

Memoirs of a Country Vet
1947 Graduate of ISU
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RETROCEDING PRE-COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT *(Or a Collection of Early Child Trivia)*

This should begin with the brief picture of how life was lived in the second decade of the Twentieth Century. Most accumulations to a family were, then, by mail order from a catalog or such. If not satisfied with the product, it was simply sent back by next day's mail and no questions asked. When this guy arrived in the fall of '15 to Jim and Kate, he must have looked pretty messy, sounded quite noisy and, obviously was going to require a lot of work. Besides, there was a World War going on in Europe. I think, at the time, this just wasn't what they had in mind; and, there probably was some serious discussion of getting it in the next day's return mail for a complete refund or at least a partial reimbursement! How fortunate they were in their decision "not to," "though I am sure they regretted it many times in ensuing years. I was fortunate to have an older sister and older brother to break ground for me, so to speak.



In the next couple years or so, we moved to a new house on 40 acres. The land originally belonged to my maternal grandfather. He'd lost his wife recently and had gone back to Germany to dispose of some property there. The war in progress in Germany did the kaput to Grandpa ever getting back. But, I am getting a bit ahead of this story.

My mother, her sister and her parents lived in an old house on this 40 acres. It was located just east of town and a short distance south of the CB&Q main line railroad. My dad, second eldest, and the oldest boy in a family of 13, realized early on that he needed to get out of the crowded nest if he wanted a place to sleep and eat. He hired out as a worker to a farmer living in a home just north of the railroad with something much

less than 13 kids – and a place to eat and sleep besides. This farmer imported Belgian workhorses, unbroken; Dad’s job was to break them to harness and work. The picture becomes clear. One didn’t have to wait for the trains to go by since a tunnel beneath the track permitted easy access along the road to go north or south of the tracks. There were few autos in those times. But the short distance by horseback or walking presented no problem for the next oldest of 13 to get acquainted with the German immigrants living south of the tracks. At that time, the phrase of “living on the wrong or right side of the tracks,” I don’t think had been coined. Regardless, the boy working and living on the north side of the tracks didn’t have much choice. The German immigrants on the south side of the tracks had just two daughters and one of them had already pledged to the local Benedictine convent.

Moving ahead in this historical whatever. This, in reality, is where this guy’s memory appears to click in. As said above, this was a new house. With Grandpa Stulz in Germany, this must have become the first property that Jim and Kate McCann could call their own.



They had the house built before moving in. The old house sat a short distance behind and became a storehouse of sorts. The land just south of the 40 acres belonged to the city of Creston and was used for dumping trash. We called it the “pest ground” -- I don’t know why. It, to us siblings, was a virtual ***Treasure Island of the Imagination***. It was kept under lock and key, and my folks were the custodians with the key. People came out from town with their horse drawn drays to dump their load of trash stopping at our front gate to get the key. One of the haulers, by the name of Jack Louden, a friendly man whom I loved to take the key to, sometimes gave me a dime for doing so. He was pretty special; and, I knew, had to be rich. Whenever the many cousins came to visit, it became a field day with an excursion and exploration at the pest ground. Broken toys, numerous knickknacks, unbroken glass vases, and literally hundreds of things hauled back home – some kept, most shortly discarded. I remember one time crates and crates of candy had been dumped. It was a



Eula, Urban and F.J.
headed for the Pest Ground

field day – colored striped hard candy, deliciously sweet. When we got back with our load of this, we were forbidden to eat any more. Mom insisted it had to be re-cooked for it to be safe. The result, when later poured out on plates and cut in squares, was an icky tan color, which somehow had lost most of its original delicious flavor.

My sister and brother were in school, walking to and from. Sometimes, I suppose, in the spring, they worked at the greenhouse located along the route to school. Their earnings in silver cash were a big envy to this guy. Amazing how early one can get addicted to money. My sister took piano lessons from the Sisters. We had an upright one. My musical talent was pretty latent at the time. I have no memory of any tunes she may have played. My gastric memories seem to have emerged better. I can recall Mom making chocolate pudding -- a favorite. I guess she was in a hurry to cool it. She just opened the window by the stove, broke off a fistful or two of icicles hanging from the eave, and in an instant, it seemed, had cooled the pudding.

Some Memories Perhaps a Bit Clouded or Just Faded from Age...

- ❖ **A failed treatment** – expecting to revive a dead robin by placing it in the oven. I can't recall the so-called source for this. It seemed authentic; and, not being at the time the skeptical cynic that in ensuing years I developed into, I firmly believed I could bring the bird back to life if I wrapped it and placed it in the kitchen oven (doing so, of course, without any adult knowledge of my attempted prowess). A cold oven was not a pre-thought factor. Heating an oven by simply pushing a button would have, in those days, been imaginative fantasy. Timers weren't part of the picture either. Nevertheless, what was believed long enough "in" for a return to life was just another of life's guesses. However, it remained very dead.

Perhaps if it had been a pigeon or a crow, results may have been different.

- ❖ **A terrific rope swing with a board seat** – with Eula and Urban being the combined “motors” for keeping me flying through the air almost breathlessly. My singing ditties must have motivated them for long periods of time. How amazing!! I couldn’t sing then any better than can now.

- ❖ **The attack by a full-grown red rooster** – I was terrified when this huge bird began chasing me one day in the barnyard. Screaming, I stumbled and fell when he reached me. Fortunately, Dad came to the rescue with a pitchfork. Memory fails me as to whether we had roast rooster later.

- ❖ **Eula and Urban ice-skating, following a ground covering sleet storm** – I can vividly recall those skates. An attached key on the back of the skate made all adjustments for fitting around the heel and forward to clamp the sole in one action. At the moment, one wonders if such a model could, today, even be found in a museum.

- ❖ **A new red, steel rimmed tricycle** – I surely can’t recall what I may have promised I’d do or stop doing if I got one or even why anyone thought I might deserve it. For days, hours on end, I did figure 8’s on the front porch – the only smooth place to ride. All cares of a 3-year-old vanished. Then the payoff! The rear end became so tenderized that even sitting on a pillow became almost intolerable.



- ❖ **Nails in boards waiting to get stepped on barefooted** – following these incidents, and they seemed to be quite common, a quick



Is that a rusty nail?

washing in a basin of warm water and then a “Denver Mud” poultice under bandage was the accepted and successful treatment. In those days, I guess God hadn’t created tetanus, staph or the many other germs we suffer with today. Kids could get sick and die from eating green apples then, but rusty nails were just a few days of limping and wearing a

Denver Mud poultice under a dirty bandage.

- ❖ **Tramps who came to the back door asking for something to eat** – because we lived near the CB&Q main line and there were no homes between ours and the tracks, it was a common occurrence for these poor bums or tramps riding the rails to disembark and be knocking at the back door asking for something to eat. In those times, we never thought of the nomenclature for this segment of humanity as derogative. Euphemistically, I reckon today they’d be called “unsubsidized transients” or something similar. Anyway, they never came to the back door and were turned down. Besides politeness, they were most grateful and appreciative even if the fare,



Would
cockleburs
or McCanns
take over
Union County?

at times, may have been meager. I think this an interesting thing in comparison to today’s culture. I can’t remember our parents ever cautioning us to stay away from or refuse

to talk with them while they sat outside eating. I guess civility may have reached and passed its peak since those days. There were no

bad guys in my world then; and only the Germans were bad, according to some of my cousins. Nostalgia does give a rosy hue, somehow, to stuff remembered.

- ❖ **I had another great memory of those preschool days. Cognitive impairment has moved in like a cloud. The result – I must stop here. I can vaguely recall -- it was the very, very best of any of the above.**

**AN ODYSSEY OF SORTS
OF A PAIR OF TEENS
WHEN OUR CENTURY WAS A BIT YOUNGER**
*(Authenticity of all enclosed incidents is as accurate
as
memory permits – Grandpa Mac)*

Epitome

Time – these days

In the summer of 1932, the culture of this country was quite different. A worldwide depression was in progress. The bright spot of the times, a summer Olympics hosted in Los Angeles. Two teenagers (15 and 16 years of age), your Grampy and a long-time boyhood buddy, Marty Brennan, somehow became challenged to “participate” as freeloading visitors. Earlier that year, reading our ***Outdoor Life*** magazines, we’d become enthralled seeing Isle Royale off the coast of Canada in Upper Lake Superior. What a deal that would be! Nobody we knew had ever been there. Wild, wooly, primitive and, of course, exciting to camp and explore. Marty was working on his Eagle Scout award. I was just a farm boy who read Horatio Alger library books and dreamed of great adventures – like all depression kids dreamed. Hitchhiking, then, was a way of transportation. It was a common sight to see college kids, some younger, others older, with a knapsack, “thumbing” passing motorists.

As spring became summer, we realized that sparse north shore traffic was not very conducive to our mode of expectant travel. It was then that the Los Angeles Olympics loomed on the horizon. Besides – I had relatives (aunts and uncles) living in L.A. who’d greet us with open arms and all kinds of gratuities. Or, so I envisioned. Some, of course, I’d scarcely even heard of – and had no addresses. But those would be only trivial problems to be worked out. Besides, there knocking on their door

were a pair of good looking, clean cut boys, who'd traveled over 2,000 miles -- one of them a blood relative, stopping by to say "Hi" – and could probably use a place to stay for maybe a week, following that expectant warm reception – or so we thought.

It was with much anticipation that we began this odyssey on a Monday, the 18th of July 1932. The Olympics began in two weeks. We'd surely be there for the opening. Clad in linen knickers, an army backpack with a hatchet and small fry pan, a first aid kit and a Navy hammock apiece – to sling between a couple of trees we knew would always be available at night – we were the Boy Scout epitome of preparedness.



The first day we covered approximately 125 miles. Not exactly a ringer, but the following days would get better, we figured, with our developing technique at thumbing. L.A. was a sure goal. In the 30's, air travel, commercially, was unheard of. However, mail routes by plane were in place. At intervals across the land were revolving beacons to guide the aircraft. Our first night we found one of these beacons – the perfect place to sling our hammocks, with the trees just in the right position. What a life! What a trip this was going to be! This was luxury traveling on the cheap! Money had somehow made a place in the lining of the belt band, top slide, three \$5s wrapped in wax paper for days ahead when needed. Besides that, we carried three one-dollar bills deep in a hip pocket for immediate needs. Marty was living on the edge, carrying a couple of fives with the expectation of writing home for another one or two to be sent to a predetermined destination, addressed only **General Delivery** and to be picked up at the post office when he got there. I'm unaware if post offices have that service in this day and age.

The second day out. Nebraska was hot and dusty – glad I didn't live in that sorry state! Trees were scarce and traffic scarcer. We made something less than 100 miles. But that was better than Wednesday, a miserable 40 or 50 miles. L.A. was getting a little dim in our sights,

hitchhiking. Somehow, I can faintly recall Mom, in that parting emotional moment of temporarily leaving the nest, saying, not, “God bless, good luck, we love you and write often.” No, it wasn’t any of that chaff. I can’t imagine what possessed her to say in that charged moment of goodbye, **“Don’t ride any freights.”** Without even a tinge of deceitful thinking, she heard me promise, **“No way.”**

Wednesday afternoon we were convinced that hitchhiking was not the method to reach L.A. in time for the Olympics. We were near a river in Grand Island. The sun was hot. We were both discouraged and the river promised some relief. With the highway and mainline of the ***Union Pacific*** in eyesight, thought wandered

as we stripped naked and waded in the warm clean water, watching cars being shunted along the tracks apparently making up a new train. The warm water was great. We hated to get out. Dry and dressed, we wandered over to the



railroad. It was about this time Brennan asked if I’d ever tried catching a freight. I, a farm boy, of course not. To that he said, “It’s not too hard, really, and we’re getting nowhere on the pavement.” We ambled to the tracks and presently came to a small group sitting by a small fire, drinking coffee and chewing on something – maybe a sandwich. This, we later learned, was a “jungle.” The place where the hobos, bums and tramps stopped to bat the breeze, fix some grub, learn when trains were scheduled to depart, etc. Always located at the edge of towns, they became an integral part of every western railroad. Railroad switchmen, called **“Brakies,”** we soon learned, were the best place for info to hitch a ride, learn the approximate time of departure and, of course, destinations. **“Bulls,”** on the other hand, were railroad police roaming the larger railroad yards – and to be avoided. After practicing getting on and off the switching cars, confidence took over; and, we were ready to roll. About dark, we caught our first ride, climbed the steel ladder to the top of an open coal car, dropped inside and had the entire car to ourselves. A bit later we strung the hammocks and watched the sky overhead slip by. This

was the life! Travel while we slept! Next morning when the cars shifted around and stopped, we were already up and packed – in Denver! Climbing out, we noticed others getting off. Next train going south was to leave that evening. Recalling Tuesday and Wednesday when we were barely crawling across Nebraska, today, Thursday, we had time to explore all those beautiful parks Denver bragged of.

We walked, it seemed miles, in different directions finding a miserable semblance of something called a park. Back in Creston, we'd scarcely mention something similar to neighbors – let alone visitors. We did find a museum for free, and those were our memories of Denver! As Midwesterners, we asked where the mountains were that we had read so much of. When these were pointed out, this guy consciously realized his imaginations and the reality of mountains had no semblance of relation. Hell! Back home it was common to look west of an evening and see the same looking blue-gray dark clouds rising above the horizon, identical to this. The difference was we got a toad strangler that night; and, they got the same blue-gray sticking above the horizon all the next day. That night we caught our second ride and headed for Colorado Springs. Another open coal-like car. The scenery was changing. Lots of curves and the hills were higher. Suddenly, looking up, we saw a bridge appearing to be higher than the clouds. Somebody called out it was the Royal Gorge. Things were changing fast now. Iowa seemed continents away.

We were on the western side of the Divide. Peach orchards were everywhere. At first stop, we loaded pockets and anything we could with peaches by the bundle, for free of course. Began to think these hobos, bums, tramps and unemployed college professors didn't have it too shabby. Either I've forgotten or never fully learned the qualifications for each category of our traveling companions. We did know there were perverts, now called gays, traveling the rails and managed to stay well clear of them. Most of these various groups smoked (**We didn't.**) and one was often offered or hit up to give someone the "makin's" (i.e. some **Bull Durham** or cigarette papers or both) to make their own. No one carried tailored mades. He might have been raped for less booty.

Soon we were aware we were in Salt Lake City. The great temple held only a slight interest to us. We would have been too scroungy to even think of a "look-see" tour. The Great Salt Lake was a fascination for this guy – I suppose because as a non-swimmer, I wouldn't sink!

Somewhere, I believe it was near Provo, Utah, Brennan found his unattended belongings had been stolen. This was disaster of climactic proportions – not even a toothbrush or change of socks. To add more trauma to calamity, the scuttlebutt being passed along was that the Bulls on the **Southern Pacific** were vicious. Literally throwing guys off the train if they didn't jump with speed!! The only way to L.A. was the **Southern Pacific**.

A quick conference, lost clothes and railroad bulls – this pair’s dreams of the Olympics suddenly vanished. Instead of being greeted and hugged by my relatives in L.A., Marty suggested an aunt and uncle he had in Spokane. **THIS WAS THE ANSWER! FORGET THE OLYMPICS!** Babe Dedrickson was really the only one we wanted to see. She did just about everything – run, jump, discus, shot put – about everything but pole vault, we thought, and not much to look at either (face or figure). In addition, the jungle word was out – the Bulls of the northwest were halfway decent. So, off to the apple country this pair headed.

Cooler temperatures, clearer water (We were bathing in irrigation ditches now.), greener scenery, great snow-covered mountains, and, best of all, **apples!** We missed Spokane on the route out. With Seattle, the bay,



the ocean and gorgeous scenery, Spokane and the greetings and hugging relatives of Brennan’s could wait. Ten dollars bought Marty new dungarees, a chambray shirt, socks and needed shorts with some dollars left over. We were winging it again. After thinking we’d seen it all, with a boat tour of the

harbor, we grabbed freight east and headed for Spokane; and, hopefully, the big Brennan family welcome.

Arriving, we found his Uncle Walt, manager of a cigar and tobacco store with a great luncheon bar. When we entered the door and Marty said, “Hi, Uncle Walt,” the guy with open mouth, blanched and then sputtered, “My gad, where in the hell did you guys crawl out of and what on earth are you doing out here? Do your parents know where you are?”

Of course, the answer to the last question was “**no.**” Not exactly a bear hug, but in the next breath, he ordered us to go to his room at a hotel, bathe, clean up, come back and he’d feed us. **That beat hugging by a mile.** I immediately knew I was going to like Marty’s relatives. All of a sudden, the entire time of over two weeks of dirt and grime and hunger

vanished. Uncle Walt provided us with a room at the hotel where he lived, three meals a day, and some money to replace Marty's losses. In those times, many people lived permanently in a hotel room. His sister lived nearby in a home with a sleeping room provided. Those were their living quarters – apartments, condos and individual houses could not be afforded. To repeat – times were tough for most. But complaining seldom heard. During that week in Spokane, I believe we went to all the movies. With matinees costing a dime, ***“it was the best of times”*** to quote Dickens; and, the movies, with the magnificent stars of those times, unforgettable. Recalling that second question Marty's uncle asked, “Do your parents know where you are?” With a gulp, I think I told him, “I write them cards.” To myself, I thought about three each with the same: “We got a good ride to here” and then the name of it. At Uncle Walt's suggestion, we took a historic side trip. We hitchhiked mostly with working truckers out to the site of the start of the Grand Coulee hydroelectric and irrigation dam. It was in the early stages of construction then, a phenomenal thing in itself. *Grandma and I have revisited it a couple of times since completion.* Ever awesome! Built of engineering science and figures (the materials – concrete and steel) to match. The dam is nearly a mile across and has the potential for irrigating nearly a million acres. The last time there, I met a man who took part in its construction. Could have listened to his fabulous tales for hours.

After Spokane, we were finally riding freights heading towards Iowa with some sidelights that must be recalled. A trip to Yellowstone. Camping overnight near the grizzlies.



Catwalk sleeping well behind locomotive

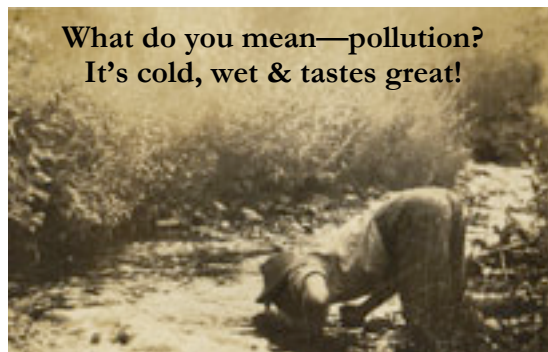
When in Washington and the Northwest, the trains traveled through many tunnels. Coming to each, we had to climb down the ladder between the cars – not enough clearance – and hold our breath, because of the choking thick black smoke from the coal-burning locomotives.

An unrelated incident: Stopping in a small town with a nearby grocery, I jumped off to get some needed supplies, like nickel day-old bread and a can of sardines, unlike those eats at Uncle Walt's. When I returned to the train, I found Marty on the ground, train gone, and my borrowed WWI backpack badly damaged. In my absence, the train began pulling out. Marty, in desperation did an "abandoning ship act" – heaving off my backpack and then climbing down and off, as the speed of train increased.

Delays, by missing freights, we learned to tolerate. We had some stuff for sandwiches – there'd be another freight, surely. We were now leaving the fruit country, perhaps the two legged variety would also be scarcer at the jungles. Can remember another experience at one of these jungles with several of its occupants very happy, it seemed, swinging red bandanas around in the air, having a helluva good time "high" on wood alcohol they'd distilled from canned heat. I guess the stuff is still made for its original use by campers for cooking fuel. Never learned these guys' process, but they obviously were getting alcohol out by swinging contents in a wet handkerchief -- distilling it. **The things a small town farm boy could learn riding freights!**



It was now August 15, a Holy Day (the Assumption), and we were bounding across Montana, missing Mass somewhere for sure. I was bothered and knew I had some more to add to my next confession. Marty was more



pragmatic, passed it off with a shrug of the shoulder. We did have, occasionally, some pretty strong religious discussions on the trip – each winning or losing some theological arguments. He was Catholic; both parents were Catholic, intellectually in

the high percentile of classes and my best long time friend. Project these thoughts: A medical career his goal; but, he had to drop out because of finances. He was drafted and joined the Air force in WWII. He'd never learned to drive a car – none in the family. His dad was a registered pharmacist. With this background, he became a hotshot marauder pilot and later a navigator. The last time we were together, we double dated. He was shipping out in a couple of days with his squadron to England. Less than a year later, he was fatally wounded returning from a bombing run. Grandma and I had just married. I was a freshman student in Ames when we got the word. As devastating a loss as if he had been a member of my own family.

Well, back to recounting this odyssey. We disembarked in Montana to catch the freight to Yellowstone Park. There, we got info for a walking



tour starting near the north gate of the park. **This was going to be a fun experience!** That evening, it was going to be our first try with the fry pan that we'd carried the many miles. Pancakes cooked over an open fire and by a gorgeous waterfall for atmosphere! **Wow!!** No syrup or

grease – just minor shortcomings. **They did look like pancakes anyway.** Even though shy on taste and washed

down with creek water, they were very filling. It was now twilight and we started back on the trail, climbing and aiming to get near the tree line to camp. With darkness moving it, it became less fun and more concerning – seeing what we thought were pairs of eyes glowing in the shadows and hearing brush moving close by. A bit short-winded, we reached the place to camp, which meant rolling up in a blanket on the ground with our heads at the base of a tree that could be scaled readily in case of an emergency.

We learned the next day, at headquarters, that grizzlies had



recently been spotted on this mountain, Mt. Bunsen. Night prayers included some promises. Surviving, the next morning we were now headed back to Livingston Park gate and a freight back to the main line of the **Northern Pacific**. At the gate, we found that there would be no freights for several days; but a passenger train for tourists was loading then for our destination. This was something new for this pair of “tourists.” We talked to a colored porter and explained our circumstances and asked about the possibility of getting a ride. He, helpfully, advised to get on the opposite side of the train, hang around, nonchalantly, near the tender (the car behind the locomotive that carries coal and water), speak to no one, and when the train started moving, grab on behind the tender. Apprehensive, we followed instructions and were successful. We were on our way. I can remember waiting for that train to start and looking through the window of the diner, seeing the colored waiter with a white towel draped over his arm, serving diners delicious looking chow – all the while recalling those pancakes we’d stuffed down the night before.

Back on the main line and crossing Dakota, I became aware that I had a five-dollar money order in my name at a post office in Minot, North Dakota. We weren’t going there via **The Great Northern**. We were on the **Northern Pacific** going through South Dakota, but we were headed east anyway. Reaching St. Paul, Minnesota, we found a train going south, boarded it, and, home was getting closer. But shortly, problems arose – **no doubt due to missing that Mass in Montana, I figured**. This train suddenly stopped someplace on the prairie (no town) and crewmembers were walking down the train side ordering every one off. **The reason:** important officials aboard the engine and riding bums a “no no.” There was quite a group of us riding and when the train began moving, just about all climbed on again. After more such stops, accompanied with harsher and more threatening language, most abandoned their ride or became invisible, so far as anyone in the locomotive could tell. Marty and I grabbed on between cars, hanging on, spread eagle-like to the car ahead and the car behind. As the train picked up speed, the ties beneath us whirled by like a blurry picket fence. I think we both were breathing **Hail Mary’s** in every breath.

At the first stop, I believe now, in northern Iowa, we felt we'd perhaps stretched our luck about as much as we should. We'd both heard of "riding the rods" – a method we had no stomach or guts for at all. There were surely easier ways to get killed. We decided to go back to hitchhiking, but this time to split up – hoping the chances of a ride might be better. Somewhere I got a ride with a traveling salesman who chewed tobacco with a coffee can between his legs for a spittoon and spitting out his open window. The rear window was pretty thick with dried tobacco juice. Reaching Des Moines, we stopped at a filling station to clean off that back window. He was home and he told me his wife would commit mayhem if she needed the car and saw that window. At the time, I could sympathize with her potential criminal action. However, he was a nice man and took me to the south limits of Des Moines, expediting a long trek through the city. Somehow I often recalled this ride and the man. His stories as a salesman were interesting and fun to listen to -- no boasting – just man to man, so to speak, respectful and interested in one's own comments.

My last ride getting to Creston was with some Jehovah Witnesses. By now I was brimming with chatter of my trip. In jest or not, they invited me to continue. I had eight cents in my pocket. I was home. The answer to that query was not a hesitant or reluctant "No."

EPILOGUE

After getting out of the car of that last ride with the Jehovah Witnesses, I started down the last half mile of gravel road to home. A road I'd walked many times before and since from grade school, later, high school and junior college, and work. My mind was dizzy with the events of the last month – happy to be home and at the same time sorry -- knowing all those experiences just ended, were now memories. Coming in the back door, with belongings and unannounced, was warm in itself. Yet like so many stoic families of that time enduring the effects of the depression, there was scarcely a rip-roaring celebration that the second oldest son had

returned, comparable to the biblical story or a hog-killing feast prepared. I think they inwardly were thankful that prayers had been answered and the guy was home safe and intact. Those first couple days I answered their questions kind of briefly. It wasn't until Mom put my dark gray wool blanket in a tub of water outside and the water turned black, even after several rinsing attempts, that the truth of those "good rides" became evident. The soot from those coal-burning locomotives and accumulated grime spoke more than words. But almost instantly the smiles and happy laughter took over and conversation seemed endless. ***A post thought – I could skip that one on a confessional list!***

In a little over a week, school started. In only a matter of days it was legend and respected tales told by these teenage "Lewis & Clarks" or their similes. Hardly another week and each was invited by the homeroom teacher to tell the class of our trip. I think up to that time, no one, to our knowledge, in or out of school, had ever quite done anything similar. I suppose one might say



we were celebrities, icons... Invitations to other homerooms became routine. I'm



sure to get the awe of our listeners, we plagiarized descriptive passages of scenery and the high mountains and gushing waterfalls and smoldering campfires. We moved from the jungles to gorgeous mountain streams, etc., etc. In all honesty, we kept to the facts but we milked it for all it was worth. I was now a Senior; Marty a Junior. It would be a good year for both.

IT'S NOT THE SAME WITHOUT YOU

PROLOGUE

I suppose I should begin this tale with events following graduation from Creston Junior College. I was working at a local drug store – mostly behind the soda fountain. This was during the depression of the 30's: No future; no goals; no money, except a pitiful paycheck for long hours. I opened the store at 7 AM and worked until 6 PM one day; the next, consisted of coming into work at noon and closing with the pharmacist at around 11 PM, after having scrubbed the floor and delivering the mail to the depot across the street so that it would be put on the last train headed west. Mr. Newcomb, the owner of the drugstore provided this convenience to his customers. We also sold stamps, at cost, mostly three and one cent ones. In the evening, to pass the time when there were few customers, I began refurbishing the glass display cases used for perfume and cosmetics. It was kind of fun to create a bit of color, using crepe paper from the store's stock. Besides, it relieved the monotony of not having folks to wait on. It seemed to satisfy the management and customers and, I was given a free hand to do as I saw fit. Eventually, I was given the opportunity to do the store windows and the store interior. I dunno where the latent talent for this sort of art developed but it did somehow create more than casual interest among customers as well as employees. But, it sure as hell didn't generate any increase in my paycheck.

Subsequently a drug salesman, commenting on a display I was doing at the time, told of a school in Minneapolis that taught display for men doing the big store windows and interiors. My strings of attachment were fragile: Depression Era; Creston, Iowa, naught but a railroad town; Union County full of cousins – first, second and surely some third degree cousins but no influential friends or relatives; the future looked about as dim as a

worn out flashlight battery. War was threatening in Europe. This guy without direction wrote the Smeby School for their catalogue and any information about work possibilities now and after graduation. The pictures and displays looked great and were the catalyst to get this boy to thinking about something other than the soda fountain or cosmetic cases; and, found him on his way to Minneapolis.

Recalling a first reaction of my southern Iowa accent to these Swedes, Danes and Norwegians: “Where down South did you-all come from with that jigaboo kind of talk?”

I liked the school and visualized, after graduation, working for one of those huge stores like Daytons, Powers, Macys and the like. Nearing graduation, the president called me to his office, saying that J. C. Penney in Davenport, Iowa, was looking for a display manager, “Was I interested?”

The Penney store in Minneapolis had really uptown windows, I knew. My thoughts then, “Not just an employee, but an honest to goodness display manager. Wow! Davenport, I was on my way and ready for hire...”

**FIRST DATE,
MARRIAGE,
and
SIXTY YEARS TOGETHER, REMEMBERED**

It was wintertime. Minneapolis was beautiful, with clean white snow all around. With fond farewells of faculty and students, I could anticipate all kinds of great things happening to the ex-farm boy. I was on board a train to a city of about seventy thousand on the Mississippi in eastern Iowa.

Arriving in Davenport was devastating. In contrast to Minneapolis, the snow appeared to have been there for weeks, months. The town reflected the filthy, soot- covered snow in the dirty light bulbs, unlike the colorful neon signs of the city I'd just left. The light bulbs appeared covered with fly specks, no doubt of several summers; and, looked to be of late Edison vintage, maybe just prior to the inventor discarding light and working on sound – the phonograph.

A room at the Y had been reserved and a Penney employee staying there told me the next day at Penney's was a half-day / half-dollar promotion. I was tired and looked forward to a first half day at work. I'd misjudged my future employer. I was informed all employees were expected to be at work at eight o'clock even though the store did not open until noon. And further, even though the store closed at five, all employees stayed to put merchandise back in order, clean, sweep the place out, and then, on to the stock room to ticket newly arrived merchandise. If I'd any more sense than a small town kid, I'd have caught the first train back to Minneapolis and forgot I'd ever heard of Davenport. But then, as with other near catastrophes in this guy's life, there would have been those who'd say if I had done that, they wouldn't be here either! And, for the next 60 years, it was my good fortune that I didn't.

The store did have some friendly employees who did make one feel welcome. Misgivings still haunted this new display and advertising manager, especially when shown the work room where displays were to be

“created” --- if that term could be stretched quite a bit. That return to Minneapolis seemed a must after viewing what equipment I was expected to work with. No mannequins of either sex --- just some headless, armless, legless forms that I believe could be used for either sex. A few heads for women’s hats and some godawful things called kitboxes , resembling something more apt to be playthings for children. They were like wooden box frames with no top or bottom; all the same size and painted white; and, the sides had been drilled with numerous holes for inserting dowel pins. I’d never seen anything similar. One’s brain convulsed in attempting to visualize how to use them. This latter doubt was soon answered. According to the management they could be used to display pounds and pounds of merchandise draped, stuffed, wadded in rolls, or just covered. The more piled on, the better. That same thinking was instilled in the preparation of newspaper ads. So many items were listed to be in an ad, that any descriptive copy had to be micro point print to fit in the space permitted. The Penney’s philosophy seemed to be, “Just list it, they’ll buy it.”

Already I was conjuring up what happened to the guy I had replaced. Likely, he either blew his brains out or jumped in the river in desperation. Davenport had a national reputation for suicides. I was beginning to see why a Penney display guy might choose that route. He wouldn’t need to be pushed to it. He would simply be driven to it.

Another Penney phenomena: James Cash Penney, the founder/owner and still living then, had a phobia about saying any item was on sale. Hell any d--- fool knew if Penney offered it, it was on sale!

Well, after being a Penney employee for a few weeks and learning that payday was the first and the fifteenth of each month, even the ex-farm kid could figure out that employees got screwed out of a week’s wages each year by such pay schedules.

Minneapolis, I need some money now to get back!

Then, as if Heaven sent, a new employee appeared on the scene—working in the office. Besides being positively beautiful, she had that come-on smile as she drifted down the office stairs at 5:00, closing time, each evening, while the rest of us peons stayed to sweep, clean and cover the merchandise tables. Even with this addition to the office force, this guy and others were saddened to learn that two long time employees were leaving to go to Sears, down the street, at increased salaries and something called employee benefits. We, who remained, had never heard anything about worker benefits here at JCP. And again, that recurring train ride back to Minneapolis was hauntingly returning like a dream. Somehow, I suppose, periodically a bit of an inborn optimism surfaces, fostering hope that things can't get any worse and must get better. The so-called display and advertising employee stays on at J.C. Penney.



Social life was nonexistent. In those days to date a girl, in contrast to today's culture, the guy was expected to furnish the cost of transportation, the city bus at least, the price of the two meals and two tickets to the movie or whatever. Sharing any expense would have been cause for ostracizing the cheapskate. On JCP's salary, for most, meant (even living at the Y, eating sparsely at Bishop's cafeteria, and buying one's tobacco) you were generally broke before next payday. It was a six day workweek, Church on Sunday and then, if weather permitted, you sat in the park and admired the engineering that had been done that week on the new bridge across the Mississippi. "Great relaxation for the weary minds," some idiot philosopher may have propounded. A good movie did give enhancement to the dreary depression lifestyle. Yet an incident -- just recalled and unrelated to any of the above did occur on a Sunday -- provided a touch of morbid entertainment.

There was a young fellow living at the Y, who worked across the river in Rock Island at a casket manufacturer. He had the key and invited Don Olen and me to go where he worked building caskets. For some, this

would have been a stupid and dull form of entertainment, but for Penney workers it was – well, different. It was a bit gross to see a bunch of caskets in different stages of completion, as well as some already completed and waiting for a corpse. Immature minds do come up with some weird thinking. This guy got the idea he would like to crawl into one to see how it felt. Permission was given and he did just that. It was pleasantly soft until they closed the lid, secured it and said goodbye. I never recall seeing the color black any blacker than it was in there. I screamed and uttered all the unprintable epithets I knew, to let me out. They, fearing mayhem, eventually did. Then a touch of brilliance came to mind: If only one had a camera and film for a snapshot of this recently created corpse for evidence to send to my draft board. I well knew my number was getting close to being called. Huh! As mentioned before, entertainment was sometimes hard to come by on a JCP salary – just another of those imaginative ideas that couldn't blossom.

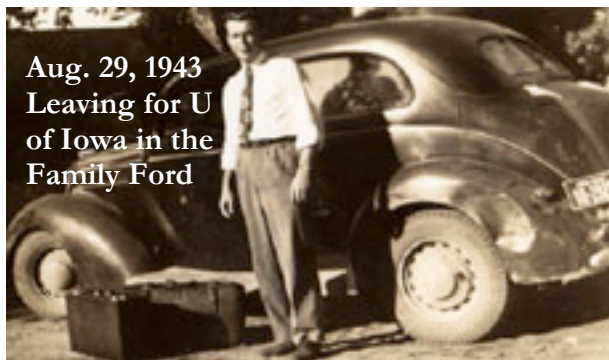


The J.C. Penney grind continued. The beautiful girl in the office resigned to accept a better salary in another town. We depressed dreamers stayed put and waited for the draft to move us and it did. Just before my number was up I got the idea, though I couldn't swim, to join the Navy. Would sure as h--- be a lot better than sloshing through the mud in army trenches. I signed up, was accepted, and, on my way to Great Lakes boot camp via Des Moines. The day I was sworn in, Colonel Lindbergh was in town to give a speech criticizing Roosevelt for attempting to get us involved in Europe and alleviate the prolonged depression that none of his alphabet programs at the time had any minimal effect on. That day I became an even bigger fan of Lindbergh's.

In retrospect my experience in the Navy was miniscule. No medals. No awards. Just some ordinary duty in a Pacific island hospital. Somehow while I was there, bleeding stomach ulcers developed and I was sent back

to a US hospital for treatment and eventual discharge. One of the doctors at the hospital took an interest in my case and asked about my plans after discharge. I just shrugged with no idea. It was he who put the idea of going back to school in my head and to consider going into medicine. It was a thought; and, he encouraged me to give it some serious consideration in the remaining time I had in the service. I've forgotten his name but have been ever grateful for his encouragement.

When I got back to Creston, I was determined to re-enter college on the GI bill for veterans. That summer two fields of medicine taunted me.



Aug. 29, 1943
Leaving for U
of Iowa in the
Family Ford

I had an old friend, a veterinarian in government service, encouraging that field. I also had a cousin, a surgeon in osteopathy, encouraging me to give that a thought. By late August, I'd enrolled at University of Iowa, leaning toward a field of Vet medicine, to catch up on a slew of

courses needed to qualify. I needed ten hours of chemistry, organic and inorganic, five hours of botany and four hours of zoology. To take this much science, for someone out of school that long, required an interview by a doctor in counseling. That interview was something this Octogenarian can still well recall. Remember, this was 1943. This doctor, an MD, was candid -- if surreptitiously biased. He told me, with respect to the two careers of medicine that I was considering: If I chose osteopathy and he met me on the street after graduation that he sure as hell would not bother to speak to me. On the other hand, if I chose Vet medicine, he'd bring his dogs, cattle and any other four-legged animal for treatment and healing. It was then I decided to be a Vet. Besides, he added, "Those patients won't lie to you either."

In the days that followed, I was on my way to completing my pre-med requirements at Iowa U, with a sleeping room within walking distance of all my classes, Mom doing my laundry (It was a common practice to mail dirty clothes home to be washed.), and the weekends free -- if part time work and study requirements permitted. Pronto, that first weekend I

was hitch hiking to my old stomping ground, Davenport, to see a couple of old friends, Don Olen and his girl friend Rae Smith, both Penney employees. After greetings and reviewing happenings since I last saw them, before the tour of duty in the service, a show was suggested to celebrate old times. I had no date and knew no one in the town to call. That's when the first chapter of the ensuing 60 years begins.

They told me that Doris Longenecker, the beautiful girl who had worked in the office at J. C. Penney, had recently moved back to town and was working at the courthouse of Scott County. How about they give her a call, see if she would be interested, and would I? And that's how it all really got started --- honestly. It was fun and I knew I'd be hitch hiking back the 60 miles to Davenport again. Still the country boy, I was unaware that she was wearing a diamond. Maybe she kept it turned. I didn't know. I didn't care. Sometime later at her home for dinner, (I was out of supposed earshot.) one of her relatives chided her regarding a dual affair. She said nothing to me. I said nothing. After all he was on the West Coast. I was only sixty miles west. What better odds could a guy ask for? Over the next succeeding weeks, college and weekends filled, perhaps, the most happy days of the farm boy's life up to then. Letters and then snapshots taken by her brother, a forthcoming photographer, shrunk the 60 miles even more. My room became a gallery of these terrific modeling snaps, bringing accolading comments from other students and the landlady. And then, the unbelievable surprise: She'd returned the ring to the railroad suitor on the West Coast. Sweaty emotions became a part of these days.



Because I'd carelessly floated, so to speak, through Junior College, my grades reflected those times. They also reflected an attitude that in later years caused nightmares that I'd actually flunked. I can even to this day still recollect a meeting with the Dean in his office that "literally shook my timbers" when he glowered at me and said, "McCann, I don't know whether you're actually registered in the college or just visit here occasionally."

I now needed to maintain a 3.5 average in these heavy courses of pre-med at Iowa to be admitted to Vet School the next spring. I felt I could handle the study load, but the libidinous effect of those snaps on a farm boy could be more than mildly distracting to concentrated chemistry and botany studying.

And, WOW! again to another challenge... The weeks and weekends to Davenport passed quickly. With help from Rae, I decided to give Doris a birthstone for Christmas and, later, a diamond for her birthday. Purchasing a diamond then and in the present, I think, divides the time period dramatically. I was doing janitor work at the U's music building. My boss was a big fan of some Chinese philosopher (Omar Khayyam -- Rubaiyat) He was always quoting this guy's bits of wisdom on life in general or whatever. I can't remember the Chink's name [editor's note: Omar Khayyam was a Persian, but then his national origin really does not matter as far as this story is concerned.], and at the time could scarcely care less with respect to his scholarly wisdom on life's problems. I had problems close to home: Getting through here and thinking of marriage. At this moment I needed some help selecting a diamond and couldn't



possibly feel the writings of some Asiatic would be even remotely a source for that. I'd written to Baker's Jewelry in Creston, asking for advice on price and terms of financing, in a quoted price range, of a solitaire Keepsake diamond for Doris. Shortly, I received an insured package from the jeweler containing not one, but four Keepsake solitaire diamonds, with a note on prices of each and hoping I might find one I liked and to just return the other three. And monthly payments could be made in the amount I felt I could afford. Wow! Could I ever tell my janitor boss to inform that Chinese mystic that I had the answers to my big problem without his Oriental wisdom. To be fair, I did let him and his wife examine the four diamonds and help judge just the right one for

Doris. So under magnification and bright light, they selected the one they were positive Doris would love. I, knowing nothing about diamonds, liked it, too.

Mom just recently got her diamond and wedding rings back from the jewelers in Jeff City, remounted and combined beautifully in a combination adjusted to fit over her arthritic knuckle. She really beamed at the finished product --- almost as much as she did 60 years ago.



In June of 1944, I enrolled at Ames, Iowa, a freshman in Vet Medicine. Three weeks later was our wedding day. As per custom, I told my counselor I was getting married the 24th. He coughed, cleared his throat and told me he thought I was taking on a lot of responsibility. I had to agree, but assured him that I was in this to the finish. I think my grade average of over 3.5 at graduation, in 1947, convinced the old fossil I'd kept my promise. Had it not been for a discriminatory malicious professor, I would have

been accepted into the Phi Beta Kappa Honorary Society (details better left unsaid). No less an accomplishment, I had fathered a beautiful baby girl. However, this all was not without much help and encouragement from Mom.



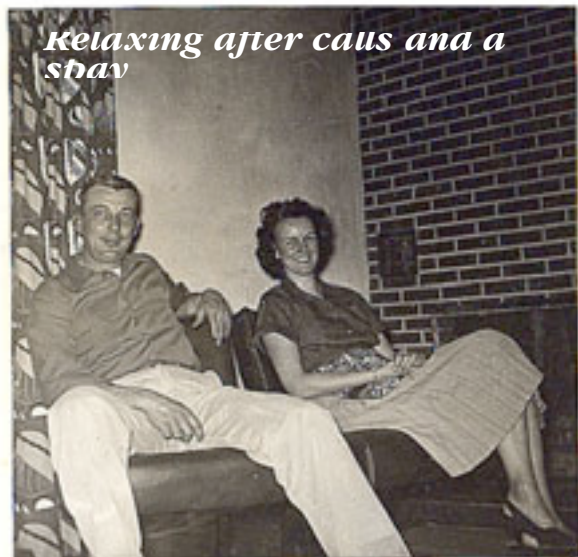
Suzybell at 3 months

Going back to those days in Davenport from the first date, I believe it is fitting here to state candidly the contrast in culture, then and now. I may be incorrect, but believe it to be true: In those times pre-nuptial co-habitation, if not nonexistent, was quite rare, among Catholic couples going steady and engaged. In our own circumstances, one was adamantly opposed; and the other, out of respect, acquiesced.

When at Ames, we continued the same work patterns as at Iowa U. Doris worked and I studied like h---. Following graduation, regretfully those days in practice were not, for lack of time I suppose, recorded – except in a journal for income tax purposes. The colorful times and the more colorful characters that should have made those times memorable are lost to memory now.

I sincerely believe those years from the forties to the mid eighties could be considered the choice time frame for a small town general practitioner in Vet medicine. I say this with the knowledge that at the beginning of that period, new and exciting medicines were available as result of the war; new techniques were being developed in Vet medicine. Veterans were returning from Service to marry, start families and begin new careers as farmers. It was an exciting time to be going into general practice. In retrospect, few could have foreseen, following that wonderfully brief period, the development of corporate farms and the beginning of absentee ownership that continues today. The small family farm, known historically, was becoming a statistic of the past.

Those still living on farms, if not retired, now need a second job to survive. Many veterinarians began moving from general practice to a specialty: The small animal pet division or an employee of a corporation or research, etc. We elders can reminisce how fortunate we were to have lived



and practiced in that area that some may call the “**Golden Era of Vet Medicine.**” This is perhaps a reminder of what has already, long happened in human medicine.

In our own practice, Mom did all the books. In the process of attempting to keep accounts receivable somewhat current, she learned to check all pockets before washing for squished up bits of possible checks, sometimes weeks old, in errant places,

misplaced inadvertently by the “good doctor.” Mom was always on call for help in restraining some viciously recalcitrant dog or cat that had other ideas than being examined by a Vet. On not un-rare instances, the bedside manner of the “good doctor” was worthless, but Mom, never even bordering on profanity, became generally effective, using other than subtle means. To keep overhead to a minimum, the kids were conscripted to chores of clean-up and the multiple little tasks about the office that you have kids for. On some rare occasions, they were expedited for country calls. ***I’m positive on a few of these they inwardly determined NO WAY would they give a token thought to following dad’s profession.*** But, to repeat: It all kept overhead low.

In conclusion to these several pages of recollected memorable romantic drivel, I believe some most important events in our lives must be, at least, mentioned now. Mom and I were blessed with four children: Nancy, Terry, Vicki and Mary Lou. They were raised and educated by us according to, now considered maybe post-primeval and/or pre-modern, standards. We did think at the time, though perhaps less than ideal, they were standards. Despite those handicaps, they seemed to survive; and, in maturing, left the nest and entered their chosen fields. Mom and I could be proud, not just that they abandoned the nest, but accomplished commendable roles in their chosen fields. Something else, I believe, that is in itself a bit uniquely creditable in today’s very secular culture, is the retention of their Faith. Forgive the hubris. Shamefacedly admitting that ten talented and loving grandchildren will, in years and wisdom, wonder just what the hell Grampy was trying to say or thought he was saying. [editor’s note: I kinda wondered just what Grampy was saying, too.] Six of these grandchildren, who live in the Kansas City area, were able to be with Grandma Mac on May 7. Together we prayed the rosary and remembered wonderful times.

In finality, this should be enough conclusion.

EPILOGUE

In recent years, I think Doris and I, aware of our personal friends gradually leaving us in death, were compelled to think of our own. Somewhere in this time frame we had a living trust and a living will created, and, promised each that the other would not submit to permitting one to be placed in a nursing home. We'd seen the pitiful last years of others in these places and prayed and promised it would not be for us. We may be forced to crawl around our home, but that was preferable to a nursing home. This last bout of Mom being in the hospital, brought the imminent realization of that happening an unavoidable possibility. What time I may have left, I shall always be thankful to the Chaplet of Divine Mercy for preventing that happening. On the morning of May 8, after Mom's last night, I read at her bedside this prayer of Saint Faustina, given to her by Our Lord. Less than two hours after Vicki and I left, we had spent the night with Mom and were relieved that morning by Mary Lou, we received her call that Mom had just died. Forgive me, emotions of thanks and sadness rushed over me like a wave. With whatever time is needed, they periodically persist. "You know, Mom, I'm not sentimental. It's not the same without you. I just miss you much."

THE CHAPLET OF DIVINE MERCY

The Lord said to Sister Faustina (1905-1938): You will recite this chaplet on the beads of the rosary in the following manner:

First of all you will say one ***Our Father***, one ***Hail Mary***, and one ***Apostles Creed***.

Then, on the ***Our Father Beads*** say these words:
"Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world."

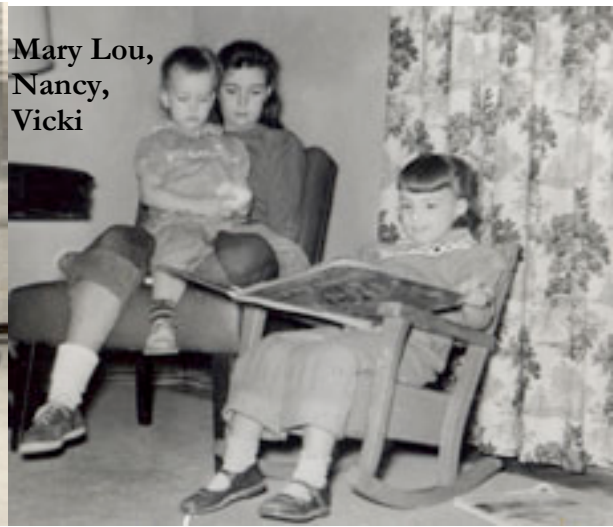
On the ***Hail Mary Beads*** say the following words:
For the sake of His sorrowful Passion have mercy on us and on the whole world

THE McCANN KIDS

circa 1957



Terry



Mary Lou,
Nancy,
Vicki

THE GRANDKIDS
Christmas at Grandpa & Grandma Mac's
about 30 years later



Jason and Fritz
Brandon, Tyler, Tray, Jessica, Nick, Liesel, Katie, Mitzi

A Few Random Thoughts of Those Practice Years

Mom and I shared this common heritage: We both were of frugal parental stock that carried into practice and raising a family. That *modus vivendi* prevailed, I'm sure, longer than our kids thought necessary.

Practice was limited to the use of facilities at the home: The basement. How well I recall telling the local newspaper our plans to build an office for practice. In the excitement of providing details, I let it slip that we'd be living upstairs. Even with the anticipation of numerous country calls, the family car was the practice car. Over the months of making calls, those Fords soon lost the "new car smell" and exuded the fragrance of veterinary practice. Some of the more expressive progeny, on the way to church, seemed to take a delight in holding their noses for exhibitionary effects. Salaries for operating costs were, the offspring may have thought, penurious. Their choice was limited. If they couldn't say it – I am sure others did. Frugality does have strange effects. But the bills always got paid on time. I repeat: **The bills always got paid on time.**



In contrast to this sparseness, we graduates of Iowa State had been well indoctrinated in the economics of treating patients. **Cheap medicine too often reaped cheap results. You better use the best, if you expect to stay in practice in Iowa.** That bit of philosophical wisdom was carried into Missouri. Through the years, in comparison with at least some of the neighboring colleagues, I became a believer.



Random thoughts to be sure ---- in retirement, they are, perhaps, wrapped in bittersweet memories.

With the pressure continuing to mount to do this addendum, and still waiting for the first royalties to come in following the printing of the first edition, the author reluctantly has gone to old files of account books in an effort to resurrect and refurbish some memories of possible cash cows in those tremendous years in practice.

He can only hope these recollections may be more productive.

One call comes to mind, vividly, since it conveys the early years of struggling with payments. The *Fourth of July* is a holiday when all the neighboring Vets, who undoubtedly had it made, took off --- vanished --- even though their clients might have emergencies.

This particular call came in from well out of my practicing territory. Doris took the call involving a partial birth dystocia (Cow having a calf). Mom told them that I was on a call, had another waiting, but would come as soon as possible. She got directions to the farm; gave some cautionary advice; assured the farmer that I'd be there and in the meantime, keep the cow comfortable. When I finally found the place and began unloading equipment where the cow lay with a half delivered fetus, I could not fail to see that her rear quarters were completely denuded. It was a holiday. Bedside manner was not part of this picture.

To the question: **“HAVE YOU BEEN PULLING THIS COW OVER THE GROUND WITH A TRACTOR?”**

I got the answer: “No sir, your wife told us **NOT** to use a tractor. We did use the pick up truck.”

When they handed me the check, with thanks for coming to their assistance, I could only silently breathe a prayer that the cow would live.

My practice in those days was primarily cattle: I loved the dairy branch of that. “Down cow ---- OK yesterday” was a commonality of incoming calls. By a strange anomaly, the owner's own diagnosis, a local, to be sure, was **“Hollow Tail.”** It seemed endemic in Moniteau County. In all honesty I'd never heard of it before, and certainly not at Iowa State. Naturally I knew I had much to learn in these early days of practice. Researching the available literature offered no help on this one. I did learn that the common treatment, generally practiced by the owner or a neighbor, was to make a slit in the hide near the base of the cow's tail, pour some table salt in the wound and bandage. In an attempt to relieve the subsequent burning, the cow would try to get up. AND, unbelievably, sometimes she must have been successful. Phenomenal --- with a capital **P!!!** I've never witnessed the event. Just heard the tales.

In this recalled incident, the owner diagnosing his down cow over the phone, “Doc, I think she's got Hollow Tail, but I want you to come out.”

“Nick,” I responded, “I'll be out, but don't let the neighbors ‘listening in’ hear you. They'll laugh at you.”

To that, he replied, “I don't give a damn. Just come out.”

Which I did. He was a great client and I loved to treat his animals. Upon arriving at his farm and examining the patient, it was an easy diagnosis of

hypocalcemia, with an immediate response to treatment. Then this guy let his sometimes perverted sense of humor take over and play this case further.

I asked Nick if his neighbor was apt to come by. He said that Willie was coming to help get in the hay. So I suggested to Nick what I had in mind. Nick laughed and thought the idea was GREAT. So, with some two-inch adhesive tape, I placed a couple of wraps around the base of the cow's tail, with the suggestion to Nick to have Willie take it off when he got here. And, I gave him the answer to Willie's sure question, "What did Doc think was wrong with your cow?"



Nick played it like a VETERAN. "Doc said it was what we used to call Hollow Tail; but, they don't call it that now. Have a new name for it. And they don't put salt in the wound. They have some new powder – much better than salt. I can't remember what he said it was. But, he did say I must take the bandage off when you got here. I'll put her halter on and hold her. Will you take the bandage off?"

Nick later told me that when he told Willie that --- his eyes enlarged to about saucer size.

Two weeks later the basement door announced that Willie was in the office. I came down the steps to greet him with a pleasant "Hi, Willie!"

With a most very sick smile, this was the uncensored reply: "G_d D_ _ _ _ d sorry-assed S O B."

And that was it. The last two words, "aren't you" didn't need to be said. The message was clear enough. One of my long time favorite clients, he is still among the living.¹ Perhaps God is still waiting for an act of forgiveness. I sometimes, in recent years, wonder if that may be the reason I'm still around, myself. I fervently hope not.

While on the track of down cows, this comes to mind. This one involves a client who did a lot of reading with respect to the health of his herd.

Following what I thought to be the appropriate treatment, a down cow failed to get up. The next day a repeat of the treatment still got no results. I was at the end

¹ Willie passed away during the editing of these tales. Grandpa did go out to see him and left a copy of the rough draft shortly before his death. Willie's son asked the old farmer if he knew about "Hollow Tail." Yeah, Yeah, he knew about Hollow Tail.

of the search for a diagnosis. However, each morning, Leonard would call at about the same time to inform me that the cow hadn't responded. Having read his home treatment book, he wondered if it could be "THIS"; the next day "MAYBE THAT"; a later day "SURELY, IT MUST BE SOMETHING LIKE WHAT I'M READING NOW." And, daily it went on.

I could not convince him that sometimes the animal is slow to respond; and, most certainly with his book of diagnosis, I hated to admit that I wasn't sure, myself, of the cause of the problem. Meantime, I continued to encourage the distraught farmer to keep his cow comfortable, fed and watered. To myself, I'd add, "Keep praying."

Today, I've forgotten the number of days this drama continued, with that morning call from the owner. I'm sure it was at this stage that my hair was losing color and premature wrinkle began developing. That particular morning, my client must have been suffering, similarly. Leonard told me, in despairing tones, that he and his wife had, after a long discussion, decided that they had tolerated the situation almost to a marital split and it was time to terminate. He had a good rifle and would call the dead animal wagon the next day. I could almost have cried for him then.

So help me, the very next day, at the usual time the phone rang. It was him. He could scarcely talk. I braced for sobs to come.

"Doc!" He literally yelled in the phone. "You can't believe it! You can't believe it! I went out to the barn with the rifle loaded. There she was. **STANDING BY THE MANGER, EATING THE ALFALFA, AND, LOOKING AT ME WITH THAT 'WHAT THE HELL YOU WANT?' LOOK!!**"

One cannot describe one's own thoughts or feelings at these moments. I can recall the only thing I could think of, and I told him, "Hell, Leonard, I'm positive she must have SOMEHOW GOTTEN THE MESSAGE THAT MORNING of what you had in mind; and DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO GET THE HELL OUTA THERE!"

And, he agreed!

In those days, people in the small towns kept a dairy cow (a Guernsey or Jersey cross) for butter and household use. These cows were treated by their owners as being pretty special ---- almost like a pet or a member of the family.²

This call was a repeat to see this cow that showed symptoms of stomach impaction, or what is commonly called "just plain constipation." I'd treated her two days previously for this ailment, with no results. And, two days was long enough; the owner was somewhat perturbed that she wasn't any better. The big thing now was:

² Bill's Schneider grandparents, south of Jeff City, had such a Jersey milk cow in the 1950's.

No appetite and diminished milk output. Those symptoms get any owner disturbed. This time I took along some pink colored mineral oil. The color is a deception: No strawberry flavor, real or artificial, but it looked at least to the owner, if not to the cow, like something good and new. A gallon is the accepted dose for an average cow. Forty-eight hours earlier, she had had the benefit of milk of magnesia and a couple of “hotshot” laxative boluses. Old reliables.

At that time I carried a neat-looking leather medical case with an assortment of emergency vials and bottles, and of course, bandaging material, gauze, etc. Haltering the cow and tying her up in the shed for tonight’s laxative of oil, I left my open bag on a low ledge at the opposite side of the stall. She was a gentle cow and co-operated nicely with my efforts to place the speculum in her mouth, pass the stomach tube and gently pump the bucket of oil, while talking soothingly to the nice patient. She showed no resentment as I removed the speculum and halter. She simply backed up to the other side of the stall, raised her tail, and, like coming from a high pressure hydrant, almost instantly completely filled my leather case with its contents. The owner laughed heartily! The cow belched contentedly! I could only swear under my breath as I fished the salvageables out of the muck! The cow would recover. I couldn’t say that with regards to my neat leather bag. (Editor’s question: Is this why I remember white metal pans in the back seat of the car rather than neat leather bags?)

An emergency run to save a cow waiting to be hauled into the dead animal wagon: An exciting day for both the Vet and the owner of a dairy.

The anxious call came in through the High Point telephone operator, “Cow down. Need help now!” While getting things ready and packed, the phone rang again. The same operator with the message, “Cow is dead. Cancel call.” Not more than thirty minutes later, a third call, and unbelievably, the same operator. This time the operator was saying that the dead animal truck happened to be in town and was attempting to load the “so-called dead cow,” when the owner noticed a leg move. “PLEASE COME QUICK! HURRY! HURRY! PLEASE!”

At that time there were no speed limits and the old Ford was used to getting revved-up on occasions like this. When I got to the farm, the dead animal truck was still there. I guess --- just in case. The poor cow, unconscious and eyes glazed, did look the part of having gone to its final destination. We started the IV and the owner applied warm clean water to those glazed eyeballs. Within forty-five minutes the cow was up, though a bit dazed, and probably wondering what all the fuss was about. **(These are the kinds of calls, when successful, make the Country Vets the talk of the community.)** The farmer happily sent the dead animal truck on its way.

A sad tale for a grandson to experience Fritz, now a captain in the US Army, is at this time, deployed in Afghanistan with others on tour of duty.

This episode concerns a time when Fritz was a handsome pre-school kid, who, with his father, was visiting the grandparents. The call came in from Latham. A dystocia. Fritz wanted to go along with his dad and me; I was glad to have the company. Arriving at the farm, we found the dairy cow in labor. Examination determined that the fetus was dead. This happened six or seven weeks before his little sister was to be born. No doubt this was on his mind when little Fritz came up with this emotional question. "Grandpa, if we'd gotten here sooner, would the calf be alive?"

To that almost tearful query, he got a positive assurance that it would be. What he didn't hear was, "Perhaps yesterday."

From grandkids to our own

Lou, for some reason loved to ride along on calls, as a pre-schooler. A single memory of those days comes to mind: A ditty she loved to belt out over and over while riding by herself in the back seat. I think it went something like this:

***"Catch a falling star,
And put it in your pocket,
Save it for a rainy day."***

This could go on for miles. Radios, in those days of Fords, never worked --- even if we had one --- so it was a good distraction for the driver, who chain smoked, and



attempting to quit, had probably just pitched a butt and was already looking in the pack to see if there might be one left - --- just in case. I'm not sure just why I put that in. I finally did quit smoking before I got cancer. And Lou grew up and quit singing and took up talking. Somehow this brings up this next episode of practice.

It was an annual call to a Russellville bachelor-farmer to vaccinate and clamp his bull calves. He was a good client, who lived by himself and was somewhat reticent, maybe just around Vets ---- I don't wish to speculate. Anyway, Lou, being, then, a bit on the quiet side since giving up singing, got conscripted for this call for no particular reason, except I knew I'd need extra help. That was the way it was in those

days: You got called you went. So, to make a prospective call from becoming too routine, I told Lou, "This guy is a literal chatterbox. He might drive you to distraction with all of his gab. You can just ignore him, if you can. We need to get this done as efficiently as possible 'cause it's a long trip down and back in itself."

I must have been a trifle overly carried away with this charade. We got through in record time and got the chute hooked up to the car. This done, the Russellville bachelor-farmer asked me, "How much?" Handing me the check, said, "Thanks, Doc."

I said, "Thank you, Wilhelm." And we were on our way home ---- but not without this sarcastic remark from the help.

"I thought you said that I must be careful engaging him in conversation. Hell, I never heard him say anything except 'How much do I write the check for?'" With that tone of Lou's voice, with nary a hint of those days of belting out **"A falling star,"** I was sure I was in trouble. I swear I could hear those words of Willie Higgins and the Hollow Tail being echoed from the back seat. It was a quiet ride home from Wilhelm's.

Such episodes, no doubt, crystallize thinking of being a lot of things other than a Country Vet. I am sure the following is another confirmation for that mindset.

Vicki, I'm sure under duress, did accompany me on a call involving a sow having trouble pigging. After much effort I was convinced that my hand was just too large to maneuver a pre-born piglet into position for delivery. Sweet talk, alternating with probably some threatening overtones, induced Vicki, with a smaller hand, to give it a try. I can see the EXPRESSION on her face yet, as she lathered and lubricated an arm to go for the fetus. The poor girl's face still haunts me. I think to describe it best would be the visage of a friend from Iowa. He was visiting here from Iowa and we'd gone to the country looking for bittersweet and found some persimmons.

"Are they OK to eat?"

"SURE."

He stuffed several in his mouth simultaneously. If he had had a gun ---- I'd been the target. Vicki's failed attempt could have precipitated a repeated similar urge.



More kids, more jobs

Nancy entered the work force as an office helper, I think as a seventh grader. The job description included cleaning the office and other sundry chores.³ I had had an excellent kid doing part-time work for several years. He progressed, at high school graduation, to a full-time job. He'd recommended his kid brother. A big mistake. In a matter of weeks, I knew he was not going to be what I needed; and, dismissed him for lack of ability for about anything. I can still recall being upstairs when the office bell would ring and hearing, "Hey, Doc, there's a guy down here that wants to see you."

I guess that's what the kid thought he was hired to do. At the time we thought the doorbell was doing quite well. And, that's when Nancy started on the payroll. Years get by and I can't remember how long she was on the staff payroll.⁴ She was a heck of an improvement over what had been replaced.

And then comes Terry, next on the list of employees. He did accompany me on calls where help was scarce at the farm, and must say he got some good compliments. Around the office his assignment included sweeping out the office stairs before school. Getting into high school, a buddy with a new car often came by to take him. That sometimes put a wrinkle in getting those stairs swept.

Terry, inheriting some of his granddad's talent, had a terrific knack with tools – mostly carrying them off and leaving them at a remote site. The common complaint became "Dammit, Terry, where's the screw driver or the pliers or both?" If there were two of each, the same question. In all fairness, Terry was the one called to fix the many gadgets that threw craps.⁵ And, he did fix them, after, of course, he found the pliers or whatever wherever.

Some basic math and counting

Terry, like Mary Lou, in pre-school days often liked to ride along on calls. Terry didn't sing for a pastime but he found other outlets for these adventures. This may not be typical, but in memory it comes back readily. On this particular call, Terry asked if he could wander about the farmyard if he didn't leave any gates open. Permission granted, Terry explored the farm buildings while I treated the animal I had been called out there for. Call completed, I honked the horn, and Terry came running

³ Those sundry jobs included: Numbering test tubes, washing spay instruments, cleaning the glove and sleeve (It was fun to pop out those fingers.), cleaning the stomach pump (Yuck!), and of course, setting up stool samples (Double Yuck!).

⁴ High School Graduation

⁵ To throw craps – a descriptive verb phrase indicating the period shortly before something goes kaput.

out of the machine shed exhibiting much excitement. Getting into the car, he could scarcely contain himself.

“Mac! You should’ve seen me! He had a bunch of John Deere tractors! And I climbed up on each one of them!”

“A ‘bunch’ you say! C’mon, Terry. What do you mean? How many, really?”



A pause, then, **“He had one in the middle and two on the side!”**

In retrospect, we were obviously remiss: Mesmerized with the heady thoughts of parenting a rocket scientist, we had overlooked counting and concentrated on basic arithmetic, i.e. addition and subtraction. Back then, the breakfast table became a pre-schooler’s laboratory. Rice Krispies was Terry’s favorite cereal,⁶ and, it was a great tool for pre-school math. Morning after morning went something like this:

“Terry, how much is three plus five?”

Terry would lay out three Rice Krispies in one pile and five in another. He counted the bunch and answered, “Eight.”

To the problem, eight minus six, our pre-school genius counted out eight Rice Krispies, then ATE six of them and answered, “Two.” Terry never missed an answer to these problems.

Those were the days of ideological dreams for this country vet and his wonderful hard-working wife. As with life and fantasies, there were great hopes and expectations. Computers were about as far out as rockets in the 1950’s. But, our John Deere and Rice Krispies pre-school potential, found computers and their innards a challenging career. I’m sure it would be a stretch to even remotely visualize tractors and breakfast cereals as empirical pre-requisites.

In relations with clients, restraint of expression always advisable. Sometimes this maxim is not only not practical, but impossible. I think the next episode illustrates the latter.

⁶. Terry could’ve and would’ve eaten Rice Krispies three times a day, if it had been available.

The client was an auctioneer who cried sales and dabbled in livestock at a sale barn in Yellville, Arkansas. It may have been a suburb of Clintonville, I'm not sure. The colonel prided himself on self-treatment of his own livestock, including those he acquired at sales. He seldom troubled the Vet with his veterinary needs. This incident is an exception, to be sure, and will be long remembered.

To save his nickels, the colonel brought the cow to the office in his livestock truck, with the sorrowful lament that the patient was constipated and that he'd given her everything but to no avail. As a Vet, I'd never relished these kind of presentations at the office. Climbing into one of those stock trucks is not this guy's forte. A ladder, at least, would facilitate. But, to save time, skipped that convenience, and with a bucket of soapy water, made the stretch and was in with the cow to examine the part that appeared to be the source of trouble ---- the rear end causing all the straining. A rectal examination confirmed quickly why the poor animal, in tortured straining, got no results. Approximately no more than a foot inside the rectum was complete occlusion. All those laxative and purgatives were activating just anterior to the blockage. With sensitive digital examining, I gingerly searched for a cause and not penetrate the wall of the intestine. Eventually, I located the possible area where a continuation of gut should be and worked into and through an opening I hoped should be it. IT WAS! To say that all hell broke loose would be minimizing what followed. With my arm and hand in the rectum, the cow was straining constantly. When my finger penetrated that closure, a retreat had to be instant. And, IT WASN'T ---not quite, anyway. I'll call it feces at this telling --- not the terminology used then. I've never, ever been so crapped on in my life: Head, shoulders, upper and lower body --- HEAD TO FOOT says it all.

To wind this disastrous mess up with the diagnosis and cause, I shall make it brief. Some sorry character from Yellville or Clintonville had done a pretty shabby surgery, attempting to correct a rectal prolapse sometime previously. Ignoring, or ignorant of, necessary follow-up treatment he simply gave obvious directions to the owner, "SELL HER." The owner did and the colonel was on the receiving end of the transaction. The rectum, following this jerk's amateurish procedure, simply closed in the healing process.

At this junction of this sorry drama, RESTRAINT was not part of the picture towards the present client. The only empathy at the moment was for the cow. I am sure, the colonel, on the way home with his Arkansas cow, may have thought, after paying the bill for this office call, may have calculated that he'd been ahead if he'd gotten the gun and left the purgatives on the shelf.

We sometimes call them "Fire Engine" calls. The owner suddenly finds big problems in the farmyard.

This case involves at least twelve or more feeder calves that had somehow broken into the feed room. Like a bunch of kids in the candy store, they were, in a short time, going to make the most of it. The owner, when he called, was more than a little panicky. When I got to the farm, some calves were bloated, some staggering and some already down. Unfortunately this is not herd treatment. One at a time. Depending on shown symptoms, individual treatment must be prescribed in a hurry. There is no poop sheet⁷. It's mostly get to the ones you feel you can save first, and progress from there, hoping you are making the correct decisions for each.

In animals, unlike humans, a blanket treatment is not feasible. There is a cost problem involved besides the time to get to all. Those down calves and very toxic may be beyond treatment. They were the last treated. For the economics of it, you treat the way your judgment dictates, under pressure. Finally finished, exhausted and cleaned up, I headed home with fingers crossed that my judgment had been correct and to figure the total cost to the client.



Writing up calls and office visits;
and no poop sheet for the
good vet's penmanship

I can recall sending the farmer his statement and later when he came in to pay with a check. At that time I asked how many did he lose. He said three. I breathed a sigh of thanks and relief, till he added, "I think you made a mistake by not treating the worst ones first. I might have only lost one or two."

These are those times one thinks MAYBE, JUST MAYBE, I should have taken up osteopathy.

I've been saving this one. It goes back to shortly after opening practice in California. A classmate of mine in college was practicing in Oregon and wondered about coming back and going into practice here as a partner. He was just working for someone out there. I thought at the time it was a good idea and he came back. Jack, unlike Grampy, went from high school into pre-med and then medicine, with only a brief time in the Service. So he is several years younger than me. He is a great guy and good Vet.

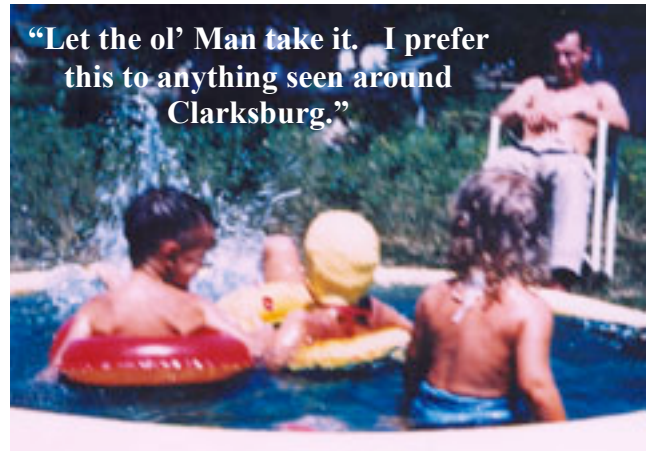
This episode concerns a client --- a "real character." And, Moniteau County was blessed with what seemed an abundance of them. Jack had been once to this farmer's place. I don't recall the result, but obviously, it didn't turn out the way the client expected. We all have those thorns in our practice years. Anyway, the next

⁷ The poop sheet is the instructions for putting something together or completing a task.

time he called he told Doris about his prayer life. When he wanted or needed something, his policy was to ask the **Father**. He didn't want to mess around with the **Son**. The **Son** might be OK for some people, but he wanted only to deal with the **Father**. That was the same way, when he called a Vet. He wanted the head honcho, not his son or whatever.

“So, I need a Vet now for this cow. I don't want the son. Is the other one there? If not, I'll just wait.”

Doris assured him she'd make sure he got the one he wanted. And, that was the way it remained. I wished I could remember, when on calls there, his many quirky quips. Some might be called maxims. One couldn't help loving the old guy and was saddened to learn of his eventual death. At the time, I recall having the hope that he did make it to the Father without stumbling into the Son on the way. Perhaps it's the least this old Vet should do.



Just recalled something in practice that may or may not be significant in telling but shall tell it anyway.

Through carelessness or lack of caution I was exposed on two occasions to rabies --- not exactly experiences one cared to repeat. One was a dog being examined in the office. Without provocation, he chomped on a partial part of my hand with his very healthy and sharp teeth. The second time I was exposed was a few years later while passing a stomach tube on a calf, suspected of ingesting something poison. What a missed diagnosis that was. Autopsies, on the death of each, showed positive rabies. Each time meant **NO QUESTIONS. START THE PREVENTIVE SHOTS OF ANTITOXIN.**

The treatment, then, was a daily intramuscular shot for fourteen days. As mentioned, these occasions were a few years apart. But memory of the first was still quite vivid at the time of the second series. The good news is that they were effective and Grandpa didn't go mad --- only when he "blew his top." Another possible after effect is that he does drool or just slobber a bit. But he believes that is caused by his cheap dentures --- maybe!

Must close this with something upbeat.

I have long been aware that those years in practice were the best anyone could have had for clients, appreciative and good friends. Deadbeats, there were some; we all have them. But, in this county, they were minimal. Far from becoming wealthy, as some practitioners may, I must admit, here the wealth was in the memories themselves. In conclusion, I wish to recount the following.

A few years ago, I was at the funeral home to pay respects to a long time client, Roy S. While there I met one of the new Vets that had come to town. He was there for the same reason as I. I had not met him, but knew his parents. We were discussing the deceased when he came out with this accolade.

“Doc,” he said. “I never went to this man’s farm that he failed to quote you, when you were in practice. You couldn’t have paid a PR concern to do more bragging than he did with respect to your many calls over the years that he had you treat his animals.”

Later, leaving the funeral home, a bit overwhelmed, I thought. “Dear God, he may have stretched it a bit and exaggerated much. But it would have been rare, indeed, to have known a nicer man than Roy.”

A couple of momentous post scripts involving the two oldest grandsons.

Note # 1: Word just received ---- Captain Fritz Keel has just returned home to the USA after spending nine months in Afghanistan. During his tour of duty, the vehicle Fritz was in encountered an enemy road mine or rocket propelled grenade. Fritz did suffer some hearing damage as a result of the bastard’s handiwork. We give grateful thanks to Divine Providence; and, continue our prayers for a terrific Captain looking out for us.

Note # 2: Another great news just received ---- A FIRST GREAT-GRANDCHILD on the way and due in September, thanks to Jason and Lee-Ann in Houston, Texas. There is a bit of a downside for this ol’ man, who is conscious of developing OLD AGE. Notwithstanding that handicap, our most fervent prayers that the baby arrives in the best of health and in perfect shape in the vicinity of September 26. Our congratulations to the proud, expectant parents!

Now, how about these two terrific **“WIND-UPS”** to complement the MEMOIRS?!

Some Mixed Memories of a Survivor, Long Ago

I think someone suggested that we call this “**an addendum**” --- or something like that. Perhaps in charity, the above title will suffice. In all honesty, I’d thought we were finished with these so-called memoirs. Then, I ran across a couple of pieces of yellow note-paper containing a hand-written note from a long remembered college professor. In it he had penned, among other things, some nice things (compliments) with respect to this guy. At my age any nice things (compliments) of ancient or recent vintage become almost sacred. I reread it several times in disbelief. It’s amazing how one’s Ego can be so energized in recollection by just such trivia. I’m mentioning it, you may guess, only for the benefit of the guy now typing. It concerns a letter accompanying some stained slides I’d sent to a former teacher at Iowa State for diagnostic help, when Dr. Jack Moye and I first opened practice in Kirksville, Missouri, following graduation. I had just recently sent a letter and similar slides to the Veterinary School at the University of Missouri; I’d received confirmation but no help. The response to my letter to Iowa State follows:

***Dear Mac and Jack;
Three cheers for the Irish!
Seriously, I want to compliment you on the
thoroughness and on the completeness of your data.
I have been waiting for such a letter as yours to read
to my class. I get plenty of the other kind. Ordinarily
I do not take specimens for diagnosis from out of
state. To do so is apt to react in an unpleasant
manner. However, I’m considering yours as a
special problem in parasitism. Perhaps the
entourage at Columbia are too deeply involved with
the new school to spend enough time on diagnostic
work. I can sympathize with them.***

***Best Regards,
E.A.B.***

The above was reprinted from a hand-written note by a nationally known professor of pathology and parasitology, Dr. E. A. Benbrook. He was the head of the department at Iowa State --- teaching there, when I was a student, years ago. His stature in his field and the recognition given to him, resulted in invitations to speak at seminars throughout the country. My first “brush” with this professor of eminence does not recall any kind thoughts of him -- as the following should illustrate.

I'd just completed pre-med at the University of Iowa two weeks previously and was now enrolled as a freshman at Iowa State in Veterinary Medicine. As a Navy Veteran I was in this new subsidized program called the G. I. Bill of Rights. Unannounced, I was surprised to learn that I was the first student to be enrolled as such. When the press learned of this, The **Des Moines Register** staff descended on campus with their reporters and cameras for their big story, interviews and photos. **Overwhelmed**, is to put it mildly. A picture of this Navy salt, looking through a microscope, rounded out the article. Survival of all this publicity was no problem for this guy, who'd just survived getting married a week previously.

Then the storm broke. Somehow Dr. Benbrook had spotted the picture in the paper, clipped it out and posted on his bulletin board. The next day, his undeniably exuberant sarcasm greeted his morning class. "Hey! Men, do take a look at this new freshman, A **ONE-EYED MICROSCOPIST** no less. Right here is his picture, a one-eyed, honest-to-goodness microscopist among us."



The victim didn't learn of this until later in the day, when some of the upperclassmen related the hilarity the class had experienced. Of course this freshman was mortified. Hells Bells, to use a Navy expression, nobody had said keep both eyes open even when using a MONOCULAR scope. I'd survived the South Pacific with only a bleeding stomach ulcer, avoiding the other pathogens prevalent there. I could surely survive this! At times I felt that I could lose an eye trying to identify some of the crud on those stained slides. Better conserve one eye if I could. Later, I did learn using one eye was a "no-no." And, I did stay clear of the character that became almost apoplectic seeing my picture with one eye closed.

The next year I was in his class of parasitology, hoping he'd mellowed. He hadn't. However, now I was on the other end of his keen wit and enjoying it. He loved to read us letters from former students now in practice and needing some help or advice for their problems of the moment. I'm positive the authors of the letters didn't get the message he passed along to his class. You knew he was thoroughly enjoying reading these to his class --- dissecting the grammar, questioning the punctuation or the lack of it. It was entertaining, now, for us --- with a touch of pity for the writer.

His tests were mostly questions requiring written answers, seldom the objective “true or false” Or “fill in the blanks” stuff. He had a heavy red pencil for corrections and used it prolifically. (Examples) “Just answer the question, Please!” “All of this is irrelevant; did you actually read the question?” “Is that supposed answer something you call English?” etc. Some of them were real jewels, most were bitter swallow. Despite all this, he was among the best of remembered instructors.

In recollection, I do think the impact of his lectures on students would be difficult to overestimate. Favoritism shown toward any of his students was not part of his character. When I was there, I didn’t know his son was following in his footsteps—studying to be a Veterinarian. His boy, younger than I, graduated in a class a few years later and became an instructor at the new school here in Missouri. Shortly thereafter, he and his wife came by for a wonderful visit with Doris and me in California, Missouri.

Through the years, I have lost track of him and also his father’s eventual retirement at Iowa. It was my good fortune to have known them both.

In conclusion, I must in humility state, all the above is the result of only recently finding a yellow piece of paper: The handwritten note from the elder Dr. Benbrook, when this guy was a recent graduate of Veterinary School at Iowa State...memories that moisten the eyes.

Graduates of Veterinary schools in the forties probably could recall those years on campus as among some of the best of treasured memories. There were, at that time, only nine such schools in the country. The one in Ames, one of the oldest, was prestigiously considered near the top of these. Being admitted to study and attend was to paraphrase the words of the well-know author, Charles Dickens: “The Best of Times and The Worst of Times.” One recalls the word of others: The unbelievable long hours of study, the amazing new experiences, the new and lasting friendships, a time for tears and a time for laughter-----all crammed together, culminating with the heady anticipation of graduation and going into practice. I think Petersen’s statue of the “Gentle Doctor,” may perhaps, exemplify it all.

Christian Petersen, an emigrant from Denmark, created this impressive piece of art during the depression years of the twentieth century, while he was employed at Iowa State. The statue is not as mammoth as Michelangelo’s *David*. It was an attention getter nevertheless – and he had clothes on, too. Entitled the “Gentle Doctor” it stood in the quadrangle where the school of Vet Medicine was housed. When Mom and I were last in Ames on a visit, it had been moved to the new South Campus for Vet Medicine; and, like the *David* in Italy, it had been moved inside for protection from the weather.

Dr. Dykstra, a distinguished professor and dean of the veterinary school of Kansas State College {now, Kansas State University} (1918—1948) was well known for his many articles published in the professional journals. His “Veterinarian’s Creed,” I believe is as poignant today as when it was written years ago. It represents standards, perhaps a tad high for some practitioners; but for achievement of goals---it is peerless.

I’ve kept a framed combination of the “Gentle Doctor” and the Veterinarian’s Creed in the office for years. I believe it served not only as an inspiration but as a reminder of the responsibility for this country vet during those three plus decades in practice.

fjmc

As published in the *DEMOCRAT SHOPPER* July 16, 1985.

August 1st

We're Closing the Office

Age and diminishing zeal are, most times, difficult to admit but after over 38 years of practice, it is time to say...enough.

The difficult part is saying, "This is it," to clients and friends.

The easy part is reminiscing through the bag of memories, with its triumphs and disappointments, as a Veterinary Practitioner these nearly two-score years.

Our appreciative thanks to each of you, who have been even a small part of those years.

F. J. (Mac) and Doris McCann