

There was this one particular guy who always used to call his wife a guinea. One night we were having a dance in Dumont and he was staggig it that night, he didn't bring her along. I asked him, "Where is your guinea tonight?" He said, "I guess she's at home sitting on a sack of eggs."

This fellow that I just mentioned was named Al. After he left the hall and went downtown and had a few beverages, he came back up in to the hall, I think he enjoyed himself more than if his guinea had been along with him.

We had lots of dances down in that Dumont hall after Lynch built it back in 1915 or 1916. There were dances given exclusively for married people, and the crowds would be quite large then, too, without the young folks.

One night there was a young fellow by the name of Louie who was going to crash the party. He was going to come in in spite of not being allowed in. Emil Conrad was standing by the stairway when this young fellow tried to come up. He told him he wasn't allowed in and the guy got mad and hauled off and was going to hit Emil. Well, Emil ducked him and gave him a nice uppercut. He was standing kind of close to the edge of the stairway anyhow. He went clean down to the bottom; it was a long stairway leading up into the Dumont hall. He rolled all the way down, but didn't get hurt.

The next day Emil was in town and a guy came walking up to him and he asked, "Are you Emil Conrad?" And he said, "Yes," but added, "by that time I had backed up and got hold of a pipe wrench." He said he was just going to make sure that he was protected this time. But this just happened to be a salesman trying to sell him some farm equipment.

Among the early settlers in Traverse county was the Fortune family. There were twelve sons and one daughter in the family. Mr. Fortune used to make a joke out of that, telling my father, "I had twelve boys and one misfortune."

There was also a judge in Wheaton by the name of B. F. Fortune. There was also another judge back in 1913 by the name of Judge Flood.

Back in the depression days, or maybe a little before that, this Fortune family with the twelve boys and one girl moved to Canada. Things were going a little rough up there, too. The boys were all great ball players. They organized their own baseball team and traveled around Canada with the ball team known as "The Fortune Brothers". I asked Bennie one time if they made any money at it. He said, "We didn't make an awful lot of money but we made three meals a day." That was a pretty fair accomplishment back in those depression days.

During the depression there was money in the country. There were people who had money, but conditions were so bad that they were afraid to stick it in the banks because the banks were failing. After the bank guarantee law got enacted, people started taking their money back out of their cans and fruit jars and things they had buried in their basements and put it back in the banks.

The most that the banks could pay in interest was two

percent. I had a neighbor who had some money and wanted to deposit it in a bank, but they refused to take it. They said they had no use for it. People didn't have any collateral to borrow on and the just couldn't use any more money. They recommended at that time that you invest your money in government savings bonds, which were paying a cent and a half interest at that time. That's quite a switch from what it is today.

Salesmen used to come through the country on foot, carrying a large bag made of canvas. Most of them came from Syria. They told about an organization that they had in the eastern cities like New York and Boston where if they could get one of those bags, they could get enough merchandise in them and could then stop at places and try to sell things. They carried a complete map, telling where they could replenish their supplies when they sold out. They were mostly all heading further west. A good many times they would stop in at my fathers and mother's home when I was a little boy. I can remember how they would come around dinner time and Dad or Mother would ask them to stay for dinner. Lots of times it was evening and they would stay overnight, but never would they intrude on you and stay in the house. They'd always offer to stay out in some vacant building or sleep in the hay loft. They didn't want to intrude on anyone too much. When they would be moving on Dad or Mother would always offer them dinner for nothing. But they would never accept anything for nothing. They would open up their bags and pick out maybe a couple of red handkerchiefs or something. Their policy was to pay their way wherever they went. The little profit they made on what they sold would allow them to go from one area to another — but it was always on foot. I often wondered how they could walk all day long from place to place with those big bags they were carrying on their backs. But they wanted to come to America. They really made good citizens and were always willing to pay their way. A good many of them wound up in some town with enough capital so they could start a little store of their own.

I can remember when my uncle Pete Schmitz started that store down in Dumont. He had everything that was available — from an overcoat down to a pair of gloves, and all sorts of edible things. All the fruit you could buy in those days was in cans. You couldn't buy these fresh peaches and pears and plums that you can buy at the supermarkets today. The only fruit that you could get was if you went out west of Dumont 11 miles, which we often did with a team of horses, and stop in at Mr. Tubb's farm up on the hill. We'd ask him if we could go down into the woods and pick plums and wild grapes. All these hills out along Traverse Lake and for a half mile back were all solid woods. There are just a few patches left that haven't died out. Mr. Tubbs was always pretty generous about letting people out into his groves if you didn't destroy the foliage. He'd look your buggy over to see if you had a rake in it. If you had a rake, you didn't get into his orchards.

When I was a little boy I was always inquisitive. I used to ask Uncle Pete in the store about different things that he was

getting shipped in. He had a contraption sitting on one of the counters there that had a long handle on it. That was an outfit that he used for cutting up chewing tobacco. That was shipped in boxes from the place where he bought his stuff, and people would come in and buy a nickel or dime or twenty cents worth, whatever they wanted. Uncle Pete would just shove that old plug of chewin' tobacco in there and cut off the size they were paying for.

He started telling me how chewing tobacco was manufactured. He said that down in the southern states where they were raising tobacco, one of their main crops, they had big warehouses open on the sides where they would hand up the tobacco plants to dry and cure them. Many of those larger plantations were owned by big landlords. They had cigar factories right in connection with the same building. At that time they had quite a problem with rats and mice and other varmints running around. They didn't have all the things to kill them with that they have today.

Anyway, he was telling that there would be lines and lines of guys standing along open benches, open on the inner sides, and when they were making those cigars many of the odd shaped leaves and small remnants and fine stuff that was unfit for making cigars was thrown on the piles underneath the counters. They would make chewin' tobacco out of the remnants and a lot of the finer stuff was ground up to make snuff.

I had a cousin who didn't smoke, but he chewed a lot of tobacco. As I said, it was impossible to keep the rats out of those warehouses. They'd be running back and forth over those remnants. That stuff would be scooped up and put into presses or compressors. They would make them into bars about a half inch thick and about a foot long. They'd ship it to stores in big boxes.

Uncle Pete's son Henry got into the habit of chewing tobacco. One day when we were threshing, he pulled out the plug he had in his pocket. It didn't come wrapped, you know. You'd just take it home in a little package and stick it in your back pocket. And whenever you wanted to chew you just bit off a hunk or broke off a piece, whichever was the handiest. Those guys who were used to chewing tobacco mostly always had a cut in their mouths. One day Henry broke off a piece and he found some evidence that rats had been running around on the tobacco that had been put into those presses. That finished his tobacco chewing. That was the last time he ever chewed, and after that he never ever smoked.

It was a kind of a way of life back in those days that you had cigars in the house. Those who cared to chew were chewing. There were many occasions when I was running around the country writing insurance when I came to places where the women were chewing tobacco. Boy, they could spit it just as far as the men could. It was kind of a shock to me because I had never seen that happen before. But today smoking is common among the women as well as the men.

They talk about the harmful effects that smoking has on people. But the oldest resident in the county, who is now over in the nursing home, he'll be 100 years old — he said he's been

smoking ever since he was 12 years old. He's almost a constant smoker yet today. You hardly ever see him that he doesn't have the old corncob in his mouth.

Down in Croke township, where I lived for quite a few years, there are as many as four vacant homesteads within a half mile area. Most of them have been torn down, there may be a granary or so sitting on one or two of them yet. In some places the groves have been bulldozed out. When you look at some sections of land there are no buildings at all where there used to be four homesteaders.

Back in the earlier days there would be quite a few farmers who started living in town. They would farm from town. They had horses and cattle right in town.

In the 1930's we didn't get a crop for three years. We never took a binder out of the shop. But John Kinney owned a large parcel of land down southeast of Wheaton along Highway 75. A few years earlier he had a lot of acreage in alfalfa. That was one of our big feed crops back in those years. He had three or four stacks of alfalfa sitting out there in the field. Then when we got no rain, and nothing grew, there wasn't anything for the jackrabbits to eat — or any wildlife, as far as that was concerned. They started digging away into those haystacks that John Kinney had sitting out there. As high as they could reach standing on their hind legs they had eaten in on the sides, and then under as far as they could reach. The stacks got kind of top-heavy after awhile, and we had some hard wind storms and they blew the stacks over.

Things looked almost entirely hopeless back in those years. No jobs, no money. But everybody seemed to come out of it pretty well after we started getting the rains and some crops. Today we're getting crops that are almost unbelievable, but wages got so high that the material they manufacture with got so expensive that people who are buying it can't get money enough out of their crops to meet their obligations. So a lot of them are having real problems today, even in this time of plenty.

When things got as bad as they were back in those days, there was only one way they could go. They couldn't get much worse, so they had to get better. I imagine that's about the way it will be this time, too.

Hoover was president at that time, and jackrabbits were plentiful. He went down in history as the only President we had who made jackrabbits taste so good.

Back in the depression days hogs weren't worth anything. And anyone who had them could always butcher a few, so we always had meat to eat.

I took every sideline that was humanly possible to try to bring in enough to keep the home going. I was doing custom butchering around the country for people, and I was writing a little fire insurance and I had a job as township assessor. I was getting a little extra money in on the side that most weren't able to get. So I imagine they had it a little worse than I did, but I had a family of 15 children and I was trying to keep them off the relief — which I did, during those times. We

didn't have anything. Our only asset back in those days was pride. And you didn't live very long on that unless you found some other means of making money.

I used to get up early in the morning when I was butchering. When I told a guy I'd be there on a certain day, I was there. The weather didn't make much difference in those days. I was younger and I could take the cold. There were mornings when I went out when it was 15 below zero with a team of horses on an old four-wheel trailer with a stack rack on it. I drove three and a half miles to a fellow's place one morning, and I got to his place just as the sun was coming up. I got my old scolding tank going. It was a long stove about five and a half or six feet long with a 30 inch tank on top of it. I'd light a fire down underneath and it only took 15 or 20 minutes to get the water ready for scolding the hogs. There weren't many of them skinned back in those days. It was mostly all scold.

After I got through about 11:00 in the morning this fellow said to me, "Jake, I'd have you come in the house for dinner, but we haven't hardly anything in the house now. I had \$2.50 Sunday, but I was way behind on my church dues and I gave that to the minister on Sunday. But I'll pay you later," he said.

He never did pay me for that at all. I suppose after I leave this world I'll have to go all over hell lookin' for him to get my \$2.50. But we got along without it.

On my way home I stopped at another farmer's place to butcher a cow. He didn't have any money either. So when we got through he told me to take the hide uptown and sell it to the produce man and said I could have half what I got out of the hide. I did that and the hide brought \$1.80. So my own forenoon's work amounted to 90 cents.

I used to come home so chilled at night that I'd be sitting there shivering and couldn't even eat my supper before I went to bed. The stove we had in those days didn't heat your house like they do now. You had to crawl right up behind them and one side of your body would be roasting and the other side would be freezing.

At that time I didn't own any land. I was just a renter. I acquired a quarter of land later on after things got better and I got my bills paid. Later I sold that and came to town and bought a home.

My home in Wheaton is the only home I ever owned. I was always living in a rented place after I left my father's home and got married. I rented up until 1957. That's when I bought the place where I now reside.

Back in those early days you couldn't farm too much. All of our farming was done with horses or small tractor. Today if you're going to buy a farm and all the machinery that goes with it, you almost have to go and borrow money to get the equipment. You can't afford to run around a field with a big tractor and have nothing behind it.

I hear on the news everyday where they ask the farmers to reduce the wheat production 15 percent. They tried a scheme similar to that back in the days I was farming. But that wasn't regarding the grain; it was hogs. We were being paid so much a head to sell off our brood sows to cut down the volume of pigs that would be farrowed. They figured that way we could bolster the pork prices. So I sold off eight of my sows. That was half of the ones I had intended to keep. I got a small payment the next fall from the government for cutting down on the size of my hog herd. But as soon as the farmers found out that a lot of them were selling off their hogs others again thought, "Well they're going to get the hog prices up, so I'll just keep that many more." So some of the guys doubled their brood sow numbers, figuring that they would get more for them because so many farmers were cutting down on production.

Back in 1917 when I and my young wife, Veronica, started farming for ourselves, our closest neighbor was a young man from Iowa whose father had bought land up here for his two sons to get going. One of the boys didn't have a hair on his head. He was just a young man, but as bald as a pool ball. His wife used to get a kick out of teasing him about it. One night we were over at their house. She was much shorter than he was, and she had a beautiful head of hair. She walked up in front of him and was using his head for a mirror because his head was so shiny. She was trying to make him believe she could see herself in the top of his head. She was working with her pretty locks, trying to get them into the proper place. He got as much a kick out of it as she did. He was what they called a skinhead back in those days. I'm one of them, too. If we don't like it, we can just go and buy ourselves a wig and slip that on top of our heads to make us look like we have hair when we don't.

8. I'd like to talk a little about back in 1904 and 1911 when we had those terrific dust storms that blew the topsoil off the gumbo land. That's the sticky stuff that's six or eight inches right below the surface.

After the dust storms blew off all the topsoil, and there was nothing left but the gumbo, and the water wouldn't soak away properly. There was only one alternative that we had. The natural sod was pretty well decayed and we had to haul out the barnyard waste from the cattle and hogs and horses, and old straw pile bottoms and try to get this ground loosened up again so we could cultivate it. There were many times back in those years, I was about nine years old at the time, we were out there with a team of horses on a gang plow trying to plow this ground. And also back in 1911 it was the same thing again. The sticky gumbo soil would stick to the moldboards of the plows and you'd have to get down there with your hands and dig it out. We lost an awful lot of time out in the field working this particular kind of ground. We either had to let it go to tall grass or weeds, what they called summer fallow, and plow that back down to try to get some of the humus back into the ground that had been taken out over all those years of cultivating this land.

Today they're growing about three times as many bushels to the acre as we did. They're taking a lot of humus out of the soil, too, but they're using a lot of commercial fertilizer.

In 1935 on Traverse Lake when there were a few low spots here and there that were covered with fish of every description. Many people went out there with wagons and loaded them up and hauled them home to spread on their farm property and used them for fertilizer. What they learned from the Indians they found out would pay off for them if they'd just get those dead fish out in their fields.

Back in the 30's when we had the depression, the federal government instigated a relief program, making government projects for the needy to work on. We'd get allowed so many hours a week. About the first of November I was the foreman of a crew of 22 men, working to pick up a few bucks every week. We had many different projects that we worked on. This one happened to be right out in the street in the middle of Dumont. A water main had burst. Mr. Nelson used to have the shoe store here and business got poor. Most of the boxes on his shelves were empty, but occasionally there would be a box with shoes in it. They appointed him as the public works administrator. He had a white collar job. He wasn't wired right for going out with a pick and shovel and doing the odd jobs that we had to do. We were digging out that

broken water main in Dumont and we got down about seven feet when we came up to the old rusted pipe. There happened to be an old maid living in town there and she had a pretty sharp tongue on her. She decided she wanted to wash that morning. I'll never forget that day; it was the first day of November. Paul Zabell had shut her water off, and she argued with him to get her water back on. Of course we had that big hole there, and that filled up immediately with water and that gave us some more work to do. We had to bail all of that out and by the time we got the water out the sides of the ditch started caving in.

The government later started sending out some surplus foods that they had. Most of it consisted of fruit and canned meats. There weren't too many who took advantage of it.

A lot of wells went dry in the drought years. Cal Davis had dug a well on the farm where I was a few years before I moved there. Wayne Williams and one other man dug a four foot hole and went down 50 feet. They hit several veins that showed that at one time they had produced water. But there was no water in it. The only water that ever got into that well was surface water that soaked in.

By the creek a mile east of us there was some seepage at the side of the hills that seeped down to a pocket. We used to haul water from there to water our gardens. Otherwise when there was no surface water in that big hole we'd have to go up to John Kinney's. He gave us permission to come and haul all the water we needed. We had only two cows. The government took the rest for \$18 a head. They couldn't furnish feed for much of a herd. After I was sold out in 1932 by the bank, I had only two horses. After the drought years came and ended, and we got rains in 1936, the government set up a program where anyone needed equipment or feed or seed or livestock to get going again, could get a government loan. Before that we barely had feed for the two head of horses and the two cows that we had left after the sale and drought.

We let the cows run loose in the daytime. They would munch along the railroad tracks. There were plenty of thistles and they seemed to be unusually high in protein.

I lost five head of cattle and eight or ten head of hogs when a storm hit suddenly and they couldn't find their way back to a barn which was only about 20 feet from where I had fed them. They wandered out into a field and froze to death out there.

My mother was living at that time yet. She went through the storm of 1880, which went down in history as the worst storm that ever hit this country. She said that this one was

fully as bad as the one back in the 1880's.

We had a good well on that place and a good pump. But we'd have to pump the water by hand all the time for the stock. There wasn't any windmill on this place so we had to take about 15 minutes everyday to pump water for the livestock.

Later on when we were cutting some wood I found an old cottonwood that we had just cut that was perfectly round. It was about 12 or 13 inches in diameter. I hollowed out a hole in the center of it, and cut it down a little bit here and there to make it good and round. Then I cut some long bolts and I bolted it to the spokes in the rear wheel on the Ford car. I'd back the old car up to the pump and put the belt on. There was a pumpjack on the well when I came there, but I hadn't been using it because I had no motor. Then when I jacked up the car the wheel would spin and I could throttle it down to the right speed to pump water. So that's the way we pumped water for our stock through the winter time, and sometimes during the summer when we were kind of busy.

The only thing we used for storm windows was heavy banking paper. We'd tack that over the windows in rooms we didn't use. And on the ones we did use we put plastic over the windows. We could break the wind pretty well that way.

We shelled quite a lot of corn and we'd use the corncobs in the cook stove. Of course, that would go out at night. We'd close the kitchen off and the next morning we'd go out and bread the ice in the water pan and start a fire up.

I often think of the time when Jim Lynch was running the butcher shop down in Dumont. He had Tony Schaffer helping him. They had quite a flourishing business going. It was hard to keep meat fresh at that time, but they had a big ice house right on the south side of the butcher shop. They'd skid a couple of big cakes of ice into the ice box and keep the meat pretty well cooled and in good shape for quite some time.

When Jim butchered there wasn't much waste on a critter. He used everything that could possible be used. We didn't have any of those inspectors around checking all the time on the sanitation system and things like that. But he did a pretty good job of keeping the place clean.

Once in awhile some of the meat would get a little older, you might say over-ripe. That was no problem. He'd just grind it up and make sausage and throw a little garlic in it, and the boys would come in and buy three rings at a time for a quarter. They'd get a bunch of crackers over at Pete Schmitz' grocery store. The crackers were shipped in boxes at that time. You'd probably get 25 or 30 pounds in a box. You'd just buy what you wanted, a dime or a nickel's worth.

There was no playing when the hay harvest came on. The women were out in the field as well as the men. If there were little children a lot of times they'd take them along out, too.

Back in those days all the crops, like wheat and oats and barley were all stacked. And then it was threshed out of the stacks. There weren't enough threshing machines in the country at that time. Not everyone could get into a threshing

crew. After the shock threshing was done, then they'd move over to those farms where there were stacks. I think in 95 percent of the cases where the grain was stacked, the wife was either doing the stacking or pitching it onto the stack for her husband. The women did more than their share out in the field, too.

Back in those days when a young couple got married it was generally some homesteader's son getting married to a homesteader's daughter. There wasn't the opportunity for young people to get out among an assortment of people as they do today in their cars.

My cousin Mike told me about the time he went over to see the neighbor's daughter. Of course there were a lot of cases where Pop didn't approve of a certain guy, and he would make that quite plain. So when Mike went to see the neighbor's daughter, it got to be along about midnight and he hadn't gone home yet. All at once the bedroom door opened up and the old fellow stuck his head out the door and hollered, "Caroline, it's time for you to be in bed. And when Mike gets ready to go home, he can blow out the light."

That's pretty much the way things were in those days. You had to get the approval of the parents before the kids could go and get married.

You hear once in awhile where people talk about putting the ladder up to the window and doing things their own way. That has happened in my lifetime. On several occasions I know where that was a fact.

It's interesting to look at the changes that have taken place over the years. Many of the old country school houses are still in pretty good shape but they haven't been used for at least 20 years. And there are a lot of old abandoned homesteads.

Ice used to be hauled into Dumont by railroad car, most of it coming from Big Stone Lake. They had a commercial ice cutting crew down there, cutting ice and loading it onto railroad cars and shipping it to towns that needed ice. My father bought some from the saloon keeper and I can recall hauling that stuff out home. We'd get three blocks in the sled, and we had to block them on both sides so they couldn't slide back and forth. If you hit a rut in the road, they'd slide to one side of the box and you'd tip over and then you'd really have a mess. Those cakes weighed 700 pounds apiece. Skidding them around was no snap.

Paul Zabell used to operate a dray line in Dumont and he'd haul this ice around to the places that needed it. Later he got himself a truck, and did a lot of hauling for the farmers who lived out quite a distance. They'd call in and have Paul bring out a load of ice and a load of coal. And then they'd have him back up to their granary and he'd haul back a load of grain to the elevator for them. He was always busy. Each time the freight came in it seemed there was always something on there for somebody in business. We had two implement dealers at the time, plus Lynch with his Ford operation that he had down in Dumont before he moved to Wheaton.

Back in the early days we didn't have the good mattresses that we have today. What we had then was they'd get some heavy cloth, something like they used for pillow cases, maybe not quite so heavy, and they'd make their own mattresses. They'd fill them up with straw. We were always careful not to get any barley straw in it. It was usually wheat or oats. Oats would work the best. We'd jam it full to the corners and then would leave a slot in the middle that wasn't closed when they were made. Every once in awhile we'd have to change and get new straw to put in.

When we had those husking bees we'd save the husks from the corn and lots of times fill the mattresses up with corn hucks. With a large family, if you could buy a mattress or two, that was a luxury. But most people had what they called straw ticks. It went along for quite a few years that way before mattresses really came on.

When I started farming in 1917 I had a straw tick on the spare bed that I had upstairs. When I had a hired man or some young kid from town or old friend, they would sleep on the straw mattress.

When a new baby was born in the area, my mother used to take us over to see it. They'd bring it out to show us and they either had it in a wash basket or some had a big dresser with a dresser drawer in it, and they'd fix up a cozy little spot in the dresses drawer. Of course, they had to be careful not to close it when the baby was in there.

When going to school in those days, I recall that I could tell when sitting alongside kids who were sleeping in old straw mattresses that should have been changed much sooner than they were.

Back in 1875 when John Doll came out into this area southeast of where Dumont now stands, Morris was the closest town. He came out with his load of lumber to build his cabin. He ended up on the wrong side of the Twelve Mile Creek. He had intended to be able to float across and haul the lumber with his team and wagon, but the water was too high so he had to build on the opposite side of the creek. So he was unable to live on the quarter where he intended to make his home. Then as the ice froze up during the winter on the creek he skidded his cottage across the ice and got it over to its present location on the southwest quarter on section 20, which was later named Dollymount Township after John Doll, the first settler in that area.

When my father and Peter Schmitz came out a short while later they saw the plight he was in so they took a different trail out of Morris and they would up on the west side of the creek where they intended to build.

The first year they stayed out there they didn't get much done. Dad went back and stayed with his folks over the winter near Edina township northwest of Minneapolis. Pete went along back also the first winter after they spent the summer of '75 up here. They got themselves what they call an immigrant car. They brought their farm machinery, which my father had made when he was in the blacksmith trade down in St. Anthony.

Homesteaders had to be 21 at that time. But the census was not taken at that time, or if it was, it wasn't very good. So a lot of young fellows claimed to be 21 so they could go out and homestead and the government didn't check it too much because they wanted to get the area settled.

In the spring when they brought up their immigrant car, Morris was the closest town. They had a turntable there where they would turn the train engine around and head back toward Willmar. In the spring when they came out they brought some extra feed grain and some seed and a homemade walking plow that my father had built, and a sled and wagon and a drag. Each one had four pieces of equipment.

Their first crop, during the first year they were here, was only about six acres for each my dad and Pete.

Pete Schmitz didn't batch as long as my father did. When John Doll came out he brought his family along, and Pete married the oldest daughter of John Doll, that was Mary. My dad didn't get married until six years later. So Pete's family was growing up much sooner than my father's did.

After that first year when they got only six acres each in, they stayed over that winter. And then as they started getting more acres cultivated, the McCormick people came out with what they called a header. They didn't have to cut their crops with a scythe anymore after that. Pete and my dad went together and bought a header. It worked a great deal like a grain binder only there was no binding equipment on it. It just put the grain up on a flat top and there was a place where a second man could stand and he could either drive the team or stand on the platform and tie the grain into the bundles.

The first year they fed their grain — that's the oats — right in to straw. And the wheat, of course, they flailed out with a flail.

They did have plenty of meat, though. The country was literally covered with geese and ducks and jackrabbits and quail. So they always had plenty of meat.

Uncle Pete was always an aggressive sort of guy, and he had a business outlook along with his nice personality. When they found out that the railroad was going to come through, he got busy and built a store — he was a carpenter by trade before coming out to homestead — he built this general store in Dumont where you could buy anything on the market at that time.

Pete was aggressive. Right away he acquired enough money so that he could buy trees to plant down a tree claim. My father lacked the \$26 that it cost to buy trees for a tree claim, so he never got in on that. But those who had a little extra money were able to get an extra quarter of land by doing so.

But no one was trying to overbid someone else in those days. If somebody got tired of his homestead after he had what they called proved it up by living on it for five years, and when a buyer came along, there wasn't anybody trying to see how much they could get. People were awful careful

about seeing that they didn't get in debt for more than they could handle.

But Uncle Pete was really burning the candle at both ends. He sort of overtaxed himself. He had a stroke already when he was 44 years old. One day when he was coming home from the store he had a stroke in the buggy and the horses brought him up to his home. He was lying in the front end of the buggy. But it was not too severe. After a few months it straightened out for him again. He went ahead with his store business.

When my dad had any banking business to do before they got the bank in Dumont, he was doing business with a German-American bank in Minneapolis. Since he was single, in the fall of the year he could get away, so he'd go down and stay with his folks over the winter and come back out in the spring.

When we were kids we used to take every opportunity when we were in town to head down to the train. It was kind of interesting to watch the breakies unload the freight and to watch the train switching the cars where they were needed and picking up full ones.

After the trains came in each town had a depot and a depot agent. And the agents all had to take some schooling and learn this Morse Code so they could operate the messages which were coming in. About all the news that came into town practically always came in on the telegraph. We used to stand around in there and watch that little machine ticking off these taps. The agent wouldn't care. He wasn't paying much attention to too many of them. But finally, his call would be coming into him and he'd go over and sit down, pull out a pad and pencil and write down some message that was sent to him where there was a death in the family, or later on during the war when there was a casualty.

I often remember when I lived near Dumont that I'd see the agent coming down the road. I'd recognize his old Model T, and when I had three boys in the South Pacific in the midst of the action out there, the messages were still coming in on telegraph if anything serious happened. He'd come right down the road towards our place, and we'd always be nervous until he got by our driveway.

Those freights that came through in the afternoon had a route just from Ortonville to Moorhead. They'd go up one day and come back the next. The guys who handled the freight were known as "breakies".

It was always interesting to be at the depot when the passenger train came in. We didn't have much in those days to look forward to. So we'd hang around the depot quite a lot.

The conductor told the agent about a young girl that he had picked up a few days earlier. She was from up by Breckenridge and was going down to Ortonville. After they switched around up at White Rock, this girl was getting pretty uneasy. She was in a hurry to get to Ortonville. Every little while she'd come and ask the conductor, "Where are we

at now and how much longer is it going to take us to get there?" She kind of irritated the conductor after she pestered him every little bit. Finally he said to her, "Why don't you get off and walk?" She said, "I would but my folks aren't expecting me until the train comes in."

As most people remember, the telegraph line was built right along the railroad tracks.

It took a lot of time on those old steam engines. They had to pull those trains along because they had to stop for water. In Wheaton they had one of those overhead water tanks near where the Standard Lumber is now. They'd fill with water there so they'd have plenty of water to keep up the steam until they got back the next day. After a period of years the old water tower collapsed here in Wheaton. I don't remember where they got their water after that.

It was quite an improvement when they took the old steamers off and put on the diesels. But that didn't last too long either. When I lived on the farm near Dumont, the train went right through the farm I was farming, and there were many times that a train would come through there with a hundred or more cars on it, and they'd have a couple of diesels hanging on the front of that so they'd have enough power to pull the load.

It was a pretty slow track. It wasn't built for speed, it was more for just service. If you wound your old car up to about 25 miles an hour you could keep up to it when she was at top speed.

We asked the depot agent what the breakies were getting and he said they got \$2.50 a day. But he said they got overtime when it took a little longer. But that was better pay than the boys on the section were getting, keeping the track in shape. They were getting \$1.50 a day.

Tom Foley was the boss of the crew. He might have been getting a few cents more than the rest of them. They'd push an old hand car down to where they were going to change a tie or do a little repair work. It wasn't as easy as it might look. But when two guys got ahold of it and got their timing down right they could wheel along pretty good. We kids used to ask the depot agent if we could take the hand car and go for a ride. He'd get on the telegraph and call ahead to find out where the train was at the time. If they'd tell him it was up by White Rock, we had plenty of time to fool around, so he'd generally let us take it. But we didn't go very far. That took real power to pull that handle back and forth and get those wheels aspinning. It seemed to me they were earning their \$1.50 a day just to take themselves to and from work.

I mentioned the breakies getting \$2.50 a day. But with the price of stuff, you could buy a lot of beans for \$2.50. It's a lot different from today. You'd probably pay \$25.00 for the same amount of stuff today.

I dread to think about a recession coming up. There's some talk about it today, but I hope it doesn't materialize. I can remember my brother-in-law in the store in Dumont. Most of the storekeepers were quite lenient and they let out a

lot of credit to people who they thought were able to pay. Before they knew it they had so much stuff on the books that they didn't have any capital to work with. There were many times we went into the store with a list of things we were going to buy. Maybe about half of what you wanted to get — which was regular stuff that they normally carried on hand — they would be out of. I didn't figure at first what was going on, but he had all his merchandise tied up in bad accounts — people that he had trusted a little too far. His groceries were coming in C.O.D. at the depot. Before he got the groceries to bring over to his store to sell, he had to sell enough of what he had on the shelves yet so he could go down and pay off what was against the groceries coming. That's why his shelves were never very heavily stocked for a good many months.

Back in the early days when the farm land was pretty well all homesteaded and it was time to get some roads built, the county organized and started levying a real estate tax used for county purposes. They also levied what they called a poll tax. The idea of that was that each farmer was supposed to put in so much in time toward building a road, depending on the amount of real estate he owned and the benefits he would get from the road.

Pete Schmitz had one of his first threshing machines that he dismantled after he got a later make. He took the cylinder out of that machine. That thing must have weighed a half a ton or better. It was 44 inches long. We'd roll that down the ditch, and put a couple of ropes on it, one on the roadbed, the other on the field side, and drag that down the ditch to break the snow so that the water could find its way through.

To drain our fields and get the water flowing down into the ditches we used to use what we called a scraper. Kids today don't know what a scraper looked like. If you took a small bath tub and cut it through in the middle and then welded some bolts and clamps on the side to hold some strong wooden handles, and then you had a circular shaped chunk of steel going from one side to the other, bolted onto the scraper. Then you'd have a log chain on the end of that and you'd hitch a team of horses on a whipple tree. You'd start by the ditch and worked back from the ditch to the point where you left off with the grader in the field. You'd haul the dirt from the scraper into the low spots. That's how you'd drain your field ditches into the road ditches.

That's the way most of the basements were made back in the early years, too. We used that same contraption to dig the basements. My father had his home on a hill next to the 12-Mile Creek and he dug it out with one of these scrapers. You'd have to square off the sides with a shovel, of course.

When the prohibition law was voted out, Dumont put up its liquor store. They offered me the job of digging the basement for the liquor store. My son, Victor, was growing up to be a pretty good size, so he and I went in with the scraper and dug out the basement.

Back in 1909 when we were having those dust storms, we had families moving in from different states. Before they had a chance to get a decent crop or two and get established, they found things pretty rough. Some had real large families, and

they were coming to the school where I was going. I noticed one noon when they opened their lunch pail, they didn't have too much in it. There was sliced turnips in between a couple of slices of bread. That was the extent of their lunch.

One family had a boy about my age and I can remember once asking him to trade his sandwich for the one I had brought from home. I was always fond of garden things. So we traded that day.

He had come here with his family from Iowa. He told me that the gophers were so thick down in Iowa that when people would plant their corn in the spring the gophers would go down the row as soon as the corn was coming out of the ground, dig it up and get that kernel of corn. So the county there put a bounty on gophers. They paid five cents for each gopher tail. It didn't take long before the kids figured that they were working against their own interest in killing off all the gophers, because the next year there wouldn't be any bounty. So what they did was just cut the tails off them after they had snared them or trapped them, and then they'd turn them loose again, so they could reproduce another crop of gophers the following year. But that only lasted one year. The county caught up with them pretty fast. Then they had to bring in the feet of the gophers.

There was a fellow in Browns Valley by the name of Griffith who had a large acreage all fenced in, and he'd take in livestock for \$1.50 per head per season. Each farmer had to brand his own cattle before he took them out there.

I can recall when I was a small boy how they used to pick these animals up and throw them down on their sides. My dad was a blacksmith, and he made his own branding iron. It had just a simple "T" on the end of a rod. That was his brand. My Uncle Pete Schmitz would just turn the iron around and have the "T" upside down, for his brand.

They would herd cattle down toward Browns Valley and the South Dakota hills. And as they'd go along, more and more farmers would be putting their cattle into the herd heading toward the grazing area. Sometimes there would be hundreds of cattle being shifted out of Traverse County and moved into South Dakota to be pastured for the summer months. Then in the fall they'd have a roundup and sort each man's stuff out.

I remember once my father was one short when he got to sorting out his herd. Mr. Griffith was a nice old fellow, and he always made up for the losses. It seems that once in awhile there were some people out in the community who would run out of meat, so they'd slip over into the herd and butcher one. Whatever was short, he always made it good. Dad lost a nice steer, but Mr. Griffith gave him a nice heifer to replace it, and it turned out to be one of our better milk cows.

We always generally had barn room enough for whatever stock we raised, but pasture was a little short. For extra hay land, you could rent all the hay land you wanted. There was what they called "school land" in the county at that time yet. Some was railroad land. Then as you got east of Dumont five or six miles there was a tremendous lot of prairie land that

never had been broken up. You could rent all the hay land you wanted for 50 cents an acre. So we'd go out and pile up a lot of extra feed so when the stock came home from the ranges we always had plenty of feed around the place to last us until the following year.

After the war with Germany back in 1916, we had what they called the "land boom" in through here. People were buying up everything that was available. Farming was done largely by horses yet in those days. Tractors had come up, but not many. You had only a limited amount of land that you could farm with horses. Many who owned their land had things pretty well under control.

During the war a lot of land buyers were coming in. Land had been selling for \$35 or \$40 an acre, but they started going up as high as \$175 an acre. Then when the depression came along after the war, people had more than they could handle. Prices went down. There was \$3.00 wheat that dropped to 19 or 20 cents a bushel, and other grades accordingly, and there was no way that people with all that land could hang onto the land that they had paid those enormous prices for.

We had a Senator by the name of Knute Nelson who authored a law called the bankruptcy law. Anytime someone didn't want to pay all his outstanding bills or make an attempt to do it, figuring it would be impossible with the prices at that time, he could forfeit his property to the government and they would send someone out to hold an auction sale. The man was supposed to release all of his property but about \$300 worth of household goods, which he was allowed to keep. Whatever the proceeds from this sale would be, he was supposed to give a list of all his creditors. Some did, others would haul some of their equipment over to the neighbors and set it in the trees. The creditors usually got two or three cents or maybe a nickel on each dollar they had coming. But that gave the farmer a chance to get a clean start again.

But the loan companies who were holding the loans on all that high priced \$175 an acre land started foreclosing those farms and they found out that they would have to pay the taxes and were unable to collect the interest. So they decided to sell a lot of those farms back to the farmers. They could usually get \$35 or \$40 an acre from a buyer. There were lots of them coming in from Iowa and Illinois and different areas in the country and picking up some of those farms.

Many who had filed for bankruptcy had all their old bills canceled. They'd find a place to live and farm a little and they'd get a few bucks ahead and start buying the land back from the loan companies. They were offering it for about whatever they could get for it.

There were instances where they were buying 160 acres of land from the loan companies for as low as \$15 an acre. But from then on things started picking up. Crops got better, prices started coming back. And when we got Roosevelt in for President, we got guaranteed farm prices. It was nothing big. Corn was guaranteed at around 40 cents a bushel, and other grains accordingly.

But the guy who stuck with it and paid off his bills, by the time he got his bills paid off — land had been going up constantly in price — was still unable to buy the land. Many of the boys who used the bankruptcy law once, or some even twice, acquired a lot of holdings, winding up wealthy people.

It wasn't unlawful. It was the law and they took advantage of it, while many who had a different viewpoint on what was the proper thing to do, stuck with it and paid off their creditors. The people who had trusted the farmers for feed and seed and so forth, they were the real losers under this law.

Most of the people who saved their farms were small farmers. Those who sat tight and had their farms paid for, all had cows and pigs and chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese. They could raise enough feed to keep their stuff going. They always had plenty to eat and a little to sell once in awhile for what clothing they would need. That was all practically homemade, bought by the yard.

Most people had a herd of milk cows. Selling eggs and cream was their main income during the summer months until harvest came, and then they'd have a little grain to haul in, enough to pay their taxes and if they owed a little on their farms yet they could take care of the interest.

When I was a young boy the taxes came due the first of June and the first of November. It seemed like it was a habit to put off selling your grain until you really needed the money. Around the time the taxes came due, the grain market always went into a slump. The buyers down in the Cities knew there'd be a heavy run about that time, so they'd start dropping the markets. So my father, after he got hooked a few times, made up his mind he was going to pay his taxes a couple months earlier while the market was still stronger. So he started hauling in some grain in the winter time and got those taxes paid earlier on his real estate. It took a few less bushels to do the job.

Before we had the mail routes all over the country, some folks lived several miles off the route, so they'd have to pick up their mail up in the closest town. The postmaster didn't receive very much pay. Nick Holtz was the first postmaster we had in Dumont. He was running the International Elevator at the time and he was getting ten or fifteen bucks a month extra for taking care of the mail. They had a little room in his house where you could mail your letters or pick up your mail.

It was a custom that people then would usually name their children after some member of the family — the grandfather or the grandma. So many of the nieces and nephews had the same name as the elders around the community had.

We had one family where the boy had the same name as his uncle. It was a little confusing after while when they'd pick up their mail. The mailman didn't know which box to drop a letter into. It happened on one occasion, when I was a young boy and hauling some grain into town for my father.

When rigs went down the road like that some farmers would come out to the road when they would recognize whose wagon it was, and ask if you'd stop at the post office and bring their mail along back. They were generally back out to the road when they saw you coming a mile or two down the road.

Anyway, this uncle got a letter one day in his mailbox that belonged to the nephew. Some young floozy around the country had written him a pretty mushy letter and the old boy was getting quite a kick out of it. He was telling about it and he wanted to know if I'd take the letter back and dump it in the mailbox. Then he wrote on the outside, "opened by mistake".

The uncle had read the letter and while he was telling about it he had a big grin on his face. I guess that brought back some fond memories from the time he was a boy.

Back in those days there wasn't much chance for communication. After the telephone got in it was pretty good, but we didn't have the private telephone lines like they have now. You'd talk on the telephone and probably two people started, but before it was over there'd be seven or eight in the same conversation.

Farmers had to build their own telephone lines at that time and furnish their own poles. Some would trim the branches from the trees in their groves and nail on brackets — any old way to get the wire up to the house. That was one of the greatest things that happened when we got the telephone office in Dumont. Of course, for long distance calls we had to call Wheaton.

In those days you could write a letter and it generally took a little while before it got to its destination. But with the two cent stamp or the three cent stamp, and the penny postcard, the country never heard of a deficit in the post office. Today they charge 20 cents and they're still running in the hole. Of course they didn't have any eight hour days either. Sixteen was about average for people who had a job. There wasn't much time to go anywhere — but there was no place to go because transportation was poor.

I mentioned earlier something about the tornado that hit Dumont back in 1919. I talked to two of the people who rode that tornado out and came back alive — Isabelle Moeller, she was Isabelle Didlo at that time; her father got killed in that tornado — and Art Rinke, a cousin of the Didlo's who was visiting at their home at the time the tornado struck. Fred Didlo was another member of the family, the Didlo family. As Art and Isabelle left the house little Fred Didlo, the youngest one in the family of three children was about to come outside, too. Art told me this just recently, that he pushed Fritzie back on the basement stairs and he rolled down in the basement. That was the only thing that saved his life. When the house blew down it blew off the foundation and he was safely down in the basement.

Art told me about his experience while he was up in the sky. He said that he remembers the old wooden schoolhouse that they had in Dumont and when the tornado hit that school the whole building went up in the air all in one peice and then it exploded. But Isabelle says that she didn't see any of that

part of it. For her recollection all she was was dust and dirt and dark clouds and felt the remains of the buildings that were flying through the air. But she said that it was so dark that you couldn't see anything. There were two different versions on what each one had seen. It followed the Dumont creek and it took off the water tower and the Lutheran church which were standing side by side and Doll's house and the Nick Didlo house was the next one that was completely damaged. There were some more of them that had some light damage. But it went westward from there. That's when it hit the old Luke house and turned that around on the foundation. Their south door was turning to the west after the storm was over. It tore the porch off the house my father built after he moved in from the farm and it took the barn along. Joe Doll was working for me at the time and I just bought a Ford car shortly before and he had bought my driving horse. He drove in and put that horse in the barn. It blew away the same as time the schoolhouse did.

As I mentioned the tornado followed the creek up. In those years we had quite a lot of moisture in the ground at that time and there was quite a bit of overflow from Toqua Lake down by Graceville. It drained into the Dumont creek and there were fish in the creek at the time. Mostly bullheads. After the storm was over and we walked around over several acres that my father had bought and found the fish lying all over in the grass. They were bullheads.

Isabell Moeller and Art Rinke who are still living yet today. They are both respected citizens living here in Wheaton. Art made his home here after he decided to quit farming and his son took it over and his son is now running it. As I mentioned before there is the fourth generation of the William Rinke family, who was the original homesteader. Four generations are still living on the old homestead.

At the time I was living out southeast of Dumont. We heard six long rings come over the phone and it told about the tornado hitting the town. My wife Veronica and I wound up the old Ford and drove into town. It was impossible to get within a couple of blocks of the disaster area. They had guards around all the place where the buildings were down. They didn't want anything disturbed, or picked up a souvenirs.

Nick Didlo was a pretty wealthy for a man back in those days and the banks were small and operated on a small capital. They boasted of a \$10,000 capital. He didn't believe in putting all his eggs in one basket. He figured that if something went wrong he didn't want to lose everything, all the cash that he had. When his house blew away most of the folks in town knew he had money planted around the house somewhere or dug into the basement. After they started cleaning up the rubbish they started checking around to see what they could find. They hadn't come on to much that was salvageable. He had an old Monarch range that sat out in the entry in his house, that he hadn't been using. They took off the lid down in the bottom and found \$2,000 in paper bills inside of that cook stove. That was one way of hanging onto your money, in case the banks failed — which they did years later.

What I got a kick out of was back in 1917 and a little earlier when people would go on a trip they always had a big purse that they carried, but they didn't carry too much money in it because they had purse snatchers at that time.

In 1918 when Dr. Ewing sent me home from the Wheaton hospital he said I would be dead in two weeks. That was back in September of 1918. The folks took me down to Rochester, Minn. My dad's sister Gertrude was a registered nurse and she said that the symptoms that he diagnosed could be wrong. She said sometimes a liver trouble would affect you the same way as stomach ulcers. Dr. Ewing said I had cancer so they took me down to the Mayo Clinic. We took the passenger train out of Dumont and Dr. Ewing came down and gave me a shot in the arm before we left. As we got into St. Paul we had to buy another ticket from there to Rochester. They had a little joke going at that time that there was more money in women's stockings than in pocketbooks. And we found a small example of that when we got to the depot down there. My mother was a little short of money for her ticket to Rochester. She had put most of it in her checkbook and of course they wouldn't accept checks at the depot, so she asked my wife Veronica if she could spare some money to finish buying her ticket. We were up in the midst of that big crowd and Veronica went over to the back end of the waiting room and pulled down her stocking and took out a couple of bills and brought them back and gave them to my mother so she had enough to buy her tickets. With the style of dress today I wonder where the women would put that extra money.

Before we had this new hospital built by the city of Wheaton, large homes were used for hospitals. The place where Alvin Hennen lives in, I was a patient in that hospital at one time when Doc Ewing was the doctor. He was telling me one day when I was in there that just a few days before he had a mother brought in having her first child and her husband was quite excited and nervous about the whole thing. There was quite a bit of commotion and noise in the delivery room and her husband was in the hallway. He was walking back and forth up and down the hall puffing one cigarette after another. His handkerchief was soaked with sweat. This birth took an unusual length of time, more than was generally expected. This young guy was walking up and down the hallways all shook up. After it was all over Doc Ewing went out in the hall and told this young fella, "Well everything's okay, mister. You've just become the father of a beautiful 8 pound girl." This young fella here responded, "Thank God it's a girl so she'll never have to go through what I've been going through for the last few hours."

Practically all of January and February kind of remind me of some of the storms that my dad used to tell that they had back in 1875 when he first came out in this country. And about the terrible blizzards in 1890 which went down in history as possibly the worst one that they ever had on record. People couldn't leave their homes for weeks at a time.

I was thinking about the Benson family and the Whittly family. Some of the Bensons live out here on the same

homestead along the lake road. And Whittly as I mentioned earlier in the story, George Whittly, homesteaded that piece of ground that Shady Dell is on today. The first winter out there is when Andrew Benson dug a cave and lived in the side of the hill. He didn't get his log house put up in time in the fall. But Whittly got his house up and enclosed.

Out on the open prairie where my father lived some of the early settlers didn't have any woods like they do along Traverse Lake. So many of them made homes out of sod. But my dad got lumber and shipped it as far as Morris and he got it from there and made himself his small cabin that he lived in. That really must have been a desolate life to live out in the prairie where there were only three families for the next three years until the Irish settled in down around Collis. It was the John Doll family, my father and Pete Schmitz, my dad's brother. They were the only ones living in that area.

They had blizzards and they didn't have good electric and gas heat like we have today. It took quite a lot to stick it out.

In 1874 the people I was talking about who settled in around Traverse Lake had horses. The Indians that were living around there had ponies. Mr. Whittly brought a team with him. He and Andrew Benson drove out from Sauk Centre and left their families there. They went and got them the next summer after they got themselves a home built up. They had no shelter for the horses, the ponies. They were turned loose and let shift for themselves. A good many of those ponies didn't survive the winter. The Indians used to take these horses that died and take their hides off and make clothing out of them. Then they would eat that meat from those frozen animals. The people complaining today, I think that maybe we are a little bit soft.

Down around Browns Valley there were some families living already. Ortens were doing quite a bit of fur trading. He came up from that area around Chatfield, Minnesota and acquired quite a bit of land around there. He did a little trading with the Indians around there for hides.

The coldest I remember was when the thermometer hit 44 below and we had snow banks of twelve or fifteen feet high. They were packed so solid that you could drive right over them with a team and sled.

In 1959 my first wife died. That's when our family was all grown up. She died from diabetes. So until 1964 I was a bachelor. I lived here in Wheaton by myself. My three youngest boys enlisted in the service, Dave and Jim went to the Navy for four years and they got around and saw quite a bit of the world. Reinhart enlisted in Army. He was stationed over in Germany the full length of time that he was in the service.

In 1964 I married a woman from Donnelly. She had lost her husband in 1953, which was six years before my wife died. All of her relatives were back in Aurora, Illinois and that area. She made her living as a telephone operator after her husband died. She was one of these switchboard operators over at Donnelly. Of course when they went to the dial system she lost her job.

I got to know her real well and we talked about getting married. We said if we could have five good years together at our ages we'd be lucky, but we figured that it would be better than either one of us living separately. As it turned out we had 15 lovely years together. And then she got hardening of the arteries. She was compelled to be put into a nursing home. She lived two years in a nursing home. On the 19th day of January, 1982, is when she died. So at the present time I'm trying to keep up the big house by myself. I have six members of my family right here in Wheaton. And they come home quite often. I'm living in a nice, friendly town. Everyone knows everyone else. It's making it quite a bit easier than I really expected. Betty was going on her 90th year when she passed away. I'm going on my 87th one at the present time.

Back in the prohibition days or before the prohibition days so many humorous things happened and some of them were more serious. One night a fella came by my farm where I lived right north of Dumont and he got out of his car right next to my garden. There was probably ten inches of water in the ditch. He stepped out of his car to relieve himself and he fell face forward into the ditch. When I ran out there to help him the water bubbles were coming up along side of his head. He wasn't able to get himself out of the water. So I think I possibly saved this man's life. If we hadn't noticed him he would have drowned in just a few inches of water. He used to joke about it later on. One night he went home from town and before he got home he said he saw three bridges. He said that he took the one on the right hand side. He made a joke that if you ever drive home inebriated and you see three bridges you should take the middle. He went off into the ditch.

I was a radio dispatcher for twelve years at the sheriff's office. I quit the job when I was 81 years old. I wanted to spend a little more time at home with Betty. There were many nights when I would go on at 4:00 and I was supposed to get off at 12:00. If we had a prisoner in jail then I had to stay until 8:00 the next morning. It made the nights pretty long. It would be sixteen hours. Of course we were getting paid for it. But it was quite a drain because I was also selling flowers at the time and garden plants. I'd get home at six o'clock and by 7:00 I'd have to be on the road to Breckenridge to the wholesaler. I used to sell during the days. Some days we'd have to make two trips because all I had was a station wagon to haul with. Betty would take care of the customers back home here. It was getting a little strenuous for both of us. At that time Betty was 84 and I was 81. So I decided to give the job up although I did enjoy it. The men that I worked with were all agreeable.

Some of the early farmers that I have neglected to mention were out in this Leonardsville Township. There was Mike and Miles Burns. I think I mentioned Mike Burns. Miles was a bachelor. He didn't stick around too long. Living alone out there in a small house by himself many miles from his neighbors. He sold out and moved away. Then there was the Rixe family down there. There were five brothers. Fred, Charles, William, John and Henry. I knew them all real well. When I got to writing insurance for Tara Mutual I canvassed this area pretty well. We'd meet quite often during the

summer and we always met at the county fair. And then there was the McCormick family. Mr. McCormick was one of our county commissioners. William Rixe held the office down here in Wheaton for a good many years as county treasurer.

In the spring of the year they had what they called shotgun seeding. It was really a contraption fastened on the back of your wagon box. It had a hopper on it and you'd go down across the fields. It would spray for about twenty or twenty-five feet. In one round up and back you could cover an area of about fifty feet. But that didn't prove out to be that profitable. It saved a lot on labor because if you could get out there right away with the disc and disc it under it would save quite a bit on the expense of getting this crop into the ground. In the spring of the year with the migration of the ducks there would be thousands of ducks and birds in the fields eating up all the seed. It would be pretty well cleaned up and you had to go through this whole operation again. This area was the main area used by the ducks as they were on their way to Canada. Now it is more into the South Dakota area.

In 1964 when Betty and I both entered into our second marriages after losing our first husband and wife, a brother-in-law of mine used to spend his winters down along the lake there near Albandale, Florida. For a wedding gift he mailed us a check for \$700 and asked us to come down and spend part of our winter down there. And of course her and my checking accounts were what you might call a little anemic, and we took full advantage of that. We stayed a month and a half. I saw things down there that I thought were history. We drove around the country where they had those outside movies — great big fronts built up of concrete where it says "All black people enter in the back gate". They wouldn't let any negroes come in and sit where the white folks were sitting.

One day he took us down to Tampa, Florida, to see a show that some Spanish people were putting on. It was in a big auditorium and that, too, was segregated. One side said for black people only. They wouldn't let the black people sit in the same part where the white people were sitting. It was quite a surprise to me. I thought that after all these years things like this wouldn't happen. The place where we were staying was a nice lovely home my brother-in-law had rented. The resort owner had a sign down the road away from the resort for fishermen to come there to fish. One afternoon a car load of negroes came from Lakeland, Florida. They came in the yard there and they were going to fish off his dock. He wouldn't allow them on his place. He was prejudiced even then. He was prejudiced against the negroes and that was a hundred years after Lincoln freed the negroes and gave them equal rights in this country. I could hardly believe what I was seeing. This was the thing that Martin Luther King was trying to get squared around. After one hundred years of giving negroes equal rights they still haven't had them in our good old United States. Of course today things are different and we recognize the negro as being a human being and treat him the same as anyone else.

In 1917 after Veronica and I got married and started farming for ourselves the neighbor's hired man came over to our place and he wanted to know if we cared if he stayed for

three or four hours. He wanted to get out of the house over there at the place where he was staying. He was just staying for his board. He had worked all summer and they offered him a place to stay over winter. He wanted to stay for three or four hours and when I asked him why he said that the slander-mill was going to grind over at the Miller's. At first I didn't understand then he said "ladies aid". So he stayed until the buggies and cars full of women left again.

Back in the recession while Hoover was unfortunate enough to be President everything went haywire and jackrabbits were being used quite a bit for meat. It wasn't all that bad.

A bunch of boys went out one day and got quite a few of those jackrabbits. Andrew Doll figured that jackrabbit was meat like anything else. He couldn't see why you couldn't make sausage out of it. So they gave him 15 or 20 of them and he took his time about trimming them down and getting all the meat off the bones the best he could. He made a batch of sausage the same as you would with any other meat. He said it didn't turn out all that bad. He claims it was pretty good after it was all boiled and smoked.

Back in the early days most of the folks who built homes after they moved out of their little homestead shacks would put in a cistern. Some of them put it on the outside of their house but my dad enlarged his house and put on a large kitchen and upstairs, dug a basement underneath this and put a cistern right underneath the kitchen floor. He had a trap door leading up from that. So you would just open up the trap door and reach down and there was a pail you would pull up to get water for washing. That way we always had soft water. They had all their rain troughs set so they would drain out to the cistern and as the cistern filled up they would disconnect them on the outside so they would run elsewhere. We had good drainage. Any water that would run off would run down into Twelve Mile Creek.

Later on they came out with a more modern cistern pump which is quite an antique today. Well the folks had one of those put in the cistern, too, so we could always pump up soft water when we needed it.

There wasn't any heating in that kitchen and it was a large kitchen. We only had the cook stove for heat. Of course after the fire went out on that the house really got cold. The living room was a large spacious room and we had a heating stove in there. It had a self-feeder on it. You would slide the top back and there was a kind of chute where you would throw in an extra bucket of coal. As it burned that stuff would work its way down so you could keep a fire going all night in that. The doors had little squares of glass in them so you could see the fires. Our living room was the room where we spent most of our time after the day's work and supper was over with. When you got up and went into that cold kitchen lots of times you had to break the ice on that water bucket. Many mornings after we had the stove going which was usually with fast fuel, corn cobs and kerosene, it didn't take long to get hot water. But we'd have to throw that into that old cistern pump to thaw that out. That would freeze up right

there in the house. You had to thaw this out before you could pump water up.

When Dad built that extra piece of house on he put a full basement under it. Then he kept his coal down in there and he also had room for his potatoes, pumpkins and squash. Everybody depended on their garden stuff. Everything that could be, was canned and that which couldn't be canned was put away just as it came out of the garden. A lot of people who built homes at that time didn't put a basement under them. So they dug what they called a root cellar. That was a short distance from the house usually. They would go down far enough so that they could walk into it without bumping their heads. They were probably about ten feet long. They would have their pickle and sauerkraut barrels, potatoes and carrots. They had it down below the frost line so things wouldn't freeze. Potatoes start growing a little in the spring. None of them had cement floors; they all had dirt floors. They were used quite often when a threatening storm would come up.

The Farmers Store had run into some kind of trouble and the Johansons and the Ulrichs took it over. They had a grocery store in the back. I used to come up to Wheaton and trade and used to go in there quite a bit. Oscar Schumacher was kind of a permanent fixture in the grocery store. He would work where they would need him. Oscar was always a pretty efficient sort of guy. If you bought a dime's worth of candy that's how much you would get. Not any more. One time we had a pretty good sized order and I ordered a bag of candy for the kids. I guess it was about a quarter's worth. He set the package on the scale and with a little scoop he'd be dropping one piece in after another. Finally he got one too many in the package for the weight that he was looking for and instead of keeping it in the package and sending it home he took it out and ate it. When Dave Tunning was in there working and you had a good sized order when you'd get home you'd generally find a big bag of candy in there that wasn't charged up at all. That was enough to entice us to go back there to trade the next time. I guess a person could be overly conservative, too.

When people started going modern back in the early days they'd get away from the washboard and get one of those wash machines that were open on top. They were sort of oval in the bottom and they had another contraption on them in the shape of a half moon and had handles. Then you could rock your clothes back and forth. Usually you'd put in the white clothes first and as you came to the dark stuff that was done last. But the soap we were using in those days was mostly homemade soap. Everybody saved the tallow from their beef when they butchered. They had recipes on the lye cans where you could make your own soap. The lye didn't only take out the dirt, but it took out the color of your clothes, too. Those blue denim overalls that we had after a mess of washings with that stuff came out more-or-less a light gray.

Back in those days if you went to the doctor you'd generally pay three dollars, if you had it. If you didn't, you'd have him put it on the books. Come the fall if you couldn't seem to scrape up the money then he'd take three dressed

chickens or something like that. After all, a doctor had to eat, too. They were out to make a living not to get rich. The doctors never turned you down if you owed them money and called on them again. That was their profession. They went into this business to help the poor and the needy.

When soybeans were first introduced into this country, I believe it was Earl Huber who was in the seed house. William Ringdahl was in the insurance business which is still being operated by his grandson, William. It was a new crop for Traverse county at that time. There were quite a few articles in the farm paper about the soybean being raised in different parts of the state as an experiment. William Ringdahl had a young farmer living on a farm southeast of Wheaton here named Carl Timm. He brought out a bunch of soybean seed and asked him to plant some acreage that year, which he did. He drove out there in the fall of the year when Carl was combining these beans. He wanted to see what they looked like.

My father never told me about these happenings that were going on up at Tintah, Minnesota. Back in the early days when different religions were coming into the community they held services in the depot or in someone's home or in the country school or outside in nice weather. There was a denomination up in Tintah that was looking for a minister and a guy came to town one day claiming that he was a minister. He was hired to take over this small group that they had up there and start some sort of a parish. The Catholics were making a lot of headway up in that area. There were a lot of people who were Catholics. It was doubtful if this guy was a preacher. He'd get up and give a sermon and everybody would go home happy. But as it turned out, he probably was a Ku Klux Klan member and organizer.

Before he got too far along with this thing he had quite a few guys converted to believe in a lot of those silly ideas that he had. It got to the stage where the first thing that he had on his mind was to subdue the Catholics and cause them as much problems as possible. Many of the big names here in Traverse County and people who are quite respected today were members of this gang that he had organized. I call them a gang because that's what they turned out to be. They built crosses that were the same as they did down south among the negroes burning crosses and doing various things to frighten the people around there. They were wearing hoods, too, so they wouldn't be recognized just the same as they did in the south.

One particular incident I got from a reliable person and this wasn't in the early days, but this was in the early 1900's, quite awhile after the homesteaders had things settled in this area. He got those people worked up in such a state that they were building crosses and going out and burning crosses around the Catholics. One night they built a big cross in one of the hardware stores up there in Tintah and it was carried out and put where St. Gall's Catholic church was. This cross was burned out on the lawn in front of the church. Some of the boys got there in time and put it out. And they knew who was behind it. They took this cross, or what remained of it after it

was partially burned, and went and nailed it up against the front of the hardware store, which they found out had been the place where it had been built. This might sound like I am exaggerating, but this happened right in Tintah.

Priests and ministers were hard to come by in those days. Most of the priests we had back then came from Germany or France. We were a new country here and we didn't have the facilities to train our own priests. There were many guys floating through the country claiming that they were ministers. Many people hadn't been to church for a long time and they wanted to be baptized. The laws in those days didn't recognize a person as a Christian unless he was baptized in one church or another.

I was told by a friend in the White Rock area that a guy came into White Rock and that he stood of the street corners in White Rock and did quite a bit of preaching religion. One Sunday he took two wagons full of people out to what is known today as Mud Lake and he baptized them in the water.

What the Ku Klux Klan did in Tintah was peanuts compared to what they did in Breckenridge. There was this guy posing as a minister from down in one of the southern states. He organized a group in Breckenridge that did the same as in Tintah at the same time. This guy, let's call him a minister, he was from one of the southern states. I also know the name of the imposter. This was in about 1917 when this happened. So there are a lot of participants of that mischief still around today.

In life we all make mistakes in one way or another. I'll always remember this Pete Pacounik who used to run the bakery here in Wheaton. One of his favorite phrases was, "Anybody who never made a mistake never done nothing."

I had mentioned earlier about the hundreds and hundreds of men that used to come through on the freight trains and make their home down by the stock yards in Dumont. When one of the gang had any money they all ate. They would put their money together and go uptown and buy food that wasn't too expensive at the grocery store. Sometimes they wouldn't have any money and they would come up to town and stop at my Uncle Pete Schmitz' store. He'd give them some stuff. Some canned beans and possibly a few loaves of bread to help them along. He always sent some coffee along with them. He was quite liberal about that. They'd stop at Jim Lynch's butcher shop. He was always a liberal sort of man, too. They'd come in there and he'd always have a few links of sausage that he'd throw across the counter. Something that would make a quick meal. My brother-in-law had a grocery store adjoining to the east. They'd come in there and he'd give them some stuff.

During the prohibition there were a lot of bootleggers around. One time I had a big straw pile that I wasn't going to use because it was really rotten and I was going to cut some new straw. I was waiting for a south wind to blow the smoke away from the buildings. One day we got just what I was looking for and I went out and lit the straw pile afire. I didn't know it at the time that one of the bootleggers was using it for storage of moonshine that he had on hand. They usually put it

in gallon jugs. When they had any amount of it on hand they would hide it away somewhere. They didn't want to be caught with too much of it at one time if they did get picked up. All at once I heard an explosion. It sounded like a bomb going off and I looked over at the straw pile and there was a cloud of ashes and soot and straw going up in the air about 25 feet. There must have been a dozen or more explosions out there in the straw pile. A little while later I saw a car come down the road and watched it. It happened to be the bootlegger's booze that he had hid in my straw pile. So I had a little fire works that was kind of interesting to watch. Kind of like the fireworks at the fairs they have. Someone had lost quite a bit of business merchandise through that fire. At that time that stuff was selling for \$20 a gallon and if you bought it by the quart it even came higher.

Almost everyday you hear our President talking about this recession. We know about that because we went through one back in the 30's. I talked about myself and the problems back in that time when I was sold out by the bank here in Wheaton, in order to take the cash that they got out of my sale to finance some of the accounts that were poorer than mine was. I mentioned Gordon Christianson. I have no animosity

toward him in any way. But he was working for the bank on a salary, same as everybody was. He did exactly what the board of directors told him that he had to do to get money to carry some of their bad accounts. Today we are back in that same position again. Many of them have to sell off quite a bit of their holdings today. Then they'll be able to hold on to a smaller part of the property they had possession of.

During my search for information for my book I've run across a picture of Mr. and Mrs. Peter O'Neil. They were the early settlers out here in Arthur Township. Arthur Township was named after President Arthur who happened to be the President at the time back in those years. When they came out here in 1878 and homesteaded they came in on the same rail as my father did when he came out here. Those folks also got off the train at Morris which was the end of the line at that time. The picture that I have was taken in 1910. It was in some news items from some early editions from a newspaper put out on June 9th, 1966. It mentioned the fact that John O'Neil and his wife are still living on the same farm which was homesteaded by their parents back in 1878.

Everyone knows the O'Neils well. They are still some of the prominent farmers out there in Arthur Township.

9. My mother-in-law, Mrs. Nick Cordes from Dumont had told me about their family. She says that in the early 1880's the Cordes family migrated from France and settled up in the Pennsylvania area where the Indians were quite plentiful. The different tribes were fighting among themselves and the French delegation that moved up in there took sides with the tribe they were friendly with. This particular tribe asked them to help in their efforts to defeat their enemies. The Americans had guns where the Indians only had the bow and arrows. The whites agreed to help their friends. Everytime they'd fire one of those guns a chief or some member of the opposing tribe would be shot down and of course this made the rivalry between the different tribes great. The French were living in danger at all times, so they moved across the St. Lawrence river and up into Canada. Then they moved west across Canada and came as far as northern Minnesota. Among those were Nick and Nat Cordes. Nick Cordes was my father-in-law. They settled in an area over near Cold Springs and Randall, Minn. From there Nick moved to St. Cloud and while he was in the Cold Springs area he met what later became his wife, Elizabeth Briedy.

The early Cordes family had associated with the Indians out there. Nick Cordes' father had married one of those Indian girls. So Mr. Cordes was seven-eighths Indian. They moved from the Cold Springs area to St. Cloud, and then moved from St. Cloud to the Dumont area. There was no place available. They were very hard up at the time. They lived in a vacant homestead that had been abdicated for many years. They finally had the opportunity to rent a farm along Highway 75. The farm is owned by one of the Stueve boys from down in Graceville. They moved to another farm south of there and that's when I met Veronica, who later became my wife. She went to the Catholic church in Dumont the same as I had with my family. After moving off that farm which the Stueve boys now own, they went off to a farm where Jimmy Unzen lives today.

The Cordes family was all quite musical. Matt was a violinist. He lived in St. Cloud. He had a family of about five children. He deserted his wife and was out on the road most of the time playing at dances and different things. He pulled out of that country and went up to Randall, Minn., and lived with another lady up there for most of his lifetime. They also had a family of about the same number as he had left in St. Cloud.

About this time, our baby, Junior, was born and received a great deal of publicity for holding the world's record for being the world's largest baby born alive. The news media spread this news all over the United States and Canada.

From all this publicity that we got in the paper at this time, this family up at Randall had heard about this child and decided it evidently was a cousin of theirs. So they got in touch with us and we drove up to this family at Randall. He died and one of the children living up there in Randall, I think her name was Margaret, wrote to us to say she thought we were relatives. And that's the first we knew that Matt Cordes had ever gone to Randall. My wife and I cranked up the old car and we went to the funeral. We met a lot of lovely people up there and this family that Matt had were real nice. His second wife was living by herself at Randall at the time. We went over to visit with her.

Veronica and I, after we were married, had a family of 15 living children and three that died at birth, and two that came prematurely. My wife Veronica died on February 3rd, 1959, after we had moved from the farm. The farm was being put up for sale because I needed \$10,000 more dollars. And due to ill health we decided to move up closer to a doctor. She only lived 15 months after we came to Wheaton. The ravages of diabetes were more that she could handle. I bachelored it for 5 years and then I met a lovely widow woman. She had no children. She came in here and made her home with me. My children all loved her and she also loved them. No one would ever believe that they were not her own children. They got along so well. My later wife Betty died on the 19th of January of this year 1982. And now I'm a bachelor at the age of 86. I'm living alone in my home.

One thing that I miss is the large wide open prairie space that we used to have here years ago. There was land that was virgin soil that had been lying there thousands of years. At certain times of the year they were all spotted with lillies blooming and wild strawberries were abundant. Those were the good old days like they say.

But some of them weren't so good either. There was a lot of mischief being pulled in those days, too, as there is today.

The first elevator was built in Wheaton in 1905. In 1904 they got the mail route through. The farmers built their own telephone lines and took care of the upkeep and bought their own telephones.

There was a young fella who came up from Iowa and brought his wife and a couple of children. He rented a farm southwest of Dumont. I was writing insurance for Tara Mutual at that time. I always made a point when a newcomer came into the country, I'd get acquainted with him and pick up a few insurance applications. I remember the remark this young fella made when I was visiting with him. He said that he was going to show the natives up in this country how to

farm. Well he hit it right at the wrong time. He got up here at the drought years. There were three in a row there where he didn't harvest any crops. He gave up in a hurry. He just stayed a little while. He boarded a passenger train one night with his wife, children and a few suitcases and he was on his way back home to Iowa again.

The first dentist that I remember in Wheaton was Dr. Williams. He had an office up over the Erickson Building. Then later Dr. Mays also came in. He had his office over the Well's Store. Later on Dr. Wieckert moved his office up over the Erickson building, too. He had been more-or-less a permanent fixture around here. All the time my family was growing up he was our family dentist. And he is still in business yet today. He's getting up there in age, but he's one of these guys who doesn't ever intend to retire. He just keeps right on going.

Another thing that is quite interesting and has been a big help to our community as I mentioned before was the hospital. They have practically everything that is modern in there now and this last year they built another extension to it.

Well, we've lost our railroad which hadn't been much of an asset to Wheaton in a good many years. The trucks have taken over and they give good and efficient service.

This morning I was thinking of conditions of the early farmers, of which my father was one of them. To cut their hay, they used to go out with a scythe. Usually they went where the grain was the tallest out on the prairies and they would slash it down with a scythe. Once in awhile there would be a little water there, and they'd cut that also and carry it over on to higher ground to dry. That's the way they got their hay supply for their few horses that they had at that time. They also fed hay to cows but the milk production wasn't very heavy on that sort of a diet. The cows in those days weren't brought up for milking like they are today. Most cows just barely gave enough milk to support a calf. Some of them didn't even give that much.

Putting up hay was quite a problem at that time. It was all done by fork and most barns were small. They didn't have good size haylofts. They could maybe store a load or two. Some didn't have hay lofts at all. Later on when they had more horses and they needed more hay there was a lot of this prairie land that was lying around the country. You could rent that for 50¢ an acre.

There was never an idle moment out there on the farm. Everyone knew his job and everyone had a job. They were all big families and they generally had a crew enough to handle the whole operation. If you didn't, two farmers would probably go together and work each other's hay. There was quite a lot of that going on the those days where farmers would help each other when there was a job that was too big for one alone.

Occasionally a group of farmers would get to town on a certain day and they'd go to one of those bars. There were probably one or two that probably over-indulged a little bit. Women at home didn't have to worry too much about it, but if

the men were unable to drive their teams home. If somebody else wouldn't be going the same direction, the fella that ran the bar would fix up a place with a few blankets on the floor where the visitor slept out the night. Once in awhile he'd make a bed for him right on top of the pool table. When it got to be quitting time the guy would lock the door and in the morning the other guy would be ready to go home. The wife was always glad to see him come back all in one piece. It always reminds of a remark that one of my neighbors said at one time. "It's a darn fool horse that don't kick over the traces once in awhile."

There were always chances out on a farm where you could get hurt pretty easily, too. When we were putting up hay on one occasion my sister, Margaret, was just getting big enough to be able to handle a team of horses and we generally put the younger members of the family on the hay rake. We'd put it into windrows and so forth. One day she ran into a bunch of those bumblebees that usually build their homes in the soil. They took after the horses and also after my sister, Margaret. The horses ran away with her. She fell off the seat and fell underneath the rake and she was going around and around with the hay that was in the rake until it hit an old fire brake and it released her out the back unhurt.

One of the first hotels that they had down in Browns Valley was known as the Traverse House. That was later taken over by Prescotts. They made a grocery store out of it. I think that building is still being operated. Known as the Prescott store.

Wheaton like any other town first just had the dirt out in the front of their business places and later on they decided to put in wooden sidewalks. In later years, Brownie Peterson's father, I think his name was Martin, put in concrete sidewalks out in front of the business places. Then Dumont kind of caught on to it and they called "Sidewalk" Peterson to come down and put in sidewalks in Dumont.

I often think about the time when we used candles around the house for lights. They had these lamps in the kitchen, kerosene lamps with a reflector on them. If you turned the reflector around you could shoot what little light there was down into the stove to see what was cooking. After awhile when the electric lights came into Wheaton Mr. Johnson, I think his name was Alex, got a gasoline engine and a generator and he started getting electric lights in the different business places. He didn't have those fancy fixtures like you have today for your lights. All you had was just one string coming down through the ceiling and it hung down low enough so that you could flash the bulb from wherever you were standing. There were no switches on the walls like they have today. Lots of times if the generator was moving kind of slow you could see the lights dim off and on. Sometimes they were fairly bright and the next minute they were dim. No one ever went anywhere at night unless they had a lantern and a pocketful of matches when you were burning kerosene.

One night I will never forget they had a little party out on the place where I used to live. They had a celebration there in that grove. My brother Paul was cutting in on another fella

that evening and he offered to take this guy's girlfriend home and she agreed to it. The boys thought they'd have some fun with Paul. The buggies had higher wheels in the back than in the front. So they just went and took one of the back wheels off and put it in the front. Of course the buggy was hanging over about two thirds on a slant. Paul couldn't figure out how come the girl was almost always slipping over onto his lap. He thought she was doing it intentionally and he never noticed that the buggy was tipping over on a slant. The first thing the next morning when Dad got out he saw what the problem was. They were forever playing jokes on young people in those days. That was part of their entertainment.

In those earlier days they didn't have any bathroom facilities like they have now. They generally set a few washtubs out in the yard and if the sun came out good and hot during the day the water would be warm by evening. After those hot days of working in that rusty grain and sweating you could go take a bath in the bath tub. But some of us had it a little handier. Like on my dad's homestead on the hill right east of Dumont on the Twelve Mile Creek with the water level high like it was back in those days, we could always go down in the creek and take a shower and swim awhile. But in the winter time you had to depend on the old bath tub and heat the wash water up on top of the stove.

Later on they came up with some contraption that you could fasten on to the firebox in your stove. Then you could force the water up with a force pump that we had to a tank upstairs. From the cistern you could force water up into that tank. That water usually stayed warm up there. Then they had a bath tub up there so you could run the water up and take a bath upstairs. But the other bathroom plumbing that we have today, that you didn't have out there on the farms in those days. They had some outfit that you shoved under the bed.

Back in the early years when the county got organized they had schools all over the county. At one time there were thirty-five school districts in Traverse county. The county hired a county superintendent. Ward T. Williams was the first county superintendent. We've run into falls where it was wet and you couldn't get your work done and almost every family depended on their children to help complete the farm work in the fall. Sometimes we'd get these wet seasons for 20 or 30 days sometimes. Many of the young boys and often girls would be kept out of school to drive the teams or the plows. My father would farm about five quarters of land and by the time we got through in the fall it was about freezing up time. Sometimes it would freeze up before we were completed. Some years the frost went out of the ground early and we got the plowing done again in December.

The school laws said that you had to send your children to school at least 40 days out of the year. Many of them didn't get that much schooling. They would have to stay home and do the farm work. So once in awhile we'd get a letter from the county superintendent in the mail that said if you didn't get your kid back in school you'd get a ten dollar fine. We generally got in more time than 40 days.

After we got up into our teenage years my brother George was quite a musician and there was a young fella that came to town to take over the Jones Lumber Co. They hired a fella by the name of Ed Robinson. He's an Iowa boy that came in. He was a real good musician and he had a band. There were 22 of us in the band. We appointed Ed to be the instructor. He did real well in that position. We had a guy playing the trumpet who was always full of heck. Whenever we could see the chance to have some fun we never missed the opportunity. We had one guy in the crowd who was always eating peanuts between each number that we'd play. One time he had his mouth full of chewed up peanuts and they gave the sign that he should start to play. This guy grabbed his trumpet and he started playing and he blew the darn thing so full of peanuts that the darn thing was stuck and he couldn't use it anymore, until he got home and had an opportunity to get it apart. We all got a kick out of it that night. We all wondered what in the world he was going to do the next Friday night.

Most times our band practices were on Friday nights. Saturday was our night off, and Sunday. Those were our nights to howl. So we had our practices on Fridays and many times we'd go down and play on the street corners. I don't know if we were doing too good or not but the crowd seemed to appreciate it. The fella that got the peanuts in his instrument came back the next time with one of those little instruments that they call a piccolo. He was a whiz on that. He had the sheet music for it and he went right on through every number that they played.

We didn't have much other to do for entertainment. On Saturday nights we'd find one of those low neck shirts with short sleeves and white trousers and those there tennis shoes and we really thought we were dolled up when we had something like that to wear. We'd go uptown. The wardrobe in those days wasn't very large. Most of them went in the overalls that they worked in all day.

There was a vacant building in Dumont as you came into Dumont from the north down main street. That store or the first storekeeper we had there was Mergens. He had a young boy staying with him by the name of Merton Kay. It wasn't his child but he was raising it for someone. I can remember the little fella and he had a habit of running away from the store. After the building was put up there was living quarters put up in the north end of it. He was a little hard to keep track of. He was always by himself and they had a rope around his waist and had him tied up. That was one thing that I never could understand. That was kind of cruel I thought.

This was the same boy that moved to Wheaton here. He joined the service when he got into that age. I'm not certain about this now but I think this Merton Kay was killed in service in WW I. His name is affiliated with the Merton-Dale Legion Post up here in Wheaton.

Mergens store was run by quite a few different people. Nick Maus from St. Cloud took the store over. Then Gunderson took over from Maus. Russell Gunderson who was the son of Gunderson married Annie Pickert from Dumont.