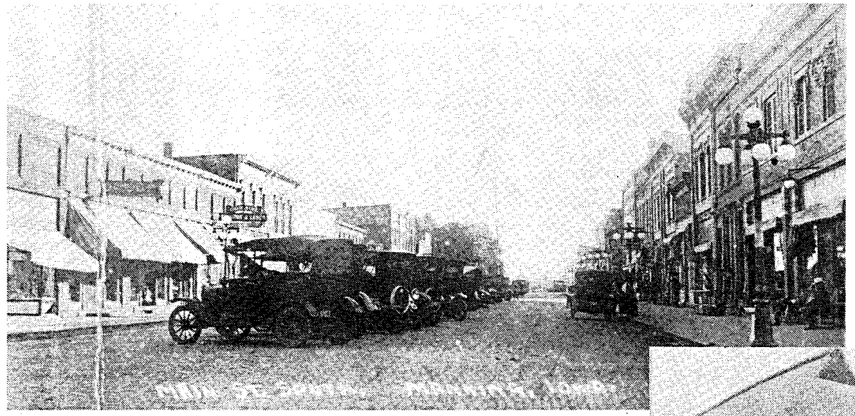
Since most of my life was spent in the Manning community, let's begin with a bit of background information on the town. Manning was incorporated in 1881 when the railroad came through. Early accounts speak of a few buildings on main street and farmers herding cattle on the prairie south of town. Originally there was a small settlement located about a half a mile east of town, but it dried up when the railroad selected the present site. The town was laid out by and named after O. J. Manning, an attorney working for the railroad. I had the distinct pleasure and honor of playing him in the pageant for the centennial celebration in 1981.

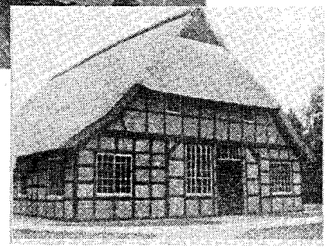
In the early 1920's Manning was a thriving little community of some 1500 souls in Carroll County which is located about 90 miles from a city of any size. Those cities, approximately equal distant were: Sioux City to the northwest, Omaha to the Southwest and Des Moines, the state capitol, to the east. Early residents were mostly first or second generation German immigrants. This resulted in the community supporting an active German shooting club (Shuetzen Verein) as well as a singing club (Liederkrantz) and a weekly German language publication. The most common spoken language was Pladeutsch-commonly called Low German. (In fact, when my bride to be came to Manning for the first time in the early 1940's she was astounded to hear some Pladeutsch still being spoken on main street.)

At that time the town boasted four grocery stores, two hardware stores, two drug stores, two banks, a butcher shop, three barber shops, a bakery, two furniture stores, two undertakers, two dentists, two doctors, three automobile dealers, three restaurants, two clothing stores for men and a like number for women, a clothes cleaner shop, two shoe stores, and, of course, four or five taverns--the germans liked their beer! The Corner Tavern was at one time reputed to have the longest bar west of the Mississippi River. The owners purchased keg beer in carload lots. Even so, the town council had only one police officer and a part time night watchman for the whole town.

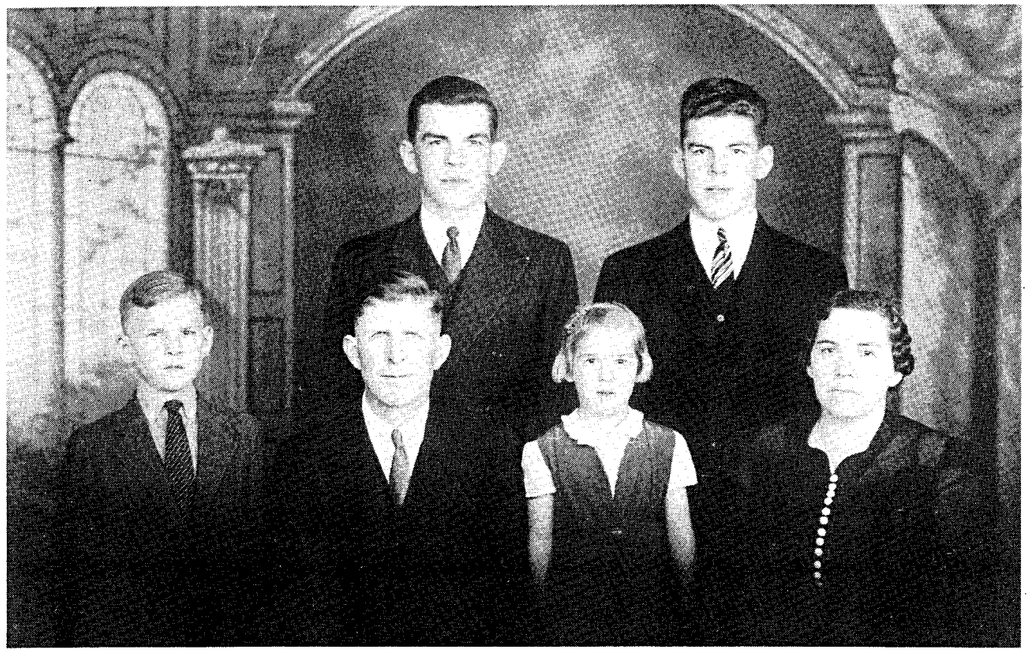
Manning was served by three railroads, the Great Western, North Western and Milwaukee. Trains arrived and departed at all hours of the day and night. Main Street was quite wide and paved with bricks as it is to this day--still with the original bricks. I

A new computer technology plant which will employ some 30 people is under construction on the north end of main street. A committee of town leaders is working on the possibility of a multi-million dollar ethanol plant of be built in the vicinity. Manning is a bustling, growing community and promises to continue to be so.

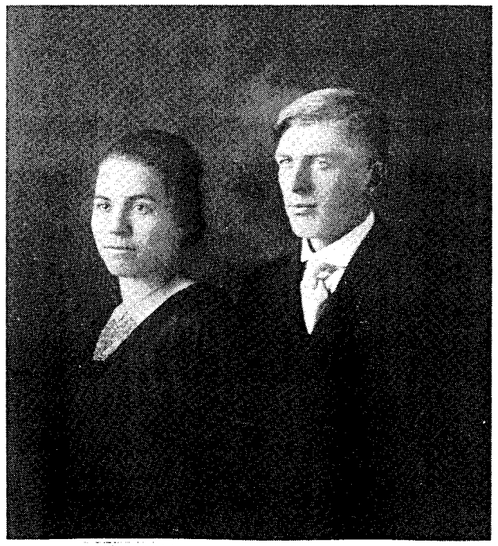




Above-Manning main street, 1920:
Right-Hausbarn: below-the Corner Bar reputed to be the longest bar west of the Mississippi, Circa 1890



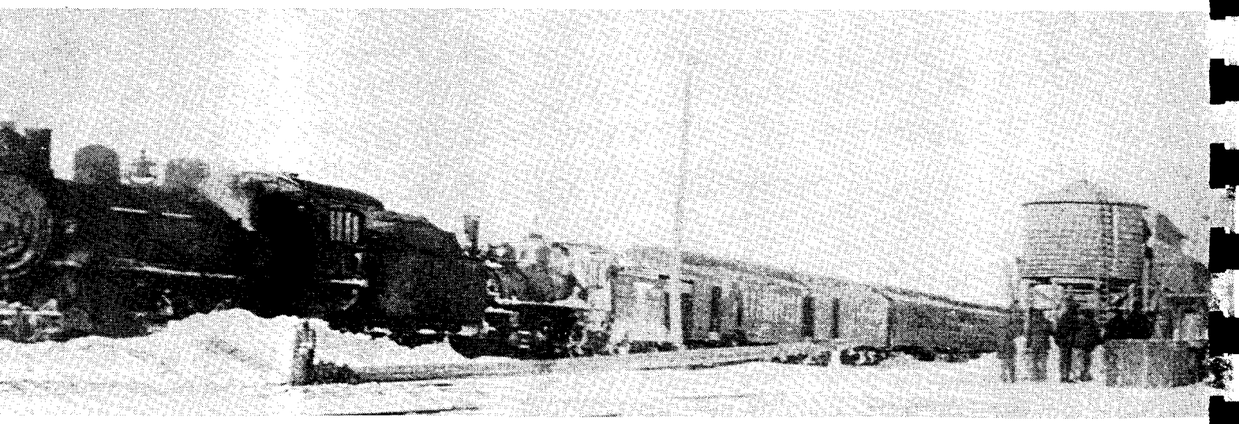
Seated: Bill, Dad, Jane, Mother. Standing George, Ivan



Mom & Dad wedding, 1918

50th wedding Annivesary

May's parents Wesley Lynk and Freyda Thomas



It's mid-winter in the mid 1930's and we did have snow and blizzards in Iowa at that time of year. Judging by the snow still clinging to it all over, including the top of the cab, the little engine has just been pulled into town from a big snow bank somewhere. Note the water tower with a spout for replenishing the water lost through steam in the steam engines of that day.

CHAPTER II

I can't imagine how I could have had better parents, even had I somehow been privileged to make the choice. They were always supportive, always set a good example, and always encouraged and expected me to do my best. They worked hard when it was time to work and believed in having a good time when it was time for that. They never had a quarrel or berated each other at any time when I was around. They disagreed on occasion and I can remember times when their relationship seemed a little cool, but it never lasted very long and certainly never caused me any concern.

Dad very much enjoyed teasing mother in a sly sort of way. He especially loved to best her at pinochle. It always seemed to me she enjoyed the teasing about as much as he did, except the losing at pinochle. This was especially true when they were in bidding competition and he kept over bidding her. "Oh, you don't have that good a hand." She would exclaim in exasperation and he would just laugh and this only agitated her more. Finally, if she got the bid and went set he would laugh and say "see you should have let me have the bid." But if he got the bid and went set she would laugh and kid him just as much. It was all good fun.

Mother attended country school through eighth grade. She attended high school in Manning with her only brother, Albert, who was two years older. When Albert graduated mother was in 10th grade and was not allowed to continue. Higher education for women wasn't a high priority item in those days, and a tenth grade education was more than most country women got. As a young woman prior to her marriage she worked as a seamstress. She would visit the home of neighborhood women to take measurements and do sewing. She was a talented seamstress who loved her work and did a lot of sewing all her life. The only time I heard her complain was later in life when that new invention, The Zipper, came along. She hated putting them in.

They were married on December 23, 1919. About all they ever said about it was that they got on the train in Manning along with Chris and Amanda Pholtner, best man and bridesmaid, rode to Carroll, were married by a justice of the peace, stayed in a hotel in Carroll over night and came back to Manning the next day. While they were around it never occurred to me to ask whether there was an engagement period, why they went to Carroll or where they lived after they got back.

Mother's maiden name was Mabel Dietz. She was born September 26, 1896 on the farm where she grew up and spent most of her life. She died on May 18,1981 at 85. In her youth, judging from pictures, she was a dark haired, brown eyed, rather tall and slender, good looking young lady. To me her eyes were most always friendly and understanding, but they could be pretty stern and serious when I misbehaved.

By the time I can remember her she had put on some weight. She was never fat--maybe stocky is the proper word. She worked hard on the farm in those early years as did all farm women. Some

of my earliest recollections are of her and I milking the cows, by hand of course. There were always cats in the barn at milking time and there was a pan where they received their share of the milk. Sometimes, when Mom wasn't looking I gave them a squirt. They always caught it in their mouth.

In the winter time the barn was warm and it was nice to snuggle up to the flanks of the cows while milking. Then too, there was always kind of a distinctive pungent smell of hay and cows in the barn that I liked and do to this day. In the summertime the flies were pesky and a nuisance that took the joy out of milking.

After milking she carried the milk to the house in a couple of buckets, one in each hand, down the steps to the basement where the cream separator was located. Somehow it seems that Dad always cranked the separator. Can't remember how he got there. Later, of course, there was an electric motor to run the separator.

Mother's life was closely geared to the farming operation and she was an integral part. During the spring, summer and fall when the men were working in the fields her day went something like this. Out of bed at 5 am, help with the milking and then prepare breakfast for the family and a couple of hired men. I don't think mother helped with the milking during the times when the men weren't in the field.

Breakfast usually consisted of fried eggs, bacon, fried potatoes, bread [homemade white or rye], butter, jam and coffee. The alternative menu was pancakes. These were what we now call thin pancakes--something like crepes. The pancakes were it. She prepared enough to make two stacks of six or eight inches in height. . They were placed on a plate in the center of the table. We put two or three on our plate and covered them with corn syrup. The stacks always pretty well disappeared.

After breakfast the dirty dishes were there to be washed by hand and in the late fall, winter, and early spring the chickens fed, watered and the eggs gathered. In the summer time the baby chicks also had to be fed, watered and tended to. Then it was time to prepare morning lunch for the men working in the field. Lunch always consisted of one open faced sandwich with cheese or meat or sausage or something similar, a folded slice of bread with jelly, two cookies [sometimes cookies were replaced by a piece of cake] and, of course, coffee. The coffee always had cream. The lunch was usually put in a paper sack and the coffee in a one gallon metal pail. These were the pails that originally contained the corn syrup for pancakes. Sometimes, if the men were working in different fields, two or three lunches had to be prepared. Usually the men took their morning lunch along when they went to the field, but sometimes we kids had to deliver it.

Once the lunch was, out of the way, it was time to start preparing dinner. Dinner, the main meal, was always at noon. The evening meal was supper. As I remember, dinner preparation began with pealing potatoes. We almost always had boiled potatoes as a staple of the noon meal. I don't remember much about the meat dish

for dinner in the early days. We didn't have refrigeration so there couldn't have been a steady supply of fresh meat during the warm months. We had ham which was produced and cured on the farm. There was also always a supply of chickens. These mother had to catch, kill, pluck, eviscerate and prepare. After we had refrigeration we always had a supply of fresh meat-beef and pork.

Dinner always included a vegetable of some kind, from the garden in the summer and from the jars she had canned at other times. Mom did a lot of canning. Then there was always gravy for the potatoes, bread and butter and often pickles or some other side dish. Finally there was dessert, cake, pie or canned fruit. After dinner there were the dishes to do again and then lunch to prepare for the men to take to the field as they did in the morning.

The final meal of the day was supper after the men came in from the field and the chores had all been done. It usually consisted of fried potatoes, fried or boiled eggs, often left overs from dinner, bread and butter and we always had milk to drink for supper. We never drank whole milk. Mother always mixed it half and half with water. I never did know why. At that time I was too young to realize the milk was mixed with cold water to cool it.

Mother also always had a large garden. Father plowed the garden in the spring, but the planning, planting, cultivation, disease and weed control and harvesting were her responsibilities. All summer and into the fall we had fresh produce for the table from the garden. How delicious those first peas, string beans and onions were after a long winter of vegetables from the can or jar. Vegetables were not available all seasons of the year at the grocery store in those days. Now is the time

Other goodies from mother's garden included asparagus, tomatoes, parsley, carrots, parsnips, pickles, onions, turnips, beets, strawberries, rhubarb, and probably some others that don't come to mind now. I sometimes got involved in hoeing or raking, but by the time I was big enough for that, most of my time was spent working in the fields or around the farm with the men folks.

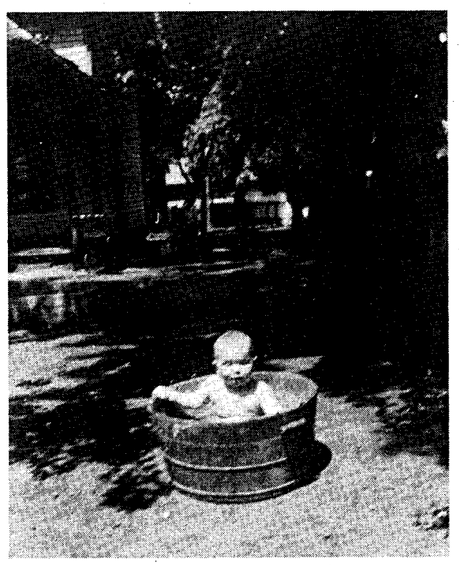
Mother, we always called her Mom, also did a lot of sewing. I don't recall her ever doing much reading other than a scan of the daily newspaper or a brief review of the women's section of the Wallace's Farmer, Farm Journal or Successful Farming magazines. I remember her often saying that sewing was a form of relaxation for her. She could sit and relax and let her mind wander as her fingers nimbly stitched or manipulated the crochet hook. During the late 30's and early 40's the feed companies often put their feed, especially chicken feed, in 50 or 100 pound bags made of cloth with pretty designs. Mother made many a dress for herself and little sister Jane from these colorful feed sacks. Don't know if clothes made the man in those days, but feed sacks made many a dress for ladies in our community.

In later years she sewed all kinds of things such as stuffed animals for the grandkids and pretty wall hangings that she framed and presented to her daughter in laws. Some of them adorn the

Mom's house to plan what should be done and how to go about it. I had been dreading this meeting because I didn't know if she would go to a nursing home and I certainly didn't know of any other alternative. Before we could even get started to discuss what to do, she calmly announced that she felt that she should move to the nursing home and that she was ready to move as soon as she could get in. She lived there for three and a half years, never complained about a thing and often remarked how lucky she was that there was a place like that she could move to and receive such good care.

Not as often as we should have, but as often as we did we would pick her up after noon on a Sunday. If the weather was nice we would go for a drive through the country side and she would tell us who used to live at many of the farm places and recount some of her experiences of days gone by. Then we would go to our house for a bit of coffee and some pinochle. Invariably when the clock got to about three thirty or four she would say, " Well, it's time to take me back now" and that was that. She lost most of her sight and her memory the last few months before she passed away, but she never complained. She was a great lady.

Proud Mother,Shiny Model-T,Sweet Finger



George in a cool tub on a hot summer day. 1923

CHAPTER III

Dad was a very special person. His full name was Emil John Opperman. He always signed his name Emil J. He was born June 21, 1895 and he died November 20, 1977. I didn't realize it while he was alive, but as I look back now, almost 18 years after his passing, I know that he was the role model that set most of the fundamental principles that have ruled my life. Traits that come to mind as I think of him are honesty, integrity, unpretentiousness, straight forwardness, hard work, no complaining, consideration for others.etc. etc. Testimony to his unobtrusiveness is the fact that I have no distinct memories of incidents or experiences involving him during my early years. I remember that he was around and was part of the scene, but nothing specific.

He grew up on a farm not far from where Mom was raised. He never said much about his early life or what he did before they were married. I know that he worked on his father's farm as well as other farms in the neighborhood, including grandpa Dietz's. He served in the army during World War 1, but he didn't go overseas and saw no action. His discharge certificate shows he had a rank of corporal when he was discharged. There were also among his papers two deferment grants from the local draft board. This would reinforce the assumption that he was engaged in farming, an occupation for which deferment could be granted. He was working for grandpa Dietz at the time they were married, but I don't know if he was working there when he was inducted. I suspect that he was because I remember Mom saying that they decided to get married when they did because so many of their friends were doing the same thing when the man returned from service.

In those days farming was a very labor intensive operation and many farmers had a hired man. This fellow, often from a neighborhood family with more boys than could be employed at home, lived with his employer and literally became a member of the family. So, it was not at all uncommon, if the farmer had a marriage age daughter, that she wound up marrying the hired man and he thus became a member of the family in fact. I've been told that grandpa Dietz thought dad was a hard worker and was quite pleased when he learned that mom and dad were planning to marry.

Shortly after their marriage Mom's parents moved into town and the newlyweds took over operation of the farm. I never heard either of them say anything about a sale, so I believe it is safe to assume that Grandpa Dietz left his livestock, machinery, feed, etc. there and took a promissory note from dad to pay for it. This must have been a big step for dad. The farm was 330 acres, which was a pretty big operation in those days. I'm sure that grandpa

hard work and required a certain amount of skill. Poorly constructed stacks had been known to topple. But when a properly built stack had been completed there was a certain satisfaction in a job well done, and perhaps only to the builder, a bit of pride in the thing of beauty which had been created. When I was younger the straw stacking was done by the hired men. When I was old enough I did my share.

The early threshing machines were powered by steam engines. I vaguely remember this huge engine chug chugging onto our farmyard, belching black smoke from its smoke stack and very slowly pulling the threshing machine behind. It had big wide rear wheels with a big belt pulley mounted just in front of them on the left. Dad was standing up in what looked to be a little square cubby hole in the rear. He had hold of a knob on an iron steering wheel and was twirling it back and forth to guide the engine to its proper place.

When the threshing machine was set the steam engine was backed up facing the threshing machine so that a long belt could be run from a pulley on the machine to the drive pulley on the engine. When the belt was tightened and the pulley on the engine was engaged the threshing operation could begin. The steam engine had a wagon loaded with coal backed up to it for fuel and a water tank near by for water. In 1936 a brand new Red River Special threshing machine was purchased by the threshing ring. At the same time Dad purchased a new Model D John Deere tractor for power. He always said that this was the first tractor sold by Puck Implement, the new John Deere dealer in Manning. This tractor simplified the power supply a great deal.

The bundles were delivered to the threshing machine on specialized wagons drawn by a team of two horses or in some cases mules. These specialized wagons were called hay or bundle racks. They were made of wood and consisted of an 8 by 16 foot floor made of 1 by 12 lumber. The sides were about 2 and 1/2 feet high and were made of 1 by 4 or 1 by 6 lumber spaced six or eight inches apart. The front was usually a bit higher than the rear and had two upright 2 by 4's about a foot apart with cross pieces on them to form a ladder. This was used to get up and down when the rack was full.

It took eight racks to keep a threshing machine running. Thus each member of the ring was required to furnish a rack, team and man. The bundles were loaded in the field by placing the wagon along side a row of shocks. The man then pitched the bundles onto the rack with a long handled three tined pitch fork. The teams were moved ahead, stopped or moved from one side of the row to the other by voice command. When the level of bundles reached the top of the rack the outside bundles were stacked carefully with the butt end out. The center of the load was kept a bit lower than the outside and the outside row of bundles was drawn in slightly as it went up. They were usually loaded to just above the ladder at the front of the rack. If not properly done, the bundles would slip out when the wagon hit a bump on the way to the machine. The extra

work of reloading was bad enough, but such misfortune also resulted in a round of good natured ribbing from the other haulers that would not be soon forgotten.

When the load reached the threshing machine it was drawn up along the conveyor extending from the front of the machine. One load on each side and the bundles were placed in the conveyor one behind the other seed end first. The bundles needed to be fed in at a certain speed. If fed too slow the machine wasn't running at capacity and the operation slowed down. If fed in too fast they would slug the machine, stopping it. The slug then had to be pulled out of the cylinder bit by bit by hand by the boss who was running the machine. This was hot, dusty and very disagreeable job. This didn't improve the boss's [dad's] temper. Even though he was a very even tempered guy, a hauler usually didn't slug the machine more than once.

Sometimes there was some excitement when a shy team balked the first time or two at getting so close to the strange big machine with its whirring belts and pulleys, but they became accustomed to it after a day or two. Usually, unless it was a very long haul from the field the bundle haulers had a little time for rest and visiting while they were waiting to get up to the machine. At the end of the day four loads of bundles were usually left standing so that the machine could start promptly at 8 the next morning. If it looked like it might rain, these loads were covered with tarpaulins. The machine was stopped at six in the evening.

Hauling the grain from the machine to the storage bin was a much easier job than hauling bundles. It required two ordinary grain wagons. These wagons had a capacity of 50 bushels. They were usually furnished by the operator of the farm where the threshing took place. They were drawn by a team of two horses or mules and were backed up to the machine side by side where the grain spout came out. While one was being unloaded the other was being filled. In the early days most of the grain was scooped by hand from the wagon into the grain bins. Usually this was a two man job. Later grain elevators became more common. They elevated the grain into the bins mechanically and this saved a lot of work.

One of the most pleasant aspects of the threshing operation was the meals. They were served by the wife of the farmer where the threshing was taking place. Usually they had relatives or friends come in for help on threshing day. They were all excellent cooks and they constantly tried to out do each other in feeding the threshers. The meals consisted of lunch at nine in the morning and three in the afternoon, dinner at noon and supper in the evening. When tractors replaced horses so that it didn't take so long to get home, supper was eliminated.

Lunch, served at nine a.m. and three in the afternoon, consisted of a dish pan heaping full of at least three or four different open faced sandwiches. These were made of home made white or rye bread, butter, and a topping of cheese, sliced roast beef or pork, ham, egg salad or jam. There was usually a pan with several kinds of cookies and at least two pans of different kinds of cake.

Grandma Opperman as I remember seeing her so often. A kind , gentle, loving person.

Grandma and Grandpa Opperman. Christmas at their house 1946

Grandpa Dietz, Albert, Mother, Grandma Dietz. Early 1900's.

Grandpa Dietz in front of the barn. Looks like he's proud of his grandson. Wish I could have known him.

CHAPTER V

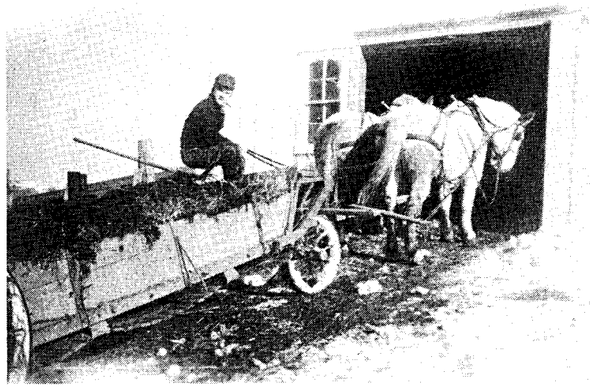
Childhood memories are always nostalgic, and in my case at least, somewhat sketchy. I've often wondered, why does our brain decide to remember only some things from the myriad of events that must have crowded our early childhood. As I review the things that I remember they seem rather mundane and I can think of no special reason why these certain events should be remembered.

My earliest recollections are of living in our home when it had no bathroom. Our sanitary facilities consisted of a traditional two holer with the largest hole, for the grown ups, at a level higher than the smaller hole for little folks. It was located some 70 feet down the slope north from the house. A brick sidewalk led past it to the elevated water supply tank [more about it later]. Between it and the house was the cob shed where corn cobs, fuel for the cook stove, were stored. Brick side walks branching off the main walkjj led to each of these buildings. I remember sitting in the outhouse with Ivan and perusing the Sears and Montgomery Ward catalogs that were always there. The pictures of guns, toys and bicycles were of particular interest. Even the ladies underwear models received some attention.

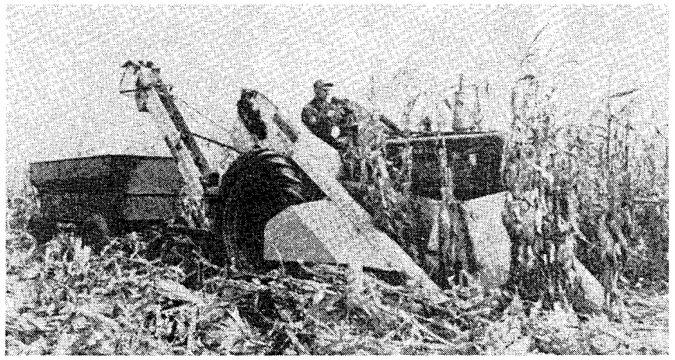
We always had running water in the house. The water tank I mentioned was a circular wooden tank made of 2 inch planks. It was about twelve feet in diameter with six foot sides. It was set on a circular brick wall so that the bottom of the tank was about 6 feet above the ground. This was high enough so that water flowed by gravity through pipes to the house and other locations around the farm place. The room created under the tank had a brick floor and was a cool, dark place ideal for storing butter and vegetables in the summertime. A roofed six sided building some two or three feet larger in diameter and about that much higher surrounded the tank. The tank was filled by a windmill driven pump in a well located some distance away, pumping water through underground pipes to the tank.

A one inch diameter galvanized pipe extended from near the top of the tank to a couple of feet outside the building. It served as an overflow in case we forgot to shut off the windmill and the tank became full. That way the overflow went harmlessly outside the building instead of spilling over the sides inside the building and making a mess. The top was covered with one by twelve rough cut boards. This served as a good place to store things that people weren't supposed to find.

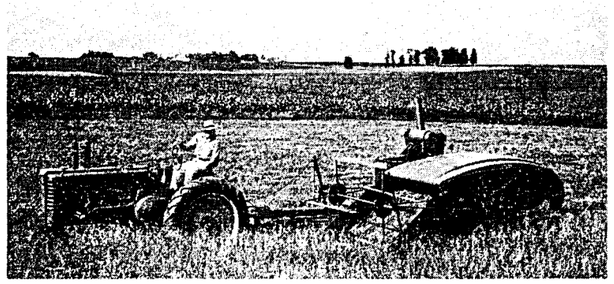
One time during the prohibition era when dad was mowing weeds along the road sides, he found a card board box containing four one gallon jugs of bootleg whiskey. He found it in the culvert under our lane where the lane joined the main road. Evidently the maker of the hooch was under some pressure and stashed it there until it could be safely retrieved. Dad brought the booty home and stored it on top of the water tank where it could be safely stored and easily retrieved as needed. The reason I remember this is that I sneaked up there one day to sample the product. It tasted horrible!



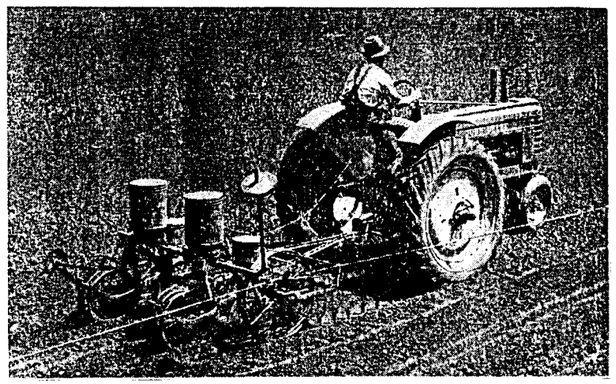
Brother Bill
Hauling manure
With a team of 3
& 4 year old
mares bred &
raised on our
farm.



Early tractor
mounted corn picker.
We had one of these.
One helluve an
improvement over
Picking by hand.



Early tractor
operated oats
combine. It cut
and thrashed
the oats all in
one operation. A
huge labor saver
for us.



Tractor pulled
corn planter-late
1940's. Similar early
planters were
pulled by horses.
Note the trip wire
to drop the corn
to make cross rows.

CHAPTER VI

The primary crops on our farm as I was growing up were corn, oats and sweet clover or alfalfa. The corn and oats were for grain. The alfalfa was for hay and the sweet clover was plowed down as green manure for fertilizer. [There was no such thing as commercial fertilizer at that time] We always had so much livestock that all of the crop we raised was consumed by livestock on the farm--frequently additional grain was purchased. I don't recall that we ever sold a bushel of grain on the market--it was all marketed in the form of livestock. Our crop rotation was corn, corn, oats, clover or alfalfa. That is, a field was planted to corn for two years. The third year it was seeded to oats with either sweet clover or alfalfa mixed with the oats.

If sweet clover had been mixed with the oats the third year, the sweet clover was allowed to grow until late April the fourth year. The field was then plowed and planted to corn. Sweet clover is a member of the family of plants known as legumes. These plants have the unique ability to take nitrogen from the air and convert it to a solid form that is stored in their roots. Thus when these roots are plowed under they add nitrogen to the soil. Nitrogen is a critical nutrient heavily used by corn. Providing larger supplies of this element by plowing under the sweet clover plants resulted in significant increases in corn yields. If the field was seeded to alfalfa mixed with the oats the third year, the alfalfa was allowed to grow the fourth year and then harvested for hay. Alfalfa is a perennial and would grow three or four years without reseeding.

This crop rotation had two purposes. The first was to allow replacement of soil nutrients. Each crop required different nutrient levels and rotation allowed replacement of nutrients not required by that particular crop. The second purpose was to break the disease and insect cycles which developed if a field was in one crop too long. In modern day agriculture fertilizers are available to supply needed plant nutrients and chemicals and insecticides are available to control diseases and insects. Therefore crop rotation is not as essential for top production as it was in those days.

Field work began in the spring as soon as the ground was dry enough to be worked. Usually this was about the first of April. The first crop to be seeded was oats. [We always said corn was planted and oats was seeded, I don't know why.] Oats was always seeded in fields that had been in second year corn the previous year. Preparation began by discing. The disc was a machine with sharp round blades about 16 inches in diameter set at an angle so that when it was pulled through the field the blades cut up the corn stalks and stirred and leveled the soil to a depth of two or three inches. The disc was twelve to 14 feet wide and was pulled by four horses. The driver rode on the disc so no walking behind was involved. Usually we took it pretty easy the first few days

so that the horses, after a long winter of leisure, could get accustomed to the harness and work. If there had been a good corn crop the previous year and the corn stalks were big and thick, they could be a real problem. The little, light weight horse drawn discs couldn't cut those heavy stalks and they would bunch up in front of the disc so that the driver had to stop and clean them out before proceeding. This could be very frustrating and time consuming. To prevent this it was common practice in the very early days to rake the stalks into rows and burn them before starting to disc. The burning was usually done at night and I can remember the whole neighborhood being lit up by burning stalks for several nights at that time of year. Later in the summer when the oats were growing the fields had dark green rows where the stalks had been burned. Later scientists determined that the stalks contained valuable fertilizer elements and contributed to soil tilth when disced or plowed under. That's why the rows in the field were darker green. The burning practice stopped in short order. Not long after that tractors came along which could pull heavier discs so the stalks were no longer a problem.

When the first discing was completed the field was seeded to a mixture of oats and alfalfa or sweet clover. The oats germinated quickly and grew rapidly. It was called a 'nurse crop' because it protected the slower germinating and growing alfalfa or sweet clover. We always used an endgate seeder for the seeding operation. This was a machine that fit like an end gate into the back end of a common wagon box. It operated on the same principal as the present day lawn seeders that are operated with a crank and have a set of horizontal whirling wheels to spread the seeds. The seeder we used was much larger, of course, and was chain driven by a sprocket on the rear wheel of the wagon. Seeding was a two man operation with one driving the team pulling the wagon and the other keeping the seeder filled by scooping in oats that had been loaded in the wagon and alfalfa or sweet clover from bags of seed also in the wagon.

When seeding was finished the field was again disced and then harrowed. The harrow was a contraption made up in sections. Each section was four feet wide and made up of six or eight iron pipes with metal projections about six inches long and eight inches apart pointing down called teeth. The pipes were connected together one behind the other to form a drag. The harrow was usually made up of four or six such sections pulled by teams of one horse for each section. There was no place provided for the driver so he walked behind. Dragging this contraption over the field left it smooth, level, and slightly compacted with few clods. This operation required few skills on the part of the operator so I remember some long Saturdays spent tromping behind a harrow tugged along by a four horse team. I was in school during the week.

After the oats was seeded the next operation was hauling manure and plowing the fields in preparation for corn. Dad and one of the hired men hauled manure and the other hired man started plowing. I'll describe the manure hauling first. During the

winter the manure from the horses, cows and calves and young stock in the big barn as well as that from the hog barn had been pitched out daily into piles just outside the building. The fat cattle shed had been bedded with straw weekly so that a manure pack several feet thick had built up. There was plenty of manure! And, it was excellent fertilizer when spread on the fields.

The manure spreader we used for hauling to the fields was a wagon like vehicle. It was longer and wider than a wagon and built lower to the ground with small wheels in front and large, metal drive wheels behind. It had a moveable apron on the floor that moved the manure to the back where a revolving beater powered by a chain drive from the rear wheels spread the manure over the ground. The manure spreader was pulled by a three horse team. It was loaded by pulling it alongside the pile or backing it into the fat cattle shed and pitching the manure in with a long handled five tined fork. It was hauled to and spread on the fields that were going to be planted to corn. This was hard work. I wasn't much involved with this until I was in high school and then only on Saturdays. Sometimes we didn't get all the manure cleaned up before field work had to be done so the cattle shed was left until after threshing when the manure was spread on the oat fields.

Preparation of the fields for corn planting was more complicated and involved more work than preparing the fields for oats. We were always under some pressure to get the manure hauled and the field preparations far enough along so that we could start corn planting by the 10th of May. Preparation began with plowing using a mole board plow. I believe everyone knows about the mole board plow so I won't describe it. We used two bottom plows pulled by four horses hitched in tandem. That is two teams of two each following each other. This was slow work and even with two teams it took quite some time to get the plowing done. After plowing the field was disced once, using the same disc as for oats, and then harrowed, again using the same harrow. This left the field ready for planting, level and firm with very few clods and almost no trash visible.

The planter was a piece of equipment pulled by a team of two horses and had a seat for the driver to ride. It was designed to plant two rows of corn 40 inches apart at a preset depth of three to four inches and to drop a preset number of two to four kernels at 40 inch intervals. The 40 inch row width was standard throughout the corn belt and was arrived at because that was the space needed for a horse to walk between the rows. The rows were straight along the field up and down hill. The straighter the rows the better the farmer. By dropping two to four kernels, called a hill, every 40 inches the corn was also in rows across the field. In order to achieve this dropping of a hill of corn every 40 inches a wire was laid across the field on the starting side, stretched tight and staked at each end. This wire had a knot in it at 40 inch intervals. This wire was threaded into a small trip lever on the planter. As the planter was driven along the field

series of 2x2 rails about 18 inches apart and 12 inches above the platform. These were roosts for the hens to use at night. The droppings fell on the platform and were much easier to clean than if they had to be picked up off the floor. The floor was bedded with straw and feeders and a waterer were in the south half of the building.

After being put in the hen house the hens quickly learned to jump or flutter up to the nest to lay their eggs. This kept the eggs clean and made them a lot easier to gather. They would reach peak production about six weeks after being housed and would maintain that peak until spring. The eggs were gathered at noon and in the evening. I remember mom commenting about finding more than 100 eggs per day from her 120 or 130 hens. In late spring or early summer mom would have the hens culled. This was done by a specialist fom the hatchery. He examined each hen and could tell which had been in production laying eggs and which hadn't. Those that hadn't been laying were sold. The rest were kept until fall and sold just before the next generation was ready to be housed.

When I was in high school my Saturday morning job was to clean the chicken house. For me it was a job I dispised more than any other on the farm. For some reason I started itching almost the minute I started and didn't stop until I was finished. I know it was all in my imagination, but it sure seemed real at the time.

On farm hog butchering in early 1920's. Grandpa Dietz standing by the cleaned hog. Harry Peterson to the right holding bottle and Dad to the far right.

CHAPTER VIII

Our house on the farm was a large two story frame structure with wood siding and always painted white. The kitchen and an enclosed porch were on the east side which faced the farm yard. A white picket fence about 20 feet from the house separated it from the farm yard. A brick sidewalk led from the farm yard through a swinging gate in the picket fence to the house then turned right along the front of the house and down to the cob shed, toilet and water tank. There was a water hydrant and a long, plain wooden table against the inside of the fence in front of the house. All of this was shaded by a big elm tree. In the summer time we washed up before meals in wash basins set on the table.

Mom said that Grandpa Dietz built the house in the early nineteen hundreds. It was the first house in the area to have a central furnace for heat. Harlan, fifty miles away, was the closest place he could buy one and he had it shipped to Manning by rail. The main entrance to the house was through the enclosed porch on the south east corner and then through another door into the kitchen. This had originally been an open porch. I can just barely remember when it was enclosed. Windows were put along the south side, a basement dug underneath and a room for a bathroom constructed on the west end. This enclosed porch was the place where we took off our dirty shoes and hung up our work coats, jackets and caps when we came in from outside. A door in the floor could be lifted and led to steps to the basement. The basement room had a toilet and shower in the far end that could be closed off by a sliding curtain. The near end had a wash basin and the cream separator. When the weather was too cold to wash outside, we came to the basement to wash up before going to the kitchen for meals. In the summertime that shower was wonderful after a hot day in the field making hay or shocking oats.

All the rooms in the house were quite large with high ceilings. The kitchen, dining room, parlor and master bedroom were on the ground floor. In the outside corner formed by the dining room and parlor was a small square entrance hall with access doors from each of these rooms and a front door that opened onto an open porch. The only time I ever saw this door open was when we needed ventilation on hot summer days and nights. The kitchen had a hardwood floor and two windows. All the windows in the house were quite large and extended to within a few feet of the floor. One of the windows in the kitchen was near the south end of the east wall and provided a wide view of the farmyard. The other window was centered in the north wall. The old fashioned cook stove was centered a couple of feet from the east wall. It was just like you see in the pictures with an oven, a water warmer at one end, four lids on the main portion and warming ovens above. It burned mostly corncobs, but also some wood. There was no feeling more content or luxurious than warming your feet on the oven door of the cook stove after coming in from chores on a cold winter morning. There was space for a nice rocking chair at the water warmer end of the

cook stove until we got the refrigerator. Then there wasn't space. Dad always occupied the chair in the evenings, but he always used the leather couch in the dining room for his noon nap. This left the rocker unoccupied so I often caught a forty-wink nap at noon in that rocker.

There were also some built in cupboards with wooden doors along the east wall on the north end. The porcelain sink with hot and cold running water and cupboards underneath was along the north wall to the right of the window. The wall telephone was on the other side of the window. The door to the basement opened on the west wall in the north west corner. The square expandable kitchen table was centered along the west wall. It usually had a couple of boards in it for expansion. It was covered with an oilcloth table cloth and had six chairs around it, two on each side and one at each end. The door to the dining room was at the south end of the west wall and the door upstairs was next to it. The door to the bathroom was a few feet from the same corner along the south wall and just to the left of it was the main entrance door from the porch.

The floor of the dining room was also hardwood, but it was covered with a linoleum rug which extended to within about 18 inches of the walls. In the center of the room was an expandable round wooden table surrounded by six high backed wooden chairs. We often sat around this table to play pinochle or canasta on long winter evenings. There were three windows in the south wall with a leather covered couch in front of them. This is the couch mentioned above as dad's favorite place for a noon nap. At the foot of the couch along the east wall was a narrow, waist high cabinet with the radio on it. This permitted dad to catch the market news at 12:30 and then get his noon nap. Just to the left of the radio table along the same wall was a good sized walnut cabinet with glass doors. This is where mom stored her 'Sunday' dishes, silverware and many other goodies.

A wide, wooden sliding door opened into the parlor. When this door was open the parlor and dining room almost seemed one. The parlor floor was covered by a rug that also extended to about 18 inches from the walls. A half dozen rocking chairs of various size and shape were parked around the edge of the rug. There was a very nice davenport along the north wall. I remember dad getting this for mom as a birthday present. There was a small walnut table between the windows on the west side. There were pictures on the walls and usually some family pictures or decorations on the table. At Christmas time the Christmas tree occupied this table. Except at Christmas time the parlor was closed and strictly reserved for special guests. It was never used as a place to just sit and relax.

The master bedroom opened off the north side of the dining room. It had a good sized clothes closet, a double bed for mom and dad and a baby bed when required. There was a dresser with large mirror and drawers for clothes and dad kept a desk in there for his papers and records. The desk was a roll top with a lot of cubby

holes and drawers. He never kept it locked. It was always a great attraction for me and I just loved to snoop through it when I could. In one of the cubby holes he kept an old square wrist watch that he never wore. I think he had it when he was in the army. I loved to examine it in great detail and dream of how great it would be if I could just have it to wear. If he ever realized that I snooped through the desk he never said anything about it.

There were three bedrooms up stairs each with a closet and large enough for two double beds and a dresser. There was also a hall closet and a good sized store room. Ivan and I shared a bed in one room, the hired man was in another and the third was a guest room. It had a rug on the floor and just one double bed plus a nice dresser. The rooms were not heated and they got mighty cold in the winter time. During this time we slept under a feather tick, which was a large flat bag filled with feathers. We didn't fool around very long getting into bed, but that feather tick kept us nice and warm. It was, however, awfully hard to get up and put bare feet on the cold floor in the morning. There was no dilly dallying around getting dressed.

There were four rooms in the basement. All of the walls were brick that had been plastered with concrete. The largest was the furnace room in the center and where the steps came down from the kitchen. It had a cement floor and a drain. The furnace occupied a large portion of one corner. The heat moved by convection through large insulated tubes which were suspended from the ceiling and led to the various rooms. In the northwest corner we piled the wood and coal to fuel the furnace. Wood was sawed from trees felled in our grove. The logs were sawed into fire wood size and not split unless they were too large to go in the furnace door. The coal was also in chunks. We hauled two wagon loads from town every fall with a team and wagon. The depot agent would call us when he had a carload of coal spotted on the siding. We would load it directly from the car onto the wagon. We always used the quietest and best team we had for this. We spotted the wagon as close as we could along side the carload of coal and tied the near horse to the car.l That way the horses couldn't run if they were frightened when we got up on the car and started dropping chunks of coal into the wagon. We had to be careful to drop small chunks until the wagon floor was covered. If we dropped big chunks first they would break the floor.

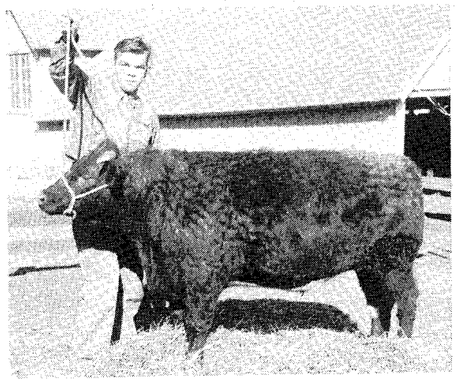
The remaining space in the furnace room, which was under the steps coming down from the kitchen, was taken up by the light plant. We had electric lights from my earliest memory. The 32 volt system was used primarily for lighting. To the best of my knowledge the only motor on the system was the water pump motor that supplied water pressure for the house. There were lights in every room in the house and some in the horse and cow barn, but nowhere else. Energy for the system was supplied by what we called the 'light plant'. The generator was driven by a two cylinder gasoline engine. It charged a group of about 10 or 12 glass

frequently had reports from club members on their projects or from the county agent on topics of interest. An event we all looked forward to was the annual summer tour. On the tour we visited the home farm of each club member. While we were there the club member would lead out his calves or show us his pigs or whatever his project might be. At noon the whole family came to a picnic at the town park. Mothers brought plenty of food.

Two times I attended a summer camp arranged by our county agent and the agent from Guthrie county for boys from all the clubs in each county. The camp was at Spring Brook state park, a Civilian Conservation Corp. [CCC] constructed state park just north of Guthrie Center and about 35 miles from home. It had a small lake and several small barracks like buildings with beds. Two things I remember about the camps. One was swimming in the lake. The nearest swimming pool to our farm was at Carroll--twenty miles away and in those days a twenty mile drive was not taken lightly, so my swimming opportunities were nil. I have never become a good swimmer, but at the camp I watched those who could swim and taught myself enough so that I could go out beyond the restraining cable.

The other memory is quite different. Several years previously dad had given Ivan and I a set of boxing gloves for Christmas. This particular year the county agent asked me to bring the gloves along to the camp. It so happened that at the camp there was a big heavy set guy from Guthrie County who kinda picked on me. The other guys noticed this and egged us on to put on the gloves for a boxing match. I wasn't anxious to do this, but finally agreed. Even though I was good sized for my age this other fellow was older and bigger and heavier than I, but he was slow. We had just started to box when I landed a right uppercut to his jaw. I didn't think it was that hard, but he went down and was out cold. He recovered quickly, but the fight was over. That's the only knockout I ever scored. The county agent called me knockout George after that.

Many people much more eloquent than I have lauded the bene fits derived to rural America in those early years from the work of the county agents and home economists in the US Department of Agriculture Extension Service. I couldn't agree more.



George proudly posing the 4H calf he took to the International Livestock Exposition in Chicago in 1938. Placed 5th in my class of 27.

CHAPTER IX

Nineteen thirty-six is generally recognized in the Midwest as the year with the coldest winter and the hottest summer on record. Not only was it awfully cold that winter, the temperature didn't get above zero for thirty some days, but we also had a humongous amount of snow. I was 13 years old at the time and in eighth grade at the country school. We missed a lot of school that winter because the snow blocked the roads so that the teacher couldn't get from her home in town to the school house three miles out. All the north south roads were impassable for a good share of the months of January and February. The county snow plows, which at that time were a good deal less mobile and powerful than they are now, couldn't begin to keep the roads open.

Several times Dad and the hired man together with neighbors went out with scoop shovels and spent an afternoon trying to open the main road by shoveling the snow out by hand. It was hard work and it was fruitless. The continuous cold weather never permitted the temperature to get anywhere near high enough so the snow could thaw a bit and become firm or get a covering of ice. It just remained grainy like sand. Like shifting sand, every time the wind came up a bit it would blow the road shut again--and in that cold weather the wind did blow. Several times Dad hitched a team of horses to the bobsled and he and the hired man went to town for groceries and supplies. They couldn't follow the road, but went across the fields and cut fences when ever necessary.

The snow drifts were higher than the fences in many places. This caused some problems and a lot of extra work. As the snow melted in the spring it settled and stretched the barb and woven wire fences. This left them sagging so that the livestock could just walk over them. We spent a lot of time that spring and summer repairing the damage.

Come summer the weather shifted to the other extreme. It was unbearably hot and dry. Daytime temperatures were above 100 degrees for days at a time. The blazing sun beat down unmercifully day after day. Several times we quit cultivating corn in the afternoon because it was just too hot for the horses [dad never made any comment about the men and boys]. It didn't cool off at night and frequently there was no breeze. Sleeping in our upstairs bedrooms was just impossible. We tried sleeping outside on the lawn or on the wash table or wherever, but nothing was very satisfactory. We had a 14 foot wagon scale with a wooden plank platform. The horses' hooves and the steel wagon rims had roughed up the planks. I tried sleeping there one night, but when I rolled off my blanket I got wood slivers in my arm and posterior.

The blazing sun and lack of rain played havoc with the crops. The corn rolled its leaves every day to conserve moisture. That it didn't just dry up and blow away seemed a miracle. The oats and alfalfa didn't fare much better. Dad was in the Drum and Bugle Corp. at that time. They marched in a morning parade in Carroll on the 4th of July. We came home right after the parade

placing of 3-4-1-2 would receive even larger discounts.

In addition to scoring each class, each contestant had to give a three minute oral dissertation on his or her reasons for placing the class the way he or she did. The reasons were given to an expert, usually a teacher, and were also graded on a 50 point basis. The accuracy of the placings, the logic of reasoning and the persuasiveness of the presentation were taken into consideration in arriving at the final score. This was excellent training, not only in public speaking, but also in logic and arrangement of thoughts in a persuasive way. The winner of the contest was the contestant with the highest total score. Individual high scorers in placing and in reasons were also announced.

That spring I was selected as one of the five members of the livestock judging team to represent our school at the annual spring convention at Iowa State College in Ames. I particularly remember the horse class in that contest. One of the horses was very outstanding from a conformation standpoint. He was large and muscular well proportioned and would easily top the class. However, horses need to walk all their life and how they move is very important if they are to be long lived draft animals. They need to pick their feet up smartly and as you stand behind them move their feet straight forward. This horse when he moved his rear feet forward they swung in and almost touched the other leg. This is a very serious fault. I remembered Mr. Campbell saying that a horse that can't walk can't work, so I put him at the bottom of the class. It turned out that this was the correct placing and evidently many of the other contestants didn't notice the defect. Anyway, I did wind up as high man in that contest.

The annual state FFA meeting was also held during this convention. One of the items of business at this meeting was the election of state officers. The morning before the election was to be held in the afternoon, Mr. Campbell told me that I had been nominated for state president and that I would need to prepare a speech to give the members reasons to vote for me. Fortunately my training in extemporaneous speaking served me well and I didn't suffer from a complete loss of memory as I had just a year earlier. I don't remember a thing about that speech, but it must not have been very good. I didn't win the election. As I look back I think it was a good thing that I didn't win. I certainly was ill prepared and probably would have done a poor job. Some years later in college I met the man who won. He was a very fine fellow and we became good friends.

We stayed overnight at the convention. Mr. Campbell was a member of Sigma Chi fraternity when he was in school. The college students were on spring break at that time so we spent the night at the Sigma Chi house. I had absolutely no knowledge of fraternities and wondered why they had so many beds in that house. Little did I realize what an important role an Iowa State fraternity would play in my life a few years hence.

One of my senior classes was Physics, taught by our high school principal, Mr Qualley. The topic fascinated me and I must

have done pretty well in it. I don't remember my grades. At that time the state administered a state wide physics examination program for senior high school students. They provided a written test that any student in the senior physics course could take at the end of the semester. The tests were sent to the state for correcting and a certain number of the highest scoring students then got to go the University of Iowa in Iowa City for another test. The highest scorers in this test then received some awards. I don't remember what they were.

I took the test and to my utter amazement to this day, I was one of those selected to go to Iowa City. Mr. Qualley took me on the 180 mile trip to Iowa City in his car. He was a short, rather dark complected, elderly man. He was almost bald and wore round wire rimmed glasses. He was not very popular and some of the kids called him "Squirrley". I never knew him very well, but I really got well acquainted with him on that trip and found him to be a fine fellow. I don't remember much of anything else about the trip except that I didn't do very well on the test and didn't win any prizes.

My final memory of high school concerns the year book. I worked on it some, but didn't really play an important role. It contained individual pictures of all the seniors together with a list of their accomplishments and a saying about them. My saying was, "The tortoise got there and so will I." I don't know where the author thought I was going, but the saying was probably more prophetic than the writer ever dreamed.

After graduation dad told me that he expected me to stay home and work on the farm for a year. After that I could do whatever I wanted and if I needed assistance he would help me all he could. Shortly after that he traded the Plymouth for a brand new two door, V8 Ford. The cost was just over $700. He didn't ever say it was mine, but I always drove it and took care of it as if it were mine. That fall I was fully involved in corn picking for the first time. It was long days of hard, dull work from five in the morning to after seven at night six days a week. I never resented the work, but I remember wondering if we were ever going to get all that corn picked.

That winter I came down with the mumps. They went down on me and I was very sick for a couple of weeks. Doc Wyatt, the one that delivered me, came out several times, but there wasn't much he could do. Mom put some blankets and a pillow on the couch in the dining room and I spent the days there listening to the radio. It was very painful and I thought I was never going to get well, but I did.

Lester Karsten, a second cousin a few years older than I, was our hired man. He and I cleaned the cattle shed that spring. This was a shed for the fattening cattle. It was long and rather narrow with two wide doors that were open all winter so the cattle could come in or out at will. We bedded it every week with straw so by spring time there was a build up of about two feet of manure. We each had a rather large manure spreader pulled by three horses for

hauling the manure to the field. We backed our spreader into the shed and then loaded the manure by hand with a long handled five tined manure fork. Needless to say, we had very well developed back and arm muscles by the time the shed was cleaned.

I don't mean to sound like that year was all hard work and drudgery. I really enjoyed it all and didn't ever resent the fact that I was working at home. That year I had an occasional date for a movie with Clarice or several other girls. I was playing the field at that time. There were also dances, a few penny ante poker games with the boys, football and basketball games and softball in the summer so I had a rather active social life.

A major turning point in my life came that second summer. I was out in the field one beastly, hot, sultry July day cultivating corn with a team of mules. As I was going along suffering in the heat and disgusted at that knot headed team of mules, all of a sudden the thought struck me, "What in the hell am I doing here?" I remember that as clearly as if it were yesterday. I don't know why, but I do know that God spoke to me that day. When I got home that evening I told Mom and Dad that I wanted to go to college at Iowa State. They said fine and shortly there after we made a trip to Ames. I was enrolled at the college. Dad paid the $57.00 first quarter tuition and we found a rooming house where I could stay.

Dad didn't tell me until many years later, just before his death, that when grandpa Opperman found out that I was going to college, he really took dad to task. He said, "Here you've just got this boy raised up to where he can be of some help to you on the farm and you're letting him go off to college." My cousin, who lived with grandpa, told me recently, however, that grandpa mellowed a bit later and was proudly telling some of his friends that he had a grandson going to college.

Football teammates: Lyle Arp, guard; me, center; Dick Ohm, end; Roger (Horse) Nickum, fullback.

Graduation, note the new suit!

CHAPTER XII

My college career began in late August of 1940 at Iowa State College. [It didn't achieve University status until some 20 years later.] Previous to that time Dad had taken me to see George Detlefs, proprietor of the local Klean Klothes Shop. Mr. Detlefs measured me for two new, made to order suits of clothes. One was a single breasted brown tweed and the other a double breasted dark blue pin stripe. I'm sure I also got some other new clothes and toilet items, etc. in preparation for going off to college, but they were pretty insignificant compared to those two new suits.

On the appointed day Mom & Dad took me and my two suitcases to what would be my new abode in a second floor room of a boxy two story house located about six blocks south of dogtown (also known as Campus town) on Welch Avenue in Ames. Mom and Dad weren't the sentimental type so there were no teary farewells. They just saw to it that I was settled in my room, told me to work hard, said goodbye and left for home so as to be there in time for evening chores. My roommate arrived shortly after they left. He was from Waupaun, Wisconsin. There were four more boys living in the other two upstairs rooms. Our landlady was an elderly widow who lived downstairs. She was nice, but she made it clear that she wouldn't put up with any monkey business. We all got along very well, but I believe that I and one other, who was a senior at that time, were the only ones to complete a four year course.

Three day freshman orientation began the next morning. The first item of business was payment of tuition. Iowa State was on the quarter system at that time. Dad had paid the $57.00 for the first quarter. Total student enrollment for the entire college was just over 4000 that year. One of the few things I remember from the orientation were the rules of conduct for students. These included; no drinking and no liquor of any kind on campus as well as strict evening curfew hours for girls living in the college dorms. We were shown locations of our classrooms and given our scholastic schedules as well as a list of books that we would be required to purchase. Included in our schedule of activities were a couple of mixer activities designed for us to relax and get acquainted with our classmates. The boy-girl ratio for the entire college at that time was about 4 boys for every girl. I suspect our class ratio was about the same so no wonder that I don't remember meeting any girls.

Classes began on Monday morning. I was enrolled as an Animal Husbandry major. As I remember my classes that first quarter included botany, English, animal husbandry and chemistry. Since Iowa State is a Land Grant College all freshman and sophomore male students were required to take one hour per week of military training. This was known as the Reserve Officers Training Course. [ROTC] An army Field Artillery unit stationed at the college taught the course. They had horse drawn 75mm artillery pieces as the primary weapon. Each male student was issued a standard army uniform which he was required to wear to class. It consisted of an

The wedding was short, sweet and permanent. As Ruth walked May down the aisle my heart skipped a beat or two. She was so beautiful in her street length white dress and partial veil. We said our vows, which we have kept for some 55 plus years. The only spectators were the members of my Motors class. After the ceremony they all took advantage of an opportunity to kiss the bride, naturally! We all went to the restaurant for dinner and then to the officers club. We visited and danced there until nearly midnight. When May and I returned to our room we had to walk past the kitchen where the landlady was having coffee with a neighbor lady. She kindly asked us if we wanted to join them for a cup of coffee. We declined!

Not long after the wedding we found an upstairs apartment. It had been converted from regular rooms and wasn't all that great, but we weren't fussy. The apartment consisted of a bathroom, kitchen, with no running water so May had to carry water from the bathroom for cooking and washing dishes, a tiny dining room and a combination living room and bedroom. It wasn't much, but we were happy and in love and got along just fine. May's brother Wesley visited us a few weeks after the wedding. He was in the Navy stationed at New Orleans. He had been home on leave and stopped to see us on his way back. He didn't say anything about the apartment at the time, but we have discussed it many times since.

When Motors class was finished I was assigned to another 4 week course on track vehicles. When I finished that I received orders to report to Fort Bragg. We went by train to Fayetteville, a small town adjacent to the Fort. Not a big deal since all our worldly possessions fitted nicely into a footlocker and a couple of suitcases. On the train as an officer we didn't rate a Pullman like I did twice when I was a private. We spent one night, again in a coach car. This time it was with a group of black soldiers. For a couple of Iowans who had hardly ever seen a black before, it was a bit disconcerting.

When we got to Fayetteville I reported to headquarters and was assigned to a training battery very similar to the one I had been in for basic training at Camp Roberts. One big difference was that the trainees here had been through basic and were now studying motor maintenance and repair. The other difference being, of course, that I was now the leader of the platoon.

My duty was to get the platoon to the proper place on time, supervise the training to make sure the enlisted men doing the actual teaching were doing a good job and be general nursemaid for any discipline or other problems the 32 men in my platoon might have. I had a sergeant and corporal for assistants and they were excellent. Every Saturday morning was inspection of both the barracks and individuals. Our battalion commander was a full colonel who was a fanatic on cleanliness and order. Every Saturday morning he inspected the area to make sure that everything was picked up spick and span, neat and orderly. I don't remember exactly how I did this, but several Saturday mornings after my

inspection, instead of hanging around our platoon area, I took the platoon down to a clearing behind our classroom building about a block away, and we took our leisure until noon. As I look back it was a foolish thing to do. If the colonel had ever found us I would probably have been on my way to the European Theater, but this maneuver sure improved my standing with my platoon.

To keep in reasonable physical shape we had 30 minutes of calisthenics every morning and went for a two hour hike once a week. This was good duty. The battle of the bulge occurred while I was there and I often thought of my OCS buddies who were over there. I learned much later that my good buddy Bill Price was wounded in the leg during that affair. At Christmas time the platoon had a special dinner at the battery mess hall. They invited May and I to attend. I felt honored. We had an excellent meal, plenty of beer and a really good time. They presented me with a fine winter trench coat. It is a treasured possession to this day.

One of the really nice things about being an officer was that I could live off the post. May found a nice, almost new, small house that we could afford to rent. It was really a big improvement over the apartment we had in Lawton. It had only one draw back and that was the heating system. It was totally inadequate for that North Carolina winter. It had a fireplace, but we couldn't find any wood. We tried pine cones, but they didn't burn very well. I was colder more times that winter, when it hardly ever froze, than I ever was back in Iowa when the winter temperature often reached 10 below zero.

Fayetteville was an old southern town. The one structure I remember was an old concrete and brick building in the middle of down town that they said was the former slave auction. We became good friends with a young couple from Indiana, about our age, Larry and Eleanor Lane. He was also a platoon commander in my battery. He had a car and she had a beautiful black fur coat and was a bit on the eccentric side, but a lot of fun. One weekend we went to Charleston, SC to see the old mansions and Ft. Sumter. She had a little black dog that she took along. The house where we found lodging for the night had a sign, "No dogs allowed". We weren't about to try and find another place at that stage of the game so she sneaked the dog in under her fur coat and out again the next morning. Fortunately he didn't bark so we got by ok.

In the early spring of 1945 the folks who owned our house wanted to move back so we had to find other lodging--not an easy task at that time in an army post town. May found a small apartment in an old building that wasn't too much better than the one in Lawton. Right after we moved in Larry and I had to be gone for 10 days on a field exercise. May and Eleanor, in a moment of indiscretion, decided to take Larry's car and come out to visit us one evening. They couldn't find us and pulled off the road to look at the map. When they tried to start up they discovered they were in sand and the car wouldn't move. Fortunately a couple of friendly soldiers came along in a jeep and pulled them out. They

were both so shaken that they headed back to town as fast as they could. After a few days May noticed that there was a lot of night time auto traffic to a couple of old houses near by. She became pretty worried about the neighborhood we were in and then she discovered that the front door lock didn't work. Fortunately, shortly after that I received orders to report to Ft. Knox, KY. for transfer to the armored forces.

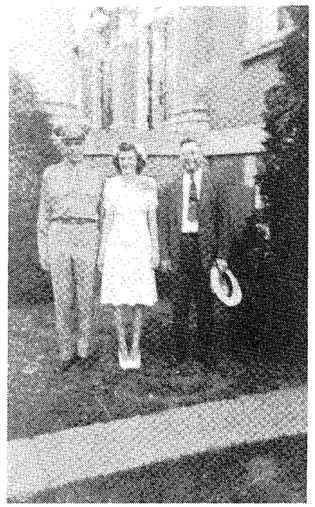
About the same time I heard of a guy at the fort who was wanting to sell his car. It was a 1938 Chevrolet with a rumble seat and pretty good tires. He wanted $230 for it. May and I discussed it and decided we would buy it. Our first ever car. We packed all our belongings in the rumble seat and took off for Louisville, which is close to Ft. Knox. It was spring and a beautiful drive through the Appellations and the blue grass country. Neither one of us had been there before. The car performed beautifully.

We found an upstairs apartment in Louisville that was affordable and considerably better than the one we had in Lawton. Fort Knox seemed to have more large and modern administration buildings than Ft. Bragg. I never did see where the gold was stored! My training for conversion to the armored force consisted of learning the tactics of armored force fighting and how to fire the tank artillery gun. The M-1 tanks we were working with had been modified to mount 90mm anti aircraft artillery guns. The tanks were not designed to accommodate these larger, longer range weapons. Consequently the space in the turret was very cramped. It was a bit tricky handling those longer and heavier shells in the cramped turret. Fortunately there were no accidents. When I finished training I received a ten day leave. Don't remember much about that leave except that May's Aunt Bertha said she was surprised to see May so slender. She thought sure that, since we had such a sudden wedding in Lawton, she would be heavy with child by this time. The car again made the trip to Manning and back with no problems.

The night we got back to Louisville I awakened with a very severe abdominal pain. The next morning May went with me to the post infirmary. She was waiting while they were performing tests on me and at noon went out for lunch. When she returned I was in bed and my appendix had been removed. I was there for a few days and then received a thirty day sick leave to recuperate. During this time we moved to Elizabethtown because we found a nice little house to rent there. It was cheaper and it was nearer the fort. It was midsummer so we spent a good deal of that leave time at the officers club swimming pool at the Fort. When my leave was up we received quite a shock. My orders were to report to Fort Ord, California immediately for shipment overseas. The war in Europe had ended and I knew this meant just one thing. The invasion of Japan!

We had a few days before I had to leave so we called home and asked Ivan to take the train to Louisville immediately so he could

drive our car and May home. Those were sad days. My train for Ft. Ord left early in the morning. I kissed May goodbye and joined a group of other officers going my way. May drove to the Louisville train station and met Ivan for the trip back to Manning. She would go back to Ames in the fall and complete her education while I was overseas.

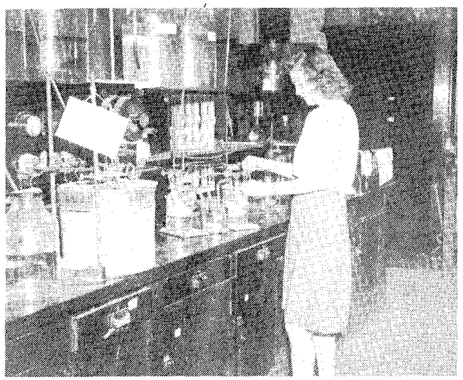


Newlyweds with Reverend Fields
Lawton, OK. June 17, 1944

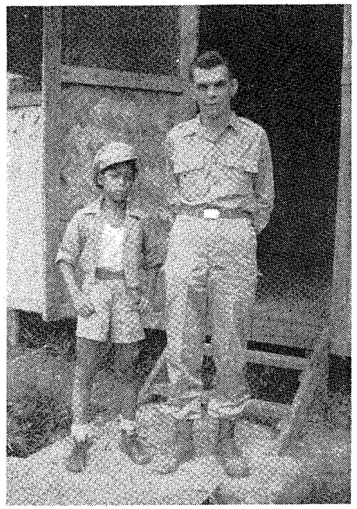
Can't hardly see those new bars I was so proud of.

Engagement Roses. The best investment I ever made.

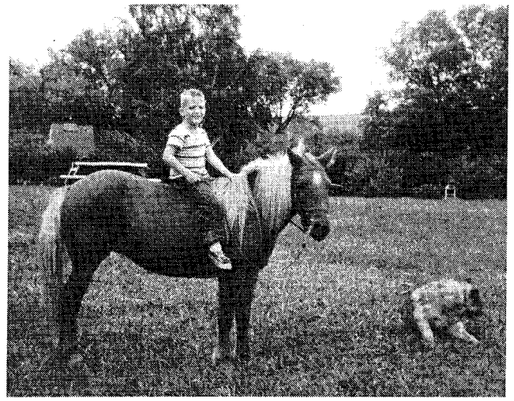
Buck Private leaning on a 105 howitzer. Camp Roberts, CA. 1943



May working in Chem Lab while
I got my degree. ISU 1946



My abode and good friend and
helper. Philippines 1945



Doug on Goldie and Pal
with head turned

Prettiest Girl I ever met.
Don't know how she ever
agreed to share her life
life with me.

CHAPTER XIV

My third trip across western US to the Pacific at government expense began in a rather decrepit coach car with some 30 other lieutenants. Our car was the last in the train. After we had been under way for a while we all went forward several cars to the diner for breakfast. After breakfast on the way back to our car another fellow and I noticed that one of the empty cars we passed through had much better seats than the one we were in so we just sat down there. We were watching the passing scenery and getting acquainted and after a while the conductor came by. He said, "Say, weren't you fellows with that bunch of soldiers in that rear car?" We said yes we were and he said, "Well, we dropped that car off at the last town we went through. That car is going to St. Louis and we're headed for Chicago." He thought a minute and then he said, "We are traveling right along side the highway to St. Louis. If you get out there and hitch hike you probably can beat the train to St Louis because it stops a number of places along the way." We said, "Lets go." So he stopped the train, we grabbed our bags got out and over to the highway and started hitch hiking. We had very good luck. When we got to the RR station in St. Louis the rest of the group was there wondering what had happened to us. We took quite a ribbing, but we got on pullman cars there and made it the rest of the way to Ft. Ord without incident.

Things were pretty dull for us at Ft. Ord. We had absolutely no responsibilities and nothing to do. One weekend we went to a football game at Santa Cruz and another exploring Monterey. The war in Europe had ended in June and this was late July and early August and the prospect of the invasion of Japan was always in the back of our mind. Then some momentous things happened. We dropped an atomic bomb on Japan. Then another and Japan surrendered. It was like a great weight lifting from our shoulders. We finally boarded ship for the journey across the Pacific in early September.

The ship was new. We were told this was only her second voyage. She was of the class known as Victory ships designed to transport both cargo and troops. Our group of about 25 or 30 all second lieutenants was in tiny rooms above deck. The rooms had two bunks, one above the other, shelves and rod to hang clothes, and a tiny bathroom. Not elite by any means, but quite comfortable and considerably better than the quarters for enlisted men below decks. We also had a fair sized recreation room with tables and chairs where we could read, play cards and write letters. We were all strangers when we left Fort Knox, but being together at Fort Ord we had gotten acquainted and in the confinement aboard ship, we soon became good friends. I had just learned how to play bridge. Several others were also bridge players. We played an awful lot of bridge on that ship. Strange as it may seem, I don't recall any gambling. Probably we didn't have money to gamble with.

We sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge in the morning. When we hit the ground swells out a ways a lot of people got sea sick and felt pretty lousy for a while. Fortunately I never had

any trouble and those that were sick got over it quite soon. Our ship was carrying ammunition, and a few days out the enlisted men dumped it all over board. Evidently to eliminate the danger of any explosion. We ran into two violent storms. At least they seemed that way to a landlubber like me. I recall standing on the deck outside the rec. room one afternoon during a storm and getting wet. I watched the bow go under as we hit a wave and hoped it would come up again. Thankfully, it always did. Our first stop after two weeks at sea was at Leyte in the Philippines. It was a beautiful bay with palm trees coming down to the beach. We couldn't get off the ship, but Filipino boys swam out and dived for coins that we dropped in the water. Our next stop was Manila Bay. As we passed Corrigidor and entered the bay we saw that it was full of cargo ships of every description. Little did I realized what an important role those ships were going to play in my life the next 10 months.

When we got off the ship we were put on a train headed north. The train was narrow gauge. The cars were small and the seats hard. We had no idea where we were going and I don't to this day. It was a replacement depot and there was an army air force base nearby. Fighter planes were taking off and landing day and night. I saw my first ever jet plane there. We slept on cots in tents and again we had no responsibilities and nothing to do. I was there about a week, I think, when I received orders to report to an outfit in Manila. It turned out to be a truck company in the transportation corps of the Quartermaster branch of the army. nTheir primary equipment was 6x6 trucks and their mission was hauling cargo from all those ships in the harbor to supply dumps on shore. The outfit was called a company instead of a battery, as I was accustomed to in the artillery.

One of the biggest problems the company was experiencing was the hijacking or sale by the driver of truckloads of cargo to the black market. The primary item of choice was cigarettes. A truckload of cigarettes could bring the driver as much as $500 on the black market. That was a lot of money in those days. My first assignment was to patrol the truck routes and side roads at night to apprehend any trucks that were off the road, recover any trucks that had been abandoned or prevent any black market activity if I could. I was issued a pistol and had a command car as my transportation. My crew consisted of a driver and an enlisted man armed with a shotgun. I don't know that it was particularly hazardous duty, but the streets and roads were dark with lots of chuckholes and the routes were not well marked.

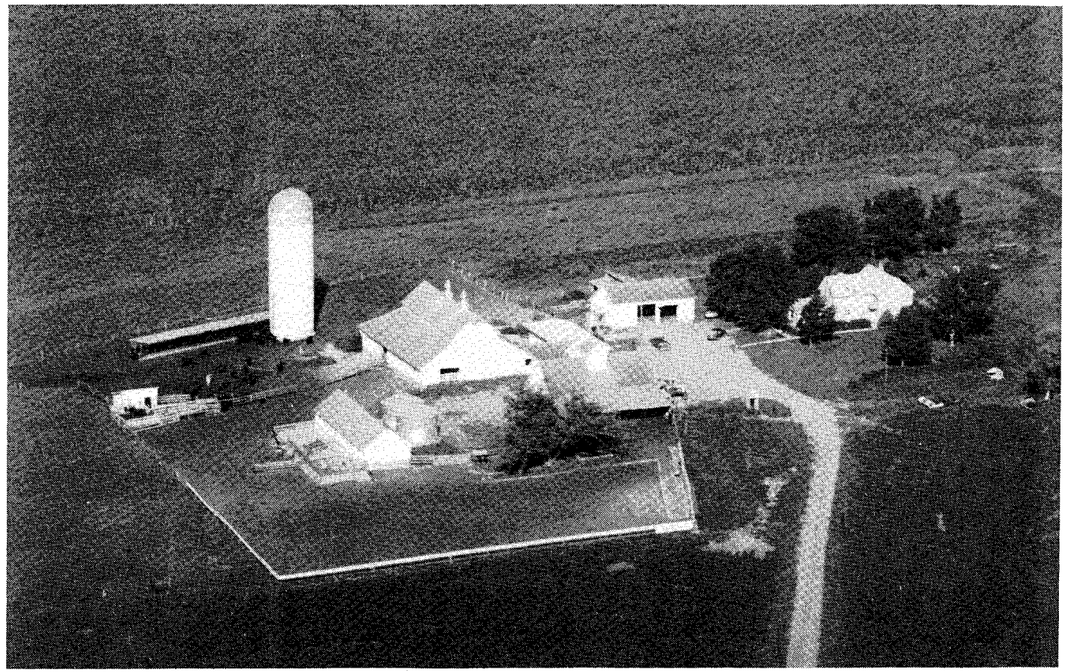
We found some trucks off the routes and a few drivers asleep at the wheel, but we only had one somewhat scary experience. One night we found a loaded truck parked outside a nightclub off the route with no driver. We took the number and I told the men to wait in the car while I went over to the nightclub located a short distance off the road. It was pretty dark. As I started walking I heard a gunshot. I drew my pistol and fired a shot into the air. Just then the driver came running out the door. What a relief!

We escorted him to his outfit and turned him over to the company officer on duty. A few weeks later our company received notice that it was being deactivated. That meant no more patrol duty. That evening three other officers and I who had been on patrol found some state side whiskey and had a party in our quarters. We all got drunk. I can't remember getting to my bed which was just down the hall. The next morning I had a monumental headache. That's the only time I've ever been drunk!

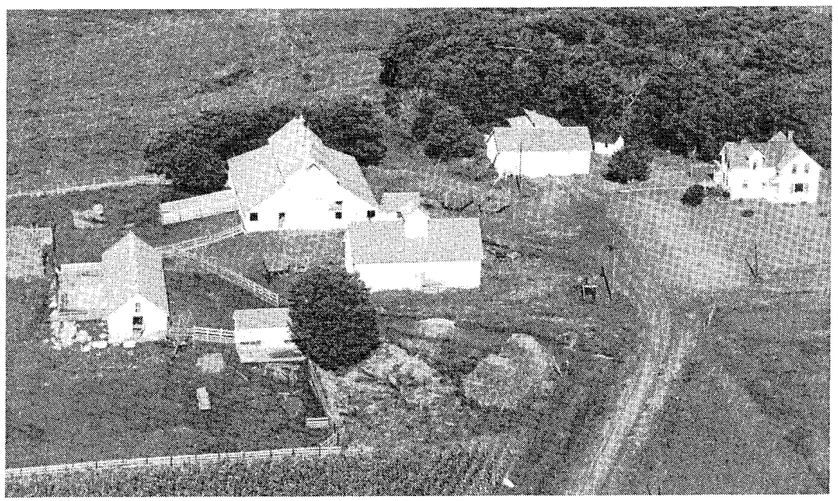
While at the company I had developed a close friendship with another lieutenant named Albert E Ware. He was from Michigan State, a student in agriculture and also recently married. We had many things in common and spent a good deal of time together. One time he told me that some of his fraternity brothers, I don't remember the fraternity, had rented a room at a hotel downtown and were having a get together and a poker game. He asked if I would like to go with him. Having had a bit of experience playing poker and not having anything else to do, I said "sure". I expected a friendly game with a ten or twenty five-cent limit and three raises like we used to have in Manning. But when we got there and were all seated around the table they announced that the bet rules would be pot size upper and a dollar minimum bet. When I recovered from my shock I realized I only had about 10 dollars with me and decided that rather than embarrassing myself by bowing out before the game started, I would just play conservatively until my 10 dollars was gone and then leave. Well, I have never had such a steak of luck in my life as I had that night. I couldn't do anything wrong. When the game broke up I had won almost $300. The next day I sent $250 home to May. I never went back there again. Come to think of it, I don't think they ever asked me.

When my company was disbanded I received orders to report to a battalion located in downtown Manila close to the Old City. This was in the days before integration. This battalion had black enlisted men and white officers. The company I was assigned to was engaged in loading and hauling cargo from the ships just like the company I left. This time, however, I was in charge of loading the company trucks at the docks. This was daytime duty and much better than running the back roads of Manila at night. I found that after I got things started and arranged in the morning, I could leave the noncoms in charge and sneak up to the ship mess. There I'd usually find some coffee and cookies or cake.

It was quite an experience for a white boy from western Iowa, who had hardly ever seen a black person, to wind up in charge of a platoon of blacks. [African American had not been invented at that time] I quickly discovered, however, that if you treated them fairly and honestly they responded. Some tested me at the beginning by saying, "If I'se ah white boy you woodn't make me do dat". About the third time this happened I said, "Soldier, I wouldn't ever ask you to do anything I didn't think you could do or that I wouldn't do myself. If you were a white boy and said that to me I would have your ass out on the parade ground with a spade digging a hole six by six and six foot deep. The sergeant would be



OHAVEN Farm 1978



OHAVEN Farm 1951

CHAPTER XV

The move back to the farm near Manning was a major turning point in our lives. To me it meant going back to the occupation that I knew and where I expected to spend the rest of my life. All of my ancestors, to the best of my knowledge, had been tillers of the soil. While modern farming obviously involved a great deal more than just tilling of the soil, that occupation was deeply rooted in my genes. May was raised on a farm, but she didn't have quite the same feeling about farming. I often teased her about this by saying that she didn't come to college to get a degree and then marry some dumb farmer and move back to the farm. I'm so glad that we spent the time in Beloit for I'm sure that was a big factor in enabling us to spend the next 31 pleasant and satisfying years on the farm.

After our decision to move back to the farm, selection of a farm name was our first real action directly related to the farm. Without any real discussion we both knew that we would have a registered Brown Swiss herd on the farm. In the registered dairy cattle industry a farm name is quite important. All registered cattle, of course, have a name that is registered at the breed headquarters. This name together with a number assigned by the headquarters is a permanent record of that animal. From this record the ancestry and offspring of any registered animal can be traced. These records are invaluable and customarily used when making mating decisions to improve production and avoid inbreeding.

In the Brown Swiss breed, as well as other breeds, registered animals usually have three characters plus a number in their name. The first character is the farm name, the second is the name of the sire, and the third is the name of the animal and is followed by the registration number. In this way the first word serves as a trademark to identify the breeder of the animal and also is a valuable form of advertising. We selected our farm name one day as we were driving down the highway with Marion and Norman Magnussen, close friends, on the way to a distant cattle sale. Norm said, "Well you guys. Have you selected a farm name for this new farm venture you are about to begin?" May and I were somewhat taken aback because we had not thought of this at all. After several names had been suggested I began to think of what a farm name should include. I felt that it should be unique, it should relate to the owners' name and it should have some recognition of the purpose of the farm. I had long thought of our proposed farm as a haven that we would occupy for the remainder of our lives. After several tries I came up with the name OHAVEN. Everyone thought that was just great and thus our farm name OHAVEN was born.

When the time came to move we realized that we had accumulated quite a lot of stuff during our two and a half-year stay in Beloit. Fortunately Dad had a small farm truck. Brother Ivan brought it to Beloit. We loaded the truck and the three of us rode the loaded truck to Manning. We unloaded at Mom & Dad's and brought the empty truck back to Beloit. With it and the car we managed to get every

This rather harmless caper was a topic of conversation among the participants long afterwards.

The farmstead where we lived, the 'HOME PLACE', as we called it consisted of 240 acres. The land originally came into possession of my family when it was purchased by great grandfather Wilken Karsten, grandma Oppermans' father, in the mid 1890's. It was inherited by two of his sons, Claus and Emil, and farmed by them for many years. In 1936, the depth of the farm depression, Dad purchased it for the going price at that time of $60 and acre. For the first few years we farmed only the 160 acres where the buildings were located. Dad kept the 80 acres across the road to the north. He built some small buildings there and fed some cattle and hogs and kept some chickens there. His hobby farm he called it. He came out every morning to do his chores. In doing so he went right past our place. Quite often when work wasn't pressing he would stop in on his way back to town. Usually he would have a couple dozen eggs for May. We would sit around the kitchen table with coffee and cookies and visit for a while. Those were pleasant times that will always be remembered. It was also customary for him to call on brothers Bill, Ivan and myself to help him sort and load cattle or hogs when they were ready for market. Usually this was early enough in the morning so that we would be finished by 9.00 o'clock. He would then ask us to join him at the Corner Cafe in town for coffee. Those times also bring pleasant memories.

Dad charged us a ridiculously low rent of $5.00 an acre for the land we farmed. He said he wanted only enough to pay the taxes. At five year intervals he transferred ownership of 80 acres of the land to us. Thus at the end of 15 years we owned the farm. There was a small debt on the land. It consisted primarily of the cost of remodeling the house. If my memory is correct it was less than $10.000.

In 1959 John Frahm, who owned 240 acres of land a mile north of our place, decided he wanted to sell his land. He first approached brother Ivan whose land was adjoining. Ivan could not get financing for that much land so he asked me if I would be interested in half. After contacting Federal Land Bank and their assurance that they would make the necessary loan, I decided that the purchase was advisable. Because there were some buildings on my half we agreed to divide the land with 113 acres for me and the balance to Ivan. The purchase price for my share of the land and buildings was $440 per acre. In 1971 Virgil Rowedder approached me to purchase his farm of 160 acres. This land was located two miles north and two miles west of our farm. It was good land with a house, barn, hog house, machine shed and corncrib. The house was not livable, the corncrib was excellent and the other buildings were fair. After considerable figuring and again getting agreement from the Federal Land Bank, I decided to make the purchase. The price was $550 per acre. This purchase gave us a total farming operation of 513 acres. At the time as a result of these purchases we were carrying a considerable debt load, but the appreciation of land values since that time has made them quite a good investment.

As I mentioned earlier, I started out farming with a very bare minimum of machinery. Over the years as I acquired more land and as my crop enterprises grew the machinery requirements to plant, cultivate and harvest the crop also grew. My first upgrade came in the mid 50"s when dad decided he no longer wanted. to farm the 80 acres where his livestock operation was located. To meet the increased power requirements for farming this I purchased a used model 60 JOHN DEERE. I bought it at a farm sale auction north of Vail. I remember it well. The bidding had reached a point where I had bid $1700. The auctioneer accepted a bid for $1800 and called for me to bid $1900. I didn't want to pay that much and refused. The auctioneer continued to call for $1900 for a while and when no one responded, he finally turned to me and asked if I would still honor my bid of $1700. I said I would and received the tractor. This is the first and only time that I have ever seen an auctioneer admit that he had made a false bid and back down

My next major purchase came at the time Ivan and I purchased and divided the Frahm land. This purchase included a model 830 CASE tractor and a three sixteen inch bottom plow. I bought this from a CASE dealer in Audubon who was going out of business and sold it at a considerable discount. If my memory is correct the total purchase price was $3000. The plow was a touch too big for the tractor, but I did use both for quite a number of years. Then neighbor Harold Schmidt bought the tractor and used it many more years. In fact, I think he still has it today, but I'm not sure it is in running condition.

When I purchased the Rowedder land it again became necessary to up grade my tractor power. This time I purchased a 970 CASE with cab, lights, radio and heater. No more sitting huddled down and shivering on the exposed seat of the conventional tractor where the cold gusty winds of early spring could blast you all day long. This was by far the best tractor I ever owned both from the standpoint of comfort and power. The purchase price was $6000. A few years after this the 830 was giving me problems so I sold it and purchase a used 930 CASE. It also had a cab, but no heater and radio.

Again I don't have the exact date, but it was in the late 60's or very early 70's that brothers Ivan, Bill and I joined to purchase a self propelled HESSTON hay mower. This was the first machine of its kind in our area. It cut a ten foot swath. Mounted just behind the cutting sickle was a set of rollers. The fresh cut hay passed through these rollers which squeezed it just enough to crack the stems of the alfalfa, which was the predominant hay crop at that time. Cracking the stems allowed the moisture to escape more rapidly. This shortened the drying time required for the moisture level of the hay to be reduced far enough for safe storage. This was important because summer rain showers could be frequent. Rain wetting the hay increased the time that the hay was laying in the field exposed to the elements and thus reduced its feed value.

In the early 1970s the concept of no-till farming was in its very early stages. This concept greatly reduced, in fact almost eliminated, the cost and time of discing, plowing and cultivation currently required

for weed control. The concept was made possible by the development of weed control chemicals. These chemicals could be sprayed on the ground as the corn was planted and, according to the advertisements, the che..micals would stop weed growth and not harm the corn.

Bill and I, being progressive farmers and always looking for a way to save a buck, decided we would give this system a try. We purchased a BUFFALO four-row combination plow and planter. This planter differed from the commonly used pull type planter in that it was mounted on the rear of the tractor. It was raised and lowered with the tractor hydraulics. In front of each of the planter units was mounted a rather large arrow type plow shovel. The theory was that this unit could be used in previous year corn or soybean fields without discing or plowing. The shovel would be set to run at a depth so it would cut a shallow, level path about 10 inches wide pushing the old previous year corn stalks to the side into the space between the newly planted corn rows. We mounted a 100 gallon tank on each side of the tractor just ahead of the rear wheels. These were for the weed control herbicide. They were connected to a pump operated by the tractor power takeoff. Hoses from the pump were connected to spray nozzles mounted just behind each planter unit. These nozzles sprayed a pattern just wide enough to cover the path cleared for the newly planted corn.

The theory was great. The actual performance was a disaster! The first big problem was that the previous year stalks would not break up and pass between the planter units. They would plug up between the planter units and the tractor driver would have to stop, clamber down from the comfortable tractor cab and pull the corn stalk mess out in order to proceed. After doing this about three times on every crossing of the field tempers tended to rise. We decided after the first day that we needed to disc the corn fields to cut up the stalks. This helped considerably, but the cost of discing cut into anticipated savings of time and money. The second disaster was that the herbicides at that early stage of development were not effective. We had weeds growing and trying to cultivate with those cornstalks between the rows was a nightmare. Fortunately we had very good weather that year and we did get a somewhat decent corn crop in spite of our problems. But one year was enough. The planter went back to the dealer. We didn't completely give up on the no till concept, but we took things a little slower. Since that time, of course, herbicides have been perfected and equipment developed to the point where minimum tillage is now a common practice. We were just 10 or 15 years ahead of time.

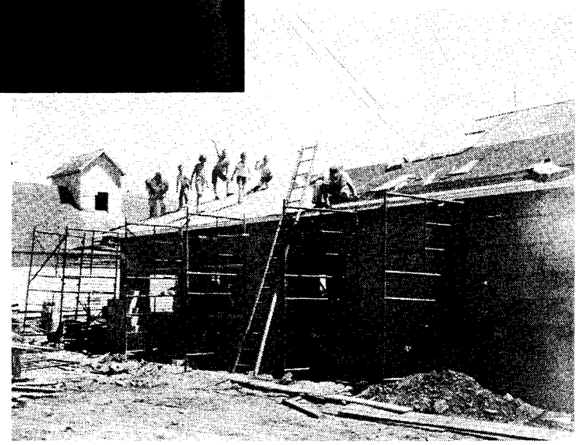
As I look back over the many years that I was closely involved in farming I marvel at the constantly accelerating rate of change that has taken place in this industry. Most of the changes have been for the better, of course, but some have been quite traumatic for the people involved. One of the latter has been the constant and dramatic increase in farm size and the accompanying reduction in the number of people on the farm. To illustrate let me relate one personal experience. One forenoon in early 1980 I was in the field

with my tractor discing corn stalks. I always carried coffee and cookies with me and stopped midmorning for refreshment. This particular morning I stopped on the hilltop just west of our farmstead. From where I stopped I had a clear view the countryside for a radius of some 2 miles. Within that area I c ould count 19 now empty farmsteads. Farmsteads where people had lived, loved and raised a family during the period of my memory.

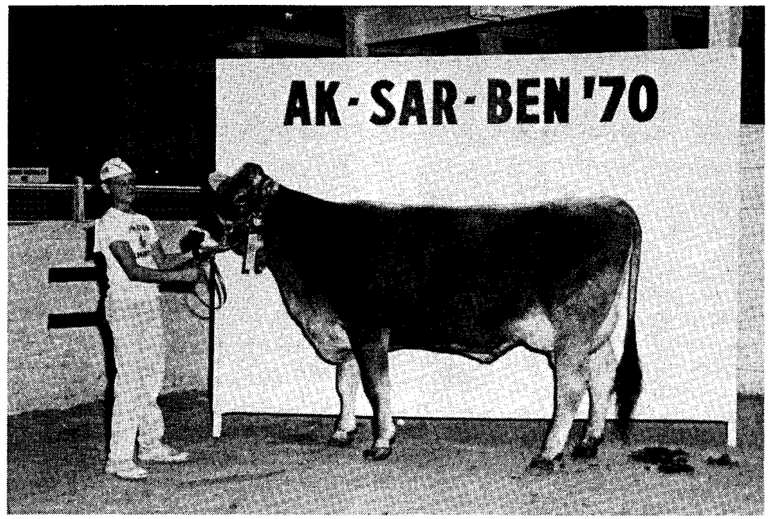
I'm sure leaving the farm, for many the place where they were born, greatly affected their lives, hopefully for the better. It also affected the lives of those of us who remained. In our little town where at one time we had four grocery stores, three hardware stores, two drug stores, two furniture stores, three machinery dealers and three car dealers. We now had one of each. We had two dentists, two clothing stores for men and two for women, a clean clothes shop, two hardware stores, a blacksmith, two shoe stores, a bakery, a creamery and ice cream plant, and a poultry processing plant. Now we had none of these. A number of buildings on main-street were empty. Most other small towns in the farming areas were suffering the same consequences. Fortunately the little town of Manning has some intelligent, industrious and gifted people. Through their hard work and initiative the town has been successful in attracting new industry and shops. I hope that those hard working people who left the farm have been as successful.

George, Mike, May, Mary and Lana on the campaign trail in my run for state senate. 1980
I lost!

Newspaper picture inside our new milking parlor. A first in our area. I knew that teat cups go on the other end.



Our new milking parlor under construction. Don't know how those little characters got up there. They are not workers.



Tom with his 4H project Swiss cow 'Bonnie'. She was Grand Champion at the 1970 AK-SAR-BEN show in Omaha.

CHAPTER XVI

In the summer of 1954 May and I had been married for ten years. We had lived on the farm where we expected to spend the rest of our lives for the past four years. Things were going well at the farm. For several years we had been trying unsuccessfully to have a baby. Early that summer, Peter Huendling, a very good friend and fellow Brown Swiss breeder, had told us that his son was a practicing physician in Sioux City specializing in fertility problems. He suggested we go to see him. We decided to do that. The doctor gave us each a thorough examination. It included collection of a semen sample from me. Examination of the semen sample showed that I had a very low sperm count and that the likely hood of achieving pregnancy was very low. The low count was no doubt a result of the mumps I had when I was 15.

The trip home was pretty sad. After some soul searching and much discussion we decided after a few weeks that we would explore the possibility of adoption. After some investigation we fournd that the Department of Human Services was in charge of adoption for the state. Their headquarters was in Des Moines. We contacted them and they sent us a rather lengthy questionnaire. This we filled out and returned. They then requested that we come to headquarters for an interview. I don't remember the questions at the interview or in the application, but I do recall that they were quite detailed. At the completion of the interview they told us that they would review our case and let us know. A couple of weeks later we received a letter saying that our request had been denied. Tbe reason given was that they didn't think we really wanted children. We were devastated. We just couldn't imagine what we had done or said to ever leave that impression.

Shortly after we received the Des Moines letter, Stu Perry, who kept our farm records, stopped in for a visit. We told them of our desire to adopt and our Des Moines experience. He couldn't believe that had happened. He told us that his wife was a member of the Board of Directors for the Florence Crittendon Home in Sioux City, about 90 miles north and a bit west of our farm. The Florence Crittendon Home was a home where pregnant unmarried young girls could go for support and delivery of their babies. If the girls did not want to keep the babies, the Home then put the babies up for adoption. We phoned the Home and they asked us to come for a visit. Again we had a thorough and detailed interview and a tour of the facilities by the lady in charge. At the conclusion of the interview she told us that she would like to come to our home for a visit. When she came we had a very fine visit. She told us that she thought we would make fine parents and that as soon as they had a baby suitable for us they would contact us by telephone. She explained that, since the Home did not approve of single child families, it was Home policy that any couple adopting a child must agree that they would take another two years later. Also, during the first year either party could decide that the adoption was not working and the child would be returned to the Home. There also was a fee for the adoption. As I recall, it was less then $250.

We were on cloud nine when she left. Finally we were going to have a baby. We waited rather impatiently through the rest of the summer and then the autumn. Then on December 4 in the afternoon when I was in the house alone eating lunch, May was at Homemakers Club, I

meetings. Don't know how they managed when May had five under five years of age., but evidently they did somehow. May also joined PEO and the Manning Women's club.

Our first closest friends in the area were Max and Marge Detlefsen. Marge was also a Home Ec. graduate from Iowa State. She attended the Methodist Church and also belonged to PEO and Women's Club. She and May had many common interests and really hit it off. Max was the town electrician. The four of us became very good friends and have remained so to this day. The Detlefsens were good friends of the Arps, Lyle (Red) and Dorothy. Dorothy was a classmate of mine in high school. Her father owned the First National Bank in Manning. When she married Red he started working in the bank and later became president. They joined our little twosome and we became a threesome. About a year later John Hornberger, a young MD, moved to Manning and opened a medical practice.. He and his wife Joan fit into our group and we became a foursome.

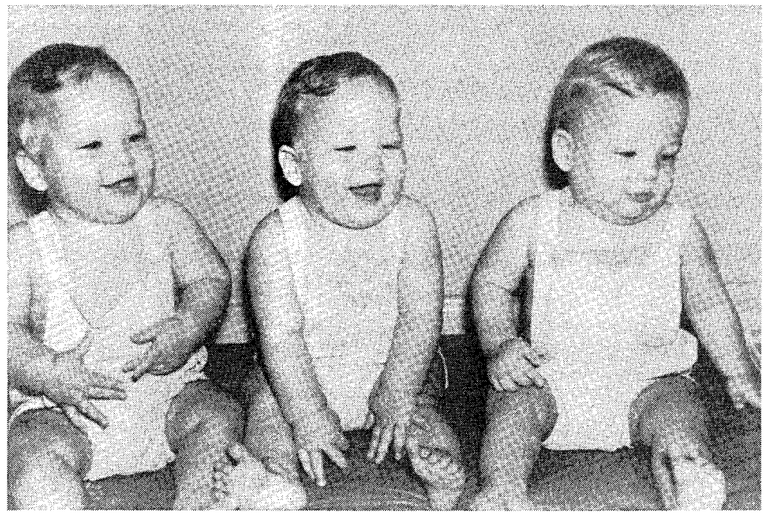
Not long after that a lady from Jefferson, a town some 30 miles away, gave a series of Bridge lessons in Manning. Don't know why she selected Manning, but am glad she did. We all attended the classes and as a result started playing Bridge on Sunday night. We rotated and each couple took their turn at being hostess. We played men and women partners and rotated partners after six hands. Each of us put a quarter in the pot. The high man got a dollar and so did the high lady. After four rounds of Bridge we had coffee and dessert. This went on for a good many years. Amazingly, as I look back, we never had an argument or disagreement

Another of our activities was birthday parties. At that time Ma Brown had an excellent restaurant in Carroll. On the anniversary of the birth date, or a near date, we all dressed in our Sunday best and drove to Carroll to Ma Brown's restaurant for dinner. In the early years we had to take our own bottle of whiskey along because at that time Iowa was in the process of moving from prohibition and the sale of whiskey by the drink was prohibited. We brought our own bottle and gave it to the restaurant owner. She then mixed the drinks from our bottle and charged us for the added mix. I never thought about whether we could have drunk it straight. One night we were up there during a real Iowa snowstorm. It was slow going driving the 20 miles home, but we made it.

For a number of years May and I had season tickets for the Iowa State football games. Once in a while Max and Marge would join us and in later years Red and Dorothy also had season tickets. Those were the years when Iowa State had some pretty good teams. One year we went to watch them play in a Peach Bowl game in Atlanta, GA. They lost! Red had a well earned reputation for being pretty careful with the bank's money, but several years he bought tickets to an Iowa game in Iowa City for the four men. We would drive to Des Moines and then catch a special train to Iowa City. On the train ride we played two-bit poker and Red furnished the drinks and a lunch on the way. We were usually not feeling much pain and in good shape to cheer the team on when we got to Iowa City. After the game we rode the train back to Des Moines, again playing poker, but in a more subdued mood. We had a good supper in Des Moines, again at Red's expense, and then drove home. It was a great day and, in spite of my somewhat snide remarks, very much enjoyed and appreciated. The trip was a topic of conversation for weeks afterwards. The women envied us so much that on one trip even they got to go along.

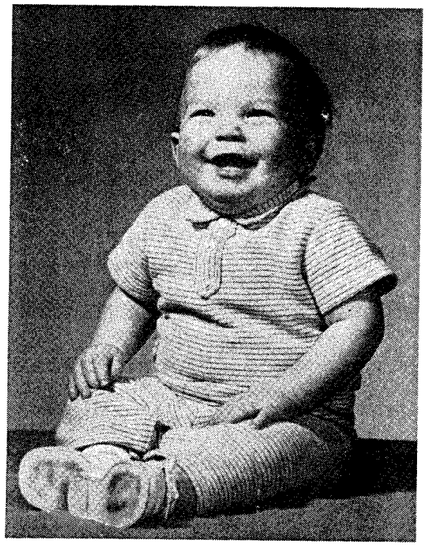
One other joint entertainment that our little group thoroughly enjoyed were dances at the

Starline Ballroom. The Starline was a large dance hall on highway 30 just east of Carroll. Some of the top dance bands of the country were booked there. Our favorites were Vaughn Monroe and Jan Garber, both popular midwest orchestras. One cold winter night when Garber was playing there Max and Marge rode with us. We were walking to the hall across the graveled parking lot. I was carrying the customary bottle of bourbon when it slipped from my grasp and fell to the ground and broke. We almost cried. Fortunately Red and Doc and some other friends felt sorry for us and shared their bottle so we still had a good time.

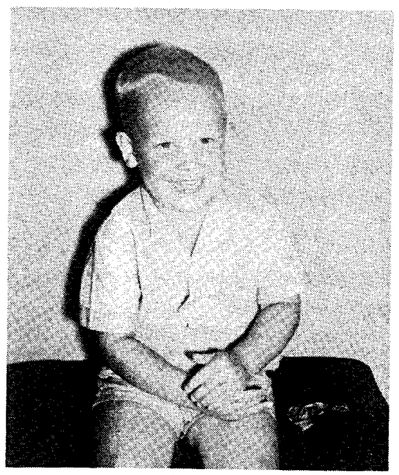


DAVE DONALD DOUGLAS 'We think'

The kids and aunt Dorothy with the deer in Ponderosa State Park on our visit to California.



Micheal



Thomas

Dad Reads "The Night Before Christmas"

Mary

CHAPTER XVII

Shortly after we moved back to Manning Robert R. Dappen, a recent graduate from Iowa State in Veterinary Medicine moved to Manning and opened a practice here. His practice grew rapidly and a couple of years later Walter D Felker, also a recent graduate from ISU in Veterinary Medicine, moved to Manning and joined the practice. They did all of my veterinary work and we became quite good friends. In the summer of 1954 Dr. Dappen [Bob] stopped at our place and told me that he had learned that the old Mill in Manning was for sale. The Mill was built many years ago, probably before the turn of the century, as a combination grain elevator and milling facility. The elevator portion had storage bins for some 10,000 bushels of grain. The Milling facility was a two story brick building with a basement. A large grinder driven by an electric motor was located in the basement. Grain from bins in the elevator building could be fed into the grinder by gravity. Ground material was then blown by a fan on the blower into bins on the second floor of the Mill building. From these bins the ground material could then be gravity fed into farmers wagon or truck or into bags. It also had a small office with an outside scale attached to the Mill building. The whole facility had not been in active operation for some years and had fallen into a state of disrepair.

Dappen said the asking price was $25,000, which seemed quite reasonable. He suggested that he, Dr. Felker, brothers Ivan, Bill and I form a corporation, each put in $5000 dollars and buy the facility. I agreed to talk to Bill and Ivan to get their reaction. They were favorable so we examined the facility and then held a meeting. We all agreed that we would purchase the facility and that we would borrow another $25,000 to update the facility. They asked me to be the manager on a part time basis to begin with. I agreed and the 1st National bank agreed to loan us the money. The purchase was made and we started to work. The first job was to clean up the place. It was a mess and the clean up was hard, dirty work. Since the veterinarians couldn't leave their work, the job fell to Ivan, Grandpa and I. Bill was in the army. Our first employee was Tater Damman, a hard working young man that I had known for a long time. One hot summer day I was working in the basement when Ivan hollered down that there was someone upstairs who wanted to see me. I was hot, dirty and sweaty when I came up out of the basement to find an elderly man in a white suit and driving a white Cadillac waiting to see me. He was a salesman selling feed additives. He was a fine gentleman and didn't seem to mind my appearance. He explained his line of additives and we had a nice visit. Before leaving he said, "George, I believe you are a good man and that you can have a very successful business here. I would offer just one bit of advice. Always remember that you may make the best feed in the world, but until you sell that bag of feed and someone pays you for it you will not be successful." That is some of the best advice I ever received and has stuck with me to this day.

While we were cleaning up we also began remodeling. We put in a new 24 foot platform scale, a pellet machine and a two ton feed mixer plus the necessary bins and piping so that feed and materials could be moved efficiently. Our goal was to formulate, grind, mix, pellet and deliver our own brand of feed either bagged or in bulk. It would be sold under the Manning Mill brand name. We also, of course, bought and sold grain—corn, oats and soybeans.

Soybeans were just coming into prominence at that time and that fall we bought the first soybeans that had been purchased in Manning. Also at that time nearly every farmer in the area had livestock. It was primarily hogs, but there were also a number of cattle feeders, some fairly large scale, and several dairymen. These would be our customers. I had no experience or training in bookkeeping. Fortunately brother-in-law Wesley was the bookkeeper for Garst and Thomas Seed Corn Company in Coon Rapids. He set up a system for me and after I understood how it worked I got along fine. My second employee was Beverly Lerrsen as bookkeeper and office manager.

Rather than handle a line of the commercial feed supplements available at that time, I decided that we would make our own line of feed supplements. I got out my Feeds and Feeding book and notes from my ISU nutrition courses and formulated feed supplements that we would make and sell. I had a feeling that a large percentage of farmers were not properly using feed supplements and that there would be a great advantage for them to use a properly balanced complete feed, especially for hogs. Therefore, I also formulated a complete hog ration. Farmers could bring their corn to our facility and we would mix it with the proper nutrients, grind and pellet it and deliver it to their farm. I wasn't sure that the increased efficiency of such a ration would be enough to offset the cost of grinding, mixing and delivery. As it turned out, however, that was our best seller and we made many a truckload of that ration in the years to come.

At that time corn prices were at or below production costs and farmers were having a tough time financially. The US government started a program whereby the government would loan a farmer money on his corn at a price considerably higher than the prevailing market price. If a farmer decided to participate in the program the government would send a representative to his farm to measure his corn crib or cribs to determine the number of bushels in the crib. The representative would then place a government document, "seal", on the crib stating that the corn in the crib was under government loan and the farmer would receive payment. Thus the term 'sealed corn'. The farmer was required to store the corn under seal until the next autumn at which time he could buy the corn back at the sealing price plus interest or deliver it to the government for storage.

This program had the effect of creating a corn shortage for the larger livestock farmers who had more livestock than they could raise feed for on their own farm. Thus they were forced into purchasing additional corn for their needs. Formerly they could purchase corn from their neighbors who had an excess above their needs. Now, however, this corn was locked under government seal. These farmers came to us to purchase corn. For some reason which I do not understand to this day, we could purchase corn in southern Minnesota, 100 miles north, truck it to Manning and sell it at a price that allowed us to make a profit and was still below the government sealing price. We sold many a bushel of that Minnesota corn those first few years.

One result of this unusual pricing situation was the development of entrepreneurs who owned semi-trailer grain hauling rigs. They would buy the corn from elevators in southern Minnesota and haul it south into our area and sell it to the local elevators. One such entrepreneur was Gale Moore, a farmer living some 5 miles south of our Mill. Gale was a year behind me in High School and I knew him quite well. One afternoon he called to say that he was on his way

with a load of corn. We agreed on a price and he said he would like to deliver the load yet that afternoon, but he would be late, to which I also agreed. It so happened that it fell my lot to stay late and unload Gale's corn.

After the corn was unloaded and I had written his check we sat in the office where it was warm and visited a bit. I happened to have a bottle of spirits. (how I happened to have that I don't know. It wasn't a common practice on my part to have whiskey in the office.) We had a nip or two and got to visiting about the Mill business and how we were making our own line of feed. He was very much interested, and on the spur of the moment, I asked him if he would be interested in a job as our salesman. He hesitated only a few minutes and then said that he sure would. I hired him on the spot. He worked for us five years and was the best salesman I ever knew. He worked on a flat salary plus commission basis. At one board meeting a few years later Dr. Dappen complained to me that I was paying Gale too much. My answer was that as long as for each ton of feed he sold we made much more profit than we paid him in bonus, the more he sold the better I liked it.

Another result of the government corn sealing program was, as I mentioned above, that the government had to take possession of the sealed corn if the farmer didn't buy it back. Very few farmers bought the corn back so the government had to store it someplace. They didn't have any storage space. That's where we came in. The government would pay 15c per bushel per year to commercial entities for storage space for this corn. Our calculations showed that we could build storage space and pay for it in two and one half years under this program. This looked like a good deal to us so we built our first storage bin for 100,000 bushels that first summer. We filled it that fall.

When I agreed to manage the Mill operation it was assumed that it would be a part time job. Within a few months however it became apparent that it would be a full time job. The Board of Directors wanted me to continue as a full time manager at a salary of $10,000 per year. That was a very good salary at that time. I found that I could hire a competent farm manager for less than half that salary so I agreed.

With a good salesman and a good product at a reasonable price our business grew rapidly. The second year we purchased what formerly was the Sale Barn property behind the Mill and built another 120,000 bushel storage bin and filled it with government sealed corn that fall. We also purchased a new self unloading bulk truck for our bulk feed deliveries. At that time our crew had grown to five full time employees and myself. Our pellet machine, grinder and mixer were running practically full time for an eight hour day. The operation showed a net profit of $10,000 the first year and $28,000 the second year. That doesn't seem like much in this day and age, but at that time we were very well pleased. I suspect the buying power of a dollar then was three to five times what it is today.

Some years prior to 1956 the Carroll County Extension director had organized a County Cattle Feeders organization. A primary function of the group was to sponsor a yearly banquet in Carroll. In addition to a dinner featuring a large, prime beef, steak dinner the program also included speeches by experts on such topics as feeding practices, market trends, disease control. etc. There were a lot of cattle feeders in the Manning area and a good number of them were our customers. As a promotional activity and to show our appreciation for their business, we decided

As well as the name and registration number of the sire and dam. A second step registration certificate was then issued for the calf. Again the Association received a fee for this service. The procedure for registering the female offspring of this female and receiving a third step certificate were the same. Both male and female offspring of the third step female could be registered and would receive a regular registration certificate.

As expected this proposal met with almost unanimous skepticism and opposition, some of it quite vociferous. The primary concern was that we would be ruining the 'purity' of the breed. We would have off color animals and the other breeds would be mocking and ridiculing us. I explained to them that I had shown the plan to geneticists at Iowa State University. They were all quite enthusiastic about the plan and assured me there would be no increase in off color spots or any other detrimental genetic results from this program. Their feeling was that the results would instead be very beneficial to the future of the breed. The other primary point of opposition was that there wouldn't be enough interest to bring in sufficient funds to cover expenses. My response to this was that I could not offer any proof of interest. But I did say that if there was no outside interest in purebred Brown Swiss then perhaps we should wonder why we were in the business. At the close of the discussion I asked the board members to think about this proposal and discuss it with their fellow breeders. I then promised that I would again bring it up for discussion at our next meeting six months hence. I asked them to discuss this matter with fellow breeders; think about it and be prepared to make any suggestions for improvement or change. I also asked them to bring any other suggestions they might have for improving the financial performance of the Association.

In the interim before the next board meeting I had an opportunity to visit with Fred Idtse, my former boss and secretary of the association. He was in favor of Provisional Registration as I had outlined it to him, but he felt that the board should not assume full responsibility for adoption of such a radical program. He suggested that the board vote to recommend such a program and that final adoption be put to a vote of the entire membership. This made a lot of sense to me.

As the time approached for our next board meeting, I must admit that I was more than a little bit apprehensive. What would be the reaction to my proposed Provisional Registration program? The thought that I might even be voted out of office crossed my mind. I arrived late for the meeting so I had no chance to visit with any of the board members prior to the meeting to get an idea of what lay ahead. When the meeting was called to order and the minutes were read, Provisional Registration was the first item brought up for discussion. Much to my surprise and pleasure the tone of the discussion and the attitude of the board members had changed completely. Seven of the nine members spoke in favor and the two opposed were quite mild. One board member, Howard Voegeli from Monticello, WI spoke up to make a suggestion that I feel contributed immensly to the change of attitude for the program. He said that he thought the Provisional Registration name had a negative ring for registered breeders and suggested that the name be changed to "Identity Enrollment" and abbreviated for common use to "IE". This suggestion was immediately and enthusiastically accepted by everyone. I personally feel that this one suggestion did more than any other one thing to insure the acceptance of the program.

I next presented Mr. Idtse's suggestion of putting the proposal to a vote of the

membership. Everyone agreed this was an excellent idea. The discussion then turned to an exploration of ways to present the program to the membership to insure full understanding and a favorable vote. The following strategy evolved: (1) sometime during the period before the spring board meeting, association secretary Kruse would convene a meeting of the following people: geneticists and dairy specialists from U of Wis. and Iowa State, representatives from the Artificial Insemination Industry, two extension dairyman, two Brown Swiss breeders and two breeders from other dairy breeds. These men (women weren't involved in those days) would discuss the IE proposal and make recommendations for changes and adoption or rejection to the spring board meeting. (2) The board would consider the committee report at their spring board meeting. They would make any changes they felt necessary. (3) The final plan would then be presented and explained at the fall 1968 Annual meeting. (4) The final plan would then be put to a final vote prior to the spring 1969 board meeting.

I chaired the meeting of the dairy specialists, geneticists, etc. It was a very interesting meeting. Our secretary took 28 pages of notes. In general the meeting was very supportive. There were some suggestions for minor changes and generally a question of whether the proposal would generate enough revenue to make it worth while. All applauded our board for having the nerve to present such a radical proposal to the entire membership for approval.

The board vote at the spring 1968 board meeting was unanimous in favor. It was decided that in order not to rush things and to give the membership full opportunity to learn about the program, that we would present it at the fall board meeting as planned and present it to the membership for a vote in February of 1969. When the proposal was presented and explained at the annual meeting, there were a couple of members in attendance who spoke in opposition. After the meeting and before the ballots were mailed, I spent a good deal of time that winter traveling around the country speaking to state meetings of Brown Swiss breeders about the IE program. I found the reaction to the proposal to be somewhat favorable on the part of some with most members not making any comments one way or the other. Then there was a small but outspoken and radical group of objectors. I had a feeling that the vote would be favorable, but that it might be close. What a moment of elation when the votes were in and counted and the result was two to one in favor. The first year nearly a thousand females were enrolled. As of this date, January 2000, a total 48,090 females have been entered in steps one and two. The step three animals are considered the same as registered and have not been counted separately. All the planning, scheming, and work had been worth while!

Just prior to the IE adoption battle I had been successful in starting another program that has been very successful for the Association. For several years I had felt that the Association could play a valuable role in assisting breeders with sale of their animals. We had four fieldmen employees working for the Association. They called on members to assist them with any registration or transfer problems and to encourage them to participate in all Association programs. They were not permitted to engage in sales or purchase activities. It was my feeling that they were in a perfect position to assist breeders with sales as well. Upon investigation I found that doing such service and receiving a fee for it would involve setting up a wholly owned for profit subsidiary company. The Board agreed with me on this and voted unanimously to

Dairy Association and the Iowa State Dairy Industry Association. It was presented at a dinner at one of the downtown Des Moines Hotels. This is the dinner where Don made his famous remark, "is this was all we get to eat?" when the soup was served. I was the fourth recipient of the award.

In the spring of 1974 I was elected to the Manning School Board. At that time Manning had an excellent school system of some 800 students. The entire system was located in a building complex located on the southeast edge of the city. The buildings were relatively new, well designed and well maintained. Paul Bjorkren was the superintendent. He had been there quite some time, was well liked by the community and was doing a good job. My first problem arose when at about the second monthly meeting I discovered that the school was carrying a checking account balance of some $283,000 at the local bank. When I questioned the necessity of carrying such a large balance a board member, who just happened to be a bank employee, spoke up to say that we needed to carry a large balance so as to have the necessary funds in case an emergency arose requiring payment. When I asked what such an emergency might be. He couldn't name any. I then suggested that we invest $280,000 plus any other funds as they are received, in negotiable securities yielding an attractive rate of return. We could pay our bills once each month and at that time transfer sufficient funds to our checking account to cover the sum total of checks written, The bank man said we paid teachers and school employees twice per month. I responded that we could transfer funds twice quite easily. He then said that according to Iowa law we were not allowed to invest school funds. The superintendent and a couple of other board members agreed. I couldn't believe this to be true.

It so happened that a school mate and fraternity brother at ISU, Maurice Berringer, was serving as Iowa State Treasurer. I wrote to Maurice and asked about restrictions on investment of School funds. As I recall, his letter of reply stated that the only restriction was that we must invest in government securities. When I showed his letter to the board all resistance evaporated and my plan was adopted. The first year of operation under this plan we earned enough interest money to pay one teacher salary.

One other rather interesting incident occurred during my tenure on the board. At this time we had a high school principle who previously had also been the football coach. In my opinion he wasn't worth a damn at either. But with the teachers union and Iowa law there wasn't anything we could do about it. It so happened that we also had a first year Iowa State graduate as Home Economics teacher. One of her classes consisted of some 20 senior boys taking a course in Home Ec. This class was too large to be accommodated in one class room so for cooking, baking, etc. the class was divided into two rooms, still with only one teacher. This, of course, was an impossible situation. An explosion waiting to happen!

The principle came to the board with this problem and asked what should be done. I immediately felt that this was a problem that he was getting paid to solve and that he should come to us with a solution and ask for board action if required. But that wasn't the way it was, so I suggested that we hire an assistant Home Ec. teacher on a part time basis to help with this class. I knew of at least two Home Ec. graduates in the community who would probably be willing to serve. He didn't accept this solution and there was no further discussion on that subject at the meeting. The day before our next meeting there appeared a front page article in our weekly

paper stating that a ruckus had occurred in the Home Ec. department at the school. The principle had secretly installed microphones to tape the event and that a young man had been expelled from School.

At our meeting the principle explained that he had installed hidden microphones in the Home Ec. rooms and had recordings of the ruckus in one room when the boys had begun throwing cookie dough at each other. As he finished his report I couldn't keep quiet any longer. I said that in my opinion he was responsible for creating an impossible situation and that he had done nothing to rectify it. I felt that secret taping of a school room and expelling a student on the basis of information so obtained was illegal. I said that I would do everything in my power to see that the student was reinstated and the problem which created his expulsion be corrected. The other four board members were evenly divided. Two members agreed with me and two were opposed. There was quite a lengthy discussion, but no action taken. All was quiet until the story of the meeting came out in the paper. My phone started ringing. Most of the people in our community agreed with me, but some were vehemently opposed. Evidently some of the larger papers picked up the story. I got calls from as far away as Washington, DC. New York and San Francisco. The president of the School Board called a special meeting. Our attorney agreed that the secret taping was illegal and that the student should be reinstated. The board vote to reinstate the student was unanimous. The principal resigned, the student was reinstated, and everyone lived happily ever after!

During the 1960 to 1980 period I was also active in a couple of other dairy organizations. I don't have accurate records, but from about 1974 to 1978 I served on the Board of Directors of Midwest Breeders Coop. This was a large Artificial Breeding, AI, cooperative with headquarters at Shawano, WI. Their service covered Wisconsin, Northern Illinois, Iowa, Western Nebraska, South and North Dakota and all of Minnesota. Tom Lyon was asst. General Manager and moved up to the General Manager position shortly before I left. Midwest was a very well managed operation and it was a real pleasure to serve on the board. I was proud to be elected Second Vice President in 1976. I resigned from the board in 1977 when I ran for Congress because Mid-west policy did not permit board members to do this. My run for Congress is detailed on the next page.

The other dairy organization where I spent quite a lot of time was Midland United Dairy Assoc. This when I first got on the board in the late 1960's was the Iowa State Dairy Promotion Board with headquarters in Des Moines. It was the dairy promotion arm of the dairy industry at that time in the late 1960's. Dairyman were assesed a small fee, I believe it was 5 cents per hundred weight, which was deducted from their milk check. We administered the use of these funds to advertise and promote the sales of milk and milk products. We were a state branch of the National Milk Promotion Board located in Washington, DC. In early 1970 Missouri and Kansas were added to our territory and the name was changed to Midland UDIA. Fortunately we were able to keep the headquarters in Des Moines.

In the summer of 1977 Mary was in college, Tom was in the army and the triplets were planning to leave for college in the fall and that meant I would be left alone on the 500 acre farm milking 60 cows night and morning with only hired help. After some discussion May and I decided we didn't want to do that. It was time to sell the Brown Swiss herd that had been an

important part of our lives since moving to the farm in the spring of 1950. We scheduled a dispersal sale for August 8, 1977. Marvin Kruse, Brown Swiss secretary, and Brown Swiss Enterprises managed the sale. The boys and I and some hired help worked like little beavers to get the barn cleaned up and all the cows clipped and polished for the sale. One part of the sale sticks in my memory. Grandpa had been in poor health for a month or more, but he wanted to come to see the sale. Sale day was bright and sunny so we put his favorite rocking chair in a spot in the shade where he could sit in comfort and watch the sale. He could and he did and he seemed to thoroughly enjoy the whole proceeding.

At dispersal sales it is customary to ask the owner to make some remarks before the actual selling begins. When Marvin asked me to say a few words, in spite of all my experience in public speaking, I choked up and had trouble saying anything. The top animal sold for $2650 and the sale averaged $803 per head. That was a little less than I had hoped for, but not too bad.

With the older children off to college, the cows gone and having resigned from all my dairy organization positions, farm life just didn't seem the same anymore. May helped me with the harvest in the fall and getting the crop planted in the spring and that was kinda fun, but I felt a need for something more. In the spring of 1978 after discussions with May and some of our friends, I decided to make a run for the US Congress. The crop was pretty well in and Ivan's son John agreed to do the necessary cultivating.

We had been quite active in Republican activities for a number of years so we were not complete novices, but pretty close. I would have primary opposition. A young attorney from Indianola had also announced that he was running. The area covered by our congressional district was roughly the southwest one quarter of the state of Iowa. On recommendation of the state party we hired a professional manager. He was a young man from Chicago who had managed a couple of successful campaigns there. This was his first experience west of the Mississippi and outside the big city. Unfortunately he had as much to learn about rural politics as I had to learn about running for office. As I recall the primary was in June so I spent about two and a half months covering the territory giving talks and calling on prospective voters. It was a great experience. I particularly enjoyed going up and down main street in the small towns calling on merchants and asking them and their customers for their vote. Each store seemed to have its own particular or peculiar smell. I had never noticed that before.

My manager kept telling me to get on the phone and ask people for money. This wasn't my bag and I just couldn't bring myself to do it. May's Uncle Charley did give me a donation of $500. The largest one I got, incidentally. When he gave it to me he said, in a very friendly way, I hope you lose. I didn't understand what he meant at the time, but I have since. He was right. I did lose. The vote was reasonably close and I was proud to get 93% of the vote in my home county. The pros didn't believe that was possible. The whole process was a great experience. It cost me $30,000 of my own money. But the whole experience was worth it and I'm glad I did it.

In late spring of 1981 I received a telephone call from one of the directors of the Brown Swiss Association saying that they were looking for a Secretary to run the Association and would I be interested. When I recovered from the shock I told him that May and I needed to talk that over and I would call him back. May and I thought and talked about the offer for a week. In the end we decided maybe that we were at a stage in our life that we could make a change. Mom

and Dad had passed on so they wouldn't need us and all of our children except Mike, in 7th grade, were not interested in farming. We decided to at least take a closer look. I called the Association and said I was willing to come for an interview. The Board was meeting in two weeks and they asked me to come at that time. During the interview they offered me $30,000 per year salary plus benefits and a car to drive. I said OK. They met for 15 minutes in closed session and said you're hired. Thus began another exciting adventure in our lives.

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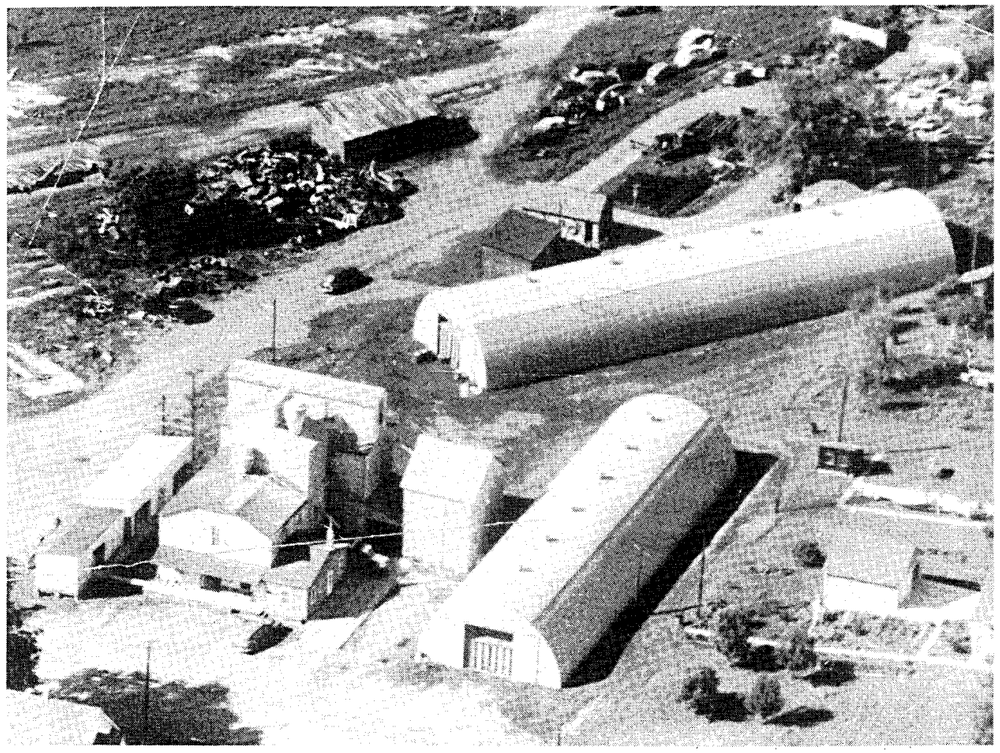
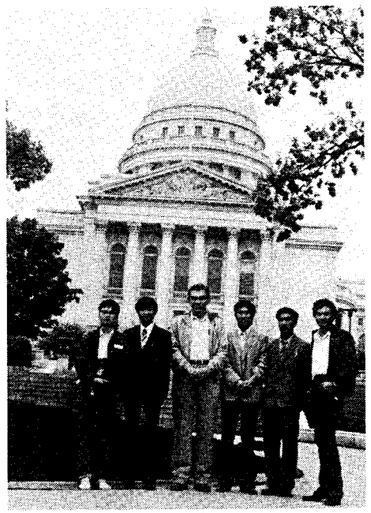


The Manning Mill faclities about 1957. Milling facilities, grain elevator office and scale left hand corner, 90,000 bu. storage bin on the right and 120,000 bu. bin behind, both filled with government corn.

George and loyal supporter
on the campaign trail
For congress. 1947

George in the Brown Swiss
office with a visitor from
Bangledesh

Grandpa and Grandma with 11
grandchildren. Nine more
were to follow.



Five chinese trainees at the
state capitol before going
home after a year in the US

CHAPTER XVIII

After making our decision to take the position as secretary of the Brown Swiss Association and moving to Beloit, Wisconsin we suddenly realized that there was much to be done before we could make the move. We had to find a place to live in Beloit. Our farm machinery and livestock had to be sold. We needed to find someone to rent the farm and harvest the crop in the fall, and we must organize and pack the belongings we wanted to take with us to Wisconsin. It was now late June and we wanted to be in Wisconsin as soon as possible.

Our first move was to contact an auctioneering firm and set a sale date. The Kerkoffs had been in the sale business a number of years and they had an open date for late July that I accepted. Finding someone to harvest the crop and rent the farm could potentially be a real problem this late in the season. I phoned Russ Mohr, a good friend who had worked for me for quite some time a number of years ago and was now farming on his own. He said that his oldest son, Jim, wanted to start farming and was looking for a place to rent. Hooray! We got together and made an agreement that he would move onto the farm as soon as we left. We agreed on a fee for his harvesting of the crop and the rent fee he would pay for operating the farm thereafter.

The next step was finding a place to live in Beloit. Mary was working in Ft. Dodge and the triplets were working on a railroad project near Humboldt so they were all living away from home. Tom was living in a house up the road north of our place and working at a repair shop in Manning. That left May and I and Mike living at home. Tom could take care of the few chores we had to do so we were free to leave. We had decided we would buy a house in Beloit so we took off to see what we could find. We contacted a real estate agent upon our arrival and started looking at houses. We looked at a number, but none that seemed to fit. Then we were driving along Florence Ave when we passed a For Sale sign in front of a two tone blue house set up an incline from the street. I asked the agent why we weren't stopping to look at that house. She said no reason at all and turned around and went back. It was quite good sized with three bedrooms, kitchen, two bathrooms, and a combination living and dining room on the first floor. The basement was set into the hill with a drive in two car garage and large recreation room opening on ground level. The rest of the basement contained a small bedroom and a large L shaped room for washer and dryer, furnace, air conditioner and shop. The back yard had space for a garden as well as a large woods with a number of huge oak trees. While I was walking around the yard our soon to be next door neighbor came over to visit. His name was Lester Nystrom. He and his wife Pauline were about our age. We had a nice visit and became very good friends over the years that followed. Naturally, we bought the house. The price was $68,000. We made a down payment and started back for Manning.

When we got home the feeling that we had been leading a rather hectic and high pressure life the past few months caught up with us. We needed a vacation. The Association Annual Meeting was scheduled for Sacramento, CA in a couple of weeks. Attending would get us away from home and give me an opportunity to renew acquaintances with the West Coast breeders. After the meeting we could drive up the coast and spend a couple of days with Mary in Prineville, OR. We decided this sounded too good to pass up.

The drive to California reminded us of the trip we had made with the kids some 15 years ago. It was a real pleasure to meet and be with the Brown Swiss breeders again. Many of them were old friends of long standing. I did meet with the Board of Directors on an informal basis.

Only one thing about that meeting sticks in my mind. One of the Board Members had just become grandfather of a baby boy. In keeping with custom of the times, he passed out cigars at that meeting. I had quit smoking years ago, but I didn't want to offend him so I also took a cigar planning to give it to one of the smokers after the meeting. I was shocked when everyone lit up. Again, not wanting to offend, I also lit up figuring that it might make me sick. To my great surprise that darn cigar tasted good to me. I could have been back on the habit again right then and there. Fortunately I was able to throw the cigar away when we left the room and haven't touched tobacco since. This experience was to me, however, mute testimony to the power of tobacco addiction. After the meeting we took the coastal highway north. What a beautiful drive through the grape country, the Redwoods and up along the coast. It was great to see Mary again. She was sharing a room with another gal so we stayed in a motel. She had just started as an intern for the Forest Service and guided us on a beautiful drive through the forest.

When we got home the work began. We had to get all the machinery and equipment lined up for the sale which was only a short time in the future. Fortunately brother Bill, Russ Mohr and Tom came over and helped us out. The sale went real well and without incident. Somehow I didn't feel nearly as sad about this sale as I did when we sold the cows. Packing the household goods for moving was another matter. How could we have accumulated so much material in only 31 years? We started a small bonfire when we began just to get rid of some things we might not want to take along. Before we finished it was a roaring conflagration. Fortunately sister-in-law Phyllis came to help and so did Tom. Fortunately also, trucker Wayne Schroeder parked a good-sized semi-trailer in our front yard a few days before we intended to leave so we could load things as we needed.

Finally everything was loaded. Rather early on Friday morning, about seven I think, we took off. Tater Dammann, long time friend and former employee at the Manning Mill, drove the semi. May, Mike and I and a trunk full of essentials followed in our Chevy and Tom brought up the rear in his van. He wanted to come along just to help. The trip was uneventful. When we got to Beloit we discovered the semi-trailer was too long to make the turn into the driveway so everything had to be carried up the hill. Tom's van was a big help. We could put some of the heavier stuff in it and hauled it up the hill. When the job was done we all sat on the rug floor with our backs against the wall in our enclosed back porch and sipped a cool, refreshing beer. We were in Beloit and a completely new life style lay before us.

We spent the weekend getting things arranged and settled in. On Monday morning, it was August 17, 1981 according to my records, I reported to the Brown Swiss office to assume my position as Secretary. (Secretary, in breed association terminology has the same authority and responsibility as CEO in business corporations) I must admit to a bit of apprehension as to just what I would find. I knew that the previous secretary had left abruptly some six months ago under circumstances of which I had no knowledge. During the interim a young lady by the name of Ginger Gillett had been acting secretary. Ginger introduced me to all the employees in the office, I think there were 21 at the time. She showed me the records and said she would answer any questions that I might have as time went on. I did have the advantage of being somewhat familiar with the operation from my three years there as Bulletin Editor, six years on the Board of Directors and five years as President. She also advised me that she would be leaving in late September to be married to a young Brown Swiss breeder in northern Wisconsin.

After she told me this I decided to let her pretty well continue to take care of the daily operation of the Association until she left. This would give me some time to observe, get acquainted and generally settled in before I had to make daily management decisions. I must admit that I was surprised to find a young lady in charge of Brown Swiss Enterprises. Barb Lee had only been in that position a few months so we could learn together. She was a personable and very intelligent young lady with a degree in Dairy Science from the University of Wisconsin. She had grown up on a dairy farm and I found that she could relate to dairy farmers very well. Connie Gritton, Editor of the Bulletin, was a graduate of the University of Illinois. She also had a diary farm background and had been editing the Bulletin for several years and appeared to have the magazine well in hand. Roger Neitzel was in charge of the Registration Department. This was the backbone of the Association. This department handled the registration and transfer (ancestry & ownership) records, milk production records and type classification records of the association. In January before I arrived the Association had purchased a computer to speed up and reduce the labor required for all this record keeping.

Computers were still a new fangled contraption at that time and there were no precedents in this field to go by. Roger was plowing new ground so to speak. I got a little frustrated when it took him more than a year to get the processing finished. But as I look back now I realize that it really was an amazing piece of work. My first trip for the Association was to the Eastern National Show at Harrisburg, PA. For some reason the only car available was a very old and dilapidated four door Chevrolet. I don't remember the speedometer reading, but I'm sure it was well into the second hundred thousand. Seems to me that Ginger and Connie rode out with me on the 600 plus mile trip. I think we left about noon and stayed overnight along the way. I don't remember anything about the show, but I do remember the long trip home all alone. Connie stayed over for some reason and Ginger went on to her home in Connecticut for her wedding and then on to northern Wisconsin her new home. I left Harrisburg early in the morning and arrived home that night concerned all the way whether the car would hold together till I got home.

I then began to implement the policies that I felt necessary for smooth and efficient operation of the Association. I found some notes I had made to record my approach to salary administration and personnel management. Here they are: "Attempt to have a system that will encourage every one to do their best. That each employee will have a secure feeling of where they fit into the whole picture, what their responsibilities are, what is expected of them and how well they are doing. They will have an understanding of what their pay range is and what they can expect. Each employee should realize that pay is connected to performance and that superior performance will be recognized. Finally each employee should understand that he or she will have input into their performance rating and that such a rating will be established in a one on one conference or discussion with me. Such conferences will be on an annual basis or more often if requested or deemed necessary."

Robyn Lindenberg had been hired as my secretary. She was a great help to me and served as my secretary all the time I was at the Association. Within six months I advanced her position to staff level as Office Manager. I called each of the staff members, named above, in for an interview. We discussed the duties and responsibilities of their office to make sure that we both had complete understanding. I explained that I expected loyalty and top performance but that I would not try to micro manage their job. If they had questions or problems my door would

other people who I assumed were officials at the farm. We sat under a tree and they asked us a lot of questions about our dairy operations for quite some time. We then went for dinner. We did eat the lamb and we had mares milk plus some baked beans, bread and of course tea. It was delicious. The drive back to Urumqi in late afternoon with the sun setting in the west was beautiful. It was a great and unusual day long to be remembered.

Our last day we spent a couple hours at a rug factory before lunch. I bought a couple of small throw rugs that we have to this day. In the afternoon we attended the Minority games. One event sticks in my mind. It was played on a field probably three times as wide and four times as long as a US football field. At each end of the field was a 12 foot pole with a six foot in diameter saucer on top. Our interpreter called it the Dead Calf game. It was played by two teams of eight mounted horseman. To start the game they lined up in a semi-circle facing each other at the center of the field. The referee dropped a small dead calf in the center of the circle. When he left the circle and gave the word the two teams vied to pick up the calf and carry it to the end of the field and put it up in the saucer. It was quite a rough battle with a lot pushing and jockeying for position to steal the calf from the man in possession and gallop to the other end of the field. They were all excellent horsemen and their wiry little ponies could fly when they had the opportunity. It took quite some time before either team was successful. It was exciting to watch, but I don't think it will catch on in the US. The next day when starting for home we sat on the plane for two hours before they announced that one of the four engines driving the propellers wouldn't start. They would need to get another engine from Beijing and that would take two days. After two long days sitting around with nothing to do and no English newspapers, magazines, radio or TV, we finally started the long trip to the states and home. The trip was a great experience, but not one I would wish to repeat. During the next four or five years I made four more trips to China and had several delegations visit the US. I proposed a number of plans for ways that we could work with them to improve their dairy production. I had several promises for semen orders and even bid on one order for a plane load of Brown Swiss heifers. Nothing ever came of any of these efforts. I never sold a dimes worth to China. I've been fascinated by the country and the people, but I guess I'm just a poor salesman.

At the December Board Meeting I advised the Board that I would be 65 years of age in August of the next year and that I planned to retire at the end of the that year, 1987. I had prepared a sample resume listing what I thought should be the minimum requirements for my replacement. I have not found a copy of those recommendations, but I do recall that one reqirement was that applicants have a college degree. I suggested that if the Board approved I would advertise and search for a replacement based on these suggestions. I would winnow the applicants down to three and these would be asked to attend the next board meeting so the Board members could interview them and make a choice. This would give the person six months to be at the office to become familiar with operations before I left at years end. After some discussion Board approval of this plan was unanimous. 1986 was the third successive profitable year for the Association. Again it was successful foreign sales of semen and cattle on the part of Enterprises that made this possible. There were no large shipments of cattle, but a number of small sales to Latin America. Semen sales to Europe continued and sales to Latin America were picking up. Enterprises also secured management of the prestigious Dairy Expo Brown Swiss Sale for the first time. It was not a highly profitable sale, but it gave Enterprises great exposure and stature.

At their spring meeting in 1987 the Board hired George Harris as my replacement. The Harris family from Connecticut was one of the early Brown Swiss breeders in the US. George had been working for the Association as a classifier and fieldman for some time. He did not have a college degree and was not one of the three applicants that I presented to the Board. High lights of the year were a new roof on the building and air conditioning for the basement. We received an order for 500 Brown Swiss heifers and 10 bulls from Venezuela. This helped to put us into the profit column for the fourth consecutive year.

I look back on my six plus years with Association with a good deal of satisfaction and appreciation. May and I loved our years of working and raising a family on the farm, but have never regretted our move to Wisconsin and the Brown Swiss Association. No other way could we have met so many fine people and had the great experiences we had there.

The Opperman clan at our 50th anniversary celebration, June 1954. Left to right Mike, Mary, Don, Mariah, May, George, Dave, Tom.

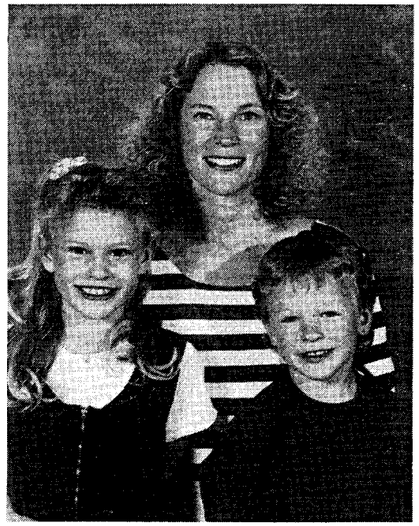
The Opperman brothers
And sister. Jane, Bill,
Ivan and George.

Sister Jane and husband
Dee Kimberly.

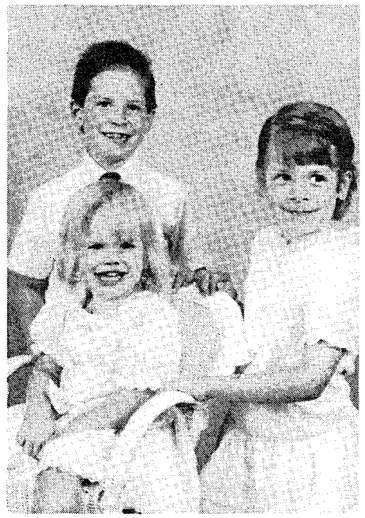
The family at Mom and Dad's
fiftieth anniversary. May,
George, Jane, Ivan, Betty, Bill
and Phyllis. The honorees
seated,

Tom and Rose

1996



Mary, Mariah and Micah



Tom's family, Brian, Melissa
Katy seated

never allowed me a bonus. Also, the Association had a retirement plan set up for me. It was to extend over a 10year period. In many companies it was customary to give an early retiree the entire 10year amount as a bonus. I received no such bonus or any other recognition of any kind. (3) At the time of my retirement I was negotiating with USDA on a deal to send 4000 young cows to Turkey. Two other bidders were interested in the deal. Completion of paper work and other details of the shipment would probably take another eight to ten months. Expected profit on the shipment would be approximately $100 per head. I thought we had a good chance to get 1000 head or a profit of $100,000. I offered the board a deal that I would do all the work in the Association name and if we got the shipment I would give them one third of the profit. They refused. When the shipment was allotted I received telephone calls from the other two bidders wondering why Swiss wasn't there. They had figured us in for 1000 head.

Our first serious camping expedition began on April 11 that spring. We were headed for the Land Between the Lakes an area about 15 miles east and a bit south of Paducha, KY. The Tennessee and Kentucky rivers are both blocked there by large dams. The rivers run nearly parallel for some 30 miles south from there creating the land known as Land Between the Lakes. Most of this is a Kentucky State Park. In the area between the dams there is a small town, Grand Rivers, and several campsites. We set up at one of these and prepared for a few days vacation. We purchase a three-day fishing license, bait, etc. and rented a boat. We weren't really serious fishermen and we didn't have much luck, none in fact. About midway through the second day we decided this fishing wasn't for us. We threw the bait over board, packed up the tackle box and fishing rods, took the boat back and headed for the camper. The next day we were exploring along the Between the Lakes road about 20 miles south when we discovered an 1850's farm. It was quite an interesting place. It was over the state line into Tennessee and was administered by the state. There were two log cabins, a couple of barns, a chicken house and a tobacco drying shed as well as a couple of out buildings. All weathered and not painted. There were a couple of sows with little pigs, chickens running around the chicken house and a couple of dry cows in the barn. There were people dressed in period costumes around to answer questions. A small plot had been planted to tobacco and a couple of guys were plowing another small field with a team of horses on a walking plow. Across the road was a large pasture with a herd of about 30 buffalo made up of bulls and cows with small calves. We spent most of a day there and enjoyed it very much. The next morning we headed back to Beloit. Thus ended what was the first of many visits that we would make in years to come to Land Between the Lakes.

On July 3 we started our first really long trip to visit daughter Mary at Prineville, OR. On the way we stopped at the Cowboy museum in Cody, WY. Went in the east gate of Yellowstone Park and out the south gate. Parked for a day at a campsite just outside the south gate. Spent a day going through an excellent Teton Park Indian museum in the morning. After lunch we went for a walk, about a mile and a half, a up to a small lake. Much of the walk was through an area that had burned three years ago. Many beautiful flowers and little pine trees were popping up through ashes. Reminded us of what the ranger said that lightning started forest fires were not all bad.

Arrived at Mary and Neal's in Prineville on the 7th at about 9:30 pm. We had traveled 2112 miles using 277 gallons of gas costing $278.43 an average of 7.62 miles per gallon. I was concerned about the pickup handling that big camper in the mountains, but it worked fine. One day at Mary's we walked up to Spring Lakes at the foot of South Sister Mountain for a picnic lunch. It was a five-mile walk all up hill. Neal carried Mariah, Mary carried the lunch and I carried ice water, pop and beer. Seemed like that weighed a 100 lbs. by the time we got up there. The scenery was great and made it all worth while. Another day we went to the rodeo in Prineville and the next day we walked up Barnes Butte. Beautiful and not as far as the mountain hike. For the weekend we took the camper to the coast for some salmon fishing. We went out on a charter and caught some fish. Enough so we had them frozen and took them home. We started back for Beloit on the 18th. Stopped to visit the Welch's at Kearny, NB. and spent a day in Manning on the way home. Arrived Beloit on July 25th. Glad to get home after a wonderful first long trip with our camper.

Our first camper trip for 1989 was to Baton Rouge, LA and a visit with Bob & Carol Bolger. We stopped to tour the Battle ground at Vicksburg and also a large plantation in Mississippi on the way. Bob and Carol have a narrow and fairly long driveway from the street and along side their house. I backed the camper in there, got lucky and made it the first try. Bob marveled that I could do that. I told him that 30 years of backing a manure spreader through a narrow barn door made it possible. One of the firms that Bob did business with was putting on a Crawfish boil that evening. Bob thought it would be a novel experience for us and it sure was. The crawfish are boiled in a tig tub with a fire under it. They give you a good-sized tray and put big scoop full of crawfish on the tray. The scoop is a gallon plastic milk jug with the top cut off. When they put that on your tray it sure looks like an awful lot of Crawfish. In addition we got potatoes, corn on the cob, salad, dessert and, of course, free beer. Bob showed us how to break the Crawfish shell and then bite the exposed meat with our teeth. He said it took 11 pounds of crawfish to get a pound of meat. Were it not for the side dishes, an amateur like me could starve to death eating Crawfish. While at Bob's we also took a day to see the sights in New Orleans and another day to see Bob's operation. He is in charge of cleaning up old oil refinery sites for Exxon and several other large oil companies. It is a huge operation. Bob seemed to have the operation well under control. After leaving Bob's we went south to see the gulf and then north along the Natchez Trace and to a campsite at the Land Between the Lakes. We loafed and relaxed there for four days and then home to Beloit.

Our great adventure of the season began on July 11. ALASKA! 'We got a late start because May had a dental appointment that morning. When we were a few miles north of Tomah, some 180 miles from home, the pickup began to sputter. It has two gas tanks and I figured one was empty so I switched to the full tank, but it sputtered a bit more and stopped. We were able to coast off the highway on to the shoulder. I kept trying, but it wouldn't start. Finally I checked the other tank and found it was also empty. I had filled the first tank the day before, but hadn't checked the second tank because I thought it was full. This was not a very auspicious beginning for a very long journey.

such a Chinese meal. May agreed. The next day we caught a plane for Shanghai and home. I had hoped to show May Hong Kong, but that wasn't possible.

June 17th was our 50th wedding anniversary. We celebrated by renting the Rotary Center down by the river and inviting all our friends for dinner, visiting and dancing. It was a beautiful, hot sunny day. The air conditioning failed, but nephew Bob Bolger and son Tom got it fixed in short order. We had a large crowd. All of our children, Our brothers and sisters and spouses, many nieces and nephews and a flock of friends were there. The place was packed. We were especially pleased to have Rev. Lester Moore, our favorite pastor in Manning, come out from Ames. After dinner our offspring put on a neat program spoofing Mom and Dad and telling stories about growing up on the farm. After that we had a small band for dancing. Doing the "Chicken Dance" has become a tradition at Opperman family gatherings and we didn't break with tradition. Just to make sure we repeated it several times. It was a great time that we thoroughly enjoyed and we hope everyone else did as well. The next morning Dee and Jane, Ivan and Betty, Bill and Phyllis and May and I went up to Devils Lake just north of Madison for a couple of days. We hadn't all been together for ages. We just ate, drank a few beers and visited for two days. It was a great time.

Late in 1994 I met Ken Weber, a retired banker from Milwaukee. He was interested in developing markets in China and had gotten my name from people at the Wisconsin Dept. of Ag. We became good friends and even made a short trip to China in 1996 to follow up on what seemed like a good prospect, but we never sold even one dollar's worth of anything to China. I did develop a request for a bid on 500 head of bred heifers from the farm we visited near Nanchang, but nothing ever came of it. I'm sure my cost of cattle and transportation made my prices too high to compete with New Zealand and Australia. I always thought that with poor sanitation and the shortage of refrigeration and transportation in China, cheese would be a natural product for them. Here again I failed. They said there was no cheese in China and that Chinese people didn't like the stuff. I also suggested soft ice cream and received the same response. It is my under standing, however, that several US companies have started soft ice cream shops in the larger cities in recent years with great success. It's tough to be too far ahead in your thinking. 1996 was the last of my involvement in foreign marketing. It has been a most interesting and rewarding experience. Few people have been privileged to see the world from the perspective that I have been allowed to see it. I thank God for that experience.

We continued our camper trips in 1995 and the years after, but my description will hit only the highlights on these. Our first trip in '95 was to Florida. We spent a couple of days at Ft. Richey visiting old friends Merlin and Betty Welch. Merlin was a cousin whom I had known all my life and Betty was a friend since high school days. Betty is an accomplished artist and we marveled at her paintings. It was so great to see them and review old memories. I'm saddened to realize that was the last time I would see Merlin alive.

In June we took a trip to northern Wisconsin. Highlight of the trip was to visit Dave and Kathie Kretzschmar, their two boys and beautiful farm. Wasn't able to convert

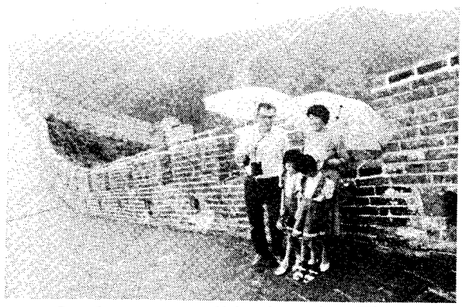
Dave to Swiss while he worked there, but he has an excellent herd of Holsteins. It was so good to see that family again. From there we went to Duluth for a couple days. Beautiful City. We took a boat trip on the lake and a train ride up the north shore. On the way home we stopped to see Smoky and Mary West. They were long time Swiss breeders and friends. They formerly were large potato farmers, but got out of that business years ago and sold their Swiss herd as well. Smokey is a good operator. He now controls over 2000 acres, feeds five or six hundred cattle and runs 500 head of beef cows. They are a special couple and we really enjoyed our visit.

In mid July we took the camper over to Wyalusing State Park on the Mississippi just south of Prairie du Chein. Highlight of our stay was watching a reenactment of the battle of 1812 in a small park along the river. The Wisconsin River joins the Mississippi at Prairie Du Chein so it was a strategic location for the fur trade at that time. The US had built a small fort there. The US soldiers were in the fort and the French and English were attacking them to gain control of the site. They shot at each other all day until both sides ran out of ammunition. The next morning they had a conference and decided that the US lost, but could keep control if they allowed the French and English free access. Not a man was killed or wounded in the battle. Next day we visited a medical museum there. Very Interesting. A man named Beaumont, an army surgeon, did some pioneering work on digestion there. One of his patients with a wound to the stomach recovered, but the healing left an opening to his stomach. The doctor over a period of several years conducted many experiments on digestion and the working of the stomach. In August we made a trip to Forest City for Don and Trudy's wedding. It was a beautiful wedding. Unfortunately it didn't last. An unbelievable number of our friends and relatives were there. The morning after the wedding we had a breakfast outing for the gang at our camper. Thirty-two people showed up. We had six dozen eggs, bacon, and juice and also rolls that May had baked. It was a beautiful summer morning. Everyone pitched in to help May and we had a wonderful time. Wish we could do that more often.

In early spring of '97 we journeyed south again to Pensacola to see Dan K graduate and get his Ensign bars in the navy. The banquet was super and it was great to see so many outstanding young men. Our country is in good hands. In July we made another trip to Alaska. This time we crossed the mountains in southern Canada and caught the Ferry north with stops at Sitka and Juneau and finally back on land at Haines. No problem getting the pickup and camper on the ferry without unhookng. Sitka is home of the Tinglit Indians. They have an excellent museum there. Tells about Russia selling us Alaska for $7.2 which is something less than 2 cents per acre. Got on the Ferry for Juneau at 3:00 am and off at 9:30. It was a short night. We took a one day boat trip from there to see whales and seals and a huge glacier breaking into the sea. Juneau is the state capitol. The Capitol building doesn't compare to Wisconsin or Iowa. We had a late afternoon drink at the Red Dog Saloon. The floor was sawdust covered and many old timer pictures adorned the walls. There were two cruise ships at the nearby pier so the place was wall to wall people. It was a great experience. We had another short night on the trip to Haines for the start of our trip overland.

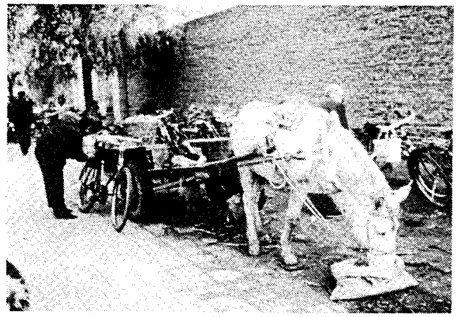
We stopped for the night at a small camp site along the road about 70 miles from Tok.

The lunch with lamb as promised and mare's milk to drink . No tablecloth or forks.

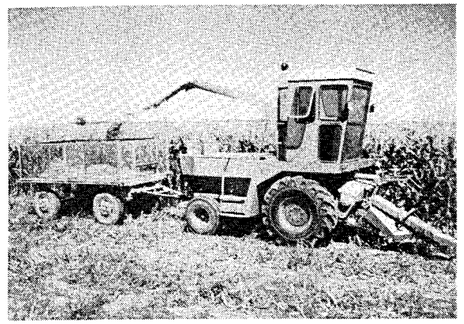


On the great wall in the rain. The lady with twin girls was my Interpreter. True!

Six pretty girls dressed in their Sunday best. I believe they are twins.



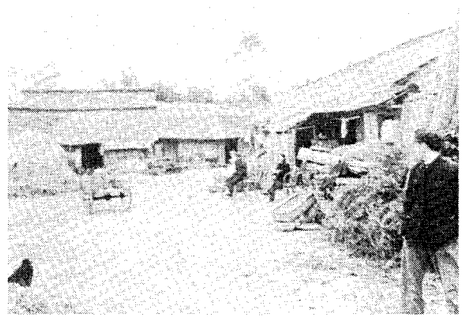
A street scene in downtown Beijing at noon in 1984.



Modern silage chopper Xingjian Prov. One man operation. Note the old style wagon.

Eight men to unload the wagon. Labor is plentiful and cheap in China.

Newly formed individual farmer. Note Mao uniform and well cared for cows. 1984



The same farmer's house and farm buildings.