

And then George Vanderwal took over the store and he discontinued the store back in those bad years. Then after Vanderwal got out of there Henry Desjardins ran the store for quite a few years. I think possibly he was the last one that ever ran that store.

Before we got electricity in our towns and villages we did have these taller elevators at that time but they were all operated by a gasoline motor. As I remember they were under the office of the elevator. That's how they got the power to get the grain into the bins that were higher up in the structures.

The tornado in Tintah kind of brought to mind the tornado in Dumont in 1919. I told about what buildings had blown down and so forth. And a man got killed. But there was one guy that escaped with his life and that was Jimmy White. He happened to be in the livery barn when the livery barn collapsed. What saved his life was a heavy beam landed on top of a beer keg that they had in the livery barn and he was pinned between the ground and the beam. After the folks knew that he was missing and they started digging through the debris they found him down underneath that beam. He was unhurt. While thinking this morning I was thinking about the style of dress that they wore in those years. The clothing stores had very little if any ready made clothing. You had to buy your material by the yard. They never had one of these tapes on the counter. They generally had these yard bolts and they would roll off a bunch, whatever they figured you had ordered. They would measure from the tip of their nose and reach out with their arm, and that would generally represent a yard. They were never out of the way more than a half an inch or an inch either way. They weren't too particular. That was the way they measured it. Nobody had any of those yardsticks.

But it took an awful lot of material to make a dress back in those days. I mentioned earlier in the story about those bustles and, of course, that pushed their hips out a bit further and then the dress would hang straight down in the back. You see three or four of these big stout women coming down the street and it looked like someone was coming walking inside of a tent. Twenty or twenty-five years later as I was a small boy we'd stand out in front of the church or somewhere where people were passing by. The teenage girls would be wearing just the opposite of what their elders were wearing twenty-five years before. They had what they called hobble skirts. I mentioned before that they were so narrow on the bottom that they had to take their shoes off to get the dress off. It was amusing to see them try to get into the buggy. When they were going to go someplace before we had cars they generally set a box down and stepped on that and they they'd get on to that pedal that you were supposed to step on as you stepped into the buggy.

Everything has changed. At that time a lady wasn't

supposed to come into church without a hat on. And the man wasn't allowed to take his coat off. He'd have to keep fully robed all the time. But when these hats came out called the merry widow hat they were about the size of a medium umbrella. Anyone who had to sit by them in a buggy or next to them in church, he had those things poking them in the head all the time. The priests and ministers that they had in those days were all careful to see that everyone was fully robed. It's quite different today and more sensible in my book where they are doing away with all those old customs and wearing slacks. Or else some nice dresses. Many of them wearing shorts, too, and men running around in what you might call short shorts. They don't leave anything anymore for your imagination. There is nothing wrong with any of this as far as I can tell. The human anatomy is nothing really to be ashamed of. That's the way God intended us to be.

When we were teenage boys, once in awhile we'd be working on a job by ourselves or two or three of us in a group. It would be a warm hot day and we'd be cleaning up the barnyards and driving a couple of manure spreaders. Dad came back and gave us a break. I never will forget what he told us. We usually didn't know what he had in mind. He was going to give us a little lecture on the bees and the birds. I remember one day when we were getting up to be teenagers and he said, "You boys are kind of growing up now, and pretty quick you will be starting to run around a little bit more." He said that he was going to tell us something. "Don't go fooling around with any girl that you don't care enough for to want to have for a wife someday." He said that was where most of the trouble was happening. Of course, back in those days if you heard of a divorce that was very unusual. But he was just trying to explain what is possibly happening today. Kids are running around together and the first thing they are getting married. And a few months later they wind up in the divorce courts. They didn't marry always for love at those times. So they didn't have a very solid foundation. They'd usually find out sometime later that they got a girl that they didn't want.

I was thinking about when Roosevelt got to be President. We got these public works programs going. We had dry years from '33, '34, '35 where nothing grew whatever. They instigated this program over in Washington where people could get these government loans and go back and restock their farms. This was back in 1936. That's when we were able to get a few horses and a small tractor. Then you could continue on with your farming. In the spring of '36 our ground was just as black as if it had been plowed. All we had to do was get out with the disc and disc it lightly over the top. That year we had a bumper crop. The prices weren't too good, but we got things going again. In the meantime our wells went dry. I don't know what I would have done if it hadn't been for our good friend John Kenney a half a mile north. He had a good deep well.

Conclusion—

It has been in my mind for many years that no one had ever written a story on the history of Traverse County. So I have tried to portray some of the things that give a picture of the way life was for the early pioneers and of some of the changes that have occurred over the years. My story tells about the hardships our first settlers had to live with and how they tried to overcome all of their problems.

All the counties along the borders of Traverse County have someone who has written a book on their respective counties, but no one has ever attempted to do it for Traverse.

Often in my lifetime I have gone through recessions and depressions, droughts and crop failures. I mentioned this in the story. Some of them lasted three years at a time. Somehow or other we always found a way of coming through it okay without asking for any help.

We hear a lot of complaining once in awhile about the way the government is doing things. But I think that we have the best country in the world today. You have plenty of proof of that — seeing people from foreign lands risk their lives in rowboats to get to other countries. My own grandparents spent 90 days on the water coming across. Thousands of others, your people and mine, did the same thing.

The single absolute proof that there is no better place anywhere than the good old United States of America is that you never hear of anyone going back to their homelands to live after they come over here. That should be proof enough to satisfy anyone. Those who come here to live never go back because they know they will never find anything better than they have here.

I guess I'll have to ring off and call it quits. I think I have

covered everything pretty solidly, showing how things were. I look at how most of us today live in comparative luxury and think of something my father used to say. He used to tell us, "Don't live too fast; someday you may have to fast to live." I think there was good logic in the advice.

I do not claim to be very good at this. I want to thank William Kremer of Wheaton, publisher of the Wheaton Gazette, for the hard word and patience he possessed with my tape recordings and for helping to make it possible for this to be put into book form.

I couldn't have done this without the help of so many of you people. Most of the things that I have written about are things that I have lived through in my lifetime or were told to me by my father in so many of his conversations during the long rides I had with him around different parts of the county by horse and buggy when I was a small boy. I was always interested in history, so I had no problem finding things to write about.

I also want to thank all those people who loaned us pictures or who helped in any way so that we could get this material into book form and published.

I thank everyone who has given me information, especially some of the oldtimers who are still around. I thank all those whom I've had the opportunity to know and live with during my lifetime for being so kind and always willing to understand another's problems.

I will be 88 years old in November of this year, 1983. Some people call this their twilight years. I am happy to have lived my life among all those wonderful people.

May God bless you all.

About The Author

"Sometimes I'd wake up in the middle of the night and couldn't get back to sleep because I'd be thinking. So I'd start talking on the tape until I said what I had to say.

"Or else I'd jot it down on a note pad I kept beside my bed, and then when I'd get up in the morning, I'd know right where to start," said 87-year-old Jacob Schmitz when thinking back to the months of reminiscence while he worked on his book, "Traverse County — Telling It The Way Things Were".

Jake Schmitz, the author of "Traverse County — Telling It The Way Things Were", has lived in Traverse County, Minnesota, all his life. He was born on a farm three miles east of Dumont. He went to a country school through the 8th grade and attended the Wheaton High School for one year.

Jake farmed on his father's farm until 1917, when he married Veronica Cordie, who also grew up in the Dumont area. They moved to a farm six miles southeast of Dumont. Throughout the years, they had 15 children — seven daughters and eight sons.

Jake farmed in the Dumont area for 40 years before moving to Wheaton, which is where he resides today.

Veronica died in 1959. Five years later, Jake married Elizabeth Johnsen. Elizabeth died in January of 1981 and a couple of months later, Jake began working on his book.

He had no formal training in writing, but thought it was time someone wrote a book on the history of Traverse County. "I just stuck to the truth," Jake said in referring to the book.

"My father told me a lot about the early days, and I've seen plenty of things happen when I was growing up."



JACOB SCHMITZ
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