

MY JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE

I. Background.

Prairie life in the late nineteenth century was full of hardship. Pioneering among the wild long grasses waving in the wind meant working from early morn to dark. My maternal and paternal grandparents emigrated from the Ukraine to Manitoba in 1874 - 75. My mother was born in a "Semlin" {dug in sod shanty} in 1880. Grandmother and Grandfather Peter Wolf had come to Canada with four children born in the Old Country. One was born at sea. He died shortly after birth and was buried at sea. Grandfather Wolf was the first carpenter in what came to be known as the Mennonite West Reserve. He built cradles, cupboards and coffins as well as houses, churches and schools. A log school and teacherage which he built may still be seen at the Steinbach Village Museum. No nails were used. The logs were split by hand and held together by wooden pegs.

Life for mother meant growing up in a village atmosphere. All children attended the private Mennonite school. Girls, especially, were not expected to get more than three or four years of education. Work and training were all strictly based on conservative religious rules. Textbooks were the Bible, Catechism and Hymn Book. Arithmetic and Handwriting were also taught. Agriculture was the mainstay of life. A settler was allotted a quarter section [160 acres] of land. He was required to "clear" at least four acres every year. Growing up on a Manitoba homestead was not an easy matter. Mother clearly remembered into her old age how she had walked behind a one-bottom plow drawn by a yoke of oxen. Girls were also required to help with the hay in summer and do the stooking of the sheaves during the time of harvest. There was little social life. This consisted mostly of visiting on Sundays and sharing the events of the week. Sometimes this might include some young people from a neighboring village. Mother met "her man", my father, when she was 18 years old. Courtship consisted of seeing each other two or three times. The young man would then ask the father for his daughter's hand. Engagements were as brief as the courtships.

My father's parents were from the Old Country as well, but were of the much more "liberalized" group of Mennonites who were pushing for education and culture. When my mother decided to marry Daniel Klassen, it was looked upon as a "mixed" marriage. The Ältester [Bishop] of mother's church told her that, if she went through with this marriage, she would exclude herself from the church at her own risk. She responded without hesitation: "I'll take the risk!"-- My parent's wedding day in January 1899 was cold and blustery.

The wedding took place in the "Grosse Stube" [living room]. Unfortunately the minister who had been asked to officiate, must have had further instructions from the Bishop. He did not show up at the appointed time.

A team and sleigh had to be sent out to find another minister who would perform the ceremony. Father had been orphaned at the age of 7. He was brought up in two different foster homes where his care could have been considered abusive. It is little wonder that Dad looked for an early marriage to have a self established home. His foster parents, especially Mr. & Mrs. Sawatzky, were very hard on him.

My parents lived "at home" in the same house as my mother's parents until the old couple built a smaller home for themselves in the yard next spring. Older brothers and sisters had married and moved out on their own. Mother had inherited 80 acres and building their own home took on a new interest for both of them.

Much had already happened to the little "Wolf Community" during mother's first twenty years of life. Grandfather Wolf had had great plans to make this little "Kuta-Darp" a Wolf Village where all his children would settle down and raise their families. Archives indicate that Grandfather had bought or "received" the 160 acres for a dollar an acre and the promise to the government that he would clear 4 acres a year. Today you would only see the cemetery where many, besides my grandparents and a brother of mine who died by drowning at the age of three, are buried. Buffalo Creek meanders through this property -- the selfsame Creek where I, later as a youngster roamed about, paddled across and where I really became attached to Nature some years later. It is interesting to read in the Archives the recordings of number of acres brought under cultivation each year, number of cattle sold, the amount of taxes paid as well as the church and school levies required.

As I mentioned earlier, Grandpa built the pioneer log schoolhouse [school and teacherage combined] which you can now visit in the Heritage Village at Steinbach. Should you go to see it, you will notice that the logs have been covered with modern cedar siding. Inside you will see the same kind of furniture as he made and which was used at the time.

Mother often related the story as to how she, as a little girl, played in the living room lying down in the coffins Grandpa had made. You must remember it was the early 1900's. My Grandparents had left the sod shanty and built a 4-room wooden frame house with a large kitchen and pantry, a living room, bedroom for the parents, a smaller bedroom [kleine Stube], and another smaller room [Sommerstube] for the children. In the center of the building was the larger brick oven which heated all the house and in which some of the cooking was done. This was fired twice a day with straw or dried cow dung. Model of this can be seen in the Steinbach Museum.

After my Wolf Grandparents passed away, Mom and Dad moved to a new location one and a half miles east, again settling near the Buffalo Creek. Dad had invested in more land using the inherited land my mother had received. By this time, ca 1922, the family had increased by some 10 children. I was the last one born in the old home - Blumenhof.

II. Oh to be Born!

In those early years, needed the children to help on the farm. One should remember that Mom and Dad had already experienced the early pioneer hardships of farming -- Mother on the field, binding and stooking sheaves by hand. Many a time, in spite of being pregnant, she had to "set" hay stacks and stook as well as look after little children, etc. No running to the store for bread, huggies, etc. Much of the cooking, baking and washing were done at night when the little one were asleep - or on a lucky rainy day. Also Mom and Dad had indirectly gone through World War I. They had been keenly aware of the horrible things that were happening in other parts of the world.

Things began looking up when in the early 20's the economics of the country brightened. A new home was built on the extra land Dad had acquired. A house-barn complex was the first building. [It stood in the same place for many years and, after a larger separate house was built, it was still used as barn and granary. My youngest brother, who still lives on the "home place", demolished it in 1985.] This was two miles east of the first location. As I mentioned before, this was again on Buffalo Creek.

Of course I do not remember my own birth, but, as my older siblings tell me, it was a blustery cold February 3rd, 1921. So far mother had had only midwives to deliver her babies. I was the first baby to be born with the aid of a real doctor. My oldest sister, some twenty years my senior, tells how Dad had taken the horse and cutter to the nearest town, Altona, to get Dr. Breidenbach. The other children at home were taken by my oldest brother, 18, to the nearest neighbors. It is "scary" to think that a woman in labor would have to wait some two hours to know that the doctor would be there. [Of course she had had babies before I arrived.]

Dr. Breidenbach had arrived in Altona in 1912. He came from Kenora. He served Altona for some 40 years and remained a bachelor all his life. It was also this doctor who managed to save my brother John's leg when it was badly broken. He had been plowing with a gang plow when his foot caught in the spokes of the large wheel and his leg got twisted around the axle. The operation took place on the kitchen table with mother as the only nurse, boiling instruments, giving anesthetic, etc. Dr. Breidenbach wanted to amputate the leg but Mother pleaded so much that he decided to try and save it. John remained lame all his life but he could walk on his own leg. We must also remember that in the early 1900's prostheses or artificial limbs were almost an impossibility or very primitive to say the least. It is amazing how Mother with little education was always able to "administer" correctly or find a way to help medically or to alleviate pain. She knew how to tie tourniquets, herbally cure our sore throats, bronchitis, ear aches, communicable diseases. How would we survive now without all our medical aid, doctors, hospitals and drug stores?

It appears to me that my birth [Mother was 41 already] was just another one of those things. My oldest sister told me that my sister Mary [who was 11 years by now] was happy "it" was a girl. Mother told me I had been a crosspatch, yelling too much, etc. Reasons must have been: "boredom, - too many siblings' laps- and maybe even old parents." At any rate, that's what the doctor told them. Somehow or other this characteristic has come along with me as I "journey onward." I can't remember much of the moving to the new location [I was only 2 at the time] but I clearly remember the birth of my youngest brother in the "house-barn" in 1923. Again Mother had a home birth with the doctor in attendance.

I remember Mom in bed in the farthest end of the house. Supposedly I was happy and excited for having a new baby in the house. It was fun to run the length of the house, and my Father had told me not to run! But being a "terrible two", the command did not sink in. I ran anyway. How vividly I remember Father grabbing me, stripping my pants down, whacking me on my bare bum right behind the kitchen table! I can even see the long bench, the wallpaper in the room to this day. Call this humiliation or what you will, but it sunk in! It's the only time I remember Father ever disciplining me in this way. No doubt the humiliation was greater than the pain. Often I wonder how this must have affected me. Is this what a new baby does to the preceding one?

The new house was built in 1924. I can see Mother whitewashing the plastered walls. The lay-out was similar to the houses of that time. There were large rooms, but no brick oven. The cooking was done on a "modern" kitchen range which also supplied the heat for the front part of the house. The living-room and the parents' bedroom were heated by a cast-iron space heater. These were fired either with wood or coal.

As "the Bible said", all girls were not to cut their hair. I remember Mom cutting my hair just in front so I could have "bangs." Mother was a proud lady, but very hard-working, humorous and full of life. She enjoyed people and loved to go visiting. -- My oldest sister had married already and so at an early age [3] I already became an aunt. My oldest brother married, too, and soon more little ones, nephews and nieces, were to affect and have a tremendous influence on my life! I seemed to grow up, not as a child in the home, but as one of the grandchildren. Toys were very limited. Times were too "poor" to afford much for the kids.

My memories of these preschool years are mostly of playing with the grandchildren when they came home -- usually once a week at least. I remember dirty diapers, bottles, screaming babies, pregnant sisters-in-law and sisters, arguments among the adults and the difficulties that each and everyone seemed to have! Sometimes I'm sure the house, and those of others as well, was just too crowded! Little ears hear too much.

We were four girls sleeping to one room. I was the youngest of the four sharing a bed with the oldest [Mary, ten years older} and the other two, Betty and Justina [4 & 6 years older than I] sharing a bed. I often wondered why I was bunked with the oldest but then she was the one evidently most delighted to have me arrive in the first place. My oldest sister, Margaret, told me that

Mary liked nothing better than to play with me. Here I would like to relate some of the connections or incidents I remember. I remember how sister Mary would take me along on a buggy ride to the neighbors- maybe to borrow something- and she would usually sing the song "Come and sit by my side if you love me" -- Red River Valley. She was a teen-ager by now and I suppose she had that love-longing look in her eyes.

Teen-agers had little diversion in that period of time. They would try to create their own "social entertainment." Imagine no T.V., no Radio, no books except the Bible and Catechism. I remember later Dad had the "Family Herald" and the "Free Press Weekly" come in. Of course the new Eaton's Catalogue was a God-send. Those newspapers were read and re-read. The comics, such as "Little Orphan Annie," "Moon Mullins", and "The Katzenjammer Kids" were always gobbled up first. Last week's papers ended up in the "out-house" where they were often read again before they were put to their final use. Talk about recycling and reusing. There was no waste. Papers not used in this way were

stuck in the wood-box where they would be used to light the fire in the morning. The outhouse, especially in summer, was also an excellent place to hide and read some columns when you were trying to avoid doing some of the less interesting house chores.

A Public School had come into existence and was located only a quarter of a mile down the road. According to the registers' first year 1922, the school had an average of 6, 8, or 9 pupils attending. I found the names of my brother Dan, sister Mary and brother Peter. Ages of these siblings were 9, 11, and 13, all in Grade I. Now English was to be learned! According to the register, these siblings only attended long enough to learn the language. So sister Mary must have "graduated" at the age of 12 or 13 since her name does not appear again. The annual salary of the teacher was \$690.

Children started school only at age 7. So it was April 1928 before I started school. In those days the children started to attend school after the Easter break. These children would have these two or two and half months to get used to the school routine. They played and learned to integrate. It was a sort of mini Kindergarten. In September they would be in Grade I and would start the learning process in earnest. My excitement was great!

I had had grandchildren around me frequently -- at least every week-end. By this time I had sister Margaret, brother John, brother Peter and sister Mary married. At this point I remember the weddings of brother Peter and sister Mary best. The 1920's were better years for my parents. Father had been able to buy a new McLaughlan 6-cylinder 4-door sedan! Seats were of leather and, of course, windows were of celluloid sewn into canvas. What a pride and joy this was! Only the Piepers [dealers in Gretna] had one too. This car was too good to be taken out on rainy days and muddy roads. When brother Peter got married to Elizabeth Froese of the Rosenfeld district. My parents were going to go to the wedding. Most weddings then took place on the bride's place - in the living room or large granary or whatever was available.

Children, even the younger brothers and sisters, weren't allowed to go to the wedding. So only my brother Dan could go to drive Father and Mother. Being a lovely summer day, hot and sultry, a rain storm set in that afternoon. The roads were all country dirt roads. We younger siblings just wondered how Father would ever get his car home "clean" in all the mud. Myself and three others stood outside the house in the yard. A lovely rainbow in the eastern sky had us looking towards the road down which the McLaughlan car and family came plugging through the mud towards home. What ecstasy! What excitement! Look at the strength of the car - mud flying in all directions!

Peter and his young wife "moved home", getting one room until another solution could be found. Before many months they moved into their own home near Neuhorst, west of Gretna. Memories of my new sister-in-law -- how she combed her hair: a knob on each ear made by back combing the hair, picking gooseberries and beans together in the garden. Later, when the young couple came home with horse and buggy, how lovingly brother Peter would help his wife down from the vehicle because she had a large boil on her leg. Then came the babies: Daniel, Martin, Peter, John -- well, I sort of played and grew up with them. When John was born, I baby-sat the one summer. I now was already 12 years old and able to take care of three little kids - yes I even baked bread, made supper, washed and cleaned up. Brother Peter had to be on the fields working with horses, scythes, etc.

III. Years at the little Prairie School -- Grunthal #1592

My parents were now well established at their new location, having lived here since 1923. My brother Martin was the only one born at this place--and that at home in the "house end" of a large barn. The new house was located on Buffalo Creek with the east-west road running past our yard on the south side. We lived only a quarter mile west of the new Public School which had been erected by the government in 1911. Instructions were to be in English now. German was taught a half hour each day from 8:30 - 9:00 a.m. and Religion a half hour 3:30 - 4:00 p.m.

The teacherage was built just south of the school but on the same yard. With the creek and the wide open meadows near by, it was a wonderful situation for someone like myself to be outdoors, play, catch gophers or just roam around to my heart's content.

As indicated earlier, the school register shows small classes at the beginning. I only had two teachers for the eight grades which I did in seven years. My teacher for the first seven grades was an excellent, vibrant, thorough and dedicated one, Miss Kate Klassen.

The discipline she exercised then would not be permissible today. If a child found it difficult to sit still, she tried to teach them by tying them to their desks. Often a little one would wet her or his pants under these circumstances. Mouths were taped shut with adhesive in order to teach them not to talk. A lot of work was done at the blackboard - heads were often pushed forcibly against the board couldn't perform or remember. Yet an average youngster could cover both first and second Grade in one year. This included writing legibly -- not just printing. Beginners started school after Easter. This was all the Kindergarten they needed. They had a good head-start on Grade I when they returned to school in September. -- Even today I feel that this would be plenty of time to prepare a youngster to start Grade I in September.

My negative memory of Grade I was the punishment I received when I accidentally broke a transom window with a snowball. I loved to play outdoors. As the snowdrift around the school was high, the Grade 7's and 8's were throwing snowballs over the school. As youngsters love to imitate, I thought I could do it, too. But no such luck. My snowball shattered the small window. The teacher, of course, had to punish me with the strap. My little wrist and arm swelled up blue to my very elbow. In those days the rule in Mennonite families was: "If you get spanked in school, you'll get a double dose when you get home!" Scared of repercussions at home, I tried to hide my arm but Mother soon realized that there was something wrong and asked to see. She sent me to Father. Father was the "Official Trustee" since our district did not have a School Board. When he saw my arm, I did not get another spanking. I just overheard him saying to Mother: "Can't she ever do anything in moderation?"

Catechism memorization started in Grade 3. I recall the contest that, whoever knew the 200 answers so well that the teacher could not get him or her stuck, he or she would be given a party at the teacherage. How she tried to get me stuck by asking back and forth through the Catechism! I made it to the party, too. And there I had my first taste of Jello!

In the winter the roads were closed to cars so the teacher's car was put in our garage for several months; on blocks, to save the tires. She would either walk back to town for the week-end or stay over in the teacherage. Often my older brother would get her on the "caboose" at 20 - 30 below. She would still sit on the front seat with her legs dangling out of the front opening of the caboose. The teacherage would be cold and I recall going out to her residence to help her with getting in wood, lighting a fire. One time she opened the wood stove lid, put in paper and kindling wood and then poured kerosene over it. When she lit it, the fire burst up high and she'd keep on warning me: "Don't you ever try doing this!"

The school itself had to be heated with wood and coal. We had a big stove in one corner at the back of the room. It had a sort of "jacket" around it. Students sitting near the stove would be roasting and those in the far corner were freezing. In the morning we had to take our ink wells to unthaw them on the stove's ledge. During the first recess we often placed potatoes on the stove ledge -- by noon the atmosphere of the room had the pleasant aroma of the potatoes we would have for lunch.

During the dry years of the 30's this was indeed a luxury enjoyed only by some kids. Most often a honey-pail with maybe a "jelly-bread" sandwich in it was all that kids had. I recall one especially poor family who usually came to school bare footed when the spring snows had not all melted yet. Later in spring the children of this family keenly anticipated catching grasshoppers after four so they could fry their legs for supper.

Christmas Concerts were always the "high point" of the school year. Practices began early in December. What singing! Our teacher would borrow the gramophone from the Gretna Public School and use it to teach us the Christmas carols in two-part harmony, -- no piano, no instruments, etc. The dialogues and monologues were fascinating! Of course all this in the German language.-- The real magnificent tree with real wax candles. A father usually was in charge of lighting the candles and watching the tree for the rest of the program. A song was sung during the lighting of the candles, usually "O Tannenbaum" i.e. "O Christmas Tree". The school was packed and in order not to have crying babies disturb the program, the teacher bribed the mothers with a yard of flannel to leave them at home.

The big boys would hang over the partition [low wall] at the back of the room to get the best view. Parents would of course discuss which child performed the best or wore the nicest dress. The opening congregational song "Dies ist die Nacht da mir erschienen--" still echoes in my mind. Of course, a good Christmas Concert meant a good teacher!

Winter blizzards were fierce and treacherous. Walking a quarter mile to and from school on the open prairie often meant: Look out! Under very adverse weather conditions, our older brother would sometimes come with the horse and "stone-boat" to pick us up at school. I remember peeking out from beneath the fur robe [cow hide] to see him walking beside the horse making sure that he would not miss the trail home. Mother would have the oil lamp lit and placed in the window. Everything seemed to be whirling and twirling in never-ending circles about you - pitch dark. There were no hydro or telephone lines to guide you. Oh what a joy to see a glimpse of the light in the window!

There were no T.V.'s, radios or oodles of games to while away a long winter evening. We had the Free Press Weekly and was it ever read! We had first introduction to "Little Orphan Annie," "Moon Mullins," "Home Loving Hearts" etc. Books available were only the ones in the school library and there were not many of them. I'm sure I've read the "Anne of Green Gables" series at least once every year. Therefore our texts were a joy to those who wanted to learn.

How exciting were those Geography maps of distant places! We had to know the capitals of all the countries of the world and had to be able to locate them on the large wall map. With pointer in hand I've had imaginary trips to far away places. Our teacher traveled a lot during the summer and enhanced her geography lessons with the cards she sent to her pupils from various places.

Outdoor play in winter meant tobogganing, sliding on the ice-bound creek and roaming through the bushes in my life's blood. There were so many rosehips to pick and chew along the creek. There were rabbits, muskrats, beaver and deer to look for. Many a nice slide was made down the straw stack which had been kept for winter cattle feed and was covered with frozen snow. There was no nice toboggan. All I used was the top lid of a can or a shovel on which I would sit and hang on to the handle between my legs as I slid down the slope.

Since oil lamps and lanterns had to be used, going to bed early was not a problem. Homework had to be done by lamplight, too. Mother would knit and sew. We had a checker board and my Dad liked to play the game with me. I re-call teaching him to read English from my books. He was born in 1879 and had only a Private School [German] education. But I still considered my Father to have a good education. Considering he was orphaned and abused since the age of seven, I still marvel as I recall his wisdom and intelligence. People living about us considered him quiet, well-groomed, trustworthy gentleman.

By this time [age 7] I had little to entertain myself with. The older siblings with their spouses and children usually came home Sunday to visit the parents. It was my duty to look after the grandchildren and play with them. Ever since I was ten or twelve I played outside with nieces and nephews. During inclement weather we played "school" upstairs. We had few books in the house so a lot of the entertainment had to be "creative".

By this time the radio, such as it was, became a part of society. To many homes this was "forbidden fruit" - especially the churches did not think this novelty was acceptable in a Christian home. My one brother, who was about 16 or 17 at the time, introduced the "Crystal Set." It had a contraption with a needle on a crystal which must have been magnetic. This box had to be connected to an outside aerial. This he made by wires connecting to a barbed wire fence with white porcelain insulators. This "radio" did not have a speaker but had one head-set. If we separated the earphones, two people could listen, each with one ear. We would scratch the crystal with the needle until we located the one available station - C.B.C. It was an exciting introduction. The lines ran all along the fence to the neighbors. With the right connections this could also be used to call the neighbors - like a telephone. Of course all neighbors who had earphones could listen in to the conversation.

The next step, some years later, came the battery radio - much like the box you see today. The battery was a six-volt car battery. How advanced! My Father, being a quiet withdrawn man, would come upstairs to listen in to some of the few stations marveling at the innovation. I can almost hear him now, as he came down the stairs, saying: "Soon I will be able to hear a church service at home and not have to go to church Sunday morning!"

Sunday was a day of rest. We were not allowed to engage in any sort of sport such as baseball, etc. Often I longed to go and join in a game at the school just a quarter of a mile away. We were told to read the Bible or study our Catechism instead. We were not force to go to church. Father usually asked on Saturday at the supper table if anyone would like to go to church on Sunday morning. The Sommerfeld church we attended was, as a rule, the one at Schönthal about a mile west and a mile north of Altona. And then, of course, the married children would come home in the afternoon.

We had no Sunday School. But the Public Schools had daily a half hour of religious instruction. This gave us five times as much religious instruction as any church Sunday School can give its children today. The better the teacher, of course, the better the instruction. We had "Bible Story" two or three times a week, Catechism once a week and once or twice a week the half hour was spent singing and learning new songs - hymns and gospel songs. The teacher I had at the Grunthal School #1592 did an excellent job in this department. She even made the older students write tests and exams in their religious studies. The marks were entered in our report cards along with the other subjects.

We had tests every two months in all subjects. These tests were supervised by the inspector and set and printed by a committee of teachers in his inspectorate. This was a unique way of keeping all the students working on a unified program and at the same pace. It made it easier when students transferred from one school to another. Comparison of marks between the different schools often became quite competitive and a serious disclosure of achievement.

The attendance records (register) of all the students in the school were carefully kept. Today these registers may be seen in the Provincial Archives. The small schools had a lot going for them in spite of some disadvantages. I must admit that I was not suffering when I finished my Elementary years in Grunthal and started to attend High School in Altona. I still have the report card made out by my teacher. It became very convenient years later when I had to prove the spelling of my name at the Vital Statistics Department in Winnipeg. Report cards can become a great help later on.

All Grade 8's had to write Provincial "High school Entrance" exams in the 20's. This was discontinued later. I remember my sister Betty having to go to the Gretna Public School to do these exams. Mother drove her there in the buggy and took me along, as "moral support" I suppose. Mother unhitched the horse at the home of an aunt of our teacher - Mrs. Klassen. I have a vivid memory of tasting my first peanut-butter sandwich. The dear old Auntie brought the sandwich to me outside where I was skipping rope. One bite and then, Oh, did I spit! This "whatever" kept sticking to the roof of my mouth. We had never had peanut butter at home!

Mother loved to go visiting and she usually did this by horse and buggy. She always had to have a "runner" (pacer) so she could go fast with a good stiff reign in her hands. Dad had bought his first car, the McLaughlan, in 1926 and what a prize it was considered to be! Of course only men drove cars in and what a prize it was considered to be! Of course only men drove cars those days. The car was only used in summer. Roads were not kept open in winter. The car was then placed on blocks to save the tires. The car had eight cylinders and all leather seats and celluloid flaps for windows.

I remember working hard on the yard at home all day. There was raking, hoeing weeds in the garden, etc., just to get a ride to town. In town we kids were not permitted to get off the car to go into stores unless accompanied by a parent. One trip I remember when Mom and Dad had gone in to shop at the General Store of Mr. Goldberg. I couldn't wait so I went into the store in spite of orders to stay put in the car. Low and behold I saw boxes of oranges on the floor and on the counter a box of spectacles which adults tried on to see which pair would fit his or her eyes. Oranges wow - people were picking them up by the dozen - so why couldn't I have just one? I took it and then went back to sit on the car quite pleased with myself. When Mother finally came, she noticed what I had done. So back she marched me and made me apologize for what I had done. I had been quite unaware that people took and then paid for them. Well, it was a good lesson and one I never forgot.

Getting back to Mom and her buggy trips, I recall the sound of the horse's hoofs on the hard dirt road as we went through the village of Chortitz where she had some relatives. What an ambitious lady she was! She was well educated in spite of the fact she had only attended German Private School. Girls did not have to go to school beyond age 10 or 12. There were more important things to be done at home.

I was not born yet, when my older brother drowned at the age of 3--but she knew and attempted to apply artificial respiration. Later my oldest brother, John, had a serious accident when he and his younger brother were plowing with horses. John was swinging his leg when it caught in the spokes of the large wheel which twisted it around the axle and broke both of the bones (tibia & fibula) and generally mangled the leg terribly. The boys came home on one of the plows, John hanging on to his leg. Mom, though she had no First Aid training, knew that the pant leg had to be cut open to free the leg. Altona had a doctor who was a veteran from the World War I. He was sent for by horse and buggy. There were no hospitals near by and an ambulance was unheard of. The kitchen table was turned into an operating table. Mother was the assistant and nurse. She had to boil the instruments on the kitchen stove as well as look after the administration of the anesthetic - mask with chloroform I assume. The Doctor was ready to amputate but Mother cried and pleaded to save the child's leg and he decided to try his best to reattach all the tendons and ligaments and set the bones as well as he could. The Doctor had done this many times during the war. The leg was put in a splint and mother now had the job of nursing the boy back to health all winter long. What a chore and with how many prayers must she have gone about this duty!

'Tis all happened at the parents first home where conditions were still very primitive. The house and barn were built together. The prairie sod had to be "broken" and cultivated before it could be used for grain, chiefly wheat. The private school was in Altberghal and my older siblings had to take horse and buggy (sleigh in winter) to get to school some 2 to 3 miles away. My oldest sister, Margaret, only attended until she was 12 years old. She had to stay home to help. John stayed home the winter he was recovering from his accident. Brother Peter and sister Mary had gone to that school until the first public school was established in 1921. It was given the name of "Grunthal #1592" and was located on the

northwest corner of the northwest quarter of Section 19, Township 1, Range 1W. Only German was taught in private schools. A new system established by the Provincial Government now involved the teaching of English. This school was only a quarter of a mile east of my parents' new home. This was the school which my other siblings and I attended. This school was closed in 1971 when it became part of the larger Rhineland School Division.

As the school registers indicate, family names in the area include such as: Klassen, Driedger, Martens, Redekopp, Kethler, Zacharias, Schapansky, Krahn, Toews and Wiebe. It may be of interest to those residing in the district to find the following in these registers:

In 1921 - 22 the first teacher was Mr. Jacob Neufeld with an annual salary of \$690. Average attendance per month was 9, 6, or 8 students. Only grades taught were 1 and 2. Some of the students were my brothers and sisters. Peter 13, Mary 11, Daniel 9, all in Grade 1. In 1922 Peter was registered in Grade 3 and Mary in Grade 2.

In 1924 - 25 the teacher was Mr. Adolph Gusse with a second-class certificate and a salary of \$100 a month for 10 months. Now five grades were taught. Sister Elizabeth, who was called "Lizzie", was in Grade 1 and sister Justina, registered as "Tina", in Grade 1. The latter was 9 years old at this time. Sister Betty (Lizzie) advanced to Grade 2 at the age of 7 indicating high performance levels and was youngest in her class. Brother Dan, age 11, was in Grade 5.

When the Public School System was instituted by the Provincial Government, the people of some districts could not agree about electing their own School Board. When this happened, the Department of Education would provide such a district with an "Official Trustee" from Winnipeg. This person would usually find somebody locally who was willing to look after the day to day running of the school. Hiring the teacher and other important decisions had to be approved by the "Official Trustee".

In the school year 1926 -27 the Official Trustee for Grunthal was Mr. J.F. Greenway on the staff of the Department of Education. Teacher, Mr. Gusse with an annual salary of \$1000. I believe Mr. Gusse hailed from the U. S. A. Brother Andrew is recorded to be in Grade 1 at age 7. Lizzie in Grade 4, nine years old, "Tina," catching up, is in Grade 4. In 1925 "Tina's" name does not appear in the register. According to Mother she was severely plagued with ear-aches.

Because of these chronic ear infections which caused her difficulty in learning, she was not liked by Mr. Gusse who frequently humiliated her by calling her "Dumme Gans" (dumb goose). Daniel is listed as being in Grade 5 still but leaving school with Grade 6 at age 13. A new teacher, Miss Kate Klassen, arrived for the 1927 - 28 term. She received a salary of \$900. It should be noted that salaries were coming down. Miss Klassen also had a "Second Class" Certificate. This meant that she had completed Grade 11 and one year of "Normal School" - teacher training. A "First Class" Certificate was awarded to somebody who had completed Grade 12 and a year of Normal School. At this time Grade 12 was equivalent to first year University.

Children began school at age 7. The only pre-school training they got was from Easter to June. All beginners started school after Easter. It is interesting to note, how adequate this seemed to be! There was no need to waste a year in Kindergarten. It should also be noted how many of the "above average" children made Grades 1 and 2 in one year.

It was in April 1928 that I started school. With me in Grade 1 were students Mary W., Tina Harder, Margaret Wiebe. As records indicate, others started later. By May there were 7 students in Grade 1 plus 2 senior Grade 1's. The enrollment for the 8 grades now stands at 41 students. If anyone should be interested in reading the complete lists, the School Registers are available at the Provincial Archives.

1930 - 31 - 32 -- I was in Grade 5 at age 10, Betty in Grade 8 at 13, Andrew in Grade 4 at age 12. My youngest brother, Martin, came on the school scene at age 7. It is to be noted that some of my older siblings had finished school by 1930. Some had only wanted to learn the English Language. You can read into the facts that sister Margaret and brother John never attended the public school. At the time of writing (1995) my oldest sister, Margaret, now 94 years old, is still living on her own and can, if need be, speak to you in English. Brother John, who died at age 69, was able to do the same. They never required or had the need for E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) teacher. Such luxuries as we have in our schools today at the expense of the tax-payer was never a consideration! What is remarkable is that these people learned the language and coped with the world about them effectively.

In 1933 - 34 I was in Grade 7 with 7 other girls. This was my last year with Miss Klassen. In 1934 - 35 the new teacher was Miss Eva Friesen from Gretna. She had me finish Grade 8. I had two teachers in the seven years. It is always very meaningful to me that I has a perfect attendance record for those seven years - eight grades. My mother often referred to me as a wild weed hard to eradicate. I attribute this to plenty of outdoor play, a poor meat eater, enjoyment of school, etc. My own sojourn in my country school days includes many of my own experiences of these years. Needless to say, it also included living together at my parental home with the siblings I have mentioned before.

In 1935 Mr. Henry D. Dyck was hired on the recommendation of my Father. In 1936 - 37 a new teacher, Mr. Jacob H. Reimer, took over. He had a First Class "B" Certificate. He had 44 pupils. My Brother Martin was the only one of my siblings to have studied under him. Martin and Harry Reimer, the son of the teacher, became close friends. Other teachers followed until the school was officially closed on August 18, 1971.

CHAPTER IV -- Home & School Recollections

Some of my very early recollections have already been given in the previous pages. It should be remembered that I grew up in the decade known as the "dirty thirties." Times were very "tough" weather wise as well as economically. This was the time of severe summer dust storms and the news from Saskatchewan came that soil erosion was so severe that the gopher holes stuck three feet out of the ground! Some of my experiences during this childhood decade of mine, may seem almost unbelievable but, if so, you should research this decade historically and you will find that it was only too true.

Before I write any more, let us have a look at the days, weeks and months of the One-Room Country School. In order to economize, the school year had been shortened to nine months - September 15 to June 15. From my experience of 32 years of teaching - 1940 to 1982 with time out for family- let me say that I considered this adequate and the children learned just as much as they did later when a return to ten months of school was instituted again.

Our school day started at 8:30 a.m. and closed at 4 p.m. with an hour for lunch at noon. Recesses were 15 minutes morning and afternoon. Our "gym" was the school yard - outdoors - and what fun it was! The games were "co-ed". I loved to play football (i.e. soccer) and baseball. For the primary students (Grades 1 - 3) children's games such as skipping rope, "Ring-around-the-Rosie", "Drop the Handkerchief" and "Dodge Ball," and "Prisoner's Base," were the most common. As a special treat Miss Klassen, who had her own vehicle (a Whippet Coupe with a rumble seat) would take a team of our best players out on a Friday afternoon to play another team at a neighboring school. Since there was no bussing of students, this did not pose much of a problem. Those kids who came to school with horse and buggy, drove home at 3 p.m. or so (we'd miss only our period of religious instruction 3:30 -4 p.m.). Some just walked home.

Of course, once winter came, this could not happen. Roads were not snow-cleared and so the teacher's car was not available. It was stored in our large machine shed, jacked up on wooden blocks until spring when driving became possible again. I recall playing football in a neighboring district. Some thirty years later a lady from that district met me in Gretna and reminded me what a terrific player I had been.

Page 15

We had to play without much of the regular equipment. The school had a bat and ball and maybe a catcher's glove. For fall and winter we had a soccer ball, no shin pads, etc. Clothing was cumbersome: heavy shirts and home knit woolen stockings and fleece lined bloomers for the girls. When parents could afford it, girls might have "long johns" for underwear. As a rule, the boys wore these under their overalls. Shoes were the felt boots laced up to over the ankles and worn with rubber overshoes. When times really got tough during the 30's, the children of some families already walked barefoot when the snow had not all melted yet.

During the spring and summer months everyone came to school in canvas runners, price of which would be about 25 cents. Many children went bare-foot all spring and summer. The jeans were patched on the knees not only once but patch on patch. But it was below our dignity to be seen with holes in our pants. You had only one pair and if you happened to tear them,

mother would patch them after you had gone to bed. Our caps were home knit woolen ones or, in winter, maybe an "aviation" cap with ear-flaps. Mitts and gloves were also home-knit or home-made from old leather or discarded felt hats or from any old worn cloth that was available. You must remember, there were no thrift shops, no welfare, no family allowances and no unemployment insurance.

As the thirties progressed no jobs were available. Poor families were sometimes helped by their churches or the municipality. This help was often difficult to get and found humiliating by the recipient. Crops failed. One year this was due to drought and another the grasshoppers destroyed what little had grown. With the 1929 collapse of the stock market, everyone was thrown into poverty and despair.

I remember standing beside my father looking at the horde of locusts (grasshoppers) drifting in like a cloud from the south, settling on his 80 acres of beautifully grown wheat and shearing off the heads of the grain in less than an hour. How he wept! The year before, rust had taken his crop. Now he had to think of: "How will I pay my taxes, my bills and feed my family and my animals?" People could get credit for a season from the local store owners in Altona. Mr. Goldberg and Mr. Nitikman provided our family with the bare necessities, such as felt shoes. The McLaughlan car (6-cylinder) Dad had been able to buy during the buoyant early 20's, had to be jacked up in the machine shed and stored until better times. What a blow! Back to horse and buggy!

Back to the classroom! All these conditions affected education greatly. Supplies were hard to get even though the school board paid for the bare necessities of the classroom. Every scribbler had to be filled corner to corner! First a scribbler would be used for English, Spelling, Composition, History, etc. Then, when it was full and had been inspected by the teacher, the scribbler was used for practicing Spelling in the margins or for scrap paper. One box of crayons was given to the primary student and that had to do him all year.

Page 16

The older students had to learn to write with ink. They had pen holders with replaceable nibs that had to be dipped into the ink well. These ink-wells were placed in a round hole at the top of a student's desk. The ink usually froze solid during the night. In the morning these little ink bottles were placed on the top of our big pot-bellied stove. The teacher was also the janitor and had started the fire in the heater early in the morning. The wood and coal had been carried in from the fuel shed by the Grade 7 & 8 boys at the end of the previous school day.

The top of this big stove in the back corner of the room also served as a place to put the potatoes for baking for lunch. Not all students were lucky to have such a good lunch. Most of the kids brought a lunch of a jam sandwich in a honey or syrup pail. A bottle of "prips" accompanied this. Prips was a coffee substitute made from roasted barley and chicory. After the "pig-killing bees" started in late October and November some children were lucky enough to be given a piece of "rebspæ" - spare-ribs- or a piece of smoked sausage to go with the bread. Being so close to school, our family had to go home for lunch except on very bad blizzard days. A quarter of a mile in a "white out" storm was very frightening. I remember my older brother Dan, who seemed to have a very good sense of direction, getting us home from school on such a day. He

led the horse, myself and brothers Andrew and Martin were tucked under a cowhide on straw piled into the stoneboat. This was a one-horse sled without shafts used for hauling manure out of the barn in winter. Mother had placed a burning kerosene lamp in the window hoping to help Dan with this guiding light.

Mother had great fears in this regard and no wonder. Her brother Abram (aged 19) had frozen to death on April 1, 1877, in such a blizzard. He and another fellow had gone to Walhalla, N.D., with a team of oxen to get some flour and they did not make it back. Mother related how my Grandmother (her Mom) had tried to revive him by unthawing his body slowly by placing him on the oven door of the kitchen stove. This procedure had saved his companion. I often wonder what became of him and who he was.

No electricity nor flush toilets were there. Our school had a chemical toilet for days of extreme weather conditions. But basically one "outhouse" for the boys and one for the girls were used. Though the teacher was also responsible for janitorial duties, it was expected that she would enlist the help of the students in keeping the school clean. I remember getting paid 25 cents a month for sweeping the floor. The teacher paid this out of her own pocket. All other chores such as blackboards and erasers were looked after by the students taking turns. The flag was raised every morning by one student while the whole class sang "O Canada" and it was lowered at four while we sang "God Save the King".

The Alphabet in large letters was placed around the walls just on top of the blackboards. Maps on rollers were located just above the blackboard at the front of the room. The only pictures adorning the walls were those of the King and Queen.

Page 17

In one corner stood the skimpy "Library Cupboard". Library books were scarce but Miss Klassen usually brought in "National Geographics" of her own. The novels like Anne of Green Gables series, Little Women and Little Men, Stevenson's Treasure Island and Kidnapped were read over and over! Somehow our vocabulary in English did grow and was well developed. When I entered Grade 9 in Altona the students in that school inquired first thing why and how come I did not speak like a "Country hick".

The time-table that a teacher had to prepare for 8 grades and often a Grade 9 Correspondence student, was not so easy to make. Each Grade would get about 10 minutes of the teacher's time; for instance 9:15 to 9:25 - Grade 1 Reading, Grade 2 Arithmetic, and so on. While the teacher took the Grade 1 Reading, the others would work at their assignments. The assignments for the older pupils were often outlined for them on the blackboard.

This way the students learned to work by themselves very well. Sometimes a more capable older student who did not need all the time allotted for his assignment, was asked to coach some of the younger ones who had some problems. I recall helping a beginner with learning to write "cat" on the blackboard. No special classroom aids were available in order to enhance the youngsters' learning experience. The only available items were boxes of letter tickets in green, yellow or pink colors. The beginner would get instructions to

spell out the new words he or she was learning and put them together on his desk e.g. hen, pen, etc. The flash cards were for drill in Arithmetic.

The earliest duplicating "machine" was a Hectograph. It was a rectangular tin pan in which a soft gelatin had been poured and left to harden. The material to be copied was written on a sheet of paper with hectograph ink. This master copy was placed face down on the gelatin and left for a few minutes to allow the ink to "set" in the gelatin. After removing the master copy, blank sheets of paper would be placed on the pan, briefly smoothed to make complete contact and then peeled off again. It was a slow process but we thought it was wonderful to be able to produce individual copies for each student. Even when I was an Elementary School teacher in the 40's & 50's, I used this system. After enough copies of the page had been made, the gelatin was washed with hot water to erase the impression. The gelatin was then cooled in preparation for the next page. In winter this was faster because the hectograph could be set outside to harden again. At that time student "workbooks" were not available yet. All the work had to be done from the text book and exercises and questions prepared by the teacher.

Our school had no piano but in spite of this we had great Christmas Concerts, learned many songs religious and otherwise. Miss Klassen was no great singer but she got us (25 - 30 kids) to sing two-part harmony. She borrowed the Gretna Public School's gramophone and records and so would be able to teach us new songs. The gramophone had to be manually wound up but it was a good and valuable tool for her to teach us. Let us imagine a Christmas Concert!

Page 18

First, the Christmas carols were learned as early as the middle of November. Some teachers, it was rumored, started the first day of school in September. A teacher's work was often evaluated by the quality of the Christmas concert he could put on. Trustees of each school district did the hiring or firing of teachers. Trustees themselves had no knowledge of what was expected of teachers as far as their academic performance was concerned. The school inspector visited the school at least twice a year, fall and spring, and it was he who made out a report on the work the teacher had done with the pupils. Much of the evaluation was based on the marks the students had obtained on monthly or bi-monthly tests known as "Inspector's Tests." Moreover, they were written by all students in all schools at the same time.

The curriculum was carefully designed by the Department of Education and so outlined that students were covering the same material at the same rate and time. This system provided uniformity for the schools. Children moving from one district to another always fitted in wherever they attended. As you can see from report cards, class standing, etc. were always given. Competition was often very keen. To be first in class was something special. Sometimes this could be frustrating. For example, if the teacher did not like you as much as another pupil in class, your papers were marked more severely.

I remember how hurt I was when just this happened to me. All my written exam papers were recalled by the teacher when she discovered that I came in first place. My marks were revised so that I came in second. Why? I don't know but I do have a feeling that she didn't exactly enjoy my determination to be on top. Maybe she remembered the year before when she accused me of cheating in a spelling test and I threw the Speller back at her -- but I did not get the strap that time. Maybe she remembered the experience she and I had when I was in Grade one and broke the transom window with a snowball. Or maybe, when I was in Grade 5, she thought I had written notes to someone. She admitted this years later after she had retired and we were visiting together, that she had received a big surprise when she had gone through my desk after four to see what she could find. Instead of notes to other children, she found a scribbler of my own where I had made notes on her

methods of "How to Teach" e.g. History or Geography. I knew as early as Grade 5 that I wanted to become a teacher! And she admitted later on that she had never expected me to achieve this. I always admired her methodology but assured myself I would never try to use her disciplinary methods.

We discussed this later when we took her to see the movie "Why Shoot the Teacher." She was almost eighty and wished she could retrace her steps and do some things differently. We must, of course, remember what the times were like. The "dirty thirties" were also very hard on the teachers. The salaries dropped to half of what they had been in a matter of months. Teachers had large classes of ill clad and sometimes hungry kids. She lived in the "teacherage" - a small four-roomed house in one corner of the schoolyard. It had to be heated by a coal and wood stove. I thought her home was quite something else! I remember bringing in kindling wood for her on one occasion. I watched with wide open eyes when she thought the fire was too slow in starting and she took her kerosene can and poured some into the stove to speed things up. The house was cold because she had just returned from Gretna by sleigh. My brother Dan would get her with the "Caboose" and mother had sent me to school to help her. When the kerosene ignited and sent flames out of the stove opening, she said "But Susan you must never do this!"

Page 19

I shall never forget my first little party I had at her house. Students whom she could not get stuck in her "Catechism Bee" during Friday's religious class, would be invited to join in this party. I was in Grade 3 and made it!-- 200 verses from memory and not asked in sequential order. At this party I first learned to know what Jello was. Baking powder biscuits I had had at home and I don't recall a cake, but I remember that Jello!

Miss Klassen believed in giving rewards or prizes for such things as perfect attendance, being first in class or for good behavior. All of the seven Grades I had with her I did not miss a single day of school. She presented me with a sleeveless cotton dress! One little gift I still have hanging downstairs is a small plaque with Psalm 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd" on it. She never expected me to make it as far as becoming a teacher, but many years later, when I graduated with my first University degree, she presented me with a marble-based pen and pencil set. It is still on my desk! -- I happened to be her first pupil to go on to University.-- I remember the car trip she gave us to the sand slides, the M.C.I. yearly Sangerfests and, of course, her Christmas Concerts!

Chapter V The Christmas Concert

Learning the Carols had begun and now for the monologues, dramas, and poems that had to be given to students to learn. Since most of the program was to be in German, she used the German and Religious periods to do the practicing. I remember one special drama I was in one year. I believe I was in Grade 6 at the time. The drama was about a poor family in Russia who had nothing to eat or wear one dreary December. On Christmas eve there was a knock at the door and a large parcel containing clothes and food arrived from Canada where people were organizing to help their brethren in Russia.

Some of the items used in the concert would look like this: She often had her brother-in-law, Mr. Henry Wall (a High School teacher in Gretna) to be the M.C. After he had welcomed the parents and guests, he would announce the first song by the whole audience such as the familiar "Dies ist die Nacht da mir erschienen --". This would be followed by an opening poem "Willkommen". If this was a shorter poem, it would be recited by one of the younger children or a more lengthy one by an older student.

The teacher's desk had been moved aside and a platform of planks had been constructed at the front of the classroom by the trustees. The pupils sat on plank benches on the right side of the platform. From here the whole class would rise to sing the carols. On the very left of the platform stood a large natural Christmas tree. The tree was decorated with wax candles stuck in

clip-on holders. About half way through the program, while the children sang "O Tannenbaum" the candles would be lit by an adult. A long stick with a burning candle was used to light the candles on the higher branches. It was so beautiful and emotionally peaceful!--giving everyone the true spirit of Christmas. In the left-hand corner a "dressing room" had been created with blankets where simple costumes were put on or off.

Page 20

WEIHNACHTSPROGRAMM -- Gnadenfeld, Dec. 23, 1957

1. Eröffnung - Lied "O du fröhliche!"
2. Einleitung - F.F. Enns
3. Begrüßungsgedicht - Leona Hildebrand
4. Lied - Sei begrüßet Heil'ge Nacht
5. Eine Weihnachtsunterhaltung - Nettie & Martha
6. Berufswahl
7. Lied - Kling, Glöckchen!
8. Weihnachtsblumen.
9. Der Weihnachtspilger.
10. Die Schaufler
11. Lied - Adeste Fidelis
12. Pantomine - Ehre, Ehre!
13. Gespräch - Des Armen Mädchens Weihnachten.
14. Der Weihnachtsstern.
15. Lied - Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht.
16. Weihnachten bei den Armen - Betty and Verna
17. Gespräch - Fröhliche Weihnachten.
18. Judy & Leni
19. Lied - Welcher Jubel, was für Freud'
20. Was können wir ihm schenken?
21. Santa Claus and the Mouse. - Carolyn Thiessen.
22. Song - Deck the Halls
23. Song - Once in Royal David's City

24. Die Kleinen.

25. Schlußgedicht - Nettie Penner 26. Schluß (etc.).

Page 21

(The program on the previous page is a sample of a typical format as used in the one-room country schools and is one I used when I was teaching in Gnadenfeld. Now, to get back to my own school days.)

The audience sat in the school desks which had been shoved towards the walls. In the center of the room more planks were used to make benches. These programs were well attended. In order to have an undisturbed evening, the teacher promised the mothers who had small babies a yard of flannel material if they would leave the babies at home. The older boys used to sit up on the divider at the back of the room and that way more space was available.

The few simple gifts were placed under and around the tree. The teacher gave each pupil a gift and the cost of that came out of her own pocket. Sometimes it would be storybooks for the older ones. The primary pupils got a coloring book, crayons or the like. I recall vividly one Christmas I got a little wooden dining room set - a round table with four little chairs. What a delight! (Mother usually created a doll for me at Christmas time - using a porcelain china doll head. I really had no other toys.) The trustees usually prepared a brown paper bag of goodies for each pupil and smaller bags of the same kind for the preschoolers. The bags contained items like peanuts (the main item), a package of gum, a few suckers, maybe an apple or an orange, etc. These were distributed at the end of the program and each child got one.

After the program was over, there was a bit of socializing went on. People talked about how beautiful it had been, who had performed best and so on. Sometimes Miss Klassen had her three nieces along to the program and they would give us an extra musical piece or two.-- I don't recall the teacher getting many gifts. Most parents were too poor during the thirties. My parents would usually make up this deficiency during the year with such things as sending home baking, car storage, transportation to and from school on week-ends during the winter, gifts of fresh meat after pigs had been slaughtered in fall, etc. Dad, being the official trustee until his death in 1936, looked after the general needs of the school buildings and the various supplies needed.

During the concert the candle-lighter did not sit down again but stood near the tree and watched it carefully snuffing out each candle as soon as it began to sputter. We must remember there was no electricity. The school-room was lit by kerosene "Mantle Lamps." Snow covered roads were not cleared. Travel was by sleigh, stone boat, horseback or, lacking these, you simply walked. School closed until early in the New Year. Christmas holidays in the homes were chiefly spent with family gatherings, chores and trying to keep the homes warm and free of fires. Water for household use came from the cistern. Blocks of ice were cut in the creek and hauled to the cistern. They were dumped into the rain water left over from the summer. I always rejoiced when the holidays were over. I loved school!

Page 22

On the day of Christmas it was customary for the married children to come home for dinner (at noon) or Faspa. Christmas dinner consisted of Plummi Moase (fruit soup/mousse), fried smoked farmer sausage or smoked ham and buns. Faspa was great with home baked buns, coffee, sugar cubes, jams and cookies; such as sugar cookies, molasses and peppermint cookies. During the afternoon the adults sat in the living-room and chatted, ate peanuts or "knacked" sunflower seeds. Floors were linoleum and the debris of shells, etc. had to be swept up at the end of the day and disposed of in the firebox of the kitchen range.

Usually I was delegated to "look after" the kids upstairs. Here we had several large benches on which the grandchildren would sit to have another concert at Grandma's. The children would have asked the teachers in their own schools to consider giving them joint dialogues so they could perform or recite at Grandma's. Even little plays would come my way. Most of the carols they had learned at school were the same. Silent Night/Stille Nacht was always a favorite. Going back all those years, I often ponder now and wonder why only my mother was there. The rest of the adults, not even the mothers of the children, would not care to come and join us.-- It was here that my mother would hand out the little gifts to the grandchildren, e.g. a hanky, some peanuts and candy, etc. Later on, when times were economically better, socks for the boys and dishes for the girls became more common.

After all this, some time could be spent outdoors playing in the snow or sliding down the snow-covered straw stack. The greatest problem was the inadequate clothing we had to wear to keep warm. Since the older siblings all had chores to do at home, -- milking, feeding livestock and poultry, etc. , they left early after Faspa. Most of them had 4 to 6 miles to go by sleigh. The children were tucked in under the warm cowhide blanket with maybe a heated stone or brick to keep the feet warm. A caboose was better protection than just a cutter or an open double-sleigh which needed the power of two horses to pull it.

These years were most enjoyable in many ways because Dad was still alive. During the early thirties some twenty to thirty grandchildren would come home on Sunday afternoon or on special occasions such as Christmas and Easter. I grew up fast seeing sisters-in-law pregnant and bringing along one baby after another. Thus diapers and bottles and crying babies all meant a lot of care and looking after. I actually grew up with my older nieces and nephews. My youngest brother was an uncle at the age of nine months and I was an aunt at the age of two and half years.

Chapter VI Entertainment during the Thirties

Let me begin by reminding the reader that there was no electricity,

no running water, no T.V. and only a crystal set radio with head phones. These headphones were also used as phones connected to the wire fences as explained in an earlier chapter. Children and teenagers were expected to help with the farm chores after school as well as in the morning before they went to school. Summer activities ranged from hoeing (weeding) the garden, picking ripened fruit, raking the yard, washing dishes, scrubbing and waxing floors, milking the cows, washing the cream separator, etc. Making butter from the cream was a weekly chore. All bread was home baked made from flour milled at the local mill from the wheat grown on our farm. Father would take his wheat to the mill located in Altona and come home with the flour in 100-lb. cotton flour sacks. The flour was stored in the upstairs attic which was under the roof along the sides of the upstairs rooms. Usually mother used one 100-lb. bag a month to feed us all. Sugar was also stored up there.

In the attic on the other side old newspapers were carefully placed on the floor and chokecherries would be spread on these sheets and left to dry. The fruit was great for a child to chew on during the long winters. In this attic also I kept a few shoe boxes which held the meager treasures I had managed to find and save e.g. pieces of colored broken glass, a poem from the only newspaper we had - The Family Herald, or some paper dolls I had cut out from an old Eaton's Catalogue. Trinkets were rare but sometimes I saved a child's handkerchief which I had received at Christmas.

My own best entertainment was the great outdoors! As soon as my chores - washing dishes - were done, out I would go whether it was summer or winter. In summer, of course, I had endless numbers of pails of gooseberries and plums to pick and drag home. The wild plums grew in a natural bush about a half mile north of the yard along Buffalo Creek. I would have my dog "Fix" along to protect me from the Jersey bull roaming about among the cattle in the pasture. Inside this pasture grew the tall native prairie grasses. Buffalo Creek provided the water needed for the livestock. A raft made of logs ferried me across to the other side where the best plums grew. One day, on arriving to pick plums, I discovered to my amazement some lady intruders up a tall plum tree with the Jersey bull pawing the earth beneath the tree. They had come to get plums without having bothered to ask for permission. The ladies were very grateful to have me rescue them with my dog.---

It was quite hard to carry two large milk pails of plums all the way home. These plums gave us the jam for the winter. The jam was placed in 5 or 10 gallon stone crocks and covered with cheese cloth or a stone crock lid. The jams were delicious on fresh home-baked bread. Winter storage for this was in the cement basement.

Page 24

In one corner of the cellar there was a bin about 8' x 10' which held potatoes, and amongst them carrots, for winter storage. Big wooden kegs filled with brine held pickled cucumbers, watermelons and sauerkraut. In another corner of the basement was the coal bin. This was filled with hard "Drumheller" coal which was shiny and not like the softer "Souris" coal which was dull and did not burn as well or as clean as the hard coal. The kindling wood had to be brought in from the summer kitchen.

This summer kitchen was a two room little house where all the cooking and eating was done in the summer. This helped to keep the big house cool in summer. In the winter the summer kitchen was used for storage of wood, for doing the laundry and for the "pig killing bees". On laundry day the large cauldron (mia-gropen) would be filled with water and heated with dry wood, dried branches and often with dried "cow pies." The washer was a wooden man-powered one. It was an all day process. The wash was put out on the lines to freeze out the moisture as much as possible and then hung out to dry indoors wherever there was space. Often clothes lines were strung across the bedrooms and kitchen or even the living room.

This whole process was very time consuming but a change of clothes was only done on Saturdays after the kitchen had become a bathroom for the whole family. A large round tub of galvanized iron was used and several family members used the same water. Home made soap was often used. It was a luxury if you could afford a bar of either Palmolive or Sweetheart soap. The latter was used for shampooing. A dilute vinegar rinse kept the hair shiny and free of dandruff. For general laundry only home made soap was used. This soap is still used today. Discarded fat or lard and lye are mixed in correct proportions and stirred. Then it is poured into flat boxes or pans to set or harden. After that it is cut into bars of the desired size. Recipes today include a scent e.g. lavender or whatever is desired.

Many a time (teaching Phys. Ed.) in later years I often wondered why body odors were so common in the classroom in spite of all the modern equipment available to shower and powder and deodorize. In the days of my childhood we never seemed to smell that strongly.-- I had only one school dress and that was made of taffeta or flannel. This would be hand washed at night time and hung to dry so it would be ready to wear again next day. The woolen stockings were hand knit and I found them very itchy. In summer walking barefoot was the order of the day for kids. Maybe a pair of cheap running shoes (25 cents at that time) would be something to have.

Playing outdoors in the spring, summer and fall would mean baseball and dodgeball at school -- "anti-over," a plain rubber ball to bounce against the barn wall. I loved skipping rope and climbing trees and buildings. Mother would be petrified to see me on top of the big machine shed or barn. Frequently I would be severely reprimanded for tearing my skirts during these climbing escapades.

Page 25

Patched clothing, especially during the dirty thirties, was an everyday sight to behold. I often wonder now, even sixty years later, why our youth must walk about with open-kneed, frayed and tornup jeans. Too bad they have not had those hard times to go through. Youngsters today beldieve that tidmes are tough, but they have everything going for them now. Family allowances only started after World War II and I remember the allotment was only \$4.00 a month per child.

Catching gophers, of which there were countless numbers, got to be part of my lifestyle. The Municipality paid a bounty of 5 cents for each gopher caught and as proof we had to turn in the gopher tail to collect our money. Moles tails were 10 cents each. My dog and I, with water pails and traps, went along the grassy fields along the creek to make money. I carried pails of water which I had filled at the creek to gopher holes I had already located. The dog would sit beside the hole waiting for the head to emerge. He would grab the gopher by the head and so kill it. With a knife I would cut off the tail and put it into an empty "tobacco tin" to take home. Usually I placed a trap at a gopher hole which was too far away from the creek for me to carry the water. Gophers would get trapped over night and I checked these traps before I went to school next morning. Sometimes a neighborhood girl would get to the meadows before I did and I would find my traps empty. This was often the case on Saturdays because I was not allowed to go out before I had finished my part of the Saturday cleaning chores. Linoleum floors had to be waxed and polished. There were no electric polishers then!

In winter just simple outdoor snowballing and sliding down snowy strawstacks was a lot of fun. Our sliders were either an old tin lid, a shovel with a handle, or a home-made sled. Our dug out, which had been made during the summer, had piles of earth mounted beside it and afforded a great slide after the snow had covered it. Our teacher lent me her downhill skis and of course this hill would make a beautiful ski slope. Wow!- what a tumble I did take!

Unfortunately our clothing was too cumbersome! I usually put on one of my older brother's coveralls. I put these on over my dress to help me keep warm. Jackets were heavy. Girls usually had some sort of overcoat for outdoors but these were impractical for any physical activity. The felt shoes inside rubber would absorb moisture quickly and so cold feet were the result. Chilblains were a common complaint.

I would often roam, just walking along the creek looking for deer, muskrats, rabbits, etc. Especially looking for the frozen rosehip berries as I went along. Today, I am sure, those rosehip berries provided me with the Vitamin C my system needed. My siblings usually came down with the communicable diseases such as mumps, chicken pox, measles, etc. I have had none of them. Mother usually referred to me as a "wild weed" - i.e. difficult to eradicate.

Page 26

School started September 15 and ended June 15. The summers of the early thirties were memorable in that one year it would be the grasshoppers chewing away the crops and the next the drought dried them up. Poison for grasshoppers was spread along the roadways and meadows. We kids at school literally ground the masses of egg laying hoppers into the ground with our feet. The children of one poor family in the district would already anticipate going home to catch 'hoppers and fry their legs for supper. This was the family whose kids came to school barefoot when the snow had not melted yet. Most of the school kids were barefoot as soon as possible. Shoes, even sneakers at 15 - 25 cents were too valuable for every-day wear. The jeans or overalls were patched and the patches patched again. The teacher would hire students to help with the school chores such as sweeping floors - one month brought in 25 cents. Mother would be glad to "borrow" that quarter from me.

Another summer event, of course, was threshing - my fondest memory is of going along with Dad and the threshing gang. Dad would more the machine with the tractor. I'd sit on top of it near the straw blower and as soon as he had it positioned on the field, I could help to line up the big belt. Dad also taught me to use the grease gun and how to fill all the important little grease cups. -- What a beautiful sight to see the grain pouring from the spout into the big box wagon. A team of horses then hauled this to the elevator in the town of Gretna. The pitchers were out in the field pitching the sheaves unto the hayracks which were then hauled to the machine. Sometimes I had to help load the hayrack and then drive the horses with the full load to the machine and come back with the empty one for more. -- 1935 was the last summer Dad was with the gang.

The month of November was usually a time for the "pig-killing" bees. Neighbors or families were making arrangements when and where to go for such a day. Some couples who were especially adept at this, were in great demand were busy all week at a different farm each day. -- Some three to four porkers were usually fattened for the occasion. Sometimes they reached weights of four to five hundred pounds. How successful this fattening had been was decided by the number of pails of lard they would yield.

Great preparations had to be made. The troughs for scalding the pigs were placed in readiness. Large cauldrons were lined up in the summer kitchen and filled with water. Kindling and firewood placed beside them. Meat grinders and sausage making machines were set up and big pans for the ground meat brought out from the house. Inside the home food had to be prepared for the gang who already arrived for an early breakfast when it was still dark. This was usually at 7 a.m. and were even treated to a glass of wine for breakfast "to ward off the early November morning chill." By the first light of day Dad would go out and shoot the first pig and slit its jugular.

Other men were ready to drag it to the large trough and hoist it in, Then a brigade would run with pails full of boiling water from the kitchen and pour this along the back of the pig. They had two ropes under the pig and four men, two on each side, would slide the animal back and forth in water filled trough. Sometimes they would roll it over on each side so that they were sure that every part had been scalded.

Page 27

This done, the pig was lifted out of the trough by the ropes and a strong wooden ladder was slipped under it lengthwise. Shearers with large butcher knives stood on both sides and scraped off the bristles. When the pig was perfectly clean on all sides and its "toes" had been pulled off with a claw hammer, it was taken to the barn. A large hook was attached to each Achilles tendon on the back feet and by means of a block and tackle it was hoisted up ready for eviscerating.

Dad would make the cut from its crutch at the top down to the neck at the bottom. Two women with a large tub would stand ready to catch the insides as soon as they came out. My curiosity was always great and I got as close as possible so that I would not miss anything. Dad would say: "Na, krup nich noch gauns nen!" (Don't creep in all the way yet!) I learned the names of all the organs before I even went to school. How many times have I recalled these scenes later when I was teaching fetal pig dissection in my Biology class!

These innards the women took to the summer kitchen to clean. The gut was first cleaned of any feces left in them and then using more clean water it was turned inside out. Dad used to feed the pigs soft Souris coal several days before the big day. This made the gut so much cleaner. It was then washed with salt water over and over again leaving a nice clean casing for the sausage meat. While the first pig was being eviscerated in the barn another crew already had the second one in the trough for the scalding process.

All this while some of the men would be cutting up the carcass into hams (later to be salted and smoked), front shoulders into sausage meat, some of the sides into spare ribs, head cheese, etc. How beautiful those sausages looked! At an appropriate time came dinner. This was usually roast chicken since none of the fresh meat was ready yet. That would have to wait until supper. In between there was Faspas -afternoon coffee and buns.

Sometimes four pigs would be processed like this in a day. Women would stand stirring the fat that was being rendered into lard in the big cauldrons and also stirring the ribs which were being cooked in these cauldrons at the same time. How delicious those ribs were and still are (when available)! Straining the lard into pails left beautiful crackles (Grieben) and "Grieben Schmalz" (pig butter"). The latter makes a tasty spread for brown bread and was often used as a butter substitute. Hams and sausages were smoked and the feet and ears were pickled. The rest of the meat was carefully stored in various ways because this was our meat supply for the winter. And the hams had to last even into the next summer. After the neighborhood had made the rounds helping each other, December had rolled around and Christmas practices and snow storms and winter fun or hardships were at hand.

Little bits of torn up old cloth or discarded newspapers were used as toilet paper. Sometimes the old Eaton's or Sears catalogues were also recycled in this way. Everything seemed to be recycled and reused in those years. And the government did not even pay for it. As good as no bottles, no canned goods and few newspapers were needed. What paper was left over had to be used to start the fire in the wood stove in the morning.

Carrying in wood for the stove and filling the coal pail as well as carrying out the ashes, were chores usually expected to be done by the younger kids. Kerosene lamps were used to supply light on those long winter evenings and you can still see some of them around today. But today we use them only in emergencies e.g. when the hydro is out during a storm. The glass chimneys had to be cleaned every morning and the lamp filled with kerosene ("coal oil" it was sometimes called) so that the lamp was ready again for nightfall. Later the mantle lamp with a gauze type of ballooning wick came to be used. This emitted a much brighter white light, but a pump had to be used to put air pressure into the reservoir holding the gasoline. These had to be even more carefully handled than the ordinary kerosene lamp. Lanterns were used in the barns. They could be hung up on a nail. Occasionally a lantern would be taken along in the caboose for a night's drive.

Sometimes neighboring friends would walk several miles to visit each other. Going to town with horse and buggy or sleigh would be a weekly expedition. Then all the mail either going out or coming in would be looked after. A stamp was 2 or 3 cents and even they were hard to come by in those days. Minor things had to be bought. There were items such as thread, baking powder, spices, etc. which we did not produce on the farm. The aroma of spices arriving from the store are fond memories of mine. Coming home from school in summer the smell of pancakes baking outside on a tripod greeted us from far when the wind was right and we ran all the faster to get there. Under the tripod Mom used small dry branches and twigs to get a fast, hotter flame. Wood chips also helped to give "instant heat."

Every summer there was a family of cats and kittens in the hayloft. The concerns I had about the mother cat giving birth! It was also here that I could hide away with my story book. Then those big Manitoba Maple trees down our driveway! What great climbing those trees provided and how many a time I tore my skirts! The skipping rope and the wooden platform (not as big as a modern deck) in front of our bedroom window afforded a good opportunity for one of my favorite activities. This was also where one of my older sisters entertained her fiancé, M.F. If I went to skip somewhere else at such times it meant a stick of chewing gum for me afterwards.

Sitting on top of the roof of the barn was such fun! Playing anti-ant-over with someone else was super! As I got a bit older, having an Anne of Green Gables book to read in the shade under the sumac trees was so relaxing! To lie down in the grass near the creek amid the soothing sounds of spring and summer frogs was like being close to heaven. There were a lot of raspberries in the garden and to pick a bowl full and then to go down to the basement to put sugar and thick cream on them - Oh, how tasty! In winter, of course, the dried cherries in the upstairs attic were a most welcome replacement. Chewing these has to be experienced! The carrots in the potato bin also became a winter pastime and provided some good nutrition, e.g. vegetables. Then there is the memory of my sister Mary and myself taking the buggy to go to visit the neighbors. Mary, as she drove, singing: "Come and sit by my side if you love me"- Oh, to be in love! Then came the wedding in early spring -in our living room. At night the dance in the big machine shed! How exciting all this was for a young girl!

I believe that our house was too small for all of us. I'm sure that the outdoors afforded an outlet for my indoor frustrations. Three sisters in one bedroom? Where do you do your homework, if any? The kitchen table served as a dining table, a table on which meals were prepared, a cutting table for my sister's sewing projects, or whatever had to be done such as ironing, etc. The big cook stove to one side of the table was used to cook, bake and heat the adjacent rooms. This was a rather friendly place! From my stretcher I could watch the flickering, crackling fire through the door. Mom would often sit on the open oven door to warm her back! Delicious home baked bread and sugar

cookies would often pop out of that oven. I can still hear the pots and kettles simmering on the shiny black top of the stove. The reservoir at the back of the stove always provided the warm water for washing faces and hands. Beside this was located the cistern pump by which we pumped the water into a pail. (See picture - the same pump used in our kitchen.) This was our bathroom area. A large pail beneath the sink caught the run off or used water. The toilet was the outhouse (biffy) outside. In winter, when it became very cold, the barn also became a good place to go. An old 5-gallon pail with the bottom removed would be placed in the gutter behind the animals. This was not too comfortable a seat but was better than just squatting.

Chapter VII 1935

A trail for horse and sleigh often cut across the snowy fields. This would shorten distances. These trails became my walking paths to and from the Altona High School (1935 - 1938.) Neighbors would never pick me up no matter how cold or muddy it would be. This was rather heart breaking to find that your own sister and brother-in-law would not give you a lift. Then, of course, I had decided to go to high school which they felt was abominable and totally out of place for a girl. She wants to walk, we'll let her!

How vividly I remember two special occasions of help I received during this time. Walking home from school in 1935 a neighbor who passed our house happened to stop for me. She asked me why I did not take the bicycle. Well, I answered, only my brother had a bike and I was not permitted to use it. She replied: "Don't ask. Take it anyway!" Later on I took her advice.

After I had learned to ride the bike the next summer I encountered a very windy morning on the way to school. The north wind was very strong and north was the direction I had to go. Another neighbor, Mr. Driedger, was driving his horse and buggy in the same direction. He tied one end of a rope to the back of his buggy and handed me the other end. The mud road had deep cracks and ruts. My bicycle wheel got caught in one of the ruts and I fell, bike and all. He certainly meant well. In those days it seemed impossible for a married man to pick up a girl (or any female) for fear of the ill reputation he might get - just in case somebody might see him. Towing a girl on a bike behind his buggy was a different matter.

Page 30

I had several ways of getting to school. I had begged and cried for my parents to let me go. Finally my Dad, being much more liberal minded, told my mother: "Let her try. She'll probably give up before you know it. It means walking nine miles a day."-- To their surprise, I kept on walking in all kinds of weather. I would try first one route a quarter mile east, two miles north and then two and a half miles east again. Here there could have been a possibility of Mr. G. Dueck to pick me up as he went to and from his office in town every day. This would have saved me two and half miles. But, oh never! Neither did he want to be seen with a neighbor's daughter beside him on the buggy. On the bike, when possible, I would sometimes pick up a younger girl going to the Altberghal country school. Eva K. would ride on my handlebars and I would save her some walking.-- A second route would be straight east for two miles to the railroad track and then north into town. This was a route I chose when the others were too muddy. On one occasion the crew on a "jigger" came along at the right time and picked me up. I also tried walking into the Altona village. From there I could get a lift in Mr. Kehler's school van powered by a team of horses. I can't remember ever having been late for school!

It was the summer after I had finished Grade 9 (1936) that my father died of cancer. He had been sick all winter. He took ill during the threshing season of 1935. Dr. Breidenbach sent him to St. Boniface Hospital for treatment. His experience there gave him nothing but bitterness and so he would not go back again. There had been no anesthetic for his prostate biopsy! At home he gradually deteriorated. This was very sad for me since Dad was the only one in the family who really supported me in my school endeavor.

Dad realized that the cold winter would make it impossible for me to walk any more. He begged her to "seek" out an old lady or widow in town who would be willing to take me in during the coldest months. A Mrs. Henry Reimer did just that. Mom knew her. Mrs Reimer must have been in her late 70's. She took my help in the house and Mom's fresh butter and eggs in return. We must remember that there were no pensions of any kind for people like this. She was a kind old lady, yet could not always comprehend a 15-year old student's needs or feelings. She also had a small barn on the back of her yard. In the summer months I would sometimes unhitch my horse from the buggy to wait for me here until 4 o'clock. I found this too cumbersome. The horse had to be fed at noon as well.

Mrs. Reimer had her daughter, Lisa, living near by. I also was supposed to baby-sit for her for free. Her son, Roy, is still in the business (Rhineland Car) which his father, Mr. P.L. Dyck was in at the time. Mrs. Reimer's son, D. Reimer, ran the Co-Op store. I also baby-sat their two girls, Eileen and Valerie, on some occasions. This was an all-inclusive deal with staying at Mrs. Reimer's.

Some memories of this time have stayed with me. -- I was hungry most of the time. Old ladies who sit knitting all day, don't need the energy foods a teenager does. There was the sleeping on the stretcher in what probably was her living room. Carrying out her "night pail" to be emptied into the outhouse is another memory.

Page 31

I had to do my studying at the kitchen table where Mrs. Reimer would sit and knit. She had a somewhat elderly lady by the name of Tina Thiessen who was her housekeeper. I can't recall anything very positive about her except that, belonging to a Mennonite Brethren Church, she was just a better Christian than anyone else.

My father insisted on the old Mennonite tradition that girls had to have long hair. This became quite a problem for me at school. All the other girls had short hair. Mrs. Reimer's daughter, Lisa, was aware of this and wanted to be helpful. One day, while I was doing homework at the table, she secretly came up behind me and in one swoop with a large pair of scissors, she cut off my long braid. How terrified I was! What would happen to me at home! Going home on Friday, I tried to hide this by tying a kerchief over my head. Mother, being as sharp as always, found out soon enough. She sent me to see Dad who quietly asked why and what had happened. After I had explained he asked: "Do all the girls wear their hair short?" When I answered in the affirmative, he told me to go back to Mrs. Deck and tell her to make a good job of it at least.

My school clothes left much to be desired. No warm ski pants or such in those days! We wore long, cumbersome overcoats, felt shoes, woolen caps, etc. Sometimes mother would fold a flannelette blanket and stick it behind the back of my overcoat on the coldest days! No shorts or slacks for bike riding or Phys. Ed. or basketball, etc. at school. When I rode my bicycle down Altona Main Street one windy day, Ms. Fanny N. stood outside the store door and watched me. My skirt fluttered up in the wind and she yelled after me: "Susie, your pants, your pants!" How embarrassed I was but little could I do but hang on to my skirt.

The Post Office was located two doors down from this store. Mr. D.W.Friesen, the Postmaster, also ran a small Confectionery as well as a business in school books. Many a time I stopped here to pick up the bit of mail to take home or to trade in the last year's used text books for the books I needed for current year. I could only get second hand books, except for one my father bought me: "An Agriculture Text" which I needed for the extra course I wanted to take in Grade 10 next year. What a treasure it was! Dad said to me: "Then you'll be better unformed to teach the school kids in the country schools." That book is still in our own library!

Also on Main Street stood Harry's Cafe, a Chinese restaurant. What a kind man Harry was! This was the place where the High School fellows, and some girls, would go for what? Hard to tell - mostly smoke. Our principal would sometimes go after them when the boys tried to play hooky. Mr. Goldberg's Store was bit farther south. I can still smell its contents and the oiled floor. He had everything from shoes to nails, thread, etc. Boxes filled with oranges or apples stood on the floor. Customers would fill a paper bag and take it to the counter and have it weighed and not by computer. The till would spew out the price. At the corner of the then Main Street was the Driedger store which became a real drug store known as Lou Erk's Pharmacy.

Page 32

Chapter VIII The Altona High School

Anyone interested in reading about the origin and development of the Altona schools should read the article by Vic. Penner in the Red River Valley Echo, Centennial Edition of 1995. The school I attended was the two storey frame structure built in 1899 for \$7,000 which served the community until 1938 when it was dismantled. It was located on 3rd Ave. N.E. where the Elmwood Apts. were built in the 1980's

When I started this High School in the fall of 1935, Mr. J. G. Neufeld was the principal. Our one-room High School had its classroom on the second floor of this building and Grades 7 & 8 occupied another one on the same floor.

The Grades 1 to 6 were located in classrooms on the first floor. The school had a small library and a storage room. The large hall served the High School students as extra study space. A small table was located near one window. I remember this table where Percy Goldberg and I often sat to study together in our free period. We had both taken our Grade 10 and 11 Math. in our Grade 10 year. This gave us an extra study period in Grade 11. Percy appreciated the extra help I could give him in the German course.

With all three grades in one room it was possible to take extra courses even at that time. Final departmental exams had to be written in June. How exciting it was to go to town at the end of June or early July to see if the statement of marks had already arrived!

My first day at school -- well, the first question the girls asked me was: "Have you got a boy friend? When I answered: "No, and why should I need one?" everyone giggled and someone exclaimed: "What a country hick!" -- Another question: "Why don't you speak like a country hick?" - "Why long hair?" Some time later when I was standing at the window just looking out: "Na, Kloassi, betst aul wada?" (Well, Klassen, are you praying again?) Many times I had notes or signs on my desk such as a skull with an arrow through it and the label "Poison" below it. Harassment was very common even then! When my first set of marks came out, my peers were somewhat more subdued!

Some students sticking out in my mind were such as Mildred Enns who also came from the country some two miles away. Her father was the teacher at the Schönthal S.D. In winter she stayed at the Schwartz sisters' place. The Schwartz House is now a Museum. Here she and I would sometimes study together or work on our debates. Our principal would have debating tournaments and it's many a debate we had in school. I rather enjoyed public speaking. The High School also had Literary Programs where the students would chair and conduct the whole evening program. Sometimes things that were out of order would happen as well. One such evening I was informed had brought in a bottle of whiskey and hidden it in his desk. Since I had to chair the program, myself and another student decided to throw the bottle of whiskey out the window. We smashed it that way. Smoking was common among the boys. We were also aware of certain drugs being brought in train and thrown out at designated locations where users would come and pick them up.

Page 33

Mr. Neufeld also had a school choir. Everyone sang in it. We often sang at funerals and certainly at the school Christmas Concert. Much racism existed then. The Jewish students always participated as well. I understand that after the war started in 1939, things had changed somewhat. Certainly the Goldbergs and Nitikmans were kind and understanding and most helpful during the hard times of the thirties. Mrs. Goldberg has asked me into their home now and then.

All High School students were placed on a supervision roster for Elementary and Junior High outdoor playgrounds. This certainly gave the seniors excellent training in responsibility. Our basketball courts were outside. The cinder-ash courts were very hard on knees and hands as well as on clothing. I always played on the basketball team since I was tall and enjoyed it. Our team had only the R.A.I. (An Agricultural School) to play against but it certainly was something. There was no such thing as regional High Schools playing in a league.

Hallowe'en was celebrated with a party. I recall one where we all trekked out to Mr. J. Siemens farm for a wiener roast - the fire was a huge one on the bank of his "dug out" water pond.

I had to have a few months of winter accommodation. The clothes for winter warmth were not available. The "thirties" had put everyone on the same level but then not everyone had four and a half miles to walk to school. December, January, February and March were my worst months. I had to work for my room and board - partially at least. Mother would bring the old ladies butter and other farm produce they otherwise would have to buy. In Grade 10 things got tougher. Mrs. Reimer's son decided that this was not enough! So late in fall one week-day morning I was told - no eating allowed! Well, so I had to go without food. I could only sleep on my stretcher. I must say that I was on the verge of becoming what we now call a "street kid".

Then Mom tried the Harms residence in the Altona village. The village had a horse-drawn school van taking kids to school in town. My room was icy cold! Lunches, and food in general, were skimpy. At school the usual routine was carried out. I had no Dad to stand up for me any more. My siblings at home had only harassment and bickering for me - yet I knew where I belonged.

In mid-March Easter arrived. I was undernourished, skinny and exhausted, emotionally and physically. It was only my faith in God that kept me going. I was taking extra courses at school such as Grade 11 Math. and Agriculture. I came down with a nervous disorder known as St. Vitus' Dance.

Mom began to realize that something was wrong and took me to see Dr. Breidenbach. I shall never forget how the doctor reprimanded her and scolded her for starving me. The doctor spoke German and in no uncertain terms asked her: "Habt ihr nichts zu essen?" (Haven't you got enough to eat?)

Mom replied: "Na, Na, Breidenbach, so schlemm es daut nich" (Well, well, doctor, it can't be that serious). "Yes, yes!" he said. The medication he gave me picked me up, but I had strict orders not to do any extra studying after school.

Page 34

Memories of Grade 10 were often too difficult to express. The hardest part was coming home to my family where I met mostly harassment and why - why do you do this? After all, we didn't get to go to High School! Being the second youngest of ten didn't make it any easier. If any one of my brothers or sisters would have wanted to go to go to High School the way I did, certainly they could have.

My greatest support was my next older sister Elizabeth (Betty). She was anxious to get an education and had written and passed her High School Entrance exams. But at the time she had some health problems and was physically no strong enough for the rigors of walking to school. She attempted Grade 9 by Correspondence courses but dropped them again. There was not enough incentive at home.

Betty was a good seamstress and did as much as possible to keep me in half decent clothes. She made me a pair of "culottes" - a split skirt - for driving bike. What an improvement since I was not allowed to wear shorts!

This certainly made things a lot easier for me in Phys. Ed. class as well. Since I did not wear shorts, my principal once asked me whether I was scared to show off my legs. I told him no, I thought I had nice looking legs. The Culottes certainly remedied the problem of the wind billowing up my skirt when I rode my bike down Main Street.

Substitute teachers were not the rule of the day. The principal would pick a High School student and send him or her down to replace the missing Elementary teacher. I spent many a day teaching the Grade 5 & 6 classroom.

Mr. J.N.Hoepfner, the teacher, was also a lay minister and was often called to serve at some function such as a funeral. Many years later a married woman met me in the Altona Laundromat and told me that she remembered me as her Grade 5 teacher. I told her that I had never taught in Altona. She reminded me that she had been in Mr. Hoepfner's class. She said: "Boy, could you ever handle the class! We just couldn't fool around! No wonder the principal chose you so often.

After Easter was the best time: last part of the school year, Departmental exams to write, and then the results! God had been good to me again! I passed everything with flying colors even the Grade 11 Math. In this subject I ranked second in the Grade 11 student results. This was followed by the summer months of hard work at home - hoeing, cleaning, picking fruit and

canning, milking, even catching gophers for the so much prized gopher tails.

The teacher of our country school had also hired me to water her prized newly planted trees around the school. This entailed carrying water from the creek.

It gave me a few cents to pay for the difference when I traded my Grade 10 texts in for the Grade 11 texts at D.W. Friesens. Some of these were already pretty tattered because I could afford only the cheapest.

At home my older sisters and brothers were married, had babies and needed baby sitters. During the summer I spent many a week at my oldest sister's rocking the cradle so that she could work on the field with her husband. A few years earlier I remember her telling me not to wave to my teacher who happened to drive by. Today, I suppose, that warning would be more appropriate.

My mother was going to make it easier for me in Grade 11. She arranged to board me with another Mrs. Reimer. Regular room and board was \$10.00 a month. Mom arranged that she would pay \$5.00 a month and I was supposed to work for the other \$5.00. Mrs. Reimer had some five to six boarders plus her own son. She also had a big garden and two cows. Her house was a two-storey one. Friday's chores like washing and waxing floors was one of my duties. This meant a three times over job since waxers and polishers were unknown. After a week of classes, studies and supervisory duties at school, I was a rather tired teenager by the time 8 -9 p.m. rolled around.

My brother Dan was married now and lived one and a half miles from home. Sometimes he arranged to do his business in town on a Friday afternoon and then stopped by to give me a ride home. One week-end when he came by he watched me on my hands and knees just finishing the polishing of the kitchen floor. He asked me about my work requirements. When we got home, he asked my mother for whom she thought her daughter had been born. Mother decided to pay full board and release me from household chore duties. This finally gave me a few months after Christmas for full board. Oh, what a relief! No more reprimands for having forgotten to salt the porridge in the for breakfast. I did not need to run errands to the store during noon hours. How many wheelbarrow loads of cabbages and potatoes I had hauled into the cellar from the garden that fall! We as boarders usually had fried potatoes and cole slaw for supper. I'm correct in saying we all were hungry enough for a heavier meal. However, the reader must remember the reader must remember that there were no old age pensions, of family allowances during the 30' and 40's. It was a tough world without welfare. The churches and municipalities had to look after the very poor.

One extra-ordinary at this house was the pig killing day. It was a big occasion as I had learned to know it at home as a kid, but for a school to close for the day so that the teachers could join in was really a surprise to me. Two of Mrs. Reimer's daughters were teaching in a country school and had closed for the day so that they could be at home for the occasion. Sitting at the dinner table with these two teacher, I jumped when I was yelled at that there was no bread on the table! Why was I responsible for this? What had these ladies been doing all morning? Then I had to run to Harry's Cafe for another pound of casings for the sausages. After I came back it was still expected of me to be back at school by 1 p.m.

It was also interesting to meet the fiancé of one of these daughters on Fridays. Even more interesting later when I got to be on the same teaching staff. Today some of these incidents would be considered child abuse - yet I suppose it groomed a hardier character and strengthened my faith in God. But it left some doubts in my young mind about the sincerity of society's much talked about love for all mankind.

My social life in Grade 11 left me with my few friends in school who supported me in their own way. I can't remember ever complaining either at home, to my teachers or to my friends.

I had an extra spare at school since I had taken and passed my Grade 11 Math. in Grade 10. Literary evenings, prayer meetings, and choir practice with K. H. Neufeld, the renowned music conductor, were some of my high-lights. I learned to know some fellows of repute but the so-called "dating" nights out occurred seldom. Going to "Jugendverein" in church with them was about the greatest event. I had no trouble having boy friends, probably because of my strict upbringing as well as my fear that I would not be able to continue my education. My oldest brother would keep a very keen observant eye on me and report all he had seen to my mother. Mother, of course, had had plenty of warnings from my older siblings.

Getting an education in a one-room High School had many advantages as well as disadvantages. The school itself was a two storey building with a large bell on top. This bell was rung to tell students on the playground that it was time to come in. - One day a fire had broken out somewhere up town. It was recess and many of the students happened to be outside. For reasons of curiosity they left the school yard and ran to see where the fire was. It didn't take long until the principal ran the bell furiously but it took some doing for the kids to come back indoors. As a punishment, the principal took a heavy yard stick and went through each room making the kids run around the room with him wielding the stick over whose ever back he could strike as they passed him. This he did through all the rooms. In his own classroom all those who had left the school yard had to run. I recall sitting in my desk hoping and praying that he would not hurt anyone seriously. He was striking at random and yelling, "Run, come on, run!"

This episode caused quite some furor in town! The principal could get very angry and irascible over any little thing. - I remember one day when I was in Grade 9 he was dictating Spelling to us. The student behind me asked me to repeat a word she had not understood. I did so and for this he expelled me from school. I practically begged on my knees with tears in my eyes for him to relent. I lingered walking home that day but said nothing about it at home. That would have been the end of it all. Back to school I went next morning as though nothing had happened. Once more God was on my side.

During my Grade 10 year, a student in Grade 11 got sick with TB. The tuberculosis clinic came around with their wagon to X-ray all the students. Again I did not say anything at home for fear of the consequences. The ill student had to go to Ninette for rest and treatment. As undernourished and as tired as I was, I still feel very fortunate in not contracting the disease.

How kind the Chinaman, Harry Yee, had been to me. One day mother had given me 5 cents so I could go to Harry's to buy a can of sardines to eat with my bread for lunch. I asked Harry to open it for me and then went to sit in a booth, the one farthest away from the door, to eat my lunch. Before I knew what was happening, Harry had placed a wedge of pie beside me on the table. I was embarrassed and tried to make it clear to him that I could not pay for it. He exclaimed: "No pay - you hungry - yours - eat!" -- Also I shall never forget good Mrs. Andres' pancakes or soup to which she treated me on occasion. Her daughters brought me home when I had nowhere else to go. The Andres had come from Russia in the 20's and were trying to eke out a living too.

Chapter IX -- Mennonite Collegiate Institute - M. C. I.

As the Grade 11 school year came to a close, I became more and more concerned of what I'd do to get my Grade 12. Altona did not offer Grade 12 and so The M. C.I. at Gretna could be my only hope. This was a private school and it had a hard time to survive in the 30's. Our people considered it a "Rußländer"

school because of the many recent immigrants that attended it. My family certainly did not have much sympathy for this school. During the summer months the teachers of the M. C. I. had to go about in the community to try and find students for the next year. This saved my life! It would be nigh impossible to go to Winkler some 25 miles away because I was expected to walk or bike to school. Early in September 1937 the then Principal, Mr. G.H.Peters and a teacher, Mr. J.D.Siemens, drove up to our house and approached Mother

(I was standing near by) to let me enroll for Grade 12. Mom told them in no uncertain terms that she would not let me stay in the old residence for girls because it had a reputation for being infested with bed bugs. Then Mr. Siemens offered Mom that I could stay with his wife and children since he was full time dean at the Boys' Residence. This was different and so again, in return for service and work rendered, I had a chance. Now, what about tuition? This had to be borrowed and a good neighbor, Mr. A. P. Driedger, made this wonderful gesture. Forty dollars was a lot of money in those days. How happy I was!

My two older sisters were dating at that time. Sister Justina was fairly serious about John Z. Klassen at that time. Justina and Betty had been at the annual M.C.I. Sangerfest in spring. They had been offered a ride by a teacher, Mr. Ben Klippenstein, who lived in the neighborhood. So to some extent they knew what the M.C.I. was all about. Mother had managed the year without Dad and the crops had improved. Times were still tough but Mother managed to buy a Model A Ford Sedan. This, of course, was driven by my brother Andrew who was the only driver at home at the time. He knew how to manipulate mother and thought he had priority in using the car. He used it to go out and see his girl friends. Of course his love for hockey and for the picture shows in Neche gave him great opportunities to meet the ladies. He would often come to my window after he arrived back from dating and tell me all about the exciting events of the night - as to where he had been, etc. He was a quick tempered brother often making hasty decisions. He would give a girl an engagement ring before he was sure of his own feelings and then find that he had to break the relationship again soon after.

Andrew often gave Mom a hard time and some of the occurrences I witnessed were not commendable. My youngest brother, now 15, now also had an example to follow that was not always positive. Mother had a hard time trying to raise five children on her own and farming at the same time. Boys, of course, always seemed more important at that time and were pampered.

Page 38

The Grade 12 school year had its ups and downs. More German and Religious courses were an extra load for me. In school two days a week were designated as "Deutscher Tag" (German Day). On these days were required to speak German during class changes and at recesses as well as during the noon hour. If a student was caught speaking English, he or she had to stay after school to memorize a German poem or song. The girls tried hard to get me caught and so it happened one day. I had to memorize the hymn "Ringe recht wenn Gottes Gnade". Every time I heard this sung in church later on, it always took me back to the M.C.I.

Our teachers were: Mr. G.H.Peters, principal, who also taught Math. and Chemistry as well as some German courses; Mr. J.Giesbrecht, Physics; Mr.J.D. Siemens, History and some German; Mr. Esau, Religion. Most teachers had extra courses. We were 12 students in Grade 12 out of a total enrollment of about 60 students. There was a strict dress code. Boys had to wear a dress shirt and tie as well as a jacket. Girls were not permitted to wear short sleeves and they had to wear stockings. A few years later uniforms for girls were instituted.

I took the Math. and Science courses as well as the English, German and Religious courses. Some of my classmates from Altona were at the M.C.I. too,

e.g. Agnes Dueck (Wall). New students I learned to know were Bill De Fehr, Susan Fehr, Peter Brown, Lillian Klassen, etc. (See picture). Mr. Peters was an excellent teacher but very old fashioned when it came to discipline especially in regard to co-ed student relationships. No "flirting" or "petting" was tolerated. A boy and girl were not to walk home from school together nor skate together. There was an unwritten rule that there should be at least three feet of space between members of the opposite sex. But Mr. Peters never got after me when he saw Bill De Fehr tie my too well worn skates. The skates were a loan since I did not have my own. Poor, ill-fitting, torn skates are not the best for learning to skate. To this day I prefer roller skating to ice skating.

The school choir was conducted by Mr. Esau. We had wonderful tenors such as Peter Koslowsky, Bill De Fehr and Peter Brown. In fact, many of the Grade 12 boys were good singers. Some interested non school members from the community would come to join our practices and thus augment our choir. Music and academics were considered of major importance in the school.

If it had not been for group studies, some of us taking physics would not have made the course. At the M.C.I. we had real laboratories for Chemistry and physics. Inspectors or Examiners would come out in spring to examine the Grade 12's practical work in the Sciences. The Chemistry experiment assigned to me was the preparation of Sulfur Dioxide. We had to do it all from memory. Due to the smell of Sulfur Dioxide, I did not have to go beyond the set up stage. -- Our labs were probably the most enjoyable part of the science courses. One student, Susan Fehr, was a brilliant person but had to be different and try out something out of the ordinary. One day she reversed the instruction never to pour acid into water, so experience an explosion which blinded her for several days. I led her to the town Dr.'s office for treatment. - Mr. Peters' favorite expression was: "Pass to the blackboard, please!" This certainly was a very efficient way of teaching quadratic equations, etc.

Page 39

In June came the three hour theoretical examinations. For Chemistry, the Periodic Tables had to be in our heads i.e. memorized. Today students receive the tables with all the atomic structures for the exams! -- In June all students in Grades 11 & 12 wrote two three hour exams a day. These were known as "Departmentals" and sent to the city to be marked. Committees of teachers chosen for each subject area would mark these at various school locations in the city at the beginning of July. They forfeited 2 weeks of their vacation for this but also received extra remuneration.

In English we had to write three hour exams in Drama, Novel, Poetry and Composition. These periods of examination were strictly supervised. The sealed packages from the Department were opened in front of the already nervous students.

It was during this year that I also took the Catechism classes in preparation for church membership. The Chapel in the school also served as the meeting place for the local Mennonite community. The candidates sat in the front row and were instructed and asked the questions which they had to answer in front of the whole congregation. I had memorized those 200 Catechism questions as early as Grade 3 and so had no problems with them.

Mr. Esau, when asking for a further explanation for a particular question and finding no volunteers to answer, would say: "Na, Suse, du weißt. Sag mal!"

Actually it was at these church services where Frank (my future husband) first saw me. He was already teaching at the school in Rosenort west of Gretna and sometimes spent Sunday with his buddy, Jake Peters, in Gretna. His two nephews, Frank Dyck and Abe Neufeld, were attending the M.C.I. for Grade 11. Since I commuted and partially worked for my board at J.D. Siemens, I didn't have much time to socialize with my school mates. The Siemens had a cow and after supper I sometimes carried out the milk that Mrs. Siemens sold.

Mr. Peters did not mind this but as a rule students had no permission to be out on the street after 7 p.m. Then occasionally I baby sat for Mrs. Siemens and for her sister Mary who was married to Mr. Peter Brown who was the Principal at the Gretna Public School. It was Mrs. Brown who thoughtfully made me a bouquet for Graduation in June. She sacrificed her best Geraniums to do this.

As soon as Sunday church services were over, I went home again. There was no school on Mondays but on Saturdays, so staying for church just worked out fine. Of course none of my family would ever come to this church on Sunday morning. I was going to join a church far out of the realms of those my family attended. Most of my family belonged to the Sommerfelder Church with Justina and Betty having joined the Rudnerweider, now E.M.M. C. So I was considered more of a rebel. In view of this, my oldest sister forbade me to cross the threshold of her home. How things have changed since!

Student shenanigans did occur. Girls in residence sometimes let themselves down by a rope from their second floor windows and then would take off in the dark for a rendezvous in the basement of the old vacant hotel. During the week-end they would sometimes walk across to Neche park during the day to meet their boy friends. Once caught, severe counseling ensued either privately in the library or publicly during chapel period next morning.

Page 40

Mr. Peters' classes were excellent but in his Literature classes he would sometimes take the opportunity to tell us how he and his wife had courted in their time - always in the presence of her parents. Mr. & Mrs. Peters had some of the M.C.I. girls for boarders. Sometimes, on Sunday afternoons, some of us girls would go over there and listen to his classical records. Oddly enough, he objected to my wearing my old red toque - the color reminded him of Russia too much.

Sometimes I had to deliver milk to Mrs. Friesen (Mrs. Siemens' mother) who lived across the tracks on a big 4-acre yard in an old two storey house. Twenty years later this became the first home that we bought. Here a brilliant son lived with his mother and sister Alvina. He had a nervous condition and it was rumored that he was using drugs. Because of his unsteady hands he was known as "Shaky Jakie". My mother and Mrs. Friesen had been childhood playmates running through the first Gretna mill which was owned by the Friesens. John Wall had built the mill. What a lot of history that part of town held for us!

In spring preparations for Sangerfest and Graduation took place. I was given parts to perform in both. The big Sangerfest was held in a big tent rigged up and supported by poles. We had no sound system and had to learn how to project our voices. Naturally a big thunderstorm blew up and gave us 60 students quite the competition. How I wished some of my family would come too. Graduation was held in a separate Sunday. I had to speak again. Of the Schulfest (Sangerfest) my memories seem to be of a Chemistry laboratory demonstration in German. One quotation I made which has stuck with me was: "Reden ist Silber, Schweigen ist Gold!"

My graduation day was a frustrating one. My Mom and sisters and brother Andy (as driver) preferred to go to a distant cousin's wedding in Morden. I was to milk the four cows and do the chores before going to Grad for 7 p.m. The cows had to be driven home from the pasture a mile down the creek and since I had to start earlier than their usual time, they objected and did not want to go. At any rate, after all was done, I took the bike and headed for Gretna.

Mrs. Siemens was anxiously waiting for me. I had left my graduation dress, made by Sister Betty and Mom, here. So I quickly washed up and changed. (The dress was made of Voile- 25 cents a yard. Our

sewing machine had decided to quit for making it and so it was done mostly by hand.) Mrs. Braun had my bouquet ready for me! At school, Mr. Peters was impatiently waiting. They had been waiting as long as possible to take pictures but it had been getting dark and so they took them without me.

At the banquet table in the school "Dorm," the principal discovered that I was alone. He was rather taken aback and I can still hear him exclaim: "Oh, du armes Kind! Mutti nicht einmal hier!" He would not let me sit alone like an orphan, so he and Mrs. Peters took me between them! This was a rather hard experience for me. Everybody else's parents were there.

Page 41

My picture happened to be taken by other friends of mine who were annual visitors to such a week-end at the M. C. I.. I guess I have Armin Sawatzky to thank for the picture. Why and how I came to meet him I don't recall.

Chapter X Summer at Home (1939)

Home life had become somewhat more subdued. My Sister Justine's wedding took place May 28th. The big machine shed had been emptied, cleaned and decorated for the occasion. And what an occasion it was!

The choir was organized by the teacher, Mr. J.H.Reimer, whose invalid wife my sister Justine had looked after kindly on many occasions. Mrs. Reimer had a nervous condition and was often disoriented. The Reimers had two children, Leni and Harry. Mother did a lot of looking after Leni e.g. mending stockings, washing and combing her long hair, etc. Leni and I have spent many hours playing together. Harry and brother Martin were at the school together until Harry went to the M.C.I. for Grade 9.

After the wedding, i.e. next Sunday morning, was my baptism. This took place in the Altona Bergthaler Church. There were some 30 candidates. This morning my Mom and I and my brother Andy went in the Model A Ford. I can't recall that either Betty or Martin came. Oddly enough, My brother John and his wife, Mary, came. But John and Andrew did not stay for the service but went up town. Where? I don't know. -- After all this was too liberal a church for them, eh? I remember staying on my knees almost an hour before Bishop Schulz had finished welcoming us all into the Congregation. Rev. J. N. Hoepfner, for whom I had substituted so often when I went to High School in Altona, assisted and had chosen as my baptismal text Philipians 1: 6 - "I am sure that He, who began a good work in you, will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." This, of course, all in German but how true and securely that verse has accompanied and supported me all through my journey in life to this very day. What a superb assurance!

Justine had moved out with her hubby. So only sister Betty, myself, Andy and Martin were left to cope with each other. The storm clouds of war were gathering over Europe and an uneasiness prevailed. In the spring of 1939 King George VI and Queen Elizabeth came to Winnipeg on their Canadian tour. Some of us M.C.I. students were able to rent a truck and due to muddy roads we went via Carman to stand in line along the Winnipeg streets to watch the Royal Parade. This was my first trip to Winnipeg. It was quite the excitement!

This summer of 1939 got to be a very restless one since I was very eager to go to Normal School (teacher training) at that time. Where would the money come from? How could I get there. Again God opened a path for me. - Mom made a loan from Mr. Goldberg for half of the year's tuition and again Mr. Driedger, the neighbor, loaned the other half. My marks were good enough to be accepted. Our average mark in English had to be at least 60%. I had excelled more than that in the Sciences.

Page 42

On the application to Normal School a section was devoted as to where to find a place to live. Through this and a friend, Armin Sawatzky (a teacher), who had roomed with the Fast Sisters at 618 Elgin, I managed to get a place within my financial means. At the time of this writing (Jan. 1996) I verified this by a phone call to the youngest of these sisters. I do recall what an answer to prayer that family came to mean to me even to this day. The rent was \$4.00 a month for me and \$4.00 for a roommate. We had one room with a davenport which doubled as a bed for the night. We did our cooking on a hot plate which sat on a contraption constructed out of orange crates. The partitions in the orange crates served as shelves for our few dishes. One dresser, a small table and two chairs completed our "home."

For a few dollars I had managed to buy a large wood and metal trunk. (This same trunk still stands in my daughter's home.) - Mother would send out my food weekly via the Altona Transfer at a cost of about 25 cents. In this package would be bread, milk, cream, butter and eggs. Sometimes it contained some ready made borscht and now and then a coffee cake. Sister Betty was as excited as I was when I finally got to the place where both of us had dreamed of going. The butter and cream I usually sold to the roomers across the hall from us, the Fontaines. This bit of money would serve me for stockings, hygienic materials - for the first time in my life I was able to use Kotex in place of old rags - or for bus fare. But mostly I walked from Elgin to school, to Eaton's, to various churches.

My brother John took me to my new home, the Fasts, with his light delivery truck. He didn't especially like driving in the city but, since he often worked for the Fehr and Neufeld Transfers, he seemed quite capable. Potatoes, carrots and cabbage (produce from our garden) would be stored in Fasts' basement. In the family there were: Anna, Katie, Margaret, Susan, Agatha, Lydia and their kind mother who gave me a "second home" and made me feel very welcome.

My roommate was Helen Reimer. She was a daughter of the lady I had stayed with during my Grade 11 year. In many ways we were two very opposite people and so had our difficulties living in such close quarters. All of the Fast sisters had jobs in the city and had rather strict rules for their roomers. They, too, were recent immigrants from Russia and had a difficult start here in Canada.

Well, World War II broke out in September. I can still hear the loudspeakers at the Free Press building screaming "Canada at War!" - This had a tremendous impact on my life - on everybody's life. War with Germany?!

Normal School introduced me to new people and I made some new friends. We were some 150 students. I was placed in Class B and in it happened to be a number of Mennonites. A very close watch by the Principal, Mr. Stevens and staff was kept, especially on students with Mennonite or German names as well as on the French. A large world map had been placed at the entrance of the school. The Principal would stand at this map in the foyer and greet us on arrival. For me the question would be: "Well, Miss Klassen, how far have the Germans advanced today?" I could honestly answer: "Sir, I have no radio nor newspaper. I couldn't tell you!"

Page 43

Students were tried for "accents" at once. The Minister of Education, Mr. Ivan Schultz, would give us all individual sessions to try us out for any noticeable accent or "reading" deficiencies. I had just had all my upper teeth

extracted the week before and an artificial plate put in on the raw gums. This made my speech different, too, and the Minister told me I really had no accent but he couldn't figure out why I spoke with such a "full" mouth. I informed him of my problem and when he realized this, he dismissed me. We had some students who had been at University for a year or so already. To my amazement some 40 students were asked to leave and thus denied a chance of becoming future teachers. This seemed to be especially the case for male students. Of course, the likelihood of them joining the army or being drafted may have been the reason.

Phys.Ed. was compulsory and that included folk dancing. I enjoyed these classes though I made a poor dancer. A "practice" classroom of some 25 Elementary students was located right in the building and became the training center for us. Instructors like Mr. Riter for Maths, Mr. Pratt for Art, Miss Graham for Home Ec. and Phys. Ed., Miss Norton for English have all left vivid memories with me.

Before many months were up the male teachers in the Winnipeg schools found themselves drafted for war services and classrooms were in need of teachers. Many a time I was sent out to take over at different schools until permanent replacements had been found. The one I was at longest was on St. Mary's - now a parking lot. Here I had a Grade 6 classroom for some 6 weeks. My greatest problem was bus fare - 5 cents at the time. Sometimes the Principal wanted to send me somewhere beyond walking distance and I had to confess that I did not have the bus fare. Sometimes, instead of sending another student, he would hand me the 5 cents. Since I had substituted as far back as my Grade 10 & 11 years, I was not quite as new at it as some of the others and this increased my chances of being sent out more often. School principals would sometimes ask to have back because they knew I would be able to manage the classroom.

The Normal School had monthly entertainment socials and each class had to be responsible for one such evening. Our Class's theme was "Hard Times." It was here one could meet more people who came in to have a bit of fun and entertainment. Here I met an Air Force fellow, Stan Switzer. He was a fellow who was very concerned about having to go overseas and actually kill people. As a Believer he found this very difficult.

It was Stan who treated me to my first airplane ride. The airport was called Stevens' Airport at the time. Another couple also embarked on this adventurous outing. The planes used for training were certainly different from what we have today. It was quite the experience to go up high and then feel the plane tilt its nose downward and make a sudden drop! - Unfortunately I could not go to the C.P.R. Station the day he left for overseas

Page 44

because my brother John had come to pick me and my baggage up to take me home at the same time. But Stan Switzer called me to say "Good-bye!" and I have never seen him again. Information had it that his whole contingent was bombed and destroyed when they were disembarking in England.

Other fellows who made my life more enjoyable sometimes took me to places and concerts I could not afford. John W. treated me to the concert given by the famous Nelson Eddy. My former elementary school teacher, Kate Klassen, lived in the city now and she would still try to give me advice on this or that matter. - Roller skating became a great hobby of mine. This Winnipeg roller rink would often house crowds of about 1000. Here instructors were present and that indeed was a great asset for me. The skates you could rent. The place is still in business.

I made a practice of visiting different churches in order to familiarize myself with different faiths and different ethnic groups. This, I felt, would help me greatly in my classrooms. I walked great distances because my money was next to nil. Nobody could afford baby sitters. All I had was the money I received from the sale of produce. Nylons were unknown. We wore silk stockings and when these got a run in them, the run was carefully mended with needle and matching thread.

Generously my sister Betty had let me have her new winter coat and she took my old threadbare one. This coat had a big brown collar and, as a teacher, I still wore it years later. Betty was a good seamstress and also managed to make me a lovely suit from my brother Andrew's discarded one. These men's suits had two pairs of wide legged pants and so there was enough material to make a nice jacket and skirt. A shirt and tie of my brother's made up my outfit. My gym shorts Betty had made from navy blue broadcloth.

Now and then Betty would manage to get a ride into the city to visit me - usually with the "Transfer." I used this means to go home for November 11, Remembrance Day. I walked to Eaton's parkade and there caught the Altona Transfer to go home. I also did this for the Christmas break.

The city, with all the soldiers training here and there, became a different, "nervous" place to be. Some soldiers felt that they should have extra privileges with the girls. My roommate, especially, had a tendency to feel sorry for these guys. She already was wearing an engagement ring but in spite of this she would often ask a uniformed "friend" over to our little room until our landladies put a stop to this. Feelings were running high as to being drafted or becoming a "Conscientious Objector."

It was at Normal School I met some fellow teachers to be who became life long friends. A special one was Anne Regehr who in later years married my husband's nephew Frank Dyck. Armin Sawatzky, Tina Goertzen and Anne Ediger are among the many others that come to mind. Many former M.C.I. students became teachers, lawyers, doctors and nurses. M.C.I. students had a good reputation with the Department of Education and so those of us who were at the Normal School fared very well. The greatest adversity, of course, was the war.

Page 45

Three weeks of country school teaching was part of the teacher training. After Christmas we got lists of schools which were on the recommended list. Naturally I was looking for a school near my parental home. Because my sister and brother-in-law lived in the village of Rosenort west of Gretna, I thought of going there because then I could stay at my sister Mary's. Little did I know that this school did not go by the name of the village but was called "Aesop". So I kept looking for the name Rosenort on my list but found only a Rosenort near Morris was listed. So I took it that this teacher had not been recommended. I didn't even know his name. So I had to make another choice and landed up at Krongart some miles north of Plum Coulee with a Mr. Voth as teacher. I could stay with him and his family in the teacherage. It was a Grades 1- 8 classroom and after only a few days Mr. Voth could leave me teach on my own. I became good friends with the family and many years later also got to teach some of his grandchildren. The daughter and her husband came to be next door neighbors to us in Winnipeg.

All this confusion about listed schools led to a correspondence with the teacher at the village of Rosenort west of Gretna. I had sent my brother-in-law to ask him for the privilege of practice teaching under him and he had consented. When I had to change my plans, I wrote to thank him for his kindness but that the Rosenort school west of Gretna had not been on the recommended list. By return mail I had a letter asking me to check whether Aesop was not on the recommended list. I did and yes it was. So I wrote and told him of my ignorance about the name of his school. At the time I had not been aware that Frank (Mr. Enns) was still single. So maybe all this led to a more independent interest in each other. Frank had learnt to know who I was earlier in Grade 12 at the M.C.I. already since he often spent week-ends in Gretna.

The Aesop school had Inspector G.G.Neufeld as an "Official" trustee and my brother-in-law, Martin Froese, was the local person appointed to take care

of things concerning the school. For this reason the teacher often had occasion to drop in at the Froeses. Frank claims that he fell in love with me because of the picture of me that my sister had standing on their living-room table.

Well, our correspondence led from one thing to the next. Because my niece was his pupil, he thought it appropriate for him to invite me to come to the school picnic in June. This was usually a joint effort of two or three country schools. Country school picnics were as much an event as the Christmas concert but of an entirely different nature. A suitable schoolground or meadow was chosen and all the pupils with their teachers organized a real sports day. I had already lived through these events as a kid. Races such as thread-the-needle, sack race, wheelbarrow race and simply running were always the "in" thing. There always were prizes; usually 10, 5, and 1 cents. The prizes were in the form of tickets and were only good for the day at the ice-cream and confectionery stand. An ice cream cone usually took 5 cents! How exciting to win and how the kids participated! In the afternoon there was a baseball tournament for which each school fielded a team. The people of the neighboring communities had met to watch their children perform and to socialize. They had all brought picnic lunches and stayed for the day.

Page 46

Frank had come to the picnic in the truck that brought all the school children so they would all be there at the same time. After the picnic they all went home with their families. Frank had asked my brother-in-law for a lift back to Rosenort. He asked Martin to drop us off at the school at the west end of the village so that he could show me the school. This was a new school and at the time we thought it was pretty wonderful. I had seen the old school in the middle of the village and experienced the Christmas concert in the old church in the village. I was surprised to find out that he accompanied the school singing by playing his violin. He always claimed that he was not musical but what a great program he had!

Over the protests of the villagers, the Inspector had insisted that the new school be built outside the village because the old grounds in the center of the village were too narrow and did not give enough space for a proper playground. The surface of the new grounds was rather uneven and when Frank asked about this, nobody seemed to know. But he was directed to the oldest lady in the village. When he went to ask her, she said that was the place where the settlers had "dug in" for the first winter after they had come from Russia in the 1870's. Those holes were all that was left of the semlins which had been constructed there. It was here that my grandparents, the Peter Wolfs, had wintered. It was here that my mother had been born.

In Frank's classroom he used a manually operated gramophone. He had some old German 78's records he had inherited from his father. While looking over the new classroom, he put on the record: "Du, du liegst mir im Herzen" (You are ever in my heart, dear). This was his way of saying, "I love you!"--- Courtship now had begun in earnest. When he walked down the length of the village street to my sister's place, many of the people came to the street fence to have a good look at their teacher and his girl friend. Much of the village has the same sites though many of the buildings have been replaced. The school is gone but the old church still stands at the same place but is only used for grain storage now. My sister's place is still there but both she and her husband are already deceased.

Most of my siblings still had hard feelings about my becoming a teacher. I had kept strict records of the expenses from the time of entering Grade 9. The money for the tuition at the M.C.I. and Normal School had been borrowed and I personally repaid that after I started teaching. The cost of these five years added up to approximately \$500. In order to appease some of my brothers and sisters, I relinquished my inheritance from Dad (20 acres of

land). Since I was only 19 and not 21 (age of majority at that time), I had to have my brother John co-sign for me at the Municipal Office. Sadly my one sister could not remember this event to her dying day though she and her husband were able to purchase it for a very low price soon after I had relinquished it.

The next school year Frank was still at Rosenort and came to see me on week-ends. World War II was on and there were some serious concerns for young people, especially for young men of conscription age.

Page 47

I had applied at various schools hoping to find a place to teach. Normal School had given the students ample practice in teaching. Even though many teachers had enlisted, the availability of teaching positions was dismal! Too many teachers! Fortunately I obtained a position to teach Grades 1 - 4 in Horndean, Steinreich S.D. My application had been one of 200! I had gone to school in Altona with Myrtle Siemens, the chairman's daughter and I knew the Principal at Horndean, Mr. H.M.Friesen, because he had been teaching in Altona when I was a student there. I was so fortunate in obtaining a teaching position for September 1940.

I had some 50 pupils with 20 of them being beginners. Of course, being very enthusiastic about my job, I was anxious to employ all the latest new curriculum methods in Grades 1-4 that we had worked on at Normal School. Geography and History came to be known as Social Studies. Projects were integrated with the different subjects and so on. The Principal found it difficult to accept some of these radical changes!

The school had three classrooms: Grades 1 - 4, Grades 5 - 8, and the one-room High School Grades 9 - 11. Miss Emma Scheibe taught Grades 5 - 8. She became a close friend of mine and helped me over some of the rough spots. The Inspector told me to take it a bit slower because he thought I was going at quite a clip.

Horndean had many pupils but no place for teachers to live. The Principal had his own home but with four children of his own he had no spare room. Miss Scheibe had an upstairs room in the house where the Stoesz family lived. I had been able to get room and board with the Wiebes and was quite happy about this. Unfortunately their daughter, Mary, had a "bad reputation" and so the principal raised objections about my boarding place. I was forced to move into a very cold room - a part of a store known as the Klippenstein store. I had an old fashioned cooking stove. In winter it was so cold that I moved my stretcher bed close to the stove which I "fired up" all night. Still the water in the reservoir at the back of the stove started to freeze.

Because of the poor accommodations available, I was forced to buy a car. My first car was a roadster that a teacher, Mr. Ben Klippenstein, had driven for some years already. This became too cold for late fall driving. This became too cold for late fall driving and so I exchanged it for a 1929 Model A Coupe which had been driven by the Peters sisters - one a teacher and one a nurse. They had taken good care of the car and never drove it in winter time. The car was in excellent shape.

A driver's license was easy to get after you turned sixteen. In the country there were no drivers' tests in those days. I remember Mr. P.L.Dyck of the Rhineland Car Co. coming into our yard to try and sell me the roadster. He asked me to try driving it. I told him I had not driven a roadster and did he want to take the risk of me backing it up. "Sure," he said, "why not." Of course I had driven my boy friend's car during my last year at High School already and was not really ignorant about driving. Taking it for a spin up country roads and then back, I decided to invest in a car.

I had no money but my job outlook being O.K. I was able to finance it completely. After several months of driving the roadster, I decided that the Model A Coupe was the car for me. Finance charges of 20% seem very high considering what it is like today - but I could make no down payment. The price of the Coupe was \$200. a driver's license at the time cost \$2.-- My salary was \$50. a month and the expenses etc. certainly made living a very tight business. The Coupe really served well both for me and for Frank after we were married. We drove it for another ten years.

The Principal, Emma and myself often used the car to go to Teachers' Locals as well as to conventions. The Principal did not have a car. War rationing became the order of the day. To get a new tire I had to fill out an application form stating the reasons for needing it and then it had to be signed by the dealer. Gasoline was rationed as well. I received only 45 gallons a month and that because most of the time I had to commute to work 15 or 20 miles. I have a ration book for sugar and coffee, etc. but I have not kept the gasoline one.

The teachers of the schools had their regular meetings known as "Locals" where teachers of a specified area would get together once a month or so to share and discuss methods and problems. Often demonstration lessons were given. These were to help teachers with their problems and to give them new ideas for their work. Work conferences known as "Conventions" were held every fall and these included all the schools of the entire inspectorate. During the Easter break a provincial Convention was held at the Royal Alex. Hotel in Winnipeg. This was quite the Conference and I feel they were more valuable than those that we now know "SAG Day."

The first Christmas Concert at Horndean was what I felt to be quite unique. I recall having a "Star Drill" with my class using a gramophone for the music. Unfortunately the parents thought it was too much like dancing but I thought it was beautiful. The other item was a duet by two little girls dressed alike doing "Once there lived side by side--".

Teaching Phys. Ed. also became somewhat contentious. I took my class outside during the good weather and put them through some of the exercises we had been taught in teacher training. This included some marching. Soon the talk went around that I was preparing the children for the military. Now, some 56 years later, I find that some of my former pupils also have fond memories of what at that time actually were difficult years. Some have passed away already. Others have become lawyers, teachers, writers and homemakers.

My second year at Horndean 1941- 1942 certainly saw some changes chiefly due to the war efforts and changes in my personal plans as well as Frank's. In the fall of 1941 Frank had enrolled in a course in Pre.Med. at the University of Manitoba. I had always dreamed of teaching in a School of Nursing.

There were a few incidents that were not supposed to be a routine part of teaching in Horndean. -- One morning I had a flat tire and I decided to stop in at Rhineland Car in Altona to have it fixed before I continued to Horndean. In my hurry I had not checked out how well the service man had tightened the nuts on the wheel. When I stopped the car at the school the whole wheel fell off and the axle sagged to the ground. This meant I had to get Wolfe's garage in Horndean to pick it up and repair it. It was late that night before it was finished. During that time a thunderstorm had developed. I don't know where I had

supper but probably at Emma's or at Myrtle Siemens' - Ben Siemens' place. It was interesting to know that Mrs. Siemens was a Schröder girl whose mother had been a 3rd wife of my grandfather Johann Klassen for a brief time.

Another family who sometimes helped me out were the Jake Heinrichs, Cleo's parents. Jake happened to be a first cousin of mine. They lived on a farm one and a half miles north west of Horndean. Cleo and I often laugh at one instance when we drove to the farm in the mud. Horndean was flooded at the time. We got stuck and Cleo's father came out to help us. He tied a rope to the front of the car and pulled it instead of pushing it.

Well, the day I drove home after my wheel was fixed was something else! I had taken country roads because the rain was not that heavy yet. The lightning flashes were so bright and continuous, that I had to turn off the car's lights to be able to see properly. At home mother was pacing the floor. We had no telephone at the time so there was no way I could tell her why I was delayed. The road from Mom's to the gravel Highway No. 30 (now paved) was gumbo mud when it rained. That fall of 1941 it seemed to rain most of the time. I already had bought mud hooks to put on the tires for use when there was risk of getting stuck. My two brothers seldom gave me a helping hand. They preferred to let me fend for myself.

For the summer of 1941 Frank had hired out to work for his brother-in-law Neufeld on the farm at Lena. He had already enrolled for Pre.Med. at the University of Manitoba. That story you can read in his memoirs.

I drove out to Lena on week-ends to visit Frank. No.3 Highway was an all gravel road and I had never traveled it before. On my first trip in the spring of 1941 I dropped into almost every small town so I would know what lay west of Morden. When I got to the small town of Lena I dropped in at the only store which also contained the Post Office. Here I asked where the Neufelds lived.

The storekeeper pointed to a rather stout farmer who was just ready to leave and told me to follow him, he was going right past the place. The stranger seemed to be only too willing to be my guide. I followed his Model A and when we got about three miles south he stopped. I stopped behind him and he came to my car's window and asked me: "Sind Sie Fräulein Klassen?" (Are you Miss Klassen?") When I answered in the affirmative, he replied, "Ich bin Dyck." (I'm Dyck). My response was: "Yes, I can see that!" ("dick" in German means "thick/obese). We both laughed heartily. This occurred on Highway 18 in front of H.M.Epp's place

Page 50

Dyck was going into the Epp yard to drop off their mail but he showed me where the Neufeld farm was and how to get there. So he went his way and I went mine. On arrival Mrs. Neufeld and her nine year old daughter, Leni, greeted me. Frank had warned me that when I came among the Rußländer Mennonites, I would have to kiss the whole lot. Because I was anxious to do the expected and proper thing, I hugged and kissed them both. I wish I could have had a camera to catch the surprised look on their faces. The Dycks lived only about two miles east of Neufelds. Mrs. Neufeld, Mrs. Dyck and Mrs. Epp were Frank's three sisters. I was to get acquainted with Frank's only brother, Dr. George (Gerhard) Enns at this time as well. -- It was a kind, generous old gentleman who had helped Frank's parents and his sibling families over to farm in this area. This story really belongs to Frank's memoirs.

At this August visit Frank was helping with the stooking and I chipped in with the many chores e.g. milking, cooking, doing dishes, etc. My welcome as a "Kanadier" girl coming into such a close knit recent immigrant family was of rather mixed feelings. I recall Mr. Neufeld making some remarks about me which nowadays would be considered rather "racist". This was at the dinner table a later another Kanadier lady of the community wondered how I could stand it. Well, this Kanadier - Rußländer relationship

improved greatly when we all got to know each other better. The fact that I dressed somewhat differently, and had short hair probably made them feel that I was too worldly.

For myself, I found the very religious attitude refreshing. I can still hear the evening gathering of the family around the piano singing so heartily. Mrs Neufeld played the guitar as well as the piano and her husband played the mandolin. John Neufeld also conducted the church choir. They were singing families and church loving people. What great singers Abe, Frank and John jr. were! Here I felt I had finally found a church with an in depth meaning of life and a love for each other. Later I, too, had to learn that everyone here was only human and that problems did exist as well. Some ten years later I was to become a member of this church.

That Sunday Frank and I had our engagement announced in the church, i.e. the "bans of marriage" read. We did not plan marriage immediately because Frank felt it would be easier for him at University otherwise. My only regret to this day is that the ring Frank had bought in winter time and lovingly placed on my finger, was not to be worn until the end of that school year. Odd as it may seem, this very ring had to have its mis- fortunes. After we were married it got caught in a door knob and had to be brought to the jeweler for repair. He had to send it away and war-time mail was very unpredictable. The ring got lost. After a year the jeweler replaced it with another one. Some years after the war was over it was found again and returned. Now I had two rings since the jeweler asked me to keep the other one as well.

The week of August 8, 1941, just after our engagement, a tragedy struck the Jake Friesen family. Ms Friesen was Frank's cousin and we had visited them just the evening before. Mr. Friesen had been cutting grain and Mrs. Friesen had been stooking. A thunderstorm was threatening and Mr. Friesen had stopped to take the canvases out of the binder so they would not get wet.

Page 51

A gust of wind flapped the canvas and this spooked the team. They bolted. Mrs. Friesen saw this and was going to try and stop them. She was knocked down and run over with the binder. Friesen's neighbor, Mr. Penner, came running to Neufelds with the horrible news. We went at once to help and found the tragic scene. A doctor was called but she was declared dead as the result of a broken neck.

Mrs. Neufeld went to take care of the Friesen household and to help with the four small children. I took over the household chores at Neufelds. Frank's doctor brother, George and his wife arrived with their small son, Ernest, arrived from Rosemary, Alberta. On the way they, too, had an accident rolling the car at a curve they did not make. The car was a total loss but not much had happened to them. They had some bruises and George had a few broken ribs. They bought a new car and still managed to make it to the funeral. It was at this time I met brother-in-law George and his wife, Anna. George obviously took a liking to me. He saw how fast and efficient I could be even under strange and adverse circumstances. Unfortunately Anna did not appreciate his praise for me and this cast a life long shadow of her dislike for me.

Frank left for University a few days before it was due to start. I kept on at my Horndean school. My sister Betty and Henry Z.Klassen (brother of John, Justina's husband) had been married on June 12, 1941. My sister and I had courted at the same time. Henry lived only a few miles west of our place. --- Frank's father had died on March 2, 1940 and his mother on August 28, 1938. Therefore I had no opportunity to learn to know my parents-in-law. Often I wonder what they would have thought of me! I always worked, learned and performed best with encouragement. Anything negative, harshness, scolding and accusations have had very adverse affects on me. Had it not been for my faith, determination and desire to help others, I could not have survived.

Now in my second year of teaching I came home to do chores, washing, cleaning, etc. for my mother and two brothers. Although I was mobile and could drive wherever needed, life was still rough. What with the war and its problems, hatred for Germans and French became ever more prevalent. With all the severe rationing our young people became ever more aware of the difficulties lying ahead of them.

At home my brother Andrew sometimes became a problem to Mother. Whenever things did not go his way, he threatened to enlist. Of course, the "Conscientious Objector" (C.O.) route was really pushed by the Mennonite Churches. Andrew obtained C.O. status and had to do his alternative service at a camp in Clear Lake. Here he got appendicitis and Mother took the train to Dauphin to visit him in the hospital. Mother didn't speak English that well but she managed to take trains and ask conductors what to do next. She loved to tell how a Ukrainian family in Dauphin had taken her in for the night and how the teenagers of the family had entertained her with a demonstration of dancing and song.

Page 52

Frank had worked himself into the Pre.Med. program finding out that his Science interests were somewhat more out of line maybe than the Arts. but he did very well in his Christmas term exams. He came home to our house for Christmas and early in January I took him back by car to the city to 835 McDermott Ave. where he boarded with the J.N.Friesens.

The men at the University of draft age could have their military training postponed as long as they were at University but had to take two half days a week of military basic training under the auspices of the Canadian Officers' Training Corp. (C.O.T.C....). A group of Mennonite boys who did not want to take military training were told to take the first hour of physical drill each half day and then, as alternative service, they were told to wash the floors in the C.O.T.C. offices.

Soon after classes started in January, Frank caught a severe cold which turned into a severe case of pleural pneumonia. He was hospitalized in St. Boniface Hospital. Things looked poorly for him. The newly developed sulfa drugs did not work for him. " Sulfa " was supposed to be 96% fool proof. Frank was one of the 4% that did not respond to it. Penicillin was not discovered until a few years later.

It was on the Tuesday of the second week of January that I received an urgent phone message at school from Dr. Claassen at St. Boniface asking me to come to see Frank - he was critically ill. The people at Wolfe's garage prepared my Model A for a very cold wintry drive to Winnipeg after four. I had installed a good heater in the car and with alcohol as antifreeze in the radiator I set out. Frank was indeed very ill. While sitting with him a radio news report came in of a very sudden severe blizzard moving in from the north. So I decided to cut my visit short and start back home immediately.

The wind really picked up when I got to Morris! The snow mingled with earth pitched fiercely across the road badly shaking the car. Turning west on No.14 Highway I had a hard time staying on the road. I had the accelerator down as far as possible. Visibility was nil - I had to open my window to guide myself by the tall weeds along the side of the ditch. No one else was on the road - it would have been death for me if another car had come to face mine because it was all I could do to keep the car on the left side of the road. I pulled in to the garage at Horndean at 11 p.m. The garage people were there to meet me and let me in. They could hardly believe I had made it alive.

During my second year of teaching at Horndean, I managed to rent a somewhat better room at the Karlenzigs - living near the railway tracks. Again it meant doing my own cooking but it was somewhat warmer. The cold,

cold room at the Klippensteins had given me a case of bronchitis and this became chronic in later years. - Mother would sometimes take the train in Altona and come to visit me. Besides my stretcher I had a raggedy old couch in my room and so we could sleep in the same room. The Karlenzigs, living in the other part of the house, supplied the wood but I had to heat my own room. I understand they later moved to Winnipeg but I have lost track of them.

Page 53

At this time of writing (Jan. 1994) Mrs. Anna Klippenstein, nee Wiebe, resides here in Winnipeg in a seniors' home. I had Barry and his younger brother in my classroom. Some of my students of that time have passed away. The principal, Mr. Friesen, and his wife have died. I managed to get to Mrs. Friesen's funeral here in Winnipeg. There I met their children whom I had taught and also their oldest son, Ralph. I was amazed to see how rapidly and how much they had aged!

Mr. and Mrs. Wiebe and their home place are gone. Their "controversial" daughter Mary passed away in a care home in California in 1994. The school we knew in 1941 - 42 is gone and even the ore recent match-box like structure has closed down. The building is used for Arts and Educational purposes. A Mr. Jake Goertzen is doing sculptural Art in it. Horndean has certainly changed. The Ben Siemens landmark farm is gone and the few acres which made up the yard, have been consigned to go "back to nature." Only one important member of our staff and personal friend of mine, Emma Scheibe now Mrs. Gilchrist, still lives with her husband, Nels, near our home in Fort Richmond. This was indeed a pleasant surprise for Frank and me when we discovered them soon after we had moved here.

I had always wanted to be a teaching nurse. All my life I had greater interest in the Sciences than in anything else. It was great to be an outdoor person - close to nature! I also admired Mother's knowledge about the treatment and care of illnesses and accidents. Mother had legs that were full of varicose veins that would often rub open and bleed profusely. In such cases she would simply take off her kerchief and tie a tourniquet and she knew exactly where! She treated Dad and cured him when he had appendicitis or strep throat. She knew what to do when my head was split open by the sharp edge of a bushel grain shovel.

My brother Dan was shoveling grain from one of the big wagons into a granary on our yard. The bin was getting full and I had been assigned to get into the small space and move the wheat away from the opening. I bent too close to the opening and my head was caught by the sharp edge of the grain scoop. It made a wide fracture in my skull and blood was running down my face as I staggered to the house. Mom gently put the hair aside, took her kerchief again, twisted it in such a way that she could tie it around my head and tightly squeezed the wound together. She then poured kerosene over the wound. (Kerosene was and is a good disinfectant.) Then she sent me to lie down. Did that wound ever burn! There was no doctor to put in stitches and not even an aspirin to ease the pain! To this day I have a deep groove in the middle of the top of my head.

Another time I got my forefinger into a manual meat grinder. The tip was just hanging by the skin on one side. Again, with kerosene and clean strips of cloth ripped from old sheets, she carefully put the tip back and bandaged it. I still can see the scar today. -- Her first aid kit was very simple: clean cloths for bandages, kerosene, vinegar, turpentine, castor oil and onion juice. She also used a number of easily available herbal remedies.

She would treat an ear-ache by squeezing out the juice of an onion and mix this with a bit of white unsalted lard. She heated this in a spoon over the kerosene lamp chimney and then dripped it into the ear. This certainly relieved the pain. You can find the allacin enzyme of the onion still used in the Auralgan ear-ache drops which you can buy in the pharmacy today. In fall she would gather and dry herbs like, chamomile, parsley, dill and wild cherries to be used for treatment in winter.

Communicable diseases like measles, chicken pox, mumps did not miss our household either. To Mom's surprise, I never caught any of them and so never missed a day of school from Grade 1 to Grade 8. Mother used to say I was her wild weed - hard to eradicate. All these experiences of overcoming and coping with illnesses, must have given me the incentive to go into the Sciences and stimulated an interest to go into nursing and teaching. Thus it is not strange for me now as a teacher with a Permanent Certificate to apply for the three year program of Nurses' Training at the St.: Boniface Hospital. I was accepted and so I resigned at Horndean.

Chapter XIII Gimli and St. Boniface

I spent the summer at Gimli Summer School for credits in teacher training in the U. of M. as required by the Department of Education for a Permanent Teacher's Certificate. Heavy Phys. Ed. and Arts programs were on the agenda. Only women attended this Summer School and we were housed in various huts or cabins on the grounds.

I had promised to pick up Ann Regehr on my way to Gimli. She lived at home with her parents at North Kildonan at that time. I also received a bursary from the University and so everything was paid for me at that time -- even the gasoline for the trip in. Being unfamiliar with that part of the city, I had some difficulty finding the Ann's home but managed eventually. Ann's mother was an invalid in a wheel chair. Ann was going to bake buns but had a hard time getting the oven hot enough. So I took the ash raker and cleaned the ashes out of the bottom and fired up the stove. Then everything worked again. While Ann packed I baked and soon we were off to Gimli. She, too, had applied for the same course.

Gimli Summer School was fun except that the infestation with fish flies was indescribable. We had strenuous workouts outside on a hardwood plat-form under the hot sun. Sergeant Yoemans had strict rules and no matter if a girl fainted behind us, we did not dare to look back and try to help. It was more like army training. I enjoyed the dramas and plays we put on as well. The huts were hot and since I had a top bunk bed, I had a tough time falling asleep. During the days the lake helped to cool down the temperature. No boys (males) were allowed on the premises.

The Supervisor of the Gimli Summer School was the Deputy Minister of Education, Mr. Wawrykow. I had become acquainted with his brother, John, at Normal School. He was Menno Klassen's and both were attending the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Manitoba. Menno was the nephew of my

former elementary school teacher, Kate Klassen. I had learned to know him and now and again we went out together. Menno liked reading poetry, especially the poem I remember was "She was a phantom of delight".--- John Wawrykow had sort of taken a liking to me and to my great surprise he stood at the door of Hut #2 one evening asking for me. It was a great surprise to all the

rest of the occupants and they yelled: "A MAN is at the door and Susan, for you!"

He had a car and asked me to go for a ride. Since his brother was the boss, I had nothing to fear. We drove as far as Camp Arnes. I had a hard time convincing him that I was really engaged to be married some time. Unfortunately I was not wearing my ring and he claimed that he was sure he had enough money to buy me a ring that would be better. The Wawrykows were well to do and owned the land and airstrip behind our camp.

I had hoped to learn to swim but a severe fall in the roller rink had damaged my tail bone. The instructor figured that I would never be able to learn to swim to save my life. I wish now at my age of 75 that he could see me do 1 km. - 40 lengths of the U. of M. pool.

I entered St. Boniface Hospital School of Nursing in late August of 1942. The war had been going adversely for the Allies now for some three years. Frank could not reenter Pre.Med because of his illness and a change of C.O. draft regulations. He was waiting for whatever came along and decided to go back teaching in the interim. Nursing staff shortages became acute and the load on first year nurses became very heavy. All the first year nurses were tested for ability and maturity. I was promoted to an accelerated two year program because I had already taught two years and my marks proved that I was capable. I had left my car at Mother's place since I would not be using it here anyway. The rules at that time for nurses were rigid. No boys allowed in the Nurses' Residence period! Time to be in was 7 p.m. Beth Cameron was my room-mate. She hailed from Kindersley, Saskatchewan. We had one 40-watt bare bulb in the ceiling of our room on 5th floor. That was supposed to be enough light to study by. We were not allowed any additional desk lamps. This was war time and we had to conserve!

By six in the morning we were on the gym floor for "Wake up Jerks." Then we had to line up in our uniforms for breakfast ready to go to the wards. As we stood in line, the Sister Superior would make an inspection of our dress and shoes. If the latter were not white enough, it would count a point against you. If the Sister suspected that you were not wearing the required girdle, she would slide her hand under your uniform to make sure.

I remember having 30 patients to look after on a Sunday morning. The Catholic nurses would get time off to go to Mass. Often they would get to go on a Retreat for a couple of days. What these nurses sometimes told us happened at those retreats was rather shocking. -- The patients had to be washed in bed, bed pans carried in and out and sterilized, medications administered and, if requested, you also shaved the gentlemen. Because of the war there were few orderlies.

Page 56

Everywhere the war effort played havoc with our lives. The food was awful. Nurses regularly had saltpeter added to their diet in order to keep down their sexual desires. I found it hard to believe that this was necessary until I witnessed my second year superior, with whom I was working, take care of a male patient. Bedding him down she used the occasion to raise the blanket so as to "expose" him. Then she turned to me and said with a laugh: "Not much there, eh?"

This type of food agreed with me very poorly. It took only a month or two until I experienced serious kidney infections - "pyelitis." I was given sulfa drugs but as soon as I discontinued the medication,

I was ill again. Dr. McEwen was the nurses' doctor who looked after me. After tests and X-rays were done he told me that I would get sick again and again because the diet was too alkaline for my kidneys. Dr. McEwen, in session with me and Sister Superior, suggested I leave training or get a different diet. The Sister was unwilling to make an exception and put me on different food but was also very reluctant to see me go. By Christmas I had practically finished the equivalent of one year's training. Dr. McEwen suggested I go back teaching until this had cleared up entirely. This was another negative strike against me. Schools needed teachers badly and I had no trouble finding a position in the middle of the school year.

Chapter XIV -- Thames, Spring 1943

The Thames S.D. at Bergfeld south of Plum Coulee had an opening for Grades 1 - 4. The Junior High teacher and Principal, Mr. John Goossen, had been thrown into jail under the War Measures Act and the Grades 1-4 teacher had to take over his duties while I was hired to step into the lower classroom. I started here at the beginning of January. I boarded with my Uncle and Aunt, the Jake Heinrichs, - "Aunt Justina was my Dad's sister. It still meant walking one and a half miles to school and taking care of the janitorial duties. The two classrooms were in separate buildings. I had just run in my one to four classroom of some 30 students when "history repeated itself." The R.C.M.P. had "picked up" Mr. Driedger because he had failed to follow the proper procedures when he received his draft call.

One morning when I arrived at the school, the trustees were waiting at the school door and they told me that I would have to take over the Grades 5 - 10 classroom. I protested and tried to tell them that I had hired out for Gr. 1- 4 but to no avail. They told me in no uncertain terms that I, too, was held responsible under the War Measures Act and thus had no choice. The Inspector, Mr. Day, had told them I was well qualified and could handle it well. I was also made responsible to help the permit teacher, Miss Braun, who had been hired to take over the lower classroom. She had only finished Grade 11 herself. Many a time I had to go over to her classroom when she couldn't handle the class any more. Mr. Day came out and told me if I had any problems with the big fellows in my room, I should let him know and he would ask the police to come over. No word of German was to be spoken on the school-yard. If he would happen to catch any one, I would be in trouble.

Page 57

One day I caught a few boys doing just that outside near the barn at recess time. Now for the discipline! I offered the boys a choice - me giving them a whipping or me asking the police to come out to take care of the situation. They chose and decided to take the first option. They had to go out and cut me a pliable willow branch. Then each of them had to stretch over the front desk while I applied the rod. I never had any more trouble for the rest of the term. - I had always vowed that as a teacher I would never strap a child. Frank chuckled and "ribbed" me a bit when I told him what had happened. But here I had no choice and it is the only time I ever administered that sort of corporal punishment in my 32 years of teaching. Later on in High School I slapped a couple of guys on different occasions but that was it. To this day I wish I could have done it otherwise. When I see what school discipline is like in the 80's and 90's, I begin to wonder if the pendulum has not swung over too far on the other side.

My first day in the Grade 5 - 10 classroom, a Grade 10 student came up to ask for the answer to a History question. I had not had nay time to prepare for the day but we still had the same text I had had in

Grade 10 ten years ago. I told her to look on page so and so and to let me know if the answer was there. I was right! This helped my personal confidence and gave me respect from the class.

Aunt Justina (Stintjimum) certainly was good to me but I suppose I should have told her I needed more lunch. I really was hungry a lot. Biscuits with cheese was good but with the walking and the teaching load it certainly kept me slim. One day when Uncle Jake was preparing to go to town I asked him if he would bring me a dozen oranges for the doctor had told me that I should eat a lot of oranges due to my kidney problem. He brought the oranges but would not let me pay for them. So I never asked again.

Frank was teaching at Halbstadt and he had the car. I often walked home on Fridays. Frank could drive the car over the hard frozen hills of snow and when the roads became completely impassable he would also walk the 13 miles to my Mother's home for the week-end. He, too, had a school with problems. (Read his memoirs.)

I remember walking home from school on a Friday trying to take a short cut across country farm land. I forgot that I would have to cross Buffalo Creek which, of course, was completely filled with snow. The snow did not carry my weight. I thought at that time that I would have to freeze and perish. The snow was so deep I literally jump and dig myself onward. When I finally dragged myself home, I was utterly exhausted!

At my Uncle's I learned to know their family better. Helen, my age, was at home. She was married but her husband Bill Stoesz was doing Alternative Service in a C.O. camp. He has become a life-long friend. Helen died two years later after the delivery of their first child. Daniel, Andrew and Erdman were at home. Andrew married that year. Erdman was dating Nora Wiebe who lived in the neighborhood.

Page 58

Erdman would take the horse and sleigh to go courting and I would take the chance to go along to see how the third classroom I was responsible for was doing. This one was near Grimsby and was known as Thames North. Miss Unrau, the teacher at Thames North, also had left nurses' training. The three classrooms of Thames were in three different buildings but we had to work and report to the Department of Education as one. All three registers had to agree to the last number. Our picnic at the end of the year was also held together.

It was in March that Frank and I decided to get married because he had received his call to military service. He applied for Conscientious Objector status and had to appear before Judge Bowman in Morden for a hearing. His application was granted and we expected that he would be sent to some camp to do Alternative service. So we set our wedding date for March 27 instead of some day in June as we had planned. To our surprise Frank was assigned to do his Alternative Service in school because teachers were so scarce. The arrangement was, that he would be allotted \$25.00 basic pay as every soldier got and a living allowance of \$38.00. That was a total of \$63.00. What salary he earned beyond that had to be donated to the Red Cross every month. It was not a great deal of money, but we were happy that we would be able to stay together.

We planned the wedding with Mom to be held in the Eigenhof Rudnerweider Church. We sent out the invitations and then just two weeks before our wedding date we had a Manitoba March blizzard which piled 5-foot snow drifts

across the roads. Fortunately a thaw set in and on Friday, March 26, a snow plow opened the road to the church but most of the other roads remained closed to motor traffic. On Friday, March 26, my trustees appeared at the school door in early afternoon and wondered why I was still there. I told them school closed only at four o'clock. They suggested that seeing I had a wedding next day, I should close school and go home. I was only too glad to do that and also on this day I walked home the five miles. -- Saturday was cold and windy but it was possible for us to drive the car to church.

Chapter XV --- The Wedding

Mother had the neighbors to help baking the buns. She had also collected extra ration coupons from the large families of her older children who did not need all the coffee and sugar they were entitled to have. At the reception in the church basement it was rather cute the way the small boys stuffed sugar cubes into their pockets. Candy was hard to come by in those days. We had a good Faspa but no wedding cake or flowers. My wedding dress was the last one of its kind available at Eaton's in Winnipeg. Silk was not to be used for anything but parachutes. Girls were to be married in whatever else they could find. I had to promise that the wedding would not be in the city. My dress was a thin chiffon complete with veil. My bouquet was one of artificial flowers.

Page 59

Rev. G. G. Neufeld from Frank's Church was to marry us. He had to come by train from Whitewater. My brother, Andrew, went to meet the train at Rosenfeld and brought him home for lunch. Then he also had to stay for the night. Rev. J.J. Siemens, of the Winkler Bergthaler Church, made the "Opening," "off the cuff" as we might say, because Rev. D. Schulz, whom we had asked to do that, did not show up. It was later that we found out that the Bergthalers had a rule that a member, who married somebody from another church who did not choose to become a Bergthaler, was automatically excluded from their membership. In reality I had been excommunicated from my own church and didn't know it!

The wedding ceremony in the little church was simple. There was no organ or piano in the church. As a "Prelude" the congregation of that church usually sang one song after another until it was time for the official opening. Anyone could announce his favorite song and the congregation would sing it. So it happened that, as more people came who had not heard what songs had already been sung, the same song would get sung more than once. Frank and I had decided that we did not want "Blest be the tie that binds" sung at our wedding but lo and behold it was sung two or three times before the wedding even started.

Frank and I waited in the little Ministers' Room at the back of the church and listened to "Blest be the tie". We walked in together when Rev. Neufeld announced the song "Jesu, geh voran, auf der Lebensbahn". When we were seated, Rev. Siemens had the "Opening." Rev. Neufeld had chosen as our Wedding Text: Exodus 33:15 - "Er aber sprach zu ihm: Wo nicht dein Angesicht vorangeht, so führe uns nicht von dannen hinauf." This verse has really accompanied and guided us through many a hard and trying time. We walked out as the congregation sang: "Nur mit Jesu will ich Pilger wandern".

The "reception" was a very simple Faspa. As stated earlier, sugar, coffee,

and butter were rationed. Mother had solved the sugar and coffee shortage in her own way and the Jersey cows in our barn did not need to see ration coupons before they would supply the butter. It was simple but it was "warm" and the usual visiting between neighbors and friends went on. And, of course, new acquaintances were made since two extended families met here for the first time. Most of the people stayed in church and continued visiting. But some of the local people had to dash home to do the evening chores. They soon returned.

The "Program" that followed in the evening was something else. Mrs. Neufeld, Mrs. Dyck and Mrs. Epp sang and accompanied themselves on their guitars. Brother-in-law John Neufeld joined in with the Mandolin. Some of Frank's nephews, who attended the M.C.I. at his time, recited some poems. (Later that spring John Neufeld presented us with a scribbler into which he had copied all the poems recited that evening.) The whole service as well as the program was in German. I promised to obey and love him for better or for worse. At that time I had no intention of marrying a farmer or a minister. Those two things came later and I put them under "for worse." Those two things I have found most challenging and trying in my life.

Page 60

Geschwister Neufelds and "Leni" came by truck and presented us with a white cow heavy with calf which she delivered the next week. Mrs. Dyck (Lise) came along with the Henry Epps. The Neufelds drove home that day but the Epps stayed over with friends in Blumenort. That night Rev. Neufeld slept in Mom's bed, Mom and sister-in-law Lise slept in one bed upstairs and of course the newly married had to use my bedroom. Next morning Mom wanted to walk down the stairs very quietly so as not to wake Rev. Neufeld and decided to carry her shoes in her hands and walk down on socks. At the top of the stairs one shoe slipped out of her hand and thumped noisily all the way down. How we laughed at this!

When the Epps arrived on our wedding day, Brother-in-law Epp soon became uneasy because the bride was not fussing over her dress yet. I consoled him that the dress fit and that it would only take me a few minutes to slip it on. Of course, at that time he did not know me yet. There were a few other things he found out about me as time went on. -- The dress was really too thin for a March wedding and everybody knew that we had planned for a June wedding. That we had moved up the date so unexpectedly, gave people cause to speculate and rumors spread that we had to have a "shot gun wedding." How cruel our folk can be! - There were no wedding showers. Gifts from the invites varied from chipped enamel bowls, hand tools for Frank, and silverware from Frank's doctor brother. Frank also gave me a chest of silverware. I should make a note here that some of those wedding gifts are still with us here in 1996: the silverware, a dough-bowl from Mom, a chest of drawers (Dycks) now at Garry's, a box of verse - "Bread of Life" from the Epps (from them also a saw and hammer), a bread knife from Brother Dan, a small kitchen step ladder from Sister Betty and a silver plated tray from Tante Regehr. One brother-in-law, thinking to be funny, presented us with a roll of toilet paper and a baby pacifier. Pyrex bowls were common and easy to get but towels and linens were almost impossible to buy. Everything we got was much appreciated. All this had to stay at Mom's until the summer when we would move into our first home in Hochstadt one mile north and two miles east of Altona. Here Frank had been "frozen" as a teacher. The Sunday after our wedding Frank went back to his school at Halbstadt and I went to Bergfeld and we never saw each other all week!

I had to organize the picnic for the three classrooms - two at Bergfeld (Thames) and one at North Thames. The year-end reports were also integrated into one. My sojourn of six months at the Thames School District left me with some vivid memories. Outstanding among them was the Zacharias family - one of the reasons was the number of children that came from this family. The

other was that their oldest daughter, Susan, had gone to school with me in Altona. It was she who had contracted T. B. and had to be taken to Ninette.

Week-ends that spring Frank and I would help Mom on the farm. Andrew and Martin were still at home and took care of the field work. We also spent some time on week ends putting in and taking care of a garden at what was to be our new home. Mom was coping very well but she was very lonely. As soon as July came we moved into the teacherage at Hochstadt. But it was only seven miles distant and we came home to Mom's often.

Page 61

Chapter XVI -- Hochstadt (Kleinstadt S.D.)

A large old church had been converted into a school-teacherage combination the way these had been common in the Mennonite villages. The classroom was at one end of the building and the teacherage at the other. There was a garden in one corner of the yard and a barn in the other corner. Since we had a cow and laying hens, we could supplement our meager income. The hens supplied us with eggs and the occasional chicken roast. The cow supplied us with milk and cream but not with butter. Daisy, as we called the white cow, gave good milk but her cream would not turn into butter no matter how long you churned it. This was something very unusual and in a herd of 12 milking cows the Neufelds had never been aware of it. -- The trustees decided to pay me a small amount for "janitorial duties" and this also helped.

The teacherage had two rooms downstairs and two upstairs. The kitchen had an added on vestibule which had cupboards in it and could be used as a summer kitchen. A hall existed between the teacherage and the classroom and led to the back door. A similar hall and door on the other side of the building was the entrance to the classroom. The teacherage was dreadfully cold in winter and was rat infested but it was our first home! Heating was done with the kitchen range and with a "Booker" heater in the living room. The pipes from both were led through the upstairs into the chimney. Along the way they dispensed a little heat in the bedroom. There was no indoor plumbing. A cistern pump drew up the water from the cistern below the floor. But we had our own milk, eggs meat and garden produce. Our Model A Coupe was in good condition.

In winter, when the roads were closed, our neighbors loaned us a horse and cutter to go to town or to go to see Mom. Mr. P.J.Hamm was kind indeed. In summer he hired Frank to help with the haying and stooking. He paid him with feed for our livestock. The daughter caused us some headaches. Even though Eva Hamm and Frank stooked on the same forty acre field, they took opposite sides of the field but evil tongues started wagging. Mother was always very suspicious about girls interfering in the lives of married couples. Mom gave vent to her feelings in an anonymous letter to Eva telling her in scathing terms that she should leave her son-in-law alone. The Hamms took this letter to the local "Cop" who paid Mom a visit and made her go apologize.

Since the Grades 1 - 8 classroom load was heavy, I took the beginners into our living room to help Frank with the teaching load. This worked very well as he had some thirty pupils and enough to do with the rest. I also had the 4-H Sewing Club with the girls. 4-H Clubs were very popular in the country schools at that time. These clubs still exist today but teachers are not expected to take charge of them now.

With the Christmas Concert being a high light in schools and Frank rigged up a good one. He was fortunate in having a good group of girls in the upper grades who were able and willing to sing and so most of the carols were sung in two part harmony. Frank was the first "Rußländer" teacher hired in this district of Kanadier and the attitude had been very cool with some in the community. This changed completely after the Christmas program!

We were, indeed, a very busy young married couple! We had the school and in the district we were expected to participate in the local "Jugendverein". Entertainment consisted mostly of church on Sunday mornings and on visiting at Mom's or at the homes of my siblings. We were also expected to visit the homes of our pupils. We had an interest in recorded music, outdoor activities, gardening and an involvement in community efforts. And then, of course, there were the chores.

To Frank's great delight, I became pregnant! He was going on 29 and was anxious to become a father. Our family doctor was Dr. Toni in Altona. On February 14 my cousin Helen Stoesz (nee Heinrichs) died suddenly after her first baby was delivered. This was rather frightening but Dr. Toni assured me that it would not happen to me. He was a young doctor and the Hospital in Altona had been created by remodeling a large old two story home.

The summer of 1944 was hot. The war was still raging in Europe but had been going more in favor of the Allies lately. I was busy sewing for the new baby and trying to get hold of things that were difficult to get, e.g. flannelette for diapers, etc. "Pampers" and "Huggies" were terms that had not been invented yet.

School had started again. On September 28th early at 2 a.m. my water broke and Frank took me to the Altona Hospital and left me there. He had to go home and chore and then teach again all day. After I was admitted I had to stay in bed or walk about and then lie down in labor again. Four other mothers were doing the same thing - agonizing and waiting to go into the only and ever occupied labor room. Seven babies were born here on that day! Frank came out after school but was only asked to help the nurse wheel me out after the delivery at 8 p.m. In the labor room the mother-to-be was strapped down on the table flat on her back. Oh what a marvelous change today! How much more difficult it was to do the pushing as the contractions progressed! The nurse I had was Miss Mary Blatz, a second cousin of mine, whose only consolation for me was: "I'm sure your mother did not deliver her babies without pain!" What a help! Well, baby Margaret was born weighing 8 lbs.! She had lovely dark hair but her lower jaw stuck out the way the Ennses seem to carry. How happy I was when, after a few days, the jaw position changed!

My brother John's wife, Mary, had a birthday that same day. When Frank drove down to join the birthday celebration, he looked so happy that sister-in-law Mary immediately remarked: "You must have had a boy!" They were very surprised that he could be as happy as that for a daughter. My brother John really adored her and after some eight months he would make a detour when he drove to Altona only to ask her: "Na, Margaret, wie geht's in der Welt?" She would answer by lifting her little hand and turning it palm inward and outward saying: "Bald so, bald so!"

Margaret spoke in sentences at 10 months but only learned to walk at 15 months. We spoke High German at home. The English she learned from the school children. In winter the Grade 7 & 8 boys would take her on her sleigh and slide her around their homemade skating rink which Frank had helped the boys put up. She enjoyed this and got her fresh air, too.

My Mother felt that it was not right if she could not converse with her granddaughter in her own Low-German dialect. Mother came to stay with us for a week and spoke only Low-German to her. It was cute to see the two of them argue about whether you called a piece of soap "Seap or Seife". After a week of this "immersion" Margaret was fluent in Low-German, too. The

interesting thing was that she would never mix up the three languages. You talked to her in one language and she would answer you in the same one!

My brother Andrew had courted Sara Heide from Blumenort west of Gretna for some time. During the third year of our teaching at Hochstadt he decided to get married. We had much rain at that time and the country roads were almost impassable because of the mud. I remember driving with our Model A Coupe with mud-hooks on the tires and just and just barely making it to Blumenort.

The wedding of my nephew Martin Giesbrecht held in Schönwiese revealed to us how shy our own daughter Margaret really was. She insisted on staying on the car and no adult dared to come even near the car to talk to her or to console her. She seemed to delight only in children. When my sister Mary thought that she would be able to talk to her, Margaret started screaming as soon as she saw her approach. She did not come out of this panic until we decided to leave the wedding and go home.

Margaret was generally a very healthy baby but contracted bronchitis so badly one winter that we were afraid of serious consequences. So one day I put her in her bunting bag and into the car and off to the doctor's in Gretna. I noticed how much easier she breathed outside. The Dr. ordered me to wrap her up snugly and let her sleep near an open window with her face exposed. My Mother was much alarmed at this instruction. She believed babies had to be covered, almost smothered, with blankets. The school children came down with red measles but she never got them. I never have had them either and since I had nursed her she must have had good immunity. - Another illness was the ringworm she developed on her leg. This came to be a serious problem and Dr. Toni had a difficult time curing her of this. She seemed to have contracted ringworm from the cats.

Frank had always had a great desire to become a farmer. So in the fall of 1945 he made the great leap into buying a farm at Lena where he had grown up. It was his sister and brother-in-law's, the H.M.Epp place. The Epps had decided to move to B.C. with their family. I was not enthusiastic to say the least. We had no money for the land nor for the machinery. The war had ended with the unconditional surrender of Germany and it was only a few months until the American use of the A-bomb forced the Japanese to do the same. Frank now had his release from C.O. obligations. Not having served as a soldier and so not a veteran, he would not be able to re-enter the University. It was, he thought, the only solution to do something else.

Through the goodness and generosity of Mr. A.B.Langefeld, he was able to start farming in the spring of 1946. I felt he had to try this venture in order for him to have peace of mind. I now had to finish the school year for him. In March he moved to Lena to get things going there. He took along a cow, calf, chickens and a dog Rover which the neighbors donated to us.

Page 64

I stayed on at the teacherage to finish the school year. This meant all the teaching, marking, organizing the school picnic and making out the yearly report. I had my niece, Margaret Giesbrecht, staying with me to baby-sit Margaret. It was my niece's first time away from home and she had some difficulty adjusting to that even though she was in her late teens. She was a very homesick person. And there were no phones so she could talk to her mother during the week.

All went well. But driving to Lena every week-end with little Margaret sitting beside me became quite a chore. The gravel road which was No.3 Highway was often mucky and rutty. Fortunately we had no accidents. Seatbelts were unknown at the time.

I had had my lesson as a young driver down that road when going to Lena after teaching a week at Horndean. The car had a sort of "cruise control" switch on the steering wheel. You could control the acceleration very nicely at the speed you wanted to go. One trip, being as tired as I was, I had set the speed at 50 m/hr. and put my legs alongside the seat. I must have fallen asleep but I awoke very suddenly when the front wheel hit a larger stone on the shoulder of the road at the edge of the ditch. The Lord had literally thrown a stone in my road to keep me from "falling" into an accident. I've never had a problem with falling asleep behind the wheel since!

Margaret and I did not exactly look forward to those week-ends. They were just work and more work. To top it all off, I became pregnant again and certainly the "load" became practically a burden! The house at Lena was not ready. We had to tear out the inside wallboard because the house was infested with bed bugs. The insecticide D.D.T. was now available and proved to be the perfect remedy for these bothersome insects. The new plaster board was nailed on the walls, finished and painted. No insulation was put in. An old earth cellar served as cool storage, pantry etc. No electricity as of yet and this cellar, too, was full of rat holes.

But Frank had promised to make the place livable for us. In the summer my brothers Peter, Dan, Andrew and Martin came to build an addition to the east side of the house. This was to become the kitchen. A cistern was put underneath for water storage. Mrs Epp had always had to manage with "rain barrels". At least this kitchen was new but the old wood and coal range had to do all the heating and cooking. In winter we again used the "Booker" to heat the other part of the house. Our little cream separator had to do the job of separating the milk and cream.

At first we sold cream to the creamery but then we started to ship milk in large 8-gallon cans. The summer months meant planting and taking care of a garden. There was a never ending battle with weeds. In early spring the chicks would arrive from the hatchery and they had to be kept warm and fed until they grew older and could be left to run outside after it became warmer. We had no special milk coolers so the milk cans were placed in large tubs filled with cold well water. This was hard work because the milk had to be carried from the barn uphill to the shed for cooling.

Page 65

Haying season meant loading the hay in the field and then hauling it to the yard to be stacked near the barn. That first summer I stacked and set 51 loads of hay in temperatures that went up to 100° F. Being pregnant and not aware of this, it was indeed a very difficult affair. To this day Frank still boasts about how well the stacks had been set. They had all shed rain and none of the hay spoiled due to mold.

In those days the grain still had to be cut with binders. I drove the tractor and pulled the two binders behind it. Due to sloughs and bush, our fields were not rectangular. They were curved and cornered. One 60-acre field on what we called the "O'Donnel" quarter, had 52 turns and corners and by the end of the day I was exhausted! This also meant that I had to be very careful about all the protruding rocks that had to be avoided if possible. One day it began to rain and I ran to the car at the edge of the field with a ball of binder twine under my arm. I tripped over a large protruding stone and fell on my stomach. This brought about my illness and I had to go and see the doctor. He told me that I was half-way through a pregnancy. I was thin as a board, still had my regular periods and so I found it very difficult to believe this. I now had strict orders to be very careful with my health. This was a hard thing to do as there was so much work on the farm and we had no real hired help.

We had one 14-year old boy who had come from Russia via Germany as a

D.P. (Displaced Person) and needed some orientation in a new country. He was of some help when it was time to fetch the cows for milking or when the barns needed to be cleaned or some other farm yard chores needed to be done.

Hired help was hard to get and moreover we really had no place for them to sleep. We cleaned and prepared a room in an old house which now served as a granary. This was all right for the summer. One summer we had a second cousin of mine from Altona. Hired help of whatever kind also meant more food to cook, etc. and being without electricity did not make things easier.

During the last trimester of my pregnancy I became toxic and I really had to watch my diet. The winter indeed was a cold one with heavy snowfalls.

No. 18 Highway from Killarney to the border was often impassable and we often had to wait for the snowplow to make it through our way.

On January 17, 1947, I had an appointment with Dr. Lone in Killarney. The temperature was -30. We started our coupe, I bundled up Margaret as best as I could and we started for town. One mile south of Lena we realized that that whole uphill mile was too deep in snow for us to be able to make it. But at the top of the hill we saw two of Mr. Langenfeld's fish trucks coming our way. The first truck would go as far as he could. Then the truck behind would tow while he backed up the hill and then took another run down. It took them a whole hour while we sat and waited and I got colder and colder. We were lucky that the Model A had good clearance and we could make it up the hill in the tracks the trucks had left.

Page 66

When we finally reached Killarney we immediately went to the doctor's office. Dr. Frank Lone was a young doctor who had just come out to Killarney after graduating from the Faculty of Medicine with his M.D. Killarney had no hospital as yet. Mrs. Firby was an elderly lady who had training in some sort of nursing and delivery and ran her home as a nursing station. Here the babies were delivered. Dr. Lone ordered me to stay in town until the roads were cleared and because he was concerned that I had become too cold on the trip in. I checked in at Mrs. Firby's and Frank and Margaret went home without me.

At about 3 p.m. my water broke and gradual labor set in - some two weeks early. I had warmed up by standing on the great big heat register in the living room floor. The Dr. was rather surprised when he was called in about 7 p.m. It was a very tough delivery since my cervix had "overlapped" when I had fallen during my pregnancy. Dr. Lone would have taken me to the Brandon Hospital if the roads had not been blocked again with snow drifts. He finally decided to use tongs and by force and no anesthetic Garry was born and weighed in at 9 1/2 lb.. He had a large thick birthmark in the shape of a map of Ireland on his chest. This slowly disappeared as he grew up! We named him Francis Gerhard. Dr. Lone was very happy things had turned out well and wanted us to name him Franklin in honor of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the recent President of the U.S.

Well, we survived well enough! Another mother gave birth the next night. There were some complications as the baby had the umbilical cord wrapped around its neck. My husband and daughter had made it home all right. Frank had taken Margaret to his sister's, the Neufelds, for the duration because he had many chores to do and did not want to leave the little girl alone in the house. Garry was the perfect negative imprint of his father.

Our niece, Annie Dyck, came to help us out for a month. Her Mother, Frank's sister Liese, had asked us over for my birthday on February 3rd, when Garry was some two weeks old. We took the bobsleigh with a large grain box on it and a team of horses to go down the snowy road. I had wrapped the baby well but left his face uncovered. What a scolding I got from my sister-in-law! Garry never had a cold or whatever else until he was almost four. At 3 1/2 he

encountered sore throat and adenoid problems. Frank's Doctor Brother, George, suggested a tonsillectomy! The was done later in 1951 when we made our first visit to B.C. where George was now practicing medicine.

Garry loved the outdoors. Frank had nailed an apple box on top of the little sleigh and padded it with an old dogskin. (This was from a former pet of Frank's boyhood). Frank would attach the little sled behind the stoneboat when he drove down to water the livestock at the well half a mile south of our yard. The well in the yard did not have enough water for the herd. Margaret, being 2 1/4 years older than Garry always took good care of her little brother. The had to stay in the house alone while Frank and I were milking and doing other barn chores. With no electricity until 1948 winter chores became quite a hassle. All the water had to be heated for the laundry, the laundry hung out first to freeze out the moisture and then taken in to dry completely. It was really cold on the fingers.!

Page 67

Fortunately, I had grown up on a farm and experienced these hardships as a child. I wonder if there would be many wives who would endure such conditions nowadays! Well, somehow one manages, but this had not been my concept of getting a teaching career as desperately as I had and then landing up in such situations! We certainly could have avoided these five years and spent them in a much more favorable environment. Crops were mediocre and barely covered the expenses and the small payments we were expected to make.

Family allowances had started with \$4.00 a month per child. With this money I managed to get myself some kitchen cabinets made. We got hydro in 1948 so things were somewhat easier. Instead of an "ice-house" which was a large hole in the ground with a sod roof over it and was filled with blocks of ice packed in saw dust and used as a cooler, I now could dream about a fridge. I could also see the end of heating sad irons on the stove when laundry was to be ironed. But what about the money?

Financially things were very tight. All winter Frank had been feeding a pair of steers for the market. When the time came, he asked the local buyer to come and look at them. The buyer gave Frank a choice. He could ship them and the buyer would take his commission or he would give him \$400.00 cash and ship them at his own risk and take whatever the market paid on that particular day. Frank came into the house and asked what he should do. I said, "Ship them and give me what you get above the \$400.00." Next day, when they were loading, the buyer felt one of them on the rump. Frank told him to get a good price, he had promised me the difference. The buyer looked at him and said, "Your wife has just made herself a lot of money!" - When the returns came, we got \$525.00! The \$125.00 gave me my first fridge!

Margaret was a very bright little blonde girl by now and totally bored. She did not like dolls, trikes, etc. Every morning I took her through the radio program "Kindergarten of the Air" which she thoroughly enjoyed. Garry at age 1-2 could hear the radio playing tunes which he would remember and sing them by himself next morning and in perfect pitch! Garry had and still does have a very good voice.

I took Margaret to see the doctor about her lethargy and lack of interest in anything we tried to do with her. He told me to send her to school because she was physically healthy but completely bored. I protested that the child was not even five yet! He told me that I was a teacher and could very well teach her at home. We went to Brandon, Moyers I believe, and bought the books she would need for Grade 1. She finished Grade 1 Reading and Arithmetic by Christmas. In school we had usually started to teach the children to read German when they were in Grade 2 - after they had learned phonics and how to read English. So after Christmas Frank started to teach her to read German. Since we spoke German with the children in the home, this

presented no particular problem and by the time spring rolled around, she read both languages fairly fluently. By then she had also done the English Reading and Arithmetic required in Grade 2. When we sent her to school that spring, the teacher put her in Grade 3 and found that she managed very well.

Page 68

Over the past several years Frank had been involved in teaching German School in the church on Saturdays. In 1948 he was elected to the ministry. He got more and more involved with the church. During the winter of '50 he went to a week long Ministers' Conference in Altona. I had to do the milking. Our nephew, Frank Dyck, came down on horseback once a day to clean the barn and water the cattle. Life became very complicated when the cows got sick with Septicemia and I had to call the veterinarian to inoculate all the cows. Oh, what a horrible time this was! I had to hold the cows by halter and rope against a wall while the vet. injected them.

I got involved with representing the ladies of our Church at the Ladies' Hospital Auxiliary meeting in Killarney. A hospital was being built and the older women in our church felt that their English was not good enough and so they picked on me to represent them. Our Ladies' Aid was busy with church work and with sewing for the hospital. Mrs. Isaac Friesen did a lot of baby sitting for me on the occasion of my having to go to town. She always felt that two more children with her crowd made very little difference. (The Friesens had 13 of their own).

Weddings also took place and had to be planned for by the congregation. I recall Liese Dyck's wedding to Jake Dick from Ontario. I liked the way these "Rußländer" did weddings. After the ceremony in the afternoon there was the usual Faspa. In the evening there was usually a program and/or circle games. With the young couple sitting on their chairs at the front again either the choir or the whole congregation would sing a special song and during that another young married woman would come and stand behind the couple and take off the bridal wreath and replace it with a large white bow. The song was as follows:
Melodie: Die Seele Christi heilge mich

Der Kranz fällt hin, er paßt nicht mehr
Drum, Schwester, gib ihn willig her,
Und sei an deines Gatten Hand
Stets glücklich in dem neuen Stand.

Jedoch das Haupt es bleibt nicht bloß
Und weil du dir das neue Loos
Freiwillig dir gewählet hast
So trage willig diese last.

Du aber nimm als Ehemann
Auch dankbar dieses Opfer an!
Seid glücklich! Wallt mit frohem Sinn
In Frieden durch das Leben hin!

Du aber, treuer Gott und Herr,
Viel Segen, Gnad und Heil bescher
Schenk ihnen nur, was heilsam ist
Für Leib und Seel durch Jesum Christ!

Taken from Bernhard Harder's "Gelegenheitsgedichte")

Page 69

Jake and Liese Dick moved to Ontario. Soon after their little girl, Linda, was born, it was discovered that Liese had bone cancer. She had much suffering and was in and out of hospital. My sister-in-law, Liese Dyck, went to Ontario to take care of her daughter. Jake had his own mental problems and could not cope with the situation very well. Liese Dick died 14/9/49. Soon after her mother came home to Lena, she became ill. At first we wanted to put it down to over exhaustion but rest did not seem to improve her condition any. This dragged on for some time and in the summer of 1950 she had to be hospitalized. Mrs. Dyck, Frank's sister, died 18/9/50, a year and four days after her daughter.

That summer it was Saskatoon picking time. I had a friend Anne Randall. The Randalls lived on a farm north-west of Killarney. They had lots of Saskatoons. So one day I decided to take Garry along and then visit Liese in the hospital on my way home. Margaret was in school and Frank was working on the yard. After picking, I stopped at the house and asked Mrs. Randall if the west bound train from Killarney was through already. She looked at her clock and said that the train must be through because it left Killarney at 4 o'clock and it was almost five now.

We had just traded in our Coupe for a 1938 Ford Sedan because the former was getting too small for us. Garry could not crawl into the space behind the seat any longer but he now had room on the seat. This '38 Ford had as good as no brakes. That's why I checked about the train. I did not want to risk meeting it at the railroad crossing and then not being able to stop. So I told Anne, that was good since our car's brakes did not very well.

Alas, when almost at the railway crossing and bush on both sides obscuring the view, the train screams loudly and all I could do was to yell at Garry to crouch down on the floor of the car which he did at once. I swung the steering wheel to the right as far as possible. In a split second I had decided to hit the ditch and risk rolling the car rather than be dragged by a long train. God must have foreseen this. Instead of hitting the ditch I ran unto a freshly raised dirt road to the town garbage dump! On this soft footing the brakes held and stopped us immediately. My legs and my whole body shook. I can still see the conductor waving to me as long as he could see. I can still hear Garry's voice "Mamma, shau mal die großen Räder!" (Mother, look at those big wheels!) when we were running close to and parallel with the steam locomotive. Dropping in at the hospital, I told Mrs. Dyck about my harrowing experience. Her comment was: "Well, I won't be surprised if you will kill yourself accidentally some day.

Mrs. Dyck died later during harvest time. On that particular day John Dyck was busy in the field with the harvesting and I went to town to visit Liese. As soon as I arrived, she began to give me instructions as to what he had left for the boys and Annie, e.g. blankets, etc. Suddenly she asked me to promise to stay with her. She said: "If everybody would just let go of me, I would be able to die." Suddenly she went into a coma and I called the nurses. They and the doctor came running and tried to revive her but to no avail. I phoned John, and Annie answered. John, too, came right away and I stayed with her, as I had promised, until she died.

Page 70

We had made little headway farming and Dr. Lone told Frank he better decide which was more important - your family, wife and kids, or farming. In January, 1951, we decided to look for a school and rent the land. Uncle Abram Enns rented the farm and we now had to plan the auction sale of cattle and machinery as well.

April 12 was the day of our Auction Sale. It was a sunny spring day. After weeks of blustery and inclement weather, this seemed to be the day on which spring had really arrived. Many people came and most of them were in a good mood. Our livestock were in good condition and they were the item that gave us enough that day so that we could pay our debt on the equipment to Mr.

Langenfeld and have some left over to pay for a new car. We bought our first Studebaker.

There were some memories which had helped to make some of our decisions to leave the farm easier. There was Frank's accident with the tractor in the first spring when we were there. Tractors were hard to come by and Frank had put most of the first crop in with a four-horse team and an old seed drill. Later that summer our local dealer, Jim Hodgins, managed to get Frank a tractor - an Oliver 70. He made one condition: that Frank would tow a combine with this tractor to Boissevain for him. Going down the hill a mile north of Lena, the combine started to fish tail and when Frank applied the brakes, the combine overturned the tractor.

We already had a phone and people were beginning to call. There had been an accident! Frank's head had been crushed under the tractor. Frank was dead. Fortunately only some of this was true. Frank had been taken to the doctor who decided that he had had a concussion. He congratulated Frank on having shaken hands with St. Peter, told him to go home and stay in the yard for the next two days so his wife could keep an eye on him. He was not always quite coherent and found many things funny when they really weren't. -- And so our farming adventure ended in the spring of 1951. As to how crop payments and financial arrangements with Mr. Langenfeld were made, you should read Frank's memoirs.

Mr. Langenfeld had been overly generous again in canceling most of the interest payments we could not make and leaving us some of the cattle profits to buy a new car, that first Studebaker. Mr. Langenfeld was so glad for us even though he was still driving a 1938 Studebaker. -- Mr. Langenfeld would have so much liked to have Garry as his son. (They had no children of their own but had an adopted daughter who was grown up and away from home already). One day in the summer of 1947 when he dropped by and saw Garry sleeping in his carriage outdoors, he made me an offer saying: "I'll give you everything you owe me in exchange for the boy!" I looked at him with a great heavy sigh and said: "Oh, Mr. Langenfeld, do you even expect me to do that?" and he answered: "No." - I always felt the "Boss" had a warm heart for me and really liked me. So few people ever seemed to care! God had led us again as our wedding text had promised us. But to be a minister's wife I had really not felt fit.

Page 71

Frank had been elected to the lay ministry in 1948 together with his nephew Abe Neufeld. Rev. Jacob Peters, the only ordained minister in the Lena group, began to apply pressure that these two should be ordained because his age and state of health indicated that he should have some help with the responsibilities of running the church. During these five years I had learned to know Frank's relatives very well leaving me with many positive as well as negative impressions. I had my reservations about ordination. Frank objected because we already knew that we would leave the community.

Friends and relatives in the church insisted that he would still be their minister and that they expected him to preach whenever we came back to visit and they hoped that this would be often. While we were still agonizing over this decision, Rev. J.J. Nickel from Langham, Saskatchewan, came to serve with a series of Bible expositions. He stayed at our house for those days and gave Frank the clinching argument for ordination. He called Frank's attention to the fact that we would be teaching in Kanadier communities and that they would find it easier to accept us if he were fully ordained.

So on July 29th, 1951, Rev. G. G. Neufeld and Rev. Jacob Peters officiated and the Abe Neufelds and we were ordained to the ministry. We stayed another week for the wedding of John Dyck and Ellie Buhler on August 4th. On Sunday, August 5 Frank preached the sermon in church and on Monday was moving day.

Chapter XVIII -- Blumenfeld 1951

It was in early winter of '51 that Frank and I had located a place to teach the next year. That was a two-room school in the village of Blumenfeld south of Winkler. I was to teach Grades 1-4 and Frank Grades 5-10. Since we couldn't move until after the end of the school year in June, we had time after the Auction Sale to go to B.C. to visit George and Anna and the Epps who had moved there to Mt. Lehman. Brother-in-law John Dyck being single offered to take his car and to take us along. This was our first trip to B.C. George and Anna had been over to see his home place, so to speak, several times. Each time I felt that his wife Anna had a deep dislike for me. I think that this was because firstly, George took a liking to me and secondly, I had managed to get a career of my own come hell or high water.

That B.C. trip will always stand out in my memory! Going down we took the southern route but coming back we decided to drive the "Big Bend" through the mountains. This was then only a gravel road and in some places so narrow that it was difficult to pass oncoming traffic. I remember the heat and the dust and how much rather I would take the wheel than either Frank or John Dyck. The men didn't mind and were quite at ease when I did the driving.

Margaret and Garry were rather quiet most of the time and when we asked Margaret what she was seeing, she would answer "The other side of the mountain" and kept on reading her story book.

Page 72

Well, the visit itself with all the relatives had its ups and downs. Anna, being a Dr.'s wife, was very impressed with her beautiful home. She had a maid and their sons, Ernest and Reinhold (now Marc) were to be just so-so in behavior, etc. I will never forget trying to give her maid a hand with clearing the dinner table. Anna told me in no uncertain terms not to do so because her maid did not need to know what "prostet" (common, ornery) relatives she had. This infuriated me and so I insisted we leave to stay with the Epps for the night.

When George and Anna came over to the Epps to see us all, George cornered me and assured me that it would not happen again and please to come back. I just couldn't. The same negative "putting down" of me was happening again! I had thought I had left it all behind me when I married Frank.

That visit George removed Garry's tonsils and adenoids. The nurses as well as George noticed how little Garry bled in comparison with the local patients. George put it down to the fact that our fruits and vegetables were so much richer in essential minerals. BC. Soils were badly leached then already due to heavy rains, etc. -- It was good to get to know Frank's relatives such as Jake and Lydia Friesen, Beth and Arthur Unruh and their mother, Tante Regehr. Then there were the other cousins of the Janzen clan: Henry Janzens, Jacob Janzens, George Epps, John Isaaks and Peter Siemens. At that time the children of these families were young and all at home yet. -- As mentioned before, we had come west on the route through the northern States and went home on the Canadian side. It was good to arrive home safely.

We arrived in Blumenfeld village on August 6th. We even brought along one cow and a few chickens. It wasn't strange for a teacher a cow to help him feed his family. (Our combined yearly salary was \$3,300.00). As to how and what arrangements we made regarding the teaching load, you must read Frank's memoirs. The trustees were very kind and co-operative and left the operation of the school entirely in our hands. It was indeed an ideal set up since they did not object to Garry's coming to school with us too. He was four years old now.

The teacherage was old and drafty and needed a lot of fixing up and cleaning. There were two small bedrooms upstairs, a little one downstairs where the snow would blow in through the north window. There was a small living room and a small, what euphemistically might be called "dining room" which had a trap door in the floor which had steps leading into the cellar. The "lean-to" served as the kitchen where I could proudly place our fridge. We had electricity and I could use my first much appreciated appliances. We got ourselves a small electric range but the old wood stove still had to be used for heating this part of the house. The "Booker" was to keep the other part of the house warm. The school, too, had a "Booker" heater in each classroom and Frank attended to these when he went to do his barn chores in the morning and whenever necessary during the day.

Page 73

With only a driveway between school and teacherage it was easy for our young son to trot to school in the morning after he had helped himself to breakfast which I had set out for him on the table. He then would saunter to take his seat and start to color or play with plasticine. I would often tie his shoes for him while I was teaching a Grade 1 class. The children enjoyed having him especially at recess time when they could use his trike or wagon or play in the sand-box with him.

I had a large class. The Grade 2's still couldn't read Grade 1 level. Margaret, only being six, had been promoted to Grade 4 in the Plum Hollow school at Lena and was quite capable of handling Grade 4 work. We decided to keep her in Grade 3 because of her age. She had really nothing to do, so she helped me with Grade 1. She practiced Reading with them and drilled them with the Arithmetic facts. We also started her in piano with a teacher in Winkler. Here she had to apply herself and work at this with greater effort. Her first teacher, Miss Evelyn Dyck, (later Mrs. Stanley Enns) made her repeat Grade 1 Piano because she hated to polish up a piece. She couldn't be bothered with that because she always knew how to play the notes immediately.

The first day of school I can never forget! A father carried in an invalid boy who was a cerebral palsy child. He had a cast from the waist down. He had had surgery in Winnipeg where doctors had tried to connect the nerves of one side of the brain he had to both his legs. It was very difficult. All of my recesses and spare time were spent with Johnny training him with whatever I had. I tried to teach him to control his hands and his speech. He had to do finger painting to which he sometimes objected vehemently. In time he learned to stand and eventually I got him to hobble/walk. It was a challenge but he also got very attached to me. Johnny actually got sick enough to stay in bed when he heard we might leave to go to another school for the next year. But Johnny was a wizard in Maths. That part of his brain seemed to function well.

Some of the other students that were disabled or needed extra help, were the Wall boys. One 12 year old Friesen boy had only 10% eyesight. The family had come from Mexico. His parents did not care very much. I got him to read as far as the first Reader but then he could not see well enough any more. I registered him with the CNIB but the nearest institute was located in Ontario at that time. He was scheduled to attend school there. I had to prepare him by taking him to the doctor for a "Medical" and then I had to go along to buy the clothes he was required to have. Then I had to take him to the train. He was quite the little gentleman when he came home for the Christmas break and came to visit me. Sometimes I wondered what happened to that Friesen

boy. At that time there were no Teacher's Aids or Resource Teachers and, frankly speaking, I don't think I could have cared to have them.

The second year the Reimer boys came to live with their Uncle and Aunt, the Wm. Reimers. Ben was 12 and still couldn't read or even print his name. Here was another great challenge! The teachers in Winkler, from where he came, informed me that I shouldn't waste my time. Ben was beyond teaching! With great patience and his taking to me, I proved them wrong. He was in Grade 3 when we left Blumenfeld but found it very difficult to go beyond that level.

Page 74

Ben later moved to Winnipeg with his brothers and found employment. At 18 he had a very serious motorcycle accident and became a paraplegic. He had taken out a good insurance policy when he bought the motorcycle and was able to be independent. He continued with his schooling and when we met years later, he proudly informed me that he had completed Grade 8. There were also many very capable students in Blumenfeld. Some made two grades in one year and went on to be principals, superintendents, teachers and nurses. Some of them chose to stay in the community and became successful farmers.

The support we had from the parents in this village was just super! We were always backed up when discipline had to be enforced. Many destitute Mennonite families from Mexico were coming back to Canada. They found it difficult to find a place to live. The Bishop (Ältester) of the Old Colony Church decided to do something practical about this. He donated a quarter section of land just outside Blumenfeld, had it divided into 20-acre lots and settled a family on each. This came to be known as Friedensfeld. Most of the inhabitants of Blumenfeld also belonged to Old Colony or Sommerfelder Church. Their early conservative style of living was still very much with them. We were not permitted a Christmas tree for our Christmas Concert but could those children sing! Our school choir was great! In summer the young people of the village would take their guitars to the street fences and on warm Sunday evenings would troll out their tunes.

Jake Elias had a "General Store" kitty corner across the street from the school where most of the basic household items could be bought. You might wonder how a small store could survive in a village like this. It was the attitude of the villagers that made this a success. They said that it was so convenient to be able to send a child for a pound of sugar when this was needed but in order to keep this convenience you had to buy more than just the "emergency" items here. When they went to shop in Winkler, they bought only those items which Jake did not carry.

The cow gave us milk, cream and butter and the garden at the back of the school yard supplied all the vegetables. Fruit was plentiful in season and many farmers raised special apples, plums and berries. Garry loved to go to the Reimers where Mr. Reimer would stuff his pockets with crab apples. Their daughter, Ann Reimer, would occasionally baby sit for us. Ann and Mrs. Reimer still reside in the place at this time of writing. Across the street from our teacherage lived the Senior Peter Elias's. Their daughter Sara was Margaret's age and they became good friends.

One Saturday our daughter Margaret asked to go and play with Sara and asked if she could stay for noon dinner if they invited her. We always had fried beans with pork on Saturday and since Margaret didn't like beans, she tried to avoid this if she could. To her disappointment the dinner at Sara's also was beans. Later Mrs. Elias told me that she had not been able to get Margaret to eat much dinner. After I explained why we both had a hearty laugh.

Page 75

I have explained what a pig-killing bee was all about. In Blumenfeld there were a great number of these in fall. The school board informed us early in fall that teachers were expected to come for breakfast, dinner and supper at these functions. We would only make it for noon dinner and supper on these occasions. The ladies at this "do" would be in charge of the big cauldrons where the lard was being "rendered" and in which, at the same time, the spare ribs were cooking. As a rule they tried to get the first cauldron going early enough so that the ribs would be ready before I would walk back to school. In this way they knew I could get a taste of the fresh ribs which I liked so much! Can you imagine a teacher walking down the village street with a generous helping of spare ribs and enjoying them every step of the way?!

One family, the John Wolfs, felt their house was too small to have us besides the working crew. So on their big day Mrs. Wolf brought the complete chicken dinner to our house. It was on our table piping hot and ready to eat when we came in from school at 12 noon. It satisfied our stomachs and warmed our hearts. And this is only one of the "warm" memories of the village.

I had three sets of identical twins in my classroom at the same time. One set were Marge and Anna Dueck, the Wolfs had boys Frank and Jake, and Klassens had Peter and Henry. Another family of Klassens also had a Peter. It was getting too complicated when trying to call for an answer from Peter Klassen because they also happened to be in the same Grade. To solve the dilemma I said to the boys: "O.K. You are Peter A. and you are Peter B.!" When another Klassen family with a Peter moved into the village, this one automatically became Peter C. -- When we were in Blumenfeld for their Centennial celebrations, two younger men came up to me and introduced themselves: "I'm Peter A!" and "I'm Peter B!" They seemed to have been comfortable with them and kept these initials for the rest of their lives.

The district always kept all three holidays at Easter and at Pentecost. Most of the Mennonite school districts did not want to lose the Departmental Grant for the extra days and officially kept the school open but it was an unwritten law that school attendance was optional if the parents decided that their children should not go to school. This meant that the teachers had to be on deck but had only a handful of children and could really not proceed with the regular program. The Blumenfeld School Board said: "If we decide that this is a holiday for us, our teachers should not have to work either!" This attitude was much appreciated.

In 1952 the Polio epidemic broke out. It was a very hot spring and in April the temperatures soared to in the 90's F. I just got sick with a very high fever and a week before Easter I had to go to the Winkler Hospital. Dr. Warkentin was our doctor and he certainly took very special care of us. Garry always seemed to come down with severe ear infections. (Maybe due to the fact that he did not have any tonsils. Dr. Warkentin felt it would be easier on both of us if we just left him in the hospital for his daily shots of penicillin. Garry was very sensitive and soon decided which nurse should give him the shots.

Page 76

One night when I was very ill Dr. Warkentin was called to my bedside at 3 a.m. He called me back from what I know was my first insight into heaven. Some people call it a "near death experience." I said: "Why not just let me be?" Dr. Warkentin answered: "You have two little children and a husband. You have work to do here yet!" -- Most of my Easter holiday was spent in bed. Could it have been a similar infection as Polio?

When summer rolled around in 1952, Frank and I, Garry and Margaret made our first summer holiday to Ontario. We visited Frank's Aunt Mrs. Peters and her children: Gerhard, Margaret, Helen, and Katie and their families. Of these Margaret had not married and sort of took care of us when we were around. There were other friends to see and there was sight seeing especially

Niagara Falls. We also visited my former teacher friends, Mr. & Mrs. Reimer, and especially their daughter Leni. Leni Reimer Bergman wrote a wonderful tribute for my Mother when Mom died in 1977. Leni and I had had many playful times together as children.

During the years at Blumenfeld we often got in families of Mexican Mennonites who had been helped back to Canada by Bishop G. Froese of the Old Colony (Altkolonier) Church. This, of course, meant that we got in a troupe of children who had to be taught English and how to read and write it to bring them up to the level of their age groups. We had no E.S.L. teachers!

No modern duplicators such as the Canon copier, etc. The only duplicator we had was the old style hectograph. We were lucky to have radios and the first simple record players by now. Tape recorders were just coming on the market at this time but had not made their way into the schools yet. - One day I had been using the hectograph and between copies I had put it outside the door to cool faster. I found later that a Grade 9 student, Edgar Enns, had used it as a target for the snowballs he was throwing. This meant that the hectograph had to be melted down completely again! Teachers today think it's tough for them - I hope they appreciate all the conveniences and teaching aids they enjoy today. Unfortunately these don't always produce more competency and more knowledgeable and efficient future citizens.

During our stay at Blumenfeld we had both taken a number of evening and Saturday courses from the University of Manitoba. In the spring of 1953 I took an interesting course in Geography especially designed for teachers. It entailed a bus tour through rural Manitoba and its major cities. We were taken through cities north, east, south and west as well as Winnipeg. Our driver was Mr. Johnny Fehr. He is now the owner of a large fleet of buses which he operates under the name of "Fehr-Way Tours." When at Brandon we were taken to the Rivers Air Base and given airplane rides. I experienced my first lesson in learning to fly a small plane. I was thrilled to fly the plane all over Rivers -- the pilot had to take over only for the landing! Only money and distance could keep me away from learning to fly!

In 1954 the M.C.I. was recruiting high school teachers and the principal Mr. Schaefer, came over to see Frank about joining the staff at the M.C.I. in Gretna. This would mean only one income and I would be without a classroom again. I applied at the Gretna Public School. They had openings but were afraid to hire a married woman of childbearing age. But Frank gave in and we were to move again.

Page 77

The 1954 school picnic turned out to be a big farewell for us. After the usual activities during the day the community gathered in the school in the evening. The villagers had gone all out to bid us farewell. They had always supplied us with cut flowers from early spring until late fall, but here indeed was a big corsage! One of the favorite songs of the schoolchildren was:

Give me the Roses while I live --

Wonderful things of folks are said
When they have passed away.
Roses adorn their narrow beds
Over the sleeping clay.

Refrain:

Give me the roses while I live,
Something to cheer me on.
Useless the flowers that you give
After the soul is gone.

Faults are forgiven when folks lie
Cold in their narrow bed,

Let us forgive them ere they die
Now should the word be said.

The Blumenfeld "Homecoming" of 1978 celebrated the village's 100th year of existence. Many old timers from round about the country as well as former teachers gathered to enjoy the parades, food and fellowship, and just plain visiting and reminiscing about the good old days. As always, the planning and organization of those days of celebration cannot be forgotten. For us the families such as the Eliases, Klassens, Janzens, Reimers, Neufelds, Duecks, Wolfs, Penners and others will always remain in our memory. In an old house which almost could have been described as "haunted" lived an eccentric old spinster, - - - - Thiessen, who gave children like Garry a lot of material for their imagination.

Our move to Gretna was to take place in early July. A lot of history had been made with new friends and families never to be forgotten. Many of the older residents of Blumenfeld have passed away but we still keep in contact with the children and it is always a pleasure to meet them and their families.

Page 78

Chapter XIX -- Gretna 1954 - 1968

We had purchased the old J. Friesen 4-acre property with the house under the big poplar (cottonwood) trees. The house was 75 years old, two storey and well built. Friesens had owned the lumber yard and used only fir when they built the house for their family. The building had four bedrooms and a study upstairs with a large foyer where the stairs came up. Downstairs the living room was large and the dining room beside the front entrance was roomy. The kitchen long and narrow had no cabinets. We had our neighbor, Mr. Krahn, build in cabinets just from plywood. There was no real bathroom but just off the kitchen on one side a room with a large, deep bathtub with legs and an old fashioned sink. These performed the duties for "clean-ups".-- There was a drain to an outside sump hole from the bathtub and sink. But there was no toilet or running water. The toilet was the old kind of out-house and in winter we used what was sometimes called a "cash & carry" large pail behind the furnace downstairs.

The basement walls were of large fieldstone and "mud" - no regular cement at the time. We had a wood and coal furnace. The cistern, too, was old and had to be thoroughly cleaned and repaired. This, with a cistern pump in the kitchen, was our running water supply. The coal was shoveled into the bin beside the furnace through a basement window and this always brought in a lot of dust. Ashes had to be carried out and so a lot of walking of stairs was involved in keeping the 8 -10 room house warm. But it was very well insulated and the Friesens had been able to raise a large family here.

A summer kitchen addition had been built on the east side of the house. The verandah off the second floor study gave one an excellent view of the town of Gretna. I was at home here because my Mom and I both had Gretna as the "home town" during the eventful days of our youth. The floors sagged toward the outside because the basement walls had been built 1 - 2 feet inside the foundation. The foundation had not been set deep enough and had sagged over the years while the basement walls stood firm. The windows had old-fashioned shutters on the outside. Storm windows had to be removed in spring and cleaned and put back up every fall.

We had a large garden and planted more apple trees in addition to the two old ones that were there. The garden and the large yard gave ample opportunity for exercise for us all. The barn had room for two horses and two cows as well as chickens. We even tried pigs but gave that up in favor of raising a calf for beef. Since the house and yard had been for sale for several years, the lawn was covered with several layers of decayed tree foliage and overgrown with tall grass. The work of cleaning up never seemed to end. We had brought along a cow and now decided to buy another one. Because I did not have a teaching job, I decided that I would sell milk and cream to the neighbors in order to get a little extra income.

Page 79

Since I didn't teach, we decided to have our third baby. We continued with Dr. Warkentin in Winkler for the time being. Margaret and Garry attended the Gretna Public School in Grades 6 and 3 respectively. It was a very busy year with re-establishing ourselves in our first "new" home. Frank was very busy at the M.C.I. as well as with ministerial work with the Lena Church as well as taking his turns with the other locations of what was known as the Whitewater Mennonite Church. Belonging to this were the local groups at Manitou, Crystal City, Mather, Lena, Ninga, Boissevain and Rivers. This was the farthest location situated north of Brandon. He was also involved with the Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization, with church radio programs and with the M.C.I. student broadcasts. This also meant that I often had to look after the home chores by myself when Frank was busy with one or the other of these activities.

So I decided to take some University courses by correspondence. I also tutored or "home schooled" our neighbor's daughter, Karen Klassen, in Grade 1. The Mennonite Ladies' Auxiliary and the Women's Institute of Gretna also had me involved. Taking care of the milk and cleaning a large old house to make it habitable entailed a lot of work. With Margaret and Garry being at the old Public School there were some projects connected with that institution which claimed my attention on occasion. Week-end visitors were also a common occurrence. Dr. Warkentin had moved to Winnipeg and opened a practice there. We decided to stay with him for the duration of my pregnancy and so I had to make the occasional trip to the city for a check-up. Mother was very happy to see us that much closer. Frank was fond of gardening and besides the fruit trees he planted raspberries, gooseberries and strawberries. Our yard was located beside the railway track and during the sugar beet season it was a bit noisy. Some farmers also used our street to drive their trucks to the Paterson Elevator.

March, 1955, proved to be a blustery winter month and roads were often closed. So shortly before our baby was due to arrive I went to Winnipeg to stay at my second "home" - the Fasts. It took our baby Vic. three weeks to decide to make it into this world. During these weeks I did a lot of walking. I walked all the way from 21 Emily Street, where the Fasts had now relocated, to the Garrick Theater located across from the Hudson Bay store at the corner of Portage and Osborne. Taxi drivers would often stop to offer me a lift to the hospital.

At the Concordia Hospital on Sunday, April 3, (my Dad's birthday) at 10 a.m. our baby Vic made his entrance into the world. He weighed in at 10 lbs 1 oz. Concordia Hospital at that time was located on the Red River near the Redwood Bridge. The future Dr. Loewen's wife occupied a bed beside mine in the same ward. Her husband, "Bill", was taking second year Medicine. -- Victor was the first baby Dr. Warkentin delivered in Winnipeg and has always been very fond of him. We took Victor home to Gretna on April 10th, Easter Sunday. It was a beautiful warm day. Tina Elias from Blumenfeld came to give me a hand with chores, etc.

Page 80

The second year in Gretna went on very much the same way. I agreed to tutor Ken Martens, an M.C.I. Grade 9 student. Ken came from Winnipeg and was permitted to take Grade 9 on the condition that he would have a tutor to give him some extra help. -- I had written my University of Manitoba English II Exam that spring. This was just ten days after I had come out of the hospital. I suppose I was too weak and didn't make it.

Vic was a good-looking, handsome, healthy boy. Impatience was and still seems to be one of his characteristics. I used the carriage downstairs for his noon naps and the crib upstairs for the night. One September day I had put him to sleep in the carriage and left it in the living room. He had just learned to walk. I had decided to carry out a pail of water for washing the car. I went back in immediately and to my shock I heard him howling down in the basement. He had managed to toddle to the basement door which I had not locked with the hook. He must have pushed the door and when it gave way he lost his balance and toppled down stairs. His face was black and blue on one side. I took him to Dr. Boreskie at once. No bones had been broken but it was a most frightening experience. And I had vowed that this baby would not fall down stairs as Garry had.

As a one year old Garry had also followed me down the cellar stairs in house at Lena. I had put a pot of hot water on the cellar stairs to cool for later use. He tripped over it and scalded his leg. The other time he came down the stairs at the John Neufelds house head first managing to stay upright with legs high in the air until I caught him a few steps up from the bottom. On another occasion we were visiting at Uncle Abe Ennses and there were some other children romping around. In one place there were two doors close together and, in trying to elude the others, he took the wrong door - into the basement. He had a nasty cut over his eye. -- Only Marg. did not seem to be quite as athletic!

Well, Vic got better again and as he got older he tried going down the stairs from the second floor. I had already placed my large heavy trunk across the top of the stairs as a barricade. But in an unguarded moment he climbed over the trunk and made his jaunt downwards!

By the time Margaret was twelve and a half years old, she was finished with Grade 8 and entered the M.C.I. Of course she was the youngest student in the school and occasionally had to take some ribbing from her classmates. This did not seem to bother her much and she soon showed them that she was mature enough to be first in class. Margaret was ten years older than Vic and was quite a lot of help in taking care of him especially when I went back to teaching. The M.C.I. did not have school on Monday but on Saturday instead. This meant that she would be home on Mondays and I would be home on Saturdays.

Garry had his ups and downs with his teachers at the Public School. When he was ten years old, Frank bought a colt for him to raise and to learn to ride. He also bought a buggy and sleigh (cutter). Many children came to our place to play in the spacious yard and to enjoy the pony. Frank always had the rule

that, when there was work to be done in the yard, everybody worked until it was done. Some children did not like this and stayed away.

Page 81

The schools at this time had problems finding qualified teachers. The late spring of '57 confronted me with the decision to fill a teaching position at Gnadenfeld (some 4 miles north east of Gretna) for the following September. The Department of Education and the Inspector urged me to take the Gnadenfeld School. The teacher the district had hired had come down with cancer. Orlando Sawatzky was taking treatments and hoped to be able to go back to teach in January. So I finally gave in to fill in for him for 4 months. The Sawatzkys had not completely moved into the teacherage yet. Orlando was taking treatments in a private nursing home in Gretna. His wife, Verna, was a sister to Myrtle (nee Siemens) a close friend of mine from as early as the Altona High School and Horndean days.

Gnadenfeld was a one-room Country School with Grades 1 - 8 and some 28 to 30 students. It meant a lot of heavy work and adjustments to make both at school and at home. I needed someone for at least 4 days a week to look after Victor who was only 2 1/2 years old. I had Tina Penner from a family who had moved from Mexico to Gretna for the winter months so that the children could learn English! Vic. found it very difficult to see me drive off to school in the morning.

Not only did schoolwork and chores keep me from going stale, but communicable disease added an extra burden. Margaret caught the measles! She had measles before she went to school and we thought it was safe to let her go to baby-sit at a family whose one child had died of measles. This was to help them out while the parents went to the funeral. Margaret got very sick and we had to be careful not to overload her while she was convalescing. She found school work very easy but had taken on to teach some piano as well. Her own lessons were taken from Miss Armelle Lagasse who came to our house from Winnipeg and also taught some of the M.C.I. students at our house. She also spent some time teaching piano at the Public School. Garry also took lessons from her.-- Not only did Marg. get sick but the boys as well and to top it all off, Frank came down with a severe case of the "flu". This meant I had to do the chores and milk first before I could go to school. That was a heavy week indeed!

Orlando died in fall and the district could not find a teacher to take over after Christmas so I was asked to finish the school year. The Christmas Concert turned out very well. My pianist, Caroline Thiessen, was the daughter of A. J. Thiessen, my school board chairman. I also had his son Irvin in class. Some of the older students in Gnadenfeld thought they could run the school but soon discovered otherwise. After a spring Inspector's visit to the school, Mr. Callender gave me an excellent rating. He suggested that I go into the field of administration. Sometimes I felt that Mr. A. J. Thiessen found it difficult to accept the success of a female in her career. Maybe he did not see the extra work I did to boost his daughter Caroline and extra step up the academic ladder! She certainly was capable enough. Irvin Thiessen, who was slightly handicapped, also took some extra effort. However, our relationship with the Thiessen family over the years has always been one of warm friendship.

Page 82

Well, the June school picnic was the end of my experience at Gnadenfeld. Since Orlando had died the district had to engage another teacher. I had another year of teaching behind me. -- September rolled around and the Gretna Public School found themselves short a teacher. At the end of September I was asked once more to go back to teaching. The Public School needed a Grades 2 & 3 teacher. I took the job and had my class in a small house

beside the school. A new Public School had been built and was already too small. When I made this decision to back again I also decided that after going back a third time, I would stay in the profession. This would mean continuing with my University studies. It also meant that I would continue to contribute to the pension fund and that meant more security for the future.

I did not have to drive now and all five of us had the same hours every day. My brother Andrew managed to get me an elderly lady from Mexico for a live-in baby-sitter. Helen Penner stayed with us for two years. She had little or no knowledge of electrical household appliances, but was good in the house, with meals and with milking when this became necessary. She was very tidy and also tried to learn some English. We still correspond at the time of this writing in 1996.

Another live-in baby-sitter we had for a longer period of time was Helen Hiebert- also from Mexico. She loved to keep house but often drove the boys out of their "tree" because, as an adult, she thought she could order them around and they did not take too kindly to it. It was help to some extent but she was not fond of Margaret. Helen herself had been severely abused by her stepfather in Mexico. On occasion she could be quite humorous. She found a husband by the name of Jake Elias and moved to Swift Current, Saskatchewan with him.

When Vic. was 4 years plus, he had to have one of his eyes corrected and had to wear glasses. The Dr. suggested teaching him to read in order to move his weak eye properly the other side. So he also had home schooling for Grade 1. He found it very enjoyable to come the half mile to meet me at school at 4 p.m.

In August of 1959 the M.C.I. Board found that they would not have enough students and needed to reduce their staff by one. The Public School was still desperately looking for a principal and Frank decided that he would help both institutions out. This happened just before the Labor Day week-end. He had Labor Day Monday to get organized in a new school and a new position. Frank had finished his B.A. at Summer School in 1957 and his B. Ed. in '58. Now I was anxious to continue with University.

We had taken the summer holidays of 1959 to go to the North American Mennonite Conference and stopped off in Ontario to visit our relatives on the way. The new Studebaker had completely reclining front seats. This made a comfortable bed. We often slept and cooked outside. We dared to leave the children home alone, Marg. 14, Garry 12 and Vic. 4. Vic. had been complaining of pain in the side off and on but Dr. Boreskie could not find anything wrong. We informed him that we would be gone for a while and he

Page 83

promised to look after Vic. if Margaret should need his help. Our neighbors, the Krahn's, Miss Wall and the Menno Klassens also promised to keep an eye open for our place. When we returned, everything was in good shape. Garry had even built and painted a picket fence across the front of the yard. He said he had a lot of help since he used Tom Sawyer's method. Margaret had picked and canned the raspberries.

Shortly after returning home, we were at picnic and there I discovered what was Vic.'s problem when he asked me to assist him in the bush for a "pee". He had been complaining of the side pain again and when he was standing there with his pants down, I saw that he had a hernia! Immediately I made an appointment with Dr. Boreskie and Victor had to wear a truss. But this was not satisfactory and we decided on surgery for the next spring.

We decided to have this done at the Children's Hospital in Winnipeg with Dr. Warkentin in charge. Vic. was placed in a ward with three other boys about his own age who had surgery of one kind or another. One boy, about three years old, had surgery done to lower his ears. He had been born with pig-like ears. His parents were not there when he was brought into the ward. He woke up violent, kicking and screaming and hitting the nurses. Since Vic. was sound asleep, I asked the nurses if I could try to help. They happily agreed and were surprised when they came back to see the boy sound asleep. The nurses asked: "What have you got that we haven't got?" I answered: "Maybe it's being a mother?" I sang to him and stroked his back, etc. The nurses told me that Vic. had the tape played "Jesus loves me" by the Dr. before they gave him the anesthetic whereas the other youngster had gone under with violence and temper. Hours later, when the parents came, they made all kinds of excuses but chiefly it had been the alcohol that had kept them away from the hospital. Vic was riding a tricycle in the halls a few days later. - When the four boys ate at a children's table, they always cleaned up their plates. One would eat all the desserts, one the meat, the other the potatoes and so on. The nurses were so pleased that each of them had eaten all his food! - Vic and I were taken to the good Dr.'s home on Riverbend Crescent until Frank came to pick us up.

Garry had managed to get jaundice one year and Dr. Boreskie had not detected this right away. Garry was quite ill and so had to be confined and isolated for some time. One year later Garry had a very bad case of pneumonia and the Dr. feared tuberculosis - but X-rays and tests showed otherwise.

The boys had found close friends. Garry had Greg. Giesbrecht and Vic. had Gerhard Ens (Gear). Margaret had a number of friends but none exclusively. There were Enid Giesbrecht, Maureen Loewen, Kathy Schmidt, Myrna Toews and others frequented our place. Margaret and Maureen Loewen were both taking piano and sometimes played duets. They competed in the Musical Festival and there also as a duet. Sunday afternoons usually found our place frequented by their visits for play, horse riding, baseball and Faspa.

Page 84

My Grade 2 & 3 classroom was enjoyable and the possibility to accelerate kids that were capable was indeed very satisfying. I ordered materials from California and was using Teaching Aids not readily available in our area. D. W. Friesens had displays at our fall conventions and would often ask me to provide other teachers with information as to where to get materials, etc. I used visual aids as well as audio tapes. I still find it odd that a child with average ability, and even somewhat below, should not be able to learn to read!

With Frank as principal he soon discovered the heavy load he carried. He taught full time in Grades 9 to 11. Besides this he supervised the other teachers and dealt with discipline problems when teachers could not handle them themselves. He was also responsible for the High School sports teams and, because there was no Grade 12, he had a small and younger student body to draw on. Teachers were not easy to get for heavy loads. I was asked to move up after two years and had Grades 4 & 5. Here also the Inspector allowed me to decide a regroup students according to their abilities.

In rural districts it often happens that families visit back and forth and compare notes as to how the children are doing in school. Neighboring teachers started to complain about me going ahead too fast. One spring day the inspector arrived and asked me to come to the office. He simply said: "I came to tell you to put your feet on your desk!" I was too stunned for words! So he continued: "You know, neighboring

teachers are complaining about you - they can't keep up and so I promised I would talk to you. So now I've kept my promise and talked to you. And you go right on with you work the same as ever!"

The next year I was to teach Grades 6 & 7. Another change meant more changes in preparation. In music, especially, I had a lot of work to do. The Grade 7's had formal classes in Appreciation of Music. I also prepared the class for festival competition. I took Anneli Ens, a student, as accompanist. There is at least one monotone in a Grade 6 & 7 classroom. Well, I had one - "Gopher" - a Giesbrecht boy but with much practice and even more patience, he too learned to sing to some extent. We did very well coming in second in the Festival in Altona. Altona had so many more students. The Adjudicator praised us because she knew we must have a monotone but she had not been able to hear it. She also praised the young student accompanying us. We ranked only one mark behind Altona and with marks of 83% & 84% for the two songs.

I also had a Girls' Choir with members recruited from Grades 5 to 11. We went to the Festival competitions and again did very well. In Grades 6 & 7 we also did art work and made plaster of Paris ceramics which the students sold by going door to door. The money raised was used to go to the Children's Hospital on a tour and to visit the children. We also presented the Hospital with some money - \$60.00 I believe. I also had to help Frank with his High School dramas. This was mostly work "behind the scenes" to help with the make up and to see that people went on in spite of attacks of stage fright.--Many times we came home from school after a long day utterly exhausted.

Page 85

During the summer it was now my turn to take University courses at Summer School. The first summer I stayed with Helen Goertzen as a room-mate in the Women's Residence, Tache Hall. The next summer I stayed at St. John's College. I usually went in on Monday morning and came home on Friday night. I tried to get as much work on my studies done during the week because week-ends at home usually made other demands on my time. Some teachers commuted daily but we found that we had fewer interruptions during the week if we did not come home every day and we also spent less time on the road. In winter I would also take a course that was given as an extension course in Altona of by "Long Distance Education." The one winter I took Geography and you can see the picture where I am writing the final exam.

With the number of High School students increasing in the Gretna Public School, it was now difficult not to have at least three teachers in charge. It was easier to get elementary teachers, so I was shifted into the High School level. I taught Grades 9 & 10 Math's. Grade 10 English and Science. Sometimes I also taught the Grade 11 Math's and History. Often the division of subjects would depend on what the third teacher could or could not teach. Mr. Gus Pokrant was the third teacher on staff for several years. I enjoyed teaching the senior levels especially the Math's., Science and History.

Departmental exams had to be written in June and students had to be prepared for these. This meant hard work for all of us. One year the Departmental exam in Algebra and Geometry had been declared overly difficult Province wide. The failure rate was very high. The inspector came and told me that he had been thrilled to discover the my Grade 10 students had rated above average with only one student failing. Needless to say I, too, felt very good about this. Even Larry Kehler later in his life introduced me to his teen age children by saying: "This is the lady who made me pass my Math's. in spite of the fact that I had already decided that I was not going to!" - One student, Sharon Harder, who found studies very hard, managed to get a 72 in the Grade 11 History exam.

I had always promised myself that I would help students to get an education under proper living conditions, since I had suffered abuse, fear and hunger when I tried to go to High School. So when the occasion arose, we opened the doors of our home. - Viola Epp stayed with us for her Grade 12 year at the M.C.I. She spent her week-ends at her brother's place, the Frank Epps, in Altona. Viola found the year emotionally hard. She had lost both of her parents at an early age and now her older siblings were trying to take care of her and her younger brother. Rudy occasionally also stayed over. Viola made it into Nurses' Training and married Dr. Ron Loewen from Steinbach. Sadly, she also lost him at an early age. He died of a heart attack at age 49!

Another year we had Paul Dyck at our house for Grade 11 at the M.C.I. while his parents finished their term in M.C.C. work in Paraguay. Paul needed extra tutoring in Math's and so evenings I gave him what help he needed. He later remembered when he was Airtraffic Controller in Winnipeg and called from the airport to tell me that he still appreciated my concerns for him. To this day he and his wife have not forgotten us and show us their love. Paul is the son of our nephew Frank and Anne (nee Regehr) Dyck.

Page 86

Another M.C.I. student from Mexico, Dave Penner, needed our help since he had medical problems - epilepsy. I recall taking him to a specialist at Health Sciences Center for more help for his condition. The Penner children Dave, Tina, Frank and Corny received the benefit of learning English in Gretna schools during winter months. One year I had Frank and Corny in my classroom. At the time of this writing Frank is a doctor in Cuauhtemoc in Mexico.

In the summer of 1964 I had decided to undergo a "bladder repair" job after I finished my course at Summer School. I was given to understand that this was to be just a minor operation. It had been slated for the day after my last exam. On my last day the schedule included two 3-hour final exams: 4th year History and 4th year German. I was rather exhausted! I packed my stuff which Margaret was to pick up. (She had graduated from the M.C.I. in 1961 at the age of 16 and had an apartment in the city while she attended University.) I took a taxi and arrived at the Women's Pavilion of the Health Sciences Center at the appointed time of 6 o'clock.

A ring of doctors came to see me shortly before bedtime and asked whether I would need a sleeping pill. I answered: "Oh, no! I've just finished to university exams today. I'm bushed!" They were rather surprised. - The next morning I was wheeled out wide awake and the orderly couldn't believe that I was alert. I had been given a needle to make me drowsy! I was rather surprised to read the sign "Major Operating Theater." Well, the anaesthecian told me that if I wanted to crack a joke, I should do it now; and off I was!

It took a day in the recovery room to wake me up and what a sick woman I was! The specialist had found more work to be done than anticipated. I had hemorrhaged badly. It took me three weeks to get out of the hospital! I despaired! School started early in September and I had to have a substitute -- the only time ever I had to take sick leave! Since the M.C.I started two weeks later than the Public School, one of the teachers, Gerhard Ens, took over for me.

Since Margaret had received the Isbister Scholarship in Grade 11 and also had top marks in Grade 12 Departmental Exams, she had an easy time to get into the University of Winnipeg. She had decided to go into Medicine and registered for a "Pre-Med." program. Being as young as she was, we were happy

that Dr. Abe and Irene Warkentin were willing to have her stay at their house while their own daughter was away at a College in the States.

Margaret was also doing her Grade 10 University of Toronto School of Music program in Piano at that time. She also taught at the Shinn's Conservatory of Music in "Theory" and "Harmony." Her teacher was Esther Wiebe. Margaret wrote her final exam in spring and passed with a good mark. She has made good use of this degree in piano at home as well as in school. When her children were young and she did not teach, she had private piano students come to her house.

Page 87

In 1961 Margaret graduated from Grade 12 and we decided to go on a trip to B.C. with our family still all at home. We now had a Studebaker Station Wagon and equipped ourselves with camping gear. Marg. was almost 16, Garry 14 and in Grade 10 and Victor 6 and in Grade 1. The trip was fun and tenting, though not my line, was fun, too. Vic. would sit on a picnic table in the early morning and shiver but he would not admit that he was cold. As indicated earlier in my memoirs, visiting brother George and his wife was much dreaded by myself. We actually made it only once every ten years or so.

I often think that the greatest blessing we had was that, in our profession, we could be together most of the time at school, at home and at University. During the school year our whole family had the same hours. After Vic. was in school too, Frank and Garry decided that they would help with the house work and we could dispense with "live in" help. Now and then our neighbor lady would come in and get supper started before we came home. By and large our time at home kept us busy, together and closer.

The Province was beginning to make great changes in the field of Education. Larger school divisions were the thing of the day. In spite of much controversy the small High School in Gretna was to close. Students from the Gretna Public School would have to attend either the W.C. Miller Collegiate in Altona or go to the M.C.I. This also meant a move for Frank and myself. I had taught at the Gretna Public School for seven years and Frank for six. In 1965 the Division closed the Gretna Public High School. That year the M.C.I. was looking for teachers for the coming year. Frank and I decided to go to the M.C.I. for the next year.

The year 1965 - 66 meant a big change especially for me. I was supposed to be responsible for the Girls' Residence as dean as well as teach subjects like Guidance 9 - 11, Music Grade 9, Math's 10, Geography 10, Girls Phys.Ed. , tutor the typing class, Grade 9 Science, and Biology 11 & 12. There were no spares! I had 39 students in Grade 9 Science; Music and Typing were not the subjects I was most interested in to say the least.

Garry had successfully graduated from the M.C.I in 1963 and gone to take the one-year Teacher Training course. He became Principal of the two-room school at Reinfeld at the ripe old age of 18. So our oldest two children were away on their own. Only Vic. had to contend with the Gretna Public School and he would give us his reports on that. -- Mr. Schaefer, the Principal at the M.C.I. would not believe me when I brought in reports of some of the things that were going on in the Girls' Residence. His comment used to be: "Na. Frau Enns, so schlimm kann das doch nicht sein!" He would only agree after things got out of hand and some girls had to be sent home.

This winter I also took my last course for my B.A. at the University of Winnipeg. It was a course in Religious Studies. Driving into the city after 4 for the evening class was an extra load. Since I had done most of my work at the U. of M., I wanted to graduate from there. But they did not want to give me credit for the course in Religious Studies. I complained to Prof. Jack Thiessen and he called the U. of M. and suggested that they transfer my credits from there to the U. of W. and they would graduate me. The U. of M. changed its mind and agreed to accept the credit from the U. of W.!

Page 88

In 1964 we had built a new house on our yard. The old house had been sold and had to be moved. This took some doing! Because of the 100 ft. trees the house had to move out the back yard and because it was so very heavy the movers had quite a time. They had to relocate the barn first before they could move the house out. We now had a new home and had built in a water system from the well in our yard. This, of course, had to be softened by running it through a softener charged with salt. This happened in the summer of '64 when I was at University and in the hospital. Coming home after the operation I couldn't even find the light switches. The house was beautiful and had been well built by John Sawatzky and Abe Neudorf and a couple of local helpers. Frank and Garry were also fully employed. Henry Friesen, owner of the local lumber yard, was the construction supervisor and saw to it that materials were always promptly at hand. All this was the reason why it only took six weeks to build.

We had been able to store our possessions and sleep at the former Menno Klassen residence down the Street. Klassens had just built a new house near the M.C.I. The Krahns had moved to Alberta and Miss Wall had to be placed in the Ebenezer Home in Altona. -- I had often brought Miss Wall food because I was afraid that she was not cooking properly for herself any more. One day I sent Vic with pancakes and he came running back very excited telling me that Miss Wall was under the table and very "bewildered"! I ran down and found her so. I called Dr. Boreskie and he concluded that she could not be left alone any longer. He asked me to help him get Miss Wall to the hospital in Altona. After a while she was transferred from the hospital to the Ebenezer Old Folks' Home. -- Miss Wall had always been Vic's "Candy Cache" when he was a little boy. She was very fond of him and stuffed his pockets with candy at every opportunity. -- So our street had changed. Our neighbors now were Henry Friesens in Krahn's place, Peter Wiens in Miss Wall's and the Neustaedters in the former Menno Klassen home.

Chapter XX -- W. C. Miller Collegiate - 1966 -1968

The 1965 -66 School Year at the M.C.I. was very heavy and exhausting. Besides, we had to decide about our future pensions and so we decided to go back to the Public School System. We both were asked to teach at the W.C.Miller Collegiate in Altona and so in the fall of 1966 we started our daily commute from Gretna to Altona.

At W.C. Miller the subjects I had to teach were more to my liking. The most difficult part was the half time Girls' Phys. Ed. I had always enjoyed Phys. Ed. but coaching team practices after school hours was very taxing. Long hours at practice and long bus rides to play other school in the evenings was quite draining.

Page 89

Teaching 180 girls Phys. Ed. kept me physically fit. 1967 was Canada's

Centennial year. The Department of Education issued a stiff fitness program for High School students. Certain criteria outlined by the department had to be followed. In spring the Minister of Physical Education to test the students in the various schools and handed out ribbons for gold, silver, bronze, etc. My girls received the greatest number of gold ribbons, 40 in all!

Some parents of course would give me the B.S. phone calls. One day a Grade 10 girl decided to skip Phys. Ed. I had the rule that any girl who thought she was not fit to do exercises that day, could come to class and sit on the sideline and do the paperwork for the class. That evening the mother of this girl, a lady I knew well from my "home" district, called me up and I had to listen to quite the tirade about being too hard on the girls. Among other things she told me that not all kids could bend backwards far enough to lick their asses as I could. She hung up when I told her this darling daughter of hers had not even showed up in class that day.

For Biology I had a new lab. and since the school was new, I was able to supply it with new equipment. Now, with student stations for lab work and shelves and cupboard space, teaching Biology was a joy! -- One large room was reserved for students for supervised study periods. I did not like to supervise in that room because many students did not come there for the purpose of working or studying. But we were expected to have strict discipline. Mr. A.P. Hildebrand, the principal, was a good administrator and supported the staff when this became necessary. He introduced the merit system for the students and with it came many problems. Some of the teachers of a staff of 27 we already knew and a number of them were Frank's former students.

In winter of '66 I took my last B.A. course in religious studies at the University of Winnipeg. That year my brother Andrew was dying of cancer. In April he passed away and since the funeral happened to be on the same day as my final exams, we went to say good-bye to him at the Morden funeral home the night before. I went on to Winnipeg. A miserable snow storm blew up that night. I stayed at Margaret's apartment and when I came out in the morning the Studebaker had a foot of snow on top of itself and it was nigh impossible to get to the Bay where I usually parked. No. 75 Highway was closed and I had to try and get home via No.3 and Carman. The trip was hazardous. For a while I could follow a snow plow and then a large truck broke trail for me some distance. From Carman the going got a little easier.

The summer of 1967 took Frank and myself on a trip to Europe. It was also the Expo year for Montreal. That year also had the Mennonite World Conference in Amsterdam, Holland. This trip was to be in celebration of our 25th Wedding Anniversary which was actually not until March of '78. We had booked a flight with a group of Manitoba teachers from Winnipeg to London and back again six weeks later. In the interim we could do what we wanted and plan our own itinerary. We were to make a four day stop-over to visit Expo in Montreal.

Page 90

(Excerpt from Frank's Memoirs)

To Montreal we had been flown in two groups but here we were all put on one charter flight. Overseas traffic seems to have been at a high all the Teachers' Society had been able to get was a lumbering old turbo-prop which took 17 hours from Montreal to London. It was a long flight to say the least. The seats were supposed to recline for resting but most of the mechanisms did not function. The seats were narrow and the rows were crowded and before long teachers became restless and disgruntled. I've never seen a group of people who had such urgent need of the limited toilet facilities on board. It was the only possibility for a change of position and the line-ups were long and tedious. But even this flight came to an end and we arrived at Gatwick Airport and entrained for London.

We had reservations at the King James Hotel which seemed to be centrally located and had reasonable rates. There were things we had to learn about English hotels but the staff never batted an eye when we asked what they must have considered a stupid question. We were only about five minutes from Buckingham Palace and the parks surrounding it and little farther from Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Bridge. We walked a lot and enjoyed it and were happiest finding out things on our own.

We also took a bus tour to Windsor Castle and the surrounding countryside. Our tour guide was an obnoxious Canadian turned Englishman who had remained in Britain after the first world war. He despised all these colonials from overseas and at every opportunity let us know what oafs these tourists were. Insults aside, it was a good tour and we enjoyed it.

For the week-end we booked a bus tour to the country and were going to leave the hotel for four days. We made arrangements to store our luggage and the man at the desk told us to be ready at seven the next morning. Susann had packed separately and we were all set when the telephone rang and we were informed that we could not go on this tour because we had not booked it before we left home. They did not tell us that there was not room on the bus. It was just that we had not done this according to the rules and there was no way they would take us.

We were more than a little upset. Before we left home, we had decided that we would not try to drive in England but now I asked the desk clerk to call the nearest car rental agency to see how soon we could have a vehicle. We had an Austin Mini at the Hotel by nine, the man drove us part of the way out of London, pointed us in the direction of the M-1 Highway and we were off for a week-end in the English countryside. It turned out to be one of the highlights of our trip and we were grateful to the tour company for not taking us. We spent a delightful four days without being in a group and without having a tour guide to sneer at us. We discovered "Bed and Breakfast" and the wonderful people that hung out signs like that. They treated us royally!

We had set our goal for Tamworth in the Midlands. Since the M-1 is a six lane highway, traveling on the left side presented no immediate problems since all the traffic was going in the same direction. We thought we had read our map but found that we had missed our turn-off and had to go on for twenty

Page 91

five miles and then circle back. We decided to do this by "country roads" and this is where I encountered some problems with driving on the left. It was not too bad until we tried to make the many turns in these winding lanes and Susann had to keep on reminding me. I had been programmed to "keep right" for so many years that it took the better part of the day to readjust.

Once off the main highway, we soon were at a loss as to which way to go even though we had a map. We did the sensible thing and stopped to ask. We knew we were within twenty five miles of where we wanted to go and were surprised that not any Tom, Dick or Harry could give us directions. We stopped at a little village store and when I opened the door a bell announced my entry and the lady appeared out of the living quarters at the back. When I asked for the shortest route to Tamworth: "Oh, I don't know but my husband does. Pity he's not home just now!" When I told her we were two Canadians trying to find our way around, she expressed surprise and asked: "Would you like a cup of tea?" I was more interested in getting to Tamworth than in tea. So we thanked her and went on our way.

Victor had a pen-pal, Roy Pickering, in Wilnecote near Tamworth and we had decided to drop in on the Pickerings. We stopped in Tamworth and booked in at a hotel for the night. We had an early supper and then drove out to Wilnecote and located 42 Smithy Lane. Unfortunately the Pickerings were not in. We left a note on the door and went back to our lodgings. It did not take long until the Pickerings arrived

and we spent a nice evening getting to know Bill and Dot and another English couple who were just on the way home from a holiday in Scotland. Bill kept the party liberally supplied with his favorite brand of wine but it would have been a charming evening even without that.

This was Saturday night and we made plans for Sunday. The Pickerings were going to pick us up and give us a tour of the countryside. We were glad because we could get to see things we would never have located on our own. Besides, I did not need to waste time asking my way around. The other couple had just come Gretna Green on the English-Scottish border and since we were from Gretna in Manitoba, we had a natural interest in the place. They told us that Gretna was about 250 miles from Tamworth. Susann and I looked at each other and decided on the spur of the moment that we would go there on Monday. There were some surprised looks! Evidently a 250 jaunt is not something you undertake with so little deliberation.

Sunday was beautiful. Bill showed us various points of interest as well as the school Roy attended at the time. They took us to see Coventry which had been so heavily firebombed during the war and we went to see the famous Coventry Cathedral. Bill and Dot had not been to see that yet even though it was only twenty miles from Wilnecote. In the morning I had got up early and gone for a walk. I realized that our hotel was built "in the shadow" of the medieval Tamworth Castle. In the afternoon, when the grounds were open to visitors, we went back there and spent some time.

Page 92

The castle grounds are beautifully landscaped and contained some of the most gorgeous flower beds I have ever seen. There were roses of all different colors and some of them on stalks three feet high. When I asked about this, I was told that they were roses grafted unto an English brier stem which was strong enough to support a whole rose plant at that elevated level. We finally tore ourselves away from the flowers and went into the castle.

The medieval structure was well preserved and had been repaired. The plank floors must have been much as they were when the knights clanked across them in their armor. I was impressed that I was standing in the same courtyard where the confrontation between "Marmion and Douglas" (Sir Walter Scott) took place and could still hear the words echoing between the walls:

". and darest thou then
To beard the lion in his den
The Douglas in his Hall?!"

There was the clattering of horses' hooves, the shout to "Let the portcullis fall!" but Marmion had escaped before the order could be carried out. --- Now, of course, the castle brooded on its hill in silence and maybe a bit of disdain for many who came to gawk but did not understand what historical heritage was contained in the venerable old stones. But what an experience for a teacher of English literature to see the halls and walk the lanes from whence that literature grew!

The Pickerings took us back to Wilnecote for supper and after a pleasant evening of conversation we went back to our hotel. It was agreed that, since we were bent on going to Gretna, they would come along next morning and pilot us to the M-6 going north. When we had reached the approaches to this superhighway, we said good-bye to our newly found friends. - We had decided that it was Susann's turn to drive. There were some astonished looks on the faces of our friends when they saw us changing places. A woman driving in a strange country and a strange car! Seems like things like that were not common in this

part of the world at that time. After we got back to London and called to thank them again for the lovely week-end, Dot could not help but tell Susann that she must have a guardian angel helping her.

Driving north through the lush of summer was fascinating. We made good time on the M-6 but enjoyed the winding country roads more. There were the quaint old villages, the small fields separated by stone fences and the sheep quietly grazing here and there. By now we were adjusted to driving on the left side of the road and found the trip delightful!

When we reached the border, we realized that Gretna and Gretna Green were not the same but two separate communities several miles apart. This Gretna in Scotland had a population of about three thousand and was about five times the size of Gretna in Manitoba. They had one similarity: On the corner of the main intersection there was the Post Office and the Co-Op store next to it,

Page 93

both of them bigger of course. This was a quiet, well-treed older community and, after we found lodging for the night, Susann and I rambled through it until dusk.

We had stopped at a "Bed and Breakfast" place on one of the secluded streets. The elderly lady who kept the large house went all out to pamper her only guests. Before we went to bed we had to have tea with her. This was no mere sipping of the beverage! With the pastries and the cheeses which she served and which we had to try, this amounted to another meal. For breakfast next morning we were served ham and eggs with fried potatoes and coffee. We knew we would not need much for lunch and did not need to worry about another meal until supper time.

We did not want to spend much time in Scotland but did want to visit the famous smithy at Gretna Green. That's where "in days of yore" so many runaway couples from England were married; 10,000 marriages, we were told, had been solemnized over the old anvil. The reason for this was that in England you could not get married without parental consent until you were eighteen while in Scotland this age limit was sixteen. This has been changed and there is no more need for the use of the old smithy for this purpose. But they capitalize on the old notoriety and have made it a museum and a tourist attraction.

The attendant "blacksmith" will marry you again if you so desire and they have a girl with a camera to make sure that the fact gets duly recorded and you pay for them and have the pictures sent to your home address. Just after we had been through the "ceremony" a busload of Welsh tourists arrived and they staged a mock wedding. They supplied their own choir and we hung around just to hear those Welsh people sing! It was an extra for which they could not charge us.

In the afternoon we started our return to London. We took a slightly different route. This took us past Lake Windermere and through the country of Wordsworth and Coleridge. We agreed that the lake has a most idyllic setting but even at that time it already had a tourist cruise boat on it. -- All country roads are paved in England and so we wound or "wended" our way south. We had decided to stop for a day in Stratford-on-Avon. Found a "Bed and Breakfast" place and stayed for the night. We were going to stay another night and so we left the car and walked. Of course we went to Anne Hathaway's Cottage, the church and various other places the brochure pointed out to us.

The first thing in the morning we had gone to the box office to get tickets for the evening performance. Unfortunately they were sold out but we managed to get two tickets for "standing room" but no seats. What happens is that the various tour companies taking people through by the busload, book enough seats for their patrons as part of the tour. The kind that was not for ordinary folk like us who do not know enough to book them from overseas. We did not regret our way of doing it. True, our legs were tired enough without standing through a performance of "All's well, that ends well" but we enjoyed it.

Page 94

It was quite interesting to stand or lean on the rail at the back with others who did not get a seat. These people talked to each other between the scenes and sat flat on the floor during intermission to continue the conversation. Our congenial "neighbors" were two university students from Prince Edward Island who were on the last leg of a journey around the world. They had hitch-hiked across Canada, gone to the "East" (by going west) and then came up through the Middle East. In Greece they had bought an old jalopy and nursed it across Europe. They were trying to sell it now before they embarked for home.

Next morning we headed for London. It was Susann's turn at the wheel again and when we approached the Metropolis, I mentioned that any time she was tired of this kind of traffic, we could phone the company and have them come and pick us up. But she insisted that she could still manage and thought she knew where she was. I took her word for it because she has a keener nose for directions in strange places. I, for my part, was completely lost. Before long she pointed ahead and asked me whether I did not recognize the place. Trafalgar Square, of course, and then our hotel was just a few blocks "around the corner". Without having missed a turn, she had brought us right "home"!

It had been a most wonderful five days and now it was time to get ready to leave London. We had planned to take in at least part of the Mennonite World Conference in Amsterdam. We took a plane and got to Amsterdam a bit early since we wanted a day or two before the Conference to see the city. We had been billeted with a family, but since we got there ahead of time, we booked in at a little hotel that had been recommended to us. This was a central location and we could walk to most places of interest. The manager was porter, etc. all in one person. He only had some female help in to give him a hand with breakfast and with cleaning the rooms. The place did not serve meals. The manager was a young man and we were impressed with his linguistic ability. His clientele seemed to come from all over the world and we never saw him at a loss when it came to speaking to them. When we left, I asked him about this and he shrugged and said that he was supposed to be fluent in fifteen languages. He had been one of the official interpreters at the Olympic Games!

We found that most of the people in Holland were fluent in two, three, or four languages. Young people who were looking for employment where they would have to meet the public, had to know four languages. Annekin Janzen had finished High School where she had taken foreign languages. Her home was in Enschede on the German border and she had belonged to a Tennis Club of German and Dutch young people. So she was fluent in German. After High School she spent six months as a domestic with a family in France in order to perfect her French and three months as a chambermaid in an English resort to do the same for her English. We had always prided ourselves on being bilingual but we certainly admired Annekin who had four channels of communication at her fingertips. She was one of the volunteers at the Conference who helped people with language problems.

Page 95

The day before the Conference was due to start, we relocated to the home of Mr. & Mrs. Niewenhuysen who lived in an apartment in one of the newer suburbs of Amsterdam. Again we were impressed by the number of languages being spoken and the number of people the Niewenhuysens had volunteered to take on for the duration. We would have thought that an apartment like that did not offer any but the minimum of living space. Mrs. Niewenhuysen found bedding and room for us, the Janzens and Annekin from Enschede and a delegate from the Mennonites of southern France.

The Conference in itself was an experience. It was interesting to see and hear Mennonites from different countries and different continents. It was fortunate that simultaneous translations of the proceedings had been arranged even though the dominant languages were English and German. For us some of the sessions were spoiled by the mobility of the crowd. Too many people seemed to have come here to be seen if not heard. You are not going to be noticed if you sit in an auditorium among thousands, but your chances of being observed are much better if you get up and move around or go in and out every twenty minutes. Susann and I agreed that if we as teachers were running this show, we would institute regular periods of bathroom drill for these "children." I was glad that we had not come as delegates and were free to leave when we wanted to.

We had made arrangements to rent a car in Amsterdam and our erstwhile colleague, John Friesen, was going to come with us as far as Salzburg. So we left the Conference and Amsterdam and struck out on our own.

We were going to go south up the Rhine Valley. When we approached a ferry in the afternoon and I asked: "Ist dies der Rhein?" (Is this the Rhine?) the man blurted out: "Na, wenigstens gestern war er es noch!" (Well, at least that's what it was yesterday). When I explained to him that we were innocents from Canada, his attitude changed visibly and he willingly gave us directions.

In Cologne we visited the famous Cathedral and then continued south to Koblenz. The family of Victor's German pen pal, Jens Wedig, live here and we wanted to drop in on them. They knew we were coming but we had not been able to supply any definite time, so our arrival was a bit unexpected. But we were made welcome. Mr. Wedig took the next day off work and took us on a tour of the surrounding area and included a tour of the Marksburg castle.

He was the liaison officer between the German and the NATO (American) forces in Europe. He spoke a faultless English with an American twang because most of his dealings for the past few years had been with the American forces at Kaiserslautern. The Wedigs also found room to put us up. We were grateful not only for the money it saved us but also because it gave us an opportunity to get to know people who actually lived here.

When we left, we made arrangements for somebody to drive our car to Bingen and we boarded one of the tourist boats going up the Rhine. This is a most scenic part of the route with many of the castles of the old robber barons still perched on the hills overlooking the historic river. We went past the

Page 96

rock of the Lorelei and of course the ship's P.A. system carried the famous tune of the folk song connected with the legend of the Lorelei.

At Bingen we got into our VW again and went on to Kaiserslautern. Here Susann had a "pen pal," Philippine Schwem. Immediately after the war the MCC had asked us in Canada and the U.S. to pack school bags for needy children in Germany. We also packed one and Susann stuck our address in. We received a thank you letter from a boy by the name of Klaus Schwem. His mother had also written. We realized that this was a needy family and as soon as we could, we sent a "Care" parcel and

did this at intervals until conditions got better in Germany. We were humbled by the overwhelming gratitude of Philipine when we got there. She claimed that our modest efforts had saved them from death by starvation. She had never requested anything in particular but Susann had always included a pound of coffee. Philipine said that real coffee had been so valuable on the black market, that the proceeds she got by selling the coffee we sent had kept them in flour during the most crucial time.

Here we came to see a family living near the bottom of the economic scale. They lived in two tiny attic rooms they had to heat themselves and their fuel supply was in the cellar three flights of stairs down. The toilet was also downstairs. Franz Schwem had been in the army but had come down with MS which was not considered a service related affliction and therefore he did not qualify for a disability pension. He was in a wheel chair and had to shift for himself during the day when Philipine was out at work. She had to get up extra early to set everything out for him and to prepare him for the day. This meant even wrapping coal and wood in convenient newspaper bundles so he could manage to put it into the stove and keep himself warm. His only entertainment was the television which he could reach with his cane to push the buttons. Klaus was grown and married and it was difficult to imagine what a hard life Philipine had from day to day.

From Kaiserslautern we turned east across southern Germany and did not spend much time in any one place until we came to Salzburg, in Austria. My brother had given me the address of an elderly couple who ran a rooming house for tourists, Alois Skoff, 29 Breitenfelderstraße. Here we stayed for a few days while we enjoyed the city of Mozart and took in various of the concerts being staged in their season of the "Festspiele." Among these was a performance of the "Magic Flute" in the famous Marionettentheater. I was from here that John Friesen left us to go home. His job did not permit him as much time as we were taking. One of the Skoff boys, who was a tour guide there, took us to visit the famous salt mines in Hallein. This was also a memorable experience.

When we left Salzburg, we turned southward and made a short trip back across the German border to visit Bergtesgaden and to see what was left of Hitler's famous hide-out and bunker. Then we continued on through the Tyrol via Innsbruck and into northern Switzerland. We spent one Sunday on the Swiss side of the famous Bodensee but, because of a stiff north breeze, the water on the south side of the lake was murky and the beaches were covered with debris.

Page 97

When we got to Basel the next day, we decided to make a detour to the Mennonite Bible school at Bienenberg. The dormitories were used for tourist accommodation during the summer and we decided to stay the night. They told us when supper would be served and that they were expecting two busloads of American tourists from the World Conference. I asked them whether these were Americans or Canadians and found out that over here they did not know the difference.

We decided to be around when the buses arrived so we could see for ourselves. Until that time we took a most exhilarating walk along the well laid-out paths in the surrounding woods. When the buses did arrive, we were pleasantly surprised that these were Canadians - most of whom we knew! They were even more surprised to see us there and wanted to know what we were doing here. I told them we had come up especially to be the welcoming committee for them. They had only a few hours here and since much of that was to be taken up with supper, they had to run around and take all the pictures and then rush back to the buses to roll on again. Susann and I were happy that no particular hourly schedule was pushing us and after a good night's rest we had breakfast and went leisurely on our way.

After stopping by at the Schwems in Kaiserslautern again, and then detouring to Nürnberg to get my Braun camera repaired, we headed north for

Amsterdam. We stopped a night in the border town of Enschede with the Janzens. Spent the evening watching "Hamlet" with Annekin. These people are lucky to have access to so many transmissions from different neighboring countries. This particular film was broadcast by the BBC.

After a swing around eastern and northern Holland we came back to Amsterdam, delivered our rented car and took a boat back to London. Here we joined the others for our flight back to Canada.

It was just as tedious coming as going. We were 17 hours from London to Toronto where the plane had to be refueled. Since we had not cleared customs, we were not allowed into the airport and all we got was a chance to walk across the tarmac to one small room in the airport and back to the plane for another five hours to Winnipeg. Sharon (Mrs. Rudy) Engbrecht was sitting beside me and during the long flight we had compared notes as to what we had seen in the six weeks' interval. I had mentioned that we had come through the Lake District in England and when someone back in London had asked me about Lake Windermere, I had been unkind enough to suggest that we had 100,000 lakes like that but did not have a Wordsworth to immortalize them. It was sunset when we came across the Lake of the woods area at Kenora. Sharon called my attention to the wonderful scene below and suggested that that was our Lake District. It was beautiful! And so was our landing in Winnipeg half an hour later. Garry was there to get us and we were glad to be home!

We had only a few days until we started school again. Our second year at the Miller Collegiate was to be our last there. During the winter the board decided to terminate the contract of our principal, A. P. Hildebrand, and since we had been toying with the idea of moving to the city, we decided that this

Page 98

was as good a time as any. We thought that A.P. had not been fairly treated and we had no idea as to who would take over. As it turned out, we were glad we had left when we did. The next principal tried to change the whole system and I was happy not to be in the mess.

We had applied to the Fort Garry School Division when an opportunity opened for me to become the supervising principal of the two elementary schools in Altona. I had to decide by a certain date and we left it up to the good Lord and the Fort Garry School Division. If they offered us work before the deadline, we would go there. To Susan's relief our acceptance from Fort Garry arrived two days before the Altona deadline and I declined their offer.

I've often wondered what might have happened, had the decision been the other way. As in Robert Frost's "The road not Taken," we'll never know. We had also declined an offer from my old friend, Jake Peters - now Superintendent in Hanover School Division, to take over the principalship at the Niverville Collegiate. We did not want to relocate in another small town. This was another road not taken.

After residing in Gretna for fourteen years, the move meant a major uprooting. We had to sell our property at a loss because real estate in Gretna was not moving that fast. We bought a place at 74 Linacre, in Fort Richmond. And that started a whole new chapter in our lives. (End of excerpt).

Much had happened in the past twenty five years. Margaret had already been teaching in the Westwood Collegiate for 2 years. Before that Marg. and I had both taken Summer School Courses. I stayed in St.John's College Residence and she had an apartment on Roslyn Road. One summer we shared a room at the CMBC Residence and drove out to the U. of M.

At Shinn's Conservatory where she had taught, Margaret met a fellow by the name of John Frederickson who taught trumpet there. He hailed from B.C. and since he worked in radio and played trumpet, she fell in love with him. When he was transferred, she decided to follow him to B.C. and teach in Vancouver. She got a school and then John and Margaret decided to get married at Christmas time.

On December 22nd, 1967, they were married by a Justice of the Peace in Vancouver. They flew home to Gretna the next day. The reception was to be held in the M.C.I. dormitory dining room and I had all the arrangements to make. I made a lot of use of the telephone to get everything organized in an already busy season. Margaret had her wedding dress hanging at home in Gretna and had not used it for the civil ceremony in Vancouver. The reception was held on December 27th with all the Christmas decorations still up. It was a lovely program with Anneli and Heidi Ens (two former piano students of Marg.'s) playing "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik".-- These weeks were, indeed, very busy for me.

Garry had taught in Reinfeld for two years and now decided to take a year off and tour Europe with his friend, Greg Giesbrecht. Vic was thirteen and we had enrolled him in Westgate Collegiate for Grade 9.

Page 99

Chapter XXI --- Move to Winnipeg - 1968

We had lived in Gretna for fourteen years. Many decisions had to be made. I got a job in Fort Garry at the Vincent Massey Collegiate. I was to get subjects like Biology 11, Geography 10, History 11 and, of course, supervision duties. Frank was placed in the Junior High School at Pembina Crest. We would be able to use the same car to go to work.

I had the pleasure of finding a home in March of '68 since I was spending some time in the city taking another course for my B. Ed. degree. A real estate agent took me around showing off the new development of Fort Richmond East not far off from the Red River. Our street had not been fully developed yet. I found the "Show Home" built by Elias Builders most pleasing. It was new and so moving away from a new home we had built did not seem to be too difficult. The home was beautiful - four bedrooms upstairs - a big bungalow with hardwood floors except for the kitchen and bathrooms. I fell in love with the large master bedroom.

Much landscaping still had to be done. We were able to get going on it and to start moving in even before the summer holidays arrived. My mother found it hard to see us move away again. Vic had to attend Westgate Collegiate for his Grade 9 and really would have preferred to go to the M.C. I. with his friends.

Vic was also growing very rapidly and often complained about pains in one groin. We soon realized that there must be something more the matter than just "growing pains." Early in fall we had him checked out at the Medical Arts Clinic by Dr. Warkentin. Vic was beginning to drag his right leg. The X-rays showed the problem as being that of a slipped epiphysis about three inches out of place at his hip joint.

The teachers had a day of Conference the day Frank and I sent him to the clinic by bus. At noon, when the teachers were having lunch, Dr. Warkentin suddenly appeared asking for us. The secretary at Vincent Massey had not been allowed to call us out of our meeting when Dr. Warkentin had tried to reach us there. So he was forced to come to the restaurant of which Vic had informed him.

Dr. Warkentin had already taken Vic to the Misrecordia Hospital and told us to go and sign him in when we were through with the afternoon session. An orthopedic specialist had put his leg into traction with a three pound weight at the end of the cord over the pulley. Then, after three or four days, when the bone was back in place again, Dr. Bruser operated and pinned it with three four inch screws so that it would not slip again until it was fused. -- Then came learning to walk on crutches! Vic managed very well. He also had to go to school on crutches for six months. Swimming was the only sport he was allowed and he enjoyed it! It was very difficult for us to see Vic suffer so and to go through another operation. I was rather disturbed by the fact that a parent couldn't be called out of a conference in an emergency.

Page 100

It was a difficult year for Vic. He also took private trumpet lessons as well as Music Theory with Marlene Pauls at Westgate. He joined the Winnipeg Schools' Band. This meant taking him to practices on Saturday mornings way out in Elmwood. Frank and I were rather busy in spite of the fact that we had no more animals to look after and our garden in the back yard certainly was smaller.

Teaching at Vincent Massey had its "sore spots". I soon discovered that the principal, Mr. Sotolov, was a womanizer and if the women on staff did not rock in the boat with him, you were not to his liking! I had a Grade 11 Home Room on the second floor. I had to share the lab with other Biology teachers and that took some getting used to. I also taught in four different disciplines and that meant many meetings with teachers of the different subject areas. To my surprise I discovered that a girl with whom I had studied together in the Altona High School was also on staff here. Mildred Enns was teaching English and when I first heard her laugh I exclaimed: "Mildred, it's you!" She hadn't recognized me for several months either.

My Grade 10 Geography class was large but on the whole the students rather liked me - even Howard Bloomfield whom the principal disliked. One reason for this was that he lived on "the wrong side of the tracks." - Howard was registered in my room. We had morning opening via the P.A. System and one day half way through the Lord's Prayer we heard the principal yell: "Bloomfield, what the hell are you doing in the hall?!" Later, when I called the principal's attention to the fact that he had not shut the microphone off to yell at Howard, he did seem almost embarrassed.

One day I had planned to take my Grade 11 History class to the Legislature to watch a session in progress. On arrival at the Legislative Buildings the security personal were really quite taken in by the fact that the class was so well behaved. Watching the session from the balcony, the students were surprised to see the MLA's on the floor so apathetic about the business at hand. Mr. Sterling Lyons was the MLA from Fort Garry and did not even introduce the visitors from his constituency. It was Mr. J. M. Froese the Social Credit MLA for the constituency of Rhineland who made a point of introducing and welcoming "Mrs. Enns and her Grade 11 Class"!

In spring it soon became apparent that the Superintendent, Mr. Leach, had hired too many teachers. The last ones hired, of course, were sort of kindly let go. I was gladly received at the Niverville Collegiate for teaching Grades 9 - 12 in the Science area. Niverville was only 17 miles south east of Fort Garry and so commuting was possible. The school had put up "huts" as the number of students increased by leaps and bounds. My lab was my classroom in a hut. Improvisations had to be made and certainly teaching the Sciences became more cumbersome than what I had been used to - but at least I was my own boss!

Page 101

For the next year Vic decided to go back to the M.C.I. - Garry had come back from Europe in the spring of 1968 found employment during the summer and then decided to go to University. Frank had also decided to leave Pembina

Crest and came to teach German at Niverville. He had a very difficult year at Pembina Crest partly because of recurring "attacks" which the doctors could not diagnose. During the fall of 1969, when we were already teaching at Niverville, Dr. Warkentin decided to hospitalize him during one of these attacks. Surgery confirmed that the problem was gallstones - not in the gallbladder but in the duct where they had not been able to detect them with the X-rays.

Chapter XXII -- Life as a Teacher in Niverville - 1969 -1982

One must not forget the friends and neighbors one encounters in life. Every new move means different associations. We have been fortunate to have nice neighbors. Some of the same people are still living around us as when we first arrived at 74 Linacre Road. The Maguires across the street have been wonderfully supportive and keep a keen eye on our place when we leave for more than a day. The Buchers, to the left of us, have been there since we came here. When Jason and Jodi were little, Victor often baby sat them. Jason had hearing problems which made it difficult for him in school. I coached him in his reading one summer. He is still with us as a friendly neighbor. Darlene, the mother, was and is a nurse practitioner whose specialty is "pace-makers". Some years ago her husband, Dennis, left her and relations became somewhat "cool" after that. To the right of 74 Linacre the house changed hands three times in the early years until the Norries moved in 23 years ago.

They've sold the house and built a bigger one in the west end of the city. They have always been close and kind and ideal. Frank was asked to marry their daughter at the St. Charles Country Club in August, 1995. She was the "little girl next door" for so many years and now decided to have the next door neighbor help her with this important step in her life. We shared many things such as the snow blower, garden produce and ideas. And we must not forget the people across our back fence.

They have also been most congenial and we probably talked as much to them as to the others. Gordon and Mabel Smith were the first ones to welcome us when we first started working in our back yard. The extended hand across the back fence was much appreciated.

Our kitchen windows face each other and we "see" them even oftener than we talk to them. Gordon was the Psychiatrist at the Victoria General Hospital until his retirement in 1995. Now he volunteers two half days a week.

Niverville, some 17 miles distant, had gravel roads at first. These were often very wet and in some springs even became flooded. But we only had a few stop signs. The Principal, Robt.Rempel, was new as was about half his staff. My subjects were the Sciences Grades 9 to 12. They included Grade 9 Science, Grade 10 Physical Science IPS and Grades 11 & 12 Biology.

The first years my classroom was in a hut with a portable sink that I rolled in for use in labs. The shelves where the chemicals were stored had heavy sliding doors. It was these doors that accidentally injured my right hand thumb as a hefty farm boy pushed one of the doors and pinched my right hand between them. The nerve was severed and I later had it operated on so that handshaking, etc. could be endured.

The previous year this classroom had had three different teachers. The lab was in a mess! I was shocked to find the radio-active specimens for Gr. 10 IPS scattered all over the desks and not stored in the protective boxes as required. This was just one example of the horrible state the lab was in. The time table was a heavy one with no spares and no lab preparation periods. My only breaks were a supervised study period or a library supervision period.

The huts were to be replaced by a new addition to the school. I was to get a new Science Room and I was also able to help in the planning of this lab. The classroom was not getting any windows but after some discussion and pleading, I was getting a small "botanical greenhouse" just off the preparation lab. The windows in this had a southern exposure and was the sunniest spot in my domain. Here I could grow the flowers and plants I needed for my Botany classes. The shelves underneath the window counter made storage space available for extra project research material, etc. I placed a chair in one corner and this my place for a few minutes of recuperation and lunch. The staff room was too smoky, crowded and noisy. The one drawback the new addition had was that there were no washrooms at this end of the new wing. The washrooms were located in the old part of the school. The preparation lab actually was a narrow hall-like room that divided the Biology and Chemistry labs and was accessible from both. Only one more teacher was hired to teach the Grade 7 & 8 Sciences and Grades 11 & 12 Chemistry and Physics.

Teaching aids like overhead projectors, film projectors and tape recorders were limited and had to be booked well in advance. It became apparent very soon that I would need a machine for myself so I purchased a Bell & Howell 16 mm. projector and a film strip machine for use by myself and my husband. Frank also bought his own tape recorder for use in the teaching of German. I ordered my films for the following year early in spring and so had them on hand at the time they were needed and so could always supplement my lessons whenever I desired.

Money allotted for lab equipment in the Science Department were always carefully weighed off and so getting microscopes for big classes always had to have priority. I loved teaching the Natural Sciences, Biology and Biochemistry! I challenged all students to make Science "come alive" and that they were an integral part of classroom activity. As much as possible we gathered and prepared the specimens for the lab shelves. In early September I organized a flower show with the Grade 9 classes. They had to categorize the flowers and plants into their various families, etc. They used their own creative vases and the classroom became a beautiful sight to behold. I had ladies who were themselves interested in flowers and plants to come in as judges and to present the prizes. In this way students had to learn the

Page 103

Taxonomy to which all their own special arrangements belonged. This meant that a lot of research had to be done. The main steps in Taxonomy were:

- A - Kingdom -- Plant
- B - Phylum
- C - Class
- D - Order
- E - Family
- F - Genera
- G - Species

The last two were usually the most difficult to find. We needed a lot of reference books. As a result I brought all my own Encyclopedias of the Sciences and bought more. Before long I had about \$7,000 worth of my own books and equipment in my classroom.

I would also take the kids to the Rat River bridge (now designated as an environmental area) for collecting specimens - everything from Hydra, algae,

snails, forms, frogs and flies. This also meant a lot of student preparation beforehand. It was very surprising to discover how much the outside world could provide for us. One student had spent the summer collecting butterflies and made a beautiful display of this. In fall the students would bring in the frogs for dissection later on. We would store them carefully in the fridge keeping them at a temperature of 4°C. Now and then one of them would wake up and try out his voice and serenade me at lunch time. Pig killing season would come around and the students would supply the lab with hearts, eyes, brains and fetal pigs. Niverville had a locker plant and would store the piglets for me until that section of our studies was at hand. One Saturday a mother actually phoned me to ask whether I would like 7 fetal piglets still in their amniotic sacs. This way I had parents involved in our studies as well. We have never calculated how much money they saved the school in supplying us with these specimens. Some of them the school would not have been able to afford on its budget.

One ambitious student took a piglet and boiled off all the flesh and then collected only the skeleton. She carefully organized all the bones into their respective parts and put them into little plastic bags e.g. all the leg bones into one bag, the vertebrae into another, etc. She and I carefully set about organizing the bones into the skeleton shape for show case display. Many of the displays we made at that time are still in the lab at this time of writing in '96. Charts, maps, dioramas, bulletin board displays, etc. made our lab-classroom with its two large aquariums come alive and exciting! The flowers blooming in the greenhouse were additional joys for all of us. Many students would come through the room at noon just browsing and looking at all the "stuff".

We had chicken eggs hatching in little incubators for embryology study and little guppies being born in the aquarium had a special thrill. One year my Grade 9 class was fortunate enough to see a Monarch butterfly emerge from a cocoon brought in by a student the previous fall.

Page 104

It is obvious that my lab-classroom had a lot of extra work to be done after school and often on week-ends. There was a lot of marking of exams and lab books. Some parents would complain to me that I was expecting too much of their children. But I only followed the Department of Education requirements.

We had parent-teacher interviews regularly twice a year. Most parents were indeed very cooperative. Naturally some were concerned about their kids "making it." -- One year a particular Mom and Dad came in to see me. I had two of their boys in class - one in Grade 10 and one in Grade 11. The one in Grade 11 had to get up early to do hours of chores in the dairy barn before he went to school. As a rule he was just too tired to pay much attention in class and on occasion would literally fall when I showed a good film and even during a lab where activity was involved. His marks were in the "C" level whereas the Grade 10 boy had better grades. The father was a deacon of the local M.B. church. I could hardly believe my ears but B and behold the awful "swearing" and derogatory remarks he hurled at me were unwarranted. Finally his five minutes were up and I offered the record of the boys exams for him to look over but he refused to avail himself of that opportunity. I opened the door and told him to get out! Later that evening I had an opportunity to talk to the Pastor of his Church. I told him what had happened and that, as a minister's wife, I felt such a deacon had no Christian rights to help with a communion service. I suppose Mr.P. had not expected this to happen. Next day he came back to apologize.

Another incident occurred at the September opening of a new school year. I had a very large Grade 9 class and all available seats were taken. In comes a new student standing in front of the class demanding a choice seat and that in no uncertain terms! He was an obnoxious one and already all the students feared if not hated him. During one noon hour his father came to see me while I was having lunch. Again I found it hard to believe that parents could be so "ornery"! Later I learned that he had left his wife in a Mental Hospital in Saskatchewan and was now trying to make a life by himself and the children. Again stories were fabricated to such a degree that it was most amazing! I never had his sister in my Gretna classroom.

When I spoke to her about this later, she told me that he was a very disturbed person. -- No year can ever be a perfect year. Teaching in a so-called "Bible Belt" brings along with it many unexpected complications.

Another incident in another year. A gossip trail followed me about the district. The Principal called me in and made me aware of it. It was hard to believe. One student I had had the year before started these stories by phoning mothers. On and on it went! Then an Evangelistic Crusade was carried through the next year. Suddenly one noon hour this student (M.F.) came to my room crying her heart out. She hugged me and begged me to forgive her. I asked: "For what?" She answered: "I started all those lies about you and not only about you but also about my music teacher as well. The devil made me do it. Please forgive me!"

Page 105

Students were of different nationalities. Not only were there Mennonites but also Anglo Saxon, Chinese, "Mexicans." and occasionally Indians. In my thirteen years at Niverville I always had three Grade 9 classes with a total of 90 - 100 plus students. So new students totaled about 1300 during that time.

My extra-curricular work was involved with the planning and organizing of the Graduation Ceremonies at the end of the school year. It was the Grade 11's who were responsible to do this for the Grade 12's each year. I had the Grade 11's as a "Home Room" all these years. It was also the Grade 11's duty to raise the money to pay the expenses for that great Grad. Day! The students would spend a Saturday washing cars. Sometimes they would spend nights catching chickens in the local chicken barns. They would order a whole truck load of oranges and grapefruit from Florida and sell them locally. Then we would have to plan for the "Theme" and then the decorations would take a lot of discussion because they would have to be in harmony with this theme. The Graduation Service was held in a church but the reception and banquet were held in the School Gymnasium. The banquet, too, had to be planned and organized. One year the gym had been decorated and a beautiful wishing well with a small walking bridge had been installed at one end of the room. Here students could take pictures with their partners.

This particular night after the reception, one of the Grade 12 students asked to be photographed at this wishing well with Frank and myself and him in the middle. After the reception the Grade 12 students had their own "Do". Sometimes this was a cruise on one of the paddle wheel boats on the Red River. But that year was different and they had planned parties on private farmyards. Early the next morning the radio brought us the sad news of a terrible accident on Highway 59. It was four of our Grads who had been killed on their way to a breakfast in Winnipeg. Frank and I had a wedding to go to at Crystal City that Saturday and were just ready to leave the house when the phone rang. The R.C.M.P. asked us to come and identify a student in the morgue at the St. Boniface Hospital. We obliged only to find it was Don Kehler, the same boy who wanted his picture taken with us not twelve hours ago. That last week of June the Staff and Student Body had to cope with four funerals. Sleeplessness, liquor, etc. had claimed four young lives, one of them was Allan Regehr who had won most of the awards the evening before. It is indeed a sad picture to see the mangled body of another student whose dress you recognize from the night before.

Staff changes occurred to some extent. Some colleagues you remember more than others. Some are still there at this time of writing - 25 plus years later! Miss E. Heide, who was a young art teacher, made the statement to me that she was treated like a piece of horse shit that was kicked around on the street. This didn't really glorify the reputation of the Collegiate to say the least.

Niverville was fortunate in its band directors! There was Mr. E. Klassen who did excellent work but also gave up because of frustrations. He was followed by Mrs. Moody a rather small person who had the knack to instill

Page 106

discipline which a six-foot male had not been able to achieve. As far as we were concerned, the high light of Mrs. Moody's year with us was the Christmas Concert. Niverville had never seen such a well organized, efficiently run and quiet Concert! This was one time the real spirit of Christmas had a chance to warm the hearts of the audience.

Mrs. Moody was succeeded by Frazer Linklater. He also did a marvelous job! We were always impressed how fast the raw Grade 7 recruits learned to play a band instrument and by Christmas time they could play simple pieces as a group. Mr. Linklater's students usually brought home awards from the Music Festival!

Mr. Don Dulder, the Phys. Ed. teacher, is still at it! He certainly instilled the spirit of competition in Volley Ball and Basketball. - Mr. McKnight was a super Math's teacher. - Mr. Grienke taught Chemistry Grade 11 & 12. We two shared lab equipment and the small "Preparation Lab" room separating our class-rooms. We also organized a divisional Science Fair. I took some interested students to the Provincial Science Fair held at the University of Winnipeg every May. Some years I also helped to supervise these students.

There were other teachers. Some of them are still there, others have come and gone. Each of them touched my life in one way or another. Some of the names I could mention off hand are: Ernie Braun, Jim Suderman, Mr. Campbell, Miss McKinnon, Mrs. Helene Dyck and many others. -- For many years some of us teachers commuting from Winnipeg formed a car pool. Winter driving was often hazardous. During that time the Hanover School Division found it difficult to close schools no matter what. They would cancel all school buses because of the hazardous driving conditions but still required the teachers to show up for the day! One time I was sure we would not make it through the big drifts, but the big V-8 engine of our Buick managed to keep us on the road.

The library was finally brought into order by Gaile Whelan-Enns who reorganized the classification of books, etc. She did a great job for several years and stimulated reading in many of the students. Sometimes her young son, Kelly, would come into my classroom to say "Hello!" and to look at the fish in the aquarium.

During my thirteen years at the Niverville Collegiate we had three different principals, Mr. Robert Rempel, Mr. Jacob Bergen and Mr. Dennis Fast. Sometimes I still feel that if they, too, had had to share in teaching a class or two, the school could have still functioned more efficiently.

Of our Superintendents Mr. Jacob J. Peters, who hired us, understood us and our work best. His successor, Mr. Henry Thiessen, supported us to an extent but thought, too, that you had to save money at all costs. So we often had a difficult time to get Science lab. equipment. Phys. Ed. and Music came first on his agenda. -- My last Superintendent, and still at the job, was Mr. Gilbert Unger. He really expressed surprise at my resignation in the spring of '82.

Page 107

He felt, as he put it, that I had everything at my fingertips so why would I resign now?! I told him that I had so often asked for and hoped to have at least one year of my life without a Grade 9 class -- but this never seemed to be able to be arranged.

One year I got a rather positive surprise when the Board sent me to a week's Science Conference in the Forensic Science Center in Toronto - all expenses paid! Of course I never had a day of sick leave in all those years. -- I also worked on the Committee for the Department of Education when a new curriculum for the Junior High Sciences was being developed. This was a new type of textbook and new methods of teaching were also to be involved. It took a lot of time as the teachers on this Committee had to do all their work on the week-ends. A whole week-end at the St. Benedict's Center in particular was the highlight of this process.

I had started the practice of asking my Grade 12 Biology Class out to a party at our house every year. Sometimes we would rent the University of Manitoba swimming pool for several that evening. Or sometimes we would play games and use the large pool table downstairs. We enjoyed the relaxations and finished with a feed of either Lasagna or "Rollkuchen and Watermelon."

I also took the Grade 12's out to the Delta Marshes every spring for more detailed environmental studies that they might encounter at the University the next year. I also gave out an annual Biology award for the most proficient student in the class. Most of all I contribute the success I had in the lab. to the interest and cooperation of students and parents in supplying specimens for the Biology and Science classes. The Department of Education also asked me to have other Biology teachers take a one or two day "in-service" to observe how we functioned in our lab.-classroom. One visiting teacher asked: "But how do you challenge your students to be that interested?"

One year an inspection team of different divisions visited the various school in the Hanover Division. To my surprise and delight the inspectors I had observing were amazed and pleased to see the operation of the "Lab." and one of them asked if he could take home to his division the ideas he had gathered in my room. It was indeed rewarding to see "others" noticing what I had been trying to do in my classroom! Even more rewarding is the fact that many of my former students still keep in contact with me either by card, letter or telephone.

The last Graduation, 1982, I was indeed surprised to receive the recognition, flowers, etc. at the service. The Grade 9, 10 and 11 classes had already made special farewell parties and acknowledgments at school. Often the Grade 9's were considered the "brattiest bunch" in school. Frank says that I'm the only teacher he knows for whom the Grade 9's, boys as well as girls, filed by for a farewell hug at the end of the last Science class! Thanks! and God Bless them all!

Page 108

Our trips to Niverville have not stopped. Businesses like Wiens Furniture Village, Wm. Dyck & Sons, Credit Union and others have kept us in touch. The little town has seven churches and I often wondered why so many?

At school there would often be differences of opinion expressed as to such a need. As a Guidance Counselor for several years, I sometimes had the opportunity to realize that "Church differences" played a greater part in the undercurrents of people's lives than would appear on the surface.

Chapter XXIII - The Retirement Years -- 1982 - 1995

I had completed 32 years of teaching. When I stopped, I missed the teaching but not the hassles that go had in hand with the every day operation of the a school. Thus, when September 2nd rolled around

in fall, I felt somewhat void and lonely. I took up my old writing desk and outside in the sun shine I started to strip and sand it. Not many days passed until the Seine River School Division asked me to substitute teach in the St. Norbert Collegiate. I told the principal the preferences of the disciplines in which I was willing to work but soon discovered that my wishes were completely ignored. Every subject such as Phys. Ed., Band, Home Ec., Shops and English were thrown into my lap.

A teacher who has the reputation of being a good disciplinarian gets called.

Many of the teachers were often sick or "burnt out". I substituted for Sharon Carstairs (English Communication) who was then already getting into Liberal politics. She was happy to have me since I was able to run the film projector myself. I soon found out that every dollar I earned, the income tax wanted back.

The second year I also home-schooled or tutored a student through the Grade 12 Biology course. Erica found it almost impossible to function in a large classroom. Yes, she made her last subject in Grade 12 with me. Another girl in the neighborhood needed some coaching in I.P.S. Grade 10. So I never seemed to be completely out of teaching. The following year a professor in the faculty of Education at the U. of M. asked me to conduct some weeks' work in teaching his fourth year students how to dissect, especially the fetal pig, which he had never done before because he had been handed a new discipline to teach for which he was not really prepared. One day at work one of my former students,

R.L., walked in a bit late and almost collapsed when he saw his former Biology teacher standing at the front of the class. He said he thought he had seen a ghost! After class he offered to drive me home.

I decided to enroll in a chaplaincy training course given by the University of Winnipeg at the Victoria General Hospital under the supervision of the Victoria Hospital chaplain Rev. Long. This pastoral training course is a very intensive course in all fields of pastoral work. We had courses in all fields of work, especially in the field of visitation of the sick, marriage problems, health care in general for the mentally ill, and to counsel families in times of death and dying. It also involved practical training in working together with doctors and nurses and patients.

Page 109

This intensive three months' course gave me credits toward my Masters degree as well as the certification for having covered the course successfully. four others taking the course were: Agnes Breton, a retired Catholic sister, R. Ford, a Salvation Army Captain Ralph Godfrey, and Ted Novak to whose ordination as a Catholic priest we were invited. It was very enlightening in more ways than one.

During our course we had separate interviews with Rev. Long and these sessions were recorded on tape (cassette). I soon discovered, by hearing a tape Rev. Long had forgotten in a machine he sent home with me, the lies A.B. had told Rev. Long about me in her interview !

The worship services we had to conduct in the Chapel were spiritual uppers! On one of my services the question asked me by the Supervisor was "Does your church know what a terrific speaker they have?" I answered "No" and he replied: "I figured!" The "verbatim" we were required to do were not that enjoyable.

I was responsible for the 5th floor where the wards were filled with mostly the terminally ill. Sometimes I would have three patients passing away in short order and their families had to be helped, etc. I could list many patients here, but Rev. Long always said to me that he was surprised to find how well I coped with the "death and dying" aspects of visitations. I told him that in my family I had had to cope with it since I was a child and even as an adult I had to watch the passing of some of my siblings due to cancer. Rev. Long had never had a death in his immediate family! -- All this may sound as if I'm patting myself on the back but it did not take many years later when my very own niece put me down with humiliating and

derogatory remarks about our work as chaplains and as ministers. Frank says people like that have a purpose in life in that they keep the Lord's servants humble. May God open her mind and forgive her the many hurts she gave us -- and that after all we had done for them!

Many of the experiences I had in that course are still very helpful in making visitations of both the dying and the lonely and those that ask for help and wish one to come and see them. I feel that all pastors and deacons should take such a course before attempting to get involved in this exhausting work. Since my husband is a minister and we were ordained as such, he felt a great need for me to assist him in this particular field where he always felt somewhat inadequate. Some patients that I visited in hospital would occasionally ask for me if and when they were hospitalized again.

Frank and I still have a number of Care Homes as well as seniors living alone whom we feel obligated to see. Some friends also ask us about all the vacations we make going south for the winter or what have you. Frank has never cared about traveling too much. He claims that he had to be "foot loose" since he was a refugee at the age of three until he came to Canada in 1926. We love gardening and our yard and home. We also like to have a nice yard and flowers. We also decided to take more time with our grandchildren than we had time for when we were both working.

Page 110

We enjoyed traveling with the Naturalists i.e. "Nature Travel". It was usually a smaller birding tour and even though birds were the important element we got to see and know something about topography and the flora and fauna of the region we visited. We have children in B.C. who are fortunate to have a cottage at Halfmoon Bay on what is known as the Sunshine Coast and we are allowed to make use of it as well. Margaret and John Frederickson and their children are delighted when we come for a three weeks' stay. When Kathleen and the twins were small, I made an effort to stay with them at least three times a year. Margaret went back to teaching when the children were all in school and I tried to give her a helping hand in the house once in while. So B.C. has become another part of our lives. At the time of this writing Marg.'s children are all in University on scholarships. -- Jared (Garry's boy) is our oldest grandson and has already finished his degree in Environmental Science at the University of Manitoba. Both Jared and Kelly have been able to use our home as their second home whenever they needed to stay over in the city. They live near Aubigny some twenty five miles south of the city.

"Nature Travel" has taken us to Hawaii twice - in 1983 and 1989. We enjoyed both since the tour covered five of the important islands and spent a minimum of time in large cities like Honolulu. Though Frank is not an avid birder, he enjoyed these trips too. Shortly after I retired I took a bus tour with "Circle Tours" to the Bahamas. My "partner", Lily Hall, was the widow of a dentist and we had a great time cruising from Florida to the Bahamas on the ship called "Emerald Seas". Our bus driver was Ted Loewen, a former student from Gretna, and it was rather fun to find a good humorous driver.

When I came home, I was surprised by an unexpected arrangement for the next day. It was the celebration of our 40th Wedding Anniversary. I really was too exhausted to enjoy such a big do but then the church wanted to do this for us. I suppose the only advantage for me was that all my remaining siblings and their spouses had been able to come and be present. A number of them have left us since.

In 1986 I made a grand tour of Australia and New Zealand with Gus Yaki of "Nature Travel" as the leader of the group again. We were sixteen in the group and we made a stopover in Honolulu. We took off from Los Angeles where I met a friend from our '83 Hawaii tour, Trudy Moore of New Westminster, B.C.

This tour was also a "Nature" tour and involved touring by vans from place to place and some flying from one island to the next. Just as in Hawaii small planes have to be used to get from one island to the other. Birding is so exciting that it is difficult to put it all into words. The trip, on a new bus, from Darwin to the outback to such places as Alice Springs and Ayers Rock must be experienced!

The week we spent camping in the Cape area some 10' from the Equator was like being in line with MASH. Here I first saw the little blue wren. We traveled by army buses, through the forest over bumpy hot and narrow paths. The government of Australia supplied us with new tents, air mattresses, etc. and a family to cook for us in a tent turned into a kitchen.

Page 111

Australia and New Zealand have an abundance of wild life especially birds in gorgeous colors. I had always dreamed of being able to see the Coral Reefs of Australia. I had to teach about them for some twenty five years. Now I had the opportunity to make my dreams come true.

New Zealand is a beautiful country and reminded me of the Cabot Trail on Cape Breton Island. The 90-mile trip along the Island coast with the bus driving on wet sand along the shore is indescribable! The flight to Stephen Island and the most southern hotel one can stay in before Antarctica is reached, is indeed a memorable one. Seeing the Kiwi birds and the Kookaburra, hearing the nocturnal sounds, flying foxes by the hundreds, the duckbilled platypus, the albatross bird and the penguins marching passed one's feet up the beach are unforgettable. (My whole trip is on slides).

One must not forget the friends one meets on such a tour. A special one, Trudy Moore, B.C. still corresponds with me and we remember each other's birthdays and get together now and then when we visit in B.C. Some Australian birders have also come to Winnipeg for some birding and it was our pleasure to take them to Oak Hammock and the Fort Whyte Nature Center. One summer, Trudy Moore and her sister from Toronto dropped in. We will never forget how they enjoyed the Mennonite lunch I had taken along for the outing to Oak Hammock - "Rollkuchen" and watermelon!

The to Australia took some 26+ hours. As we cross the international date line, another day has to be added. The huge plane (Quantos) of New Zealand Air had to land at Christchurch, New Zealand first and then go on to Australia. En route, flying over the Indian Ocean during the night, the plane suddenly dropped through an air pocket some 1000 feet sending the oxygen air masks down and anyone standing at the time was sent sprawling! Quite an experience!

On our second trip to Hawaii when we were leaving for Vancouver the plane, having barely taken off, couldn't gain altitude over the sea. Soon the pilot told us that we would have to go back since the landing gear would not retract and we could not make it across the ocean this way. Everyone sitting near a right window should watch him jettison his fuel in preparation for landing. How scared many passengers were! Before we had embarked we had just heard the news that on another plane just taking off one of the doors had blown out and the resulting decompression had sucked several passengers out and they had fallen into the sea. Our plane got back safely, they issued us free dinner tickets for the cafeteria but we were not allowed back into the airport proper. Six to eight hours later we were ready to leave again. That same day passengers from three different planes were all fidgeting about in the "holding" area. Several from our plane refused to re-embark.

I love traveling but unfortunately Frank does not. But in 1988 I managed to get him to take a bus tour to Alaska with me. This is a very long trip by bus and stops for the night at various points across the prairies. At Dawson Creek, B.C. we took the Alaska Highway. Here the Peter Batchelors, former students

from Gretna, picked us up, gave us a tour of the area, fed us supper and then took us to Fort St. John, to the hotel where our group stayed.

Page 112

The trip through the Yukon was also delightful. Near Dawson City we were given an opportunity to pan for gold. On June 21, the longest day of the year, we were taken to a hill near Dawson City from which we could observe the midnight sun. We went as far as Fairbanks and Anchorage in Alaska and then back into the Yukon and northern B.C. to the coast at Skagway. From here we took the scenic cruise along the coast to Prince Rupert. From there the bus took us through the mountains of B. C. heading for our beloved Manitoba.

This trip was worth taking and I was able to collect some interesting fossils such as trilobites, hematite rocks, etc. Boys on the coast stood ready with trays of little collections of rocks to sell to us when we got off at Prince Rupert. On this trip Jake and Helen Rogalsky were with us. On the boat we shared the cabin with them for the night. Bus trips are boring when the only entertainment people can think of is Bingo and Cards. I like to get off and learn something about the geography and topography of the country.

A rather unique Enns-fest had been planned for August 16 to 18 in 1991. This was held at the Lakeside Resort near Gimli, Manitoba. Garry and his Committee had done a wonderful job of planning. Some 60 to 70 relatives from as far away as Germany and B.C. had come to join in the festivities. The more detailed account you can find in Frank's "Diary - 1990 - 1994."

Our last bus tour took us to Phoenix, Arizona, for three weeks in February of 1992. I had been to the Bahamas with "Circle Tours" and to Alaska we took "Fairway Tours" but to Arizona we took "White Owl Tours." We had a rather congenial group but there were not many Mennonites on this one. We had a small apartment suite in a hotel in Mesa. The hotel had a swimming pool which was used mainly to lounge around and get a tan that you could show off when you got home. In our rooms we had facilities to have our own breakfast and lunch if we so desired. On this trip we enjoyed the side trips we were able to make such as a day in Salt Lake City to tour the Mormon temple square and Tabernacle. The temple itself was out of bounds for us. We visited the early Sedonas area in Arizona. The trip from Mesa to the Mexican border and the walk across to Nagali in Mexico also proved interesting except that Frank tires easily of being hounded to buy this or that by street vendors.

Most of our bus passengers were amazed at Frank's contribution to the daily bus trip by being able to recite from memory a poem each day. Never a repetition!

The youngest couple on our bus tour were Bea and Lionel Coulombe. Once or twice during our trip Lionel missed a day where he stayed at our hotel because he was not feeling well. They managed to get back to Winnipeg just in time! We came home on a Thursday and he died the following Sunday of a heart attack. We attended the big funeral at the Leatherdale Chapel. We were surprised to see only five of the bus gang present. Bea Coulombe had been a receptionist at Dr. Young's office when we first went there and so was not quite a new acquaintance on the bus. We met her again in early 1996 and she informed us that she had now moved into a condominium in South of the Border.

Page 113

As I wrote earlier we made several trips to B.C. and we still do off and on. One trip by car was in 1990. On this occasion we also took in the Sunshine Coast as well as Vancouver Island area visiting Frank's cousins at Courteney. On the way to B.C. we visited a number of relatives and friends. In Swift Current, Saskatchewan, we visited Helen (Hiebert) Ruf who once had been Vic's baby sitter. This was the last time we were to see her on this planet.

We had to make another trip by car in 1993 because Frank had agreed to officiate at the marriage of our nephew's daughter, Angie Klassen, in Edmonton. The wedding in Edmonton was beautiful as usual. We stayed in the hotel where the reception was to be held and our niece, Angie's Aunt Elizabeth, chauffeured us back and forth to church and to Gibbons for the post-wedding get-together the next day. Angie's Uncle, Dr. John Klassen of Calgary, stayed in the same hotel for the week-end and we had the pleasure of meeting and visiting with him and his wife.

On our way west we stopped in Kelowna but found our sister-in-law Ruth Enns too preoccupied with others and so could not keep us overnight. It was seven years now since George had passed away and we felt that maybe she did not care much to keep up any further relationships. We stayed at nephew Henry Epps place. I was much more comfortable here anyway.

The last time we stayed at George's was 1985. At that time he was walking around the house with along extended oxygen tube which was connected to a generator in the basement. At that time we cleaned up his garden and his lawns, etc. He also enjoyed the gooseberry mousse I cooked for him. And how he did love the crackles we had brought! Ruth had little understanding in this respect. -- For me it was most difficult to visit his first wife, Anna, in the Care Home in Clearbrook and then see Ruth "further up the trail." -- Having been to George's and Ruth's wedding in Calgary in 1971 memories of disgust and surprise still linger with me. The promise he made again "until death do us part" with his oldest son Ernie standing by his side as best man, brought tears to my eyes. More than that came later when George wrote us how we, especially I, had spoiled his wedding. Numerous other letters followed that were rather heartbreaking especially to his brother Frank. All that may be "water under the bridge" and forgiven by now but the forgetting is much harder!

Our trips to B.C. are and will be numerous but maybe now that their children are adults, their need for our help may be reversed to our need for them to come and see us. John, our son-in-law, has been over far too seldom.

The numerous times he has taken me fishing on the Pacific and the boat rides together with the kids to Buccaneer Bay and so on have been much appreciated. We have and still enjoy the cottage especially in September when we come to harvest the blackberries growing wild in the bushes just up the road. In the early years of their marriage it was just a gravel road but now, in the 90's, there is a well paved highway that winds its way from the ferry landing at Langdale past Sechelt and Halfmoon Bay and on up the peninsula.

It's over a year since I have been there and I do miss it!

Page 114

Chapter XXIV --- Our 50th Anniversary -- March 1993

A wedding in March is always somewhat risky. Blizzards, ice and fog can interfere. Preparations for my wedding in 1943 had their worrisome moments.

But the cold and hard frozen roads made it possible. Our Silver Anniversary we ignored and took a trip to Europe instead. Surprisingly we received some congratulatory cards by mail in spite of no invitations to a special gathering. Our 40th was to be a big surprise for me! Now I cared very little for our 50th.

Our sons, of course, with some of their close friends hatched a brilliant idea of a 50th Anniversary Scholarship fund for University students. This was to be awarded at the University of Manitoba to deserving students from three Collegiates where we both had taught: M.C.I., W.C. Miller and Niverville. Victor had done an excellent job of organizing a musical program for March 27th with a choir consisting of relatives, former students and friends. The ladies of our church were supplying the reception goodies. The

plan was that instead of cards and flowers people would make donations to the scholarship fund to be started in our name.

It was not a good day for many who had planned to come. Parts of southern Manitoba were blanketed in such heavy fog that driving was impossible. Some of our nephews had been caught in a flu epidemic and could not dare to get too far away from the bathroom. There were other excuses not quite as compelling. In spite of all this, some 350 guests did make it!

Garry was the M.C. for the program and Frank Neufeld led the congregational singing. The choir leader was a former student from the W.C. Miller Collegiate, Dr. Garry Froese, who did a great job. We met many close friends and relatives. Even our minister, Rev. G.G. Neufeld, now 90, was able to attend. Unfortunately he was too deaf and blind to do any kind of pulpit functioning-- but then we did not want any speeches anyway. Of course we later were criticized about this. Some people were also surprised to see me dressed in a white leather suit. I froze in my thin 1943 wedding dress, I was bound not to do so on my 50th! -- Another great joy was that our daughter from B.C. could be present too. With great sadness only her husband John and their three children were absent due to the price of air fare, school and business.

At this time of writing already two scholarships have been awarded and both of them to Graduates of Miller Collegiate. The fund had a tremendous start and with the donations usually made at funerals, it will still grow substantially. We feel that this is the best memorial we could have. It will continue even after we have gone to eternity.

Our guest book for both the 40th and 50th Anniversaries shows the names of all the guests. We still received cards and a few reminders. The Bethel Mennonite Church was indeed a great place for such a function. The tapes made were excellent. I appreciated our nephew Frank Neufeld singing my favorite song: "Die Uhr." Thanks!

Page 115

The tragedy of the suicidal death of John Enns, Frank's cousin, in Killarney, April 6, brought a sad picture and an emotionally heartrending experience to us all. At our 50th I had asked him why he hadn't sung in the choir for he had such a beautiful tenor voice. He answered sadly: "I don't sing any more." -- Only afterwards did we come to realize the reason why!

May and a late spring had its effects. Frank was not feeling well and one day when he became disoriented and collapsed, I had him taken to hospital by ambulance. Everybody suspected a heart attack but he kept on giving them all the wrong answers in his semi-lucid state. They had to fill him up with liquids first, before they could make a urine test. Then they realized that he had a very severe bladder infection. They put him on intravenous antibiotics and he ordered a bottle of Vitamin C (from home) and took 500 mg. every half hour. After a couple of uncomfortable days and nights on a stretcher in the Observation Unit, he was well enough to sign himself out when the doctor was not there to do it.

During the month of May, we were also blessed with numerous visitors from various parts of Canada. Half of the Month of May had some fifteen entries in our guest book. -- June was also slated for a homecoming of the M.C.I. students who had graduated in the decades of the 3's: 1933, '43, '53 etc.

This was known as "Crossroads '93" and included Frank who had graduated in 1933! Though there are a few others still around, he was the only one who felt it to be important enough to make an effort to be there.

In July we were looking forward to visitors from Germany. Siegrid Wedig and her daughter Andrea Wedig Volk arrived on July 3rd. The Wedigs had hosted us in Germany in 1967 and again in 1973. Mr. Wedig had passed away in 1991 and we were only too glad to be able to host Mother and Daughter. We took them around to as many historic sites as possible and showed them as much of southern Manitoba as possible in ten days. Then we put them on a plane to Vancouver and our daughter, Margaret, gave them what they called the "Vancouver Blitz" in four days. From here they took the flight home.

As I've mentioned before, we were also to drive to Vancouver by car once more in 1993 and left on August 23rd. After all, blackberry season was coming up and so we left for Halfmoon Bay soon after we arrived at John and Margaret's in Coquitlam. I always made a lot of jam. By the time we came back to town, the grandchildren and Margaret were in school already. Whenever we were in this area we tried to see Frank's cousins: Lydia and Jake Friesen, Beth Unruh and the Janzen family in Clearbrook. Their ranks are thinning out too. My friend, Trudy Moore, and I had to have our weekly swim at the Canada Games pool. -- The details of this trip are well recorded in Frank's "Journal" (Diary) for that summer.

Page 116

Fall was upon us before we knew it and garden preparations for the winter always have to be made. Fruits and vegetables have to be harvested and stored. Frank insisted that our garden patch at the back was too small, and planted with trees, to lend itself well for machine tilling. So he did it the old-fashioned way: he dug it up with the spade! After he had turned 80 in 1995 he finally agreed to have John Wiens in with the roto-tiller. It took John less than 15 minutes!

To have a house and yard looked after while one is away on vacation, takes a lot of planning. During the latter years our grandsons Jared and Kelly with the help of their father (Garry) took over. During the years we had University students we had excellent caretakers. No one was as proud of this as my niece Susan (Klassen) Gilson. She was taking a course in Agriculture at the U. of M. She had a sense of immaculate outside work. - Karen Dyck, (now Tiessen) a niece, also did well. Another student we had living with us for two years was David Johnston from Emerson. My niece Charlotte (Klassen) Johnston also looked after the place when she spent a year at our house. Maybe it would be in place here to list all the students (and others) who have lived with us during the years of our marriage. To some we provided a home.

1. Peter Ediger - at Lena (he was 14 years old)
2. Frank Loewen & John M. Klassen (summer help on the farm-Lena)
3. Helen Penner - (Mexico) Gretna - helped baby sitting
4. Helen Hiebert - (Mexico) Gretna - " " "
5. Tina Penner - " " " " "
6. Paul Dyck - (son of Frank and Anne Dyck) M.C.I. student
7. Viola Epp - M.,C.I. Gr. 12. 1962.
8. David Penner - in and out
9. Peter Dueck - University student (living at 74 Linacre now)
10. Vic and Rona
11. Charlotte Klassen - University
12. Dave Johnston - U. of M. - 2 years.
13. Karen Dyck - summer student
15. Susan Klassen - " "

Many others would find 74 Linacre a haven for a stay-over now and then. We always opened our home for those who didn't know exactly what and where to go. Others again, some nieces and nephews of mine, didn't care enough to drop in or give us a phone call at least when they were in the city. All I can say to that, of course, is that they are the losers.

The year 1993 gave us a tragic closing when on Dec.10 Dr. Ron Loewen, Viola's husband (Kenora), died of a sudden heart attack as he was climbing out of the swimming pool. He was 49. -- Many other funerals had taken us to various places during the year as well.

Page 117

Chapter XXV - 1994 & 1995

The year 1994 brought us much of the usual agenda: weddings, funerals, hospital and home visitations. We had a cold winter. I kept busy with having our grandchildren over sometimes even for sleep overs. And I did some knitting. I don't intend to list all the funerals and weddings. At our age the funerals are to be expected as friends and relatives leave us one by one. The weddings are getting fewer most of the children of our nephews and nieces are married by now. Some of them have others who are more important to them on their special day. Mennonite weddings have a tendency to get too large anyway.

We try to visit a few people we know at the Bethania Personal Care Home. Notable among these are Rev. G. G. Neufeld and Rev. Jacob Toews. It is difficult to communicate with Rev. Neufeld because he is almost totally blind and deaf. But he is still "all there" and appreciates the fact that we have not forgotten him. Visitations with Rev. Toews are different. He can see and hear but he is lucid only on very rare occasions. His wife lives in Bethania House and comes to see him and help feed him every day. -- Our elderly retired minister Rev. Jacob Friesen and his wife Susan live in Kildonan and expect to see us on a regular basis. - For the past years of retirement I volunteered at least once a year at the Thrift Shop on Sargent Ave. This was in conjunction with our church group. Last year I terminated that because I felt I had had enough and thought it was time some of our younger members started doing that.

We both took our first swimming lessons at the U. of M. as soon as we moved here. At that time the use of the facilities was free to Alumni but now we have to pay an annual fee and as with everything else it keeps going up from year to year. We have tried to keep up swimming once a week ever since. With a lot of practice and endeavor I have managed to get to the point where I can swim 2/3 of a mile (1 km.) each time. Using the different strokes it gives me quite the work-out! Frank swims half the lengths. In summer time and weather permitting, we cycle through King's Park daily. There is a lovely cycle path around the park. The distance from home, around the park and back home again is ca 5 km. In winter we try to keep in shape with our exercise equipment downstairs. There we have a rebounder, backbender, ski-glider, rowing machine, stationary bicycle and a vibrator. We try to use these and do various aerobics at least three times a week.

The highlight of 1994 was our trip to Germany. We left on May 18th and arrived in Frankfurt on May the 19th. Siegrid Wedig and her daughter Andrea

were there to meet us. They took us to Siegrid's home in Brey near Koblenz. This became our headquarters. Siegrid supplied us with her master bedroom and all the taxi service we needed. The purpose of this trip was mainly to find and visit all of Frank's relatives who had relocated to Germany from Russia in the last twenty years. Since Frank has described this in detail in his "Diary", I shall go over only some of the highlights.

Page 118

The great concern and love with which they all met us, is out of this world. Siegrid took us to the nearest relative, Henry Schulz, (son of a cousin of Frank's) and from there we were passed on from one to another. When Frank asked about train or bus schedules, the husband of one of the Schulz sisters said: "Das ist Quatsch! Wir werden fahren!" (That is nonsense. We'll drive) And they taxied us from Neuwied to Hamburg and back again. Only once did we insist on taking the train - from Koblenz to Oberrimbach in Bavaria. Frank wanted to see his cousin Henry Enns there. It was a rather sad state of affairs. Betty, his wife, is too sickly to take care of the house properly. Their daughters, Herta and Irene, do the best they can but live too far away to be there every day.

Personally I enjoyed the "Thermal Bad" swimming pools as the one at Bad Ems. Needless to say, I always enjoy shopping! -- We enjoyed the hospitality of the people who opened their homes to us. Where we might have thought that we were coming as absolute strangers, they welcomed us with such open arms (literally!) and hugs that we had no chance of feeling strange. We also marveled at the expensive furniture we saw in most homes. They have been treated well and they have certainly done well. Of course, they have also worked hard. - It was a trip never to be forgotten!

The rest of the summer of '94 entailed the usual duties that coincided with weather and with friends. On August 27th we left for B.C. again, this time by plane. We made the usual rounds of visitations detailed in Frank's books. -- My oldest sister, Margaret, had to go to live in the "Units" for seniors. She still lives by herself but carries an "Alert" wrist band since her legs are weak and often can't carry her especially when she wants to get up. -- Canning fruit, etc. also takes a lot of time. Vic and family living at 200 Lenore street often takes us out that way. We try to spend a fair amount of time with our youngest grandchildren. They are indeed a joy to have around and growing up much too fast!

My brother Martin had a light heart attack in the early part of November. My niece, Mary Kerr, was terminally ill in Bathurst, New Brunswick. Sandra, her daughter, phoned me in October that Mary had only two weeks to live. So I made up my mind to take the Greyhound Bus and go all the way to Bathurst to bid her farewell. We had always been fairly close and so off I went! She was in hospital with Pancreatic Cancer. I was picked up by Donna, Fred and Mary's daughter, whom Mary had given up for adoption at birth. She greeted me warmly and was glad I had come. She had not seen her biological parents since they had found each other a decade ago! We shared a bed the first night and spent half of the night talking. Donna stayed a few more days and we got together in the hospital and we got together with Marie and family to celebrate her granddaughter's ninth birthday.

Fred had not had a driver's license for 12 years and it was very obvious he would need to be able to drive a vehicle to get around. As soon as I had taken Donna back to the airport, I had to do the chauffeuring. Thus I decided to help Fred to get his license again. This meant that there was some legal work that had to be done. The most difficult part was to face Marie in the hospital

Page 119

and get her to understand that she sign the transfer papers for their vehicles over to his name. God was with us and all went well! The time I spent with that family was about the most difficult of times I encountered. The icy distant relationship between man and wife even when "death

comes a-knocking at the door" is traumatic. As a chaplain I have had various occasions that were very difficult but this topped them all.

After a few days (on Friday) Sally, Marie's sister, and her husband John Dyck arrived by plane from Winnipeg. I picked them up as Fred had only his "Learner's" and needed someone to supervise him when he drove. Sally and John really were so sick with the flu that it made matters more complicated than ever. Now that I can assess the situation by "hind sight", I wish I had gone home sooner. Sally is very domineering insisting that every household of which she is a part has to be run her way. To this day the encounter there has brought about more hard feelings than I'd ever dreamed could surface between any one. - I was glad to get back on the bus again. Fred and the Dycks dropped me off at the bus depot but it was Sandra and her two children, Freda and Hazen, who came especially to say good-bye to me. I shall never forget how lovingly Hazen begged me: "Aunt Susann, please don't go home!"

The trip home meant, of course, 4 nights of trying to sleep on a bus and then the 5 days of traveling through eastern Canada to Winnipeg. Next time, if I ever make such a bus trip, I would stop at certain locations for the night and continue the next day. Even some of the bus drivers could not believe how well I coped for a 73-year old!

Arriving home in Winnipeg, Frank picked me up. He informed me that Martin had had a light heart attack and that he had taken him to Health Science Center for further tests. December rolled around and Marie died at her daughter Sandra's home. The claim was that she had not died within the specified two weeks and therefore was well enough to go home. But Marie did not want to see her own home any more!

Christmas brings with it many shopping trips, preparations, etc. Vic and Sheila wanted the family Christmas dinner at their house. This is not what I'm conditioned to - but it was a nice gesture and a nice Christmas!

Chapter XXVI ---- 1995

The new year had me fighting a severe bronchial infection. The incessant coughing drove me near to despair. I managed to keep on swimming, doing my housework, etc. but only with great effort. My 74th birthday was sheer agony and fortunately the weather was so cold and ugly that only my children close by visited me. One Saturday evening we finally asked our neighbor across the street, Dr. Lori Ebbeling, to come over and take a look at me! She brought along a sample of an antibiotic, Amoxillin, to tide me over the week-end. On that occasion she also told us that her husband had decided to leave her - to sick of having three lovely children to help the kind Dr. to raise. What fickleness of young fathers! She is indeed a dear neighbor.

Frank's nieces and nephews also managed to arrange an 80th birthday celebration for him at Smitty's Restaurant. Of the nieces and nephews in Manitoba only Helen and Peter Peters of Killarney were not there. Of our children, only Margaret and her family couldn't be there. Unfortunately Helen Peters had been on chemo-therapy almost a year. The surgery had taken place the previous year. Due to lack of understanding and difficulty in accepting such an ordeal as Cancer, Peter refused any relatives to visit or give moral support. This was most disastrous for me - because usually it had been I who was the "bone of contention" with people. Sometimes it almost seems that people still envy and are jealous of us not being sick or in a care home for that matter.

In early spring I planned to get the living and dining room rugs removed. The other upstairs rooms had been done two years ago. We were going back to hardwood floors. After putting the garden in, I made arrangements for Frank to fly to Vancouver to visit Margaret and family. I was not going to subject him to the horrendous amount of work involved! All the dishes and furniture had to be moved into the kitchen and the bedrooms. I asked Jared and Kelly to help with the biggest pieces of furniture. Since the Folk Festival was to start at Birds' Hill it seemed difficult for us to get help. The sanders were to come the next week but were delayed - middle of June.

Theo, our grandson, was not well - believed to be ear infections. His severe headaches gave us doubts. He was diagnosed as having a brain tumor on June 20th and immediate surgery after a "Cat Scan" and an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) was planned. He had an ependymoma, a brain tumor found chiefly in children ages 3-6. His operation was slated for Saturday, June 24th. I phoned Frank at Margaret's and he came home on the 23rd of June. This sudden "intrusion" of desperate illness certainly upset, not only Vic and Sheila and family, but the grandparents as well. The children and all certainly needed support in more ways than one. Many ardent prayers by churches, friends and neighbors certainly helped to bear such a cross. This was especially true of Vic who had himself endured 5 operations (two on his hip) beefier the age of 16.

Page 121

The specialists felt the 8hr. operation had been a success - the tumor had not "ballooned" yet. Theo had to go through a lot of pain and rehabilitation. He was up and around again after a few days. On the last day of school in June he was able to go to his Laura School in a wheel chair to bid his class farewell for the summer.

On his birthday, July 10th, the neighbors of the street gave him a great big birthday bash. The neighbors had planned and organized a most unique party. The street was closed to vehicle traffic and the kids had a great time! During the week that Theo was in the hospital the neighbors had also brought in daily suppers as well as extra baking.

Theo then had to undergo 31 radiation treatments. In order to suppress the nausea he was given steroids. These gave him a voracious appetite. Gradually he was able to decrease and then stop the steroids and his appetite decreased. At the time of this writing (Feb. 10th, 1996) the family is flying home from a week in Disney World, in Florida. The Children's Wish Foundation had arranged and paid for this. Theo seemed to feel good about this because he felt he could recompense his family for the difficult summer he had given them. His next MRI is scheduled for Feb. 16th. We hope and pray all will be well.(Our prayers were answered!)

The floors were all finished by the middle of July. It was the same crew from St. Laurent doing them who had done them originally i.e. when the house was first built in 1967. Taking care of hardwood floors is easier.-- The kitchen floor also had to be redone. So Frank still had to help with the mess.

Summer brings along grass cutting, canning, etc. - the usual. It was a hot summer. Donna decided to look up her roots now that she had found them and asked us to pick her up at the airport. Due to misinterpretations of phone calls from Toronto, Sally Dyck decided that she had all the priorities. And yet, the Dycks had never met her yet. Donna had her flights booked for the last Monday in August to return the following Saturday, Sept.3rd. Because Abe and Adeline Klassen, Donna's uncle and aunt, were planning to celebrate their 40th Wedding Anniversary for September 3rd, Frank called Donna and asked her to extend her stay one day. She had done better than that and extended the time to the next Monday. Sally would not give us any credit for this but had decided that she was going to run the whole trip for her. She insisted on picking her up at the airport. They took her home and then spent Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday taking her to see Sally's brothers in various parts of southern Manitoba. We were glad they did this but we also thought that Donna should see her Uncle Martin in Steinbach.

On Thursday I called the Dycks and spoke to Donna personally. We made arrangements that we would pick her up Friday morning and take her to Steinbach and that she would then come home with us. We spent the day at the Village Museum and then went to Martin and Lena's for supper. Donna and her Uncle had a nice visit. Saturday morning we did a quick trip to the Museum of Man and Nature, rested in the afternoon and then went to Abe's 40th where Donna had another chance to meet the relatives.

Page 122

Sally and her brother Martin have been feuding for years and it was this reason that we volunteered to take Donna to Steinbach. Ever since the episode, and especially when she found out that we would not be manipulated, Sally has been utterly impossible! The ugly tongue lashings, the fabrications and the lies she threw at us are unbelievable! We had always tried to be helpful. Frank had officiated at the marriage of their only son, Douglas. We used to get together and phone each other. At one time she even declared her willingness to take care of us in our old age. -- All we get now is fabrications and lies she spreads around trying to get others to hate us. How I wish that she, as such a great Christian, would study the Epistle of James, especially Chapter 3!

Christmas holidays rolled around and Frank again sent out more than a hundred of his Christmas Letters. We certainly felt great support from the number of letters we received. God bless you all!

Chapter XXVII -- Relationships

Relationships between Mom & Dad and others that I have observed over the past seven decades that I have lived.

Mom and Dad were two different personalities with two very different upbringings. Dad was an orphan at seven and experienced abuse in foster homes. Mother was born into a very conservative family. Mom had a strong character and was very outgoing -- Dad would withdraw from crowds and public gatherings. Dad pushed education and worked in this field as much as his academics allowed. Mom was strong and worked very hard in field and home. Her objective was to make something of her inheritance (80 acres)

in order to pass it on to her kids. She was talkative and loved visiting - but found it difficult to get Dad to go places. One niece remembers her grandmother as a "feisty lady" - she always knew what to do. Dad wasn't abusive in the sense that he would use force or even foul language. But the reader must remember abuse was also prevalent among people and couples even as early as the 1900's.

Women were expected to obey men or husbands no matter what - Men were the cream of society. Women were expected to have a baby every year. A woman who couldn't nurse her baby usually got pregnant shortly after giving birth. A woman was expected to help on the fields no matter what. Mother has stacked hay or sheaves when she was pregnant and other small ones playing or crying in the children's wagon beside the hay stack.

Mother was also expected to have meals ready and, since going to buy at the store was impossible, she had to figure out what to do. She also had to help with the chores such as milking. She had to bake and cook and do laundry and if this did not get done during the day, she had to do it in the evening and into the night. The man of course would go to bed. The wife, more than exhausted, would finally and stealthily creep into bed beside him hoping that she would not wake him up.

Page 123

Yes, she was too tired for lovemaking but this usually happened because he had already had a few hours of rest and of course it would not be right if she did not become pregnant again soon. Even as times improved in the country the only entertainment a couple might have was a wedding or a funeral or guests coming over to visit.

My Dad died early at 57 and I lived through a period in which I had to witness abusive children mistreating Mother. Married siblings and their spouses would come home to visit and really make things difficult for Mom. She never seemed to do anything right. She kept track of all transactions as best she knew how. Many of my brothers and sisters were fiercely opposed to my going to school. My two brothers still at home certainly tried their utmost to "run" her so to speak. I can't forget Andy conniving and trying to convince her to buy this or that and to fly into a temper he could not control! Threats such as "I'll join up!" or so and so said this.---

I recall one spring day Mom came to get me from the school where I was teaching and she decided to take a short cut across the field. The spring thaw was worse than she had expected and the horse stumbled and broke the shafts. Getting home on foot, Andy came and pulled mother's arms this way and that. All she could do was beg him "Don't, after all it's my horse and buggy."- Others would just yell at her and make life very miserable. They threatened and instilled fear by verbal accusations of not treating everybody equally. For Mother a son was more of an asset than a daughter - a conditioning, I believe, of her early Mennonite upbringing. A son was someone to carry on a name and someone who had the muscle.

After Mom had Martin and his wife Mary to take care of her, she seemed to feel a lot more stable. Mary and Martin had Mom for some twenty years. The advantage this was for them was that they had a built-in baby sitter when they worked out in the fields. Mom would also do the minor preparations for cooking dinner while they were out in the fields. The other side of the coin was that it was very difficult for Martin and Mary as all the married siblings would come home to visit as usual and expect Martin and Mary to be responsible for all the Faspas, etc. Some of them were also envious of Martin for having the "home place" and never thought of what it meant for him and Mary to take care of an aging mother. This brought about many a strained relationship. Mary, especially, must have found it very difficult at times. But

she was always quiet and they could not pick a fight with her! When our children got older and saw what was going on they sometimes referred to Aunt Mary as a "Saint".-- Mom also had many friends who would drop in, unannounced of course, and for Mary this usually meant serving coffee again. Mom was very talkative and aggressive. She would sometimes stay over at our house but some of my siblings had misconceptions about this and thought that we were getting money from her! Such stays never lasted long before she would again say: "Etj well trigj noa mieni Atj!" (I want to get back to my corner.) She had the corner room in the old house. But when she visited the Froese's only seven miles away, she had to pay \$1.00 to get taken home!

Page 124

I had baby sat at my sister Mary's in Rosenort (now Rosetown) one summer and so had a close relationship and also because Mary had indulged me as her baby sister when I was small. Later, when Frank taught in Rosenort he had my niece in his classroom. Even later than that my niece Mary was in our home for the weeks of her "Practice Teaching" when we were at the Blumenfeld school. Frank spoke at Tony Wiebe and Mary's wedding. This marriage was indeed an unhappy one later ending in divorce.

Since Frank was a minister, he conducted the brief service in the Funeral Home. This made us highly unpopular with our brother-in-law, Peter M. Giesbrecht. Mother had named Frank "Executor" of her estate and that was another thing of which he disapproved. He felt Frank had no business to "stick his nose" into these matters. He called us most obscene names! We shrugged it off as coming from someone who did not know any better and we more than suspected that he had had too much to drink on that occasion.--

"P.M." as he was called, was an abusive husband all through my oldest sister's marriage. This family has some of its children and grandchildren living the kind of life that he would always point fingers at when he saw others doing it.

P.M. committed suicide at age 81. He had a stroke and was rendered speechless though he remained mobile and could even keep on driving. It seems the good Lord had to show him that the tongue is indeed a most dangerous weapon! (Ref. St. James, Chapter 3.)-- In the early years of their marriage during the Depression of the 30's, Mom would find old felt hats, etc. to give to Sister Margaret so she could make some sort of shoes for her children.

Brother John and Mary lived near Altona. Mary was the sister of brother-in-law Martin Froese. The Froese family was always considered to be rich. Since his accident at age 12 John had been lame but his leg was never an excuse for not doing his share of the work when there was work to be done.

They had married young, when I was 2 1/2 years old. For the first winter they had moved in together with the P.M.Giesbrechts. It must have taken quite some adjustments - two young couples, just married, in one old house that had been used by the grandparents Wolfs. John and his wife had a new house built on a farm two miles north of Altona on Highway #30.

Brother John had a hard life to lead. They had 10 children and Mary worked on the fields a lot. They lost one child (Jake) to diphtheria, had a set of twins, etc. Mary was afflicted with some sort of "Black Outs" and would faint any time anywhere. The children would simply rush for cold water and pour large amounts of it over her head to wake her up! When I was attending High School in Altona, Mother thought that it might be easier for me to walk just the two miles to brother John's, but I found this rather straining and would rather walk home. Sometimes, during the summer, one of the children would stay at

Mom's place for a week or two to make it easier for the family. My recollections of such stay-overs were: Jacob, who died of diphtheria a week later; Sally, who tried to run home across the fields and Mother sent me to fetch her back. Evidently Danny, one of the twins, stayed during the 40's some time when I was away from home.

Page 125

John's daughter, Mary, was as stubborn as her mother. She ran away at age 14 and tried to make it on her own. She got into trouble in the city and was placed in a reform school where, she told me years later, she received the best training. She was a good waitress. Her marriage to Fred Kerr, an army veteran, whom she met in the restaurants, proved to be a rather "rocky" one. Fred and Mary had a daughter, Donna, in 1947 before they were married and Mary gave her up for adoption. Donna grew up in foster homes until she was adopted (at age 5) by the Patterson family in Toronto.

The Kerrs lived in Bathurst, N.B., and adopted a daughter, Sandra, since they were not able to get Donna back. I visited the Kerrs and in 1972 we went by car to see them. We took Sandra with us to tour Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. Years later I flew to be present at Sandra's wedding.

It was then that I became aware of Donna's existence. Then again in 1994 during Mary's cancer illness, we met person to person and really got to know and appreciate each other. This particular week would have been unbearable if it has not been for Donna.

Brother Peter and family always made us feel more welcome and positive. The years we lived at Lena and came "home" to visit we would occasionally stay there for the night. Mom's home had Martin and family there now too. It was through Frank's persuasion that brother Peter allowed John to go to the M.C.I. and later Erdman as well. John taught school for two years and then went into Medicine. Peter lost his wife in 1952 through a brain aneurism. He remained a widower and died of lung cancer 12 years later. I was always very close to sister-in-law Elizabeth having helped her as a baby sitter when some of the older boys were young and she was in bed with another baby. -- At the time of this writing most of their children remember us. Out of their family of nine Elizabeth, the only daughter lives near us here on Tamworth Bay. She is a good niece to have nearby. Only one of the sons of Peter's family has not ever been in our house.

Deaths of my parents and siblings in order of occurrence:
Baby brother Daniel, at age of three (1908?) drowned
Nephew Jake Klassen, at age 6, died of diphtheria
Dad, age 57, prostate Cancer, 1936
Elizabeth, Peter's wife, 1952, brain aneurism
Nephew Nick Klassen (Andrew's boy) combine accident
Brother Peter, 1963, lung cancer
Brother Andrew, 1966, internal cancer
Brother John D. Klassen, 1972, emphysema
His wife Mary, 1973 (74?)
Mom at age 97 1/2 in 1977 -old age.
Sister Mary (Klassen) Froese, 1979, heart attack
Sister-in-law Sara, Andrew's wife, 1979, heart attack
Sister Betty, 1980, breast cancer (lymphoma)
Brother-in-law Henry Z. Klassen, 1985, died in his sleep.
Brother-in-law Peter M. Giesbrecht, Dec. 1985 - suicide
Brother-in-law John Z. Klassen, Dec. 1989 - heart attack
Sister Justina (John Z.) Klassen, 1991 - breast cancer
Mary (Klassen) Kerr, Dec. 1994 - pancreatic cancer.

Chapter XXVIII -- Relationships -- Nieces & Nephews (continued)

It will be 28 years this spring since we moved to 74 Linacre Road. I think it would be quite appropriate to list briefly the numbers of my nieces and nephews who have come to see us now and then. Some, of course, come regularly, others have not ever been by. I have some 65 nieces and nephews and it will be less trouble to list those who have not been able to nor wanted to drop in.

Sister Margaret's children that have not been here: Margaret (Mrs. J. Dyck); Andrew, who has just moved back from Alberta; Annie, (Mrs. Isaac Driedger) tried last year but we were otherwise occupied that afternoon; even her son Martin & wife Mary from La Crete, Alberta, were over at least once. Mary and Bill Reimer surprised us by coming at Christmas 1995. It had been 25 years ago since they came the first time.

Brother John's family: Abe and Adeline take us out for coffee at least once or twice a year; Sally and John Dyck used to be regular seeing us at our birthdays, now they stay away. Those who haven't been by at all are Jake and his wife. Jake came to see us in Gretna and they put us up for a night when we toured New Brunswick in 1972 when he was stationed with his unit at Gaagetown. All the rest have made it at least once. Andy and Milly, Altona, find it difficult to drop by. The Kerrs usually paid us a visit when they came to Manitoba.

Brother Peter's family: Erdman and Katie and Edward and Selma have not been here.

Brother Dan's family: Danny, Annie and Jackie have not been here. Betty has not left us out. Invited us to her son Darcy's wedding.

Sister Mary: Niece Mary has come now and then.

Justina's family: since her dislike and assault on me at Crystal City in 1990 has herself only taken one or two occasions in 25 years. She did a good job of getting her daughters to dislike us. Poor Sister, always was jealous and envied us. Because she was sick with cancer, I believe that she did not know what she was doing. I can never forget the Satanic look in her eyes when she told me to go to hell with the pictures I had brought her of their 50th. -- Of Justina's children son Alfred has been faithful in coming by once a year. Of her four daughters not one has been in our house. I was so happy to have Linda and Peter Elias give us a special musical presentation at our 50th Anniversary. But they've never made it to our house.

Betty's children have been much closer to us. Charlotte lived with us for a year and Frank officiated at her and Doug's wedding. She still comes in to see us and sometimes we go shopping together. Sometimes she drops the children off here while she goes on to take care of business up town. Frank also married Albert and Sylvia. Ted and family have been here at least twice. John has been here twice; once on the day of his wedding which had to be postponed due to a blizzard. Mary and Jake have been over at least twice.

Andrew's children: the closest to us have been Susan, Margaret, Sarah and Becky (who wore my wedding dress for her rehearsal). Margaret and Leon Hiltner and children enjoyed supper at our place in January 1996. Needless to say, we enjoyed them too. - Andrew and Stephanie have been in. Susan and Charlie Gilson have been in. Only Richard and Nick have never taken the trouble to come by.

Martin's family: have been in and out and had the occasional visit with us. Art stayed with us when he was working in the city.

Summing up: out of 65 nieces and nephews only a dozen or so have "never made it" to our house. That is really not such a bad record! -- There are also the many wonderful and loving cards and flowers and letters which I as well as Frank have received year after year and especially those on my 75th birthday and on Frank's 80th a year ago.

Page 128

Chapter XXIX -- Relationships with Churches
(from the view point of a Minister's wife.)

Frank and I were ordained as ministers in 1951. This was in the Lena Church by Ältester G.G. Neufeld of the Whitewater Mennonite Church. The Lena Church was one of the "Locals" of the Whitewater Church at that time.
Another couple, Frank's nephew Abe Neufeld and wife Helen were ordained at the same time.

At the time of our wedding in 1943 I thought I had made it very clear that I did not wish to be a minister's nor a farmer's wife. For the latter I felt that I could never be physically strong enough and as to being a minister's wife, I felt I couldn't be devout and/or maybe religious enough for people of that special era.

Yes, I had found my Saviour and felt very close to Jesus ever since I was 12 years old. This was through the Canadian Sunday School Mission work being done through local school. I remember telling Mom who thought it rather humbug. Child Evangelism? Fat Chance! -- It was only through the thorough religious training at school and at home and my own study of the Bible that kept my faith and goals in life alive. Sister Betty was my great supporter.

Of course at the Altona High School I was slandered and laughed at -- often with notes left on my desk. I attended prayer meetings, went to choir practices, etc. I joined the Catechism class at the M.C.I. and was baptized on May 29th, 1939. The thorough Sunday morning Catechism classes by Rev. Esau are unforgettable. That is why it was so heartbreaking to discover, years later, what kind of a man he really had been. Infidelity, etc. and then suicide in B.C. -- how impossible! -- As I already wrote earlier, the verse given to me at my baptism has seen me through a lot of difficulties. I had joined the Bergthaler Church though most of my brothers and sisters belonged to the Sommerfelder or Rudnerweide Churches. Here I was a rebel again and my oldest sister forbade me to cross her threshold.

When Frank and I were planning our wedding, we asked Rev. D. Schulz to make the Einleitung (Opening) and Rev. Neufeld would officiate. Rev. Schulz never showed up. Some years later, when we were living at Lena, I decided to join Frank's church. I could not get a transfer from the Bergthaler Church in fact, I got no response to my request. When Frank communicated his concern about this to Rev. Neufeld, he was told that I was likely not to get a transfer. The Bergthaler Church had a rule that if a member married someone outside their church and this person did not join the Bergthaler Church then they considered that member as having left their church and I would not be considered a member any more. I had been excommunicated and had not known about it!

Page 129

Well, at the Lena church things were not all that rosy either. I had not really been "one of them" ever since I first landed there. I had short hair, I drove my own car and I plainly expressed my points of view too, aggressively! Again, even though Frank took his regular turns at speaking in the different churches of the Whitewater Gemeinde, at the church that I had at first thought to be MY CHURCH, things came to an end. Later the group dispersed and its members joined various other churches in the area. In 1951 we went back to teaching and attended Blumenorter churches in Reinland and Rosetown and the Bergthaler church in Gretna. But we did not become members of any of them.

After moving to Winnipeg in 1968, we decided to look over the different churches before joining any. We attended First Mennonite, Springfield Heights, Bethel Mennonite and finally went to Glenlea. The Glenlea was similar to the one at Lena consisting of members who had come to Canada in the 1920's. There were only some 47 members here. Frank felt more at home in a smaller group than in a large city congregation. The church was in need of a minister who was fluent in English and we were welcomed with open arms. We became members of the Glenlea Mennonite Church in 1971 though Frank had already been preaching here since 1969. At that time it was still required that a specially ordained Ältester serve at Communion and Baptismal services. Rev. Jacob Toews continued to serve in this capacity. Frank knew him because he came the Whitewater kChurch and had been ordained by Frank's father.

It was in 1975 that the Leading Minister, Rev. Jacob Friesen, decided to step down and Frank was elected to the Leadership position by the congregation. We were both still teaching as well and Frank did not request a salary but he was given an "Honorarium." It was in 1977 that the congregation decided to have their own Ältester (Bishop) and asked Frank to accept the ordination. Both, Rev. Toews and Rev. G.G. Neufeld, officiated at this service.

Frank found doing the administrative and all the paper work, the weddings and funerals he conducted, to be too much besides the full teaching load at Niverville. Thus Frank decided to take "early retirement" from teaching, which at that time was the age of 60. This was in 1975. - I had to keep on teaching if we wanted to continue living where we were. Plainly speaking, I supported the Pastor for seven years! Financially, giving up teaching early and having taught in private schools for 8 years still affects his pension and will for the rest of his life.

As a wife, of course, I had to give up many social functions. We tried to keep our weekly smim on Fridays. This also turned out to be the usual wedding rehearsal night. Over a span of some 40 years Frank has conducted 33 weddings. -- I decided not to attend membership meetings since I find it difficult not to express myself especially on issues with which I am familiar and feel that I am competent to have an opinion. A minister's wife is expected to be silent but do anything the congregation requires of her!

Page 130

Again I tried to do my part. I had the Ladies Choir for three years until it became too exhausting for me. I had no spares at school and besides, I was no trained musician. When I resigned from this position, it was looked upon unfavorably. I refused to take on Sunday School responsibilities because I felt I was teaching a heavy load all week. As long as the Ladies' Aid was carried on during the evenings, I attended them. I also took over my share in working at the Thrift Shop until I was 74

The time Frank decided to give up the administrative work for the church, things became more complicated. They decided to elect a Worship Committee to plan the church services and the Board Chairman was to look after the church mail. The Congregation had now grown to 120 - 130 members. Then I was asked to be on the Worship Committee. I flatly refused.

Now I was told by members who I never thought could make such accusations, that I never wanted to do anything. Not only that, I didn't sit in the front pews where the older people were supposed to sit. Moreover, I did not come to church every Sunday! To me going to church had always meant more than just needing to be seen and accounted for. Soon after, the deacon spoke to me in the same vein and on the same theme! By now the church was really giving me a hard time and I found "going to church" even more difficult! -- Again we can talk about water under the bridge and time heals all wounds but unfortunately the scars remain and are hard to forget.

I had always felt happy to see my two grandsons (Garry's boys) in church at Glenlea but in time that dropped away. Garry and his family have not been in church with us since the evening of our 50th Anniversary. --- Victor had joined the Glenlea Church but after his divorce from Rona, he asked to be released from membership. After he and Sheila were married they moved to Saskatchewan where Vic had found work. Nine years later they returned from Regina to Winnipeg and Vic decided that he and his family would attend at the First Mennonite Church and his children liked the Sunday School there. We were so glad to see this!

I have always found the ladies in church quite friendly and I am, to some extent, still active in the church. When, at the age of 75, Frank decided to give up his pulpit duties and retire completely, it is indeed strange to find that the desire to keep in touch is not the same. We sometimes feel as if we have really been "turned out to pasture." Notices and schedules concerning ministers do not get put in our mailbox any more. Does a retired minister not remain a minister any more? Sometimes one feels that many may think: "Why are you still here?"

For me, the churches have put a bit of a damper on the teachings of our Savior as we find them in the New Testament. Where have all the basic Christian teachings gone? Oh, that tongue of ours! Maybe we should read and study the Epistle of James a little more! It seems to me that our society today is ailing from making a set of biblical rules to fit our modern day standards.

Page 131

Chapter XXX ---- Conclusion.

Amendments and Additions to my Recollections - 1996

Three quarters of a century has now passed. Many things and incidents have occurred in that span of time! God has wondrously led me through many trials and temptations but has never let go of my hands. God has always kept the promise he bestowed upon me in my Baptismal verse -

Phil. 1:16,

Und bin derselben in guter Zuversicht, daß, der in dir angefangen hat das gute Werk, der wird's auch vollführen bis an den Tag Jesu Christi.

Being confident of this very thing, that He who begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

I have always had a deep love of nature and the natural surroundings of the countryside. Early childhood saw me roaming woods and meadows, climbing trees and generally rambling through the great outdoors! Finding the Rose Hip fruits sticking out of the snow and watching for the first onion tips peeking through the last snows of spring was the greatest! The rose hips supplied me with Vitamin C though I did not know it at the time. -- Therefore teaching the Natural Sciences, Biology, etc. was really a part of me. I always longed for the sight of the first crocuses appearing in the spring or to hear the song of the mourning dove and robin telling me that the long winter was over. It is little wonder then, that traveling on a Nature or Birding Tour was almost like a part of heaven to me.

I have said little about my travels, especially after I retired from teaching. The B.C. tours were always part of our routine since our daughter and her family live there. It was either by car, bus, or plane that we went to the lovely West Coast. After I retired in 1982, I made a special effort to fly out at least three times a year to help our daughter with her twins and Kathleen. They were lovely to be with and once they were all in school Margaret could go back to full time teaching again.

The Ontario trip, as indicated earlier, was first done in 1952. We went again in 1959 and continued on to Bluffton to the North American Mennonite Conference. We went again in 1972 and this time we went all the way to the

Maritimes. Most of the time we did our own cooking on a little Coleman camp stove. In New Brunswick we stopped in at Bathurst where we picked up Sandra Kerr. She is the daughter of my niece Mary (Fred) Kerr. We made a special effort to show her the famous Green Gables in Prince Edward Island and Peggy's Cove in Nova Scotia. - I have described our trip to Europe in 1967. This took in Expo in Montreal and the Mennonite World Conference in Amsterdam.- The second European trip (1973) we rented a car in Germany but did not drive in England.

Page 132

The third trip we made in 1994. We had an interesting and exhausting "vacation" visiting Frank's relatives who had come from Russia to live in Germany. Mrs. Sigrid Wedig, a wonderful friend of ours, gave us a royal reception with bed and breakfast and more. She also did a lot of driving for us. Koblenz is, indeed, one of the most scenic areas of Germany!

Some trips I made alone. In 1961 my Mother and I joined another teacher and his mother to drive to Mexico. It was a lot of driving and for me Mount Rushmore, the Carlsbad Caverns Cuauhtemoc are memorable. -- The two trips to Hawaii I managed to get Frank to come along, too. A place he enjoyed and the flora and fauna are super! -- In 1983 I joined a Bus Tour with Circle Tours to Florida with a cruise to the Bahamas included as related earlier.

In 1986 I joined "Nature Travel" again. This time it was a tour to Australia and New Zealand. It was a long 32 hr. flight but all of it is described in my slides, etc. -- In 1988 Frank joined me on a bus trip to Alaska with Fehrway Tours. -- Some summers we stayed in Manitoba and made short trips to various areas of our own province. -- Now I'm anxiously desiring a few weeks in Palm Springs or Costa Rica before we get too much older.

What about hobbies and pets? I've always enjoyed reading, traveling, knitting. (I've made an afghan for each of my children and grandchildren and knitted many sweaters as well.) Swimming and fishing are two other activities we both enjoy. I only learned to swim when I was 48 years old. Since we live near the U. of M., we are part and parcel of a weekly swim at the University pool. The King's Park near by also affords wonderful bicycle trips and enjoyments of Nature. At the time of this writing, I swim 40 lengths of the pool or 2/3 of a mile each week. Frank does 20 lengths and that at the age of 81 My binoculars go with me on the car all summer!

Our household always has had pets. Early on our children had outdoor cats, a dog and horses. On the farm Frank introduced them to rabbits as well. Our farm dog "Rover" was very close to me and Garry. Rover would always lie beside the carriage when I left Garry out in it. When we were on the farm at Lena, the customs officer, Mr. Privat, brought me his canary - cage and all. His wife had passed away and he thought the bird would be better off with us. Since then I have always had a canary until this year and I miss it now. We have had at least 5 different canaries. Each one managed either to get away outdoors or meet its doom naturally. -- Plants and flowers and aquariums have given us much joy and still do. In my Biology lab. in School I had two large aquariums and they gave the students many hours of enjoyment.

In Gretna I wanted to be kind to my canary and placed him outside on a beautiful autumn day. The cat saw it and when my back was turned, took a jump at the stand and knocked it over. The door burst open and the canary flew out! Next morning he was sitting on the hydro wire singing his heart out!

He entertained the whole town and every once in a while someone would phone: "Your canary is on our roof! Don't you want to come and get him?" Frank's response usually was: "Yes. You catch him and I'll get him!"

Page 133

Then came November and blustery, cold, snowy days. The Canary joined a flock of sparrows who went to spend the cold nights in the nearby Grain Elevator. One evening the manager called to tell us the Canary had come in for the night and if we wanted to, he would close the door and turn out the lights and maybe we could get him. Frank took a flashlight, climbed up on a ladder and picked him off his perch. Next morning he was singing again in his cage as if nothing had happened. We sent the story to the "Altona Echo" and the Canadian Press picked it up and it appeared from Halifax to Vancouver.

My last Canary we had boarded out at our niece's place in Emerson while we went away. On our return, we went to pick him up. She had the stand and cage outside while we were having a picnic lunch. All the others had just gone inside for a moment. Frank and I were out there alone when a sudden gust of wind knocked the cage over. Again the Canary was gone. But this one never came back.

In Gretna the boys had a horse/pony, a cutter and a buggy. Since we had a cow, calves newly born was another thing! When the boys were old enough, they had to help with the chores. Frank made the arrangement with

Garry that he would do the chores in the morning but Garry would come home after four and take care of them. This worked out well for both! When Garry left for Teachers' College, Vic was old enough to take over. Vic sold the extra eggs we had and made some pocket money. Many a neighbor enjoyed our rich fresh Jersey milk.

As early as at the age of 4 Vic would come to school to "pick us up" after school. He brought his little sleigh and expected a ride back. Our 4-acre yard was well treed and was always a haven for games and fights for many children. At least the children had space and freedom to play and enjoy mother nature.

Margaret left for University at the early age of 16. The first year she stayed with Dr. and Mrs. Warkentin. She earned her pin money by teaching piano and music theory at a Conservatory near the University of Winnipeg.

Garry became Principal of the Reinfeld School at age 18. Victor, being 8 years younger, was left to put up with his aging parents! Our new house in Gretna was built in 1964. All these summers I attended Summer School in order to get my B.A. in 1966 and B.Ed. in 1969. I was offered a scholarship to continue with graduate studies in Geography but since Vic was so young, I decided to let it be. In 1964, after summer school, I had to take a bladder repair operation. This would be a necessary solution for me in teaching Phys.Ed. It is rather interesting to be at University the same time one's children are!

In 1966 I graduated with a B.A. degree. After taking two courses at Summer School and one in winter by "Distant Education" it did not take all that long to graduate. I must admit that driving to Winnipeg once a week especially in the cold and ice of a Manitoba winter, was rather challenging at times. An example I cited earlier: I was unable to attend my brother Andy's funeral in April 1966 because I had my final exam to write on that day. The storms had left roads high impassable.

Page 134

In 1969 my B.Ed degree became a reality as well. During the following years I often attended Clinics and Conferences and Curriculum Sessions for the development of Science programs.

Through all these years swimming has been a very important part of my week's agenda. We also exercised at home daily; and that in the morning before breakfast and before we went to school. It is getting more difficult to get our aging (tired) bodies to get going in the morning. But we still try to exercise regularly.

Another important item to be remembered is the Wolfe Reunion in Warman, Saskatchewan, some years ago. Some 375 Adults of the Wolf clan registered. Many came from remote provinces such as B.C., Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and the U.S.A. The three day event was well planned and organized by my cousin Jacob Wolfe and his son. I'm sure my grandfather, Peter Wolfe, would have been unduly shocked at what he saw. It must have been far from what he envisioned for his future extended family. There were the staid ladies in their long dresses, aprons and kerchiefs. (They were the ones that ran the show and did it swell). On the other extreme there were the "made up", cigarette-smoking young chicks in shorts!

The Klassen reunions take place every second year. This year it is to be held on May 5 (1996) at 1 p.m. in the Winkler Seniors' Center. Supposedly the the Klassen Genealogy Book is to be ready for sale at that time.

It is March 11th, 1996. With this page I conclude my Memoirs. Our excitement at the moment is that we hope to see our daughter when she arrives in Winnipeg on March 16.

All is well that ends well!

