

**TO MY CHILDREN
AND THEIR CHILDREN**



BY EUGENE F. WOPATA

January 3, 1926 – February 25, 2013

TO MY CHILDREN AND THEIR CHILDREN

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2. To My Children and Their Children

After writing and publishing “My Army experience,” I found letters that my parents received from their friends and me. Also visiting with my Army buddies at our National 42nd Rainbow Reunions has revealed experiences that I had forgotten. Also attending Prisoners Of War Conventions has brought to life other experiences that were canned up for many years. Treatment at the Veterans Medical Center in Kansas City has permitted me to talk about experiences that formerly were concealed. I now have added some of these experiences to my original Army story.

My partner, Evelyn, for over 45 years was the cornerstone of my wonderful family. How she shaped such a wonderful family was a true gift of God. She was a true Christian. Why God called her home has been difficult for me to understand.



Back row left to right: Matthew, John, Jeri, Julia, Susan, Ryan, Kristy, Steve, Kyle
Front row left to right: Mark, Daniel, Evelyn, Eugene, Mollie
Photo taken by William Cofer in the fall of 1996 at my home

Mathematics and shop were my favorite subjects in high school. History was not my favorite subject, even though I had a great teacher. I now have experienced a huge change in our world, and actually it's been a great history lesson. In watching my children and grandchildren, I see huge differences in their daily activities versus what I experienced at the same stage of life. Therefore, I hope that some of my experiences may be of interest to them.

Many people remember December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands and drew the United States into World War II. I was a junior in high school and was living on a farm near DuBois, Neb., in the southeastern part of the state. The folks and I had gone to Denver that summer to visit Aunt Bess, who was my father's sister. Denver was 525 miles from home, which was a huge day of driving. California was at least twice that distance beyond Denver. Pearl Harbor was a whole lot farther. As a result, I didn't think this war would have any effect on me.

Then there was the fall of Bataan on April 9, 1942. The Bataan Peninsula was in the Philippine Islands, which were a territory of the United States. Soon after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese invaded the Philippines and overwhelmed the small American military presence, backing them up on the Bataan Peninsula and causing the eventual surrender of our armed forces and all of the Philippines. All that still didn't mean much to me because it was so far from Nebraska.

All of a sudden January 3, 1945 came and I was 18 years old, and drafted. Uncle Sam became interested in my health in February. In March I had to decide what branch of service I wanted to join. The Army Air Corps said I was too tall. I felt the Marines were too gung ho for me. The Navy was out because I had trouble passing the swimming requirements in the Boy Scouts, so I decided to join the Army.

I took my basic training during a very hot summer in Camp Walters, TX. After basic in October, I became a part of the 42nd Rainbow Division. In November we left Camp Gruber, OK, and I ate my first turkey during the Thanksgiving dinner on a troopship in New York Harbor. We soon headed for Europe, and we landed in southern France on December 8, 1944.

From there the 42nd Rainbow Division moved to the combat area north of Strasbourg in northeastern France on the west bank of the Rhine River. All of this happened during and soon after the Battle of the Bulge, and there was not much action after our arrival for a couple of weeks.

Then things got exciting. We crossed the Zorn River and captured a German outpost. Then we got shelled, and I was knocked unconscious. When I came to, I couldn't move and couldn't hear. Finally, my hearing came back. Someone nearby was wounded and was yelling for a medic. I shook the guys on each side of me and got no response. So I finally went over and picked up the guy who was yelling. He had a bad leg and shoulder wound. I managed to carry him back across the river bridge. There was a jeep serving as an ambulance near the bridge. I eventually was awarded the Bronze Star for carrying that guy back across the bridge, but that came some time later.

I then dug my first and only foxhole. The ground was frozen, and digging was very slow. We were finally getting ready to get some rest, when we were ordered to move out toward Gamsheim, a village near Strasbourg.

Once again a German machine gun was firing from the timber adjacent to Gamsheim. We started running to find a tree to hide behind. Two of us decided this fellow needed to share

his tree. Isadore (Shorty) Urban went on one side of him, and I took the other side. Then there was a shell burst in a tree which resulted in a severe neck wound on the guy lying between Shorty and me. That was enough for me. I decided to vacate the timber. I started back toward the road, another artillery barrage was coming. So I hit the deck in the depression along the side of the road.

I spent a lot of time in this area. Eventually I was wounded and captured on January 6, 1945, and I wound up in a prisoner of war camp in Germany. I was liberated from the prison camp by the Russians on April 23, and then escaped from the Russians and returned to the American forces in May.

Armistices Day, now known as Veterans Day, originally recognized the end of World War I. Many World War II veterans celebrate on special days. The European Veterans hold VE Day (Victory in Europe Day) or May 7th as a special day, while the Pacific Veterans consider VJ Day (Victory over Japan Day) September 2nd as a special day. There is no doubt that the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and Nagasaki on August 8, 1945, ended the war quickly and saved many lives.

I have attended many Army Reunions and the POW Conventions since 1986. We always have memorial services for the men who did not return from the war as well as the veterans who have passed away in recent years. I have been to several American Cemeteries in Europe, the United States and Hawaii. Since having lost my freedom to the Germans in World War II, it has special meaning to me. The Pledge of Allegiance also has a few choice words, "One nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all." That word "Liberty" jumps out. Freedom and Liberty have similar meanings to me. They are great and very precious. *Please remember that FREEDOM IS NOT FREE.*

3. Just Some Facts

Eugene Frank Wopata was born January 3, 1926, in the McCrea Hospital in Table Rock, NE. My father was Frank Louis Wopata, and my mother's maiden name was Mollie Beranek.

I was married to Evelyn Barr on October 27, 1951. We were married in the Presbyterian Church in Pawnee City, Nebraska, which is now used as a doctor's office. Evelyn was a cancer victim on December 4, 1996. We were married more than 45 years and had three children. Steven Eugene Wopata was born October 15, 1952. John Roger Wopata was born June 27, 1955. Susan Kay Wopata was born December 12, 1957.

Steve married Kristy Bear Cofer on June 28, 1986. Their children are Ryan Dain Cofer, Kyle Steven Wopata and Mollie Ann Wopata.

John married Jeri DeGraff on September 7, 1985. Their children are Matthew John Wopata, Daniel Eugene Wopata, Mark Thomas Wopata and Julia Marie Wopata.

I graduated from the University of Nebraska with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering in the summer of 1949. I worked for the Nebraska Highway Department as a civil engineer for two years. Most of that time, I worked in the State Capitol Building in Lincoln. I also was in charge of a survey crew in Peru, NE, for a few weeks one winter. This was when I discovered that the frozen feet that I experienced in Europe during World War II were a real problem. This was reported to the Chief Engineer. A short time later I became a State Consultant and worked in the City of Omaha Engineering Office for a while before I resigned.

In September of 1951, I went to work for The Standard Oil Company in the Sugar Creek Refinery. I spent some time as a draftsman. One of the landmarks that remain is a fence that encloses the current BP (British Petroleum) property. Also there is a pipe bridge that crosses the railroad tracks. This is another project of mine. I retired from AMOCO Oil Company after 30 years of service.

All of my grandparents were of Czech descent, so I am 100% Czech. All of them died before I was born, except Agnes Beranek, who died in 1965.

Evelyn and I joined the First United Methodist Church in Independence on Palm Sunday in 1952. I have held many offices in the church organization and I have been involved in many of the church projects.

I have a lifetime membership in the following organizations: American Ex-Prisoners of War, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Purple Heart and the American Legion.

I vote as an Independent, but have probably voted more times as a Republican.

My nickname was “Wop” in high school, college and the Army. I am now usually called “Gene” or the “tall guy.” I really think I should be called “Lucky” because my Guardian Angel has taken care of me numerous times.

4. EFW Birth Certificate

The following information is from the State of Nebraska Department of Public Works, Bureau of Health, Registered No. 1766

Place of birth was the county of Pawnee
 Township of Table Rock
 Full name of child Eugene Frank Wopata
 Sex of child Male, Legitimate Yes, Date of birth 1-3-26
 Full Name of father Frank Wopata Full Name of mother Mollie Wopata
 Resident post office Table Rock Resident Post Office Table Rock
 Color or Race White Color or Race White
 Age at last birthday 24 Age at last birthday 22
 Birthplace Table Rock Birthplace DuBois, Neb.
 Occupation Farmer Occupation Wife
 Born at 4 AM
 Attending Physician E.L. McCray
 Address Table Rock
 Silver solution installed in each eye yes

STATE OF NEBRASKA
 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE
 Bureau of Health
 Division of Vital Statistics

PLACED OF BIRTH
 County of Pawnee W-130
 Township of Table Rock
 Village of _____
 City of _____

Registered No. 1766

St. _____ Ward _____
 No. _____
 FULL NAME OF CHILD Eugene Frank Wopata
 (To be answered only in case of stillbirths)

Sex of Child male (To be answered only in case of stillbirths)
 Twin, Triplet or Other? _____ Number in order of birth _____ Legitimate yes
 Date of birth 1-3-26 Month Day Year

FATHER		MOTHER	
FULL NAME <u>Frank Wopata</u>	FULL MAIDEN NAME <u>Mollie Beranek</u>	FULL NAME <u>Frank Wopata</u>	FULL MAIDEN NAME <u>Mollie Beranek</u>
RESIDENCE <u>Table Rock</u>	RESIDENCE <u>Table Rock</u>	RESIDENCE <u>Table Rock</u>	RESIDENCE <u>Table Rock</u>
POST OFFICE _____	POST OFFICE _____	POST OFFICE _____	POST OFFICE _____
COLOR or RACE <u>white</u>	COLOR or RACE <u>white</u>	COLOR or RACE <u>white</u>	COLOR or RACE <u>white</u>
AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>24</u> Years	AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>22</u> Years	AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>24</u> Years	AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>22</u> Years
BIRTHPLACE <u>Table Rock</u>	BIRTHPLACE <u>DuBois, Neb.</u>	BIRTHPLACE <u>Table Rock</u>	BIRTHPLACE <u>DuBois, Neb.</u>
OCCUPATION <u>Farmer</u>	OCCUPATION <u>Wife</u>	OCCUPATION <u>Farmer</u>	OCCUPATION <u>Wife</u>

No. of children of this marriage _____ (When as of time of birth of child person deceased and including this child) (a) born alive _____ (b) born alive but deceased _____ (c) stillborn _____

CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN
 I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child, who was _____ (Date Alive or Stillborn)
 Signature E. L. McCray, M. D.
 Address Table Rock

Given name added from a supplemental report _____
 STATE LAW
 Was silver solution installed in each eye? yes
 Filed prior to Dec 31 1926 Registrar

WRITE PLAINLY WITH ENLARGING INK. THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD. SEPARATE RETURN must be made for each child, with the number of each, in order of birth, above.

N. B.—In case of more than one child at one birth, the number of each, in order of birth, should be indicated.

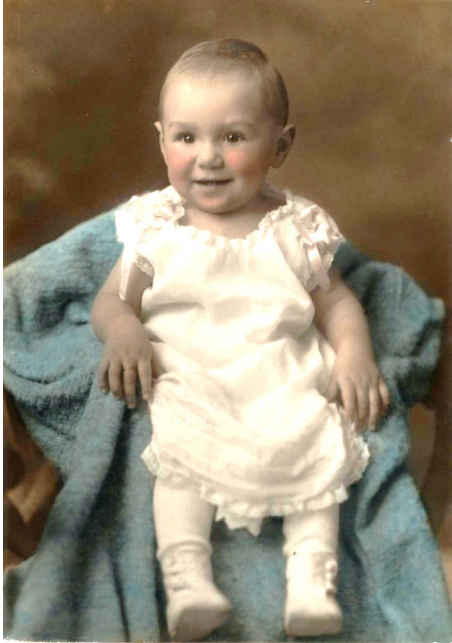
*When there was no attending physician then the father, householder, etc., should make this return. A stillborn child is one that neither breathes nor shows other evidences of life after birth.

THIS CERTIFIES THE ABOVE TO BE A TRUE COPY OF AN ORIGINAL CERTIFICATE ON FILE WITH THE DIVISION OF VITAL STATISTICS STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, WHICH IS THE LEGAL DEPOSITORY FOR SAME.

E. L. McCray, M.D.
 STATE REGISTRAR
 LINCOLN, NEBRASKA MAR 24 1926

5. My Ancestry

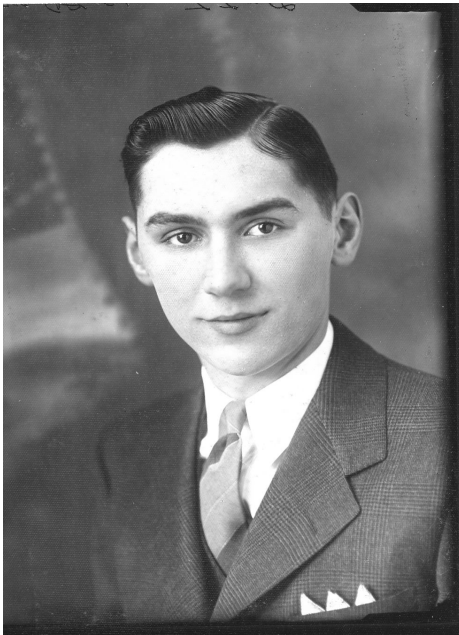
Eugene Frank Wopata was born in the McCrea Hospital in Table Rock, Neb., January 3, 1926. I am of Czech descent.



Wasn't I a cutie!



Eighth Grade Graduation



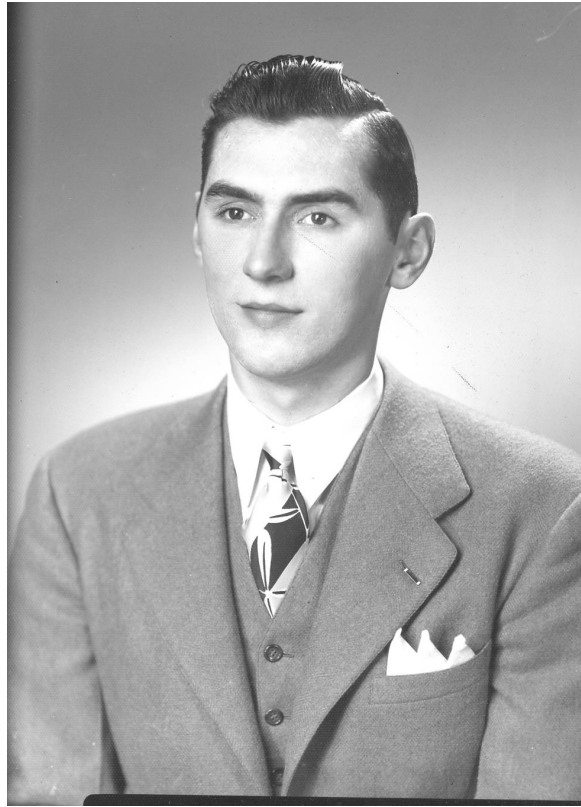
High School Graduation



After Basic Training



Army Veteran



College Graduate



My parents were Frank and Mollie Wopata. They were married April 8, 1925 in the Pawnee City, NE, Courthouse. I was their only child.

My father's full name was Frank Louis Wopata. He was born October 7, 1901 in Table Rock, NE, and died August 26, 1982.

My mother's maiden name was Mollie Beranek. She was born August 14, 1903 in DuBois, NE, and died August 7, 1988 in Pawnee City, NE.



Frank and Mollie Wopata - 50th wedding anniversary on April 8, 1975.



My Mother's Ancestry

Mollie Wopata's parents were Josef and Agnes Beranek. (My grandparents) My grandfather's full name was Josef Beranek, Jr. He was born July 4, 1871 in Moravia Okrea Novi Miste Republic, Czechoslovakia. I believe he lived in Nove Mesto, Moravia, before coming to America in 1883. Nove Mesto, Moravia, is near Prague. He died in 1928.



My grandmother's maiden name was Agnes Klima. She was born April 21, 1876 in Lisna (Leas Nerm), Moravia. She came to America with her parents in 1886. Her family settled in the Humbolt area. Grandma Klima spoke broken English. Czech was spoken in the home. Agnes Beranek died in 1965.

Josef and Agnes Beranek were buried in the Czech National Cemetery located 7 miles east of Pawnee City.

Josef and Agnes Beranek had 5 daughters and one son.



- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| Bessie (Beranek) Hubka | 1896-1981 |
| Annie Beranek (Bessie's twin sister who died when she was about 2 in 1896) | |
| Minnie (Beranek) Hubka | 1898-1992 |
| Helen (Beranek) Kotalik | 1900-1974 |
| Mollie (Beranek) Wopata | 1903-1988 (my mom) |
| Otto Beranek | 1910 - 1954 |



Front row Otto, Agnes, Josef.
Back row Minnie, Mollie, Helen, Bessie



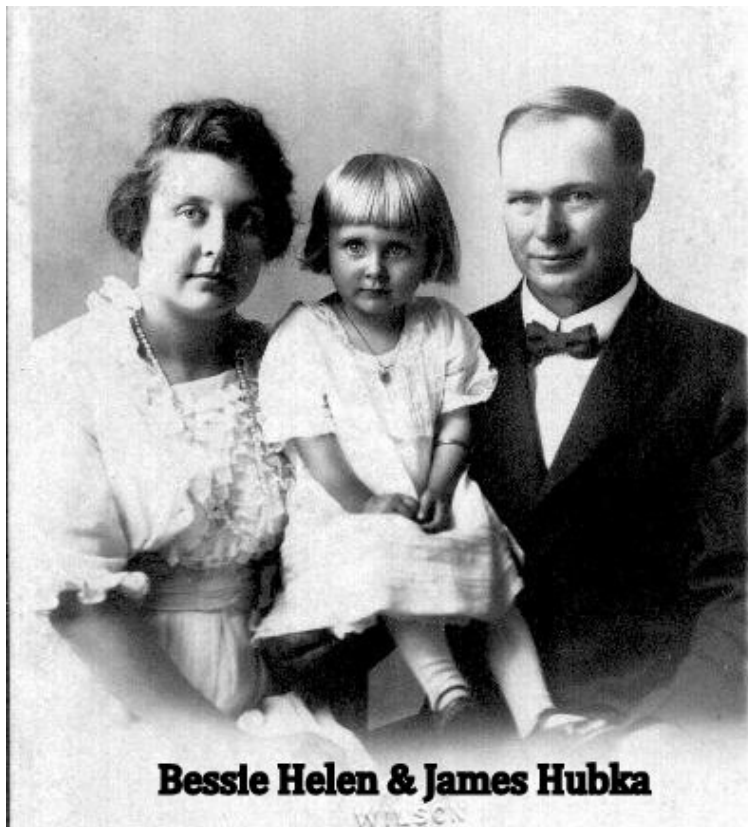
Agnes with her 4 daughters.
L to R: Minnie Hubka, Mollie Wopata, Agnes Beranek, Helen Kotalik, & Bessie Hubka.



Gene Wopata and his children with his mother and grandmother.
L to R: Agnes Beranek, Steve, Susan, Mollie, Gene, John. (1958)

Mom's oldest sister Bessie married James Hubka. They had a daughter Helen, and she was like a big sister to me. She was eight years older than me. I saw her more frequently than other relatives because these Hubkas usually lived nearby.

Aunt Bessie had a twin sister who died at an early age.



Bessie Hubka and Helen Zelenka
(mother/daughter).



Helen married Arnold Zelenka. I took my cousin Helen on a Caribbean Cruise in 1997 a few weeks after Evelyn died.

Mollie Beranek Wopata had a sister named Bessie who married James Hubka. They are standing in this picture.

Mom's other sister Minnie married Ferdinand Hubka. They are sitting in this picture. They had a daughter Vendeline Mae who died as an infant.

James and Ferdinand Hubka were cousins.



Ferdinand and Minnie Hubka



Minnie (pictured) and Mollie were very close. In Pawnee City they lived near each other. Later in life they shared a room at the Pawnee City Manor.

Mom's sister Helen married James Kotalik. They had daughters Betty and Alice. Both were younger than me. We did not get together very often when I was growing up because they lived near Table Rock.

Betty married Jack Mahoney. They had a daughter Lucinda who married Chris Dowding, and they have Brayden and Kiersten. I went on a conducted tour of the Czech Republic with Betty in the summer of 1997.

Alice married Don Siske. They had a daughter Holly.



Betty & Alice



Betty Mahoney



Alice Siske



Alice & Don Siske, Betty Mahoney



My mom, Mollie Wopata, was the youngest girl in her family. Mollie did not have a middle name.



Frank & Mollie Wopata

My mother's brother, Otto Beranek, was born Jan. 4, 1910 and died May 11, 1954. He never married. My dad and he cut timber together.



My Father's Ancestry

Frank Wopata's father (my grandfather) was Albert Wopata II who was born March 15, 1846 in the village of Studena, country of Kralavice, state of Plzen in Bohemia then under the Austro-Hungarian rule. After serving six years in the Austro-Hungarian army Albert went to Hamburg, Germany and from there he sailed for America in August, 1871. After the boat docked in Brooklyn, New York he went to Chicago, Illinois where he stayed with a half-sister, Mrs. Kokes. He died July 31, 1923. He married twice.

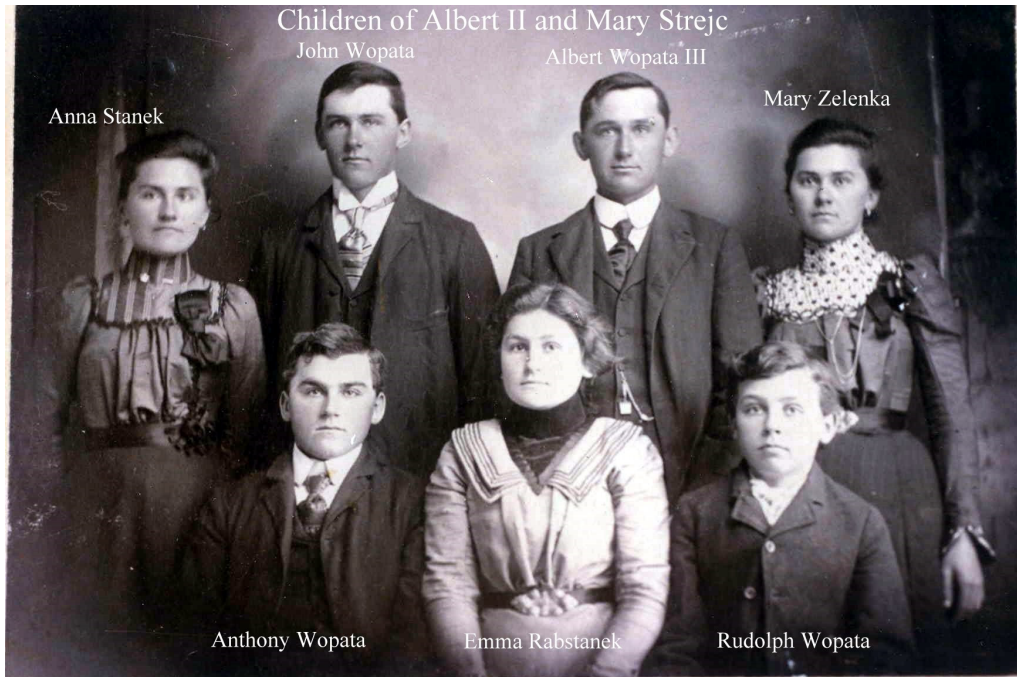


Albert Wopata II's first wife was Mary Jane Strejc. Mary was born Dec. 31, 1855 and died Sept. 8, 1889.

Their seven children were:

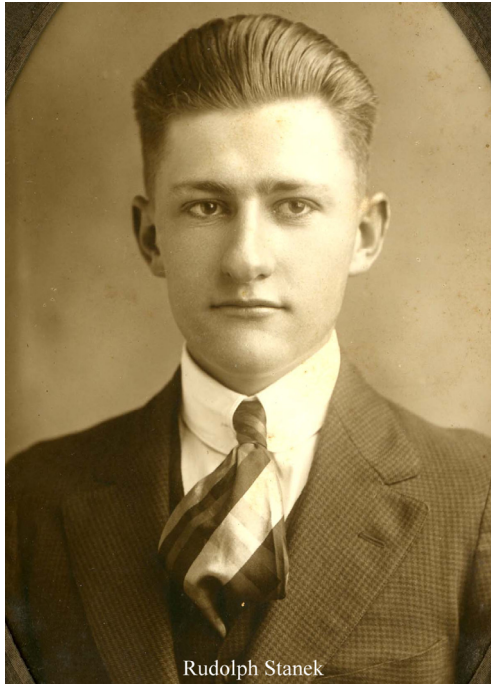
Anna Wopata (1875 - 1971)
Albert R. Wopata III (1877- 1943)
Mary Josie Zelenka (1880 – 1961)
John J. Wopata (1881 – 1962)

Anthony Wopata (1884 – 1905)
Rudolph S. Wopata (1887 – 1947)
Emma Rabstenek (1885 – 1972)



Aunt Anna Wopata (1875-1971) married Albert Stanek. (1879-1910). They had four children: Rudolph, Helen, Mary and Albert.





Rudolph Arthur Stanek (1899-1979) married but had no children.



Mary Stanek (1904-2004) married Lawrence Lichtenham. They had no children.



Helen Stanek (1902-1965) married Victor Cacek. They had a daughter Shirley Ann who married Chauncey Aksamit. They had a son Gary Dwight.





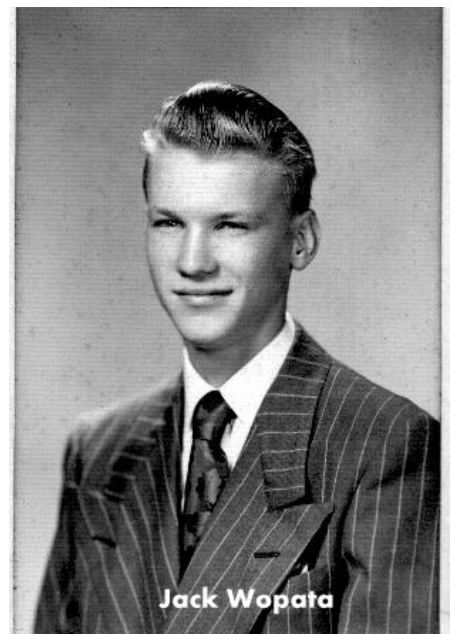
Albert A. Stanek Jr. (1909-1990) married Thelma Noland, and they had no children.



Albert R. Wopata III (1877-1943) married Anna Zelenka (1881-1909) on Feb 25, 1902.



They had a son Jesse, (1903-1963) who married Minnie Tenk. Jesse and Minnie had a son Jack Wopata and daughter Joyce Wopata.



Jack Wopata married Gayle Chesness, and they had daughters Marcelle and Julie. Marcelle married Barry Miles, and they have sons Alexander, Griffith and Xavier. Julie married Jesse Dominic Renollet, and they had a son Calan.

Jack Wopata's second wife was named Faith Samuelson, and they had sons Joshua and Scott. They are the only Wopatats left on that side of the family. Scott married Allyson Flinch in 2004. Jack was an anthropology teacher and was living with Barbara Cameran. He died in a hospice care center Dec. 16, 2009.



Joyce Wopata Newton

Joyce Ann Wopata married Robert Newton (now divorced). Joyce is a Clinical Pharmacist in Iowa. They had a son Rob and a daughter Christine. Rob lives in West Des Moines. Christine is married and lives in Denver.

Albert R. Wopata III's second wife was Mary Hruska Scott, known as (little Mary).

Mary Josie Wopata (1880-1961) married William Zelenka. They had sons Rudolph, Anthony and Arnold. Rudolph married Hulda Kuhlman, and they had no children. Anthony married Jane Tenk. They had a son Richard Allen Zelenka, who lives in Arizona. Arnold married Helen Hubka, my first cousin.

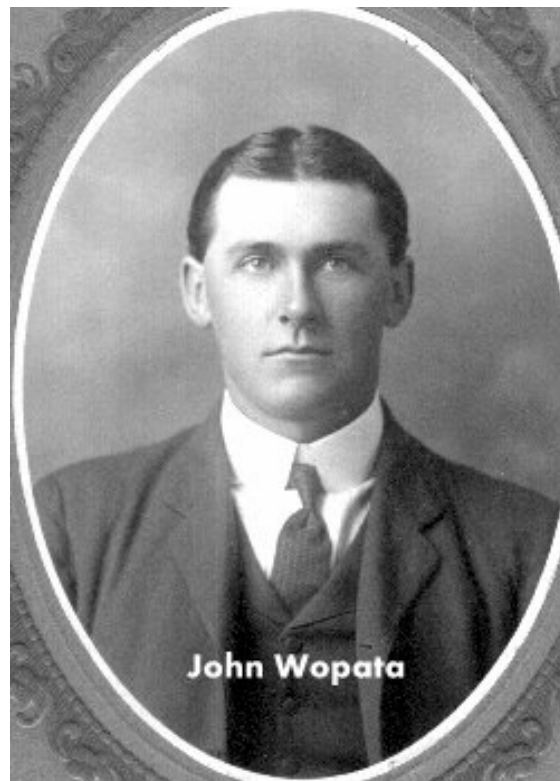




Arnold and Helen Zelenka

They had a son James and daughter Janice. James married Vickie Boehmer, and they had Jennifer, Peter James and Mary Jane. Janice married Raymond Daniel, and they had no children. Janice died Dec. 20, 2000.

John J. Wopata (1881-1962).
He was killed six miles east
of Humboldt, NE. He never married.



Anthony Wopata (1883-1905). He was killed in an accident in Oklahoma.



Rudolph Sylvester Wopata was born Dec. 31, 1887 and died Jan. 1, 1947. He married Mary Petrsek. They had a daughter Velma who married Ernest Mach.

Emma Wopata (1885-1972) married Charles Rabstejnek. They had a son Phillip who married Willa Rickman. They had sons Charles, Rick and Randal.

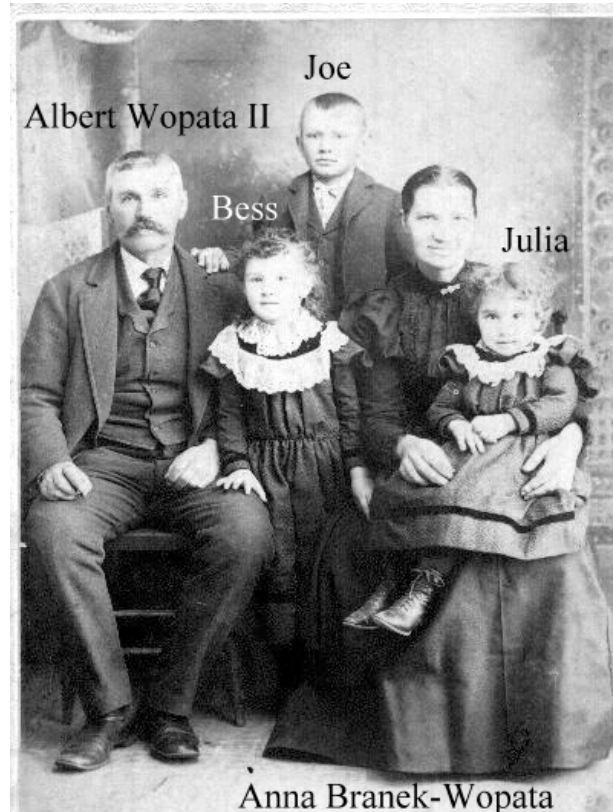


Phillip & Willa Rabstejnek.

Albert II married his second wife, Anna Branek, who was born August 29, 1861 in Owen Sound Ontario, Canada, and died July 6, 1924.

Albert II and Anna Wopata were buried at the Table Rock cemetery east of town. They had four children:

Joseph Fredrick Wopata	1891 - 1970
Hellen "Bess" (Wopata) Farrar	1894 - 1992
Julia Barbara (Wopata) Blecha	1897 - 1995
Frank Louis Wopata (my dad)	1901 - 1982



This is a picture of Joe Wopata, Bess Farrar, Julia Blecha and Frank Wopata (my dad).



Joseph Fredrick Wopata (1891-1970) first wife was Frederica Petrasek. She was born Sept. 24, 1896. After Frederica died, he married Veronica A Colling. They had daughters Helen A Wopata who married William A. Margrave. Their adopted daughter Arlene Mae Wopata married Jack Pesek.



Joe and Frederica Wopata

Hellen "Bess" Wopata (1894-1992) married Elmer Farrar. They had one son, Russell Dwain Farrar.



Elmer and Bess Farrar



Elmer, Bess, and Russell Farrar



Russ married Anne Salva. Russell died August 25, 2009. They had a daughter Janet Lynn who married Eugene Frank Czyzewski. They had a son Russell Alan who was killed in an auto accident. The Farrar's all lived in Denver, Colorado.

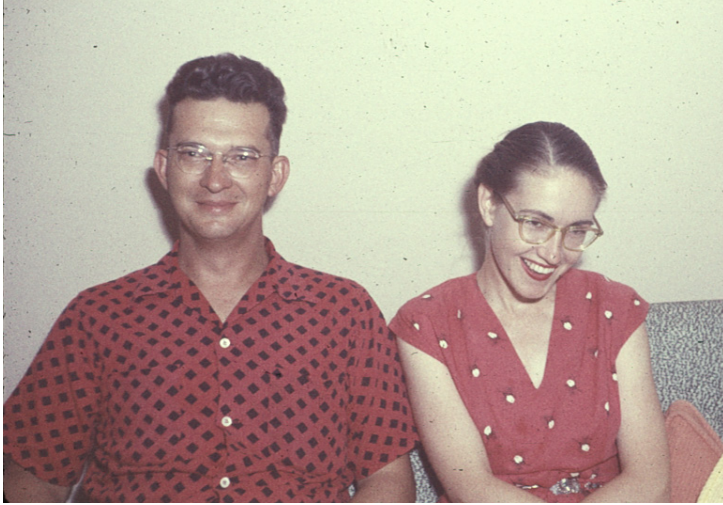
Julia Barbara Wopata (1897 – 1995) married Louis Blecha. They had one son, Arvid Dwight Blecha. Arvid married Anita.



Julia Blecha



Arvid Blecha



Arvid & Anita lived in Denver, Colorado. They had no children.

Frank Louis Wopata (1901-1982) married Mollie Beranek on April 8, 1925. He was the youngest in this family, and he was my father.



My dad, Frank L. Wopata



My parents, Frank and Mollie Wopata

I was watching the Susan Orman TV show recently that emphasized the importance of getting records in order. Of course, she primarily was referring to financial records. I thought of something else, because I saw a Wopata Family Bible on the shelf behind the TV set. I have taken some notes and collected a lot of pictures over the years. I can identify most of them, but I am sure my children would have some trouble. Especially since my children have never even met some of these people. Another thing that dawned on me, I am the oldest Wopata living in the world. This will be discussed later. I wish to start out with the Bible. It is in pretty bad shape. It was given to me by Anita Blecha, who was the wife of Arvid Blecha. Arvid inherited it from his mother Julia Blecha who was my dad's sister. I assume Julia inherited it from her parents, who were Albert Wopata II and Anna Branek Wopata. I think Julia is the one who recorded the events in the Bible.

The Marriage Certificate included in this Bible states

Mr. Albert Wopata and Miss Anna Branek
Were Solemnly United by me in Holy Matrimony
At Steinauer on the twenty-first
Day of October in the Year of Our Lord
One Thousand Eight Hundred and 90
Conformably to the Ordinance of GOD and the Laws of
The Land
In presence of Joseph Strejc and Mary Neidela

On the page **Family Record Marriages** were the following:

Joseph Branek Mary Burgert March 16, 1889
Hellen Branek Frank A Wenzl May 28, 1889
Edward Branek Emma M Wenzl November 10, 1897
Anna Wopata Albert Stanek Married February 9, 1897
Mary Branek Joseph Fritz May 7, 1901
Albert Wopata Anna Zelenka married February 25, 1902
Mary Wopata William Zelenka December 30, 1903
Rudolph S Wopata Mary M Petrashek September 26, 1912
Joseph Wopata Veronica Colling January 7, 1914
Emma Wopata Chas. Rabstejnek March 18, 1914
Julia B Wopata Louis R Blecha December 16, 1919
Bessie H Wopata Elmer Farrar September 21, 1921
Joseph Wopata Fredrica Petrashek July 16, 1949
Frank L. Wopata Mollie Beranek April 8, 1925

On the page Family Record Births

Albert Wopata born March 15, 1846
Anna Wopata born August 29, 1862
Joseph Wopata born September 4, 1891
Hellen B Wopata born August 20, 1894
Julia B Wopata born January 25, 1897
Frank L Wopata born October 7, 1901
Veranica A Wopata born November 16, 1892
Helen A Wopata born March 21, 1915
Arlene Mae Wopata born March 1, 1927
Anna Wopata born August 29, 1862
Joseph Branek born November 20, 1866
Kate Branek born April 4, 1868
Helen Wenzl born February 23, 1873
Edward Branek born April 5, 1875
Barbara Branek born June 20, 1878
Frank Branek born December 20, 1880
Mary Fritz born March 1, 1881
Johnnie Branek born May 23, 1885
Barbara Branek born October 20, 1841
John Branek born December 27, 1838

ANCESTRY OF EUGENE WOPATA

BARTA VOPAT-- BORN 1611 REMESIN
MOVED TO CERNIKOVICE 1651

BARTA VOPAT JR. & ONDREJ VOPAT

MATEJ KOUKL VOPAT

MARTIN VOPAT--SON OF MATEJ
DIED IN 1747

JIRI VOPAT--SON OF MARTIN
MARRIED KATERINA

JOSEF VOPAT--SON OF JIRI, BORN 1725 IN CERNIKOVICE,
DIED IN STUDENA, WAS FOUNDER OF STUDENA VOPATS

VACLAV VOPATA-- BORN 1764
MARRIED BARBORA JAKUBEK

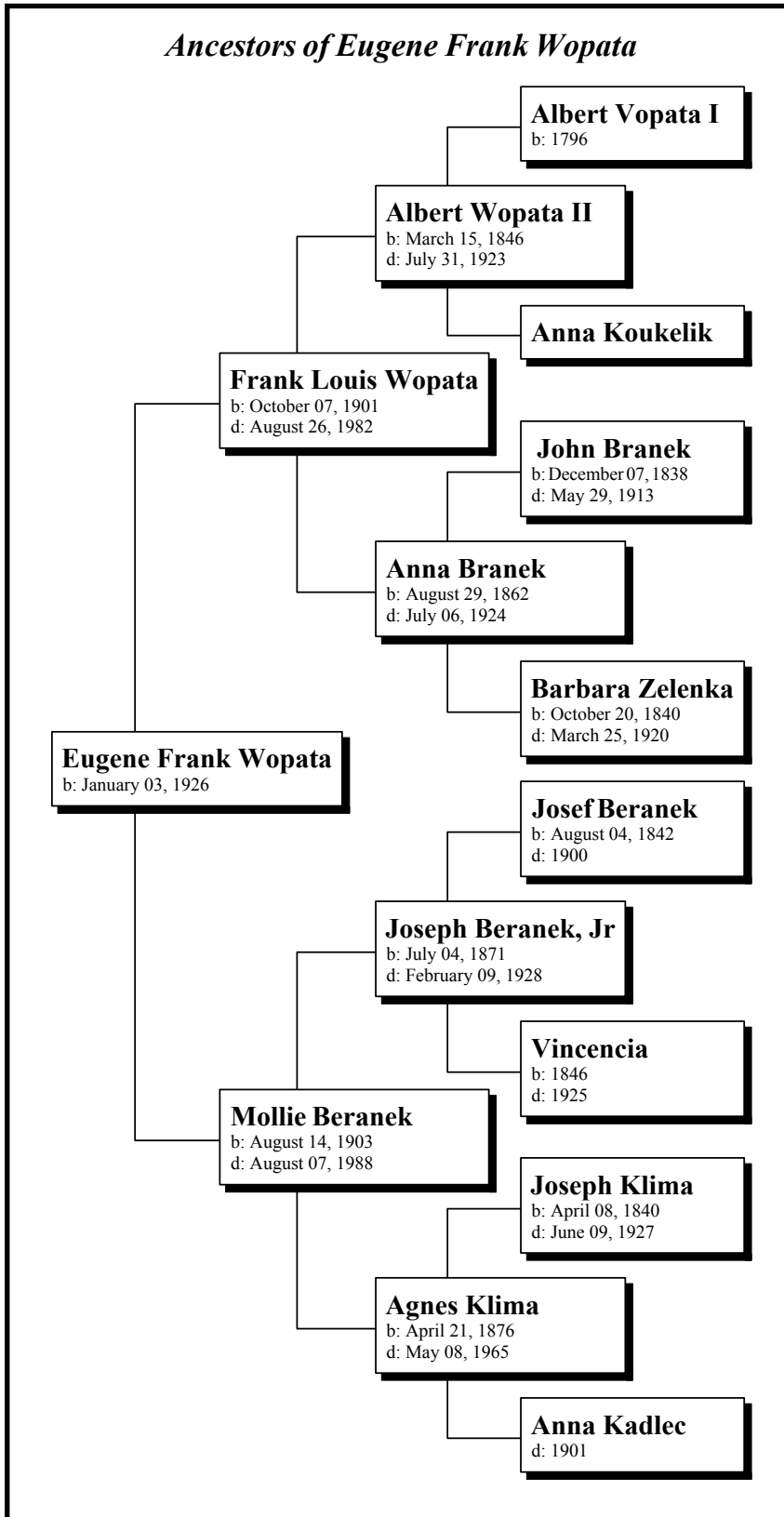
VOJTECH (ALBERT) VOPATA-- BORN 1797
MARRIED ANNA KOUKELIK

VOJTECH (ALBERT) VOPATA II-- 1846-1923

FRANK WOPATA-- BORN 1901
MARRIED MOLLIE

EUGENE WOPATA-- BORN 1926
TABLE ROCK, NEBRASKA

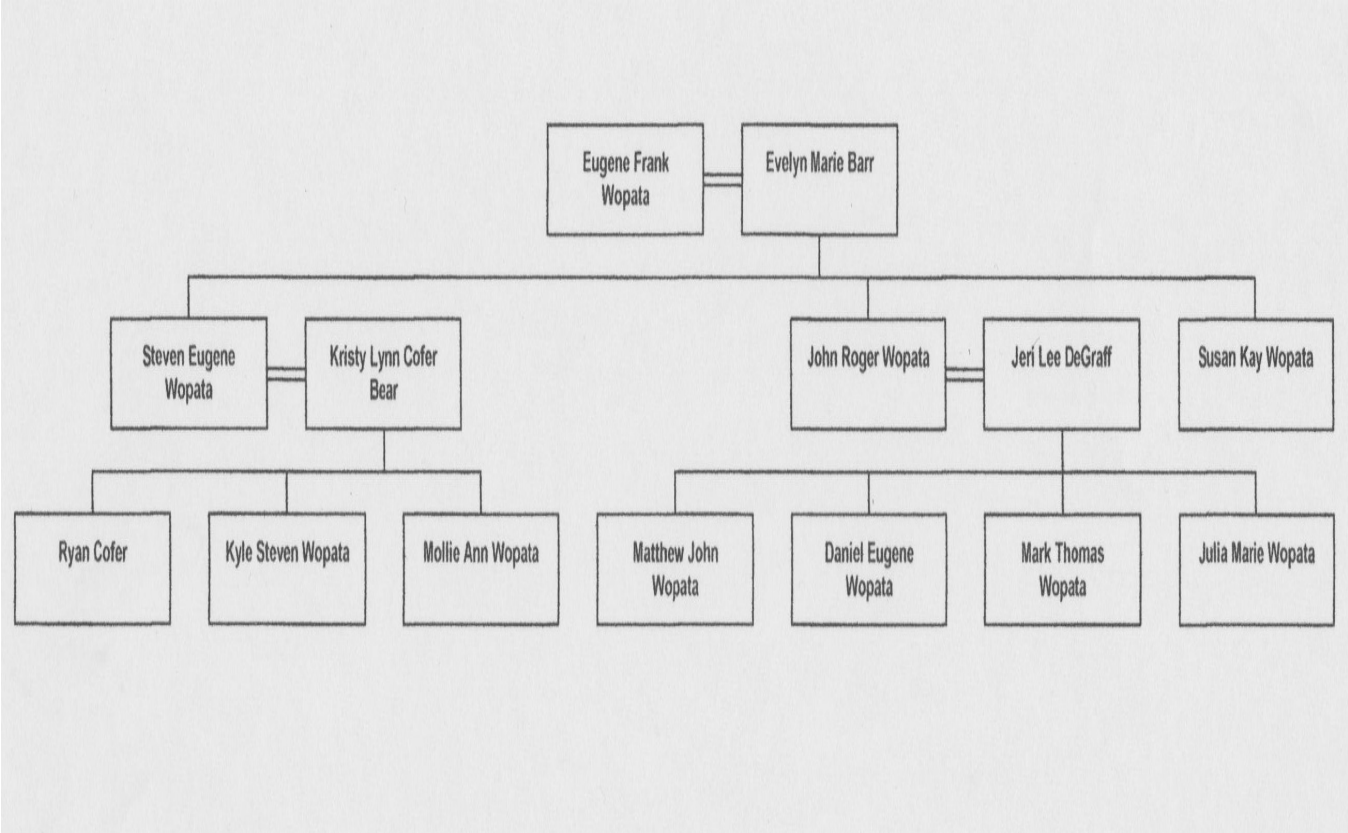
6. Ancestry Tree



Notes written by Mollie Wopata

Since Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Beranek already had four lively darling daughters the first ones being twins Bessie and Annie. Annie lived for only two years. Then about two years later chubby little Minnie arrived. When they expected another baby no doubt the parents were hoping the next one would be a boy. But it was Mollie. When she looked at them with her big blue eyes, they decided one more daughter would be nice. She grew up to be quite a tomboy; anyway she loved to climb trees, windmills, and high roofs. Strange as it may seem, she never had a broken bone in her life. My parents lived in the village of Dubois, Nebraska, where my father owned a delivery barn. Horse and buggies were the only taxi service there was in those days. Dad had a couple of rigs so that he wouldn't have to be on the road all the time. He would let the hired man go too, at least part of the time. A few years later father traded the barn for a farm northeast of Dubois. In about 1909, we moved to a 120-acre farm northwest of Dubois, where our brother Otto was born in 1910. The farm was 3 miles from town and about $1 \frac{1}{4}$ miles from our country school where I started to go to school at the age of seven. I was a very shy little girl and I still remember how bad I felt when I had to stand up and recite before the class. I always felt like crying, but I had a very good understanding teacher. She used to take me on her lap and made me feel better. There was another boy in my class that felt the same way. He always cried. We lived $1 \frac{1}{4}$ miles from the North Star School. My sisters and neighbor children all walked together to school in nice weather. In bad weather, our parents would take turns in taking or getting us from school. I'd always be glad when I looked outside and saw a team of white horses tied to the tree with a carriage. Then I knew it was dad waiting for us. My father's mother and his sister lived near the schoolhouse, just down the hill. So sometimes in real bad weather we stayed there. My sister Minnie still remembers the good pumpkin pies we had there.

Descendant Chart for Eugene Frank Wopata



7. My Birthplace in Table Rock, Nebraska

I was born in the McCrea Hospital in Table Rock, NE, on January 3, 1926. The hospital was located one block west of the water standpipe in Table Rock. Dr. Edward Lee McCrea operated the hospital from 1900 to 1951. The building was torn down in 1991.



Old Hospital - Just A Memory

By Paula Jasa

After almost a century since it was built, the first known hospital and nursing home in Table Rock has been torn down. Even though the structure hasn't been used very much recently, residents of Table Rock remember when the building was a thriving business.

From 1900 to 1951, Dr. Edward Lee McCrea was noted to be the only practicing physician in Table Rock's first hospital. Dr. McCrea and his wife, Eliza, moved to Table Rock just after he graduated from the University Medical College in Kansas City, Mo.

In 1918, Dr. McCrea moved his office to the hospital, where he added another story and a porch to the building. After the improvements, the hospital was known to be one of the most

complete hospital buildings in any little city. He had examining rooms and the medical dispensary on the south end of the main floor, operating rooms and hospital rooms on the second floor, and bedrooms on the third floor. Even with the lack of modern medicines and techniques, Dr. McCrea performed difficult operations on patients with serious ailments, including appendicitis, and saved many lives.

In 1938, on their 50th Anniversary, Dr. and "Mother" McCrea received a quilt that listed the names of the 302 children that he delivered in Pawnee County. Thirteen years later, he passed away at the age of 86 years old. Dr. McCrea was commended with boosting the progress of the Table Rock building boom.

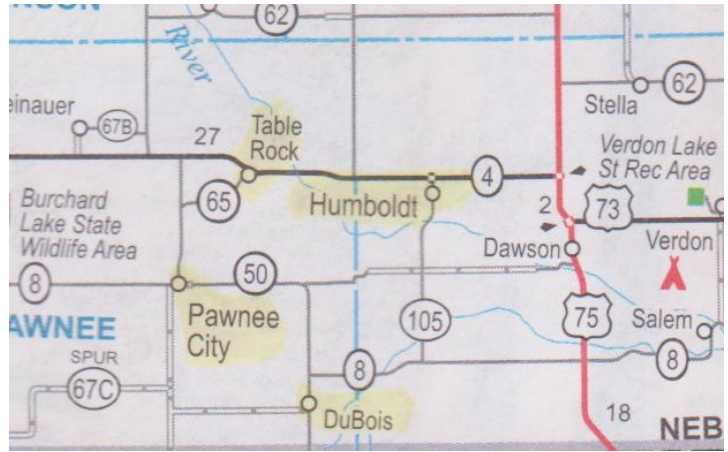
After Dr. McCrea's death, the building was improved once again with the addition of the east sun porch. Most of the remaining years thereafter the building was used as a nursing home for the elderly and the ownership changed hands several times until it was finally closed down.

Most recently the building had been used during the Halloween season. It made a perfect setting for a haunted house and had been used as a frightful setting by both the Methodist Youth Fellowship and the Table Rock-Steinauer High School students.

Although the building wasn't one of Table Rock's historical sites, people remember the many years of service and care that both the hospital and nursing home provided.

8. Farm Home North of Table Rock

The first home I lived in was on a farm two miles north of Table Rock. This was a white two-story house. The kitchen was in the back of the house, and the living room was in the front half. The two bedrooms were upstairs. The wood-burning kitchen stove was near the center of the first floor. There was a pump outside near the back of the house. No doubt, there was a garden because both Dad and Mom were good gardeners.



This picture of the house was taken in 1996.

Dad met Mom at a dance in Table Rock. Mom worked in the hospital as a bookkeeper. Dad rode a horse to visit Mom during their courting years. That wasn't so bad when she stayed in Table Rock, because Dad lived just a couple of miles north of town. To visit her when she was home on the Beranek farm, however, was a different story. Ten plus miles on a horse would be a little tiring.

I do not remember much of the Table Rock farm. When I was about three or four I had a close call with a big sow. Apparently, I followed Dad down to the hog pen, which was near the barn. Dad happened to see me after the huge sow had knocked me down and straddled me with her front legs. The sow was about to chew on an ear, and it wasn't corn.

I had my appendix removed when I was six years old. I vaguely remember the event. I didn't like the smell of the ether, and so I was told to blow it away. I took the advice seriously and really took deep breaths to blow the stuff away. The harder I blew, the more I inhaled the ether. As a result I don't remember much else. After a week in the hospital, the first thing I did when I came home was climb up in the haymow of the barn. The folks found me just as I was to make a ten-foot jump into the hay. Needless to say, Mom was very upset when she found me.



This picture of the barn was taken in 1996.

Dad inherited the Wopata family farm. He raised cattle in addition to farming the 160 acres. He apparently borrowed money to buy the cattle. When the cattle prices dropped, he suffered a big loss. As a result, he had to downsize his farming. He traded his 160- acre farm for an 80-acre farm northwest of DuBois in 1933.

9. Farm Home Northwest of Dubois, Nebraska

We moved to an 80-acre farm northwest of DuBois when I was about seven. It was a small house on a dirt road. There was a small barn, which had stalls for the two horses. Also, there was a chicken house, cattle shed and an implement shed. Most of the land was tillable. There were about 15 acres of pastureland in the back part of the 80 acres. The house was rather small. Most of the rooms had linoleum-covered floors. We did not have running water, a furnace or electricity. There was an outhouse in back of the house, which is the white structure shown on the right side of this picture. It was a two-hole facility, and pages of the Sears catalog were used for tissue.



This view of the house is looking north from the road. The southwest room was the combination dining and living room. It was usually used for company. The folks' bedroom was in the southeast corner of the house. Theirs was the only room that had a closet. The kitchen was in the northwest corner of the house. We normally ate in the kitchen where the table was in the middle of the room. My bedroom was in the northeast corner of the house. It was the smallest room and was about nine by ten feet. There were two small rooms upstairs. The ceilings in these upstairs storage rooms were low. An adult could not stand up erectly. Access to the stairs was in the kitchen near the stove. Sitting on these stairs was a good place to sit to get warm when the weather was cold. There was a small porch on the north (or backside) of the house.

There was a cellar under part of the house. You had to go outside and enter the cellar from the east side of the house. The cellar had stone walls and an arched stone roof. This is where the home canned food was kept. It was a cool place. It was also a safe place to go in case of a storm or tornado. It was used for storm protection a couple times a year. We never experienced a tornado, but we did have lots of high winds.

There usually were washable throw rugs at both outside doors. I had a single bed. In the winter, I slept on a feather bed. This is a huge quilt like thing that was full of goose feathers. I covered myself with a blanket and quilt. Mom made the quilt by sewing pieces of salvaged cloth

from old clothing. It was rather thick and heavy. It was a bit of a struggle to turn while on the feather bed and with the quilt on top.

The folks had a double bed. The only other furniture in their room was a four-drawer dresser (which I still have in my basement) and a vanity. They did not have any nightstands. They had the only closet in the house. There were a couple of wooden chairs in their room.

The telephone was on the south wall of the kitchen. This was the type that you cranked to get the operator. Several people in the neighborhood were on the same line. If the telephone would ring two longs and a short, that was a signal the call was for the Wopatas. Of course, everyone on our line could listen to the conversation; in other words, it was a party line. You might say that was our entertainment. I remember sharing the receiver with mom and listening to the neighbors' conversations.

We did not have electricity in the house. Our radio was in the living room. It was a battery-operated device that used a 6-volt car battery plus another battery. This was the only entertainment center in the house. It was used rather sparingly. We did not stay up late because the light was furnished by kerosene burning lamps. We had a couple of Aladdin lamps, which produced a brighter light because they had mantles. I still have some of these lamps.

There was a sink on the west side of the kitchen. The water well was 50 feet north of the house. It was necessary to carry water to the house. The sink drained into a large bucket on the outside located on the west side of the kitchen.

The mail was delivered to the mailbox out by the road. The mail came usually before noon. We didn't get much mail.

We did not have a doorbell. Cars were rather noisy in those days. You would hear when company came. That usually ended up in a scramble to pick up the house to make it somewhat presentable. The stuff would be put in my room because it was out of normal view. The house was never locked. The lock on the front door had a key, but the lock was rather common and used a so-called skeleton key. The back door didn't even have a lock.

The lawn in front of the house didn't grow very fast. It was mowed using a push type reel mower. There were flowers along the fence by the driveway. These were mostly irises and peonies. They have been divided and moved several times. I still have some of these plants here at the Markham house.

The vegetable garden was on the downhill or east side of the house. The folks raised lots of beans, radishes, onions, peas, cucumbers, grapes, corn, potatoes, strawberries and lettuce. I spent lots of time pulling the weeds. When I picked the peas, I probably ate a fourth of the harvest. Looking for ripe strawberries took a lot of bending, but that provided good eating too. Dad would use a horse to plow up the potatoes. That usually was a big day -- pawing through the dirt to find the potatoes, taking them up to the house and putting them in the cellar.

I don't remember the summers being very hot, but they must have been, since there was no air conditioning. We didn't even have any fans. I would just lie on the bed near the window and listen to the locusts and other night sounds. During the day I didn't wear much, just a shirt and overalls. I seldom had any underwear, and went barefoot a lot.

The winters were cold. I did some sleigh riding, but not too much since I was alone. I still have the sled. I spent a lot of time close to the kitchen stove, sitting on the steps that went to the attic.

Dad was a farmer during his younger years. On the DuBois farm, he used two horses to pull the plow, corn planter, mower, seed drill, wagon and other farm equipment. Dad was a big man in good physical condition. I believe the current day description would refer to him as a "hunk." He was real handy with an axe. That is what he used to cut down a tree, say up to 12 inches in diameter. He would usually use a large crosscut saw for bigger trees. Some times I would get on the other end of the saw. That didn't last long because I was not able to keep up pulling at his rate of speed. The wood was used for heating and cooking. Otto Beranek, mom's brother, and dad usually cut wood together. They cut down the trees in Grandma Beranek's timber, which was a mile west of our house. This land is now known as Iron Horse Lake. Uncle Otto had an old model-T Ford that was used to power the saw, which had a large diameter (about 30 inches) blade. The car was stripped and was basically a frame with wheels and an engine. The right rear wheel had a pulley attached to it, which was used to drive the saw with a flat belt. Dad would pick up the rear end of the car so that Uncle Otto could put a block of wood under the axle to keep the wheel off the ground.

One day I escaped a near disaster. I was probably eight years old when Dad had gone to the timber without me. I walked over later. I came up behind Dad while he was notching or cutting a "V" on the tree. He was using a double-bladed axe. On his back swing, he hit me in the chest. Fortunately, it was with the side of the axe and not one of the sharp edges. Also, if it had been a foot higher, it would have hit me in the head. The blow knocked me down. My winter coat cushioned the blow. It was a real shock to Dad and me. That taught me to be careful around people who are working.

In the 1930's, money was scarce. Dad and Otto would cut down the trees, saw up the logs into 15-inch long pieces, load the wood in a wooden grain wagon and haul the wood to DuBois to the grocery store for 3 dollars a load. The horses pulling the wagon seemed to have a lot more energy going home and would trot. I would sit on the floor of the wagon. The steel rimmed wheels seemed to hit every rock and bump in the road. I would usually end up with a sore bottom. Dad was a very honest man. After one of these trips to town to deliver wood, Dad discovered the man at the store had made a mistake of a dime in Dad's favor. Although it was nearly dark, Dad wanted to go back to town (two miles) to correct the mistake, but Mom convinced him to wait till the next day, which he did.

About a half-mile south of the house was a timber with a nice creek. This is where I went fishing. I had to cross a field of corn, cross a railroad track, which resulted in crawling through three fences. The fishing pole was cut from a small skinny tree. I would then leave it by the fence, so I wouldn't have to make a pole the next time I went fishing. Before I went fishing, I would dig up some worms in the garden or pick them up from under boards in the farmyard. I

used a cork float and a hook and small nut (from a bolt) as a sinker. Dad taught me the finer arts of fishing; Patience. I was very proud when I came home with four or more 12-inch yellow belly bullheads.

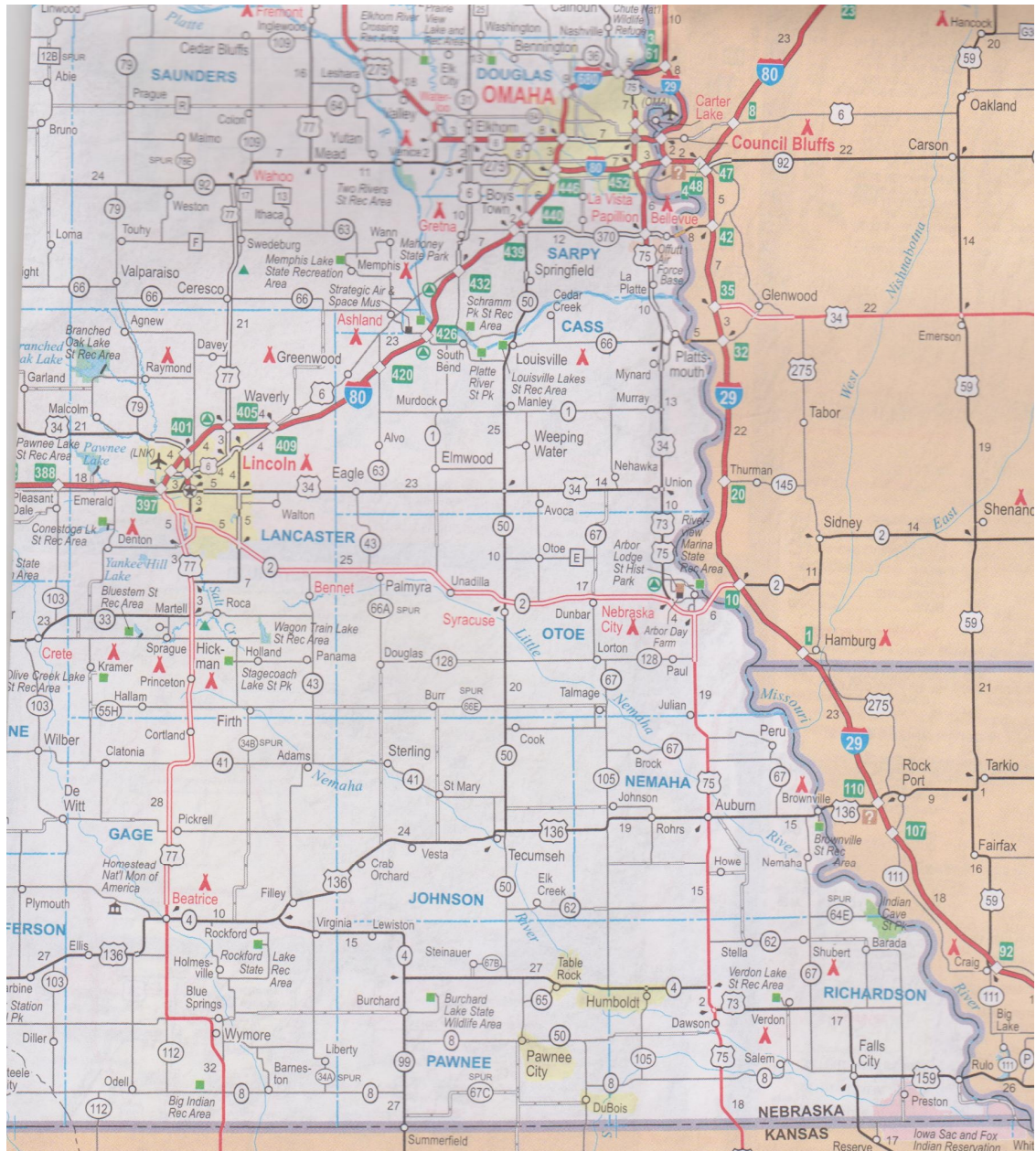
I know my parents loved me very much. Even after being a teenager, they let me do lots of dangerous things. At least I would have classified them dangerous when my kids were growing up. The fishing trip mentioned is an example. It was a rather tiring half-mile walk across the fields to the fishing hole. Also the banks of the creek around the fishing hole were rather steep, and I couldn't swim a stroke. Need I say more?

Grandma Beranek and Uncle Otto Beranek (1910-1954) lived a mile west of us. Grandma was a pretty good cook. She could bake the best rye bread in 12-inch diameter loaves.

Grandma walked over to our place quite often. Uncle Otto would disappear for several days a couple times every year. I would say he should have been called an alcoholic. During these periods, Grandma would come over every day. She would be very upset. Grandma needed to talk to someone. Mom and Grandma always conversed in Czech. When Uncle Otto was gone, Grandma would have to milk the cows and do the other chores herself. Oddly enough, the chores would all be done before she would come to our house. I enjoyed going over to her house. They had a player piano. Uncle Otto could play the piano, the fiddle and the accordion. Uncle Otto also made a tube type radio. He really was very good at making and repairing things. Dad was good at fixing things, too.



Grandma Beranek and my mom, Mollie



10. Filling Station at the Humboldt Corner

When I was about 11, we moved to the Dawson, NE, area to operate the filling station. We lived upstairs. The filling station is located at the intersection of State Road 4 and U.S. 73-75 highways, known as the Humboldt Corner.



This building still stands, but it has been moved since I lived in it. It is hard to believe that we lived in such a small place. This filling station also served as a flag stop for the Greyhound buses.

The front half of this building had a display case for candy, cigarettes, some groceries, etc. We also sold sandwiches and beverages. There was a small room on the north part for the storage of tires, inner tubes and fan belts; the back part was a



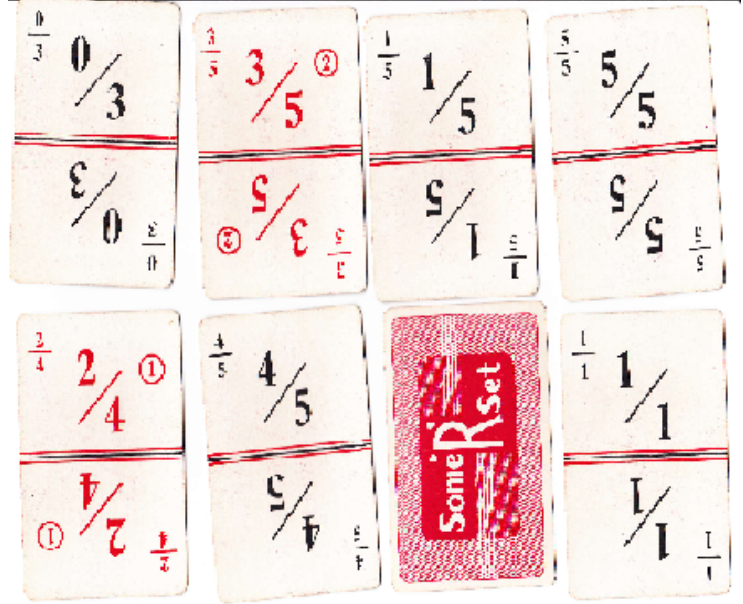
kitchen and an enclosed porch. There was a sink on the east wall of the kitchen. The drain went to a bucket outside. Most of the stuff in the bucket was used to water the garden area. The kitchen stove used bottled or propane gas. We had a 32-volt generator, which was used in the evening for lights and to provide power for the motor on the compressor on the air tank.

These pictures show the gravity type gasoline pumps. You manually pumped the gasoline to fill the glass container, and then the gasoline flowed by gravity through a hose into the car's gas tank. This glass container would hold ten gallons of gasoline. There was a metal marker inside of the bowl to permit dispensing in units of gallons. As you see in the pictures, coupes were rather common.



I did not have any neighborhood playmates when I lived north of Table Rock or northwest of DuBois. When I lived in the filling station, I played with the O'Grady boys who lived across the highway. Mark Drake was one of my better friends, and he lived a quarter of a mile east. He drowned in a farm pond when I was in the eighth grade. Ronald Hill lived a half mile south, and we were in the same grade in country school. He moved away before I started to high school. We made little wheelbarrows with small boxes so that we could haul things around. We would make engine noises with our mouths and chased each other around like a racetrack. Then we all got bicycles. We rode our bikes up and down the road and highway. It's a wonder a car or truck didn't hit us. We even built ramps, which would permit us fly through the air. This also was our means of transportation to the Grand Avenue Country School, which was one and one-half miles west of the filling station. We liked to play in the O'Grady's barn. It was a large barn with lots of hiding places. It was fun to play in the hay and the grain bins. There were lots of dark places, and that made it a little spooky. We bought comic books and traded them. They were pretty crumpled after everyone in the neighborhood had read them. Jumping rope did not go over very big nor did marbles. We did dig caves or holes and cover them with boards. We also built tree houses. It really was more of a platform with roof and one side made of cloth. I do not remember being sick in my youth.

My folks played (some'Rset) cards with the Drakes at the filling station. At times, I would get to play if dad had to go pump gas or wait on someone. I also played caroms with Mom. We did have some good games.



The lights provided by batteries were rather dim. I went to the basement to start the generator so we would have lights for the building. The basement was spooky even with electricity. I would usually go to the basement in the dark and feel my way around to the generator. Then I would reach into a metal box and move a lever, which would cause a significant spark. This was a rather crude switch that started the gasoline engine. I usually came up from the basement two steps at a time.

When I was 11 or 12, I was talked into joining the Boy Scouts and went to Scout Camp about a month later. The weeklong camp was located south of Lincoln, which was 70 miles from home. It rained the whole time I was there. I was in a small tent with a dirt floor. My tent mate didn't show up. That was a real bummer. I was sure glad to get home to a dry bed and mom's good cooking. That was my first stay away from home, and it was not good.

Mom's favorite magazine was the "Kitchen Klatter," a weekly publication from Shenandoah, Iowa. The ladies that wrote the articles also had a radio show that was a "must" to listen to at our house. Dad spent most of his time reading "Successful Farming" and "Popular Mechanics." The "Dawson Herald" and the "Pawnee Republican" were the weekly newspapers. The "Omaha World-Herold" was the daily paper.

11. Country Schools -- Bunker Hill, Union, and Grand Avenue

I was five years old when I started to school in September 1931 at Bunker Hill School, District No. 65. It was located three miles north of Table Rock, NE. My teacher was Erma Belle Harlow. The school did not offer kindergarten, so the beginners went directly into Grade One. I do not remember this school, but it was a one-room school house. I went to this school for seven months. My parents spoke Czech in the home, and I did not speak English when I started to school.

ALBERTA COUNTY
Alberta Ballance
Superintendent

Eugene Wopata
Group 1 Year 1931 Dist. No. 65

Subjects	Standing by Months									Final			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4
Reading	B	B	A	A	B	B	A	99	78	95	95	96	
Physiology								90	90	95			
Penmanship	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	96	96				
Spelling	B	A	B	B	A	A	B	78	79	90	96	98	
Mental Arith.													
History													
Grammar	C	B	B	B	B	B	B	76	77	85	94	92	
Geography													
English Comp.													
Arithmetic	A	A	A	A	A	B	B	76	78	100	99	100	
Drawing	B	B	B	A	B	B	B	77	78	78	95	96	
Civics													
Bookkeeping													
Geog. of Neb. or Agriculture													
Department or Citizenship	B	A	A	B	B	B	B	9	9				
Days Present	17	20	19	14	19	19	19	5	16				
Days Absent	0	0	0	0	1/2	1	1	0	4				
Times Tardy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				

Erma Belle Harlow
A-100-96 C-90-85 F-100-99
S-2300 E-95-90 D-95-80 E-10-90

Bunker Hill School, District No. 65

SIGNATURE OF PARENT or GUARDIAN

SEPT. *Mrs. Mrs. Frank Wopata*

OCT. *Mrs. Mrs. Frank Wopata*

NOV. *Mrs. Mrs. Frank Wopata*

DEC. *Mrs. Mrs. Frank Wopata*

JAN. *Mrs. Mrs. Frank Wopata*

FEB. *Mrs. Mrs. Frank Wopata*

MARCH *Mrs. Mrs. Frank Wopata*

APRIL *Mrs. Mrs. Frank Wopata*

MAY *Mrs. Mrs. Frank Wopata*

JUNE *Mrs. Mrs. Frank Wopata*

CERTIFICATE OF PROMOTION
This Certifies That
Eugene Wopata
has completed the work of the 1st Year and
is hereby promoted to the 2 Year of the
Public Schools of this County
May 13 1932 Olga M. Klima

Union School, District No. 31

The next school I attended was Union School, District No. 31. It was built in 1923 and was located three miles north and one mile west of DuBois. I attended this school until I was in the sixth grade. There was one teacher all eight grades. There were usually 15 or so students. Olga Klima, who was my cousin, was my teacher until I completed Grade Three.

Erma (Harlow) Lucky was another teacher of mine for a couple of grades at Union School. Years later, on May 18, 1997 I visited her at No. 123, 1704 West Obrien, Lee's Summit MO in John Knox Village. She had gone to college in Peru, NE, and had taught in Burchard, NE for a couple of years before she came to the Union School where she taught in 1935 and 1936. This school had a raised stage. She also had to stoke the furnace in the basement. She remembers when I got sprayed with a skunk, and she sent me home from school. After she left Union School she taught third, fourth and fifth grades in DuBois. She quit teaching and went to Huff Secretary School in Kansas City. She then worked for a builder before working for Pratt & Whitney on Bannister Road. She met a naval officer inspector there and got married. Her husband, Steve, died at age 44. They had a daughter Marsha, who married Larry Hawk. Coincidentally, Larry Hawk has been my insurance agent for many years. Erma remarried Foster Kelley. Foster Kelley was the brother of Keith Kelley. Keith Kelley and his family have been family friends for many years.



This picture was taken in 1996 of the Union School. Apparently a farmer had purchased the school and was using it to store grain.

We lacked all of the fixtures common to public buildings today. Our toilet was a small wooden structure or “out house” in back of the schoolhouse.

Another amenity we lacked was running water. A well was located on the school grounds and was equipped with a hand pump. At the end of recess, the students would line up at the pump. One student would work the pump handle while the others took turns and formed a cup with their hands to drink the water.

We also had a white enamel bucket for water inside the school. It was filled daily with fresh water. Each student had his or her own cup for drinking.

Our United States Senator, Kenneth Wherry lived in Pawnee City, NE. He owned a pony for his children to ride during summer vacation. Kenneth Wherry was a congressman, and during the school year, his children went to school in Washington, D.C.. While their family was in Washington D.C., my father and I took care of the pony. This then became my transportation to school. Dad moved a small shed and put it in the southwest corner of the schoolyard. This was a shelter for the pony. I left the saddle on the pony all day. All I would do is loosen the belly strap. I was Gene Austry, Hop-a-long Cassidy, The Lone Ranger, every week.

Grand Avenue School, District 92

When I started to the sixth grade, we had moved to the six-mile corner, which was six miles east of Humboldt. We lived in a filling station at the intersection of State Route 4 and US 73 and US-75 highways. We didn't live on a farm, but we did live in the country like the farmers. Now it was only one and one half miles to Grand Avenue School #92. It was on a State highway, which was a gravel road.

This schoolhouse was on the north side of the road. It was a little larger than the Union School. It had a nice basement where we could play when the weather was bad. This basement was complete with a furnace and coal bin. This provided heat via a large register in the wooden floor. It also had a raised floor along the north wall. This is where the teacher had her desk. It gave her a good view of the students. We stood up on this riser or stage to recite our lessons. There were a couple of small rooms on the east side of the building. There were no windows on the north wall. The blackboard was on the north wall.

REPORT OF

Eugene Napata

Grade 8 Dist. No. 92

For the Year 1938.-1939

BRANCHES PURSUED	STANDING BY MONTHS								EXAMINATIONS QUARTERLY TEST				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4
READING	A	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	85A
PHYSIOLOGY													
PENMANSHIP	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
SPELLING	A	A	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	B	A	A	84
MENTAL ARITH.	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
HISTORY	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
GRAMMAR	A	A	A	A	A	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	87C
GENERAL GEOGRAPHY	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
ENG. COMP.													
ARITHMETIC	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
DRAWING	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
CIVICS	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
BOOKKEEPING	A	A	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	85A
GEOG. & AGR.													
DEPARTMENT	B	A	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
DAYS PRESENT	20	19	20	18	19	17	17	17	13				
DAYS ABSENT	0	1	0	1	1	2	3	8	7				
TIMES TARDY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				

Lydia Stalder TEACHER

REPORT OF

Eugene Napata

Grade 7 Dist. No. 92

FOR THE YEAR 1937-1938

I shall look forward to next year for you have done excellent work and I surely am proud of you. - Miss Stanley

BRANCHES PURSUED	STANDING BY MONTHS								EXAMINATIONS QUARTERLY TEST				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4
READING										80	80	85	88
PHYSIOLOGY	90	90	90	92	90	90	90	92	91	89	86	90	80
PENMANSHIP	90	90	90	90	92	92	93	93	90				
SPELLING	88	93	95	96	94	91	93	95	92	86	70	80	78
MENTAL ARITH.													
HISTORY	88	90	83	85	83	86	90	93	90	85	83	89	70
GRAMMAR	90	90	86	82	84	82	87	90	85	87	80	85	90
GENERAL GEOGRAPHY	90	90	90	88	87	85	88	91	87	90	83	88	90
ENG. COMP.													
ARITHMETIC	88	93	90	87	88	90	92	94	93	69	00	00	100
DRAWING	86	88	88	90	90	90	91	90	90				
CIVICS													
BOOKKEEPING													
GEOG. & AGR.													
DEPARTMENT	80	80	75	60	70	75	80	83	85				
DAYS PRESENT	16	18	17	18	10	14	18	19	21				
DAYS ABSENT	1	1	2	2	10	6	2	0	0				
TIMES TARDY													

Nadyne Stanley TEACHER

Emma Leach was my sixth grade teacher
 Nadyne Stanley was my seventh grade teacher, and Lydia Stalder was my eighth grade teacher.



I am the third one from the right on the back row.

I usually walked to school with Mark and Junior Drake, Jim or Roland Hill or some of the O'Grady kids. I was probably in the seventh grade when I finally got a bicycle and rode it to school.

Eight grade students from the rural schools had to pass the "County Exams" before we were permitted to enter high school. These exams were given each spring in Falls City, which was the largest town in our county. Much of the year was spent in preparation for this exam.

Eighth Grade Diploma
Richardson County

Richardson County, Nebraska

This Certifies That

Eugene Frank Wopata

of School District No. 92, Richardson County, Nebraska, has completed
the Course of Study prescribed for the Public Schools of
the State, and in recognition thereof is awarded this

DIPLOMA



In Witness Whereof, My signature is hereunto attached



Given at Falls City, Nebraska, this 20th day of May, 1939.

Edith S. Greer
COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

12. Dawson High School

I went to the public high school in Dawson, NE. Dawson is in Richardson County on the North Fork of the Big Nemaha River; downstream from Humboldt and upstream from Falls City.

The school was a two-story brick structure, which at that time seemed to be very large. The original building, which I attended, was actually rather small. It was expanded after I graduated by adding an athletic building, which is as large as the original building.

There were about 200 students from kindergarten through the 12th grade. However, most of the students were in the 9th through 12th grades. Usually, the students went to a country school near their homes until they graduated from the 8th grade.

The school bus we rode to school was rather small. It had wooden seats and backs. It could haul about 20 students. Orville Wooster was my bus driver. He was also the custodian of the school as well as the track coach.

The assembly room was on the second floor and we had individual seats. My locker was on the second floor. That is where we kept our books, coats and lunches.

The basketball court was in the basement. It was a small court and there were only a few feet from the court boundary to the concrete wall on three sides. One side had a concrete terrace which was the spectators used for seats.

My basketball experience was rather short. I had never held a basketball before I went to high school. Therefore, my freshman year was a huge learning experience. Early in my sophomore season I broke the middle finger on my right hand. This happened while playing touch football during the lunch hour. I had to wear a splint for six weeks. As a result, I was out for the season.

In my junior year, I again injured myself playing touch football. This time the injury was to my left hip. It happened when I was running and made an abrupt side step. No one touched me. However, the X-ray indicated that I tore off a quarter-inch by 2-inch piece of new bone growth off the hipbone. That really did hurt. I passed out as they carried me off the playground to the car located by the road. The doctor didn't splint or tape it. I just had to walk carefully and pay attention. They gave me a crutch, which did not help. In fact, it caused great pain because it pulled up on the muscle that apparently caused the problem in the first place. As a result, I was not able to play basketball my junior year.

Because I was rather awkward and had no playing experience, I decided to become the student manager of the basketball team when I was a senior so that I could go to all the games. That was great fun.



The playground was on the west side of the school. It was a flat area where we played touch football. The school didn't have a football team. They started a seven-man team program after I graduated.

During my senior year I got on the track team by accident. We had some sort of interclass sports day, and the coach saw me throw the discus. He got me to go with the track team to a tri-county meet in Auburn, NE. What a surprise! I came in second in the discus throw. I threw the javelin and shot-put, and also participated in the high jump. I doubt if I cleared much more than four feet. A fellow from the Falls City Scarlet Heart School was known for his jumping ability, so there were very few participants. They proceeded to raise the bar several inches after the rest of us were eliminated.

We played a lot of Ping-Pong. I played reasonably well as a single and/or with a partner.

Our music program was rather weak. I was too bashful to try to sing. I took a few lessons with the viola before I ended my musical career in high school. In 1996 the population of Dawson was 157.

I received a scholarship to the teachers college in Peru, NE, but because I didn't want to be a teacher, I did not use the scholarship. I wanted to go the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. I tried to prepare myself for college by taking a class in Latin. That was rather foolish. It was a correspondence course, and I did not get much out of it. I don't understand how I ever passed. I guess they looked to see if I had written in the book. We didn't have physics or chemistry classes at Dawson High. English was hard for me. History was boring. I did like math, typing and shop. Most of our work was with hand tools. I don't remember using any power tools. I made a nightstand, which my folks used in their home and the nursing home. Steven now has it.

Edward Kean lived three-quarters of a mile east of the filling station. We went to the movies in Humboldt nearly every Saturday. At that time, it was common in movie theaters to

have newsreels and serial programs that changed every week. The serial was about 10-15 minutes long and was the big incentive to go every week. Of course, the cost was only a dime. We would usually stop in the drugstore for a cherry Coke, which cost another nickel.

One of the winter activities was to ride on a tin roofing sheet that was pulled by a car on the local country roads. It was a very bumpy ride and difficult to stay on because there was nothing to hang on to except the rope extension connecting the roofing sheet to the car.

Another popular activity was listening to the radio. Popular shows were "Craft Music Hall," "Bob Hope Show," "The Shadow Knows," "The Lone Ranger," "Roy Rogers," and others. Bing Crosby and the song "White Christmas" were very popular. Also, "I'll Be Seeing You," "I'll Never Smile Again," and "Praise the Lord, and Pass the Ammunition." It was also exciting to get "V" letters from service people overseas that were censored.

We also went to the weekly free outdoor movies in Dawson. I became good friends with Lowell Heim and Byford Elwonger, probably when I was a sophomore. We really did everything together. I went to the basketball games when Lowell and Byford played on the team. We did a lot of roller-skating in Sycamore Springs, KS, and went to a lot of movies.

One of the big purchases we made in high school was our class ring. As I remember, it cost \$25, and we purchased them when we were juniors. Our class started to have class reunions after 20 years. We've had them every five years since, usually in Auburn. Byford Elwonger lived in Auburn and always made the arrangements.

Lowell Heim was one of the few students who had a car. The rest of us used our family cars. Byford and I spent a lot of time riding with Lowell, because it was always available. On one occasion, we were returning from Falls City, and I am sure we were cruising along near the speed limit when all of a sudden, a highway patrolman was on our tail with lights flashing. Of course it took a long time to stop the car. The brakes were bad!!! Anyway, Lowell and Byford pushed me out of the car to go talk to the patrolman. The reason I was chosen was because I knew most of the patrolmen. Many of the patrolmen stopped at my parent's filling station. The reason we were pulled over was because the taillight was out. Lowell immediately started pounding on the light. That nearly broke me up. In a recent newspaper article, it was reported that the majority of the motorists stopped for inoperative taillights pounded on the vehicle even though it was obvious the light hadn't worked for some time. The bulb was either missing or the wires were disconnected.

Then there was the "chicken house" experience. This happened the last day of school when I was a senior. Lowell had his folks' car. We were cruising around town when all of sudden, Mike Kean revved up his engine. I think that was some sort of code for "let's race." Both cars tore out south of town. It was a rather short race because Lowell's Dodge was faster than Mike's Ford. After Mike dropped out, we kept on at a pretty good pace. All of a sudden, a lumberyard truck with a chicken house on the back was in our lane in front of us and a big gasoline transport truck was in the oncoming lane. Again, Lowell's car had poor brakes. Because we were unable to stop, Lowell took off on the right shoulder, and about that time there was a concrete culvert structure on the shoulder. Somehow, Lowell was able to stay on the shoulder

and miss the culvert. I was sitting between Lowell and Byford, and I was groping for the emergency brake. I also remember seeing the expression of surprise or shock on the oncoming truck driver's face as we passed the lumberyard truck. While passing, there was a screeching noise and a big bang. We drove on for a couple of miles before a single word was spoken. We finally pulled off on a side road, afraid to look at the damage. We expected to see a lot of damage. Initially we couldn't find anything wrong. Finally, after close inspection we found that the chicken house support had rubbed the chrome strip down the side of the car and then hit the hinge. In those days, door hinges stuck out about an inch. There was a little paint rubbed off of the hinge. I don't think Lowell's dad ever noticed the damage.

I graduated from Dawson High School in 1943.

Program

Processional—Tannhauser ----- Wagner
 High School Orchestra
 Miss Jeanne Spier, Director

Invocation ----- Rev. C. E. Nichols

America—Led by Miss Spier ----- Audience

Music—Selected ----- Sextette

Address of Welcome ----- Margaret Sue Fishwood

Vocal Solo ----- Betty Hendricks
 "Smilin' Through"

Address ----- Mr. Ray Rice
 "There Are No Substitutes"

Vocal Solo ----- Lowell Heim
 "Tommy Lad"

Presentation of Awards and Class -- Supt. H. E. Little

Awarding of Diplomas ----- Chas. A. Heim

Benediction ----- Rev. Aloys Reibold

Class Roll

William Edward Auxier	*Ruth Celeste Kean
Lucille Maxine Boring	Marilee E. Lollman
George Byford Elwonger	John C. McGinnis*
Waldo Glenn Elwonger	Junior McGinnis *
Margaret Sue Fishwood	Vernon C. Mendenhall
Larry E. Gerlt	Earl J. Nedrow*
Lowell Edward Heim	Mary Margaret Quinlan
Lowell D. Helmick	Glen Hughes Ray *
Betty Louise Hendricks	Ella Mae Sinnett
Dorothy Anita Hill	*Ormal Dean Suchsland
Stanley Leroy Holder	Martin Joseph Tiehen*
Blondena Howerton	Lucille R. Weatherfield
Michael James Kean	Eugene Frank Wopata
Rita Anastasia Kean	Dorothee Jeanne Yates

* Honor Student

Class President ----- Margaret Sue Fishwood
Class Sponsor ----- Supt. H. E. Little

Class Motto—"Life Is Like a Picture; Paint It Well."
Class Colors: Blue and Silver
Class Flower: Red Rose

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Chas. A. Heim, President	Melvin J. Heim
Max Georgi, Secretary	Edward J. Auxier
Geo. F. Utermohlen, Treasurer	David M. Kean

13. After High School

I graduated from Dawson High School in 1943. We had a big hailstorm that spring. When it started to rain, I got into the car and drove it into the garage. Then it started to hail. The hailstones were bigger than golf balls, and the wind was blowing hard from the west. It hailed so hard that I was afraid to get out of the car even after I was in the garage.

The storm caused a lot of roof damage. Dad started replacing roofs in the area, and I was his assistant. I earned one dollar an hour, the same as Dad. It was pretty hard work. I usually carried the bundles of shingles up the ladder. Dad was very handy with a hammer. He would tap the nail and then drive it home with one blow. If I tried that, the nail would usually bend or get crushed. I earned \$400 that summer. I used that money to start college.

That fall, Lowell Helmick and I went to Lincoln and enrolled at the University of Nebraska. We shared a room near 17th and “R” Street. It wasn’t long before Lowell moved into a fraternity house because he could earn his board and room. I then had the room to myself.

It wasn’t long before the folks sold their interest in the filling station and moved to Lincoln. I lived with them in a house on “C” Street. Dad got a job in the truck department of DuTeau Chevrolet. I rode to work with him and then walked the short distance to classes, or I rode the city bus. College was very different. The classes were so big. I was enrolled in Engineering College because my favorite high school subject was math.

During my Christmas vacation in 1943, I got a job as a machinist in the Mechanical Engineering Department at the University. I machine tested cylinders out of aluminum ingots. It was rather interesting work, but the diameter of the test specimen was very critical. That job lasted until I started the second semester. I was 18 on January 3rd, 1944, and I registered for the draft as required. Soon after I registered, I took my physical and was classified as “1-A.” In March, I received my Greetings from Uncle Sam to serve my country.

After I was drafted, the folks moved to 4838 Randolph Street in Lincoln. When I turned up Missing In Action, they moved back to the farm near DuBois.

When I returned from the service in December 1945, I lived on the farm with my folks until I returned to the university in January 1946. At first, I lived in the YMCA. Then Dad was able to get his job back at DuTeau Chevrolet, so the folks moved back to Lincoln. They rented a house close to the campus on “Q” street.

My parents then bought a large, two-story house at 2676 South 9th Street. The upstairs was not finished, and that is where I slept. It was very cold the first winter. You could see sky through the cracks in the wooden shingles. I did most of my studying in the hall that contained the staircase. My desk was a huge roll top office desk. The southwest room was the living room. The southeast room was the kitchen. The room between the living room and the kitchen was the dining room. The northeast room was the bathroom. It was a very large room and had a four-legged bathtub. This house was heated with a gravity type gas-fired furnace.

The room north of the dining room was the downstairs bedroom. All of the rooms were rather large. The house was not air-conditioned. We didn't even have a floor fan or a window fan.

We did a lot to this house. Dad and I replaced the roof and painted the exterior. We also made two huge rooms upstairs with a couple of large closets. Dad and I removed trees and shrubs, and Mom planted flowers. We also had a nice garden.

Mom helped paint or wallpaper all the rooms. Mom was a rather sloppy painter. I spent an awful lot of time cleaning the windows and door trim from her painting. The window glass was always a big mess.

After I graduated from college, the folks moved back to the farm, and I rented a room in Lincoln. I ate all my meals out. When I moved to Omaha, I stayed in an apartment house that furnished most of the meals.

As a youth, I can remember our family taking only one vacation. This was a trip to the Black Hills and Colorado in the summer of 1941. After the War, the folks spent a winter in Florida. Dad worked in a boat factory. When they returned from Florida, they worked on the Hallmark Farm here in Kansas City, Kansas. Dad took care of the garden, ponies, raised chickens and other odd jobs. Mom worked in the greenhouse. Dad's arthritis limited his activity, so they eventually returned to the farm in Nebraska. After a while they purchased a couple of houses in Pawnee City.

I took my folks on a trip in our travel trailer for their 50th Wedding Anniversary. Most of this trip was spent in Missouri. Dad and I fished in Bennett Springs. Mom enjoyed the visit to Silver Dollar City in Branson. We visited Steve who was working in Sikeston.

Mom was the leader in our family. She pretty much controlled what little money we had. I would say we were classified as being in the "poor" class. Dad farmed 80 acres using a team of horses. He never owned a tractor until after the War. Dad and Mom were very caring persons toward each other as well as to others. They enjoyed playing pinochle and some Rset cards.

We did not have very many family reunions. However, Mom's relatives would get together for dinner to celebrate birthdays and holidays. The Wopata clan got together when the Farrar's from Denver came to Table Rock every summer. Uncle Elmer worked for the railroad. Aunt Bess and Russell would come to Table Rock on a railroad pass. They would always spend a few days with us when we were living on the farm.

I had only one pet, a white Spitz dog named Curly. He died when he was about 12 years old. He died behind the heating stove at the filling station when I was about 12.

Dad used a double bladed safety razor to shave. He had a cup that held the soap. He would make lather with a small black round brush. I still have this brush and cup. Dad also had a straight razor and stone that was grandpa Beranek's. I never did see Dad use this razor. Dad's handwriting was rather legible. Mom's handwriting was very good.

When I took Evelyn to meet my folks, there was tension. Evelyn's father was the banker in Pawnee City. Evelyn's mother was a nurse. My parents knew Evelyn's parents. Evelyn's folks were pillars of the community, and my folks were dirt farmers. There probably was more tension on my folks than on me. Mom was always concerned about doing everything right. I feel the folks loved each other very much. I don't remember ever hearing any harsh words spoken between them. I was the center of their world.

Mom had a habit of saying "aye" or "oh my" whenever she was startled or if something unusual happened, and that really was quite often.

My family did not go to church. The first time I went to church was to the Evangelical Church in Dawson when I was in high school. However, there was a Bible in our home in which Mom kept dates of births, weddings, deaths and other important events. My family did practice the Golden Rule, which I still believe is a basic teaching of Christ's. I received the huge Wopata Family Bible from Anita Blecha after her husband Arvid died. He had inherited the Bible from his mother. Aunt Julia recorded lots of family events in this Bible. This Bible included a certificate marriage of Albert Wopata and Anna Branek in Steinauer, NE. on October 21, 1890. This Catholic Bible was approved for printing in 1883. This family Bible will be passed on to Steven.

The homes I lived in before I was married were rather primitive. We made a big jump when we moved from the farm to the filling station. We then had a sink that held water, a gas stove, an oil burning heater, an icebox, and 32-volt lights. We still had a gasoline engine powered washing machine.

When we lived in Lincoln, we really improved our standard of living. We then had running water, a full bathroom, 110-volt lights, an electric stove, an electric refrigerator, and a gas furnace. Even the Maytag washing machine was converted to use an electric motor.

The house north of Table Rock, the house northwest of DuBois, the filling station on the Humboldt Corner, and the house in Lincoln on South Street were still standing in 1999.

14. My Two Days of Combat

I was a member of "G" Company, Second Platoon of the Rainbow Division of the Army. On the fifth of January, 1945 we had a cold ride into Weyersheim, France. Then, we started our hike along the north side of the road toward Gambsheim, France. Toward evening we were greeted with unfriendly machine gun fire from the left. We crossed a stream of water, which was the Zorn River. Our Company captured the machine gun outpost. A short time later, we experienced a huge artillery barrage. It was probably 88's.

I thought I was dead since I couldn't hear, couldn't move, couldn't smell, etc. But I could still see the flash of artillery shells. I finally regained my senses. I shook the fellows on each side of me with no response. The third fellow on my right was screaming for a medic. I went over and found out he had a bad shoulder and leg wound. So I picked him up and carried back across the Zorn River Bridge to a jeep near the road. During this whole trip he didn't say anything about hurting.

For forty-one years I wondered who this fellow was and did he survive. (I was awarded the Bronze Star for doing this). At the 1986 Oklahoma City Reunion, Jack Weiser came up to me called me by name and said "thanks for carrying me out when I was wounded". That was a very emotional event for me, and now brings tears every time I think about it. The morning report shows that William Rosalie, Earnest Lee, Harley Stands and Glen Randle were killed on the fifth of January. Since Rosalie and I were in the same squad, I was probably next to him when he was killed. (He probably was one of the guys I shook and got no response.) I visited his grave in Epinal, France in June of 1990.



January 6, is a very special anniversary date for me. This was the day I was wounded and then captured by the Germans in Gambsheim, France in 1945. After dropping off Jack at the jeep, Isadore (Shorty) Urban helped me dig my first and only foxhole. The ground was frozen several inches deep and it took most of the night for us to complete it. We were about to get some rest, when we were ordered to "Move Out" and start moving toward Gambsheim.

After crossing the Landgraben Canal Bridge, we continued on toward Gambsheim on the north side of the road. As we approached the town, we were greeted by machine gun fire from the Steinwald Forest on the left. We ran for cover, which was a tree. A man was already behind this tree. Shorty went one side of this guy and I took the other side. Shortly after the machine gun nest was silenced, we were hit with a barrage of artillery. The tree bursts rained death. The man lying between Shorty and me received a severe neck wound, which nearly decapitated him or least there was blood all over. I immediately moved back toward the road. Then there was another artillery barrage. I dived toward the depression on the side of the road. Then I was greeted by machine gun fire from a tank. I am not sure if he was shooting at me or something down the road. The bullets were popping over my head. I spent the next several hours in this depression next to the road.

Sniper fire soon started coming from a building, which was located on the south side of the road next to the railroad tracks. Julian Kujawa remembers the building since that is where he was captured. Freddie Brant also experienced sniper fire from that building. The German tank finally crossed the railroad tracks and came down the road. (I still have never found anyone that saw this tank.) Now what am I going to do? My M-1 wasn't going to do anything to the tank. I decided to play dead. The tank goes on by, but soon stops. An infantry man jumps off the tank and comes back on the gravel road. These footsteps will be the last sounds I will hear. I expected a bullet or a bayonet in the back. Then the infantryman kicked off my helmet. My reaction must have been such that he knew I was alive. He greeted me with a "Raus, Raus", which I took to mean, "Get up", which I did. He escorted me to the tank where there was a German SS Officer, which I assumed was the tank commander. This is where I joined five other Americans. The officer then told my guard to take the six of us across the railroad tracks where we joined another group of American prisoners. (This is where I dropped my pants and had my wound dressed by one of the other Americans using his medical pack.

I have attended several Rainbow Reunions since 1986, and have held several POW group meetings. I've never met anyone that was in this group. Our group moved a few blocks into town and where we were placed in the basement with more "GI s". There were at least 25 of us now. There were a couple Artillery observers in our group. (They had nice hooded parkas.) William JJ. Finley remembers them. He is the only one that I have found to share this experience.

The next day we hiked toward the Rhine River and crossed on a barge. American artillery had a target, which was our boat, but they only splashed water on us. After we crossed the river and as we hiked toward Stuttgart, Germany, an American P-47 fighter strafed us. We also rode on a passenger train. (Lt. John Salopek is the only other POW that remembers riding on a passenger train) before we arrived in Stammloger VA near Ludwigsburg, Germany. I stayed here for about two weeks before I had a four-day ride in a crowded boxcar to Stalag IVB near Muhlberg, Germany.



This was the German command post where I was taken for interrogation. We entered the basement through an entrance that is located behind the car. It is now used a school and is located next to the city hall. It was in the basement of this building that I realized I was a POW.



This was the entrance to the basement where I was taken after being captured.



I am standing in the basement where I was taken after being captured.



Railroad Tracks where tank pinned me down in Gamsheim (picture taken in 1997)



Lise Pommois & I are standing at the ditch area where I was pinned down by the tank. Railroad tracks are in the distance. It was a more depressed area in 1945. The ditch was probably 15 inches deep. There was a small culvert for the driveways, which were about 25 feet apart. The tank was on the other side of the railroad tracks, which are just beyond the median in the road.



Lise Pommois



Old railroad bed where tank was positioned that pinned me down. Tracks use to be elevated



© MICHELIN, d'après carte n° 87 - 27ème édition -
Autorisation n° 91-714"

Evelyn and I visited Gamsheim where I was captured after our tour of Germany in 1985. Susan and I visited Gamsheim in 1997. John also was able to visit the site while on a trip to Europe in 2001. He is standing by a tree that is almost in the exact spot where I was captured.



The hard surfaced road has replaced the gravel road of 1945. The building across the road is about the same.



John Wopata standing by building where my interrogation took place (in basement).





City Hall in Gamsheim.



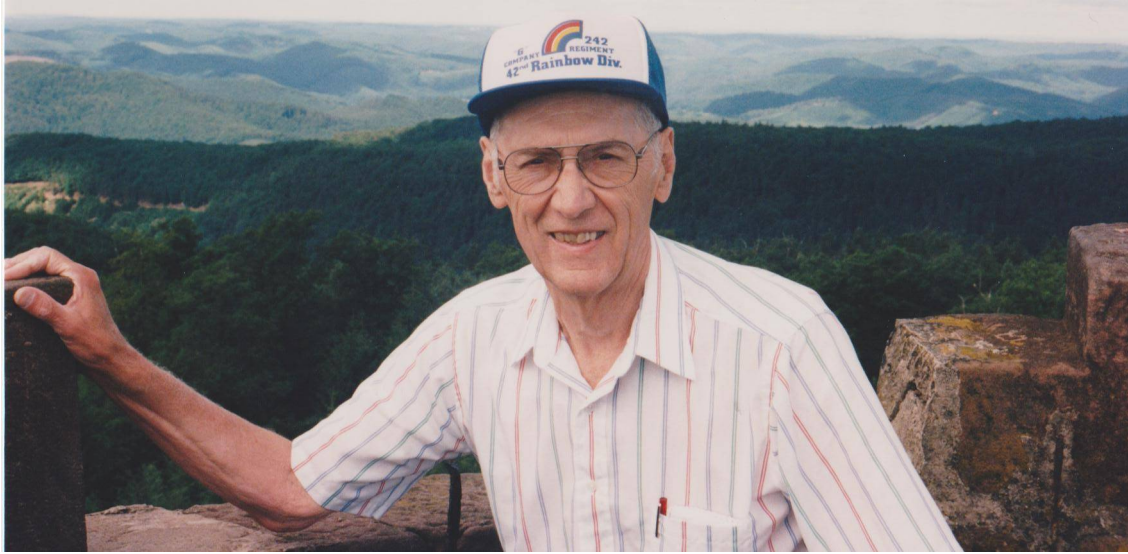
Atemine Pommois and Gene outside Atemine and Lise's home in Niebrohn, France.



City park area in Niebrohn, France.



Winterberg Tower. The name means tower of winter.



Gene at top of Winterberg Tower. (1997)



View from top of Winterberg Tower.



View from top of castle of Lichtenberg – the observation point of the 42nd Rainbow Division.



Alternate view from Castle of Lichtenberg.



Schoenebourg – major fortification.



Maginot Line



Pillbox at Hatten, France



Lichtenberg castle

Flying the flag

Nothing is more beautiful than the flag waving against a blue sky. It probably means more

to me than most people. I am a World War II veteran.

I escaped injury after an explosion of a shell that caused numerous casualties. I carried a severely wounded man back across a bridge over the Zorn River so he could be transported back for medical treatment.

The next day, after withdrawing from the forest, I was pinned down by machine-gun fire. Eventually I was wounded by artillery. Many of us were taken into a POW camp south of Berlin.

The Russians eventually liberated our camp. A short time later a Jeep flying the American flag drove into Stalag IV B.

Reminiscing about this event brings tears to my eyes to this day. I went to my first Army reunion 41 years later. Jack Weiser thanked me for carrying him across the bridge. I also met the rest of my squad.

I feel I am patriotic when I fly the flag. It is to honor those who sacrificed their lives so that I can enjoy freedom. Freedom is not free.

*Gene Wopata
Independence*

Veteran salute



MR. EUGENE F. WOPATA

WWII Army, POW



Gene Wopata was an 18-year old when he enlisted into the Army in 1944. He trained in Camp Walters, Texas, and joined the 42nd Rainbow Division soon after. He was sent to Marseille, France, and then onto Strasbourg. The Germans were on the east side of the Rhine and the Americans were on the west side.

He was then sent to Alsace, France to stop the German attack known as Nordwind. This was the second major German operation of the Battle of the Bulge. Gene saw many of his fellow soldiers being killed, and was captured himself at the age of 19.

He spent two weeks in Stalag VA, then transferred to Stalag IVB where he remained until the Russians liberated the camp on April, 23, 1945, after more than three month as a POW. After an escape from the Russians, he found his way to American lines near Grimma, Germany. Gene reached the Statue of Liberty on June 12, 1945, with the destination of home in Nebraska arriving on Fathers' Day.

A 60-day convalescent furlough ended too quickly when Gene was sent back into service on the East Coast until his discharge on November 24, 1945.

He used the GI Bill to further his education, graduating with a Mechanical Engineering Degree. Gene was married to Evelyn Barr in 1951 until her death in 1996.

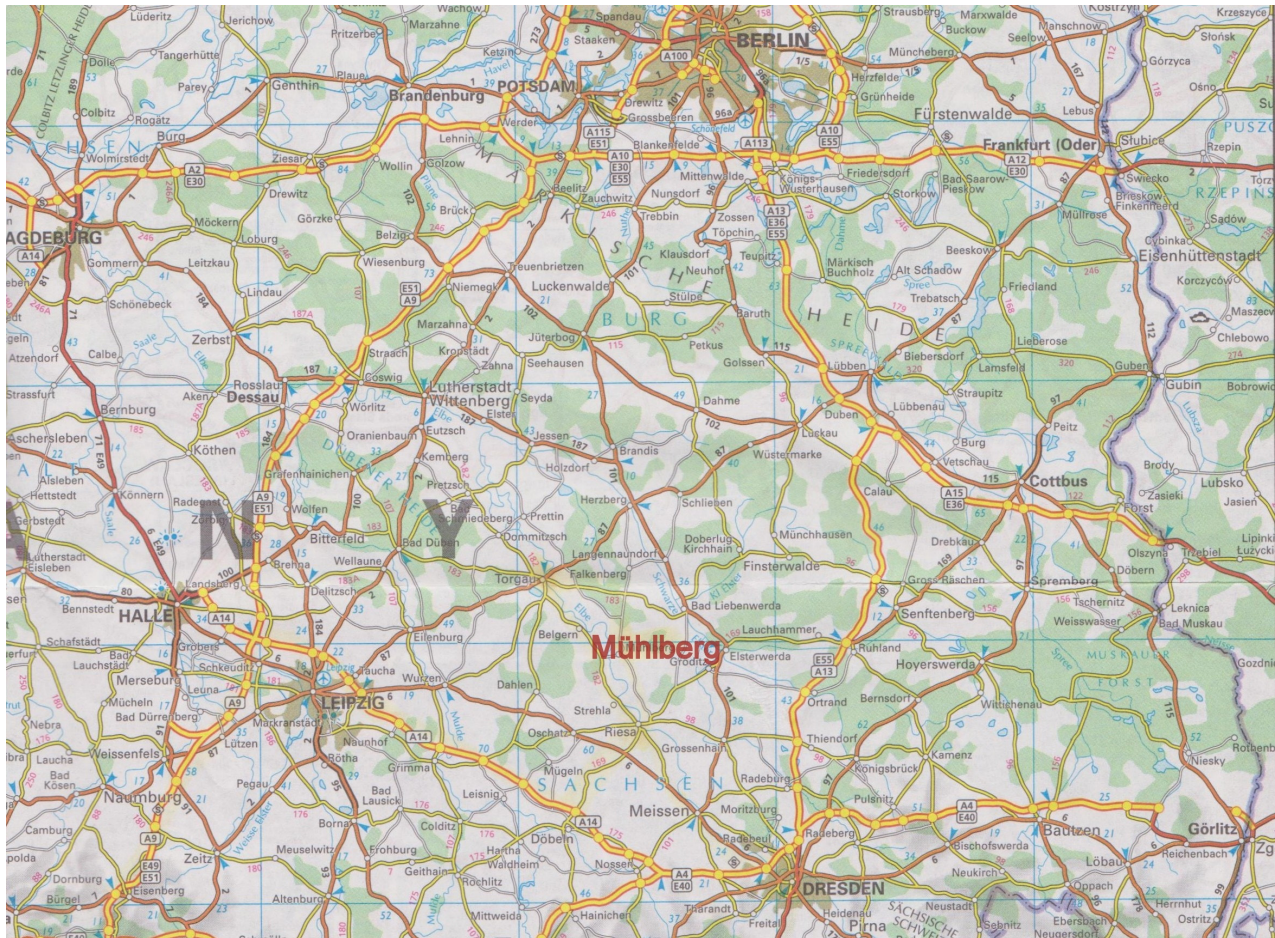
Gene's military history can be viewed at the Veterans' Hall in the Independence Parks and Recreation Truman Memorial Building at 416 W. Maple.

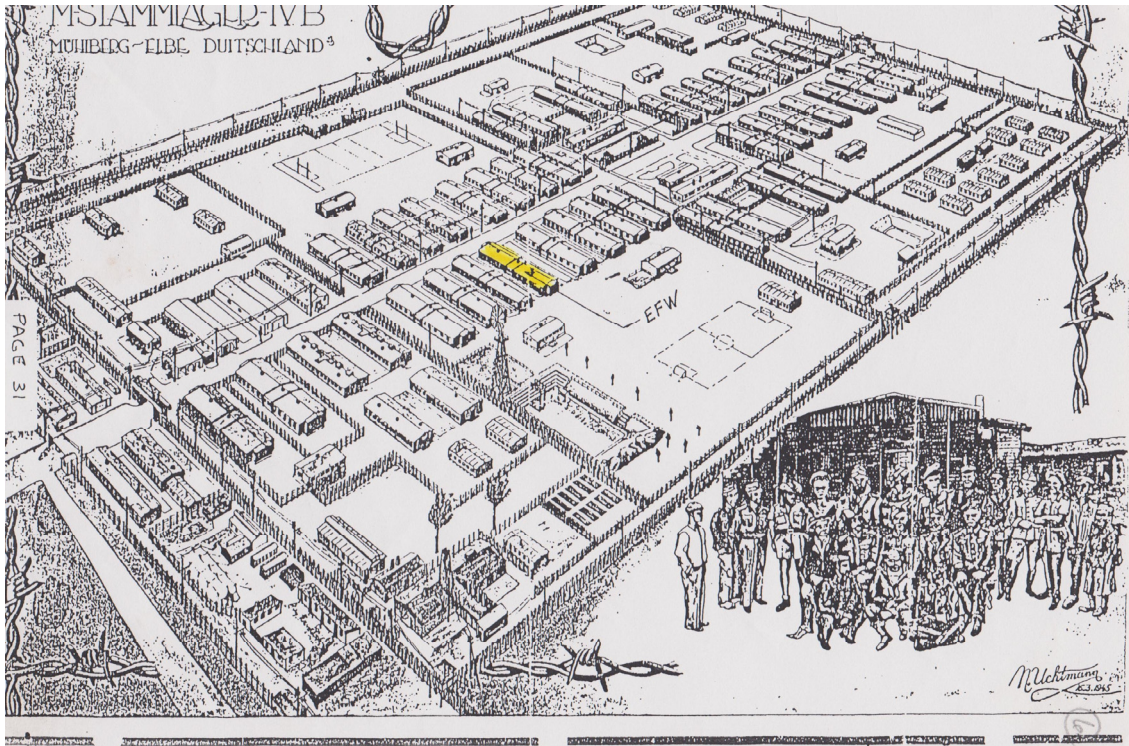
– This is part of a weekly feature on local veterans submitted by Helen Matson, volunteer program director for the city of Independence

Published in The Examiner on May 13, 2009

15. Stalag IV-B in Muhlberg, Germany

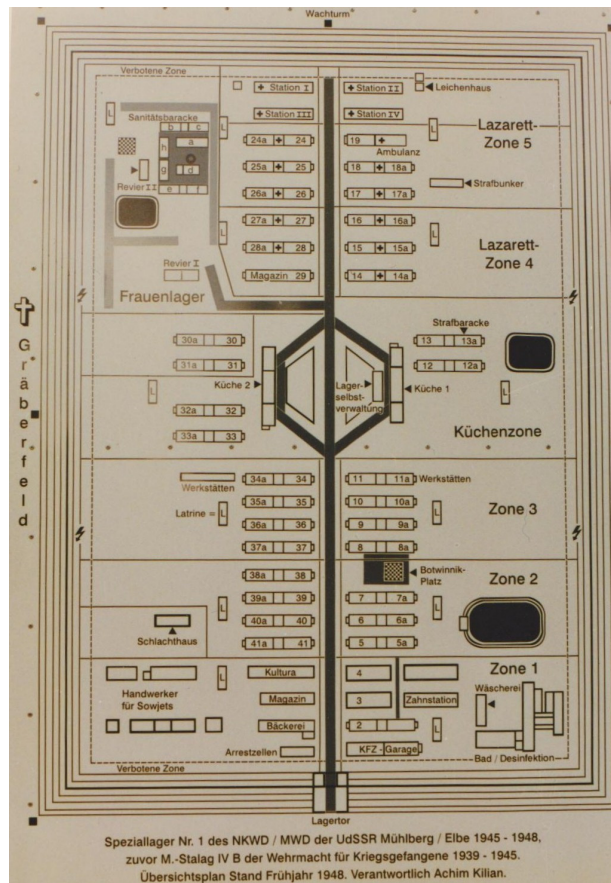
This Prisoner Of War Camp was established on September 29, 1939, on a barren field in the middle of Germany. It is located near Muhlberg on the Elbe River, which is 75 miles south of Berlin. It is also 15 miles south of Torgau which is the town where the Russian forces met the American forces on April 25, 1945.





The barracks marked in yellow were my barracks. The sleeping quarters were divided into two areas that were separated by a concrete washing area. The pit toilets that served the barracks in our compound were in the two buildings in the exercise field, which also served as a soccer field. The camp was divided into six compounds. Our barracks were located in the largest compound. The guards lived in barracks outside our fenced camp.

The first prisoners in this camp were Polish. Permanent barracks buildings and administrative buildings replaced the tents. Finally it became the largest POW camp in the territory with over 40,000 prisoners from all nations: Americans, Danes, Dutch, Belgians, Frenchmen, Poles, Yugoslavians, Rumanians, Italians, Czechoslovakians, and Brits (including Indians). Soldiers of the red army of the Soviet Union were housed in a separate area or compound from the rest of us. The Russians were treated more harshly since they were not involved with the International Red Cross.



We were housed in wooden barracks. Our bunk beds were in groups of twelve. Three levels with four bunks on each level. There was a washroom in the middle of each barracks. This washroom had concrete walls and a concrete basin. Cold water was piped to the large basin so it could serve several people at a time. The water ran most of the time. I do not remember washing any clothes since we wore everything we had to keep warm. I remember taking a shower only a couple of times while I was a prisoner. We were herded into a large room where we undressed and hung our clothes on some portable racks. We then went into a shower room where the showerheads were in the ceiling. We had no control over the water flow, but it was warm and sure felt good. Apparently our clothes went through a gas chamber to kill the fleas, bedbugs, lice, etc. while we were showering. This was the delousing treatment. The clothes were not laundered. There were no towels. We dried ourselves by putting on our dirty clothes.

Our daily ration was a cup of soup, a slice of dark bread, and two small boiled potatoes. There were a lot of British prisoners in my compound. We were served tea twice a day. Three of us combined our food and cooked together. Our daily ration would not be equal, so when the three of us re-divided our meager ration each day, it provided us with a more stable daily ration. It also reduced the crowd at the stove. We would dice up the bread and potatoes and add it with water to the "skilly" and we would end up with a cupful of soup twice a day. I lost 60 pounds in less than four months on this diet.

There were 142,227 American POW's, and 125,171 were repatriated. It is reported that there were 73,435 alive as of January 1990.

The Russians liberated our prison camp on April 23, a very joyful event. An American contingent also came and told us to stay put because there was still fighting in the area. The Russians moved us from Stalag IV B on May 4. On May 7, the war was officially over. Some of us escaped from the Russians on May 9 and returned to American lines near Grimma, Germany. We visited a Red Cross Club car and enjoyed a swell GI meal. Now that I am under American control, I am heading home to the USA. However, I will take my time; since I want to gain back some of my weight. On May 11, we left Halle and were flown via a C-47 to Nancy, France. A train then took us to the RAMP Camp in Epinal. On May 15, I started for Camp Lucky Strike on a hospital train. I continued to eat and rest. Finally on June 4, we boarded the Admiral Benson and began sailing home. On June 12, we saw the Grand Ole Lady and then docked. Then it was a scramble to catch a train for Leavenworth, KS, and on to Lincoln, NE. I tried to call home on the numerous train stops, but the lines at the telephones were so long that the train would always leave before my turn for a phone would come up. I finally got to a phone at the railroad station in Lincoln, NE. I made my call to the folks, but found out that the number I called had been disconnected. I then decided to call our home in DuBois, and found them there. So now I get back on a train headed for Table Rock, NE. The folks met me at the train station on June 17, which was Father's Day, what a great reunion!!! I don't know who was the happiest, was it Mom, maybe Dad, probably Me.

After a sixty day convalescent furlough, I enjoyed a ten-day R & R in the Arlington Hotel in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Then several of us were sent to Fort Lawton, WA. I ended up being a company clerk of a Troop Train Detachment in Camp Jordan near Fort Lawton, WA. I was discharged on November 24, 1945 in Fort Lewis, WA.



Susan and I found the prison camp Stalag IVB (Germany) in 1997.

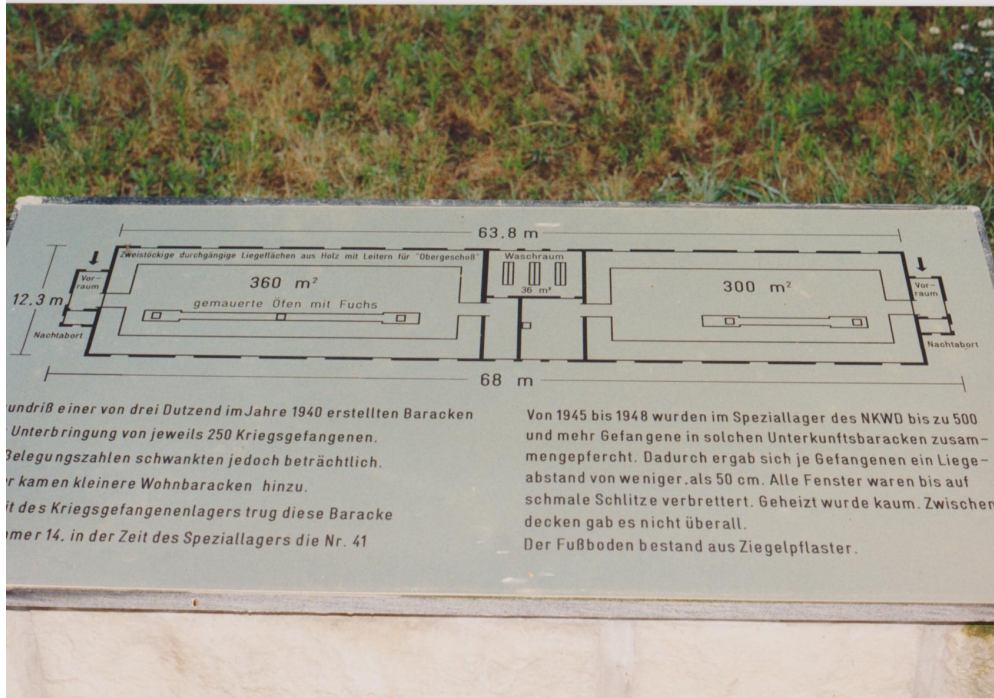


The camp site was marked with a sign as well as a stone marker.

Lager means “Camp”.



Cemetery where German Civilians were buried from 1945-1948



Plan of Barracks



When I was a prisoner this area was an empty field.
 When I visited the camp 52 years later there were lots of tall trees.



Foundations of Barracks



Hotel in Muhlberg

Stalag IV-B, Muhlberg, Germany

July 1997

by Eugene Wopata, 12101 Markham Rd., Independence, MO 64052

While serving in the 42nd Rainbow Division, I was wounded and captured in Gambesheim, France. After a four-day train ride, I ended up in Stalag IV-B near Muhlberg, Germany. Our camp was liberated by the Russians on April 23, 1945.

On May 4, the Russians moved several hundred of us Americans several miles east. We were housed in a two-story building similar to a motel or hospital. This group of buildings was surrounded by a brick wall.

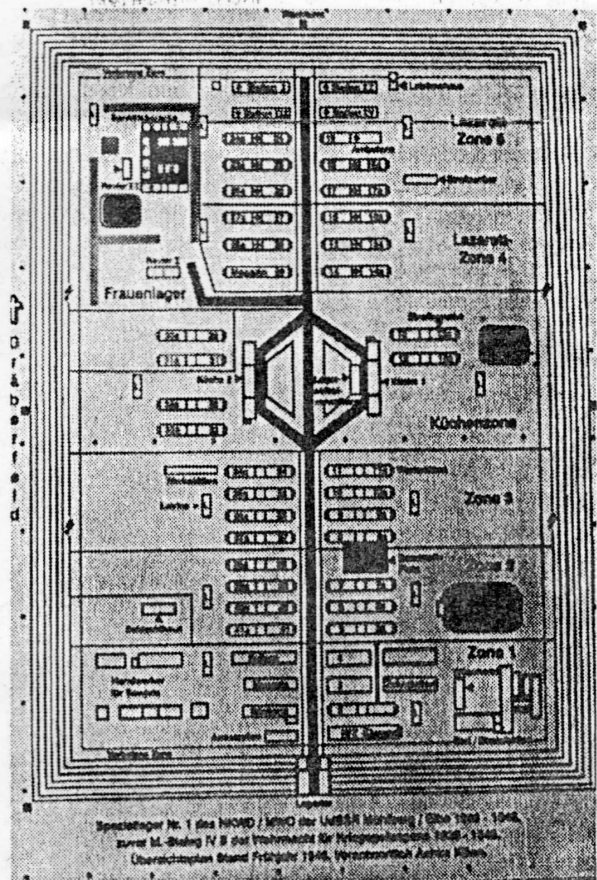
Four GI trucks came for us on May 9th. Since it was impossible to load several hundred men onto four trucks, the Russians ordered the trucks to return empty. However, several of us were able to intercept the last truck after it left our compound. We had some difficulty finding a bridge to cross the Elbe River. We stayed overnight in Grimma, then we flew from Halle to Nancy, France. After a few days in Epinal, we went to Lucky Strike by train. We returned to the USA on the Admiral Benson.

In July 1997, I returned to Europe to show my daughter the area where I went into combat. My daughter and I stayed in Hotel Hamburger Hof, in Muhlberg. The lady desk clerk could not speak English, so she summoned Mike Schober, the local banker. I asked about Stalag IV-B and he immediately took us out to the camp site. There was a sign at the entrance, "Lager Muhlberg/Elbe."



The Russians made some changes in the camp in 1945. It was used until 1948 to intern 7,000 Fascists from Munich, Hamburg, and Berlin. The drawing made by P.R. Liddle, dated 11-6-45, and the one currently shown at the camp, indicates some of the buildings were removed and the remaining buildings were renumbered. The picture shows the layout of the camp, which is now covered with many trees.

Many of the barrack and latrine foundations that remain are identified. The barrack areas are covered with grass. Trees and other vegetation cover the surrounding area.



There is a sign that shows a typical barracks. It had latrines on each end and a washroom in the middle. The barracks were 68 meters long and 12.3 meters wide.

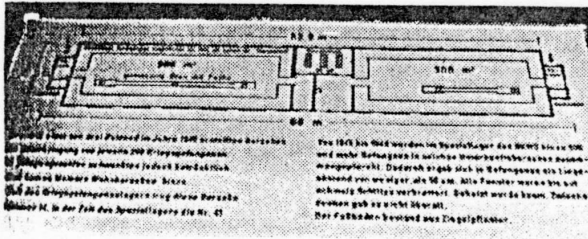


Diagram of a typical barracks showing a latrine on each end and a washroom in the middle.

A stone monument has been placed near the entrance indicating it was Stalag IV-B from 1939-1945, and then a Speziallager from 1945-1948.



Flag Trivia

submitted by Diana Thomasian

During the manufacture of our flag, the material left over is never allowed to fall upon the floor. It always falls into a container. The ball at the top of the flagpole is a "truck". On an official government installation, inside the truck is a .45 caliber bullet, a .38 caliber bullet, and a bullet for an M-16 rifle. In the event the truck falls and hits the ground, it is to break into thirteen pieces representing the original colonies. At the base of each flagpole on an official government installation is a box buried in concrete. This box contains one saber, a .38 caliber pistol and a book of matches. In the event the enemy overtakes the last government installation, the survivor is to defend the Flag with the saber and pistol, and burn the Flag with the matches so that the enemy cannot capture the Flag. A glorious historic tribute, albeit a bit outdated, but consider the glory of it all-
EX-POW BULLETIN, OCTOBER 1997

Many Germans from the rural area were buried in the camp during 1945-48. Most graves are marked with wooden crosses. There is a sign that identifies the graves.



After visiting Muhlberg in 1997, I now have a problem. The Elbe River was the dividing line between the American and Russian forces in 1945. Since we were liberated by the Russians, we were on the east side of the Elbe. I thought the Russians moved us to Riesa on May 4th. Wrong!! Riesa is located on the west side of the Elbe. When we were moved east by the Russians, it must have been near the towns of Bad Liegenwerda or Elsterwerda. If anyone remembers this experience, I would like to hear from them. Please contact Gene Wopata, 12101 Markham Road, Independence, MO 64052. Hope to see you in Tacoma!*

EDITOR'S NOTE: The articles published in the *Ex-POW Bulletin* are submitted by members of American Ex-Prisoners of War, based on their own experiences as they remember them or from their wartime diaries. These are honest-to-goodness ex-prisoners of war writing about a time of their life as best they can recall, most after more than fifty years. From time to time some discrepancies in numbers, exact times, etc., may occur. Readers are asked to take into account that the authors are not professional journalists, are writing from memories of fifty years ago, information given to them as POWs was often based on camp rumors, and everyone tells their story in their own way. Their stories are extremely valuable written and published for what they are. We are grateful for both their contributions and for them.

When submitting news items and feature articles to the *Ex-POW Bulletin*, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope for any photographs or other material you wish to have returned. Please submit the best quality of photograph possible. Glossy prints will reproduce well. Polaroid shots, newspaper clippings, or photocopies of photos do not reproduce well. Submit to: *The Ex-POW Bulletin*, 6508 Widmer Road, Shawnee, KS 66216-2229. •

16. College Days

My mother wanted me to go to college. I had a scholarship to go to Peru, which was a state teachers college. I didn't want to be a teacher, although I didn't know what I wanted to be. Because I liked math, my adviser at the University of Nebraska thought it best to enroll in the Engineering College.

College was a big adventure for Lowell Helmick and me. We got a room together, but that did not last long because he found a good deal by working for his room and board at a fraternity house. I didn't think I would like that because they liked to party. They also made it pretty tough on freshman by making them wear beanies and other hazing.

Up until this time, the enrollment at the University was less than 5,000. Now, after the War, it was a different story. Enrollment more than tripled when the veterans came back. We were a special group. Fraternities had a lot of vets too, but there was a big change in the fraternities as well. None of the kids' stuff, like harassing the freshman was allowed after the war.

I worked pretty hard because I was far behind in the math and science courses that were required for Engineering. I had to make up Physics and Chemistry because they were not offered at my high school. T.T. Smith, a Physics professor, flunked a third of students in his class. I got grades in the upper 70's and was in the upper 10 percent of his class.

Chemistry was a real bummer. I had too many accidents with things going "Poof" and disappearing. I was lucky to pass that course, too. Math was my favorite, but my grades continued to drop. In my third semester of Calculus, I then realized this would be the end. I had forgotten too much from the previous courses. One major problem was I could not visualize what a formula would look like when sketched. Without this ability, my success in the courses seemed almost impossible.

These courses were a prerequisite for other Engineering courses. However, I really don't know why. I never used the material. I was actually a second semester Junior before I got out of the Junior Division of the Engineering College. The last year of college was easier, and I got my highest grades.

I didn't participate in any college sports. Some of us Independents who didn't belong to a fraternity played softball and badminton. In fact, Dick Dudek and I won the badminton championship one semester. It was fun, but we really were not very good, just lucky. We decided to play the Frat house champions. Only one player showed up, but he still wanted to play us anyway. Dick and I agreed to play. That was embarrassing! The single guy beat the two of us, and it wasn't even close.

I didn't have much of a social life in college. College was a serious business to me, and I felt I needed to concentrate on my studies. I did go to the dances or balls when some of the big name bands played. I even bought a tux to wear to a couple of the dances.

I graduated after summer school in 1949. This really came as a surprise. I didn't think I had enough credit hours to graduate, but the requirements changed, and I got some credit for being in the Military Service. I didn't participate in the cap and gown ceremony. I was very busy trying to find a job, but the jobs were all taken. Lots of vets graduated in the spring, and corporations were not sending out recruiters for the summer graduates.

17. Four Nebraskans Go to Washington, D.C. in 1950

I had made several friends during my 60-day Army furlough in 1945. After I graduated from the University, I spent weekends in Pawnee County visiting my parents. On one of the weekends, a group of us decided to go to Washington, D.C. to visit Nebraska Senator Wherry as well as a couple of his daughters. The daughters had gone to Pawnee High School with Emil Beranek, Delphin Sommerhalder and Ronald Renne (left to right).



Emil Beranek



Ronald Renne



Delphin Sommerhalder

We left Pawnee City on a Friday night, drove all night in my Chevy convertible and ate breakfast in St Louis. We went to the zoo in Forest Park there and were impressed with the lion trainer in a cage with 19 lions and tigers at one time. After dinner we drove around St. Louis and then headed for Mount Vernon, IL.

On Sunday, we crossed the Wabash River at Mount Carmel, IN. After visiting a paper mill, we crossed the Ohio River into Louisville, KY and visited Churchill Downs, the Home of the Kentucky Derby. That night, we stayed in a tourist home full of antique furniture in Winchester, KY.

On Monday, “Damn poor looking crops” was a comment my farmer friends made in the area before we got to Huntington, W.Va. The weather was nice as we drove through lots of mountains before arriving in Charleston, WV.

On Tuesday, we drove on the Blue Ridge Parkway through Shenandoah National Park, and then we got caught in extremely heavy traffic as we approached Washington, D.C. After checking into the Hotel Cairo, we had lots of fun visiting with Dorothy and Carolyn Van Horne, who were from Pawnee City, at the French café Bonat’s.

On Wednesday, We climbed the stairs to the top of the Washington Monument where we could view the whole city. The monument is 555 feet high, but seemed much higher. Next, we went to the Smithsonian Institute where we saw lots of old cars, ships, planes, documents and all sorts of things. We had a picnic lunch in the National Zoological Park (with the rest of the monkeys). We drove past the cathedrals of St. Peter and St. Paul, the Naval Observatory and the Lincoln Memorial. The Bureau of Engraving was closed. The mirror lake in front of the Washington Monument was beautiful. We then cleaned up before we picked up Carolyn Van Horne who directed us over to the Pentagon to pick up her sister Dorothy. We drove all over the city (that must have been a cozy bunch with six in the convertible). We had a great meal at Hogat's, which had a great selection of seafood. After dinner we drove out to the Washington Airport, which was very busy.

On Thursday, we drove along the Potomac River to the home of George Washington at Mount Vernon. Next, we went to Arlington Cemetery to see the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I was impressed with the precise action of the soldier walking guard. We toured the FBI building and on our second attempt, the Bureau of Engraving. We didn't stop for lunch, but grabbed a few ice cream bars as we headed back to Washington. We saw the Oval Office in the White House and then toured the Capitol where we had a very good guide who that told us the painter who had painted the dome had accidentally fallen and eventually died. We did not see the Senate chamber or the House of Representatives because they were being repaired. After resting in our hotel room, we got dressed and went to Carolyn and Dorothy's for dinner. Then we went to Phyllis and Dave Wherry's house, son of Senator Wherry. Senator and Mrs. Wherry came over, and we had a fine talk with the Senator.

On our way to New York on Friday, we visited the Hoard Trenton House, which was built in 1719, in Trenton, NJ. The traffic became very heavy as we approached the Holland Tunnel and New York. We finally checked into the Hotel Statler at 11 p.m. The hotel's parking garage was several blocks from the hotel. I don't remember who went with me, but we were very concerned as we walked to the hotel because the garage was not in a good part of town.

On Saturday, we ate breakfast in the cafeteria across the street, then toured the Rockefeller Center and went to NBC for tickets for a radio broadcast. Then we went to CBS for tickets. We took a ride on a double-decker city bus. We were really enjoying the sights. One of the guys made a remark, "I don't see anybody I know," which would be a pretty safe statement under the conditions. WOW! All of a sudden, I started yelling when I saw a fellow that lived down the hall from me at the YMCA in Lincoln, NE. We got off the bus at 168th Street and took the "A" train back to 59th Street. We missed the CBS broadcast by 15 minutes. We then ate at an Automat, visited Macy's and a tourist home full of antique furniture. After a rest we took a cab to Radio City Music Hall and saw the Rockettes for \$1.50.

On Monday, we ate breakfast and an early lunch, then checked out of the hotel and went down to the docks for a 3-hour boat tour around Manhattan Island. We left New York in the rain on the Merritt Parkway and stayed at the Bernmyer Motor Court in Branford, CT which was two miles from the Atlantic Ocean.

On Tuesday, we continued up the coast and visited the Lincoln Dye and Finishing Co. in Pawtucket, RI. Then we spent some time looking for the Old North Church in Boston. We saw the Boston Navy Yard on the way to New Hampshire.

On Wednesday, we traveled near Lewiston and Auburn in Maine where we went through a Bates factory, which made bedspreads and tablecloths. After lunch we went through a shoe factory and then stayed in a tourist home in Montpelier, VT.

On Thursday, we ate breakfast in Burlington, VT, then drove in lots of rain and saw a lot of nice farmland. The view of the Niagara Falls is much nicer from the Canadian side. That night we stayed in a tourist home in Dunnville, Ontario.

In Canada, the country was nice and level and the weather was cool. Most of the cars were American made. On Friday, we ate lunch in Windsor, Ontario, and then went through the Ford Plant in Detroit, MI. Traffic in Detroit was terrible, and the drivers were crazy. That night we stayed in a tourist home near Toledo, Ohio.

On Saturday, we were on our way to Chicago, and the weather was nice. There was flat farmland with good crops of corn, alfalfa, soybeans and truck gardening. We had a picnic lunch in Chicago on Lake Shore Drive on Lake Michigan and then stayed in Oskaloosa, Iowa.

Apparently we returned to Pawnee City on Sunday after driving 4,530 miles and visiting 22 States and Canada. The gasoline cost for the entire trip was \$71.16.

We all took turns driving, and each position in the car had a job to do. The guy in the front with the driver was the navigator. He read the map and watched for the highway signs. The backseat people were planning the daily tour and recording where we had been.

18. My Dating Experience

When I started to high school I didn't know anyone. Lowell Heim lived less than two miles from me and we rode on the same school bus. Byford Elwonger and Lowell were friends from a farming organization. It wasn't long before Lowell Heim, Byford Elwonger, and I became a trio. We didn't do much dating. Finally when we were juniors, we were expected to have dates for the Junior Senior Banquet. Byford, a farmer, had a date with Evelyn Brown, a farm girl that lived in his area. Lowell Heim had a date with Evelyn's younger sister Dorothy. Evelyn Brown also arranged a blind date for me with her cousin Peggy Brown, who lived in Hiawatha, Kansas. This was my first date and apparently I must have been coached about a few things. The picture indicates that I wore a white shirt, tie and sport coat. I even had a buttoner or flower of some sort. It appears that Peggy had a corsage too. I am reasonably sure that Lowell was the driver for this event and drove his folk's car. I don't remember what



happened at the banquet. We probably ate some food prepared by some parents and listened to some speeches by the principal. We then probably went to Falls City to a movie. The goodnight kiss was a disaster since we lost our balance and I nearly fell off the stoop. On the trip home from Hiawatha, there was a lot of talk about the event that happened on Peggy's front door stoop. We were in the midst of gasoline rationing so driving was rather limited. Peggy lived in Hiawatha, KS, which was 40 miles from my home. As a result that was the only date I had with her. (I have been communicating with Evelyn Brown Elwonger for many years. She informs me that Peggy lives in Overland Park, Kansas and has been widowed three times.) Lowell and Byford continued to date the Brown girls so I was required to do my own shopping for dates. I dated Polly Powell for several months. Oneida Nicolas was someone I was interested in but she was the preacher's daughter. Marie Clark was a neighbor near my home and she was always inviting me to go to church with her. I now had a good reason to accept the invitation. It also was the church where Lowell was a member. I dated Oneida a few times. But that didn't last long.



I finally got around to dating Lowell's sister Janis. She was the one I was dating when I went into the service. She was the one that received the first postal card that I sent from the German Prison of War camp. She lived on a farm north of Dawson and she called my folks who were then living on the farm northwest of Dubois. When I came home on a 60-day furlough, it wasn't long before we broke up. I think she was dating someone else. Lowell and Byford were in the Merchant Marines and were at sea on the west coast. I was grateful to be home so I spent a lot of time enjoying

Moms good cooking. They were living on the farm north west of Dubois and as a result I spent a lot of time in the Pawnee City area with my cousin Emil Beranek, and his friends Delphen Summerholder, and the Renne brothers. This group didn't do much dating. I did date Marilyn Bysner a few times. I was also interested in Irish McCulla who later became the movie star in the *Queen of the Jungle*. It seems like the guys in the Pawnee area didn't think she was one of us. I finished my military career in Seattle. While in Seattle, I went to dances but I can't say I really ever dated anyone. I arranged to be discharged from the service in Fort Lewis Washington,



which took place in November 1945. I went down the coast to San Francisco in hopes of seeing Lowell and Byford. I missed them by one day. I then went on to San Diego to see Russell Farrar who was in the Naval Hospital.

I then stopped in Ogden, Utah to see Jerry Hill. Her brother was in my class in country school. She was a nice pen pal while I was in the service.

I then started back to the University in January 1946. I was rather busy with my studies. During this period I dated Dorothy Brown who was also going to the University. She had broken up with Lowell and also with Gene Heim. I also dated Margaret Sue Fishwood who was in a class ahead of me in county school. However, she graduated in my class from high school. Her folks had her take 8th grade over since she was so

young. I often wondered how that was accomplished. She was the 1943 Class Victorian.

Engineering classes at the University kept me pretty busy. After graduating, I worked for the Nebraska Highway Department. Now that I was out of school, my dating became more serious since I would be looking for a life time mate. Three of us state engineers were sent to Omaha for a meeting. One of the guys was dating a girl that was in nurses training. She in turn fixed the other two of us up with dates with some of her friends. Since Evelyn was the taller of the gals she chose the date that was the taller of the guys, which was me. We went to a dance and during the evening I found out that she had gone to school in Monmouth College before she entered nurses training. Her mother was a nurse. Since Lincoln was not my hometown, I confessed I was from a small town in southeast Nebraska you never heard of. What a surprise, Dubois is only eight miles from Pawnee City, which really was her hometown. She knew all the guys that I ran around with during my furlough. This really was meeting a hometown girl. But.... She was pinned to a guy in Monmouth. She was an angel that was already spoken



for. Seeking a life mate was doomed again.

As it turned out Evelyn broke up with her boyfriend and as a result she wrote to me in care of my folks. I took the hint and made a phone call and soon I started making weekend trips to Omaha. Eventually I was able to serve as a state consultant to the City of Omaha. What a deal; an expense account and being located near my dream girl. We were together every night. My 1950 Yellow Chevrolet convertible was probably the main attraction. We ended up getting married after knowing each other less than a year. We had a great 45-year marriage. As a result, that ended my dating experience for over 45 years.



After Evelyn passed away, I lacked companionship. I took my first cousin Helen Zelenka on a Caribbean cruise. I also went on a Czech Republic tour with my first cousin Betty Mahoney. Evelyn Brown



Elwonger went with me to a Stalag IVB POW dinner in Chicago.

I also dated a few widows in the neighborhood until I met my second angel, Yvonne Brice. It wasn't long before we became engaged. It soon developed into a problem. She will not consider living in Evelyn's house. Since the house is in a trust and she plans to outlive me, she doesn't want to be tossed out after my death. Her house is bulging with a 50-year collection of stuff, so there is no place to put any of my stuff. Yvonne wanted to buy a condo and we looked at several, but none of them were the equivalent

to Evelyn's house. We look like a married couple, since we are involved in a lot of things together. We have gone on several cruises and tours together. We share a room, but not the same bed.



19. A Very Special Christmas Card

I received a very important Christmas card dated December 17, 1950, which ultimately changed my life and resulted in the Wopata name being carried on.



A Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year

Evelyn

Dec. 17

Dear Gene,

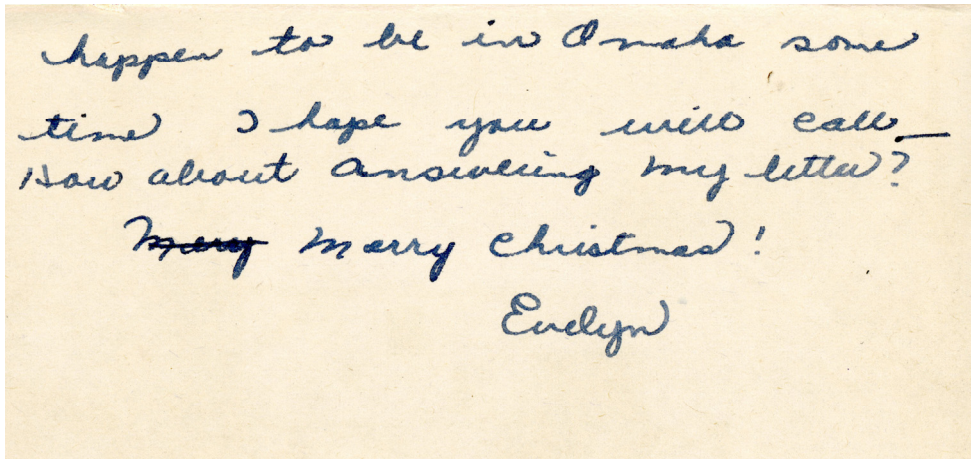
Surprised to hear from me again? You never did answer my letter! It has been so long - who knows you may be married by now.

I was in Lincoln a couple weeks ago & almost called you, but thought it best that I didn't after all.

Wee & I have had one last big misunderstanding so we are through. I guess it had just gone on too long & we were both too young when we started being serious.

I realize that I'm sticking my neck out - but here goes. If you still think Anala might have some attraction I'd like to see you again, Gene. Before I had Wee in the back of my mind, I realize I wasn't very good company some of the time. I think you know that I did enjoy dating you.

Guess I've said enough about that. If you should



happen to be in Omaha some
time I hope you will call—
How about answering my letter?
Merry Merry Christmas!
Evelyn

I met Evelyn on a blind date while attending an engineering meeting in Omaha. We had a great time. In fact she was a prize and I made several trips to date her. She finally informed me she was pinned to a fellow that was in Monmouth. That was bad news. She had gone to Monmouth College for a couple years before she came to Omaha. Receiving this card was great news. No doubt I responded and as a result we got married, which resulted in a great Wopata family.

May 17, 1951

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Barr,

I wish to inform you that I have been very serious about your daughter and hope that it meets with your approval. I have presented Evelyn with an engagement ring and she has accepted it.

I fell in love with Evelyn a year ago, and was very upset when I found out about Wes and how she thought she felt about him. I thought that I had lost the girl of my dreams but was overjoyed when I found out I still had a chance to make her mine.

I wish to tell you that I love her very much and will do everthing in my power to make her happy. To help do so, I have myself to offer, a college education, a fairly good job, and a financial standing of a couple thousand dollars and a car. I am not a member of a church, but plan to become a member of a church that will meet with our mutual approval.

I deeply regret that I was unable to discuss this matter with you in person, and hope that you will accept my-apology in doing so.

Sincerely yours,

Engene

REPRESENTING



J. A. BARR

Insurance

PAWNEE CITY, NEBRASKA

June 5th, 1951

Mr. Gene Wopota,
209 So. 33rd St.
Omaha, Nebr.

Dear Gene:

First of all, I guess that we owe you an apology for not answering your letter which you wrote us before we were in Omaha for Evelyn's graduation. For some unexplainable reason your letter got mislaid, and to this day we have not been able to find it. We did not have your address, so did not know where to write.

Gene, I hope that you will fully understand our position in not whole heartedly giving our consent to you and Evelyn getting married. We have had no opportunity to become acquainted with you, other than the very short time you have been in our home, when you would bring Evelyn, or come to get her. We also feel that Evelyn should know your folks better, and that they should know her. Gene, we know nothing against you, but feel that we would have liked to know you a little better, before you and Evelyn become engaged.

Evelyn seems to be very confident that she has made no mistake, and I guess that you feel the same. We hope that you haven't, and that if you get married that you will have a happy wedded life. I am sure that there is no father and mother that prize their daughter, or love her more than we do Evelyn. There are people of more means financially than we, who have perhaps done more for their children than we have, however we have done all that we possibly could.

We have tried to maintain a christian home, of which I am sure Evelyn has told you. It is our hope and desire that you will unite with the church, and take your place along with Evelyn, and lead a christian life, which I am sure you will not regret.

Gene, we do not want anything to mar the love which we have for Evelyn. We hope that you will love her as we do, and that you will have a good christian home. Evelyn seems very happy, so we will be very glad to have you, any time she and you can come.

Sincerely,

Mr. & Mrs. J. A. Barr

20. Our Wedding

Barr – Wopata Wed in Evening Ceremony

Miss Evelyn Barr of Pawnee City became the bride of Eugene Wopata of Independence, MO, at the United Presbyterian Church at Pawnee City, NE, Saturday, Oct. 27, 1951. The church was decorated with tall baskets of white chrysanthemums, ferns and seven branch candelabra. Tapers tied with white ribbon marked the pews.

Dr. Robert M. Karr performed the evening double ring ceremony in the presence of 225 guests. The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John A. Barr of Pawnee City. The groom's parents are Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wopata of DuBois, NE.

Mrs. Clyde McKee, pianist, played the traditional nuptial music and accompanied Mrs. George Humphrey of Omaha who sang, "Because," and "I Love Thee."

Bridal Gown

The bride, given in marriage by her father, chose for her wedding a gown of imported delicate white lace in demi-length with a scalloped off shoulder neckline, featuring a tulle yoke, and a standing collar. Tiny buttons fastened the long lace sleeves in Elizabethan points over the wrists, and tulle under lace scallops was featured at the hemline. Her waist length veil of imported English silk illusion fell softly from a lace cap, accentuated by puffs of tulle caught up by seed pearls. She carried a colonial bouquet of white roses.

Miss Eleanor Knoll of Omaha, maid of honor, wore a gown of blue stardust embroidered net. The strapless bodice was



featured with a tulle stole, and the voluminous skirt was demi-length. She carried a colonial bouquet of yellow and white mums.

Gene Heim of Dawson, NE, served as best man. Ushers were Delphin Sommerhalder of Steinauer, John Morgan of Lincoln, Robert Barr of Liberty, cousin of the bride, and Jack Wopata of Table Rock, cousin of the groom.

Reception

Immediately following the ceremony a reception was held in the church parlor for 225 guests. Miss Carol Wilson of Omaha cut the cake and Mrs. Allan Casey of Auburn, and Miss Vera Anderson of Omaha, poured. Miss Mary Wherry of Tecumseh was in charge of the guest book. Assisting at the reception were Mrs. Byford Anderson of Pawnee; Mrs. Julius Jensen of Pawnee; Miss Marjorie Hedell and Miss Jean Omachi, both of Omaha; Miss Leah Neilsen of Council Bluffs, IA; Miss Kathryn Kramer of Marysville, KS; Mrs. Harold Neil of Pawnee; Miss Ruth Kelly, Miss Barbara Tangdall and Miss Frances Bonner, all of Lincoln.

The bride chose for her wedding trip to New Orleans, LA, a three piece brown suit with matching accessories. Upon their return the couple will be at home at 1214 West Maple, Independence, MO.

Mrs. Wopata attended Monmouth College at Monmouth, IL, where she is a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority, and is a graduate of the University Of Nebraska School Of Nursing. Mr. Wopata is a graduate of the University of Nebraska and is a mechanical engineer with Standard Oil Company at Independence.



Bride's Gift to Groom – billfold

Groom's Gift to Bride – gold earrings

Something old – pearls

Something New – wedding dress

Something Borrowed – hair pin from
Eleanor

Something Blue – Kappa joy colors

Rehearsal dinner was given by Evelyn's
parents at the John Barr residence – 7 pm

Engagement picture May 17, 1951

Where We Met – Conkling Hall – 42nd
and Dewey, Omaha, NE

How We Met – Our blind date was
arranged by Phyl Cone. Gene was in
Omaha for an engineer's convention. We went dancing in the Pax Room.





This Certifies
that
Eugene Frank Wopata
of Independence, Missouri
and
Evelyn Marie Barr
of Pawnee City, Nebraska
were by me united in
Holy Matrimony
at Pawnee City, Nebraska
according to the laws of
Nebraska
on the 27th day
of October 1951
W. Carr

Witnesses:

Elmer Hall
Gene Kern

Oct. 27 (Sat). St. Joseph, Mo.
Hotel Robidoux 110 mi.

Oct. 28 Sun. Nevada, Mo.
South Winds Motel
Judys Place - speilbat steak 206 mi

Oct. 29 Mon. Little Rock, Ark.
Magnolia court
Bruno's Little Italy 600 mi

Oct. 30 Tues. Jackson, Miss.
Tarry More Hotel Courts 290 m

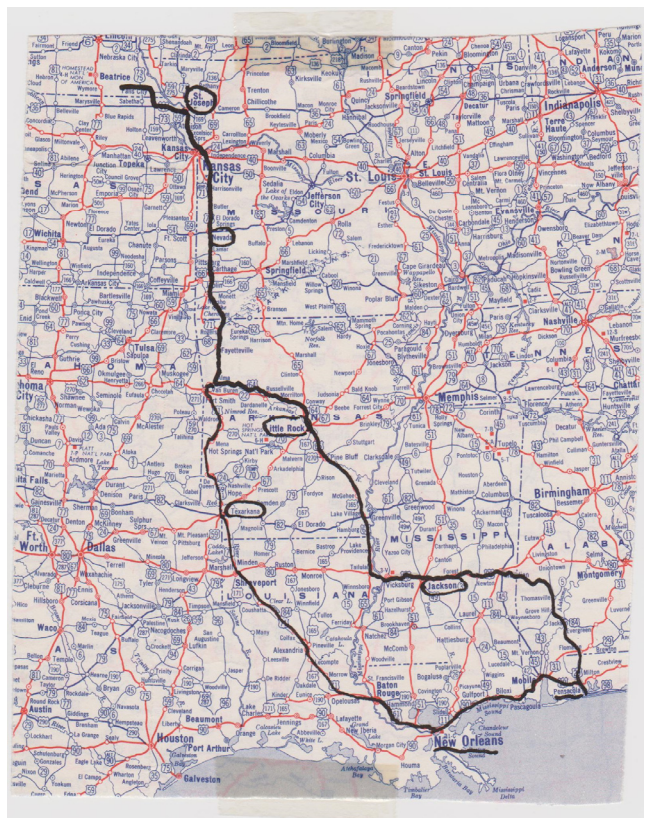
Oct 31 Wed. Pensacola, Florida
333 m
Carpenters - snapper - shad now

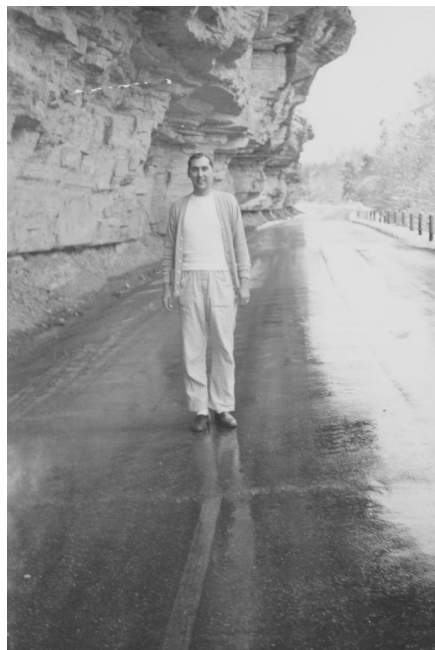
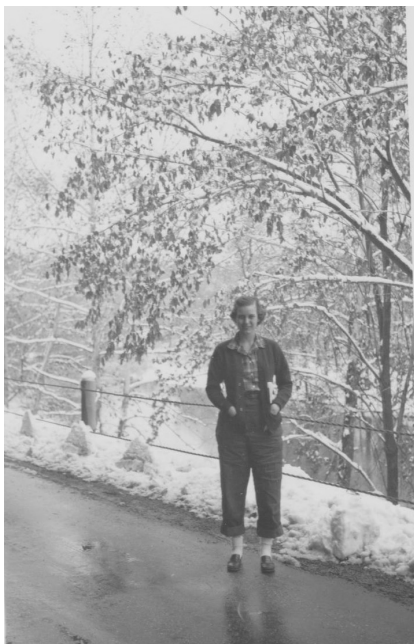
Nov. 1 Thurs. Edgewater Park, Miss
+ 2 Fri. Edgewater Gulf Hotel
Sea Ranch, Mobile, Ala. 198 m

Nov. 3 Sat. New Orleans, La.
+ 4 Sun Tulane courts 159

Nov. 5 Mon. Texarkana, Ark.
Park Plaza Motels 434

Nov. 6 Tues Independence, Mo. 512
Drove through area with
17" snow fall







**2006 wearing
his 1951
wedding suit**

21. My Job Experience

My parents owned and ran a country service station while I attended grade school and high school. I worked in the family business, but was not paid. I pumped gasoline, washed windshields, checked tire pressure and oil level. When you were under the hood checking the oil, Gates Rubber Company encouraged you to check the condition of the fan belt. I even got an award for trying to sell a fan belt to the Gates mystery man. It was a pleasant surprise to get this \$5 reward. When I was in high school, I was able to repair and install tires. I did it manually. There wasn't any motorized equipment like they use in tire shops today. There were no motorized lug wrenches to take the wheel off the car. It was necessary to use two tire tools to take the tire off the wheel. Also, the tires had rubber inner tubes. There were no tubeless tires.



The summer after I graduated from high school, I worked with dad as a roofer on houses and barns. We installed composition and wood shingles. I earned \$1.00 per hour, which was the same rate that my dad was paid. I earned \$400 that summer and that paid for my first semester of college.

During Christmas break of my first semester at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, I worked in the Mechanical Engineering Department. I operated a metal lathe and machined test spools from aluminum bars. I didn't earn much, but it was fun to do something like that for a couple weeks. I'm sure it would become boring after a few months.

I graduated from the University of Nebraska with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering in August of 1949. This came as a surprise because my advisor was telling me I needed another course. The required credit hours had been changed, or my advisor wasn't paying

much attention to my records. I received credit for my army service, which was equivalent to ROTC. Apparently this was overlooked for years.

Lots of veterans were looking for jobs and the companies were not recruiting at the University of Nebraska for summer school graduates. As a result, I was happy to get a job with the Nebraska Highway Department in Lincoln. I worked as a draftsman in the State Capitol Building. It really was a nice, clean and comfortable job. The job involved taking field survey notes and plotting the information on large sheets for drawing cross-sections of a roadway. These sections would then show the existing grade as well as the proposed roadway. Then I used an instrument to calculate the cut or fill areas. This information was then put on a form. A manual calculator was used to calculate the cut and fill volumes. As I remember, the fill volume had to exceed the cut volume by 20%. After about a year of this, a field surveyor became ill and needed to be replaced. The replacement was me. I was the only one that had an engineering degree in our survey party of three. Having a degree made me the head honcho of the survey party. I was to be the surveyor, and supervise the rodman and the chainman. They both wanted to run the instrument, so I made an arrangement. They both had experience using the surveying instrument. I knew how to use it, but had no experience. So I had one guy run the instrument and the other guy would be the rodman. Then they would change jobs at noon. I was the note keeper and held one end of the chain. This job was in Peru, NE. The project was to make a road out of a goat trail on the side of a bluff. Not only was the terrain difficult, but the weather was very cold. I didn't really realize that my feet were a problem. My feet were frozen while I was overseas in the Army. They never really bothered me while I was in college, or while I was pheasant or duck hunting, since I wasn't in the cold very long. While working on the road, my feet would get cold and I wouldn't know it. Then when they warmed back up, they would really burn, and it would last several hours. I still have that experience with my feet. That two-week tour of duty in Peru was really difficult, since the weather was near freezing almost every day.



When I returned to Lincoln to work, I informed my supervisors about my foot problem. During this time I met Evelyn and was making frequent trips to Omaha. The city of Omaha needed engineering assistance for designing an expressway. The city needed to comply with state requirements and build a limited access highway in the northwest part of Omaha. I became the engineer on that project. What a deal! This would reduce the driving time on the road, increase the number of dates with Evelyn per week, and I would receive a per-diem for living away from Lincoln. This job was different, but interesting. The work at the Highway Department in Lincoln involved making drawings of a road out in the country. With this project, we were designing a road through the city of Omaha. The Limited Access concept meant there needed to be entrances and exits every mile or so. However, the City Engineer had a tough time. The mayor or a

councilman would come in and have a conference with the City Engineer which resulted in changes to the drawing and additional entrances and exits were added. We'd make the change and then send it to the Highway Department in Lincoln for approval. Before I left, they ended up with entrances nearly every three blocks.

I notified the University that I was interested in a mechanical engineering job. Standard Oil was recruiting at the University of Nebraska. I soon had an interview with Mr. G. Larson from Standard Oil in Sugar Creek, Missouri. I drove down to Sugar Creek for the interview and toured the refinery. It looked a little scary and maybe dangerous. However, when they offered me \$375 per month, I thought it was worth a try. I started to work for the Nebraska Highway Department for \$190 a month and worked five and half days a week. It was a big increase in pay, plus I didn't have to work Saturday mornings. I started to work at the refinery on September 1, 1951. Evelyn and I were married on October 27, 1951. This would give me a few weeks to find out if I would like the job in Sugar Creek. Well, I guess I did since I retired after 30 years of service.



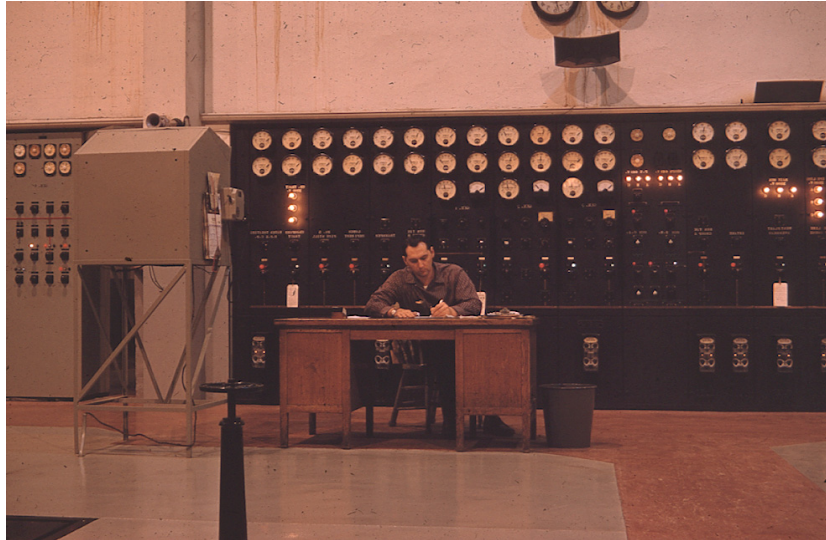
Here again, I spent a great deal of time on the drafting board. One of my very first jobs was to draw up the plans for fences on the eastern part of the refinery. Oddly enough, the fence is still a landmark. I finally got involved with piping drawings. The piping specifications were in a book about 3" thick. Another one of my landmarks, which still stands, is a pipe bridge across the railroad tracks. Previous designs used structural "I" beams. I suggested



using steel trusses like they use in commercial buildings. This would permit greater spans and smaller foundations. Iver Ericson, the Assistant Chief Engineer, approved the idea. My next hurdle was to get one of the civil engineers to show me where to get the design data. Lots of pipes have been added to this bridge since it was originally built, which I thought would be the case. Even though the refinery is closed this pipe bridge is still standing.

After a few years of working at the refinery, the union went on strike. The engineers then worked with the supervisors to help run the refinery. I worked in several places, but most of

time, I worked in the Utilities Division. I trained for a week in Cold Process, and then I went to the West Plant Cooling Towers. This was rather interesting. There were four large cooling towers with lots of fans and pumps. It was a long walk to check all the equipment, and it was a rather lonely place. I seldom saw more than three people in a 12-hour shift. I also worked in the Power Station Turbine room. Most of the time was spent at a



desk. My main duty was to check the instrument panel every hour as well as the generators. Lots of people were in this area. There were several people working in the same building operating the boilers. Also Hot Process was nearby. We worked long hours and had only one day off per week. It was interesting work and the pay was fantastic

I also worked with process instrumentation. I even taught a few classes at the Sugar Creek Refinery. That was the day when pneumatic instruments were the “in thing” due to the need of spark proof control devices. Electronic devices finally took over.

I became interested in the analyzing vibration produced by rotating equipment. At that time, most of it was done with portable devices. I started logging data on the important turbines, compressors, pumps and generators. Whenever the data indicated a problem was developing, I would report it to the Process and Mechanical Divisions. A plan was then developed to shut down the machine. It was normal for some of these machines to run for 3 years before they

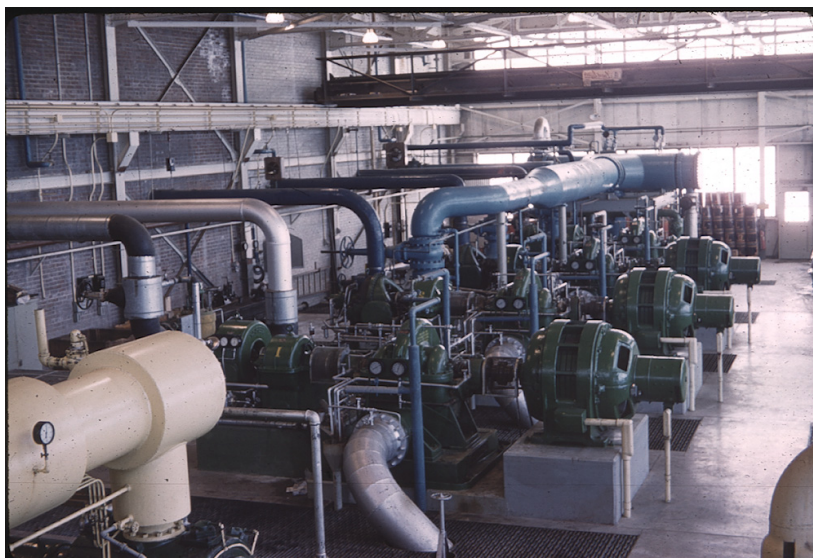


were shut down. It was then necessary to arrange for factory service men and the spare parts. Sometimes it was necessary to work around the clock until the machine was repaired. There was a time when engineers were paid for overtime and I earned a big paycheck.



Prior to retirement, my duties in the refinery dealt full-time with rotating equipment. I became somewhat of a specialist. The final two years before retiring were devoted to installing mechanical seals in pumps to comply with OSHA standards. This was extremely interesting and challenging since it was somewhat experimental and I was in competition with the big boys at the large refineries as well as corporate engineering.

Then there was a great move in the organization for downsizing. In fact, there were incentives offered for taking early retirement. The company was still hiring outside engineers as consultants. I decided to accept the retirement since my age plus service totaled 85, which was the requirement. I would retire and hoped to come back and work as a consultant. During this period of time my dad had health issues. He survived a 9.5 hour back operation in Independence, and then was moved from hospital to hospital. He then went to an urgent care home, and finally the nursing home in Pawnee City. Since I had retired it gave me time to be with my parents, and arrange for dad's operations and treatments. After nine months, dad died. During this time the Refinery shut down. There went my consulting job. I started looking around for a job and did not find anything that interested me.



After surviving a year of retirement, it felt so good and since my assets were holding up okay, I ended up retiring for good which was a great decision. Since retiring in 1981, it has permitted me to do lots of traveling and spend time with my children and grandchildren. I have been so fortunate to be retired for over 31 years.

22. 'Round the Square

Page 2-The Pawnee Republican, Thursday, April 10, 1997



'Round the Square

Back in 1920 Henry Ford cut prices on all Ford vehicles an average of \$142. The most expensive touring car is now selling for \$512 without starter, with starter it sells for \$585.

That ad, reprinted in a recent magazine, brought back lots of memories. I remember: Riding in grandpa's Model T started with a hand crank. There were no windows, only side curtains with little squares of isinglass to see out.

Picking up cobs in the pig pen for the kitchen stove, pumping and carrying water from the well for drinking and cooking. Turning the handle on the separator to divide the cream from skim milk, then churning the cream into butter. Planting potatoes, dressing chickens, and putting eggs under a broody hen. It was exciting to see the fluffy yellow chicks when they hatched out 21 days later. Getting knocked down by hogs while trying to pour slop in the trough. Being pecked by an old hen while gathering eggs from the nest. Making ice cream with your own eggs, cream and ice from the stock tank in winter.

Sleeping in a feather bed in a room so cold it froze water. A brick or sad iron heated in the oven then slid into the bed helped a little. Kerosene lamps and lanterns provided light and every farm had an outdoor privy. No Charmin there, only a Sears catalog hung on a nail.

Stepping on a rusty nail while barefoot (which was all summer), didn't rate a trip to the doctor. Mom's bread and milk poultice drew out the rust and bacteria.

Neighbors helped each other butcher a hog or beef then shared the meat. Have you ever milked a cow with a dirty tail swishing in your face or tried to teach a stubborn calf to drink from a bucket?

Rural telephones were on a party line and people could, and did, listen to every call to keep up with local news and gossip. The central office in town would ring three long rings for emergencies such as fires or accidents when help was needed, and everyone responded.

Planks were set up in a vacant lot where free movies were shown in town in summer. The adults visited and shopped and kids played before and after the show. Candy bars were a nickel, stamps were three cents and postcards one penny.

I wouldn't go back if I could, but it's fun to remember how it used to be.

x x x x x

If nobody knows the troubles you've seen, your phone isn't on a party line!

-Evie Popelka

This article sure hit home.

Don't know about car prices.

I do know that these curtains with windows were small.

Had to watch where you stepped in the pigpen.

Pumping & carrying water was a big chore.

We didn't have a separator.

Dad usually planted the potatoes. Had to have the eyes a certain way and spaced.

The black board also was on the wall.

I helped clean a lot of chickens.

Dad slopped the hogs.

Feather bed was nice, but I didn't use a brick.

Sears Catalog is not very comfy.

Butchering a hog was a big event.

Party line telephone was equal to radio or TV.

Free movies on Wednesday nights.

23. Camping Trips

The first family camping trip was in 1958. It was in our station wagon and was the first camping event for all of us. Our shelter was the station wagon, which was expanded using a canvas boot over the back hatch. The second seat of the wagon would fold in a manner that provided support for the front edge of a piece of plywood. The back edge was supported with ties to the clothes hooks

located above the doors. A pad on this plywood provided the bed on which John (3 years old) would sleep. Steve's (5 years old) bed was the front seat. Evelyn and I had the whole back bed of the wagon. This really wasn't too bad when rehearsed at home. The major problem while on the trip came when unloading the cooking box and bags of clothing before you could go to bed. Also, the entrance to the master bedroom was rather inconvenient. You had to unzip the boot and then take a huge two-foot step down to the ground.



Our first stop out was at Aunt Bess Farrar's home in Denver. They provided us with good facilities. Our next stop was in "Western Colorado". I remember Evelyn was busy preparing supper and the boys were having a great time running around picking up sticks, rocks, dirt, etc. Then she got the boys washed up ready to eat. But, before she could get the food served, the boys would be throwing handfuls of dirt into the air... whee... e..e.. e.....How she kept from exploding is beyond me. She had never been camping before, and never cooked on make shift equipment; in a rather dry, dusty campground, this was a real experience. But I had experience as a boy scout.



We purchased a wall tent before our next camping trip. It was about ten by twelve feet in size, with no bottom. Fortunately, we didn't run into any rain. As I recall, we used it in Bennett Springs, and also in a state park in Oklahoma. We used plastic under our air mattress on the rough ground. This was not a pleasant experience, especially camping next to people with nice camping equipment.



We finally bought a camping trailer. This was the type where the main body of the trailer provided a double bed. There was the tent that folded out, and covered the bed of the trailer and an area next to the trailer. There was storage under the main bed for clothing and food. We could set up cots on the ground portion of the tent. I definitely should have purchased the off the ground type. However, we saw a lot of the United States in the many years we owned this trailer.





The boys did enjoy camping. It gave them an opportunity to do lots of climbing.

We then purchased a used 17-foot Pathfinder travel trailer. This was a big improvement over the tent trailer. It required a much better towing vehicle. It had a stove, refrigerator and bathroom. We made many long trips with this trailer. It also was stored near Bennett Springs during the summer, so it was used a lot on weekend fishing trips to Bennett Springs.





On November 6, 1975, Bill Fleming and I bought a 1971 Chevrolet camper van. Its prime purpose was to pull a boat to the various lakes where we fished. I truly enjoyed several fishing trips with this van even though we seldom slept in it. Bill did not retire with me, but he transferred to the Texas City Refinery, so I purchased his share of the van. One of the longest trips was to the Glacier National Park and the Canadian Rockies. Susan and her friend, Brenda, spent the first two weeks with Evelyn and me. They camped in a tent near the van, while Evelyn and I slept in the van. Then Steven flew up to Calgary, Canada and traded places with the girls. The girls flew home and he then spent two weeks with us. Evelyn & I were gone for 30 days and never once stayed in a motel. The van was used on several other camping trips including, Washington State, Texas and Florida. Steve and John used it for several ski trips to Colorado. I sold it in September 1986. The van really got a workout since we drove it over 50,000 miles while I was the owner.



Then we bought a used 23-foot Ford Coachman motor home. This was finally our best camping vehicle. It made several long trips. I sold this a couple years after Evelyn died because it hadn't been used much.

We were visiting Susan at Henderson Settlement in Frakes, Kentucky on our 35th wedding anniversary in October 27, 1986.



24. Fraternal Organizations

When I started to college in the fall of 1944, I was rooming with Lowell Helmick who was a high school classmate. What I knew about fraternities was very limited. It appeared that they had a lot of parties, which did not interest me. Also the freshman had to wear beanies, which looked pretty silly. Then there were the additional costs, and I did not have a surplus of money. Lowell joined a fraternity and went to work in a fraternity house that provided him with room and board. I think he had to work in the kitchen and act as a waiter. When I returned from the service and went back to college, I again had the same thoughts about fraternities. Now they did not wear beanies, but the parties were even wilder. Then again I was able to live at home with my folks in Lincoln.

After I started to work in the capitol building in Lincoln, two of the fellows that I respected and visited with during the lunch hour were Masons. So I ended up joining the Masons. This was a secret society with special handshakes and passwords. It required memorizing lots of stuff that really was not of much interest to me. Anyway I didn't complete my Masonry degrees in Lincoln, so I finished them here in Independence. There were a few people that were Masons that worked in the Refinery. However, they worked in the plant and not in the office. Also, it was taking too much time. I now had a house to maintain and there was a boy in our house that I wanted to help take care of, so I demitted from the Masons.

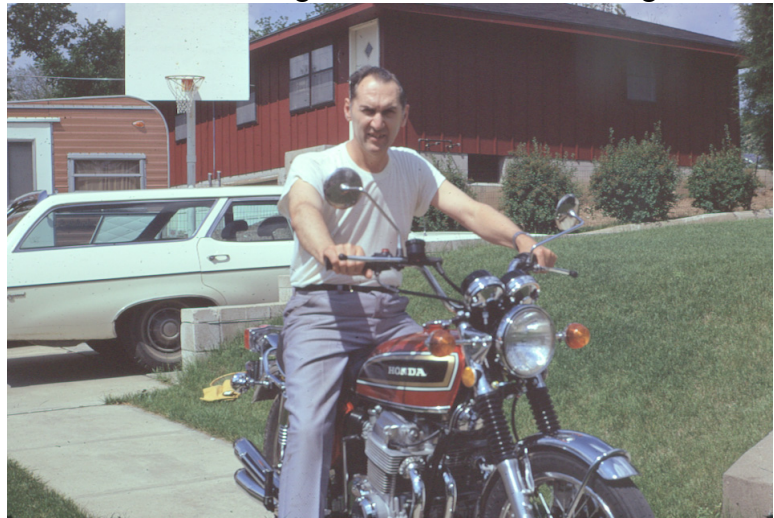
Prior to our plans to take a Globus Gateway Tour of "Romantic Germany" in 1985, Mayland Crosson called and was looking for former Company "G" Rainbow Veterans. She informed me that some Rainbow Veterans were going to a dedication ceremony of a monument in France near Gamsheim where I was captured. I found this to be interesting and exciting. As a result, Evie and I extended our tour of Germany. We rented a car in Frankfort and drove down to Haguenau, France, where we stayed three nights. While we were there, we attended the dedication of the monument located between Hatten and Rettershoffen. I got acquainted with several Rainbow men. A man from "G" Company, Bill Kenny and his wife led the way back to Gamsheim where I was able to retrace my movements prior to and after my capture.

This was quite an experience. Fritz Kreisler is a friend from First United Methodist Church and worked at **The Kansas City Star**. He had someone interview me and there was an article in **The Kansas City Star** about our trip. As a result of this article, I was invited to various veterans groups in the Kansas City area. I now have a Life Membership in the Heart of American Ex-Prisoners of War Chapter, The Rainbow Division, Military Order of the Purple Heart, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Disabled American Veterans. I have been the Chapter Commander of the Heart of America Ex-POW group as well as the Missouri Commander. I now attend the Rainbow meetings and some of the Purple Heart and American Legion meetings. I attend most of the weekly Chapter meetings at the KC VA and state conventions of the POW's. I have also attended most of the local lunches and many of the National Conventions of the Rainbow Division. Membership in these organizations is rapidly declining due to deaths and illness.

25. Vehicles

The first vehicle I rode was a bicycle. I was living at the filling station at the time so I must have been about 13 years old. I didn't have much help learning how to ride a bike. Most of the neighbor kids had bikes so I was rather eager to learn. I learned by coasting with my feet off the pedals. After few spills, I learned to coast with my feet on the pedals so I could use the brakes. Hand brakes or multi-speed bikes were not invented yet. Something we liked to do was clip a piece of cardboard near the rear wheel so it would rub the spokes and make a noise, which simulated an engine, or motorcycle.

I don't have much experience with motorcycles. The first time I rode a motorcycle was when Gene Heim took me for a ride after I was out of college. That was a thrill. I thought the machine would take off and leave us behind. Gene Heim was known for driving fast, so I think he gave me a first class ride. He was upset with me when I put my foot on the ground while we were making a rather sharp turn. The only other motorcycle ride I remember was one on Steve's motorcycle. I felt much safer with him. John also had a motorcycle. I sure was glad when John's motorcycle got stolen out of our driveway. The thief sure did his mother and dad a big favor.



The first car I drove was when I was about 12 years old. The only motorized vehicle I had driven up to this time was Uncle Otto's tractor. A tractor moves a lot slower. The car was a 1934 Plymouth. It was a four door with a heater, no radio, and a stick shift on the floor. I drove from the garage to the house, which involved backing and lots of turning.

The next car I remember driving was 1937 Plymouth. It was a black 4 door, with a heater, and an AM radio with an external antenna. This is the car I drove when I got my first driver's license. It was necessary to go to Falls City, Nebraska and drive for a state patrolman. I felt I could drive real well; shift gears, park, etc. But I was rather tense when I took the test. I knew many of the state patrolmen since many of them would stop at the filling station. However, on the big test day I didn't know the patrolman. That didn't help matters any. It was a sense of real accomplishment when I passed.

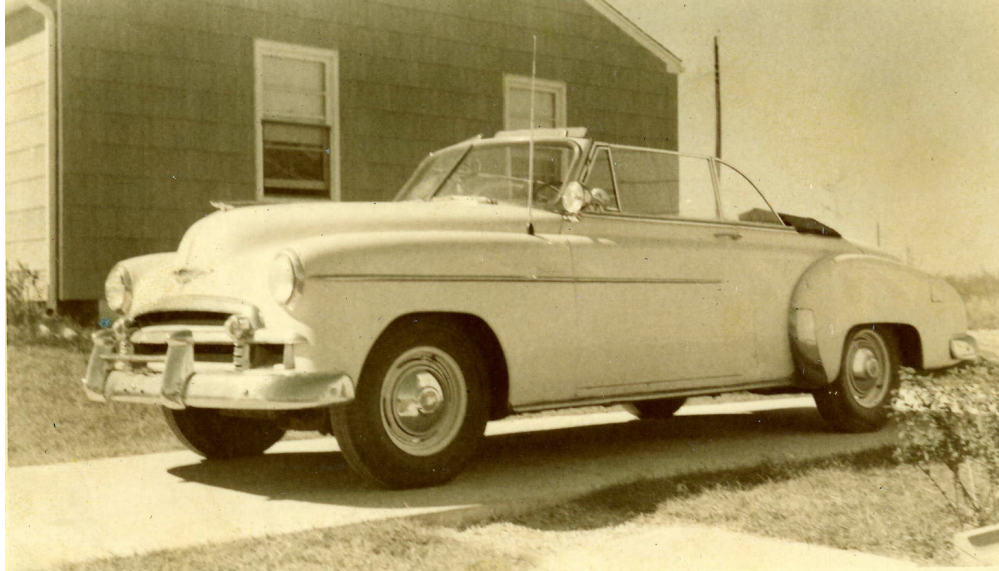
The 1937 Plymouth was the car I drove while I was in high school. This was during the war and gasoline was rationed. Gasoline cost about 18 cents per gallon. After I was able to drive, I took better care of the car. That would involve pumping the water in a bucket and washing the car with a sponge or rag. I would usually wipe it dry with a rag as well. We didn't own a shamus skin. I also waxed the car once a year. We didn't have a vacuum to clean the inside of the car, so

I would use a whiskbroom. I would usually wash or wipe the rubber floor mats, too. It was also customary to cover the fuzzy seat material with seat covers. This permitted you to slide in and out much easier. It also made the seats much cooler in the summer time. We didn't have air conditioned cars. We would open a small side window vent that would scoop the air directly into the car.



This is a truck that we hauled ice from Humboldt to the station and sold the ice to the public. (around 1942-43).

After the war, Dad worked at the DuTeau Chevrolet in Lincoln and was able to buy a new car at a reasonable price. Cars were hard to buy. You had to be on the good side of the dealer. Dad bought 1945 slant back, two door, two-toned brown and Green Chevrolet. That was the cats meow in those days. I haven't seen that style of vehicle for years. It had a pretty good radio and heater. No tape decks or air-conditioning.



After I graduated from the University, the folks gave me a 1950 yellow convertible, which cost \$1,601.93. This is the car that Evelyn drove when I taught her how to drive. This was an excuse to spend time together, which resulted in over 45 years of a wonderful marriage. We continued to drive the convertible after we were married, but when Steve came along we decided we needed a family type car.

Byford Elwonger worked in the Auburn Ford agency so we bought a 1953 Ford Custom Four Door for \$2,134.76.



On March 17, 1958, we bought a used 1955 Pontiac Station Wagon for \$1,495.



On October 18, 1960, we bought another station wagon, which was a 1958 Dodge four door, station wagon. This was a big vehicle with an automatic transmission. You shifted gears by pushing buttons on the dash board located on the left side of the steering wheel.

On March 31, 1963, we bought a new 1963 Rambler four door station wagon. When I went to Texas on a temporary assignment, I had an air conditioner installed.

1967 Dodge four-door sedan which I inherited from my folks.

On Oct 13, 1971, we purchased a 1972 Bonneville four door sedan from an Amoco widow. This was a nice family car.

1967 black cougar, bought in 1969. Steve bought this from me for \$700 when he left home for college in 1972. There were now three drivers in the family so having two cars was handy.



September 7, 1972, we needed a second car so we purchase a 1971 Capri. This was basically John's car.

On November 6, 1975, Bill Fleming and I bought a 1971 Chevrolet Camper Van. Its prime purpose was to pull a boat to the various fishing lakes. When Bill did not retire with me and transferred to the Texas City Refinery, I purchased his share of the van. I sold it in September 1986. It was used on several camping trips to Canada, Washington State, Texas and Florida. Steve and John used it for ski trips to Colorado.



On May 19, 1978, we purchased an Olds Delta 99 from Ketchum Oldsmobile for \$5,891.62

On July 25, 1986, we purchased a 1986 Pontiac four door Sedan. This became Susan's car in December 1990, and I took her 1980 red tudor Chevrolet Citation. The Citation was used a lot like a station wagon since the hatch back opened up like a station wagon.

We ordered at 1991 Buick Park Avenue, which listed for \$27,336 and with John's discount cost \$20,081.42. Steve ended up with this car after we drove it for many years.

On February 18, 1995, we purchased 1995 Oldsmobile Silhouette Van. The MSRP was \$21,920, which cost \$19,517 with John's discount.

In 2000, I purchased an Oldsmobile Silhouette GLS four door Van. The MSA price for this was \$29,695.

Steve reported he was in need of replacing a vehicle so I ended up buying a 2002 Chevrolet Venture Van that listed for \$27,181.80 so that he could buy my 2000 van. This van had electric doors on both sides as well as rear sensors. This engine started leaking water in 2008. The estimated cost to repair was \$1,000. I started shopping for a car. I had a Cadillac sedan picked out and was on the way to buy it. I decided to look at the Honda dealership. What do you know, the dealer had a Honda van that looked like my Chevrolet van. It was much easier to get in than the Cadillac. We dickered about an hour about the price before we made a trade.

I now own a 2006 Honda Odyssey that I bought in 2008. I miss the backup sensors and the compass; otherwise it is a dream to drive. John no longer worked at GM.

I consider myself a defensive driver. I have no problem in driving a standard shift, but prefer to drive a car with an automatic transmission, especially in the city. I usually used Standard or AMOCO gasoline. I felt it was a good product and I wanted to be loyal to my employer. My second choice was Phillips 66; again it must be loyalty since that is what we sold at the filling station for about seven years. Sometimes, I bought Conoco since their stations usually had clean rest rooms and also would provide nice travel folders. Currently, I do not have a favorite brand.

I've had experience with most of the American Cars. I favor the General Motors vehicles, primarily because John worked for GM. John has also been able to arrange for me to buy a vehicle at a good price. For most of my life I have done the maintenance on my cars, such as changing the oil and filter, brake fluid, power steering, radiator coolant, rotating the tires, replacing the sparkplugs, brake shoes and pads, etc.

I helped a man overhaul the engine in our 1937 Plymouth. Shortly after that overhaul, Dad, Mom and I went on our first vacation together to the Blackhills and Colorado. I also helped Steve overhaul his 1969 Cougar.

I currently belong to AAA. Most of my life I didn't belong to a motor club. I have been very fortunate when it comes to accidents. I sideswiped a car a couple miles west of the filling station. I didn't even have a driver's license at the time. I was lucky. They didn't stop. I think they were blinded by the sun and crossed the line over into my lane.

I also rear-ended a car in Lincoln when I was going to college. I made a panic stop and slid under the bumper of the car that stopped in front of me. There probably was no damage at the first impact. However, as he pulled forward he pulled me along. Then he rolled back and hit me with greater force than when I hit him. It put a little dent in the fender. Dad didn't tell Mom.

I enjoy going on vacation in a car. It permits me to get out and stretch when I feel like it. It also permits me to stop and start at the hours I want, and not meet a schedule of catching a plane or a bus.

On December 31, 2003, I had an accident on Blue Ridge Cutoff. I was issued a citation for failure to yield the right of way while changing lanes. Mr. Mull was unlicensed and had no proof of insurance. I appeared in court two times and since he didn't show up the case was dismissed.

26. Homes After Marriage

When I was engaged to Evelyn, I wanted to change jobs. I decided to accept a job offer from Standard Oil and work at the refinery in Sugar Creek. I first rented a room in a house on Winner Road. I then rented an upstairs apartment at 1214 West Maple in Independence. This was our home as a newly married couple. We lived there until we purchased a new house at 10625 E. 26th Street, Independence, in 1952.

This was a small two-bedroom home with a single bath.



I built an attached garage.



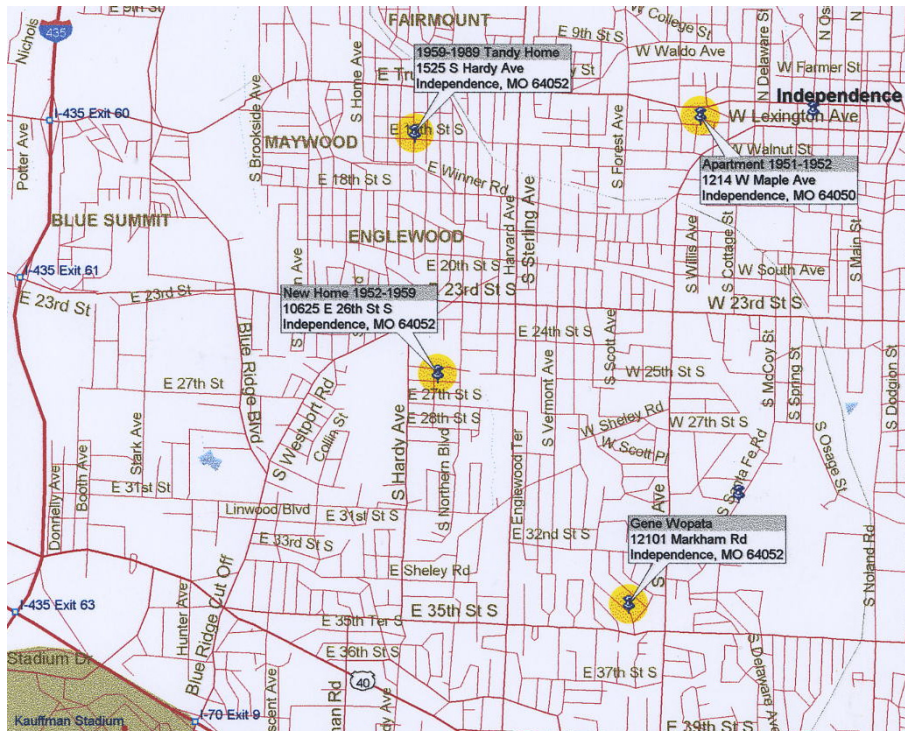
On October 19, 1959, we purchased a home at 1525 S. Hardy, Independence.

There was a lot more room in this house. We had two bedrooms and a bath on the main floor. It had a huge room upstairs that was later converted to two bedrooms and a bath. The house had a basement garage. In fact, you could park two cars end to end. The driveway was very narrow. Eventually we widened the drive and straightened it out.



In October 1988, we purchased the home where I currently live at 12101 Markham Road, Independence (Manor Oaks subdivision). We were shopping for a ranch type home for retirement. We even bought a lot and planned to build in Blue Dawn Manor. Evelyn heard this house on Markham was going to be on the market soon, so we had our name on the list to see it when it was put on the market. We looked at it the day it was listed, made an offer the next day, and bought it the following day. I have lived in the same 64052 zip code since 1951.





27. Christmas Cards

Christmas pictures cards were an annual project. Most of the pictures were taken on either a box camera or a 35 mm Argus C-3. The pictures were developed in a closet located in the basement.





Merry Christmas
Happy New Year



the Waples



HOLIDAY
GREETINGS

1955



Christmas
Greetings

Steve, Ralph, & David John

1956



Christmas
Greetings

The Wopatas



1957

**THE GENE
WOPATAS**



**HOLIDAY
GREETINGS**



1958

GREETINGS FROM OUR HOUSE TO YOUR HOUSE-



1959

Elsie, Evelyn, Steven, John, & Susan



1960

BEST HOLIDAY WISHES *from Our House to Yours*

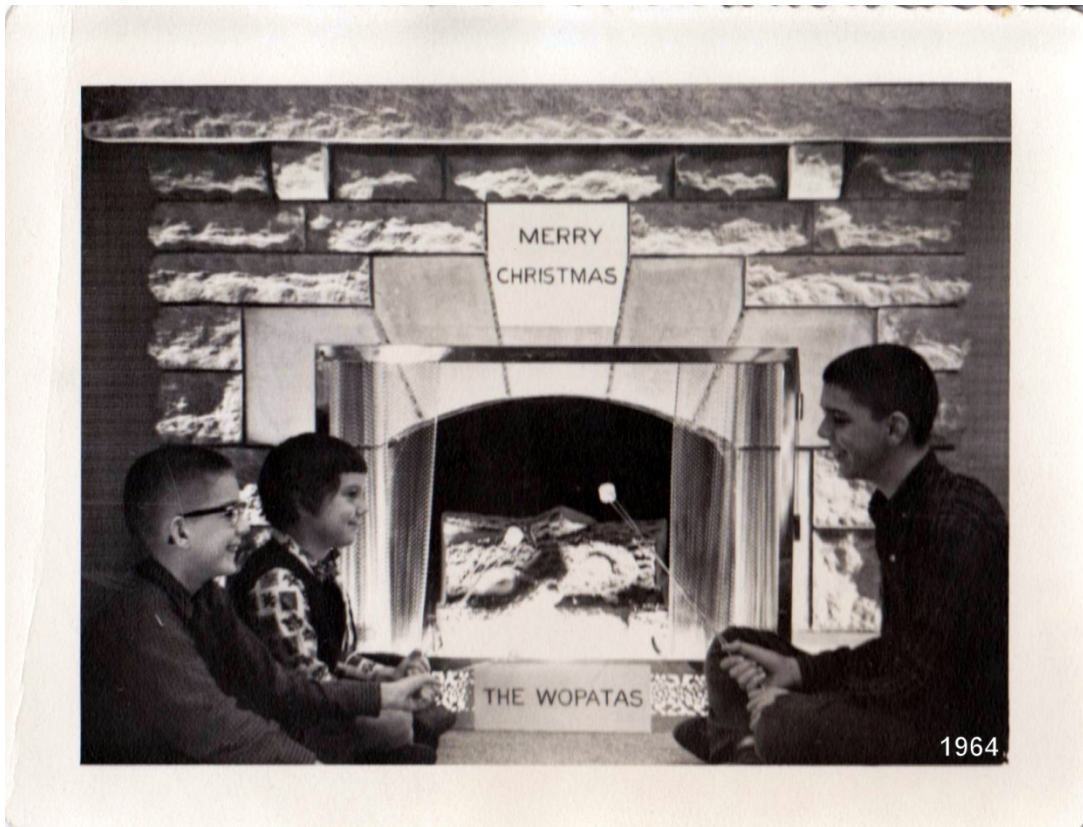


1961

The Wopatas



1962





28. Hall Farm

In 1957 my folks went to Florida for the winter. On the way home, they stopped at our house to visit. They responded to an ad in the Kansas City Star and then became employed at Hallmark Farm. Hallmark Farm was the home of Joyce C. Hall, founder of Hallmark cards. Dad took care of the livestock, mainly ponies and chickens, while mom took care of the greenhouse. They lived in a small house on the farm.

This area is now known as Hallbrook Farms and is located in Leawood, Kansas. It is located in the area of State Line Rd. and 112th Street. I recently drove by that area and saw that some of the buildings were still standing as they were in 1957 – 1958.



This is where the owner, Joyce C. Hall, and his wife, Elizabeth lived.



This is the house where my parents lived on Hall's farm.

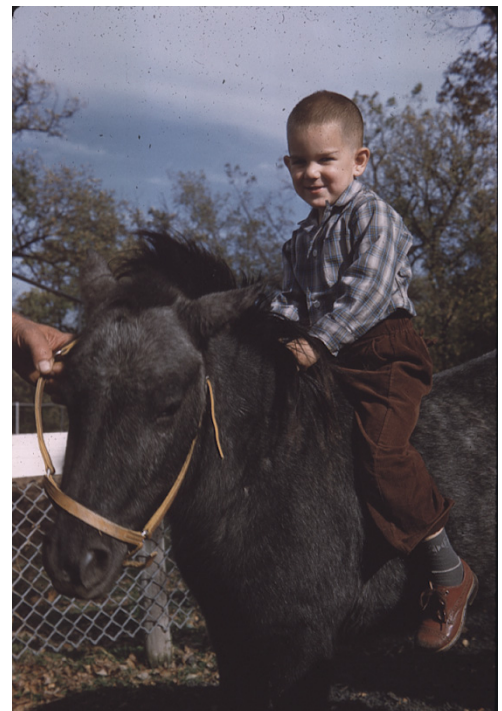
This is the greenhouse where Mom worked.



Dad took care of the vegetable garden.



Evelyn and I went to visit my folks about once a month. Steve and John enjoyed riding the ponies. The Hall farm was 30 minutes from where we lived.





Steve and John enjoyed playing with the farm's watchdog.

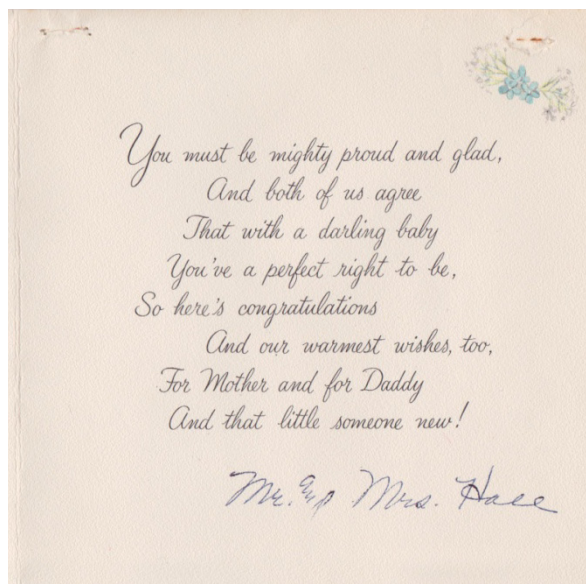


Joyce Hall with Dad and Steve.





Joyce and Elizabeth Hall gave Susan a dress, slip and shoes when she was born. She wore the outfit when she was baptized. This card is from the Hall's.



29. Spiritual Experiences

I was brought up in a family that did not attend church. There was a Bible in the house but it was not used except to record births, weddings, deaths, etc. However our home had a Christian setting due to the love shown to one another, relatives, and friends. There was an appreciation of God's creation of flowers, crops, animals, etc. I think I was in high school before I attended my first church service. The neighbor lady invited me. I decided to accept since I was interested in getting better acquainted with the minister's daughter. I even got brave enough to ask her for a date. I don't remember anything that happened. Apparently it didn't last long.

During Basic Training in Camp Wolters, TX, I attended church services. This was a bit unusual, but it was a good excuse to leave the barracks. It was a nice social event also. I also attended church services while I was in the military hospital. They were a lot more meaningful. Then when I joined another training group my attendance became more regular. In fact, I was in a ceremony with a group, which was similar to baptism.

You might say I had a foxhole conversion, or the lack of a foxhole. Many of my army buddies were killed or wounded the night before I was captured, but I managed to escape with no injury. The next day it was more of the same, except the shell explosions were very visible as well as shocking. The most critical time occurred while laying in a depression along the side of a road prior to being captured. Artillery shells exploded nearby and machine gun bullets popped overhead. Stray bullets were all around. My Guardian Angel urged me to move numerous times. After each move, a bullet or piece of shrapnel would hit the spot I had just vacated. Need I say more? My Guardian Angel sure kept me busy. I finally was wounded. I consider the flesh wound I received was actually a blessing of my Guardian Angel who indirectly was telling me to stay put. Death continued to rain all around, until the German tank with infantry aboard approached and stopped nearby. I was soon captured and escorted from France into Germany.

While being escorted into Germany, American artillery shells exploded nearby as we crossed the Rhine River. The explosions merely splashed water on us. My Guardian Angel was still with me. Then an American fighter plane made a pass at us and on the second pass, I think he then realized that we were probably prisoners. Then we were thankful to be in a blinding snowstorm when we were in Frankfurt. This made it difficult for the American Bombers to hit their target.

When I returned to college, my roommate was a Presbyterian. I went to church with him frequently because he had a car. When I didn't have a ride and I had to walk, I then went to a Methodist Church. I also went to a Congregational Church in the evenings, since they had a very good youth program. Believe it or not, I ended up marrying a Presbyterian. We visited the Presbyterian Church here in Independence several times. Several of the Refinery Engineers that I worked with, went to the Presbyterian Church. However, when we visited the Presbyterian Church, no one spoke to us. I then suggested we visit the Methodist Church. We found the Methodists very friendly, so we joined. Evelyn sang in the Choir. Evelyn wanted to see the family, so we sat in a pew on the left side of the sanctuary. I continue to sit in this same pew. This was a spot where I could see Evelyn and she could watch her family.

I think I have been baptized three times. In 1944, I was baptized while I was in Basic training in Camp Walters Texas and again in 1948 when I was in College in Lincoln, Nebraska. The last time I was baptized was by Rev. Ross Fulton when Evelyn and I joined the First United Methodist Church in Independence on Palm Sunday in 1952.

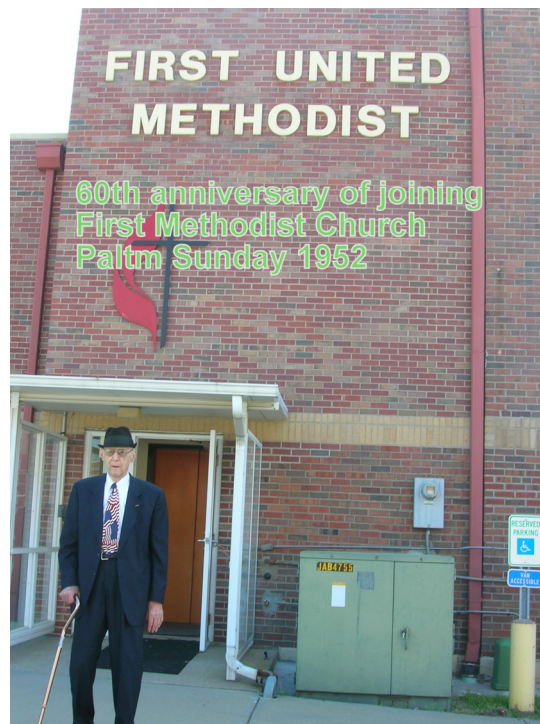
Evelyn and I were in the Maritus Sunday School Class.





My main volunteer contributions at the church involved church maintenance projects. I started the Wed. morning work days at the church in 1988 and was involved with that for numerous years. Our first project was moving the air handler out of the dining room.

I have had many serious medical problems. My Guardian Angel continues to take good care of me. I have been blessed so many times and memories of these events often result in tears. However, I still have a big problem with God. Evelyn was a true angel, and why she was called home at such a young age is hard for me to understand. She was such a good wife and mother.



30. Fishing Trips

I started to fish when I was about eight or nine years old. This was when my folks lived on the farm northwest of DuBois. When we lived in the Dawson area, I don't go fishing. For several years while I was in the service and in College, I didn't go fishing. After I was married, on our trips to Nebraska, I went fishing with my dad and Evelyn's mother, Gladys Barr. We fished in the Pawnee City Lake and some farm ponds in the area. I took my folks on a camping trip in Missouri using the travel trailer. This was on their 50th wedding anniversary. We went down to Sikeston, where Steve was working. On the way back home, we stopped in a few State Parks to fish for trout.



Bill Fleming was an avid fisherman and worked at the refinery. After work, we would go to the Malvern Lake located near Lawrence and fish until 1:00a. We usually caught a lot of crappie and sometimes cleaned them after we were home or even the next day. Bill and I even talked our wives into going fishing with us the Lake of the Ozarks.

Bill McGraw lived across the street from me. He had a place on the pits west of Butler, MO. He had a nice fishing area with a mobile home with several boats and you could always catch fish. I took Floyd Alverson, Gale Fulghum, Kyle and Matt to fish there.



After I purchased the travel trailer, I stored it near Bennett Springs and then spent several weekends fishing at Bennett Springs. I also spent time fishing the lakes at Smithville, Pony Express, Blind Pony, Branson, and Tanycomo. I also have spent time fishing at Two Rivers Park, Pawnee City Pond, and ponds east of Pawnee City.

In June 1978, Bill Fleming, my son John and I drove 1000 miles north to Red Lake Canada. We also fished in the nearby Ecko and Detour

Lakes. Even though we had a guide for a few days, the Canada catching was not that great. We caught a few trout, some walleye but mostly pike.

Bill Fleming took his son, and I took Steve fishing in Canada, northeast of Thunder Bay near Nipigon. We had to take a train to Kenora and then fly into Red Lake.

In 1979, Bill Fleming invited me to go fishing with a bunch of his relatives to Melvern Lake in Kansas, which developed into a rather regular annual event.

In 1984 through 1989 we went to Hickory Hollow. Since as many as 20 would gather for this event, they would arrive at different times. Bill, John, Don and I, lived close to the resort and pooled our rides, so we would usually be cooking fish before the rest would arrive. The whole group



would assemble in our cabin the first night and have a big fish fry. Our four man crew brought food for a week stay, while most of the others came only for the weekend. As a result our food supply was consumed; we always had to go to town to get more supplies.

We finally isolated ourselves, and cooked only for ourselves. This finally developed into spring and fall fishing trips. We started to rent Gerald's place in 1991. This was a paradise. We had spring and fall fishing trips. We had great facilities for sleeping, cooking and playing cards. We played as many as 500 hands of bridge in a week. We even stopped bringing our boats. Caught all the fish we wanted right off the dock and always brought fish home.

My fishing nickname was "Three Pole" because I fished with 3 poles at a time.

2003 Spring Fishing Trip, Monday May 12 to Saturday May 17.



Phyllis
Bing
Peggy
Chris

Left home at 8:00 AM to pick up Don to do some last minute grocery shopping at the Price Chopper in Lakewood. The Sunday grocery shopping was done from memory, since the shopping list had been misplaced. We still were able to beat John to Bill's house for the 9:15 AM scheduled departure time. Don and I led the way to the lake on route which bypasses the traffic lights in Lee's Summit. This route was not well received by the Fleming Brothers, which was expected. You don't ever try anything new!!!!

We made the usual stop in Sedalia's McDonalds. Then ate lunch at McDonalds in Warsaw. We then purchased our milk and ice cream while Bill & John picked up some nice minnows. After we unloaded at East's place, we went down to the dock to try out the nice minnows. Fishing was not great and so we so decided to sort cards instead. Even the cards were not very good since we played 133 hands before John and Don bid and made a little slam.

Of the 444 hands of bridge played, there were 183 sets.

The slams bid and made were as follows:

John F. 11, Bill F. 9, Don M. 8, and Three pole 4.

I managed to get Bill to play "6 no trump" missing two aces. He made it !!!!

Another record I made was to bid two and take two tricks. (Down six??)

The number of bridge hands played was down, mainly, the troops enjoyed the horizontal position more than usual. There also seemed to be a scheduling problem, resting, fishing, bathroom calls, telephone calls, walks, etc.

The weather was pretty nice. We had a day that was windy, rainy with lightning & thunder. Even had to turn on the air-conditioned a couple of times.

I caught a couple of 16" long cat fish that were cleaned by John and cooked by chef Bill. Bill did such a good job it tasted as good as crappie.

The facilities were exceptionally clean when we arrived. I prefer to leave the place better than we find it. The only improvement I thought we made was, the oven was a litter cleaner.

I think the East's are not traveling as much as in the past. No hotel soaps were found.

There was a little problem with the mustard dispenser, which almost was a disaster.

Hope to provide a spoon, ladle and tongs on our next trip.

There were specific instructions made to take the third exit in Harrisonville. Apparently the instructions were not clear since both vehicles missed the stop. Thank goodness for On Star and cell phones. Hopefully, we will continue to make future trips without escorts or chaperons.

The trip cost \$157. We paid G. East \$400 rent. I got \$25 for driving.

THREE POLE

31. My Travels

- 1951 New Orleans (Honeymoon)
- 1954 June 13-21, Yellowstone and Black hills with Elwongers. (2607 Miles)
- 1956 Aug. 31-Sept. 10, Denver, Loveland, Rocky Mt NP, CO. (2383 miles)
- 1957 Missouri in the fall
- 1958 Denver, Colorado Nat. Mon., Bryce Canyon NP, Zion NP, Grand Canyon, Sunset Crater, Flagstaff, Petrified Forest; Mesa Verde NP
- 1959 Merrimac, Big Springs, Alley Springs, Bennett Springs, Lake of Ozarks State Parks of Missouri
- 1960 Grand Lake, OK, Roaring River, MO
- 1961 "Y" Camp in Colorado
- 1962 July 15-27, Pipestone, MN, and Ledges SP IA, Interstate State Park, Gooseberry Falls SP, Itasca SP, Sibley SP, Lake Shetek SP, MN
- 1963 Dinosaur NP, Tetons, Yellowstone, Custer Battlefield, MT. & Black Hills.
- 1964 June, July & August, Texas City, Space Center, Houston, TX
- 1965 Aug. 8-28, Frankfort, KY; Williamsburg, Jamestown, Yorktown, Mt Vernon, VA; Washington DC, & World's Fair
- 1967 Aug. 10-19, Dodge City, KS, Sand Dunes, Gunnison, Colorado Springs (2475 mi)
- 1968 July 28-Aug 8, Bennett Springs, MO, and Horseshoe Bend, AK
- 1968 Sept. 9-12, ISA Convention in Chicago, IL
- 1969 Aug. 14-24, Rocky Mountain NP and Y Camp, CO
- 1971 June 3-20, New England States and Canada
- 1972 Aug. 2-20, Mammoth Cave, KY; Hermitage Nashville, TN; Biltmore House near Ashville, "Unto These Hills" drama in Cherokee, NC. Oak Ridge, TN; Montauk SP, MO
- 1974 June 11-19, Hawaii
- 1976 Oct. 18-25, Mexico City, Taxco, Acapulco (25th wedding anniversary)
- 1978 Jan. 17-24, Jamaica
- 1978 June 16-22, WLF, JRW, EFW fishing at Echo Lake in Canada
- 1978 July 27-Aug. 4, GMI Graduation in Flint, MI and Camp Miniwanca in MI
- 1978 Oct. 20-Nov. 4, Lansing, Philadelphia, Harrisburg, PA
- 1980 Nov. 30-Dec. 11, Carson City, Tahoe, San Francisco
- 1981 Jan. 26-Feb. 7, Jordan, Israel, Egypt
- 1982 July 5-20, Switzerland
- 1982 Oct. – Nov., Arkansas, New Orleans, Corpus Christi, TX
- 1983 Feb. 15-Mar. 7, Carlsbad, NM, Tucson, AZ
- 1983 Aug. 13-Sept. 8, Canadian Rockies
- 1984 July 26, Great Sand Dunes, Ouray Rocky Mt NP
- 1984 Oct. Herman, MO Oktoberfest
- 1984 Nov. 8-15, Cayman Islands
- 1985 Jan, Feb, Key West, FL, and Disney Land
- 1985 June 4-20, Tour of Germany and France
- 1986 Jan. 22-29, Nassau in the Bahamas
- 1986 July 9-12, Rainbow Reunion in Oklahoma City
- 1986 July 17-19, POW Convention in Jackson, MS
- 1986 Oct. 20-30, IL, KY, and Henderson Settlement
- 1987 Jan. 28-Feb. 26, Florida with Fleming's and then Frakes, KY
- 1987 May 29 - June 19, Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland
- 1987 July Rainbow Reunion in Bloomington, MN
- 1987 Oct. 18-31, Ark, MS, Mobile, AL

1988 Feb. 2-26, Mardi Gras Parades in Mobile, AL and Northern Florida
 1988 May 12-13, Amana Colonies & Pella, Iowa
 1988 July 10-20, Rainbow Reunion in Denver & Rocky Mt. NP
 1988 Aug. 7, Mom passed away.
 1988 Aug. 31, Colfax, IA
 1989 Jan. 29- Feb. 19, Oklahoma City, OK, Zapata, South Padre Island, San Antonio, TX
 Orlando and Cape Canaveral, Big Nassau, Port Lucaya, Key Largo
 1989 Apr. 14-16, State POW Convention at Lake Ozarks, MO
 1989 July 12-16, Rainbow Reunion in St Louis, MO
 1989 Sept. 8-17, Fishing at Stony River Lodge, MN
 1989 Sept. 19-Oct. 1, Rocky Mt NP, Dumas, TX, Oklahoma City
 1990 Feb. 1-22, South Padre Island
 1990 June 1-22, Globus tour of London and France, Self guided of Germany; Prague, Lisna,
 Czechoslovakia; Niederbron, Gamsheim, France
 1990 July Rainbow Reunion in Pittsburgh & Kentucky
 1990 Oct. 22-29, Puerto Yallarts, Mexico, via Dallas, TX
 1991 Feb. 2-9, Las Vegas, NV
 1991 Apr. 12-16, State POW Convention, at The Lake then to Oklahoma City
 1991 April POW Chicago, Galena, IL, Cedar Rapids, IA
 1991 July 10-14, Rainbow Reunion, Houston, TX
 1991 July 29-Aug. 26, Denver, CO; Cody and Yellowstone, WY; Helena & Grand Coulee
 Dam, WA; Stanley Park and Aquarium in Vancouver, BC; Butchard Gardens near
 Victoria, BC; Olympic NP, Olympia, WA; Mt. Rainer, Mt. Helena, WA; Portland,
 Crater Lake, OR; Boise, ID; Great Salt Lake, UT; & Lincoln, NE
 1991 Sept. 10-15, POW National Convention in Tulsa, OK
 1991 Sept. 27, 28, 29, Tantara with Family (40th wedding anniversary)
 1992 Apr. 16-17, POW Convention at Branson
 1992 Apr. 18-19, Oklahoma City and Texoma stripper fishing
 1992 July 8-12, Rainbow Reunion, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 1992 Sept. 22-27, POW Convention in Evansville, IN
 1992 Oct. 12-14, Mahoney State Park & Omaha Zoo
 1993 Jan. 30 – Feb. 6, Funway Holiday Charter to Cancun
 1993 Apr. 29 - May 2, POW Convention in Branson
 1993 May 17-20, Bennett Springs with John's Family
 1993 June 24-28 Evelyn's Class Reunion in Asilomore, CA
 1993 July 14-18, Rainbow Reunion in Salt Lake City, UT
 1993 Oct. 3-11, POW Convention in Knoxville, TN
 1993 Dec. 2-6, Family trip to Orlando, FL
 1994 April 15-17, State POW Convention at Osage Beach, MO
 1994 July 13-17, Rainbow Reunion, Louisville, KY
 1994 Sept. 3-25, Bennett Springs SP with John's family
 1994 Oct. 26-31, POW Convention in Albuquerque, NM
 1995 Nov. 25-26, Palace Inn & Big Cedar Lodge, Branson, Rockettes
 1996 Jan. 16-20, MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX
 1996 May 24, 25, Pawnee City High School Class Reunion
 1996 June 7, 8, Nurses Class Reunion in Omaha, NE
 1996 July 15-21, Rainbow Reunion, Little Rock, AK
 1996 Aug. 21-23, Branson, MO
 1996 Dec. 4, Evelyn passes away at home.
 1997 June 9-19, Czech Republic Tour with Betty Mahoney. Visited Jihlava, Brno, Prachatice,
 Prague, Podedbrady, Plzen

- 1997 June 19-July 3, Susan met me in Prague and we rented a car and went to Nove Mesto, Lisna, Jemramov, Mikulov in Czech Republic; Semmering, Bad Aussee, Innsbruck, Oberammergau in Austria; Nieberbronn, France; and Muhlberg, Germany before returning from Prague
- 1998 April 17-24, State POW Convention and then on to Chicago IV-B Group.
- 1998 May 3-8, Spring fishing trip to Gerald East Place at the Lake of the Ozarks
- 1998 May 23 & 24, Nebraska relatives, Wopata, Zelenka, Daniels, Siske's, Mahoney's, & Dawson Class Reunion
- 1998 June 6-28, France, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, England
- 1998 July 7-13, Rainbow Reunion, Duluth, MN
- 1998 Oct 5., Fall Fishing Trip to Gerald East Place
- 1998 Nov. 18-21, Branson, MO, (Branson Towers, Rockettes, Shoji, Stafford, Waltzing Waters, and Magic Show)
- 1999 Apr. 23-24, State POW Convention in Osage Beach (Elected State Commander)
- 1999 May 10-15, spring fishing trip Laurie, MO
- 1999 June 5-6, POW Chapter meeting in St Louis with Susan, Kyle & Mollie
- 1999 July 6-11, Rainbow Reunion in Charlotte, NC
- 1999 Aug. 7-8, Aunt Mary birthday in Bruning, NE
- 1999 Aug. 22-29, Family and friends to Branson, MO
- 1999 Oct. 5-10, POW National Convention in Evansville, IN
- 1999 Oct. 17-23, fall fishing trip to Branson, MO
- 1999 Oct. 5-10, POW National Convention in Evansville, IN
- 1999 Oct. 17-23, fall fishing trip to Branson, MO
- 2000 Apr. 22-27, spring fishing trip
- 2000 May 1-3, POW Convention
- 2000 June 3-21, tour of Europe, France, Germany, Italy, England, etc.
- 2000 July 11-15, Rainbow Convention in Wichita, KS
- 2000 Sept 24-29, fall fishing trip
- 2000 Nov. 9-11, Veterans celebration in Branson
- 2001 Jan. 6-13, Eastern Caribbean Cruise via Atlanta
- 2001 Apr. 22-27, Spring fishing trip
- 2001 July 11-15, Rainbow Reunion in Wichita, KS
- 2001 Sept. 24-29, Fall fishing trip
- 2001 Nov. 9-11, Branson with Veterans
- 2002 July 5, Kyle Warrior Ceremony
- 2003 Apr. 23-24, POW State Convention in Springfield, MO
- 2003 May 12-17, Spring fishing trip to Gerald East Place
- 2003 July 16-20, Rainbow Reunion in St. Louis, MO
- 2004 Apr. 21-23, State POW Convention in Grand Glaze
- 2004 May 3-8, Spring Fishing Trip to Gerald East Place
- 2004 May 25-30, WWII Dedication in Washington, D.C. with Steve & John
- 2004 July 13-18, Rainbow Reunion in Memphis
- 2004 July 23-30, Family fishing trip in Canada
- 2004 Sept. 27- Oct. 2, Fall fishing trip to Gerald East Place
- 2005 Apr. 26-29, State POW Convention in Osage Beach, MO
- 2005 May 19-20, Nebraska visit preparing for Memorial Day. Stayed in Lincoln
- 2005 June 13-15, Hillsboro, WI. Vopat reunion
- 2005 July 12-17, Rainbow Reunion in Indianapolis, IN
- 2005 Aug. 5-13, Family Reunion at Y Camp in Estes Park, CO
- 2005 Oct. 14-23, Elderhostel in Sutton, Canada and 42nd Rainbow meeting in Troy, NY

2005 Dec. 28-31, Family retreat in Cancun
2006 May 20-21 Emil Beranek Services in Lincoln, NE
2006 July Rainbow Reunion in Kansas City, MO
2006 Aug. 18, Cruise with Susan to Hawaiian Islands
2006 Oct. 14-23, Elderhostel to Sutton, Canada
2006 Nov. 9-11, Veterans celebration in Branson
2006 Dec. 28-31, John's boys, Susan, and Steve's family to Cancun
2007 Apr. 23- 26, Military planning Conference at Branson
2007 May 26-27, Nebraska
2007 May 8-13, Elderhostel in Branson, MO
2007 July 10-17, Rainbow Reunion in Virginia Beach, VA
2008 Mar. 12-13, Met legislators for POW tax relief in Jefferson City
2008 May 16-18, Nebraska
2008 Dec. 24-29 Family to Cancun
2009 June 13-15, Hillsboro, WI, family reunion
2009 Branson with Veterans
2011 May 8-13, Elderhostel in Branson, MO
2011 July 13-17, Rainbow Reunion in Oklahoma City, OK
2012 May – Memorial Day, Nebraska
2012 Branson with Veterans

32. Guided Tours, 1976, 1981, 1982, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1997

October 1976, Mexico City, Toasco, Acapulco (25th wedding anniversary)

January 17-24, 1978- Jamaica Tour

This trip was arranged through Travel House in Mission, Kansas. We departed at 8 AM on January 17 on Capital Airlines. We stopped in St Louis before we landed in Montego Bay at 2:30 PM. A motor coach picked us up and transferred our group to the Hotel.

January 1981- Israel

This was an Educational Opportunities tour that was arranged by our Pastor Bill Crawford at First United Methodist Church. We flew to Jordan and stayed in Amman. There were four busloads of us. (There were only six of us from First Methodist Church Bill & Betty Crawford, Dexter & Francis Harvey, Gene & Evelyn Wopata.) The next day we crossed Allenby Bridge into Israel. The border crossing took over 3 hours. Evelyn's suitcase was emptied and taken into another room to be x-rayed. I had the same examiner and had no problem. We then visited Bethany, Mt. of Olives, Haifa, Mt. Carmel and Jacob's Well. We stayed in the Blue Bay Hotel in Netanyahu a couple of nights and then moved to the Notre Dame Hotel in Jerusalem. While in Israel we visited Nazareth, Mary's Well, Garden Tomb, Mt. Zion, Upper Room, Jericho, Masada, Haifa, Megiddo, Sea of Galilee, Dead Sea, etc. There were lectures every evening so it made it a big day.

The Independence group also signed up for the 3-day extension to Egypt. We flew from Jerusalem back to Jordan and then flew to Cairo. We had to fly around Israel to get to Cairo. We stayed in the Mena House Hotel which was very nice and only a couple blocks from the Pyramids. We had a nice dinner in the hotel and then spent the evening visiting instead of being tourists. The next day we spent several hours in a Museum. In the PM we went to the Mohamed Ali Mosque, Citadel and Bazaar. We then spent a cool evening watching a Sound and Light performance near the Pyramids. The next day we drove around the Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx. We got to ride a camel. We also visited Memphis and the step Pyramids before we flew home via Jordan. This was a well-organized 13-day tour that cost \$1,368 each.

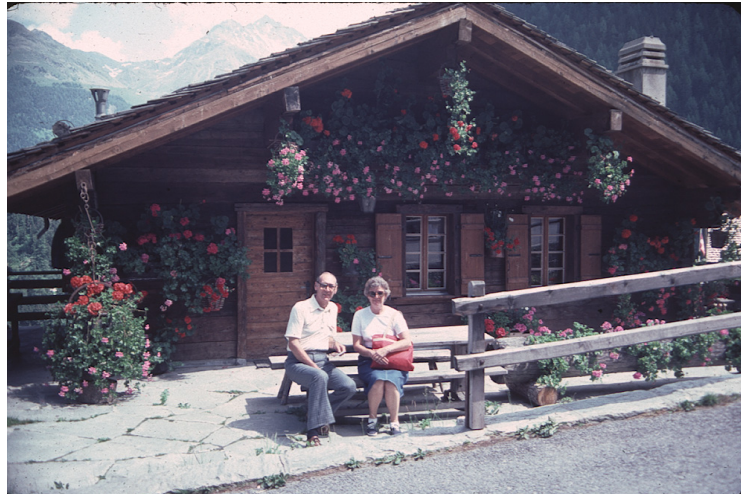
July 5 to 20, 1982- Switzerland Tour

This was another Educational Opportunities tour, which cost \$1,814 each. Pastor Bill Crawford was our Tour Escort. People on the tour were Susan, the Bales, the Deatherages, the Edgertons, the Junckers, the Kelleys, the Perrys and the Stegners.

We flew Capitol Airlines to Zurich, Switzerland. Then we were taken



by bus to the Hotel International in Bazel. We had daily trips from this hotel to Jura Mountains, Neuchatel & Bern Switzerland. Sion, Siders, Grimentz, Montreux on Lake Geneva and Castle of Chillon. We then moved via bus to Hotel Des Masques in Anzere.



We had bus tours from here to Mt. Montreux, Zermatt, Matterhorn, Thonon and Evian, France; Vaduz, Liechtenstein, Feldkirch, Austria, Lindau, Germany; and Bernard Pass, Italy. We stayed in the Movenpick Hotel Int'l near the airport near Zurich, Switzerland.

June 1985 - Germany & France

Evelyn and I left Kansas City on June 14 and spent 17 days in Europe. The 12 day guided tour of Germany started and ended in Frankfurt. After checking in the hotel we took a nap. We then took a street car to downtown. After walking around for several blocks, we ate lunch at McDonalds, and then went to the train station. The last time I was there, I was in a box car with 39 other POW's. It was during a blinding snow storm, and we were bombed by the American Air force. It was an event that I still remember.

The next morning, after a short bus ride, we boarded an excursion steamer from Rudesheim for a cruise on the Rhine. This area lives from tourism. Wine consumption by the tourists provides a living for all the towns along the Rhine. There are two railroad tracks on both sides of the river. Most freight trains had only 40 cars while the passenger trains were usually less than 10 cars. Trains cruise a lot faster in Germany. Towers on the river were first built for collecting tolls from ships. A cable was put across the river to stop the ships to collect the toll. The Rhine is 870 miles long. The middle Rhine narrows and flows swiftly at Loreley Rock. There is a story that a blond nymph used to sit on top of the rock and lure the passing sailors with her feminine charms. The men gazed up at the Loreley instead of watching the perilous waters and many wrecked their boats. The Katz Castle was originally built in 1095 and now has been restored and is now used a girls boarding school.

Cologne is the 4th largest City in Germany and is over 200 years old. At the beginning of WWII the population was 800,000, but only 40,000 remained after the war. The 515 foot twin spires of St. Peter and St. Mary were untouched by the bombing of the last war. The foundation for this church was started in 1238. There are 5 bells. An 11.2 Ton bell was installed in 1448. The St. Peter's bell weighs 24 tons and was installed in 1923. It is the 5th largest church in the world. Cologne is also noted for its perfume water.

We stayed in the Ramada Inn in Dusseldorf. It was the only place that provided wash cloths. The TV programs were in German. The Armisus monument is a statue of a German soldier commemorating the defeat of the Romans. We climbed a spiral staircase to the Viewing platform.

Hamburg is in the Ruhr Valley and is the busiest industrial area of Europe. This area was heavily bombed during WWII. The water front is a legal red light district. There are 78 consulates in Hamburg. Allster Lake is popular for sailing and windsurfing. We viewed the city at night from an 890 foot TV tower.

We crossed into East Germany about two miles east of Hamburg. Our passports were collected and checked against the passenger list. The border guard came on the bus and checked each of us against our passport picture. This was our first rest stop in East Germany. A lady caretaker collected 50 pfennig or about 17 cents at the entrance of the restroom. The toilet tissue was like gray construction paper. The towel looked like a feed sack hanging from a hook. A full view of the men's restroom was visible from the hallway.

Berlin is 110 miles from the border of West Germany. Mostly older people provided the labor in the fields. There were large fields of corn and wheat. There were no fences except around the pastures. Farm homes were in clusters and did not appear to be the quality of those in West Germany. The soviet war memorial was the first memorial erected after the war. Twenty soviet soldiers remain on duty here. Every two hours they have a changing of the guard. The Reichstag is located on the Spree River and now belongs to East Berlin. The Berlin Wall is 28 miles long and is on the east bank of the Spree River. There have been 56 people shot trying to escape to West Berlin. Checkpoint Charlie is in this area. In East Berlin there was an 1185 foot high TV tower with a revolving restaurant.

Our next stop was at the Gasthof Hotel in Rothenberg. I would consider it a quaint firetrap. Our evening meal consisted of noodle soup with parsley, liver sausage, liver dumpling, bratwurst, kraut, boiled pork chop, mashed potatoes and a fruit cocktail. It is a fortified medieval town near the Tauber River with an arched bridge built in 1330. Most of the 12,500 people living here work to serve the tourists. We then stopped in Dinkelshuhl for a soup and tea lunch.

We then stayed two nights in Munich and visited the Dachau Concentration Camp nearby which was built in 1933. Over 31,000 prisoners died here. This camp was liberated by the 42nd Division. Munich is the third largest city in Europe. There are 22,000 employed by the Bavarian Motor Works. We spent 30 minutes shopping in Oberammergau near the Austrian border.

After we completed our tour of Germany, we rented a car in Frankfurt, and drove to Haguenau where we stayed three nights. The nearby villages of Hatten and Rittenhoffen were having a ceremony and dedicating a monument for the battle here in January 9-20, 1945. There were 10 Rainbow men along with 20 veterans of the 14th Armored Division and several German veterans at the ceremony. Bill Kenny was one of the few men of the original "G" company that was not killed, wounded or captured. He and his wife led us back to Gambenheim. We visited his

combat area as well as mine. I was surprised to find the ditch where I was captured, railroad tracks and the school house where I was taken to be interrogated. I visited the basement which had the two rooms where the prisoners were held. The last time I went up these stairs I was scared because people that left never came back. This was reliving trying times of 1945.

January 22-29, 1986 - Bahamas

We arranged this trip with Tamarack Travel at Blue Ridge Mall. On January 22, Evelyn and I Flew Delta Air Lines from Kansas City to Atlanta and then to Nassau. We arrived at Paradise-Paradise at 3:30 PM and attended a meeting at 4 PM. That evening, we visited the Holiday Inn and Paradise Island Casino.

On January 23, we took a bike tour of the island and then took a Majestic town and country tour of Nassau where we visited old forts, a water tower, the Queens Staircase, and the Government House. We attended a Manager's party at 5 PM which was a real bash. Lots of people attended. Lots of drinks & hors d'oeuvres were served. Playing musical chairs with a bunch of drunks is something. We then went to the Holiday Inn for a Bahamian Show and dinner.

On Friday, Evelyn and I rode bikes in the AM and then played bingo pool side. Later, we took a bus to the bridge and walked over the bridge to the market. That night, we went to the casino for good dinner and a show, which cost \$76. The show opened with gal dropping from the ceiling in a glass enclosure. Bare bosoms, good comedian and a colorful show.

On January 25, we took a ferry to Nassau where we bought baskets, a necklace, and a ring. We returned to the resort via the ferry. Evelyn and I went snorkeling and saw sand colored fish and gar and a 15" dark fish. We then ate at the dinner Holiday Inn. Nassau is the capital of the Bahamas, which is on New Providence Island. Over 700 islands make up the Bahamas and only 22 are inhabited. It has a population of 135,400. Cruise ships dock at Prince George Wharf.

On Sunday, we took the ferry to Nassau with the usual delay. We walked through some stores, but most were closed so we got to the Trinity Methodist Church early. Church service was from 11:00 to 12:30. The church treasurer let me use the phone to call Aunt Minnie on her birthday. After church we had to wait for the ferry back. We then walked the beach past Club Med. They charged for their chairs, towels, snorkel gear, etc. That night we went to a show at the Cable Beach Casino and watched the super bowl game on a large screen TV.

January 27, Monday. We ate breakfast at the Grand Hotel then rode the bus to the shopping center and then walked back.

On Tuesday, it was cold and windy but we went bike riding again and then watched the backgammon tournament. Evelyn and I played bingo and won some t-shirts. We ate at the Holiday Inn then walked the beach toward the lighthouse. I then had to put a heating pad on the knee.

On Wednesday the 29th, we flew Delta from Nassau to Atlanta and then to Kansas City.

1987 May - Ireland, England, Wales & Scotland

This was a tour that was arranged with Globus Gateway tours.

We arrived at the Shannon airport at 8 am after a 5 ½ hour flight on Air Lingis from New York. We were met by the Globus Gateway people who took us to our hotel in Limerick. That night we attended a Ceili dinner with folk entertainment. The next day we toured the Ring of Kerry which is a 100 mile panoramic drive around the southwestern tip of Ireland. We stayed overnight at Killarney. Next we visited the Blarney Castle and kissed the Blarney Stone.

We next stayed in Waterford. On our way to Dublin, we visited the Powerscourt Gardens and Waterfall. We spent two nights in Dublin before crossing the Irish Sea on a ferry to Holyhead, Wales. We then stopped at Caernarfon where we had lunch and visited the castle where Prince Charles was crowned the Prince of Wales. Next, we went along the northern coastline of Wales and passed by the Conway Castle on our way to the walled City of Chester where we stayed overnight. Chester had lots of Roman Ruins, Black and White half timer houses and a Cathedral.

From Chester we took the motorway to the Lake District of England. We saw lots of sheep, cattle and rock fences. We went past the Carlisle Castle before we crossed the border into Scotland. We stopped in Moffet before we reached our next hotel in Edinburgh where we stayed two nights. After Edinburgh, we visited the 50,000 acre estate of the Floors Castle. Also, we stopped at Jedibugh, before we came to the English border.



We then visited Hadrian's Wall near Newcastle on our way to York where we stayed overnight. Next, we visited the industrial part of England. Sheffield was a German target during WWII. We visited a modern Cathedral in Coventry. We stayed in Stratford



on Avon where we visited Anne Hathaway's cottage and Shakespeare's birthplace. Next was Worcester where we visited a church and a porcelain factory. We went through Hereford before we crossed the border back into Wales. We went through Brecon Beacons National Park on our way to Wales. We attended a Welsh Banquet in Cardiff Castle, which was not fancy, but it was fun. Next we crossed the border back to England. We then crossed the Bristol Channel and visited Bath and toured the Roman Baths and pump room. Next was the prehistoric monument of Stonehenge. The Salisbury Cathedral has the highest spire in England. Next was the Tudor Palace of Hampton Court before we toured London.

After our 14 day Globus Gateway tour of Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and England, we ended up in Gatwick Airport where we rented a car. After a few roundabouts or traffic circles we made to Oxford. We then went to Cotswold country where the houses have thatched roofs.



The roads are very narrow and one continuous curve. The towns have odd names, such as Stow on the Wold, Chipping Camden, Upper Slaughter, Lower Slaughter. We drove back into Wales and stayed in Betsey-Coed. We proceeded to Aberystwyth, where we stayed overnight. Evelyn's grandfather, David Williams, was born in this area. The drive along this coastline was beautiful. We went thru Fishguard to St Davids to visit a historic church. The first church was built here was burned in 645. It was rebuilt and again it was burned in 1088. Parts of the existing Cathedral have existed since 1176. Next stop was in Tenby which is located on the southern coast of Wales. On the way back to Gatwick, we toured Winchester Cathedral. Our last night in England, we stayed in Cambridge which was about 3 miles from the airport. We had driven a Ford Orion 260 miles.

1990 June 2 – 15 - London, France, Czechoslovakia

Friday Bill Fleming took us to the airport to catch a 5:25pm flight to Cincinnati where we changed planes. Flight #36 was delayed because of a warning light on a compartment door. Mr. & Mrs. McKinley sat in front of us. He was taking a group of students to London for 6 weeks for a history study. We had seats #26A & B, which were the exits to the wing on the L1011. Seats #25A & B also provide the extra leg room. We landed in Gatwick at 9:35 AM after a 7 hour-flight. A Globus Representative spotted our bags and provided transportation to the hotel. This was not included on our voucher. After checking into the Park Court Hotel (91.5 lb), we took a cab to the Reject China Shop. They did not have any china pigs. We then went Wesley's Chapel, visited his home, Wesley's Tomb, the Aldersgate site for the 5 PM service at St. Paul Cathedral. We went to bed early.

Saturday We took the bus tour of the city. We stopped near Westminster Bridge to photograph "Big Ben" then marched with the new guard detail to Buckingham Place. We walked around

Westminster Abbey and took the guided tour of the Tower of London offered by (Globus). We saw the 530-carat "Star of Africa" diamond and the 317-carat diamond in the Queens Crown.

Sunday We left at 8:00 AM and stopped at the Canterbury Cathedral before going to Dover. We crossed the Channel on a hovercraft to Calais. This big vessel provided a firm ride just like riding in a truck. The crossing took 32 minutes at a speed of 55 MPH. We stayed at Rouen and walked around the Cathedral and the square where Joan of Arc was burned.

Monday We left at 7:20 AM to visit the Normandy Beaches and Cemetery, and talked with 3 rangers that survived the climb of Ponte du Hoc on D-day. Then we stopped at Bayeux to look at Matilda's Tapestry, which depicts William, the Conqueror's conquest of England. We stayed in St. Malo.

Wednesday We visited Mont Saint Michel, which is a Cathedral, surrounded by a wall. It was founded in 708. It became a Benedictine Abbey in 966. Tides of 40 ft are common in this area. Toured the winery at Saumur and tasted their wine. Stayed at Novatel in Blois for two nights.

Thursday Drove through Chambord Park and visited Castle of Amboise, Clos-Uuce with Leonardo.

Friday Visited Orleans, Gothic Cathedral in Chartres Palace and gardens of Versailles. We arrived in Paris at about 5:30 PM. Traffic was a mess, but Mashell was a very good driver. We had room # 120 in the Mercure Hotel (735 F). It was a very nice room. The stool was separate from the bath. No washcloths or shower curtain, but it did have a showerhead on a hose. Went out to eat with the Globus group and had a nice 6-course meal, which included soup, salmon, salad cheese, lettuce, dessert plum, plus wine and music. Everyone had a good time. At 10 PM we went on a bus tour of the city to see the lights.

Saturday We were up early to eat a hard roll, soft roll, jelly, orange juice, and coffee or tea for breakfast. We took a tour of city and had a brief walking tour of Notre Dame. It was very dark inside and it was raining outside. Other cathedrals we have visited were nicer and seemed to be larger. Next we drove along the Seine, Hotel des Invalids and stopped at the Eiffel Tower and rode the elevator to the first level. Then we drove by the Arc de Triumph where the traffic was a mess. We then separated from the tour and visited the Louvre. The entrance is a modern glass pyramid. In the Sulley Area, we saw Studea Law code in Hummurahi and Seated Scribe. In the Denon area, we saw the "Winged Victory of Samothrace"(3 times) while looking for the "Slaves of Michelangelo" and the "Mona Lisa", There sure are lots of paintings and sculptures of nude women and men. After 4 hours in the Louvre, we started back to the Hotel and bought a couple scarves. We then went by the Doera, then into the Printemps department store. We came out a different door and soon became lost and returned to hotel at 5:30 very tired. We rested and then went down to the "Quick" hamburger shop for a hamburger and malt. Then we stopped in a "Flunch" for dessert.

Sunday Slept, till 9 AM. At breakfast, we talked with man that was on a LSI that landed on "D" day. We rode the "Metro" to Musee D Orsay. This is another large building with 3 floors of paintings, sculptures, photographs, etc. I was able to spot the "Monet" type of painting quickly. There were many artists that were painting duplicates of what was hanging on the wall; some were outstanding. We then walked to the Muse Rodin and saw the passionate "Kiss" and other sculpture and paintings in the house. Duplicates of the "Thinker" and "Burghers of Calais" were in the garden with 2000 roses. Then we walked thru the gardens of the Hotel dee Invalides (Home for veterans) to the Air France building where we picked up our Eurocar. We returned via the Metro and went 1 stop past Place Clichy and walked back to the hotel. Then we sat in the lobby and talked with the Shays from New Jersey and a couple from New York. Had a big laugh about what it costs to own a cat. They sent a cat to Florida which cost \$102 for the plane fare and \$20 for the case. The return cost was less. He also was a spark at the dinner Friday night. After a rest we had a pizza, strawberry dessert and coke at a cafeteria.

Monday Ate breakfast at 9:30AM by ourselves. Took the #30 bus to the Arc de Triomphe where we walked through a tunnel to come up under the arch, which is huge. The elevator was out of

order, so decided not to go up to the top. I stopped at the tourist information center but they were not very helpful. Then we took the Metro to Jussieu. It was a long walk to Café LeProcope where we had a nice lunch; (Chicken, salad cliché). Then we took the Metro back to Place Clichy, which was the stop near the Mercury Hotel. Evie didn't feel good. I went for a walk and bought some fuses for my converter.

Tuesday Our Globus Tour services ended with breakfast. It was time to leave Paris and Evie still didn't feel good. I went down and brought up a breakfast tray for her and then went down and ate breakfast with Betty and Dick from Wichita, Ks. They thought we were pretty gutsy to rent a car and go to Czechoslovakia and not be able to read or talk extra languages like French, German or Czech. I rode the metro to the car rental office. Arrived at 10 AM, but there was a problem with the credit card. I am not certain what the problem was all about, but I think they wanted to sell me more insurance. My intended 2-mile route back to the hotel was something else. The one way curved streets that change names often, made it very difficult. I circled the Arc de Triomphe and others and needless to say I got lost several times. I made it back to the hotel at 12:30 and Evie was waiting in the lobby. She was feeling better and was willing to travel. We headed north from the hotel and got on the freeway that circles the city. We headed for Reims. Most of the vehicles were driving in excess of 130 KM/HR. The speed was excessive and the toll amounted to about 10 cents a mile. We bypassed Reims by going to Chalons, Dizler, Nancy and stopped in Charmes, France. We stayed in the Vaudois Hotel (205 F), and ate dinner in its very nice dining room. Evelyn had fruit and guinny. I had salmon and duck. We both had strawberry tart and tea.

Wednesday Evelyn and I visited the Epnal American Military Cemetery. A retired Air Force man served as a guide to show us William Rosalie's grave, A-12-16. I believe I was lying by him when he was killed 5 Jan 1945 near Gamsheim. Apparently, Earnest Lee and Harley Stands were also killed that night. They were sent home when the bodies were moved from the temporary graves to these permanent burials. The families had two years to decide if they wanted the bodies returned. No others can be buried there. It is maintained by U.S. tax dollars. We ate lunch in a cafeteria in Calmor in a K-Mart like complex. I talked with a man that plans to visit America with his wife, and daughters 13 & 17. He plans to camp. We then visited Eschau and Ellkirch Graffenstaden and looked for a bridge over the Rhine Canal near a pillbox, but no luck. We got lost in Strasburg, but found the motorway to Karlsruhe and Nurnberg. The traffic was heavy and slow in some places. Other places the speed of 130 KM/Hr was common. The road signs were better in Germany, but we still had problems. We stayed in Drexler Gasthof (80 DM) in Schwaback near Nurnberg. It had a nice shower and down covers. The breakfast included ham, cheese, liverwurst, rolls, tea, etc.

Thursday We ended up in Nurnberg and had difficulty finding the road to Rozvadov, Czechoslovakia. It was raining and there was a long line of cars and trucks trying to cross the border. It took nearly 2 hours, but we had no problems crossing. They stamped our passports and recorded our cameras. It was still raining when we went thru Plzen, where traffic was a mess. There was road construction and the wires were down that powered the buses. We had problems in Prague. We had a good map but couldn't find a landmark. Finally we ended up at a hotel and called Milos. He came and led the way to Mrs. Kosava's apartment. After showing us the apartment we made plans for meeting him the next day.

Friday Evelyn and I drove to the International Hotel to eat breakfast and shop at the TUZEX Store, which we thought was near there. We had a full breakfast for 25 K or \$2 each. The Tuzex store was found to be downtown. We drove to the Fucihkova Station and rode the metro to the museum station downtown and then walked to Wenceslas Square where we visited the Bohemia Mozel store and looked at crystal. We decided to wait to purchase the crystal after we met Milos Svaton at the Ambassador Hotel

at 1 PM. We were to meet Alvin Wopata, his wife Ligaya, and sister Arlene Austin at 1:30 PM, but they did not show. Milos took us on a walking tour of old town to show us city hall, Powder Tower, astronomical clock, monuments and beautiful buildings. We bought crystal at a Bohemia Shop. The fish mugs at the Tuzex Store were sold out when we returned. Then we walked on the Charles Bridge, which is made of stone. It was built in 1357. We returned to Mrs. Kosava's apartment to rest. Then, drove to the International Hotel to meet Milos and Dasha Svaton, Alvin, Ligaya and Arlene. Our dinner included a ham roll appetizer, potato soup, pork dumplings, kraut, and caramel and ice cream desert. Milos paid the check for the 7 of us, which cost less than \$17. After dinner we toured the huge Prague Castle grounds which contained the St. Vitus's Cathedral, President's Residence, etc.

1993 January 30-February 6 Cancun, Mexico

This Funway Holidays charter left KCI at 4:20 PM and landed in Cancun at 7 PM. The tour guides met us and took us to the Holiday Inn Crown Plaza. We had a beautiful room with a nice view of the gulf. The next morning we took the shuttle bus to downtown Cancun where we caught a big tour bus of the area. I called Kristy collect. We toured the Chichen-Itza Ruins and Mayan Villages in shuttle buses that had poor cushions and no air-conditioning. We then took another tour package and snorkeled at the Xel-Ha lagoon which is a natural aquarium. We also took the Cancun Coves Package tour which included a buffet dinner, Mexican Music, drinks, dancing and a show. This was a great trip which cost only \$2150 including the meals and souvenirs.

1997 June 9-19, Czech Republic

Toured the Czech Republic with my first cousin Betty Mahoney. Visited Jihlava, Brno, Prachatice, Prague, Podebrady, and Plzen.

33. All My Cruises

- (1) My military service introduced me to traveling. Before entering the service, I had traveled on a wagon pulled with a team of horses, a passenger car, a home made school bus, and a few times on city bus in Lincoln. Also a few times on the train between Lincoln and Table Rock when I started to college. Several of us that were inducted into the service, so we traveled by train from Lincoln to Fort Leavenworth. After entering the service I went by train to Camp Wolters, Texas. Buses were used on weekend passes. Then came the big trip overseas. This was my first Cruise. Ate my first turkey in 1944 as Thanksgiving dinner on the *USS Gen. Wm. Black*. Departed New York City on November 25. On the second day at sea on the way to France many of the fellows were sick. My stomach turned over a couple of times. When you laid down you could hardly notice the movement. Only when you were standing or walking did it become rather noticeable that the ship was moving. Up on deck, it was rather surprising that our destroyer escorts would disappear due to the huge waves. The smaller ships really did move side-to-side as well as end-to-end. On December 8, 1944, there were 3,500 of us that got off in Marseilles, in southern France.

- (2) I was liberated from prison camp by the Russians on April 23, 1945. I was under their control until I escaped from them on May 8th. I rode in some GI trucks, a C-47 plane and hospital train to Camp Lucky Strike. After spending a few weeks in Camp Lucky Strike, I boarded the *Admiral W. S. Benson*. We left LeHavre, France on June 5, 1945, to come home from Europe. The ocean was fairly smooth so the ship did not move very much. The ship moved a lot faster since we got to New York in seven days. If any one got sick, it was probably from eating too much. I managed to eat a whole box of Hershey's chocolate bars in a couple of days, and don't remember getting sick.

Evelyn had a problem with motion sickness. She had to be careful even while riding in a car. We had made some nice group trips and she made them with no difficulty which involved short rides on ferries. We decided to do a trip on our own. In 1987, we flew to Ireland and then had to cross the Irish Sea to get to Wales. She sat in the middle of the ship and she stared straight ahead and had no problem. This was considered Evelyn's first cruise, which lasted less than a day.

- (3) In 1993, Evelyn and I decided to visit Alaska via a Collette Land Tour and a Crown Princess Cruise. This involved flying to Anchorage, and then touring the area via a bus. I took a plane ride to get a closer view of Mt. McKinley. Then we took a 62-mile bus tour into Denali Park and then took McKinley Explorer train with domed cars to Fairbanks. Here we took a cruise on stern-wheeler *Discovery* on the Chena and Tanana Rivers. It was an unusual site where the rivers jointed since one had clear water and the other was loaded with silt. This was an interesting cruise since there were interesting demonstrations of all sorts on the banks. Enjoyed several Salmon Bakes, as well a stop at the North Pole to visit the Santa Claus House. Saw the Alaskan Pipeline as our bus took the Alaskan highway to Skagway where we boarded the *Crown Princess*. We cruised Glacier Bay, Ketchikan and the Inside Passage to Vancouver, Canada. Evelyn had no problem with sea sickness.

(4) **1995 Family Cruise plus Florida Tour**

The family went on a three night cruise on the Big Red Boat in the Caribbean from January 20 – 23, 1995. After the cruise Evelyn and I stayed in Florida for a week.

- (5) While Helen Zelenka, Vickie Zelenka and Janice Daniels were visiting me in January of 1997 after Evelyn's death, I decided to take my cousin Helen on a cruise. We left Kansas City on January 27 during a blinding snowstorm. We had to make some changes since we had missed the flight from Dallas before we left Kansas City. We then went to Miami and stayed overnight. We missed the scheduled departure in San Juan so we flew on to St. Thomas where boarded the **Tropicale**. We then visited St. Barts, St. Lucia, Aruba, Panama Canal, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, and San Juan. We then flew back to Kansas City via Newark. Helen's seemed to enjoy her first and only cruise. She lived on the farm in Pawnee County.



- (6) In January of 1998, Yvonne Brice and I took a 10-day cruise of the Eastern Caribbean. We flew to San Juan and boarded the **Carnival Fascination**. We then visited St. Thomas, St. Maarten (Netherlands), St. Martin (French), Dominica, Barbados, Martinique (French) and back to San Juan. We flew Delta back to Kansas City via Atlanta.
- (7) In January of 1999, Yvonne Brice and I flew to San Diego via Salt Lake City and boarded the **Royal Caribbean, Legend of the Seas**. We visited Cab-San Lucas and Acapulco, Mexico; Caldera, Costa Rica; Panama Canal; Cartagena, Columbia; Oranjestad, Aruba; and Ft Lauderdale, Florida. We then flew to Kansas City via St. Louis.
- (8) In January of 2000, Yvonne Brice and I cruised on the **Carnival Destiny**. Flew TWA via Atlanta to Miami and returned from Ft. Lauderdale via Atlanta. We cruised the Western Caribbean from Miami, FL to Cozumel, Georgetown, Grand Cayman, Ocho Rios, Jamaica and back to Miami.
- (9) In January of 2001, Yvonne Brice and I cruised on the **Norwegian Norway**, out of Miami. This was a low cost Cruise. The total cost including, Air, and Port Taxes totaled

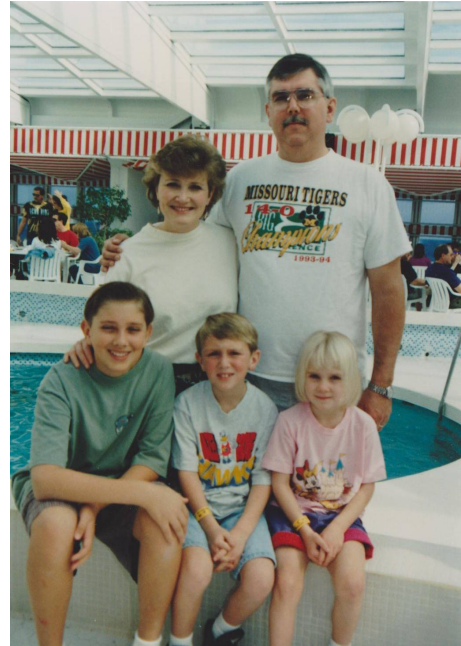
- \$835.75, out from Miami to St. Maarten, St. Thomas, and Great Stirrup Cay and back to Miami.
- (10) In June of 2001, Susan and I took a Scandinavian Cruise on **Norwegian Dream**. We flew TWA to St. Louis and then on to Gatwick Airport, in London, England. Took a train to Dover and stayed overnight. We then cruised through the Kiel Canal to Warnemunde, Germany; Tallinn, Estonia; St. Petersburg, Russia; Helsinki, Finland; Stockholm, Sweden; Copenhagen, Denmark. Then took a train from Dover to London, England. Stayed in a B&B for a couple days before returning to Kansas City via St. Louis.
 - (11) In January of 2003, Yvonne Brice & I cruised the Eastern Caribbean on the **Norwegian Normandy**. We left Miami and visited St. Maarten, St. Thomas & Great Stirrup Cay before returning back to Miami. This was a repeat of the January 2001 cruise, which was a disappointment.
 - (12) In October of 2003, Susan I went on a cruise to Canada & New England, on the **Princess Regal Princess**. We flew Continental to Montreal via Newark, We then visited Montreal, Quebec City, Quebec; Halifax, Nova Scotia; St. John, New Brunswick; Bar Harbor, Maine; Boston Massachusetts; New Port, Rhode Island; and New York City. We then flew US Airways from Newark to KC via Charlotte, North Carolina.
 - (13) In January of 2004, Yvonne and I cruised the Western Caribbean on **Royal Caribbean, Rhapsody of the Seas**. Flew Northwest to Houston via Memphis to Galveston and stayed in the Tremont House. Total Cost of Cruise, Air, Hotel, Insurance was \$937.50. Ship departed Galveston and visited Key West, FL; George Town, Grand Cayman; and Cozumel, Mexico.
 - (14) January 2005, Yvonne and I cruised the Western Caribbean on the **Royal Caribbean, Explorer of the Seas**. Stayed in Sleep Inn before leaving on cruise from Miami. We visited Belize City, Belize; Costa Maya, Mexico; Cozumel, Mexico; George Town, Grand Cayman.
 - (15) In August of 2006 (Susan, Don & Beverly McBride) cruised the Hawaiian Islands. We booked the cruise from Vacations to Go on the **Norwegian Pride of America**. This was 81,000 ton ship with a 2,146 Passenger capacity and a crew of 800. We had a Balcony Stateroom, which cost \$1479, and booked our flights on American Airlines via Internet (\$751 each.)
 - (16) March 2011, booked the cruise with Vacations to Go (\$2103), Susan and I flew on Southwest to Ft Lauderdale to board **Holland America's Nieuw Amsterdam**. We had a Balcony cabin. Ports of call were Grand Turk, San Juan, St. Maarten, Half Moon Cay and Ft. Lauderdale. I attended many digital camera workshops.

These are the ports that I have visited on the islands in the Caribbean.

Port Lucaya; St. Barts (French); St. Lucia (British); Aruba (Netherlands); Ocho Rios, Jamaica; San Juan, St. Thomas; St. Marten (Netherlands); Saint Martin (French); Dominica; Barbados; Martinique (French); Acapulco, Mexico; Calderia, Costa Rica; Panama Canal; Cartagena, Columbia; Oranjestad, Aruba; Georgetown, Grand Cayman; Great Stirrup Cay.

34. Family Vacations, 1995 Florida, 1999 Branson, 2004 Canada, 2005 Colorado, 2006 Cancun and 2008 Cancun

1995 Caribbean Cruise plus Florida Tour Jan. 20 to Feb. 2



Friday

Left KCI at 6:15 AM via Delta. Flew in an L-1011 from Atlanta to Orlando. Took bus to Cape Canaveral, where we boarded the S/S Oceanic. Check-in was slow. Went to the pool deck for lunch. We were required to participate in the lifeboat drill. We put on our life jackets that were in our cabin and then went to the muster station. We had a nice dinner with Kyle and Matthew at our table. The kids went to Pluto Playhouse, while the rest of us went to the Broadway Showroom that featured a guitar player, impersonator of Elvis, and the Blues Brothers.

Saturday

Ate breakfast with Mark and Daniel. Went to a program for kids. There was a lot of singing, dancing, and photos with the characters. After lunch in the dining room, the rest of the family went to Salt Cay. This is where the Gilligan's Island show was filmed and also the movie Splash. The kids had a good time on the beach. Evelyn and I walked around Nassau and bought a straw hat and cloth bag. Ate lunch in the dining room. Sound system in Hollywood Theater was not working, so went to our room for a nap. Watched **IRON WILL** movie on TV. After dinner, the kids danced in the Lucky Star Lounge and had lots of fun. Played Bingo in Broadway Showroom. The dance at the stern under the stars was with Jamaican music. YEA MON was not for us. Midnight buffet was Mexican. Had stomach ache that night.

Sunday

Ate breakfast in the dining room. The eggs were good, but the pancakes were not as good as McDonalds. Also had apple juice, coffee, bagel & honey. After lunch, The Wopata group tried to get on the 1:30 PM boat that went to Port Lucaya. When I got to the gate the crew said there was room for only one more person. I then noticed that Matt, Kyle, and Daniel got on without us knowing that. I was allowed to get the boys off. Susan was on the boat since she was ahead of us. We then took the 2 PM boat. Walked around the shops and then went to the beach with Steve's family. Mollie and Kyle had fun. We didn't see John's family while we were on the island. We bought some shirts at the straw market. Sunday evening we saw a very good show in the Broadway Showcase. Man on unicycle, and juggler with knives and torches. Also bull horn man. Lots of laughs. Daniel was scared of the torches. Kyle and Matthew went to sleep before 11 PM. I stayed with Mark and Daniel. Evelyn stayed with Mollie. The Moms and Dads went to the casino and midnight buffet.

Monday

Ate breakfast in dining room at 7 AM and then proceeded to Broadway Showcase. There was a bingo game, a magician and a drawing for a free cruise. They called people off the ship by the decks, starting at the top. We got off the ship about 9:30 AM. Evelyn and I rented a Pontiac Grand Am from Alamo. The rest of the family went back to Missouri. Had a Whopper for lunch before we checked in at Fairfield Inn at 12:30 PM. Spent afternoon in shopping Mall. Bought some sheets. Ate at Morrison's Cafeteria.

Tuesday

Purchased tickets for Universal Studios at Fairfield Inn at discount. Rides we did not take were, Kongfrontation, Earthquake, Jaws, E T Adventure, Back to the Future. The Rides we took were the Production Tram Tour, Nickelodeon Tour, Hitchcock's 3-D theater, Murder She Wrote Mystery Theater, Ate lunch at Melee's Dinner and heard "The Hollywood Hi Tones". Enjoyed the UNIVERSAL'S STUDIO BRASS and the BLUES BROTHERS. Best shows were the WILD, WILD, WILD, WEST STUNT SHOW and the ANIMAL ACTORS STAGE. Ate dinner at the Olive Garden.

Wednesday

Went to the Florida Mall and ate at the Morrison's Cafeteria. Then went to the Paul Newman movie **NOBODY'S FOOL**. Returned to Universal Studios to video the WILD, WILD, WILD, WEST SHOW, ANIMAL ACTORS, and the Lagoon water show, DYNAMITE NIGHTS STUNTACULAR.

Thursday

Drove through Tampa to the Days Inn Marina Beach Resort in Saint Petersburg. Had a very nice room on the bay, with a view of the boats. Motel had a nice beach, two pools, playground, etc. It was a beautiful drive to Mullet Key and visited Fort Desoto Park. Campground here is considered to be one of the best in the State. Bob and Inez loved to camp here. They have a very nice home with a dock on a canal that leads to the bay. Ate in Gigi Italian restaurant in a shopping center.

Friday

Crossed over the large bridge south of St. Petersburg. Stopped in Venice and walked the beaches. Took Alligator Alley highway across to East Side of Florida. Called Dorothy Van Horne from the Ramada Inn.

Saturday

Went to breakfast at Dorothy's Church and then looked at the rummage sale. Drove to Key West and had lunch at the Marriott. Then walked the beaches and the dock. The parasail people took off and landed from the back of the boat. Visited the southern most point in the United States.

Sunday

Went to BURTON MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, in Tavernier with Dorothy. Ate lunch at Italian Restaurant with a nice view of the Gulf. Cleaned 4 mini-blinds and 3 ceiling fans. Watched the Superbowl game at Dorothy's condo.

Monday

Left Dorothy's at 8:30 AM. Stopped in Florida City Outlet Mall and bought a pair of SAS shoes. Took US 41 across southern Florida. Shark Valley Center was closed due to high water since November. Visited Marco Island. It was very nice, with lots of condos. Walked beaches at Naples and several places on Fort Myers Beach.

Tuesday

Spent the day on Sanibel Island. Walked the beach near the lighthouse. Then visited the Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Took the driving tour and saw lots of birds and some crocodiles. Ate lunch at Timbers. Drove to a bridge that crossed over to Captive Island. Ate dinner at Channel Mark in Ft. Myers Beach. Visited a hospital where the Halverson's worked. It was plush and very modern.

Wednesday

Left the Halversons at 8:30 AM. Went to Corkscrew Sanctuary. It was a real swamp. Didn't see very many birds. Did see some alligators. It was a nice two-hour hike. Planned to stay at the Quality Inn, but had difficulty getting to their drive. Ended up staying in Days Inn next door.

Thursday

Had pancakes at the International House of Pancakes. Turned in the car at Alamo at 11:30 AM. We were checked in at the Delta Gate at 12:30 PM. The plane didn't leave till 2:20 PM. The L-1011 was full to Atlanta. The MD 88 to Kansas City had several empty seats. Susan met us and we were home at 7:30.

Branson 1999 August 22-29

Sunday

Branson Surrey Vacation Resort is located about two blocks south of Osmond's Theatre. John, Jeri, Matthew, Daniel & Mark Wopata stayed in the "I" Building, Condo 9B. Kristy, Kyle, Mollie & Susan and I stayed in "I" Building, Condo 13B (3rd Floor). Steve did not make it because of his work. Susan and I left Independence at 9:30 AM Sunday morning. Stopped for Subway Sandwich in Ozark, MO. Checked in at 2 PM but could not get in since we were registered to stay in Steve's Condo and it was not ready till 3:30 PM. Kristy, Kyle and Mollie arrived at 5:00 PM. John, Jeri, Matt, Dan, Mark and Julie arrived at 5:30 PM. Susan and Kristy went to the grocery store. We cooked pizza for supper.

Monday

Susan, Jeri, Kristy, Julia and Mollie went shopping. Susan and Kristy bought coats. Went to the snack shop located near the indoor pool and picked up Ping-Pong equipment. Went to the recreation room in Building "H". Kyle and Matt played several close games of Ping-Pong. I played some pool with Mark and Dan and finally with John. We made sandwiches for lunch. Then Susan, Jeri, Julia, Kristy, Matt, Kyle and Mollie went shopping. John stayed with Dan and Mark and he took them swimming. I took the fishing-motor to Branson Marine Sales to have the pump repaired. Free fishing docks are available downstream from the Main Street Marina. Talked to a man who was fishing. He reported fishing was poor. Stopped at Wal-Mart to get some more pizza and ice cream. Went to the Surrey Party the **Planet Branson** at 5 PM. The finger food included ham and turkey sandwiches, meat balls, chicken wings, small wieners, slaw, potato salad, toss salad, chips, salsa, coffee, tea, etc. It was our supper. Plenty to eat. Many of the Branson entertainers performed. Several prizes were given out including airline tickets, 3 and 4-day vacations and cruises as well as tickets to local shows. Planned to go to the Magic Show, but found it closed. Then went to the **Wild, Wild West show**. We enjoyed the show. Julia and Mollie got hugs from "Sunny" the female star of the show. Sunny remembered seeing us at the Planet Branson. The three guys called the "Wild Bunch" were also at the Surrey Party. We had ice cream, banana splits, etc. in our condo before going to bed. Got to bed after 11 PM.

Tuesday

Went to the **Checkered Flag**, which is a go-cart facility located near the Remington Theatre. Surrey made it available to purchase \$11 tickets for \$6. Total cost was \$30.00. Matt could not drive so Jeri took him shopping. Kyle, Mollie, and Dan drove cars. John took Mark for the first race. Then John took Julia for the second race. They gave kids free popcorn and pop. After the races, John, Jeri and Julia went shopping. The rest of us went back to the condo for lunch. Kristy, Kyle and Mollie left for home about 12:30 PM which was before John, Jeri and Julia returned. John, Jeri, Matt, Dan, Mark, Julia and I went for an 80-minute tour on the **Ozark Mountain Water Ducks**. The driver told us about the area and the shows. We spent 30 minutes on Table Rock Lake. Dan got a certificate for driving the Duck on the lake. Susan went

shopping while we rode the Duck. John took his family and me to the **Kirby VanBurch Palace of Mystery Show**. This was a very good show, which included a tiger, panther, helicopter, an act that appeared to cut women in two pieces that were locked up in boxes. The show had five dancers. Jim Barber was a very good ventriloquist.

Wednesday

Bill, Marge and Yvonne arrived 3:15 PM. We went to eat at the Ole Hickory Bar-B-Que. We had a coupon for buy one and get one free. It was a good smorgasbord for \$6.99. Went to the **Braschler Theatre** for the 8:30 PM Show. We had a discount coupon for \$3 so the tickets cost \$16.50 or a total \$66.00

Did not hear very well for the warm up show. The microphone was not working. Later the sound system came on and it was so loud that Yvonne and I moved back to the center of the auditorium. We had ice cream with caramel and chocolate syrup in our room before going to bed.

Thursday

Went to the **Waltzing Water show** with Frederick at the pianos. Had three tickets, but we had to buy one for \$12. It was better show than I remembered. The various shaped sprays of water were very unusual and illuminated with colored lights. The jets were coordinated with the music. Frederick is very soft spoken but an interesting man. Susan, Mary Hagen and Karen Kelley came back as we were finishing lunch. They packed up their things before eating. They left for home after lunch. The four of us went to the **Dixie Stampede Dinner and Show**, which cost \$140.00. The pre-show started at 4:40 PM. They provided an unusual drink served in a plastic boot. We moved to the arena for the main show, which started at 5:30 PM. We had seats on the front row. It was a packed house. The dinner included a nice biscuit, very good creamy soup, roasted chicken, slice of barbecued pork, corn on the cob, potato strips, turnover, pepsi, coffee or tea. You eat without utensils. Stopped at the Tanger Factory Outlet Stores. Visited the Harry & David shop to sample chocolate. Ended up buying 4 packages of trail mix. Also visited the quilt shop and the SAS shoe store. Ate ice cream and played more cards.

Friday

We were eating breakfast when Mindy called to report that they planned to leave Independence at 4 PM. We went to the **Brumley Music Show** at 9:30 AM in the 76 Music Hall. Used a \$3 discount coupon. Four tickets cost \$66.00. This purchase provided four free tickets for the Sunday morning show. The Brumley Show was entertaining. The comedian spoke too fast which made it hard to understand. He also dressed as a woman for a couple of skits. Also did an act in tights. His movements were very funny. Think he would be fantastic if he just spoke more slowly. It was also so loud that Yvonne and I moved back to the center of the theatre. Ate lunch in our room. Bill and Marge went home at 1 PM. Yvonne and I washed sheets and towels and cleaned up the condos. Yvonne and I went to Wal-Mart and picked up some free tickets to Waltzing Waters and to the Branson Classics show in the Branson Mall Music Theatre. Yvonne prepared a nice spaghetti dinner. We then walked around the facility waiting for Chris, Mindy and Maggie. I didn't recognize their car since they drove the Bronco. They stayed on the third floor. I finally got off the sofa and slept in the king bed.

Saturday

Chris, Mindy and Maggie came down to eat breakfast with us. Then went to the Waltzing Water show using the free tickets we picked up at the Wal-Mart Store. Picked up the tickets for the Jim Stafford show. Had pizza for lunch in our room. Went to the 76 Music Hall to see the **Country Western Show** at 1 PM. Walked through the mall and sampled the chocolate. Had a little

problem getting into our room. Played a wild game of bingo with Maggie. Went to Wendy's for supper. Shopped in the Dollar store before going to the **Jim Stafford Show**. We arrived 30 minutes early for the 8 PM show and the place was packed. Jim played a guitar, violin, banjo and harmonica. Laser show was very different. The 3-D show was almost scary. Two-year-old daughter and six-year son were in the show. Wife did part of the warm-up show and had a small part in the main show. (Looked like she walked across the stage upside down.)

Sunday.

Got up a little early so we could check out. Had to strip the beds and put all the sheets and dirty towels near the front door. Also emptied all the wastebaskets. Found extra plastic bags in the bottom of the wastebaskets. The checkout time is 10 AM. We had to hurry since we went to the 9:30 AM at Branson Classics Show in the Branson Mall Music Theatre located by Wal-Mart. Good seven piece band that played the 40 and 50 songs. A male MC with three men and three women dancers and singers. Show is only 1-½ years old.

2004 Canada Fishing Trip Red Wing Lodge July 23-30



Friday

Picked up Susan at 4:30 pm after work and she drove the 460 miles to Ames, Iowa. Stayed in a nice Quality Inn and ate dinner in the adjacent Buford's Restaurant. A nice breakfast was provided in the restaurant. We drove through Minneapolis at 10:30 Determined by cell phone that Steve was about 2 hours behind us. We ate lunch at Little Falls, MN and again at the Subway in Baudette, MN. Arrive in Red Wing Lodge at 6:30. Mike took me out for several mile ride in his speedboat and pointed out varies buoys and landmarks. He might as well talked to the life jacket. I remembered nothing since I was too busy looking at the sea gulls, pelicans, landscape and island. Steve & family arrived about 8 PM. John forgot his blood pressure medicine so he called his doctor who in turn called a pharmacy so he could pick the prescription. This procedure delayed their Minneapolis departure several hours. They arrived about 9:30. Mike suggests the 3 bedroom #2 cabin for John & family. The two bedroom #9 cabin for Steve & family. And the one bedroom#9 cabin for Susan and me since it was vacant.

Sunday

Ate breakfast at 8 AM. French toast, sausage, juice and coffee. Mike then went over the map in detail. The Wantiez map was not up-to-date. We purchased an up-to-date map, which was still hard to read or understand the symbols. He also suggested the types of fishing rigs to use. Then he gave instructions on starting and operating the motors. The first time out, Susan, Mark and I were in a boat. Mark caught a small fish. One also got away. I had three bites. Sunday lunch was a bowl of broccoli soup, which was very good and a cheese and meat sandwich. We made our own salad from the salad bar for dinner. We were served potato salad, peas, ham and homemade bread and a brownie sundae. Steve and I went fishing after dinner. Still no fish. Think Mollie caught three and Julia caught two. Mark and I played Kyle and Matt spades. Jeri popped corn, which was very good. Danny played the guitar.

Monday

Breakfast again at 8:15. Poached eggs on toast with sausage. Sherry was our blond waitress. Four boats went fishing. Dan operated the boat for Susan and me in the AM, and then Matt had the duty in PM. Lunch was soup and a toasted cheese sandwich. Lemonade type drink. For dinner we had salad shrimp, french fries, choice of cherry or apple pie with ice cream. Kyle caught a 21" walleye plus four smaller fish. I caught six small fish. Steve brought a TV with a CD player. The kids watched movies. John, Jeri, and I fished off the dock and caught nothing. I walked with Kristy & Steve to the top of a hill. I decided I was tired and that was enough for me. Kids went swimming in the lake off the dock. They played in a tube type device.



Tuesday

We had bacon and blueberry pancakes for breakfast. We all went out to fish and fishing was pretty good this morning. John caught a very nice northern. Started to throw back fish since they continued to be 11-12" long. Cleaned a bunch for Betty to cook for the Wednesday lunch. Matt caught four fish while driving the boat for Susan and me. We all started throwing back the walleye since we had our limit. Mike barbecued pork chops for dinner plus we had tatter tots and mixed vegetables. We make our own salad at the salad bar. John, Mark and I went out in the evening and caught 11 fish mostly walleye. John was teaching Mark how to drive the boat. Ran out of minnows. I heard that things got a little boring for the boys. Kyle and Matt each paid Dan a dollar for eating a minnow. Think that was similar to a trick he must have seen on a TV show. He survived.



Wednesday

Susan woke me up at 7 AM. We had breakfast early at 7:15 so we could meet the guide at 8 AM. Bill, the guide, drove the boat with Mark and Kyle. Jeri, Steve and I were in the trail boat. We went out several miles and jig fished. We probably caught for a total of 20 fish. Fishing was poor. It clouded up and finally started raining. We motored home in the rain. It was miserable. Don't see how Steve managed to get us back. After lunch the game plan was changed. Susan and I went with the guide. Matt, Dan & Kyle followed and then Steve and John followed us. Fishing continued to be rather poor. Fished in four different places before heading back. After dinner Dan drove the boat for Susan and me. Matt drove Mollie and Julia, and John and Jeri were by themselves. Fishing was still not very exciting since we were catching fish that were smaller than expected. Packaged the fish, which were 12 walleye and one pike. Dinner included a salad from the buffet, stuffed chicken breast and potatoes, with ice cream and strawberries for dessert.



Thursday

After breakfast, John finished loading up his van. They sure had a lot of stuff. They managed to leave before the scheduled time of 10. They were going to stay overnight in Minneapolis. The rest of us returned to our duty of fishing. It seems like the fishing was a little better. The fish seemed to be just a little larger. More in the 14-15" range. Our last time out, Kyle drove the boat

for Susan and me. He caught ten fish, Susan caught four and I caught the quality 18" fish. It was odd we never caught any perch after the first couple of days.



Friday

It rained in the AM. Had juice, sausage and pancakes for breakfast. Had a sandwich and chips for lunch and then lasagna, salad, and green beans, and tomatoes for dinner. In the PM Kyle drove the boat and caught 10 fish. Susan caught four, and I caught a 19" walleye. Steve, Kristy and Mollie came along side and Mollie injured her thumb, so went to cabin to apply ice.

Saturday

Loaded up before breakfast. Mike made a ham and cheese omelet, with O.J. and toast. Picked up lunches and left the 8:45. Made a mistake in leaving the camp and had to backtrack less than a mile. Also took a different road the Rainy River. Crossed the border before 10:00AM. Crossing was easy. One inspector asked a lot of questions. Another searched the interior of the car and checked the cooler with the fish. Stopped in Bemidji to see Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox. Ran into slow traffic near Minneapolis. Arrived at the Mall of America about 6 PM. Made contact with Steve and met on Macy's first floor, Susan bought 3 swimming suits at Macy's while I walked around with Steve & Kyle. Stopped at T-Mobile and got some help with the cell phone. Found out I had the wrong number for Steve. Kyle programmed in other numbers. Had a Sunday at McDonald's. Met Susan at 8 and we left for our Motel. Found our Red Roof Inn and then ate at Subways. Steve stayed in the same motel. We checked in at 9 PM. Stopped at Cabelas, which is a huge sporting goods store. Lots of stuffed animals. We also stopped at a Vanity Fair Shopping Center north of Ames. Susan spent some time shopping. I did a lot of walking. Think we had a great trip. However, there was a lot of road time. Susan drove all the way except for few miles in Canada. While I was driving I took the wrong turn twice, so it is a good thing she drove most of the time. Although the others could change drivers, it still involves a lot of rest stops. The trip cost a little more than expected. Paid Red Wing Lodge \$12,100, which included minnows \$143, fishing lures \$95 and a guide \$187.50. All in all the trip was fantastic. Everyone caught fish and had fun. Think the next time it would work out better to order our meals off the menu and do our own breakfast. (Wasn't aware that option was available until we were leaving). The meals that were furnished sure are not recommended for my diet. We drove 1,692 miles.

2005 Family Vacation in Colorado August 5-13

Friday

Picked up Dan and Mark and then picked up Susan in front of her office at 3 PM. Took I-70 and stopped at the first rest stop to let Susan drive. Stopped to eat at Wendy's in Salina. Stayed in the Hampton Inn in Hays, KS. Mark slept on the rollaway and Dan slept on the floor. Gene and Susan each had their own queen beds.



Saturday

After a very good complimentary breakfast, we were on the road at 7:45. Had a snack at a Subway, and also stops in Colby, KS and Boulder, CO. for gasoline. After checking in at the Wind River Lodge, we went over to the Steve's Campsite # 179 in Moraine Park. Mark and Dan decided to camp near Steve's trailer. Steve served us chicken and rice that was cooked in a Dutch oven. We all went to the Ranger talk "Majestic Elk". We stopped for some groceries on the way back to the Y camp. It was a big day, but Susan drove most of the way. Kyle and Dan decided to climb Longs Peak Sunday. They drove over to the trailhead Saturday night to sleep in the van before starting their climb at 1:45 am Sunday morning.



Sunday

Susan & I showered early so Steve, Kristy, Mollie & Mark could use our showers before we went to church. We ate lunch in the "Other Side Restaurant" in Estes Park. I then dropped off the five of them at the Longs Peak trailhead so they could hike up the trail to meet Kyle and Dan. They were on the trail for only 40 minutes before they met the boys. That probably was a

very joyous meeting. The boys made it to the top by 9 am and spent 40 minutes at the top before starting down. In driving back, I spent some time at Lily Lake before returning to Steve's campsite. The rest of them came back in Kyle's van. Steve cooked hamburgers for the evening meal. Dan and Kyle did a lot sleeping after making their climb. Mark and Mollie came back to the Y to play tennis and miniature golf. We took Mark back so he could camp with Dan. We saw several Elk and the way back to the Y.

Monday

Steve and Mark decided to climb Flat Top Mountain. Kristy, Kyle and Dan came at 8:30 to use our showers. Susan and I checked out of the Wind River Lodge and stored our luggage in Kyle's van. Kyle, Mollie, Dan, Mark, Susan and I, drove up Fall River Road to the Alpine Visit Center. We made several stops on the way. They all climbed up to the peak at the Alpine Center. We also made several stops on the way back on Trail Ridge Road. I was glad I was driving, since some of the sides were rather steep. We arrived at Steve's campsite shortly after Steve and Mark returned from their climb of Flat Top Mountain. Mark was really bushed. Steve must be in pretty good condition to wear out Mark. I then checked our group in at the Y Camp Administration Building and then we picked up room keys at the Mt. Epsilon Lodge. John, Jeri, Matt & Julia were very impressed with their visit of the Colorado School of Mines in Golden. They arrived at our Lodge at 5 PM. After dinner in the Walnut Room, we went to the evening program that was fun for children. John arranged for fans to be provided for our rooms. The youth went to the teen night party. Kyle and I were in room 3520; John, Jeri & Julia in 3519; Matt, Dan & Mark in 3518, and Susan & Mollie were in 3517.

Tuesday

Grandchildren had fun playing ultimate frisbee. I used the exercise bike for 30 minutes. The Wopata boys wiped out four college boys from Florida in a basketball game. We ordered sack lunches so we ate them in our meeting room, which was in the basement of the Rainbow Lodge. It served its purpose, but was rather disappointed. Beautiful scenery outside and we were in a room with no windows. Steve and Kristy ate dinner with us. Steve showed us pictures on his laptop computer. We all went to the square dance class. The instructor was very good and we all had a good time. The teens then went to the swim party.



Wednesday

We ate breakfast and lunch in the huge WGR dining room due to the Memorial Services of a Park Ranger who died in the park. The family went on a hike to Bible Point. I stayed in my room and rested. Steve and Kristy came at 10, but I missed their arrival. Steve went down to the main intersection to watch for the Russell and Ann Farrar. They arrived at 10:40 and we then we sat in the Mt. Epsilon Lobby and visited. The rest returned from their hike a short time later. We posed for pictures before we went to lunch. Ann mentioned that she had friends Mary & John Yurak that knew Stella McCray. Then Russ, Anne, Steve, John, Susan and I continued to visit in

the Administration Building lobby till the Farrar's left at 3 PM. Jeri and Julia went to the handicraft class. John and his boys joined me at the swimming pool and we played water volleyball before dinner in the Walnut Room. Steve's family left for home after dinner. They drove till 1 am before resting 5 hours. They arrived home 2 PM Thursday.



Thursday

We picked up sack lunches at breakfast. Then went to the RMNP and did the one mile walk around Bear Lake. Took lots of pictures. Ate our lunches near the entrance to the walk around Bear Lake. Then took the hike to Lymph Lake. I had to sit on lots of rocks to rest. John and Dan stayed with me all the time. It started to rain so we hurried back to the car and return back to Y. After dinner Susan I went to hear the James Divine saxophone concert. He had served 10 years in the Army Band and currently a teacher in high school system near Colorado Springs. We then went into town and Susan purchased a framed picture. Called Anita Blecha found out she had a commitment on Saturday so it would not be convenient to stop on the way home as I originally planned.

Friday

Susan and I drove over to the Alberta Falls trailhead and were able to find a parking spot. This was less than a mile hike, but I stopped several times to rest going up and coming back. Susan went ahead and continued on to Mills Lake. I beat her back to the trailhead and rested in the car after visiting with the Park Ranger. The Park buses came by every 10 minutes and looked nice. We returned to the Y camp and we were late for lunch. However, we were able to pick up stuff from the dinning room and then picnic on the porch. The view was very good. We then went to watch John and the boys do the zip line. They had to wear a special harness, and practice walking on cables 35 feet up in the air, before riding the zip line back to the ground. Looked very exciting. After dinner we went to hike around the Alluvial Fan. This was the result of a dam failure in 1982. Family had lots of fun climbing on the rocks, except for Matt. He found a nice flat rock and stretched out on it. I think he was checking out the back



of his eyelids. Saw a few elk at a distance. Then stopped at McDonalds in Estes Park for ice cream treats on the way back to the Y.

Saturday

Susan and I loaded up and went down to eat breakfast at 7. The boys were already there. Met John, Jeri and Julia as we were leaving the dining room. We started for home at 7:25. I drove to Longmont to fill up with gas. Susan then drove the rest of the way home. John passed us before lunch. Arrived at Susan's at 8 PM.

The lodging and included meals at the Y cost \$2,500. We drove 1,650 miles. Think the family had a good time with all the activities.

December 2006 December 28-31 in Cancun

Funjets vacations arranged via AAA. 373 1717 ext. 150 Pat

Thursday

Susan picked me up at 4:30 a.m., parked car at Thrifty, met the rest of party at the airport at 5:35am. Check-in (6:00) was crowded, but was ready to load at 6:30, started to load at 7:00. Susan and I were in the last row (22) and the plane took off at 7:35. Jeri, Mark and Julia did not go with us. Arrived at Cancun before the scheduled 10:40 AM arrival. Went through immigration and picked up our luggage and were ready to be transferred to hotel at 10:55, but didn't leave till 11:35, since Lomas had a lot of people to transport to hotels. Arrived at the hotel at 12:05 and with a slow check in, we were in our room at 1:00.



Then went to eat our lunch. The **RIU Cancun Hotel** is located in the beach front in the heart of Cancun's Hotel Zone. It is a regal landmark against the Cancun skyline; this exclusive hotel has been designed to capture the radiance of the bright Mexican sun and beauty of the crystalline Caribbean Sea surrounded by lush garden and a large pool and bar. It offers direct access to the extensive white sand beach while offering unforgettable dining, entertainment and fun filled activities. The Don Juan was a buffet type restaurant and a large selection of food than the sports bar. The bar tender was very efficient in mixing drinks. Was introduced to a Pena Colada drink which was pretty tasty with or without alcohol.

Friday

Spent the day on the beach or terrace overlooking the beach. Made reservations to eat at the Brazilian restaurant. Table was set up for nine. It was an interesting meal, and took lots of time to eat and visit. The meat was served on securers and sliced off right onto your plate. Went to the theatre afterwards. Had good seats, but the show was not very professional.



Saturday

Spent a lot time on the beach. It was great since the weather was so nice. Had to be careful not to get sunburned. Matt, Kyle and Danny joined up three others to play volleyball. Since the winning team gets to stay, they played for four hours and finally stopped so they could go eat something. There was always a place that was serving something to eat. Got up early (7am) to make reservations to eat at the Japanese restaurant. It was a popular place and they only had two seatings. The food was unusual. The waiters were oriental, but I don't think they were Japanese. Then had octopus for an appetizer. salmon for the main course and fried ice cream for dessert. Went to the theatre but didn't stay since it was primarily singing. Then stopped the lobby and played spades with Kyle vs. John and Matt.



Sunday

Ate breakfast with Susan, missed Steve & Kristy, they were in the dinning room too. More time spent enjoying the nice weather on an upper deck. Could look down at the volley ball game. Packed up our bags and checked them in for storage in the lobby. Loafed around in the afternoon. We were to be ready to go to the airport at 5:50 and we left at 5:55. We were checked in and at gate A-8 at 7 pm. The Frontier flight left Cancun at 8:25 and arrived ahead of time in KC at left at 5:55. We were checked in and at gate A-8 at 7 pm. The Frontier flight left Cancun at 8:25 and arrived ahead of time in KC at 11:25. Luggage pickup was very slow. Susan's bag was one of the last ones. Didn't wait very long for the Thrifty shuttle. Car valet was a little slow at Thrifty. Got home at 1:15 am.

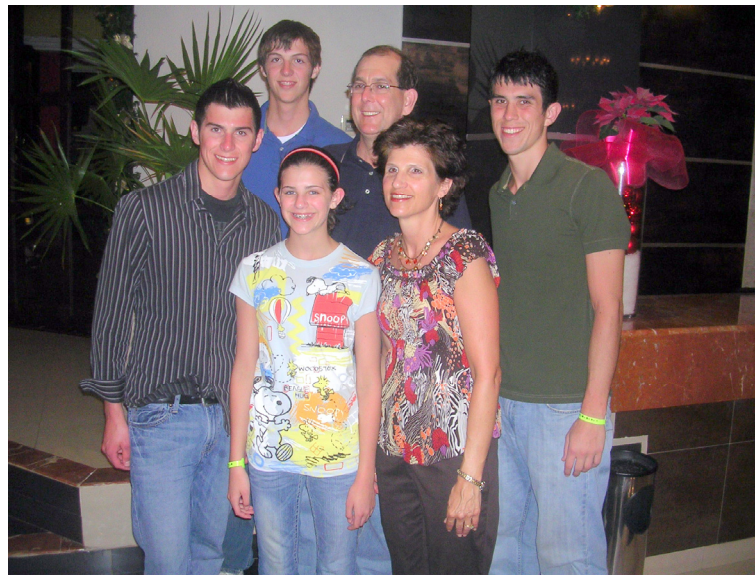
Roommates were Steve & Kristy, Kyle & Mollie, Matt & Danny, Gene and Susan, and John had a room to himself since Jeri, Mark and Julia did not come with us. Frontier Air was \$568.35 and Land cost was \$664.00 or \$1,322.34 each person.





2008 December 24-29 Family Christmas in Cancun

Trip was booked through Patricia Scroggin 816-246-5885 at (alwayscruise@yahoo.com)
This was a Funjet Tour that uses Frontier Airlines.



Wednesday

Left to pick up Susan at 4:15 AM. She drove very carefully to the airport due to the snow. It was also slow since we followed a snowplow most of the way. Transfer from the Parking Spot to the Frontier gate was very smooth. We were checked in and ready to board at 6:05. The scheduled departure of 7:15 was delayed due to de-icing the plane. We were in the air at 8:00. Flight was smooth and we could watch TV mounted on the back of the seat in front of you. Immigration, passport check, & luggage pickup took time before we met our Lomas Representative. Transfer to the Gran Caribe Real Hotel was speedy in a large bus. At Check-in we were issued room card keys and beach towel cards. Also wristbands were placed on each person. This gave us access to restaurants. Then listened to guest service explain the programs available in the facility. Susan and I ate lunch before going to our room. I was disappointed with the room 2810 since it really did not provide a view of the lagoon, just a parking lot. I called the desk a couple times to request a change. John finally got some action and we were moved to an ocean view room 2721

with a verandah, which we both enjoyed. Susan paid the extra \$40 per day fee for the upgrade. After a rest, we watched the parade of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Three Wisemen, etc. parade around the pool and the huge lobby. The parade ended at the Christmas tree. We then ate dinner in the Sunset Grill, which was outside and dimly lit. The girls sat with the adults while the boys were at a nearby table. We then went to Gaiotas Restaurant for dessert. John and Mark played Jeri & Matt spades while the rest of us watched. Susan & I went to our room and were in bed at 10 PM. It was a big day.

Thursday (Christmas)

Watched the sunrise from our verandah. Had eggs, potatoes and lots of fruit for breakfast. Ate a couple more times and had coffee with several other Wopata's. Spent the day getting acquainted with the hotel. Put on tanning lotion and spent some time in the sun. Around noon Santa flew by in a helicopter a couple times and finally landed on the sand of the volleyball court. He then hiked to the Christmas tree in the lobby. Lots of young children had their picture taken with Santa. Ordered our lunch off the menu and ate with Mark, Mollie and Dan. It was a rather lazy day. In the evening we went to some sort of show. It was a very different Christmas.



Friday

Watched the sunrise, but the clouds were not as colorful as expected. I had an omelet and lots of fruit for breakfast. Walked to a shopping center near our 2006 hotel. Bought a couple of silver items. Took bus back to the hotel. Saw Susan, Jeri & Julia do water aerobics. After lunch watched the grandsons play beach volleyball. John led the group to catch the city bus to a shopping center with the aquarium. Saw a lot of strange fish and sea life. Saw Mark, Mollie and Julia swim with the dolphins. Stayed for the evening Dolphin show. Had a late dinner in the Graviotas Restaurant including white wine. Then went to an excellent evening show of dancers and gymnasts. Sat on the front row.



Saturday

Another omelet breakfast and fruit. Peaches, pineapple cantaloupe, melon, blue and white grapes. Susan I went to the stretching exercise class, which was a lot like yoga. Then played water volleyball, without wearing my tennis shoes. (Had some strange feelings in my feet, ankle and several inches above the ankles). Wind caused a lot of problems. There were some little kids trying to play. After that I stayed in the pool and joined the water aerobics class. Susan, Mollie, Julia, Jeri & John were in the class too. Then John and Mark took me surf walking. I was really surprised how strong the waves were. Sure glad they were hanging on to me. Susan snapped some pictures. Dressed up for lunch (no swimsuits) at Albatros. It was very nice lunch since we ordered a shrimp cocktail and fish dinner off the menu. Service was very good. Sat in the lobby on the very soft upholstered furniture. Steve and Kyle joined me for a visit. I then rode the exercise bike for 1.5 miles. That evening we ate in the Marias Restaurant, where it was difficult to get reservations. Ate at the table for eight. Susan and the grandchildren sat with me. The parents sat at a nearby table. Served good food and drinks and was almost like a private party. Had a nice visit with all the grandchildren.

Sunday

We went to eat breakfast early since we planned to be in the lobby ready to check out at 8:30. Had the usual breakfast omelet and fresh fruit. Also had tomato and cranberry juice to drink. Back to our room to finish packing. Susan carried my luggage up the steps so I could drag it to the lobby. Had to turn in our room keys and beach towel cards and also have our wristbands clipped. We were then given a card to give to the bell captain so our luggage could be put on the bus. John's crew was all set to go when we got to the desk. The bus was very late in picking us up. Did not comply with the two-hour check in time, but we had plenty of time to meet the one-hour cut off time. Susan & I ate our granola bars while the rest bought stuff in the waiting area. We left late since our plane was late in leaving KC due to de-icing like our flight coming down. We were at least 40 minutes late leaving Cancun. Flight was smooth and immigration at KC was rather quick. Luggage was a little slow but able to get on The Parking Spot bus as walked out the airport. The discount coupon provided by Funjet resulted in a \$31.87 parking fee. Unloaded Susan's bags and was home at 5:15 PM. The family all thought it was a great trip. The Funjet cost for air, hotel, transfers, taxes and travel protection cost \$17,100.72 or \$1,425.06 per person. Next family trip might be to a lake resort with boating, etc.

35. “G” Company, 242nd Regiment, 42nd Division

When we got off the ship in Marseilles, France on December 8, 1944, there were 181 men and 6 officers in our Company. Before the war was over 314 men had served in our Company. There were a lot of replacements for the Wounded in Action (WIA), Killed in Action (KIA), and Missing in Action (MIA). There were a total of 127 replacements. (314-181-6=127)

My company was engaged in several battles before the war ended. These took place in Gamsheim, Rettershoffen, Hatten, Kaltenhaus, Schweinfurt, Nurnberg and Munich. I met the enemy in Gamsheim, France and became a Prisoner of War (POW) there. At this first battle there were 33 WIA, 24 MIA, 12 KIA; 69 casualties in my company.



The German’s second thrust of the Battle of the Bulge, called Nordwind, started the first week of January, 1945. The Germans crossed the Rhine River north of Strasbourg near Gamsheim, France.

There are 12 men in a squad and three squads in a rifle platoon. Then there are four platoons in Company, which also includes Headquarters and weapons platoons, which ends up with total of 189 men.

Just before Evelyn and I were to leave for a tour of Germany in 1985, Mayland Crosson called. She was looking for Company “G” Rainbow veterans and was so happy to find another Rainbow Veteran.

She told us about a Rainbow dedication that was being held in France, which was scheduled to occur shortly after the end of our tour of Germany. We altered our plans and rented a car in Frankfurt, Germany, and drove to the Alsace area to attend the dedication of the monument located midway between Hatten and Rittershoffen. The mayors of these towns invited the Americans and the Germans that were involved in the battle that took



place in this area between January 9-20, 1945. The ceremony involved a lot of people. The French had a platoon of Paratroopers. The Americans had an honor guard group from Heidelberg. There were 20 men from the 13th Armored Division, 10 of us from the 42nd Rainbow Division, and a couple hundred Germans.

Lise Pommois arranged for our 3-night stay in the hotel in Haguenau. She also served as our guide for the Rainbow people. She is the author of **Winter Storm**, which details the War in northern Alsace, November 1944 to March 1945. She attended Rainbow Reunions beginning in 1986 for several years. I visited Lise's home with Evelyn in 1990 and with Susan in 1997. Lise visited my home several times when she was in the United States.

Bill Kenny, a "G" Company man, was one of the ten Rainbow men that were at this dedication. After the ceremony, we visited Gombsheim, France, where the war ended for me. We had a good time visiting the sites we remembered. He invited me to the Annual Rainbow Reunion, which was all new to me.

I went to my first Army Rainbow Reunion 1986, 41 years after the war was over, and found 58 men of my company there. The reason for such a good attendance was due to Mayland Crosson. Mayland and Tom Crosson first heard about Rainbow Reunions in 1981. They tried to contact men, found a few and four of them met at Claude Hawkin's farm in Anabrson, S.C. The next year, 1982, Tom and Mayland went to the big July reunion in Tulsa, Okla. Out of 1800 people attending, only one was a 242-Co. G. man, William Walker – he had been a replacement and Tom didn't know him. Back home in PA, Mayland asked Tom if he wanted to go next year – it was to be in Dallas, TX. He said yes, but only if there will be men from Co. G – 242nd. That is when they started hunting for men, using the 1994 Rainbow book with names and 1944 addresses. 15 men showed up in Dallas (1983); 29 in Windsor, Canada (1984); 35 in West Palm Beach, FL (1985); and 58 in Oklahoma City (1986).

It was the first reunion for many of them. As for my squad, all 9 of us that were alive at that time were at this reunion. Since then, some have died. In 2005 Godino and I were the only ones attending that were in the squad from the 1986 Reunion. Others in the squad like DeVoge, Klentz, and Schaible or their wives are unable to travel.

I went to my Army reunion 2005 there were only 9 of my company there. I went to my Army reunion in 2006, there were only two us there. The other guy was the man (James Radford) that replaced me in the 1945 squad after I was taken prisoner. I was in a combat area for over three weeks. We didn't suffer any casualties till January 5 and 6. In those two days the squad casualties were one killed, one wounded and one was taken prisoner. I was the one taken prisoner.



KC area Rainbow Veterans when Ted Symington came to town.

These were the men attending from 242nd Co. "G" in 2005 reunion.

Row 1: Norm Thomrew, Bill Schwark, Lou Godino, Lloyd TGale

Row 2: Tony Caminiti, Jim Radford, Bill Kenny, Gene Wopata, Ray Scklmocan



KC Rainbow veterans and widows

January, 1987

DEFYING ALL ODDS



When Eugene Wopata of Independence, MO, a member of the MO-KAN Chapter, departed for the National Reunion in Oklahoma City, he had only the name of his squad leader, Wirt Glover, and hoped that he, too, would attend the reunion. He not only found Wirt Glover, but six other squad members as well as two replacement members, William H. Henry, Bridgeport, WV, and Carl H. Vorderstrasse, Plymouth, NE.

This squad from the 2nd platoon of "G" Company, 242d Infantry, saw early action prior to all the support troops having arrived in the field. On 5 January 1945 they left Strassbourg via truck, went to Weyersheim where Sgt. Glover then led his men toward Gamsbheim where they immediately ran into trouble. That night William Rosaline and three others were killed. The remaining nine survived and were at the 1986 reunion in Oklahoma City.

Left to right in the photo, John D. Weiser, Stark City, MO, wounded 1-5-45; carried to safety by Gene Wopata. Eugene F. Wopata, Independence, MO, wounded and captured 1-6-45 (retired mechanical engineer). Louis G. Godino, Plantation, FL, wounded 4-11-45 (cabinet maker). Erwin N. Klentz, Norfolk, NE, wounded 3-19-45 (county maintenance). Wirt Glover, Longwood, FL, Squad Leader, who came through without a scratch. Glenn DeVoge, Las Vegas, NV, transferred to Rangers in February '45. Isadore Urban, Northglenn, CO, wounded 4-11-45. Gilbert Schaible, Lafayette, IN, who also came through unscathed. The ninth man, Freddie Brant, transferred to the Rangers in February '45, but was not present for the photo.

Due to some personnel shuffling, the squad consisted of only ten men when it went to Gamsbheim.

OR THE
COMPANY

Squad Members

John D. Weiser, Stark City, Mo. Wounded night of 1-5-45. Remembers Wopata carrying him across the irrigation ditch bridge to a jeep after being wounded. (Cattle rancher.)

Wopata, Independence, Mo. Wounded and captured near railroad tracks on west side of Gambsheim. (Retired Mechanical Engineer)

Godino, Plantation, Fl. Wounded 4-11-45. (Cabinet man and was wounded

Klantz, Nor-fork, NE. B.A.R. man
(County Maintenance)

(Wirt Glover, Longwood, Fl (came through the war without a scratch)

Glenn DeVoge, Las Vegas, NV, transferred to the rangers in February 1945.

Isadore Urban, North glen, Co.
4-1-45.

Gilbert Schaible, Lafayette, In.
Came through the war without a scratch).

Not in Picture.

Freddie Brant, Gulfport, Ms. Transferred to rangers in February 1945.

Squad replacements at the reunion were William H Henry from Bridgeport, WV., and Carl H. Vorderstrasse, Plymouth, NE

Two men were transferred from the squad before it went to Weyersheim and the squad was given the 2nd B.A.R. Therefore, the squad was composed of 10 men instead of 12 when it went to Gambsheim.

36. What Are the Odds?

Evelyn and I went to our first Rainbow reunion in Oklahoma City in 1986. After registration we walked into the hospitality room. John Weiser walked up to me and said, “Wopata, thanks for carrying me out when I was wounded.” WOW, that was a shocker! The day before I was captured, we were shelled and four men in my company were killed and six were wounded. I was knocked unconscious during the shelling. When I came to, I heard a man yelling for a medic. I shook the guys on each side of me and got no response, so I went over to this guy. He had a bad shoulder wound and leg wound. I picked him up and carried him in a fireman’s carry like I learned in Boy Scouts. I then carried him back across the Zorn River Bridge to a jeep that was being used as an ambulance. For forty-one years I wondered who this man was, and did he survive. It was nice of him to remember my name. I assumed he had something to do with me receiving the bronze star for this event. This was his first reunion as well as mine. You don’t very often celebrate an event that occurred several years ago without a great deal of planning. This was truly a big thrill. I usually tear up when I tell this story.

Something else happened at this 1986 reunion. There were only 10 men in my squad when we went into Gamsheim. One man was killed (William Rosalie on 1/5/45), one was wounded, and one was captured (me) in January 6, 1945. The squad was involved in several battles before the war ended, and as a result several members were wounded. Then 41 years later all the living members of the squad decided to go to a Rainbow Reunion in 1986. This really does not happen very often.



After a tour of the Czech Republic in 1997, Susan and I went to visit the old Stalag IVB prison camp in Germany. I wrote a report on this visit, which was published in the Bulletin, which is a National POW Magazine.

As a result of this article, Vern Elder wrote me since we shared the same prison barracks. He had a list of 18 Americans that were in our barracks. (Vern is a retired Methodist pastor in Iowa.) I wrote to these old addresses and Ralph Carr from Texas responded. This resulted in a mini-reunion at my home. We had lots to talk about, but liberation day soon came up. They remembered the feast we had on partly cooked food. I remembered that one fellow got sick and bloated and looked like a pregnant woman. Another fellow helped me take him to the medical building. The doctors did some checking, took his blood pressure & temperature, etc. and finally stretched him out on a table and laid on top of him. That terrified me, so I left. After I told this story, Vern Elder says he helped me carry the puffed up man to the hospital. He also witnessed the treatment of the doctor lying on top of the patient. To top it off, Ralph Carr said he was the patient. *What are the odds?*

37. POW Conventions

POW National Conventions

1986, July 9-12, Jackson, MS
1990 Seattle, WA.
1991, September 10-15, Tulsa, OK
1992, September 22-27, Evansville, IN
1993, October 5-9, Knoxville, TN
1994, October 26-31, Albuquerque, NM
1997, September 22-27, Tacoma, WA
1998, Baton Rouge, LA
1999, October 5-10, Evansville, IN
2000. September 24-28, Louisville, KY
2002, Sept 25-29 Rochester, MN
2003, April 23-24, Springfield, MO

POW State Conventions

1989, April 14-16, Holiday Inn, Lake Ozarks, MO
1991, April 12-16,
1991, April 22-27 Chicago
1992 April 16-17 Branson
1993 May 1-2, Branson 142
1994 April 15-15, Osage Beach
1997 April 18,19,20, Springfield, MO.
1998, April 17-24, Columbia & Chicago IVB group 118
1999, April 23-24, Osage Beach (elected commander)
2000 April 28-29, Osage Beach, Inn at Grand Glaize
2001, May 2-3, Inn at Grand Glaize, Osage Beach, MO
2002, April 24-25, Inn at Grand Glaize, Osage Beach, MO
2003 April 23-24, Springfield
2004 April 21-23, Osage Beach
2005 April 27-28, Inn at Grand Glaize, Osage Beach
2005 Oct 12-13, Radisson, Branson, MO
2006 Oct. 29-30, Osage Beach
2007 April 10-13, Osage Beach
2007 November 8,9,10 & 11 Branson Vets Week
2009 April 21-22, Columbia, MO



2006



APRIL 20-22, 2008 COLUMBIA, MO



2010



38. Vegas Slots, TV and Pointer

I made a visit to Vegas in 1991. They have a machine that you can put in a coin, pull a handle, and then watch wheels turn, cards flip, lights flash, etc. I had a dream the other night and I used the same type of machine but I didn't need a coin. I just pulled the handle and then a picture would come on like a TV set.

The first time I pulled the handle, it was a picture of a hunting trip with my dad and Uncle Otto. I had a 22-single shot rifle, my uncle had a 22-repeater rifle and Dad had a 12-gauge pump. I always got the first shot, my uncle the second shot, and dad was last, at that time, my trigger finger wasn't very accurate. Dad got plenty of action, and he seldom missed.

The next time I pulled the handle; I was hunting by myself when I was about twelve and running my trap line. I had a 22-bolt action repeater. There was snow on the ground, and there were lots of rabbits, I had shot four rabbits before I got to the last trap. I was trapping muskrats. The trap was under water and I ended up with wet hands when I reset the trap. I even ended up with one wet sleeve. I had trouble getting home since I had to walk about a mile and the snow was about 6 inches deep. My nose was dripping, and my hands were so cold they were numb. I had a hard time carrying my rifle and those 4 rabbits. The good part of this experience was that I was able to sell the dressed rabbits for 25 cents each, to some Omaha hunters. They were prize rabbits since they were headshots. That took some of the pain out of my trigger finger.

There goes the handle again. This time another uncle had pointed his finger at me. Many 18 year olds had the same uncle, and his name was Sam. He was requesting my presence in Fort Leavenworth, KS.

I pulled the handle again. I'm in camp Wolters Texas, finishing up my basic infantry training. This was my second time going thru house-to-house combat training; firing the M-1 from the hip, etc. But while in basic I ended up in the hospital for a month with a leg infection. I joined another training group to finish my basic. As a result, I got a double dose of this fancy "shoot from the hip" training. I really developed a pretty fast and accurate pointer or trigger finger.

I pulled the handle again. It was October 1944. Now I am home on a delay reroute to Camp Gruber, OK. Again I was hunting with my Dad and Uncle Otto. They would drop me off at one end of a cornfield, while they drove to the other end of the cornfield. The plan was for me to walk through the cornfield and they would get good shots when the bird came out of the cornfield. However, this time a rooster decides to come in my direction although he was up in the air rather high coming right at me. I made a fantastic hip shot. When the bird fell, it hit the ground and bounced once and hit my feet. I picked up the bird, which didn't weigh much. I found out why. All I had was head, two wings and two legs, and a few feathers. The full 12-gauge load had blown away the body. That finger did it again.

The next time I pulled the handle it was January 6, 1945. I was in a shallow ditch along side of a road near Gambenheim, France; machine gun fire was popping the air above my head. I lifted my head a little to see what was going on. It was a tank. Apparently I met up with German that had a good trigger finger too. An artillery shell exploded nearby and I felt some shrapnel hit me. I reached back and put pointer through some of the holes in my overcoat. It came back

bloody. Now I was trouble. What am I going to do? The question was answered when the tank came down the road and stopped near me. All of a sudden I was viewing the wrong end of a rifle, which appeared to have a bigger bore than a 12 gauge shot gun. I certainly am grateful to that 50 plus year old German soldier. A twitch in his pointer and I would have been history. To be in this situation is difficult to describe. The next four months, while I was a prisoner of war, this condition was repeated numerous times; one twitch away from being history.

Another pull on the handle and I was receiving instructions in how to straighten out my pointer. I was being shown how to release the fishing line while casting using an open face fishing reel. For several years now, I've enjoyed practicing using these instructions. My instructor was Bill Fleming.

Another pull on the handle and I'm at church using pointer to point to various jobs that need to be done. I was active on the property committee for many years.

On the last pull of the handle, there was a lot of laughter and screaming. Old pointer enjoyed drilling holes in the ribs of my 7 grandchildren. They always put up a good fight to get away, but usually attack me and came back for more. There is a lot of joy in hearing kids scream with laughter. I don't know what playing the slots have to do with anything, but pointer has reminded me of a lot of things: the hazards of war, hardships of prison camp, and good times of the present.

I guess I could say there are more good things than bad things about the slots in Vegas.

39. Ancestry of Beranek and Klima



My Mom's parents were Josef and Agnes Klima Beranek. My grandfather's full name was Josef Beranek, Jr. He was born July 4, 1871 in Moravia Okrea Novi Miste Republic, Czechoslovakia. I believe he lived in Nove Mesto, Moravia, before coming to America in 1883. Nove Mesto, Moravia is near Prague. He died in 1928. I do not remember my grandfather because I was under three when he died.

My grandmother's maiden name was Agnes Klima. She was born April 21, 1876 in Lisna (Leas Nerm), Moravia. Lisna is outside Nove Mesto and Snezne. Lisna is a village. A town is larger than a village. I have been to this area twice, once with Evelyn and with Susan in 1997. Evelyn and I visited with a Klima family in 1990. This area reminds me of southeastern Neb. Agnes Klima's family settled in the Humbolt area.



Agnes Beranek

Grandma Beranek came to America when she was ten years old. She did not have a formal education. She understood very little English. Czech was the family language. I could only speak Czech when I started school. That talent was soon forgotten. In later years, my mother requested that grandmother speak English to me, and I was to speak Czech to grandmother. This was to help us both learn the languages. It was fun, but as a result, we spoke more with our hands and eyes than we did with our voices.

To get to Lisna from Prague we drove on the road to Brno. We went through Humpolec, Zdar, Nove Mesto to Snezne. In 1997 we stayed in at the Bohemia Regent Hotel near Milovy. In Lisna we saw Klima house #1 (Agnes Klima Beranek) Mollie Wopata's mother. Also talked to people that lived in house #20 which was the birth place of Joseph Beranek (Aug. 4, 1842) Mollie Wopata's grandfather. We also drove to Jimramov which was the home of Josefa Tlustos (wife of Joseph Beranek). We visited a castle near Svojanov and climbed a rock in the area new Medlov-Studnice.

The following are pictures of the birthplaces of my great grandfather Joseph Beranek and my grandmother Agnes Klima Beranek in Lisna, Czechoslovakia. Susan took these pictures in 1997.





Birthplace of Joseph Beranek



Birthplace of Joseph
Beranek – my great grandpa



Birthplace of Joseph
Beranek

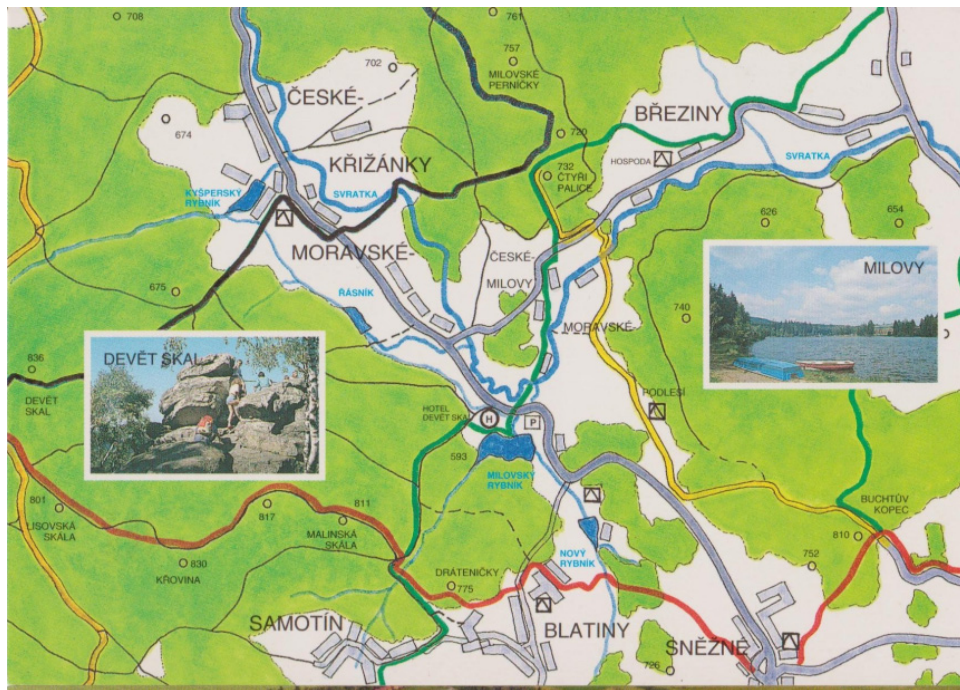


Slama house (related to Klimas?). Evelyn and I visited with a Slama family in 1990.



Klima house – grandmother's





40. Communications with Bill Wopat



Joyce & Bill Wopat Ontario, WI Phone (608)-625-2855

Message #1, 26 Nov 2005

Dear Bill,

Some time ago your name was given me as a possible relative. I am trying to compile a family history. All four of my grandparents came from Czechoslovakia.

The Albert Vopata I, had two wives. Children of one wife were Jim, Albert II, Rudolph and Barbara. Several of his children came from Studena. When Albert II (my grandfather) came to America the "V". became a "W". I have been told there is not a "W" in the Czech language. I assume your ancestors may have lost an "A". Do you have any family history?

Gene

Message #2 November 26, 2005

Dear Gene,

Thank you for your e-mail letter. I do have some information for you, at least as pertains to our names. In actuality we have the same name. I have studied Czech on my own for quite a few years and I can speak Czech at a basic level. Our true name is Vopat. When someone in the Czech Republic refers to the Vopat family for example they would say Vopata. Here is an

example in Czech: Mluvim o Vopata rodina z Plzen. The translation is: I am speaking about the Vopat family from Plzen. The persons name maybe Vaclav Vopat but when you refer to Vaclav's family you would say and write Vopata. So I think that when your family (Vopat) came to America the American authorities saw Czech documents referring to your family (Vopata) and that name was used. That would be my guess. I do not know how your name and mine was changed from Vopat to Wopat, unless the V looked like a W. You are correct that there is no W in the Czech alphabet (except for foreign words). Also, I have written to my relatives in the Czech Republic and their names are Vopat. I was able to visit them a few times over there. My relatives are from the Plzen area and a few live in Prague and some small villages near the city of Plzen. My great great-grandfather was Martin Vopat (Wopat) and he was the one who came from the Czech Republic and his name was changed to Wopat. My great grandfather was Wencil Wopat and my Grandpa was William Wopat. Martin immigrated to the Hillsboro, Wisconsin area in the late 1800's. I think that I spoke with you once. Are you from the St. Louis or Kansas area? Feel free to write to me again if you have some questions or would like some information. It would be interesting to see if we are related and to exchange information.

Sincerely, Bill Wopat

Message #3 Nov. 28, 2005

Dear Gene,

Thank you for replying to my letter. You have a real interest in your Czech ancestry and that is something that we both have in common. Also, that we both have traveled to the Czech Republic. I noticed when I was there that many of the relative's tombstones had the words rodina Vopata or Vopata rodina. This means family Vopat or Vopat family. Sometimes my relatives would answer the telephone and say " Vopatovi". This means the Vopats. Also, you probably know that anyone who is a female Vopat has the legal name Vopatova. So a lady that is named Anna would have the full name of Anna Vopatova. It would be interesting to talk with you. I live about 2 miles from Ontario, Wisconsin. My telephone number is area code 608-625-2855. The best time to reach me would be after 6 PM in the evening. There is an annual Czech festival near us at Hillsboro, Wisconsin each year in June. Many of my relatives come to this celebration. It is called Cesky Den (Czech Day). Maybe I will call you within the next few days. You can feel free to call me also. Since we share the same name it would be interesting to see if we are related. Did any of your ancestors come from the Plzen area? Some other Czech relatives names are Picha, Sebranek, Urbanek, Yansky and Holub and Fanta. I look forward to hearing from you again either by e-mail or on the phone.

Message #4

Dear Bill,

Am sending you a letter that was sent to Florence Otstat, who is a Vopata descendent who lives

in Arlington, VA. Hopefully you will be able to translate it. Miroslav Vopata is the man that we tried to visit in Studena, Czechoslovakia. His sister reported him to be ill and couldn't have company. I

will try to call you this weekend. That is when I make most of my calls, since my calls are free then.

I do not work, but I go somewhere every day as well as many evenings.

Gene.

Message #5 Nov. 30, 2005

Dear Gene,

Thanks for your letter. I have translated the letter for you and I will write it out in English below. Miroslav writes that he was born in Kralovice. That is the same city that my Vopat relatives are from. Also, the city where he lives Nove Straseci is only about 60 miles from Kralovice. So I was excited to read that. We may be related after all. It only took me about 5 minutes to translate the letter and I only looked up 2 or 3 words so it was easy for me and I really enjoy doing it. Here is the letter in English.

Dear Florence and family,

Your letter gave me pleasure. Our daughter did not have a problem with the translation. We were pleased that you visited Studena at the farm. Vojtech was my great Uncle and Marie was my great Aunt. Vojtech knew that someone lived in the U.S. but was afraid to speak. The Czech government then forbid people to communicate with family or friends who were foreigners. After the Velvet Revolution there is now freedom. We go to Studena to the farm every weekend. We grow vegetables, fruit, terrible wine, potatoes and hay. My wife she takes care of the vegetables and I take care of the fields and woods. My grandfather, Antonin Vopata was born in Studena. Vojtech was his brother and Marie his sister. My father Vladimir Vopata was born in Dolanech. Now he is in retirement. I was born in Kralovice. I am a locksmith and a farmer. I am 40 years old. I was married in 1978. I have 2 daughters who are 16 and 14 years old. The older daughter studies in Business School and the younger studies in Grade School. My wife, Hana, is a saleswoman. I have 2 brothers and 1 sister. Their names are Vladimir, Antonin and Marie. I don't know if our family roots are so large. I regret that I don't have more information about our generations. I send you photo of our family, Vojtech and Marie. If you are sometime came to the Czech Republic and to Prague we will be glad to have you over for a visit. We will be waiting to hear your reply (to the letter).

Miroslav Vopat

I look forward to visiting with you on the telephone.

Sincerely, Bill Wopat

Message #6 December 3, 2005

Martin Vopat Sr. lived and stayed in Czech near Kravolvice. Had son Jon that stayed in Old country, and daughter Telka that came to US. Martin Vopat Jr. Came to US. Born Oct 3, 1831 Died 1913.

He was a game keeper in old country, was a teamster in US . He had a son Marv Vopat, Sr., that was married to Linda Helen, lhwopat@mwt.net , and Have a son Marv Vopat, Jr., that has corresponded and visited Wopat in Czech. Hillsboro is the Czech Capitol of Wisconsin and has a festival every year on Saturday about April 15. They live in Elroy, Wisconsin about 25 miles west of the Wisconsin Dells and 90 miles NW of Madison. He is now 80 years old. Alvin Vopat an uncle served Army in Africa during WWII. Ronny Vopat served in the Navy during WWII
Linda Murphy

Bill Vopat is a Banker in Kendall, Wisc, 608 463 7101 ext 26

Wife is medical tech; they live in country on 50 acres. His son lives in Lacrosse and teaches in High school, has two children a daughter who is a Chaplin in Lacrosse and a son John who is married and is in college.

Has a nephew Tom Wopat that was in the Dukes of Hazard Show.

Is now on Broadway in Annie Get Your Gun.

Message #7 May 10, 2009

Dear Bill,

It has been a long time since we communicated. My notes indicated it was December 2005. Well I am still moving and above grade. I've some trying experiences since I've talked with you. I had a spell in September 2007 and was in the Vets hospital for eight days and treated for Guillian-Barre Syndrome. Additional blood work a couple weeks later indicated I had West Nile Virus while I was in the hospital??? At any rate my Guardian Angel took care of me and I survived. Some of the Doctors are amazed at my recovery. I have lost some of my strength this past year. It becomes real work to walk more than a couple blocks (It is more of a stagger than a walk). Standing more than ten minutes also is work. I have been issued a cane, a walker and a wheel chair but do not always use them. I still manage to play water volleyball at the YMCA three days a week. That gives some exercise without the danger of falling on a hard surface. I still manage to go somewhere every day. I am so busy I don't see how I ever had time to work.

I think you mentioned that there is an annual Czech festival near Hillsboro, Wisconsin each year in

June. Sounds like that might be fun. I am sure there will be lots of Czech foods that would comply with a diabetes diet ???Would you please send me the dates. I might find some of my siblings to go with me.

Gene Wopata

Message #8 May 11, 2009

Hello Gene,

It was nice to hear from you again. I am glad that you are recovering from your illness and are on the mend. Yes, there is a Czech Festival at Hillsboro, WI and it is in June. The dates for this year are June 13th and June 14th. They do have Czech food like kolaches, pork and dumplings and of course Czech beer. They have some Czech dancers usually and Czech singers. They always have polka music and always have vendors who sell a lot of Czech items. I go every year to it. They have a wooden dance floor there also. Some of my relatives come to it each year also. I grew up on a farm about 6 miles from Hillsboro and my Dad went to school there. It has been very busy at the bank for me. We make loans primarily to farmers and there has been a lot of activity. My wife and I are about 10 years from retirement and we are already looking forward to it. You & I may be related if we can trace both of our families back far enough. One of my hobbies is genealogy and recently I did a family book for our daughter-in-law's family. I was able to track them back to the 1500's in England. So she was happy with the scrap book I made for her. Well, so long for now and write me again soon. Take care.

Bill Wopat

Bill Wopat
2009 June 13-15 Hillsboro, Wisconsin

June 13, Saturday, Went to the AAA office to pick tour books for Iowa and Minnesota. Left Johns at 930 instead of the planned 8:30 departure. Had a pits stop at a Casey's also picked up some chips and drinks. Then stopped at Perkins for lunch. Next stop was for gasoline in Dexter. Lots of flat farmland and lots of windmills and most were not generating power. Checked in at the LaCrosse Super 8 Motel (\$95.97) at 5:30. After a short rest we ate supper at Perkins. We enjoyed strawberry pie for desert. We then cruised the city and found the route out of town for our morning departure. Also drove around the University of Wisconsin Campus. Ended up watching some TV.

June 14, Sunday, Had a nice breakfast in the motel lobby. We were off for Hillsboro at 9 AM. The east side of the Missouri River was very different. Road was very much like those in the mountains of the Ozarks, which were very curvy. Arrived at Fireman's Park on the west edge of Hillsboro about 10. Received a pin for our \$8 admission. Visited the booths that were selling crystal, Jewelry, T-shirts, souvenirs, etc. Went to the food building and ate our first poppy seed Kolache. Since Bill didn't show up we went to the Program Tent Ecumenical Service. We sat near a back edge so we could watch for Bill. We soon saw a 6-ft man wearing glasses and a white polo shirt hurrying to the food tent. So we followed and made contact. We then starting going through the stuff he brought to share. After a while we decided to eat, so I ordered the same as John, which was a pork sandwich with sauerkraut and another poppy seed Kolache. We than continued to look at our data and found out the Studena was northwest of Praha and his Vopat ancestors came from a town that was 8 miles from Studena. The Jolly Swiss Boys Band started playing at noon. The umm pa pa music makes the foot bounce. Lots of youth danced or performed a program. There were times that elderly people danced. This distracted our visit with Bill. An Irish friend and was fun to visit with. Also a couple of Bills cousins stopped by. We then went to visit the Vopat Cemetery. There was on unusual Vopat monument that was about 40 feet tall. We than took some cross-country roads since we had enough of the winding road back to LaCrosse. We phoned ahead to Super 8 in Toledo, IA (\$66.33)

June 15, Monday. Had a nice breakfast in the Motel Lobby, Only few people eating with us. Continued going south on US -63 through Otumwa and Kirksville to US-36 then west to I-35 and home. Picked up some groceries and was home at 5 PM. Very good trip and I didn't drive only from home to Johns and back.

Total trip cost \$852.53

November 6, 2009

Bill Wopata we are cousins

YES, I HAVE DISCOVERED FOR SURE THAT WE ARE IN FACT COUSINS. I AM PRETTY EXCITED ABOUT IT. MY COUSIN (OUR COUSIN) VACLAV VOPAT, FROM KRALOVICE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC, SENT ME A LETTER POST MARKED OCT.22, 2009 AND I RECEIVED IT TODAY. IN THE LETTER HE STATED THAT THE STUDENA VOPAT FAMILIES AND THE KRALOVICE VOPAT FAMILIES ARE COUSINS. THEY IN FACT VISIT EACH OTHER EVERY SO OFTEN. THE TWO CITIES ARE ONLY ABOUT 12 MILES APART.

HE STATED IT VERY MATTER OF FACTLY IN THE LETTER AND THEN MOVED ON TO WRITE ABOUT OTHER THINGS. AS FAR AS I CAN TELL WE ARE 3RD COUSINS ASUMING OUR ANCESTORS WHO CAME TO AMERICA WERE 1ST COUSINS. I ENJOY DOING FAMILY GENEALOGY AND I HAVE BECOME FAIRYLY GOOD AT IT. I DISCOVERED ALOT

OF INFORMATION ON MY MOTHER'S SIDE AND HAVE MADE 4 BOOKS OF GENEALOGY ON HER SIDE. I HAVE MADE ONE BOOK ON MY DAD'S SIDE. I PLACED YOUR INFORMATION IN THE BOOK AND NOW I CAN PUT ANY FURTHER WOPATA FAMILY INFORMATION FROM YOU IN MY BOOK AS WELL. SO YOU HAVE A WHOLE OTHER

FAMILY OF COUSINS IN WISCONSIN AND I HAVE A WHOLE OTHER FAMILY OF COUSINS

IN MISSOURI. ALSO, BECAUSE WE ARE COUSINS, YOU ARE RELATED TO THE FAMOUS TOM WOPAT (LUKE DUKE OF THE DUKES OF HAZARD TV SHOW) BECAUSE

HE IS MY 1ST COUSIN AND YOU ARE A 3RD COUSIN TO HIM AS WELL AS TO ME. YOU WILL HAVE TO TELL YOUR SON JOHN ABOUT THIS. IN FACT, YOU AND JOHN

LOOK VERY MUCH LIKE A 2ND COUSIN THAT I HAVE AND HIS NAME IS BOB WOPAT. HE IS RETIRED NOW AND HE OWNED A COMPUTER COMPANY NEAR MADISON, WI.

HE IS TALL AND THIN AND LOOKS VERY MUCH LIKE BOTH OF YOU. IN FACT HIS DAD LOOKED LIKE YOU BOTH AS WELL AND HIS DAD WAS A COUSIN TO MY DAD.

PLEASE WRITE ME WITH YOUR HOME ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER AGAIN SO I CAN SEND YOU ANY ITEMS IN THE MAIL AND CALL YOU ONCE IN A WHILE.

WELL, I WILL

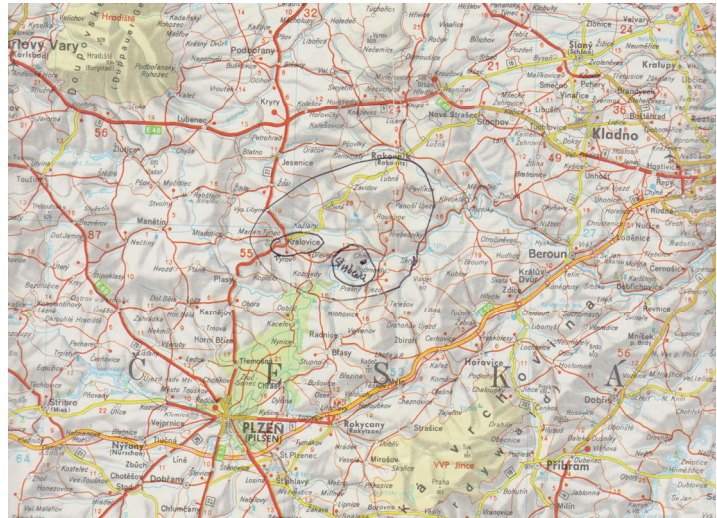
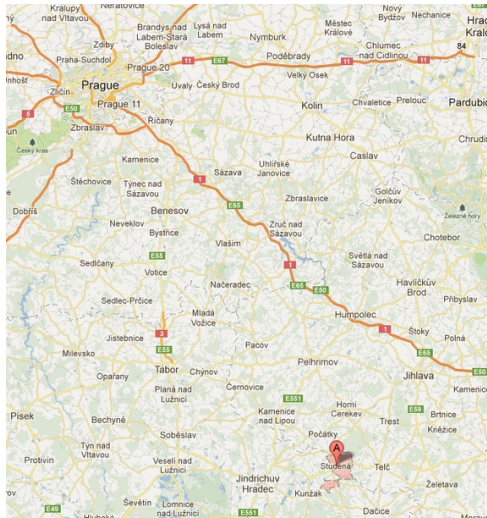
SIGN OFF FOR NOW. TAKE CARE.

YOUR COUSIN AND FRIEND,

BILL WOPAT
E12577 SPOHN DRIVE

ONTARIO, WI 54651 PHONE -- (608)-625-2855

41. Wopata = Vopata = Vopat



In our trip to Europe in 1990 Evelyn and I visited the birthplace of Albert Wopata II, whose father was Albert Vopata I. The name “Wopata” vs. “Vopata” always was a little strange to me. This was accepted since I was a Wopata but there was a Rudy Vopata that lived in Marysville, Kansas, which came to the family reunions in Pawnee City, Nebraska. Then too, I also had corresponded with Alvin Vopata that indicated we were related. Alvin’s wife had a Czech Doctor in one of her English classes. Alvin used that information to arrange for the Doctor’s Dad to serve as a guide in Bohemia when we were on our trip. His name was Milos Svaton, a resident of Prague and could speak English very well.



Daughter of Milos, Milos, and Evelyn

This correspondence resulted in us meeting Alvin in Prague, while we were on tour in Europe. With Milos as our guide, we went to Studena and visited the Vopata farm. This is where Vojtech and Marie Vopata were living. Vojtech claimed to be ill and did not visit with our group. Marie and Milos had a good conversation.

As I remember, we were told the farm had been in the family for 250 years. If that is the case, then this would probably be the birthplace of Albert Vopata I. The actual family name is Vopat. The word means “an overseer of a large property”. The Kralovice area is the birthplace of the Vopats. This is located west of Prague about 50 miles. The family needed space so a Vopat family decided to move to Studina, which is only about 10 miles away. This family decided to be different so they added an “a” to their name. That is where Albert (I) Vopat I was born and started his family. His children were Jim, Albert II, Rudolph and Anthony.



We then went to the cemetery. The tombstones I would rate as being in excellent condition. Apparently the tombstones had been replaced in recent years. We asked Milos where he thought (Albert I) was buried. He rather quickly took us to one that was marked RODINA VOPATOVA, which was located in corner in the oldest part of the cemetery.



I had a phone conversation with Bill Wopat on February 1, 2007. He lives in Ontario, Wisconsin, which was very interesting, concerning our name. Hopefully I understood every thing he told me. The name on the tombstone was marked “RODINA VOPATOVA”. RODINA

means family. Vopatova is the legal name of a female. The actual family name is Vopat. Adding the "a" to the name "means more than one".

Abbot means "a man who heads a monastery". These monasteries were huge acreages with lots of workers and monks. In other words the abbot or father or head priest was an important person. The Czech meaning of abbot is "opat". The slang pronunciation of "opat" is with a prefix of a "v". We now have the name "Vopat".

Albert II, after serving two terms in the military in the Austro-Hungarian army, went to Hamburg, Germany. He came on a German ship for America. When he got on the ship is probably when his name got changed. The German printed "W" has the sound of a "V". So when he boarded the ship and he probably gave his name "Vopata". The German put the "W" where the "V" was supposed to be. Albert's brother Rudolph, who came with him, retained his Vopata name as well as all his descendants. It appears that the Wopata name is a mistake and should be Vopata or Vopat.

All the children of Albert Wopata II are now dead. I am the oldest living Wopata in the world. Jack Wopata was several years younger. He passed away in December 2009. He was married twice. The first marriage resulted in two girls: Marcelle Ann that married Barry Keith Miles. They had Alexander Clay, Griffith Anton and Xavier Evan. Julie Anette married Cominic Davie Renollet. They had Calan Miles Renollet.

His second wife was Faith Sammuelson. They had sons Joshua and Scott. Scott married Allyson Danae Finch.

Jack's sister Joyce Ann married Robert Newton. They had a girl Christine Ann Newton that married Kevin O'Hearn that resulted in Rob O'Hearn.

Dates of Events of Albert II

1796 His fathers Albert I birthday
1846 Albert II birthday
1862 went into service for his brother Jim
1865 re-enlisted for another 3 years
1868 out of service and went to Hamburg, Germany
Aug 1871 sailed to America with Rudolph
Oct 1871 Chicago fire then worked in furniture factory learn English
Spring 1874, Married Mary Strejc from Studena
1878 moved to Nebraska and lived with Kovanda 4 years
Sep 6, 1889, wife Mary died
Oct 21, 1890, married Anna Branek
1893 went to worlds fair in Chicago

Albert Wopata II was born March 15, 1846 in Studena, Bohemia.

He sailed to America in August 1871. Took six weeks and landed in Brooklyn.

Brother Rudolph Wopata came with him. They lived with half-sister in Chicago.

Albert II married Mary Strejc in 1874. After Anna and Albert were born they moved to Table Rock, Neb. They then had Mary, John, Anton, Emma and Rudolph.

After Mary Strejc died, Albert II married Anna Branek in 1890 and had Joe, Hellen, Julia, and Frank. (Frank was Gene Wopata's dad).

Anna Branek was born in Owen Sound Ontario, Canada.

The Life of Albert Wopata II
Compiled by: Arvid Blecha in 1965
(Arvid was Gene Wopata's first cousin)

My Uncle Albert first told me these stories of the Wopata family in 1939. He was the third Albert Wopata in succession to be given this Christian name. Albert I, born in 1796 of the line of Wopata, spent his entire life in Bohemia. His main exploit to pass down in family history was being a soldier in the Napoleonic Wars. But, to me, his most important contribution was fathering my grandfather. Albert II was born to Anna and Albert Wopata on March 15, 1846 in the village of Studena, County of Kralovice, state of Plzen in Bohemia then under Austro-Hungarian rule.

Anna had four more children, Jim, Rudolph, Anthony and Barbara. Albert I, however, married again and fathered six more children. They were Frank, Joe and John and three daughters, whose given names have been lost to history, but who became Mrs. Kokes, Mrs. Poda, and Mrs. Shafranek. Of these assorted brothers and sisters of my grandfather, who will hereafter be referred as Albert, his brother Jim and his three half brothers remained in Bohemia.

In 1862, at the age of sixteen, Albert went into the Austro-Hungarian Army to serve for three years. This was to fulfill an obligation of his older brother Jim, who already had a family. When these three years were up, he re-enlisted for another three years. He was in the Prussian War in 1866, and then in another war, which lasted only two months. He was a member of the army band in which he played the baritone. In his later life he used to entertain his children by proudly describing the time when, on the banks of the Danube in Vienna, he played the "Blue Danube Waltz", with the composer Johann Strauss, himself, conducting.

His military memories, as he recounted them, were more amusing than heroic. Once retreating at full gallop, he was thrown into a creek by his horse, which continued to retreat without his rider. A buddy, recognizing the horse, caught him some distance ahead and brought him back to a damp and footsore Albert. Another time he was dodging the shooting and sure he going to be killed any moment, when a shell knocked the heel off his boot and graced the underside of his horse. During one of the battles in which he was fighting, a cluster of spectators was watching from a bluff above. This understandably irritated the soldiers, one of whom shot a ball into the crowd. The soldiers then stood watching, in turn, as the crowd quickly scattered. Peter Jasa's father, who lived north of Table Rock, and John Blecha who later lived southwest of Humboldt, Nebraska, both knew Albert while all three were in the Austro-Hungarian Army.

After serving the second three-year stretch, Albert went to Hamburg, Germany, and from there he sailed for America in August 1871. He made the crossing on a steamboat, which took six weeks! After the boat docked in Brooklyn, New York, he did not stay in the New York City area long. His brother Rudolph came across with him, and neither of them could speak the English language. They went to Chicago, Illinois where they stayed with their half-sister Mrs. Kokes.

Here a great adventure awaited them for Mrs. Kokes lived next door to the woman who owned the cow the kicked over the lantern that was supposed to have started the Great Chicago

Fire in October, 1871. However it started, Albert and Rudolph had to jump from a second story window. Albert saved two boots, but later found out that both boots were for the same foot. Rudolph managed to save a trunk with most of their possessions. After the fire Albert carried bricks and mortar to rebuild buildings and he learned to speak enough English to get a job in a furniture factory at a planing machine.

In the spring of the year 1874, Albert married Mary Strejc who was born December 31, 1856 to Anton and Josephine Strejc in the same Bohemian village in which he was born. She came to this country with Anthony Wopata and James Vondrasek, who later became her brothers-in-law. She had three brothers and two sisters who were Joseph, Anthony, Frank, Mrs. Jane Vondrasek, and Mrs. Anna Kovanda. Albert and Mary came to Nebraska in 1878, where they lived with Frank and Anna Kovanda for four years.

Albert then began a long series of real estate transactions. First he bought what was known as the Evans place, which is one mile north of the Bunker Hill School House. This place had ninety-seven acres and he paid seven hundred and fifty dollars for it. (At an earlier time a named Joe Kubick, the father of Rudolph Kubick who lived in Table Rock, homesteaded this Evans place. Kubick is said to have sold it for a team of horses.) It was while living there that in 1885, Albert organized the Bunker Hill Brass Band.

On September 6, 1889, his wife, Mary, died and was buried September 8, 1889 at the Bohemian Cemetery, three miles east of Table Rock. Albert then married Anna Branek at Steinauer, Nebraska, in the Catholic Church on October 21, 1890 in the presence of Joseph Strejc and Mary Neidila. Anna Branek was born August 29, 1862 to Bohemian parents, John and Barbara Branek, in Owen Sound, Canada. She had four brothers and four sisters- Joseph, Edward, Frank, John, Barbara, Kate, Mary Fritz and Helen Wenzl.

Albert's mother and sister Barbara followed to this country in the early 80's and made their home on what is now the Penkava place. During the year of 1903 they moved to Albert's home. Albert's mother died of a stroke in June 1904 and his sister died in October 1911. Both are buried in the Bohemian Cemetery.

One event in Albert's life that impressed a teenaged grandson was that in 1893 Albert went to the World's Fair in Chicago, Illinois. In the same year Albert moved from the Evans place to the Ed Penkava Farm, which is four miles north and one and a half east of Table Rock. He then bought the 80-acre farm across the road (where Ed Wopata, his nephew, now lives) and moved on to it. After living here two years, in 1895, he moved back to the Evans place.

Additional real estate juggling, of interest to local Nebraskans: -- in 1895 he bought an eighty acre farm four miles north of Table Rock for \$2,700, which is now owned by Richard Gottula; in 1898 he sold one of the places which he bought in 1893, to his brother Rudolph for \$2,400 and bought a 94 acre farm from Frank Kovanda for \$2,800; in 1902 he sold his two farms of 97 and 94 acres for \$6,000 and bought 320 acres for \$5,000 near Granite, Oklahoma from Washington D. Farwell who had homesteaded it. In 1903 Albert moved to the place now owned by Richard Gottula, and four of his children went to Oklahoma to live on his land. They were Anthony, Albert III, Rudolph, and Emma. Also making the trip was Albert III's wife, Anna.

Albert's daughter Anna and her husband, Albert Stanek, were already there. In 1903 Albert sold one eighty-acre patch of the 320 acres for \$2,500 to C.C. Samples. Almost every year between 1903 and 1906 Albert visited his children in Oklahoma. In 1906 he deeded eighty-acre portions of the Oklahoma land to his sons, Albert III and John. In 1909 he bought the Straka place, which is two miles north of Table Rock paying \$15,000 for 245 acres. He moved to this place in 1912. He sold the last 80 acres in Oklahoma to his sons in 1914, 40 acres each to Albert III and John. In 1914 he moved to Grandma Branek's place, which is five miles northeast of Table Rock, (Grandpa had died the year before). This farm is now owned by Junius Shuss. In 1916 Albert move to Table Rock and lived in the first block west of the schoolhouse. He deeded his Gottula farm to Rudolph and the Straka place to his sons, Joe and Frank.

Albert died July 31, 1923 of cancer of the liver and his wife, Anna, died July 6, 1924 of heart trouble. They both are buried in the Bohemian Cemetery east of Table Rock.

Albert and his first wife had three girls and four boys, born as follows: Anna Stanek, November 27, 1875; Albert III, July 11, 1877; Mary Zelenka, January 17, 1879; John September 18, 1881; Anthony, May 21, 1883; Emma Rabstajnek, September 8, 1885; Rudolph, December 31, 1887.

Those who have died are: Anthony, August 2, 1905 who is buried near Willow, Oklahoma; Albert III, September 16, 1943; Rudolph, January 1, 1947; Mary Zelenka, July 2, 1961; and John, July 20, 1962. These four are buried in the Bohemian Cemetery east of Table Rock.

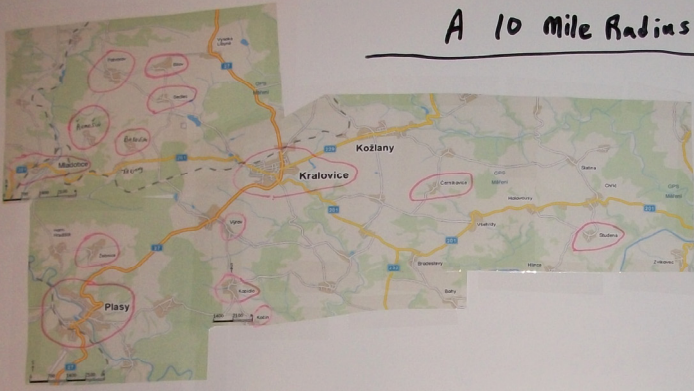
Albert and his second wife had two girls and two boys – Joseph, September 1891; Bessie Helen Farrar, August 20, 1894; Julie Barbara Blecha, January 25, 1897; and Frank, October 7, 1901.

Julia Barbara Blecha is my mother.



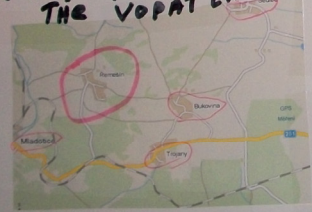
VOPAT Home Region

A 10 mile Radius from KRALOVICE



O = Villages of ANCESTORS
District = PLZEN- North
Plasy is 30 miles North of PLZEN

Village **ŘEMEŠÍN**
THE VOPAT CRADLE



Řemešín is a Village of 40 people.



KRALOVICE



Kralovice population = 3,000

42. Medical Procedures

I write and throw right-handed. I did not wear glasses until I was out of college. I assume I am nearsighted because I need glasses to read. I wear them all of the time because they are bifocal. I had cataract surgery on my right eye in May of 2002. I had cataract surgery on the left eye in January of 2009.

The doctors indicate my ideal weight for my height of 6 feet, 4 inches is 203 pounds. I weighed 200 when I was discharged from the Army. Eating mom's cooking while going to college; I ended up weighing 240. I gained a few more pounds after I got married. The most I have ever weighed was 248. After my first heart surgery in 1978, I managed to get down to 195. After my second heart surgery in 1996, I weighed 210. I currently weigh 195, which is what Dr. Johnson, my cardiologist, wants me to weigh.

I have been considered a diabetic since 1988, and now I am taking medication for that condition. I try to do some exercises every day.

I have traumatic arthritis in my right shoulder, neck, thumbs and lower back. This is the result of a beating while a Prisoner of War. The shoulder and neck have improved with exercise. The lower back ailment is now called lower spinal stenosis. A pain center clinic recommended surgery, which my general practitioner doctor would approve only as a last resort. I had numerous tests at the VA Hospital with no recommendations. Dr. Albano arranged for tests at the University Of Kansas Medical Center. Finally my problem was discussed with a neurosurgeon, Dr. Ania Pollack, who explained in detail the surgery required. Considering my ability to move about and that I can sit and sleep without pain, she did **not** recommend surgery. I decided to accept her recommendation.

I also suffered frozen feet in the war. The sum of all my disabilities as rated by the Veterans Administration considers me unemployable or 100 percent disabled.

I had my first open-heart surgery with three bypasses in 1978. This was very successful. Then I had a balloon job and a stint installed in 1994. In April 1996 I finally had a second open-heart surgery to repair the mitro valve and install four bypasses. My back has been a problem since I was beaten while a POW. Chiropractic treatments have normally been of great benefit. I remember in college while living at the YMCA, two friends carried me to the chiropractor's office 1-1/2 blocks away. After an hour of treatment, I walked back to the "Y" on my own without help. It was normal for me to have a chiropractic treatment several times a year. This was done to reduce lower back pain, which I still experience.

In September 2007, I was admitted to the VA Hospital, and was treated for Guillian-Barre Syndrome, a degeneration of the nerve coating that controls muscles. Fortunately, I survived with no serious effects. I later found out that I also had West Nile Virus while I was in the hospital. I also have spinal stenosis and peripheral neuropathy of the lower extremities. As a result my walking is unstable and I must use a cane or a walker. My blood is type "O" RH Positive.

1978 Three bypass graft heart surgery by Dr. Reed

7-1-1994 Balloon dilatation of the heart

4-4-1996 Heart Cauterization by Dr Johnson.

4-4-1996 Heart valve replacement and four-bypass surgery by Dr. Reed

10-31-1996 Gallbladder surgery at Independence Regional by Dr Kelly James

8-13-1998 Sebaceous Cyst removed from back at the VA

12-4-1998 x-ray of right knee and shot of cortisone by Dr. Hummel

12-30-1998 Ultrasound of carotid Arteries at VA by Dr. Glat

6-26-2000 Test of bone marrow indicated refractory anemia at VA by Dr. Talley

11-21-2000 Started treatment for diabetes

12-21-2000 Broke bone in right hand and installed plate at VA

5-17-2001 Treadmill stress test and echo at St Luke's

5-26-2001 Colonoscopy by Dr. Perry Culver, some diverticulitis.

5-6-2002 Right eye cataract surgery at VA by Dr. Voo.

6-6-2002 Bone Marrow test showed Refractory Anemia (leukemia) at VA by Dr. Talley

7-23-2002 Dr. Peterson impressed that Dr. Tribble noticed change, agreed with Dr. Talley to do nothing, take extra B-12 and Folic Acid vitamins.

12-26-2002 Echo Stress Test by Dr. Johnson, valves OK, leakage between chambers

3-4-2003 ER Independence Regional for back pain, x-ray of hip and pelvis

4-2-2003 MRI test of lower spine by Dr Donahoe recommended surgery and referred 3 surgeons

6-2-2003 Dr. Albano surgery as last resort, Dr. Peterson surgery as last resort, epidural might help

10-1-2003 Independence Regional epidural shot(Marcaine 0.25 & Depomedrol 80 MG) in lower spine area by Dr. Daniel Merck

12-11-2003 Routine heart check echocardiogram in office by Dr Johnson.

- 11-5-2004 Dermatology & skin cancer check by Dr. Mark Fleischman. Froze area on right ear
- 1-11-2005 VA bone density test, tested normal, some lower spine was dark, thought to be arthritis
- 1-10-2006 Nuclear scan and echo cardiogram of heart at VA
- 3-22-2006 Colonoscopy at VA by Dr. Bansael
- 4-7-2006 Pain Clinic Dr. Mikeladze pain test
- 5-1-2006 Epidural shot at VA
- 3-13-2007 Spinal Stenosis
- 5-23-2007 VA Dr. Lallau, Epidural shot of Depo-medrol
- 9-11-2007 Admitted to VA Hospital and treated for Guillan-Barre Syndrome.
Had MRI of brain, Lyme disease not detected, A1C 6.5, treated 5 days with Immunoglobulin. Also had Heart echocardiography study
- 9-19-2007 Told I had West Nile Virus
- 6-9-2008 Muscle & nerve clinic to review Guillian-Barre by Dr. Barry Bestoff
- 8-8-2008 Chemical Stress test of heart at VA. Took several hours. Good report per Rachel Elaine.
- 8-28-2008 Blood work was very good, no sign of West Nile Virus.
- 8-29-2008 The cardiology-echo that checked the four heart valves and artery in lower back
The phone report was good.
- 1-22-2009 Cataract surgery of the left eye at the VA.
- 4- 28-2009 Had bone density test in Dr. Albano office
- 4- 19 -2009 Nuclear heart stress test
- 8- 24-2009 VA Muscle and nerve clinic. All joints were tested for movement and strength. Then a rubber hammer was used on all the joints and finally a tuning fork was applied to each joint. Dr. Giron, felt my problem was more apt to be anemia than GBS.
- 9-1-2009 Dr Albano. She ordered lab work and made an appointment with KUMC.
- 9- 8-2009 VA Hematology Clinic. My blood and platelet values have been fluctuating and Continue to decline.

- 9- 9-2009 VA, Dr Reddy used a sharp needle and withdrew bone marrow.
- 10- 6-2009 VA Dr. Kambhampati No change in bone marrow since 2006, blood seems to have stabilized which is good news. If blood deteriorates they would recommend chemo. (At some point I was offered chemo, but refused it).
- 10- 27-2009 KU med center, Nurse checked legs with shock type testing. Did not complete the test that normally uses needles that penetrate the skin since I had heart valve repair.
- 11- 1-2009 VA Physical therapy. He checked the movements and strengths in the hips, knees and ankle. I must go back every two weeks for four times. Have a list of exercises to do every day.
- 12- 7- 2009 VA Went to 5th floor to operating room. Had some sort of local applied to the penis and then camera was inserted and kidney was checked and found to be OK.
- 12-15-2009 VA physical therapy, Cindy Nielson. Dr. Vogelsang's nurse enrolled me in a diabetes class. Last lab tests indicated that my A1C was 6.1 and my Glucose was 105. Both good.
- 1-13-2010 Went to KU Hospital spine clinic. Ended up with a spinal injection of Depomedol by Dr. Braun.
- 6-23-2012 Went to VA to have a bone marrow sample drawn for testing, by Dr. Kambhampati (works at KU. Samples to be tested at different labs. Will discuss results in a couple weeks.)
- 7-3-2012 Dr. Kambhampati reported that the MDS has gone to MDL or (AML) Acute Myeloid Leukemia and that I probably will live only 4 to 6 months. Recommends Chemo Therapy with would be one hour a day for 5 days each month. Also there would be several blood transfusions. These would give me a little energy. This would probably prolong my life 2 or 3 months. I favor the blood only. I declined the chemo and radiation treatment at the present time.
- 7-17-2012 Went to 5th floor for lab work at 9 am, then POW group meeting at 10-11 and then back to 5th floor for blood transfusion. I will continue to have blood checked every Tuesday morning at 9am.
- 9-14-2012 Signed up with Omega Health Care (hospice).
- 1-7-2013 Hospitalized at VA for 3 days. Received 3 units of blood. Sodium levels low. Placed on fluid intake restrictions.

- 2-19-2013 Began using oxygen machine.
- 2-23-2013 Began taking two drugs prescribed by hospice.
- 2-25-2013 Gene dies peacefully, pain free in his own bed with Steve, Kristy, and Mollie there. Cause of death – acute myeloid leukemia (AML).

43. Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.



I made an application for the Honor Flight on April 23 and was accepted on July 27. On September 30, 2009 Helen Matson picked up five of us at the Truman Memorial Building at 4:15 AM, and we headed to the KC airport. We had to remove our jackets and shoes for the MCI airport security. We flew US Airways and departed at 6 am as scheduled. I was seated in 4A which I think was considered first class on this plane. Only 5 other vets requested wheel chairs. In Washington, the veterans were asked to deplane last, especially the handicapped. We found out why as we entered the airport lobby. There were lots of cheering people, waving flags and colored balloons, as well as, lots of picture taking. You would have thought we had won the New Years Rose Bowl football game. It even made my heart get a little excited. Then the 40 of us veterans, 15 escorts and a doctor were loaded on a 55 passenger bus and headed for the World War II Memorial. Although, I took my two sons on a five day four night tour to the dedication in 2004, I wanted to go when it wasn't wall to wall people.

In 1944-45, I was in a combat area for over three weeks, however we suffered no casualties until Jan 5 and 6, 1945. I wanted to leave a little remembrance at the WWII memorial for these Rainbow Veterans like I do visiting the graves of relatives on Memorial Day. Only this time I was going to place a coin in the memorial pool in front of the gold star wall. Richard Barrett, a Rainbow Vet, was going to help me by pitching the coins while I read the names. I took my red POW blazer so I felt I was performing a special remembrance for these special veterans. What a disappointment!! The memorial pool was empty. So I read the names of the 5 that were killed, then the 16 that were wounded, and finally the 20 of us that were missing in action. I made comments about some of the individuals; most of them are dead now. We then cruised (in my wheelchair) around the fountain, looking at the State Columns, reading inscriptions, taking pictures, etc. Then we meet Senator Bob Dole, who thanked us for our service and gave us an opportunity to have our pictures taken with him. We ate a boxed lunch as the bus moved us to the Vietnam Wall and Korean Memorials. We had to use a special tour bus in the Arlington Cemetery. We saw a lot of special head stones and the usual military markers that were installed in straight lines in all directions. This is what I have seen in the US overseas cemeteries. We witnessed the changing of the guard, where the men are perfectly dressed and make precise movements with perfect timing. It is a very impressive event. We visited the grave marker of Audie Murphy, the Astronauts, etc. A rain shower came as we were waiting for the tour bus to come pick us up. We thought being under a tree would keep us dry, but the tree leaked really badly.

We finally got back on our big 55 passenger bus for a drive-by tour of the White House, Pentagon, Washington Monument, Air Force Monument, etc. and finally ended up at buffet restaurant. After pigging out, we headed for the airport. I again had seat 4A on the home flight. After we were at cruising altitude, Gary Swanson started yelling "mail call". He was passing out large envelopes, and I finally received mine. What a shocker! It contained lots of envelopes. I cried all the way home while opening envelopes and reading the thank you notes, letters and cards from all my children, grandchildren, relatives, church members and special friends. We also had a similar welcome event at the Kansas City airport like the one in Washington. What a fantastic trip. I didn't get home till 11:00 PM. It was a huge but wonderful day, and I was sure glad I requested a wheelchair for the trip. I didn't get tired but I am sure my escorts did.



44. Typical Wopata Christmas Letter

December 1966

Dear Friends,

We enjoy hearing from our friends at Christmas. This year we are writing a letter which mentions some of our family's activities in 1966.

Our Brownie Scout, Susan, is in the 3rd grade. This year she started taking piano, and even practices without being told! She also takes dancing lessons and sings in the Childrens' Choir at church. She attended YMCA Day Camp for a week last summer. Since Susan had the mumps on Thanksgiving, we weren't able to go to Pawnee City.

John is a 6th grader and likes to play ball. He was the First baseman on the Cub Scout team which won the Championship. He received his Webelos Badge in Cub Scouting. He joined the Scout Troop on June 28 and left on June 30 to spend ten days at Scout camp.

This has been a big year for Steve in Scouting. He received his God and Country Award and his Eagle Award. He enjoys Junior High School and is a member of the Junior National Honor Society. He is 6' 1" tall and was a first string tackle on the Freshman football team. He is now out for wrestling. Baseball is his favorite sport and his team came in second after losing the play-off game for the Championship. He cracked his pelvic bone in the first game and sat on the bench for six weeks.

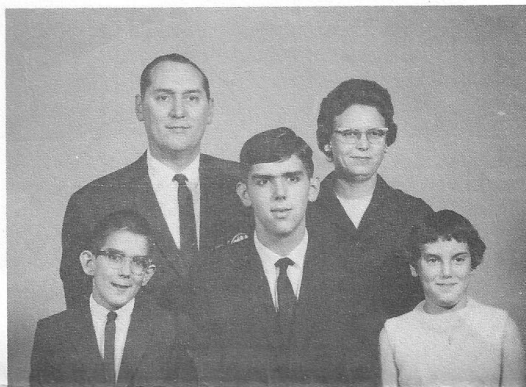
Gene's main activity is Scouting. He spent another ten days with the boys at Scout camp at Osceola, Missouri. Although he had four weeks vacation this year, we didn't spend much time away from home. The boys didn't want to miss any ball games, so we didn't even take our tent trailer out. We did spend a few days on Table Rock Lake and Lake Taneycomo before the summer was over.

Evelyn is the family chauffeur. She keeps busy with church Choir, Circle, P. E. O., Young Matrons, and is a Room Mother for Susan. Gene and Evelyn do play bridge once a month, and it's nice to have a 14-year old boy who can baby sit.

We all wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We plan to spend Christmas with our families in Nebraska.

Love,

Gene Evelyn
Steven John
Susan



We continue to be active in scouting. John received his Star badge before leaving for scout camp this summer. Steven became a Brave in the tribe of Mic-O-Say at scout camp. "Little Dark Oak" also earned a bronze palm for his Eagle badge. Gene spent his third year at scout camp with the boys. Susan has earned 4 merit badges and has been on several Junior Girl Scout outings. Evelyn also helps with the troop.

We bought a second car this year and don't know how we ever got along without it. Gene and the boys did replace the head on the Rambler this summer. The work was satisfactory since it made it to the top of Pikes Peak on our vacation. We spent most of our vacation in Colorado Springs and in the Gunnison area. We did some fishing. John caught the most fish while Gene spent his time drowning worms. The girls had their leisure life at camp interrupted because of wind and rain storms. We also spent some vacation time in Pawnee City with our parents. Gene helped his folks get things ready for moving into another house that they remodeled.

Gene helped coach John's baseball team this summer. It was John's first year in baseball, but he developed into an excellent 3rd baseman. Steve earned a spot on a Kiwanis team. He spent most of his time on the pitching mound and finished the season by pitching in the All Star Game. Steve also played football this fall and is now on the Van Horn Junior Varsity basketball team. We are also proud of the children's academic accomplishments in school.

Susan fell and broke her arm a couple days after Christmas last year. She got along fine and continued to practice on the piano with one hand. She is also taking flute lessons. She enjoys singing in the children's choir at church.

We all wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We plan to spend Christmas with our families in Nebraska.

John Gene Steve Evelyn Susan

Merry Christmas from 12101 Markham Rd., Independence, MO. I had reservations to move to a retirement home, but I decided I was not ready to move at this time. Therefore no change in address. I still want to be close to all my treasures. I am still driving. John comes by weekly to help with my house and computer problems.

During May, Susan and I went to Nebraska for a couple of busy days. We serviced 28 graves of relatives in 5 different cemeteries. We also shared meals with 12 relatives.

In July, I rode with Jim Radford to the Rainbow Reunion at the Four Point Hotel in New Orleans, LA. This is a shrinking group of Veterans since everyone is 84 or older. At my first reunion in 1986, I met nine members of my squad that were still alive. This year I was the only one in my squad that attended. However, Jim Radford, my driver, was my replacement in the squad after I was captured.

In August, Susan and I went to Wisconsin. We stayed with cousins Bill and Joyce Wopat who live on acreage near Ontario. Bill is a real serious genealogist. He has documented the name changes of Wopata, Wopat, Vopat ,etc., as they moved in the 13 communities near Kralovice, Czechoslovakia. He presented a lot of this information at the family reunion we attended in Reedsburg, Wisconsin. There were over 100 people present.

Also in August, Susan and I attended a Barr (Evelyn's family) reunion in Nebraska. On Saturday we had lunch with a group of 26 Barr's in a family home restaurant in Lewiston. Later Susan and I visited some of my relatives in Table Rock. We stayed overnight in Tecumseh. On Sunday we attended the church service and the Barr potluck at the Mission Creek Church.

During Veteran's week in November, Yvonne and I spent several days in Branson. We enjoyed four shows and some that were even new. My primary reason for going is the Veteran's Day parade. There have been as many as 25 of us on the POW float in past years. This year we were down to 10. We tossed out a lot of candy and trinkets to the children along the way.

In November, I woke up with a stomach ache. I called 911 and was taken to Veterans hospital. They said I had diverticulosis. I was discharged on the 3rd day. I am now back to my normal routine. I still play water volleyball three days a week. Susan comes by nearly every day to fix supper and makes sure I have things to eat in the freezer or refrigerator.

Gene

Susan

Dec 2012

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from 12101 Markham Rd., Independence, Missouri. Already you should notice a couple of things. I still want to keep Christ in Christmas and that I haven't moved. I had plans to move to a retirement home on July 7th. I have had refractory anemia for 10 years. On July 3rd I got a tough medical report that my blood condition has gone from MDS (myelodysplastic syndrome) to AM2 (acute myeloid leukemia). The doctor gave me 4-6 months. With that report, I decided not to move. I decided to meet my maker in my own home just like Evelyn did. That gives me lots of space with all my treasures. So far, I am blessed that I have no pain, but I am tired all the time. That bed sure feels good. I try to get in some daily exercise using my walker in the house. I am still able to get out and go to church, out to eat, etc. Our bridge group that started almost 50 years ago still meets once a month.

In September I signed up for Hospice. My daughter Susan is my primary care giver. She spends several hours each day taking care of her dad. John normally comes on Wednesday evening. Steve doesn't have a regular day, but he comes by too. I am certainly blessed to have a caring family living close by. I still have my housekeeper spend a few hours a couple times a month, and also have people come fix my lunch now.

I continue to go to the VA on Tuesdays as I have for the past several years to the ex-POW support group meetings. My granddaughter Mollie rode with me in KC's American Royal parade. Steve drove me to Branson so I could be in the November 11th, Veterans Day parade. My KC POW group has done this for about 20 years. I believe this is going to be the last year, since our group has shrunk in numbers.

The computer keeps me busy and in touch. The grandkids are showing me how to use Facebook, but I can't begin to keep up with the email. I am looking at a lot of old family pictures and creating an autobiography. The keys are much easier to use than a typewriter.

Update on the grandkids: Steve & Kristy's children are doing well. Ryan is still working in KC. Kyle is engineer for a company in KC. Mollie is graduating this month with a degree in health studies. John & Jeri's family is starting to spread out. Matt is an engineer in Dallas. Daniel will graduate from MU in engineering and will be working in Jefferson City with plans to move to Dallas. Mark graduates from Truman State in May, is getting married in June, and moving to Louisville, KY to go to seminary. Julia is in high school and is playing lots of volleyball. Susan got me to lots of Julia's games. I had volleyball figured out by the time the season was over: get it to Julia and let her slam it!!!!

My finance Yvonne Brice and still are able to get out together, but neither one of us is driving. We enjoy watching TV together, going on guided tours, and dream dance, etc. We spend time on the phone. It is nice to have someone to talk to.

Faith and Family keep me going. I hope your holiday will be as blessed as mine.

Eugene Wopata

Dad

45. My Last Months

2012 July 3, Medical. (written by Gene and Susan, and emailed to the boys on 7/3/12)

I went to group POW meeting this morning. 14 were present. Picked up a copy of the TB test results that were needed for the Fountains. Picked up envelopes to dispose of old prescriptions.

Susan and I went to the Silver Clinic this afternoon to hear the results of the bone marrow needle aspiration and biopsy. Had some blood work done.

Dr. Kambahampati who performed the bone marrow test gave the results. This was the 3rd bone marrow test I've had over the years. The last one was in 2009. I was told before that I have myelodysplastic syndrome (refractory anemia). I have a pamphlet on this. In the pamphlet it indicates that this can develop into leukemia. The pamphlet also indicates that many people who have this end up dying of something else before this gets worse. When I went today I was expecting to hear bad news. I do have **acute myeloid leukemia (AML)**, and the dr. said this will probably be the cause of death.

Dr. K. indicated if I didn't do anything I would probably live 4-6 months.

The dr. recommends starting chemo. The name of the drug is Vidaza. Susan asked if this was his dad would he try the chemo and he said yes. There are side effects and it is hard to tell if the chemo will suppress the leukemia much. He thinks the chemo might prolong life 2-3 months.

The chemo would be done on an outpatient basis 5 days a week once a month.

Blood transfusions will become regular. I am scheduled to have another one on Friday, July 6th. The dr. recommends I not drive for blood transfusions.

When I was having my bone marrow procedure recently the tech/nurse/whatever (Mr. Lane) was talking about Dr. K. He said some of the doctors in the hematology area are on staff at KU. Mr. Lane said that he was a good doctor and wasn't sure if he wasn't the head of the VA hematology area, but would be close if he wasn't. I don't feel that I need to get another opinion.

Susan told the dr. that I planned to move to a retirement home Sat. and he thought that was a good idea (because you would need more care). I said I would like to stay at my home. He said that would be okay too and they would work with VA social services if that was what I wanted. Susan indicated that maybe he could stay at home and then move to a nursing home if that is what he wants.

The forgetfulness, not remembering things can be associated with the anemia (and not Alzheimer's) as it was starting to drive Susan nuts today. (ie not remembering to call her this morning or for lunch, not remembering about the high school letter Sat., etc).

Next appt. with Dr. Kambahampati is, Tuesday, July 10, at 1:20. All family is invited to consult with dr. on options. I hope John, Steve, and Susan can attend.

July 10, 2012 (written by Susan)

The children attended the appointment with Dr. Kambahampati and it was decided not to do any chemo. The doctor had a social worker visit with the family to determine what services could be helpful. Dad's desire was to die at home like mom did.

The social worker made arrangements to have home health aides come to the house 10 hours a week.

On Tuesdays dad had his blood tested before he attended the weekly ex-POW group meeting at the VA. After the meeting he went back to the oncology area, and if his hemoglobin was below 7.0 he received a unit of blood at that time. About every 3 weeks he received a unit of blood. He was still doing his normal activities – attending church, eating out, seeing Yvonne, spending time in the “command center”, enjoying visits from family, playing bridge, and working on this book. In the summer John had taken the van keys so dad wasn't driving anymore.

Dr. Kambahampati recommended signing up for hospice soon as it would be helpful to dad and the family. On Sept. 14, 2012, dad signed up with Omega Health Care. A metal ramp was installed in the garage.





On January 3, 2013, dad celebrated his 87th birthday at V's restaurant with family.



On January 7, 2013, dad was in the hospital for a few days because his hemoglobin blood levels were low. After he returned home someone was with him most of the time. Mollie graduated from college in December and wasn't working full-time so she was able to spend quite a bit of time with her grandpa. Susan had been laid off from her job right before Thanksgiving, and after dad's hospital stay she spent the nights at dad's house.

On February 17, 2013, John took dad to the emergency room. Dad's blood scores were starting to go down dramatically, and the ER doctor said dad would be meeting his maker soon. Hospice ordered a hospital bed and began making more frequent visits. On February 19, he had an appointment with Dr. "K" and oxygen was ordered. There was a big snow storm on Feb. 21 which shut down most of the city. Christine, the hospice nurse was able to make it over to see dad on Feb. 22. Dad was still up using his walker and continuing with his normal routines like reading emails. On Feb. 23/24th with the assistance of two people dad was up in a wheelchair enjoying visits from family members, eating, looking at pictures, and reading emails. Susan heard him tell an ex-POW wife on the phone that he was ready to go.

Dad was declining rapidly. On Feb. 24 John made arrangements for 24 hour nursing care with an agency that had experienced staff.

On Feb. 25th dad didn't leave the bed. In the afternoon he ate some soup Sammy Wilson brought by. Dad died peacefully, pain free at 7:25 p.m. with Steve, Kristy, and Mollie by his side. The funeral home came and when we were leaving the house about 9:00 p.m. it was snowing. There was another big snowstorm which kept people home and off the roads the next day.

Considering it all, it was a good death. He enjoyed life until the end, and died peacefully without pain at home like mom did.

Email from Pastor Mitch after his last visit with dad

From: Mitchell Jarvis [mailto:thejarvi@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 10:28 AM
To: Susan Wopata
Subject: RE: Gene Wopata update

Thanks for the update - these are always helpful. I stopped by and visited with your Dad this morning and he seemed to be in good spirits (Stephanie was there. Did you know she and her family were church folks? I baptized their kids!)

I want to offer you a little reassurance:

Of all the people who I've been with throughout the dying process (and there have been many in the last 10 years of pastoring) your father is one of the most clear thinking, prepared, and non-distressed folks I've met yet. Despite his deteriorating health, he is very much spiritually, mentally and relationally alive; which is a blessing of untold measure. He and I talked again very directly about his passing, the inevitableness of that event, and how he felt about it. He is as just about as ready as anyone could expect. Sure, he gets a bit emotional at times, which is understandable, but he is not afraid in any way. This fact will make the whole process easier for everyone involved. I just wanted to share this with you from my pastoral perspective.

Gene and I talked about sharing communion with one another soon, so I hope to be out again before long. Please don't hesitate to call me and ask me over (even of an evening,) if something more immediate develops. Know that I'm eager to support you and your family in any way I can.

Mitch Jarvis
Lead Pastor
Independence First United Methodist Church
"Connecting Faith to Life"



46. Obituary and Funeral

The Examiner
Thursday, February 28, 2013

MEMORIALS

Eugene 'Gene' Wopata

Gene Wopata, 87, of Independence, Mo., passed away Monday, February 25, 2013.

A visitation will be held 6:00-8:00 p.m. Friday, March 1, at Carson-Speaks Chapel, 1501 W Lexington Ave., Independence. A funeral service will be held 11:00 a.m. Saturday, March 2, at First United Methodist Church, 400 W. Maple Ave., Independence. Burial will be at Floral Hills, Kansas City, Mo.

Gene was born January 3, 1926, in Table Rock, Neb., to Frank and Mollie (Beranek) Wopata. He lived on a farm near Dawson, Neb., and rode his bicycle to attend country school near DuBois, Neb. After graduating from Dawson High School in 1943 he attended University of Nebraska. In March of 1944, he joined the Army in Ft. Leavenworth, Kan. After basic training in Camp Wolters, Texas,

he joined the 42nd Rainbow Division in Camp Gruber, Okla. On Thanksgiving Day 1944, he boarded the US Black in New York Harbor. He landed in Southern France and went into combat near Strasbourg. During the Battle of the Bulge, he was wounded and captured on January 6, 1945, near Gamsheim, France. Gene was taken to Stalag IVB near Muhlberg, Germany, liberated by the Russians on April 23, and escaped and returned to American lines on May 9, 1945. He was discharged on November 24 in Fort Lewis, Wash. Gene was awarded the following: Combat Infantry Badge, Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster and the Purple Heart. Gene later graduated with a Bachelor degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Nebraska in July of 1949. He married Evelyn Barr in October 1951 and together they had three children. Gene retired from the American



Oil Company Refinery in Sugar Creek after 30 years of service. He served many years in the Scout programs for Cubs, Boys and Girls groups; and was a member of Mic-O-Say. He was an active member and served on several committees at the First United Methodist Church. He had Lifetime Memberships to the DAV, VFW, American Legion, Ex-Prisoners of War, Purple Heart and Rainbow Division. Gene enjoyed traveling, having been in all 50 states, many of the

European countries and most of the Caribbean Islands. After losing his first "Angel," Evelyn, to cancer in 1996, he met his second "Angel," Yvonne Brice. They were engaged for many years.

Gene is survived by son, Steven Wopata and wife Kristy of Lee's Summit, Mo.; son, John Wopata and wife Jeri of Kansas City, Mo.; daughter Susan Wopata of Independence, Mo.; seven grandchildren Ryan, Kyle, and Mollie; Matthew, Daniel, Mark, and Julia. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, and had no siblings.

In lieu of flowers, please send memorial gifts to First United Methodist Church of Independence, Mo., or to Heart of America Ex-POW; 804 N. Pawnee, Independence, MO 64056. Online condolences may be made to the family at www.speakschapel.com

Arrangements: Carson-Speaks Chapel
816-252-7900

■ MORE MEMORIALS ON PAGE A6

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2013

EUGENE "GENE" WOPATA



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Gene was born January 3 1926 in Table Rock, NE to Frank and Mollie (Beranek) Wopata. He lived on a farm near Dawson, NE and rode his bicycle to attend country school near DuBois, NE. After graduating from Dawson High School in 1943 he attended University of Nebraska. In March of 1944, he joined the Army in Ft. Leavenworth, KS. After basic training in Camp Wolters, TX, he joined the 42nd Rainbow Division in Camp Gruber, OK. On Thanksgiving Day 1944, he boarded the US Black in New York Harbor. He landed in Southern France and went into combat near Strasbourg. During the Battle of the Bulge, he was wounded and captured on January 6 1945 near Gamsheim, France. Gene was taken to Stalag IVB near Muhlberg, Germany, liberated by the Russians on April 23 and escaped and returned to American lines on May 9 1945. He was discharged on November 24 in Fort Lewis, WA. Gene was awarded the following: Combat Infantry Badge, Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster and the Purple Heart. Gene later graduated with a Bachelor degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Nebraska in July of 1949. He married Evelyn Barr in October 1951 and together they had three children. Gene retired from the American Oil Company Refinery in Sugar Creek after 30 years of service. He served many years in the Scout programs for Cub's, Boy's and Girl's groups; and was a member of Mic-o-Say. He was an active member and served on several committees at the First United Methodist Church. He had Lifetime Memberships to the DAV, VFW, American Legion, Ex-Prisoners of War, Purple Heart and Rainbow Division. Gene enjoyed traveling, having been in all 50 states, many of the European countries and most of the Caribbean Islands. After losing his first "Angel", Evelyn, to cancer in 1996, he met his second "Angel" Yvonne Brice. They were engaged for many years.

Gene is survived by son, Steven Wopata and wife Kristy of Lee's Summit, MO; son, John Wopata and wife Jeri of Kansas City, MO; daughter Susan Wopata of Independence, MO; seven grandchildren Ryan, Kyle, and Mollie; Matthew, Daniel, Mark, and Julia. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, and had no siblings. In lieu of flowers, please send memorial gifts to First United Methodist Church of Independence, MO or to Heart of America Ex-POW; 804 N. Pawnee, Independence, MO 64056.

Online condolences may be made to the family at www.speakschapel.com

Arrangements: Carson-Speaks Chapel
816-252-7900



Flying the Flag

Nothing is more beautiful than the flag waving against a blue sky. It probably means more to me than most people. I am a World War II Veteran.

I escaped injury after an explosion of a shell that caused numerous casualties. I carried a severely wounded man back across a bridge over the Zion River so he could be transported back for medical treatment.

The next day, after withdrawing from the forest, I was pinned down by machine-gun fire. Eventually I was wounded by artillery. Many of us were taken into a POW camp south of Berlin.

The Russians eventually liberated our camp. A short time later a Jeep flying the American flag drove into Stalag IV B.

Reminiscing about this event brings tears to my eyes to this day. I went to my first Army reunion 41 years later. Jack Weiser thanked me for carrying him across the bridge. I also met the rest of my squad.

I feel I am patriotic when I fly the flag. It is to honor those that sacrificed their lives so that I can enjoy freedom. Freedom is not free.

Gene Wopata

Published in The Kansas City Star on July 3, 2002

In Memory Of *Gene Wopata*

January 3, 1926 - February 25, 2013

Funeral Service

11:00 a.m. Friday

March 2, 2013

First United Methodist Church
Independence, Missouri

Officiating

Pastor Mitch Jarvis

Music

Angy Bounds - Organist

Interment

Floral Hills Cemetery
Kansas City, Missouri

Pallbearers

Matthew Wopata - Daniel Wopata

Mark Wopata - Kyle Wopata

Randy Miller - Ryan Cofer





Independence

First United Methodist Church

November 3, 2013

The United Methodist Church celebrates All Saints' Day on the first Sunday of each November to remember and give thanks for "all the saints who from their labors rest." All Saints' Day is a time to remember Christians of every time and place, honoring those who lived faithfully and shared their faith with us, particularly those from our local congregation who have passed to glory in the last year, including:

Lee Buck
 Bob Burnup
 Dexter Harvey
 Charles Heath
 Don Heriford
 Tom Noland
 Don Sanders

Erik S. Schwartz
 Leslie Tobin
 Vera Lee Tyler Rogers
 Mary Wantiez
 Wayne Willard
 Martha Ann Williams
 Gene Wopata

47. The Final Chapter

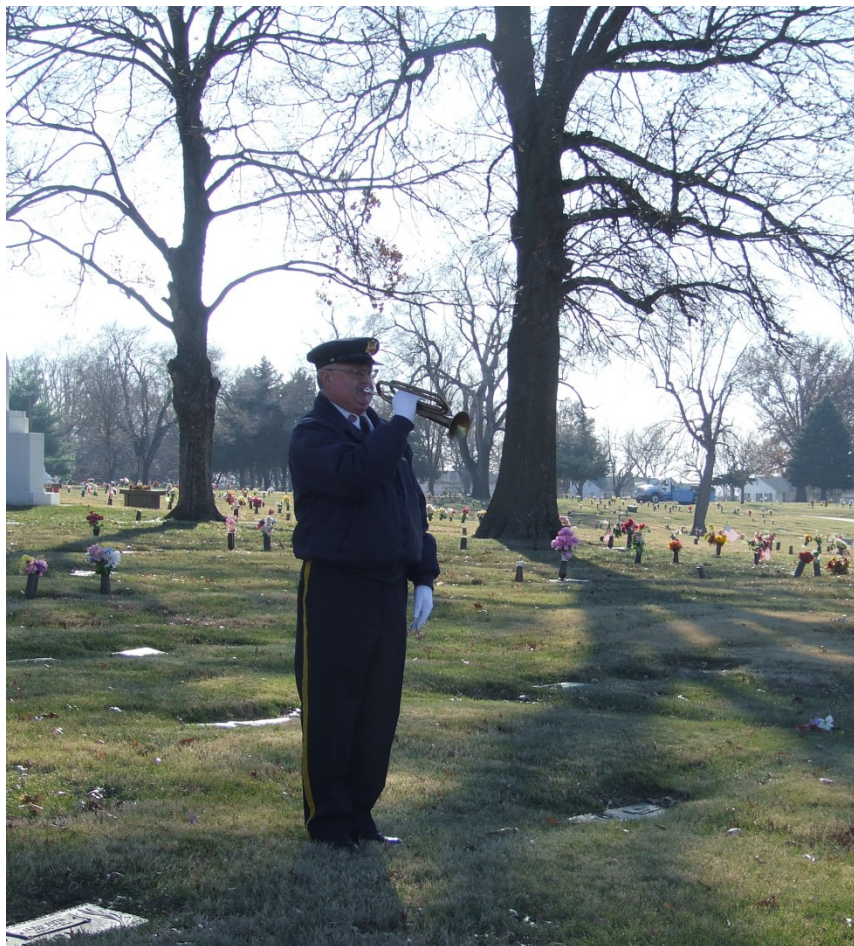
The military honor did not make it to the gravesite service so it was rescheduled for the Friday after Thanksgiving, November 29, 2013. All of the family was there.



Front Row L to R: Emily Benbrook, Allison, Julia, Jeri, Mollie, Susan, Shannon Vaughan, Kristy
Back Row L to R: Matt, Mark, Daniel, John, Steve, Kyle, Ryan Cofer









“This flag is presented on behalf of a grateful nation and the United States Army as a token of appreciation for your loved one’s honorable and faithful service.”