

STARTED JANUARY 1996

SUMMER HARVEST TIME

Although my brothers usually did the outside work my sisters and I helped shock grain during harvest season. The grain is cut down with a grain binder or reaper that ties it into good sized-bundles and they stay on the ground until they are put into shocks. The bundles are then picked up two at a time and propped together with the grain at the top so that they stand erect. You then continue to add two bundles at a time until you have six or eight bundles almost in the shape of a tepee. This is called a shock. This allows the grain to dry out so that it does not mildew.

It was usually very hot during the summer and the bundles of grain were heavy. The chaff from them stuck to our skin and clothes and it was very dusty. As I recall we did get tired, hot and itchy and it was tedious, but I look back on it as a worthwhile experience.

Up until the 1940's during harvest time the threshing crew was made up of all the neighbor men from miles around and my uncles (Dad=s brothers: Emil, Ed and Frank) who lived on nearby farms. All of the sons who were old enough also helped. They took turns threshing the grain at each others farms until all the grain was in. My Dad grew oats, barley and wheat as well as corn that was harvested later in the year.

A thresher is a large machine (this one pulled by horses) which removes (threshes) the grain from the bundles. The threshing crew picks up bundles from the shock and tosses them into the machine. After being run through the thresher the grain is sent out through a large pipe into a grain wagon. As each wagon was filled it was taken to the granary where it was fed into an elevator that transported it into a large room in the granary to be stored.

John, my twin brother, recalls that while using a pitch fork to pitch bundles into the thresher, he snagged a large bull snake. He threw it to a weasel which was close by and watched them struggle until they killed each other. He could tell the story lot better than I can.

In the earlier years (1920's to 1940's) the meals that Mother prepared were enormous as there were usually at least ten to twelve men to feed, plus several teenage boys and the women who helped with the meal. In later years (early 1940's) there were probably half that many. Mother spent hours after dinner preparing for the next day, didn=t get to bed before 10 P.M. and was up at 4 A.M. during harvest. She cooked a big breakfast for Dad and my brothers plus the threshing crew during the early years. During the 1920's until the early 1940's a 10 A.M. lunch, as it was called, and a 2 P.M. lunch were served while in later years only an afternoon lunch was served. The women served these to the men in the field.

Lunch consisted of mounds of a variety of sandwiches (at least two kinds of meat), sweets (probably kolaches, cookies, etc.), gallons of iced tea and lemonade. Kolaches are sweet bread formed into a doughnut shape except instead of a hole in the middle, it is indented to hold a small amount of prune sauce. It is then baked. Other fruits, such as apricots, were also used.

For the large meal at noon there were pounds of meat (such as roast beef or pork, meat loaf, ham and/or fried chicken). There were mountains of mashed potatoes and gravy, several kinds of vegetables, baked beans, bread and rolls, lemonade, iced tea and several kinds of dessert. Mother always insisted on making pies and rolls in the morning so they would be fresh.

Mother worried so much about having enough food and having it served exactly on time. There was always more than enough delicious food and always served on time. Before the girls in

the family were old enough to help, the neighbor women helped each other with meals.

Sometime during the early to mid-forties Dad hired a commercial combine to do the harvesting. In the late forties Dad bought a combine which cut the grain, and fed it into a wagon attached alongside. It was all one operation. It combined the grain binder (reaper) and the thresher. Of course, there was no further need of shocking the grain.

We girls, Jean, Joan and myself, had to help with the milking during harvest because the boys had to help the men in the fields. Before I knew what it was like, I begged to milk cows but it got old really fast.

DAD=S TRACTORS

In 1940 Dad bought his first tractor, a huge McCormick that he used for many years. John and I were twelve years old. The next tractor he bought was a John Deere that had steel lugs from someone who lived west of us. John drove it home.

Dad let Joan drive the tractor after the boys left home. He must have thought a lot of her driving to allow her to do that because he didn=t let just anybody drive his tractor.

FARM BUILDINGS

We lived in a large two-story that faced south and was situated on the corner of two busy roads. Trees, silver maples, black walnut, etc. surrounded the corner from the driveway on the south to about an eighth of a mile on the west. Two beautiful, lavender lilac bushes were situated in front of the house on the west side as you entered the driveway . On the east side was a mulberry grove. The outhouse sat back among the trees.

John and I dug a huge hole among the trees and covered it with a blanket held up with poles so as to make a roof over our Acave@. We played a lot of imaginary games there.

Across the front of the house was a porch with wooden pillars. We entered into the living room through the front entrance. At the east side of the room was a bay window. To the west was the entrance to Mother and Dad=s bedroom. This room also had a bay window. There was no door to the bedroom so a curtain was placed there for privacy.

In later years, probably the 40's, Dad put in beautiful hardwood floors and extended the living room to become a dining area where their bedroom had originally been. He also made a bedroom out of what had been the dining room. That was to the north of the living room. Before Dad replaced the floors they had very wide, rough, painted boards. The hardwood floors he put in were beautiful.

Dad also remodeled the kitchen and did a beautiful job. He put in new steps at the back entrance into the kitchen.

To the north and east of the kitchen was a fairly large pantry where we originally had the ice box as well as several shelves for storage. Directly across from the door to the pantry was the door to the cellar .

We entered the upstairs off the kitchen. There were two small bedrooms and two large ones. The girls= room was on the southeast and the boys= on the southwest side. From the girls= room was an entrance to a porch clear across the house but we didn=t use it because there was no railing as there used to be years before. After Jean and Joan left home I used the small room on the northwest for my room.

When Jean was in 4-H. She remodeled the bedroom and it really looked beautiful. It was

so nice to have it all painted and lovely. Everything matched --paint, bedspread, curtains, etc.

JOHN=S BROKEN LEG

Scott Page was driving his tractor, pulling a hay rack and John was riding on the tongue. Well, he fell off and the wheel ran over his leg breaking it. John was about 4 years old. Mother came running out of the house and rushed him to the doctor.

CREAM SEPARATOR

We had a hand-cranked cream separator--the milk going into one container and the cream into another. It was heavy and always a job to clean thoroughly enough to prevent a sour smell. It needed a special wrench to open up and remove the disks in order to wash them. It was also difficult to tighten when put back together again. If it weren=t tightened properly it would fly apart.

SCHOOL DAYS

The Alittle red schoolhouse@ we attended was actually a big, red, brick building. This was Daisy Valley School. There were several steps leading to the main schoolroom on the first floor. There were cloakrooms off the large schoolroom. This was where we hung our coats and placed our rubber boots during the winter as well. It was also the place where we kept our lunches. The girls used one side and the boys the other. There was a bathroom (chemical toilets) on each side.

It had a large basement with windows across the front. There was one huge room with a cement floor and walls. We used this as a playroom when the weather was bad. Off this room was a smaller room where the furnace was located. There were outhouses behind the schoolhouse. A pony barn behind them was available to those who rode ponies to school.

John remembers on extremely cold, winter days, Dad would drive us to school in a sleigh pulled by horses. We would be all bundled up in heavy blankets and Dad would yell at us to keep our head under the covers.

One teacher taught grades one through eight. My first grade teacher was Mrs. Villhauer. Miss Lois Kilker was the fifth and sixth grade teacher and Mr. House the seventh and eighth.

John related that one teacher used to smoke cigarettes and we could see smoke billowing out of the bathroom window when we were outside playing.

Some of the children who attended the school were: The Wynias -- Donald (the oldest) Dolores, Duane, Dorothy, Delvonna (the youngest). Others were: Schuurmans, Bly Rouse, Dewey Britton and the Hajek twins.

Outdoors was a teeter-totter which we could push round and round as well as go up and down. I can still remember getting dizzy and feeling nauseated after being pushed around and around on it. Of course, kids would often wait until one end was in the air and then bounce the other end down quickly and hard so that the one on the other end would fall off or get a hard bounce on their seat.

During recess and lunch hour, when the weather was nice, we usually played softball, tag, drop the handkerchief, farmer and the dell or ante-ante over. The girls played jack stones (jacks)

in the schoolroom during bad weather. (Rules for some of the games follow later on.)

We had a yearly potluck picnic at the end of school. Mother often made a huge bowl of her delicious potato salad. Some years the picnic was near the James River and we used to have to walk through fields dotted with cow pies (cow manure that became dried into a circle). We played games and had races while the grown-ups talked.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES

During the summer months Mother took us most often to the Tyndall Park or less often to the Springfield Park. Tyndall was about six miles north of our farm and Springfield was about four miles south. Tyndall had a round swimming pool with a small slide and a short pier. The unheated pool seemed very large at that time but actually it was quite small. I never did learn how to swim and was afraid of learning until years later. Mother did not swim and there were no swimming lessons at that time. I did enjoy playing in the shallow water and sliding down the slide especially on those extremely hot summer days. There was a large area surrounding the pool where we could play and have a picnic.

There was a bath house where we could change and a little store in one area of the building where they sold candy, frozen candy bars, popsicles and ice cream novelties as well as ice cold soft drinks. I especially remember how good the frozen candy bars tasted. I doubt if anything cost more than a dime.

At Springfield the cement pool was more elaborate and rectangular with a cement walk all the way around as well as a fence. Of course, at that time it was not heated.

There was a beautiful, well-shaded area with tables and benches for picnicking near the pool and we often went there for picnics. Dad almost never went with us because he hated picnics -- actually he hated to eat anywhere but at home. Just below this area there was a beautiful path along the Missouri River where we often saw deer, birds and other wildlife. This area was my favorite spot.

GARDENING AND CANNING

Dad plowed up an area behind the house for a large garden and Mother and we kids planted and tended it. We helped to plant a large plot of potatoes and all kinds of vegetables. The freshly picked vegetables tasted so good. We would eat the peas before they ever had a chance to be brought into the house. Mother canned a lot of vegetable from the garden as well as fruit and meat. She also made a lot of pickles. All canned goods were kept in the cellar for use during the winter months.

Mother also canned fruit that she bought locally or we got from neighbors. Uncle Emil had a small cherry orchard and we kids used to help pick them. We usually bought apples from an orchard near Springfield and Mother made and canned applesauce. We used to buy watermelons at one dollar for a trunk load (>29 Chevie) and I can't remember if Mother made watermelon pickles or not.

About the only flowers we had were lilac bushes in front of the house. In later years Mother did plant more flowers. She loved flowers so much.

RAISING CHICKENS AND ANIMALS

Dad raised cows, pigs and chickens. Mother and the girls helped a lot raising the chickens, gathering eggs, etc. Dad and the boys butchered the animals and Mother canned enough so that we had a good supply of meat in the cellar. Shortly after butchering, we had fresh

liver which I hated then. Now I really like it but it is hard to find fresh liver.

Mother made pickled tongue, heart and pigs= feet. She also cooked the kidney which Dad liked. We had plenty of ham and sausage, too. Dad especially like brains fried with scrambled eggs. That definitely was not one of Mother=s favorites.

AN EXPERIENCE I NEVER FORGOT

It was my twin brother, John, who had the job killing the chickens so that my mother could fix them for dinner. I had begged him to let me do it for some time. Finally, one day he gave me permission to do it.

Out in the yard there was a big block of wood cut from a tree which was used for this purpose. My brother handed me the hatchet and the chicken. Although it looked so easy when John did it, I found it difficult to hold the chicken and raise the hatchet for the kill. At last I raised the hatchet and brought it down on the chicken=s neck but I had not been able to make a clean cut. The chicken at that point fell from the block and began moving from side to side on the ground. John then, disgusted with me, took the hatchet, picked the chicken up and finished the job. Even then the chicken bounced around on the ground. Hence, the saying I guess, AJumping around like a chicken with its head cut off.@

I had never killed anything before and still remember vividly the terrible feeling that I had as the hatchet came down and I saw how much the poor chicken had suffered. It was some time before I got over it and it is hard to describe the feelings that I had. I found out very quickly that it was a very unpleasant thing to do and I certainly never did it again.

BAKED GOODS

Mother baked bread every few days. Sometimes we had fried bread. She would fry the dough in hot lard. Often after school when we walked in the door we would smell freshly baked cinnamon rolls. There would be two large pans filled with cinnamon rolls covered with a delicious, gooey syrup.

Joan, my sister, baked a cake every night for years. It was usually chocolate but sometimes white or yellow. She really knew how to bake some good cakes.

CHRISTMAS

Each Christmas Eve we would go to Midnight Mass at Saint Leo=s Church. One particular Eve the choir broke up into two groups, one inside and one outside, and it had an echo affect. It was really beautiful. They sang Silent Night as it began to snow. Fortunately it only snowed for a few minutes.

Christmas Day Mother always prepared a big feast with a lot of desserts. She always made divinity and chocolate fudge candy along with pies and cookies of all kinds. We usually had relatives and/or friends and really enjoyed the day.

It was a wonderful custom for us to attend Midnight Mass as well as having a big feast and fun with cousins and other relatives Christmas Day.

I either made or gave Mother and Dad each a small gift when I got a little older.

One year Bill prepared a very special Christmas for us. We had to wait until Christmas

morning and when we came down there was a brand new bicycle (the only one we ever had). There were new harnesses for Dad=s horses and for Mother a set of dishes.

Often we didn=t have snow on Christmas but we did like it to be a white Christmas

JOHN=S HORSE, BUSTER

When Buster, who was gray, was born his mother died so Dad gave the new colt to John because Dad thought Buster would die. Frank Plihal, a hired man, (He was a kind and humorous man and we kids loved him.) gave Buster castor oil and saved his life. John fed and cared for him. He relates that Buster was a real woman-hater and he loved to drink milk.

Norris Curl, a neighbor, bought Buster for \$70.00 even though Dad told him that the horse was not trained. Norris hooked him up to a wagon with five other horses and Buster dropped dead. Norris wanted his money back and Dad, who was as generous as the day is long said, ANo.@ Dad gave John the money.

JOHN=S PIG

All I know about this is that John had a pig that followed him around like a dog and John named him Oink.

ANTICS

One time Don Blanchard, John and I were trying out the derrick, a tall framework for lifting and moving heavy objects. I don=t remember what we were trying to lift but in the process the huge framework fell over. We knew we had to get it upright or we would be in big trouble with Dad. It was extremely difficult but we finally returned it to its original position. We never fooled around with that again.

Another time I wanted to try shooting the 22 rifle. I stood under a tall tree near the back door, looked up and saw a small bird. Thinking that I would never hit it, I aimed and shot the rifle. To my surprise and horror the bird fell to my feet dead. I remember the terrible feeling I had and that was the last time I ever aimed a rifle at a living thing.

The other experience I had with that rifle was when John and I had just returned home in the >29 Chevie and for some reason he had the rifle in the front seat. He asked me to unload it and in the process the gun went off and put a hole in the floorboard. Mother had just come out of the house and asked what that noise was. John said, AOh, it was just a backfire.@ We found out some time later when Dad was checking the tires that the bullet just grazed the tire. When Dad asked about the hole in the floor board and the mark on the tire, of course we knew nothing about it.

When John and I were about three years old we decided to gather together all the money we found around the house. I don=t remember what we planned to do with it. We took all of the money we could find on top of dressers, pants pockets, etc. When we showed it to Mother and told her how proud we were she got upset and had a difficult time returning it all to the proper owners. (John does not remember this.)

Joan says she was going to be smart and milk the guernsey cow without using the kickers (two metal pieces attached by a chain that fit over the back legs to keep a cow from kicking). Joan said that cow kicked over a whole bucket of milk. I don=t know if she got a few bruises or not.

PETS

The dog we had the longest was a black and white border collie mix. He had a large black >W= on his side. We got him as a Pup from family friends, Ray and Lila Wordehoff before I was born. His name was Pal and he was the gentlest most loving dog I=ve ever seen. He lived for about eighteen years.

Some time later I got a small black puppy that I named Colonel. I named him that because John had a dog named Major which I believe originally belonged to Don Blanchard, Jeanne Blanchard Balvin=s brother. I began training him to sit on a small wooden barrel and get down when I told him to jump. I spent so much time with him and really loved him. One day I couldn=t find him anywhere. When I asked everyone if they had seen him nobody had. Then Mother told me that Romain had run over him and Colonel had died. I was so sad and really angry at Romain for not telling me about it but Mother explained to me that he felt so badly he just couldn=t tell me.

I also had a pet pig at one time, probably when I was about 12 years old. I don=t believe I ever gave him a name. He was a runt and I suppose Dad gave him to me because he thought the piglet would not survive. I used to put a blanket underneath a mulberry tree and feed him. I would play with him for hours. He didn=t live very long, however and I missed him.

NEIGHBORS

Dad=s brothers lived within a mile of our farm. Uncle Ed and Aunt Emma, their children, Hayes and Vera lived about a quarter of a mile west of us and on the south side of the road. Uncle Emil and Aunt Fay, their children, Joyce, Dorothy and Donny (twins) lived just a few yards beyond on the north side of the road.

Uncle Frank and Aunt Mamie, their children, Francis, Rosemary, Roberta, Anna Maria, Alice and Dave lived a mile east of us.

McCollums, Melvin and Vern, lived just south of us less than a quarter of a mile. After they moved John and Albina Wurtz lived there. John=s brother Fred and his wife Elsie and their two sons, Kenneth and Lyle lived about a mile east of us just across the road from Uncle Frank and Aunt Mamie. Scott and Grace Page lived just north of us about a quarter of a mile.

Donna Mi and Uncle Albert lived on a farm just a few miles north of Tyndall. Donna Mi was Mother=s sister. Their children were: Helen, Marietta, Robert, Pat, Donna, Billie and Nell. We visited them often and always enjoyed playing with our cousins. I remember that Uncle Albert had some interesting crystal radios that we listened to.

Aunt Kate and Fred lived on a farm about four miles southwest of us. (We never called him Uncle Fred.) Her children from her first marriage were Ernie and Louise Evers. Fred and Aunt Kate=s children were Owen (Ownie), and Alice. Aunt Kate did a lot of crocheting -- beautiful bedspreads as well as a lot of doilies and edging on pillow slips, etc. She also made elaborate quilts. She did a lot of baking, too. She kept a starter for bread baking.

JIM=S STORIES; TOLD TO ME 27 JULY 1988

Sometimes Dad would run out of beer before making the next batch. When Dad=s the supply was running low Jim and Joan would put several bottles of beer in a gunny sack and put it in the cistern. Then when Dad would come in hot and tired from the field thinking there was no beer Jim and Joan would surprise him with some nice cold beer.

Along with a lot of lightning and thunder it rained four inches in just a short time and Romain sent Jim out to turn the windmill off because he didn't want to. (Jim hopes it wouldn't bother Romain to tell this but he would probably get a kick out of it.)

Lightning hit the peak of the barn and blew it off, ran down the sling and melted the ends of the sling two feet from the floor, hit a sow and eleven piglets, made a ten inch diameter hole in back of the barn. (I believe a sling is a supporting band that is used to lift hay into the loft.)

Dad used to shoot pigeons on the peak of the roof with a 12-gauge shotgun when they got too numerous. He was an excellent shot.

Jim stood up on the sewing machine in the dining room to watch the lightning during an especially bad storm. Bill yelled at him to get down from there and just after he got down the window blew out.

Dad was driving the Model-T Ford and Jim was riding in the jump seat. Dad had a 12-gauge Winchester with a hair trigger. (Some part was sheared off.) He hit a bump and it blew a hole in the roof. He never fired it again but got rid of it. He carried it that day to shoot a pheasant.

Uncle Ed had a 10-gauge double-barreled pistol. He shot and lost both barrels and it gave him a real jolt.

RULES TO SOME OF THE GAMES:

ANTE, ANTE OVER

There were two teams -- one on each side of the school house. Team one would yell ante-ante over and then throw the ball over the roof. Someone on team two would try to catch it and run to the opposite side before getting tagged. Team one would run to the opposite side and would have to tag the one who caught the ball. If he were tagged it was then team two's turn to throw the ball. The one who was tagged then became a part of team one. The team to end up with the most players won.

JACK STONES (JACKS)

Jack stones were pretty much the same years ago as they are today:

Hold all 10 jacks in the palm of your hand and throw them into the air and catch the jacks (10) or as many as possible on the outside of your hand. Turn your hand over and try to catch them all in the palm of your hand. What you don't catch you pick up one at a time by throwing the ball into the air and picking up a jack in the same hand with which you threw the ball, before the ball bounces twice. This is the way you start each variation and then continue 2's, 3's, etc. through ten.

Remember that in all the games that you cannot touch another jack except those that you are picking up. Also, if you want to pick up the smaller number jacks (for instance: in eights, you want to pick up two before six) you must say, ACart before the horse.@ Your turn ends when you touch another jack, when you miss the ball or let it bounce twice (exceptions are Double Bounce and No Bounce), do not pick up the required number of jacks or you don't say, ACart

before the horse.@ where appropriate.

Double Bounce: Let the ball bounce twice.

No Bounce: Do not let the ball bounce.

Eggs in an Basket: Toss the ball into the air, pick up a jack, put it into your left hand, catch the ball.

Pigs in the Barn: Place your hand palm down on the floor with just enough room to push the jacks underneath. Toss the ball into the air, push the jack into your hand.

Single Tap: Throw the ball into the air, pick up a jack, tap the floor once with the same hand with which you threw the ball up.

Double Tap: This is the same as single tap except you tap twice.

Horses Over the Fence: Place your hand on its side upright with your little finger on the floor. Throw the ball up, pick up the jacks and place them on the other side of your hand.

Around the World: Throw the ball up, pick up jacks and make a circle around the ball with them before catching the ball after it bounces once.

You may play any game backwards starting with ten and going to one.