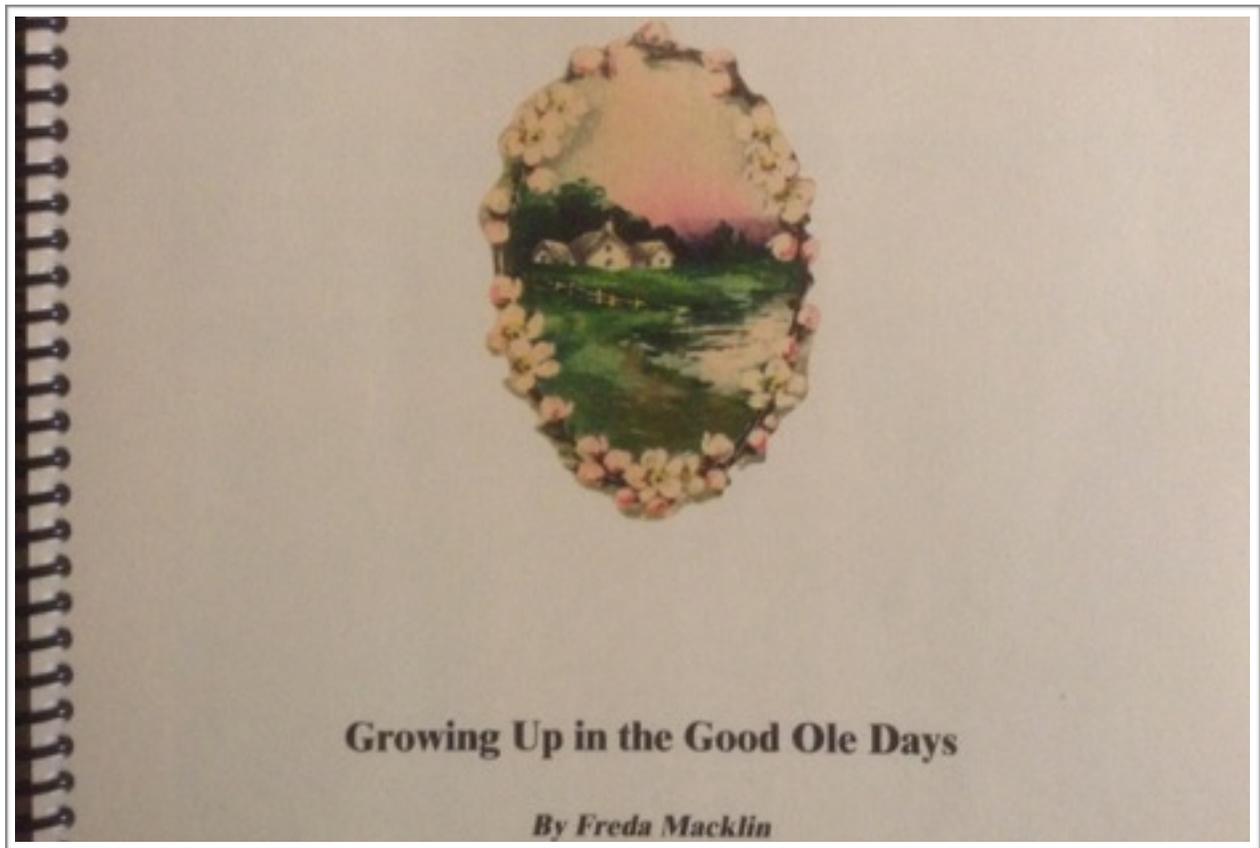


Growing Up in the Good Ole Days

Family History by Freda Frey Macklin

(Note, this document is an condensed version of the original document)



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Macklin/Frey/Rentz History

Written by Freda Macklin Frey

1839 - 1905 The Old Country

Life in Ukraine and Germany

My grandfather, Ernest Widiger, served in the army at Bromberg, Germany. Since he spoke three languages, he was an interpreter in East Germany. People moved from country to country a lot, therefore my ancestors lived in many different places. Although the children were born in other countries, they were still of German origin.

My great-great-grandfather (Paul Widiger) was born in 1839 in Sweden, my great-grandfather (Wilhelm Widiger), and grandfather were born in Posen, Germany (Eastern part). Later, this part of Germany was taken by Russia, which was difficult for my ancestors since they could not speak Russian. While living near Kiev, Ukraine, they were promised titles or deeds to these homesteads. After fifteen years of improvements to the land, the Russians enforced a rule that everyone would learn to speak Russian. Many people, including my relatives, left for North America to begin a new life. This area of the Ukraine was settled by German Lutheran and Mennonites. The Mennonites helped my great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents emigrate to the United States. They settled in Kansas, Oklahoma and Minnesota.

Two great-uncles (Gustav and Julius Widiger) participated in the Oklahoma land rush. Later, they discovered oil on their land. Julius helped build a Lutheran Church and started the congregation in Perry, Oklahoma.

One of my grandfather's brothers (Henry Widiger) was a jeweler in McPherson, Kansas. One of his jobs was to inspect railroad watches. His wife, Minnie, had a milliner (hat) shop in the same building. Another brother, Samuel Widiger, was a minister in charge of the Orphan's Home in Winfield, Kansas. These ancestors were all on my mother's side.

My father's (Henry Rentz) brother (Karl Rentz) lived in Katerineslow, Russia. During world war I, his family moved to Australia. I don't know if Karl ever got out of Russia. One of his daughters (Erna) in Australia wrote to my parents that her sister was put behind the Iron Curtain (guarded borders of Communist bloc countries after World War II).

My Parents In The Old Country

My first father's (Henry Rentz) occupation in the "old country" was making wooden vessels of all kinds. This included churns, mixing bowls, wooden buckets, kegs and barrels. He had his shop at home. When he had enough made for a wagon load, he transported them to the market.

My mother did a lot of weaving on big looms in their home before and after she was married. She spun the yarns or threads from "flax" they raised. The table cloths and sheets were of linen as well as other garments. While my mother and others gathered in their homes to weave, they would sing funny songs in mixed voices. She also knitted socks, gloves and caps for the family. She probably inherited this skill from my grandmother, who sewed for other people as a professional seamstress.

The only education that my mother received was from her father. Her father took a Homestead across the border in Russia. She could not learn the Russian language. It was a plot of land to be given to homesteaders - if the people would develop the land. It turned out to be a fake, so they came to the United States.

My grandfather worked in a flour mill and he was a school teacher before coming to this country (United States). He also provided instruction to the Lutheran children in Catechism classes.

Grandfather was a very strict man. His father, my great grandfather, also was a teacher. He came over with the Mennonites in Kansas and taught their children at Moundridge, Kansas. My grandfather's brothers were musicians. They played in a church orchestra in Perry, Oklahoma.

1905 - 1913 Minnesota

The Voyage From Germany to Baltimore

“Two little kids, eight months pregnant, fourteen days on a steamship”

My parents crossed the ocean on a steamship in 1905. It took them fourteen days to get from Bremen, Germany to Baltimore, Maryland. My mother told me about some things that they experienced on their voyage. They planned what food to take to prevent sea sickness. They took home cured ham, home baked rye bread (which my mother baked on an outdoor hearth,) home made dill pickles, and cherries marinated in whiskey. Not one of our family was sea sick, while a lot of the Jews ate fish and got sick every day. The sailors who were in charge of cleaning on the ship were very angry.

Before leaving Germany, Reinhold, my oldest brother, played in the ashes which had been dumped outside their home. He developed Pink Eye, or some kind of infection, after they boarded the ship. This is one thing for which immigrants were rejected and returned to their homeland. The grouch doctor on the ship said Reinhold would have to stay in the dark until the infection cleared. I don't remember how many days he spent in the dark. Can you imagine how difficult that must have been for my mother?

Another incident occurred after a week or more on the ocean. The ship's whistles began to blow - and blew continuously. The passengers became frightened, wondering if something had gone wrong with the ship. Finally, the Captain or one of the crew told them to settle down. The fog whistles were blowing because the ship could not move on until the fog dissipated in the morning. That must have been a long night. Finally they reached the Baltimore, Maryland harbor—now they *really* were in America—the *free land!*

From Baltimore, after they went through customs, they took the Great Northern train to Kerrick, Minnesota. It was quite a trip for my parents with two small children (Eda was five years old and Reinhold three). They arrived early in the morning and were greeted by a ticket agent. When he said "gut morgen" my parents commented to each other, "oh, this man speaks German". Then Grandpa Widiger came to pick them up. They all piled into a two-seated carriage with their belongings. Most people from the "old country" just tied their belonging in a bundle. My grandmother Widiger fixed a bounteous meal for them. The Widiger's were my mother's parents who came to America two years earlier. My brother Robert was born in Brookfield, Minnesota just a month after they arrived in the United States, what they called the New World "America!"

My mother told us so many times that if she dreamed that she was in that "old country" she was so frightened that she jumped up in bed. She said the happiest time of her life, was when she became a citizen of the United States.

After their arrival, they had to go to Renville County in southern Minnesota to work for one of their cousins who had sent them passports. They worked for a year to pay for the passports. My mother did the cooking and cared for newborn Robert and the cousin's baby while my dad worked on the cousin's farm. Everyone had to prove that someone had a job for them before they were admitted to this country.

After a year they went back to Kerrick, cleared 4 acres of pine forest and built the log cabin in which I was born. My father Henry Rentz and my mother's oldest brother Ernest both worked for the Great Northern Railroad.

The Mennonites

My grandparents came to Kerrick two years before my parents. Grandmother's sister and her husband Joe Nightingale (pronounced Nachtigal in German) sent a passport. Joe was a Mennonite and the Mennonites in Minnesota sent him a passport. This was the reason that my family settled in the northern part of Minnesota. Kerrick was mostly Swedish settlements, plus a few Mennonites and Germans.

Since timber land was inexpensive at that time, my grandfather purchased enough for all the members of his family. When they arrived they would clear the timber from their piece of land and build a house. When all the homes were completed, it was like a little village!

My parents had to learn to speak English. It was difficult in such a thinly populated area, but the people in Kerrick were good to them. It was especially hard for my mother since she didn't have many chances to meet with people outside her own home.

The winters in Northern Minnesota were extremely cold. It was common for temperatures to reach 40 below zero! The pine trees would crack and break from the cold and heavy snow. It sounded like hundreds of wood choppers in the forest. I guess we survived the cold and stayed healthy.

The log house had one long room. In the kitchen area, a box wood stove turned red from the heat. The little children climbed up a ladder and slept upstairs. At that time, they only had two little ones - Robert was still a baby. About two years later (1908) Fred was born and my grandmother Karoline Roscher Widiger died at the age of 52.

My Father (Henry Rentz) Dies

The city of Kerrick had a bank, grocery store, railroad depot, post office and a few other stores. Most all of the businesses were owned by Jim Hogan. Later he operated a saw mill that was run by a steam engine. My dad and my uncle (my mother's twenty-one year old brother) both quit the railroad and went to work for the saw mill which employed about eight men. On cold morning, April 27, 1909, Hogan told the men to hurry and get the steam pressure up. He hung a heavy weight, a logging chain, on the pop off valve. The engine had no way to release the pressure and the saw mill exploded around 9:00 a.m. killing six men including my father and uncle. My father was only 32 old, and my uncle 21!.

The explosion shook the school house, one-half mile away, where Eda and Reinhold were. They were about nine and seven years old, respectively. The teacher told them to run home - she knew

what had happened. The kids were met by my mother, carrying Fred with Robert walking beside her. I wasn't born until January. This was such a shock to my mother, but she and all of us survived the ordeal.

1910 Freda is Born

I was born January 30, 1910 in Kerrick, Pine County, Minnesota. This is a small town forty miles southwest of Duluth and Lake Superior - the lake on which the city of Duluth was built.

I was born in a log house that my father built on forty acres of land that he bought from my grandfather. Since this was a new settlement in the middle of a pine forest, the land had to be cleared before the house could be built. I was told that until our house was built, we lived in one of grandfather's log cabins.

I never had a chance to see or know my father, nor any of my grandmothers. My mother had a real struggle trying to raise five children in that cold country. She got a settlement of my Dad's death of only \$100, plus the lumber to build a five room house and only one coat of paint!. Of course, Jim Hogan had plenty of lumber from his saw mill. The contract is still in a box at Arthur's house, where my mother kept it. She was to get an allowance of \$7.00 per month until Reinhold became eighteen (or twenty-one, I'm not sure which).

My Mother, Bertha Rentz Meets John Frey

In 1911, when I was one year old, my mother met Arthur and Erna's dad, John Frey. He was 36 years old and had never married. He loved to travel and see the other States and countries. His parents lived in the Black Forest region between Freiberg and Baden Baden Germany. This was the southern part of Germany near France (Strasbourg). They owned 300 acres of Black Forest land from which furniture and cuckoo clocks are made. Their house was three stories with lots of windows one each story.

He came to the United States, returned to Germany, then returned a second time. He purchased a fruit farm in Michigan. Later, he sold the farm and got a job working for Anheiser-Busch in St. Louis. His sister's two sons still live in the area.

After that, John traveled a lot and he said he had been in all but three of the States. He talked a lot about Oregon and Walla Walla, Washington. He lived in Little Rock, Arkansas until he got Malaria Fever and lost a lot of his hair. He then got a job in the area where we lived, working for some of the people who dug potatoes to feed the cows and hogs.

When the crew came to dig my mother's potatoes, she would give them a meal each day. John Frey said he loved my mother's cooking and would like to become acquainted with her. After he left there he kept writing to her. By this time, he got a job in Minneapolis working for a bedding company - washing feathers! He sent all the children Christmas gifts.

He thought the five children needed a father and asked my mother to marry him. She would not consent unless he wrote to his mother and got a copy of his baptismal certificate. She would only marry a Christian man, who was a Lutheran. His mother sent the papers and they were married in Pine City, Pine County, Minnesota in 1911. Three children were born to them--Arthur was born January 30, 1912 - on my birthday, Erna November 26, 1916 and Adeline November 13, 1919. Adeline died as an infant at age six weeks.

John Frey then got a job in Kerrick for a molding sand company. He earned \$7.00 a day, which were great wages in those days!

1913 - 1921 Missouri

In 1913 or 1914 my parents decided to sell the their place in Kerrick, Minnesota and moved to Missouri. My grandfather, his youngest two sons and several other relatives had previously moved to this area. Dad rented a farm one mile north of Horton, Missouri in Vernon County. It was on a cross road between Nevada and Rich Hill, Missouri. We lived here for seven years before moving to Hume, Missouri in Bates County. Dad used to walk to Horton every day to get the daily paper. This was one mile each direction. He loved to read the "St. Louis Times"! I always wondered why he read the St. Louis paper instead of the Kansas City Star.

Dad had nephews living in St. Louis. One worked in the meat packing plant and the other owned a bakery. Since Dad formerly worked in St. Louis I suppose that he wanted to keep in touch. He always had plenty of papers to read for all of us. "Cappers Weekly" from Topeka, "A Farmers Magazine" and a German paper "Western Post" (pronounced "Vestliche Post") were always present in our house.

Dad cut cord wood in the winter time when wasn't so busy with farm work. He worked very hard trying to raise seven children. By now Erna was born in Horton (1916).

A Typical Day On The Farm

We always had nine around the dinner table. My mother would bake rye bread on an outside brick oven! Dad had to work hard to support our large family. I remember watching Dad and the neighbors making sorghum (molasses from sugar cane). They chopped the cane and cooked it in big vats in the field. It smelled so good and was great for gingerbread, or on pancakes.

The boys had to work too. They hunted rabbits, wild geese and ducks for meat. We would use the feathers for pillows. They trapped furs (muskrats, opossums and skunks) in the winter for extra money. They also fished.

Dad raised hogs and chickens for meat. We also maintained a big garden of vegetables. We kids often picked wild strawberries in the meadows for jelly and sauce. We also picked gooseberries and blackberries on the sides of country roads, or in a pasture. That was a "scratchy" job!

We all had to help make sausage, stuff the casings and boil them. Dad would smoke some and he would also make smoked hams so we could keep them without refrigeration. They were cured with some kind of preservative, like saltpeter.

We always raised about three-hundred chickens, so that was a big job. Dad had a big herd of cows for milk, cream and butter. I'll never forget the times I had to churn the butter in the cellar or basement underneath the house where it was cool. We had the type of churn that sat on the floor. It had a wooden dash (a long handle with a cross piece nailed on the bottom end of the long handle). The dash slid into a hole in the lid of the churn. We had to work the churn dash up and down until it finally turned to butter.

My mother taught me to make a gallon or two of cottage cheese at a time. It was quite an art. My dad turned the cream separator by hand. He had to get enough speed to make the bell ring. He would get wringing wet from sweat and take his shirt off.

My mother baked several loaves of bread every other day. I had to learn to knead the bread too. I'm sure glad that I did, now. We didn't have a refrigerator, no one else did either. So, we had to put the eggs, milk, cream and butter into a bucket and hang it in a well with a rope to keep it cool.

My First School

I started school in Horton, Missouri along with my brothers Robert and Fred. We had to walk that mile each way every day. It was quite a walk for a first grader, especially in the winter! The only English that I could speak was my name and age. My parents were still learning English. They spoke German at home. By this time, my Dad was doing better at English. But my

Mother didn't have time to get out much because she was always so busy providing for the family. It didn't take me long to learn English.

I had to stay in the third grade for two years because my parents didn't have the money to buy books for all of us due to a crop failure that year. Both Fred and I had to take the grade over. When we moved to Hume, Missouri I told the teacher that I was in the fourth grade. Fred said he was in the sixth grade! At that time, no records were kept. All one needed was the required books and the ability to make the grades. Both Fred and I made it just fine.

At the Horton school they had a big pot bellied coal stove in the middle of the room. The older boys kept busy carrying coal and corn cobs to start the fire. This stove "scorched your shins and froze your back"!

The drinking water was pumped from a well. The kids took turns carrying the water. The bucket had only one dipper in it and everyone in that school drank from the same dipper. Talk about epidemics! We caught the whooping cough and our six-week-old sister, Adeline, died from it.

1917 World War I

While still living on the Horton farm, World War I began in 1917. I was eight years old and Arthur was six. This was a bad time for everyone. Food prices were high but farm products also rose in price. Wheat was \$6.00 a bushel. We couldn't get coffee, so my parents roasted Kafir corn and barley to make a coffee substitute.

Finally the war ended and everyone was really happy. I remember asking my dad (we called him "papa") if the war was really over. We could hear the bands playing and whistles blowing in Nevada, ten miles away. The round house for railroad was in Nevada so they had a lot of train whistles blowing.

1919 The Flu Epidemic

In 1919, when the boys came home from the war, the flu epidemic began. It was called Influenza. People died like flies since there were not enough doctors to treat all the sick people and there were no antibiotics in those days. Our family doctor, an Englishman, told us to stay in one place. My sister Eda had only been married a year or less. So she and Ed had to move in with us. We only had a four room house. two were big rooms and the other two were small. We put up cot beds and hung sheets all over for privacy.

After the flu people had enormous appetites. Dad, my oldest brother Reinhold and Ed got over it first. Dad had to go to Horton for groceries. The two boys were trying to cook for all the hungry ones. They fired up the wood stove and started cooking ham, eggs and pots of oatmeal. Then the roof caught fire! They grabbed a twenty-five pound sack of cattle salt and a bucket of water, climbed on the roof and put out the fire. We survived a lot in the early days!

1920 - 1921 Hume, Missouri

In February, when I was about 10 years old, our farm was sold and we had to move. We moved to another rented farm in Bates county, near Hume, Missouri. Here I attended my first city school. It was hard to get used to the change from elementary country school. Here is where I skipped a grade to make up for the grade that I lost in my other school at Horton. In some of the schools, they sometimes didn't teach some grades due to not having enough pupils in that grade. So, we automatically moved from fourth to sixth grade. So, you either passed your next grade or you didn't. Maybe that is why some boys were older, sometimes 16, 17 or even 18 (usually because they goofed around too much!). In addition to the schoolwork they also had to help their parents on the farms.

A friend told me the other day when she was in school, teachers could teach with merely a high school diploma and summer school. Later, it required two years college. This lady was my age and some of my friends are 80.

The Big Snow Storm

On March 29, 1920 we got a big snow storm. My eldest sister Eda and her husband Ed Summers moved in with us until they could find a small farm. Their daughter, Viola was born on March 29. I don't know, but the doctor must have come out on horseback to deliver her!

The school wagon got stuck that morning. We didn't have a school bus, but this wagon was built like a bus. A long bench on either side and windows on both sides and a door in front and back. My oldest brother Reinhold got out our team of Missouri mules (Pete & Ike). They could pull more than a team of horses. My brother managed to get the kids to school the next few days.

The Green Papaws

In the fall the papaws were getting ripe. We passed a timber on the way home from school where the papaws were not fully ripe. I didn't know how to recognize the ripe ones so I picked out a

nice big firm one and bit into it. They taste a lot like bananas and avocados with one large seed. Well, I didn't really like the taste of that bugger - but to be a sport I ate the whole thing and pretended I liked it - even if it puckered my mouth! That night I had the worst stomach ache and got deathly sick. I'm sure it poisoned me. The doctor thought I had appendicitis and sent out some powder in wax paper wrappers with my dad - he hadn't even seen me or checked me. It seemed people never called the doctor to come out unless it was an extreme emergency. Well, one thing was the doctors traveled with a horse and buggy, or on horseback. It took time to get to the farm, if they didn't get lost!

The Tornado

On this same farm by Hume, we had a heavy hail storm and tornado. I can still see my dad sitting outside at night with the farm lantern lit beside him, watching the approaching storms. He would say the storm is coming toward the wind, it will be bad - get the kids to the cave or cellar. Here we had a big basement that my dad and brothers helped build. It was the full size of a house that had previously burned down. The house we rented had been moved on from someplace else. I will tell you about the law suit over this basement later on. We had a bedstead and springs in this basement that we kids could take turns lying on at night when we were so sleepy. We put comforters or blankets over the springs.

This basement was a distance from the house. It was built with the top about 36" above the ground. It was a favorite place for marble games on top of it or "Upset the Fruit Basket". There was a big cement post in the center of the basement to give extra support. While the storm was approaching, my dad tied a rope to the trap doors and then to the inside, upright doors, wrapped the rope around the center post. My Dad and my two older brothers pulled on the rope with all their might to keep the doors from flying off.

My Dad was so proud of his bumper corn crop that year, he admired it every day. But, the heavy hail chopped the corn to shreds. He was so depressed that he actually wept. The chicken house and mothers 300 chickens were scattered in the muddy field. The cupola on the barn was off and lightning hit one of his horses and killed it. When we went to the house there was about a foot of water in it and the windows were broken. It took weeks to dry out the mattresses. We laid them on top of the basement to dry. This was only one of the storms we were in. Do you wonder why I've been so scared of storms and get ready to crawl under the table? Ha! Ray was never afraid of storms. I hope I didn't affect you kids.

Whenever we moved to a different farm, the first thing my dad did was to dig a wind cave. He knew just what side of the house to build it on for safety. Then, he would get a peach twig and test the ground for a water vein. If there was water, the twig would automatically bend down toward the ground. So, you see, people had ways and means without the engineers to guide them. After dad dug the cave with a horse and scraper device (I can't remember what they called them) he got railroad ties and made a pitched roof to clear one's head. Then he put lots of dirt and sod over the top and sowed grass to make a good sod. I never heard of anyone being injured in one of these caves by a storm.

The Lawsuit

After the basement was completed, dad and my two oldest brothers, Reinhold and Robert, cleaned out all the debris from the house that had burned and got the whole thing ready to get the concrete poured. Dad then asked the landlord for a credit on the rent. The landlord tried to argue out of the agreement, so dad refused to pay that part of the rent. The landlord took the case to court but it seemed to be a "framed" deal - a wealthy landlord against a poor farmer. My dad got so angry at what the crooked lawyer said that he jumped up and grabbed the lawyer by the necktie. I think dad called him a liar, so dad was fined with a contempt of court.

1921 - 1925 Prescott, Kansas

In 1921 we finally got back to Kansas and the rural schools by moving to a rented farm, three miles east of Prescott, Kansas. The farm was either 320 or 360 acres. It also had some acreage across the road with another small house on it. This is where Ed, Eda and Viola moved.

In those days, a lot of newly married couples lived with their parents and worked together - especially on big farms. The house we moved to had 13 rooms. It had been a doctor's home. It had huge rooms, one wall had bookcases built in it with glass doors that reached from floor to ceiling. I mean the ceilings were extremely high, we had to get a step ladder to reach the upper shelves. This room also had a fireplace. This is where Dad brought in the whole top of a cedar tree that actually touched that high ceiling. We had eight big cedar trees in rows in the front yard and some trees in the field.

My Mother raised several hundred chickens and one of my jobs was marking the eggs. I believe it was every morning. I also had to feed the chickens and carry water to them. I had to rescue them from trees where they preferred to roost until they learned to go into the hen house.

The Barbed Wire Fence

Here we had a big hay meadow where we kids picked wild strawberries. One day we took some pans and containers to pick in, this was my three brothers and I, I don't think Arthur went along that time. He usually waited for me if I had some kind of trouble. He was two years younger but I depended on him as a safety guard from coyotes and wolves. Thinking I would find lots of strawberries that day, I took a dish pan - how dumb. It was hard to carry, the boys used their straw hats. On our way home, one of the boys said they saw a wolf behind a straw stack. They ran as fast as they could - I was petrified! The boys jumped over the top of a barb wire fence as I was crawling through it. My leg was ripped open - boy, did they get a lecture from our mother after I told her how mean they were. And on top of it, I spilled my berries. I think it took five or six weeks for my leg to heal, I still have the scar. I never saw a doctor, just used home remedies and never had a Tetanus shot. I must have been in good country health.

Treasures

It was on this farm where Fred, my third oldest brother, hunted for treasures. He believed the doctor must have hid some riches in the attic or under the house. One day Fred decided to search the attic for possible treasures. He found some doll clothes for me, I was pleased to get them. They must have been there for a long time. The next thing that happened in this exciting adventure was Fred was straddling the rafters, the ceiling plaster was coming down all over the stair way. He managed to get to safety, but don't remember the story he told Dad!

Arthur's Splinter

This house had bare 10 foot floor boards. It was my job to scrub them. No wonder I have big muscles and bones! The boys had hunting hounds, so I had to keep guard so one didn't sneak in and track the floor. One day after a rain I was busy mopping one of the floors in a big room. Arthur, then about 10, was outside barefoot. He decided to come in for a cookie or jelly bread, so he tracked in mud. I got defensive and dared him to go through the room. He was determined to do his will. We started to scuffle and he grabbed a broom. We were see-sawing until I could no longer hold it and turned loose. Arthur ran a huge splinter in his big toe which Dad had to take out with his pocket knife. When that battle was over, I think it hurt me more than it did him. I felt very bad and ashamed - we never had anymore bad fights. He was so good to help me always.

The Gypsies

We still were pestered with Gypsies here, only by this time they traveled in automobiles instead of covered wagons. These years were in the early 20's. At night, they would steal our chickens. They were camped across the road in a small timbered area where they had built bon fires to cook on.

The Teacher's Pet

My favorite teacher lived about one-half mile up the road from us. Her name was Pearl Lindell. She taught at the "Indian Creek" school that we kids attended. I think I was her pet, I heard in later years that she named her only daughter Freda. Ha! She and her husband Carl paid for their farm by raising pure bred chickens - Rhode Island Reds and Buff Orphingtons. One spring she gave me a setting of eggs (15) every one hatched. I sold them in the fall for one dollar each, a big price in those days! I had enough money to buy my school supplies.

My teacher let us ride to school with her in her buggy, whenever we wanted. Fred agreed to care for her horses at school, fed, watered and hitched them. Fred and Arthur stood in the buggy box behind her seat while I rode in front with Pearl.

We had fun at that school, played volleyball, keep-away baseball and old-time games. I enjoyed walking to school on the country roads, looking at the milky pods, sunflowers and wild asters as we walked along. One of my favorite poems "The Goldenrod is Yellow" by Helen Hunt Jackson, that I learned in school puts pictures in my mind of all these fall flowers.

When Ray took me for rides in September, I would tell him how much I enjoyed my school walks and I would say this poem to him. One time for my birthday, Joan found this poem in an old book. She put it in a gold-leafed frame that she made. I have it hanging in the new bedroom and I have cherished it all through the years.

The Christmas Tree

Before going on from this farm I want to tell you about our Christmas and the tree that reached the ceiling. While we were at a Christmas program at Indian Creek school, my parents, sister Eda and Ed got busy and strung popcorn and cranberries for the tree. We had made paper chains earlier. When we got home, the huge tree was lit with 6" pastel colored candles, some in brass holders, others tied on with string. The candles were only lit long enough for us to gather around the tree to sing three songs with our parents; "Come Hither, Ye Children" (in German,

"Eier Kinderlein Kommet"), "Silent Night", in German, and "The Christmas Tree, the Beautiful Tree" (in German, "Der Kristbaum Ist Der Schoensta baum"). My parents and several others kept close watch on the candles - what a daring chance.

I can still see the shining beads on the tree for Erna and me. The tiny tea pot and china set gift. I was so happy that Erna got a Bye-Lo baby doll. I only got one doll in my life time, a china head with molded hair, and a home stuffed body. Her name was Nellie. A naughty broom maker's daughter (a neighbor) broke my only doll.

Johnny and the Bee Stings

Johnny Summers was born on this farm in 1921, where we had several bee hives. One evening, while the bees were clustered on the outside of the hive, Johnny poked a stick in the hive where the bees went in and out. He soon was covered with bees. My Mother was wearing a big apron that reached nearly to the floor. She wiped the bees off Johnny, made a soda paste and covered him with it. My dad and Johnny's dad, Ed, took him to a doctor in a lumber farm wagon three miles away. The doctor said the soda was the perfect medication. Johnny didn't even swell up.

1925 - 1926 Fulton, Kansas

Now its time to move on to Fulton, Kansas. This was four miles East of Prescott, in Linn county. From the farm near Prescott, we moved to another farm near Fulton. Here I attended my last year in elementary school. This was a one room country school called "Fish Creek". Baseball was the most popular game played at this school. One day I was up for bat when one of the smarty boys hit me in the head with a hard baseball. I saw stars that was the last time I tried to play ball. I'm sure he resented a girl on the team.

After a year on the Fulton farm we moved to Paola, Kansas, where I still live. Do you wonder how we came to move to Paola? Well, there was no Lutheran church at Fulton--it was a Catholic settlement. One day while my sister Eda and her family lived in Hammond, Kansas, she noticed an ad in a Fort Scott paper about Lutheran services that were held in a Y.M.C.A. building. So, we all decided to attend one of their services. The Pastor was from Paola and when he saw a long pew filled by our family, he urged my dad to take a look at Paola. He was looking for members for the Paola church.

1926 - 1995 Paola, Kansas

After my parents talked it over they made a trip to Paola. A Lutheran school teacher took them around to look at farms and also the city. Later my Dad and oldest brother Reinhold came back to see if work would be available, in case they decided to move to town. My oldest sister Eda also went with them to see about renting a house. Sure enough, Dad and my three brothers Reinhold, Robert and Fred all got a job on either the Katy Railroad or Missouri Pacific ("MOP"). They also found a house to rent with Herman Timken, a grocer's help. The railroad foreman lived next door to us then.

Dad held a farm sale and sold every thing except a milk cow and about 50 chickens. We brought these to Paola since, at the time there was no city ordinance toward chickens in town. Some neighbors had ducks and geese and a few hogs on the out skirts of town.

After we moved, Dad put the Jersey cow out to pasture across the tracks west of town. We missed our farm animals, mules, horses and hogs. It was about a 69 mile move and we were excited about the big change from living on a farm to life in the city. Our first impression was the neighbors seemed so close!

Dad would milk the cow every morning and night. After about a year he decided to sell the cow and buy milk from the milkman, who delivered every morning. He still had the glass milk bottles and jugs in a crate he carried to the house and set them on the front porch. I almost ran into this milkman one time as he was placing the milk bottles on the front porch.

It was quite a coincidence that the first family we met in Paola, before moving there, was Barney Koelsche's (Estella's parents). As you know, Reinhold later married Estella.

The Fish Worms

I got acquainted with a neighbor girl who had a big brother in high school. He was always dressed up for school. That was before wash n' wear or permanent press clothes. He would walk without bending his knees much so the press would stay in his pants. Ha! Most people used brown grocery sacks to press slacks instead of using press cloths.

This guy always wanted to tease me; I was 16 years old at the time. He handed me a folded paper saying "my sister sent you this note, but could he read it first? I told him NO!! He handed

me the small paper and I opened it to discover it was full of fish worms! I was so mad at him that I chased him out the front door and nearly ran over the milkman. Dad had set a wooden herring keg under the outside water hydrant and it was always full of water. Dad told me to throw that water on him - which I did! He wouldn't speak to me after that (because he probably had to press his pants).

My Badly Sprained Ankle

When I was 16 or 17 while living in Paola, my Mother went to Minnesota to visit her sisters because she couldn't stand the Kansas heat. I was gathering the bed sheets to wash and getting ready to come down the stairs. I stepped on a sheet and fell down the stairs. Arthur heard me, held his arms out and caught me before I hit the bottom. I sprained my ankle so badly I am really sure that I broke it. Arthur put hot towels on my ankle every day and night. I had to crawl on my hands and knees to go to bed. I hopped with a stick for six weeks before I could use my foot again. I didn't see a doctor, in fact I was eighteen before I visited Dr. Van Pelt's office.

My First Job

I got a job working in the city laundry and later worked for Devin's Laundry for three years. I also worked at the Commercial Hotel, located where the Miami County Bank is now. I worked as second cook (or cook's helper) and had to wash all the dishes - by hand! They served a lot of dinners, around 50 or 60, especially Saturday evening and Sundays. I had to dry the dishes, also, and they were the heavy kind with all the side dishes, glasses, pots and pans. By this time I was 18 years old.

Later, the building got old and in bad shape. Rats got in the building and I was petrified! After the dining room closed, I washed dishes and cleaned off the food. I would keep two wooden kitchen chairs by the sink to jump up on when the rats came. I would then scream!! Then the night watchman would come in and scare them away. Sometimes he would occasionally check up on me but not always. One time I got so scared I called Eda's husband to take me home. More and more rats chased around in the kitchen. I finally decided to quit my job (it only paid \$7.00 a week). After I quit, the hotel was condemned and torn down.

Later I worked in the home for the people who owned the hotel. They had a huge two story house. I had to clean the attic and the basement, did their laundry, iron their clothes, cooked two meals a day and sometimes breakfast - for \$3.00 a week!! In the spring, I cleaned the rugs on my hands and knees. I also scrubbed the floors and washed the curtain panels in March, outside

when it was so cold. There was no extra pay for this since it was in the Depression days. After that I didn't work much, just stayed at home and helped my Mother.

Still during Depression days, we worked in Minnesota on a truck farm. I enjoyed this a lot more than working at the hotel. I was about 19 or 20 years old.

Ray and Freda Meet

You are probably still wondering how I met your Dad. We moved to Paola in February 1926. My sister Eda, Ed, Viola and Johnny moved here in June 1926 from Hammond, Kansas. Her husband Ed was a foreman on the Frisco Railroad. He got transferred to Spring Hill first, then later Paola. At that time the men had to bid on a job. The one with the most seniority got it. Ed, Eda and family moved into a house and Ray's parents (your Dad's) moved into a house next door. They became close friends so when one family moved the other moved also. They lived close by for years.

My sister Eda told me she had new neighbors when the Macklin's first moved next to them. She said they have six boys!! One of the boys is working in Colorado. This, of course, was Ray. One day Eda called me and said they were having a card party ("Pinochle" which was popular at that time). I went to join them even though I never played cards (Lee knows that - ha!). Anyway, I ended up being Ray's partner.

I didn't see him for a long time after that since he went back to Colorado. Maybe he had a gal out there??? He worked cleaning cantaloupe cars during cantaloupe season. He made \$7.00 a day in Depression time while others only made \$1.00 - if they were lucky enough to find work at all. The cantaloupe job was at Ordway, Colorado near Rocky Ford. (We still get the best Cantaloupes from this area.)

One time later in the spring, Ray came home again. By this time he became a friend with my brother Fred. One Sunday afternoon my sister Erna and I were walking to someone's house when we met Fred and Ray in Fred's Model A roadster. Ray asked me to go with them to Wallace Park to take pictures. I finally accepted, even though Erna and I had other plans (she was very angry). We were very close sisters and had our own plans together. Ray, Fred, Hazel and I took pictures and talked. From then on, Ray kept dating me. He later told me he wanted to keep me dated so the other "birds" couldn't get me. Ha!! Ray didn't have a car since he worked in Colorado, so we double dated with Fred and Hazel. His parents never owned a car; they got railroad passes for out of town trips.

After dating for three years, Ray and I decided to get married. We were both 23 years old. Ray was working at the "Drink & Nibble Cafe" for \$1.00 a day and two meals. We were confident that there were better opportunities ahead for us. We were married on July 16, 1933 at the First Lutheran Parsonage in Paola, Kansas by Reverend H.J. Theel. My sister Erna, brother Fred, Hazel Hoyle (who later became my sister-in-law) and cousin Ernest Brown were attendants. Since it was at the end of the Great Depression, we were still living with my mother and brothers Fred and Arthur. Many people shared their house in those days to minimize costs.

The Wedding

We had a wonderful wedding reception at my mother's house (my step-father John Frey died the previous year). My older sister Eda fried chicken for hours on the wood-burning stove. It was an extra hot day with the temperature over 100 degrees! Eda said she will never forget how hot it was cooking that chicken. Ray's mother, Amy Macklin, had our wedding cake baked at the Jackson Hotel, where she worked. My mother, Bertha Frey, decorated the table with Zinnias flowers from her garden.

There were jokes and pranks like ceramic dolls in the bottom of our coffee cups and symbolic wedding rings baked in the wedding cake. I wore a white crepe dress, a white satin jacket with large Navy blue polka dots, a matching sash, and white pumps. The only flowers were a corsage of Myrtle with a white carnation. The Myrtle was a special house plant that my mother brought from Ukraine. In Ukraine, the Myrtle was used for special occasions like weddings. Ray had a similar corsage prepared by Eda and my mother.

The Honeymoon

For our honeymoon, we spent the night at my brother Robert and Clara's house. They had put sand in the bed and tied tin pie pans to the bed springs! This was the way newlyweds were typically initiated. They made a friend of ours push his wife in a wheel barrow through a picture show. These tricks were funny, but not always fun for the bride and groom.

Charivari

A couple of days after our wedding, we were surprised by another prank from "the Charivari" (our group of friends). One night after I had lain down to rest and Ray had gone to work at the Drink & Nibble, I heard cow bells, tin cans and all kinds of noise outside. When I opened the door, one of the Charivari's said to me, "Come, you are going for a ride". I told him

Ray was working and I wasn't going without him. He said, "Oh yes you are"! When I got outside, there was a cart with a donkey hitched to it, a wash tub turned upside down for a seat and a big corn stalk for a buggy whip. I just about flipped! They made me drive this donkey around the town square, using the corn stalk if the mule got stubborn. The worse thing was the noise from the tin cans tied to the cart hitting the brick street. Ray's boss let him off for the event, even though the cafe was busy. He said it was all in good fun. After we returned to the house, the gang kept ringing the cow bells along with other noises until we invited them in. Ray knew what was expected and provided treats of chocolates and cigars.

Soon after, Ray got a job at Timkens's Grocery store. In the fall, he was hired by the Missouri Pacific Railroad (MOP) to build bridges.

Tough Times

One of my brothers paid the house rent of \$7.00, another paid the utilities and another bought the groceries. There were no unemployment benefits, welfare, nursing homes or Medicare. West of Paola was a "Poor Farm", run by the county, for people who had no job, no money and were old. The men would work and help raise crops and the women had to help with garden work, can foods and do other chores. The "Poor Farm" cemetery is still there. In later years, my dad worked for a wealthy farmer building chicken and hog houses. My Dad would come home every evening as it was a regular job. We didn't always have bad times, only in the late 20's and early 30's. We had a lot of good times too.

During those years, Arthur and Fred worked for the county, maintaining roads and driving trucks. Reinhold and Robert were married by this time. Reinhold also worked on county roads and built bridges. He and Robert helped build the bridge on U.S. 169 near Hillsdale. Robert helped construct the Miami County Bank building.

Births Of Our Children

We lived with Grandma Frey six years, Ernestine and Norma were born there. By that time, Ray got a job on the Frisco Railroad. Before that he worked in Hillsdale and batched in a railroad car. I didn't want to live close to the railroad tracks because I was afraid the girls might get run over by a train.

When he was transferred to Paola we rented a house and moved. Joan was born there, November 14, 1939 (the year World War II started). I remember when they called the Cavalry to

active duty. Ray's brothers were in the Cavalry at that time. Horses had been used, but they changed the Cavalry to using tanks, motorized equipment and heavy artillery. This was another bad time.

Joan was born at home, as were Ernestine and Norma. Lee was born at Burson's Nursing Home. There were no hospitals in Paola at that time. The girls were delivered for \$25 each, Lee's bill was \$60 including room and board for ten days!

Furniture

Before we moved to this place Dad and one of my old boyfriends went to Kansas City, where Dad bought furniture for this house. Did we get a good buy! New cook stove \$39, Maytag washer for \$59, 9' X 12' linoleum rugs \$4, Oak dining room table, chairs and buffet \$59 - and the chairs had genuine red leather seats. He also bought dishes and a set of silverware. The payments were only \$12 per month on all of these things.

Job Changes

At the time, Ray was making \$4 per day. We managed to buy the house, make payments on the furniture and on a used car. Dad worked in a grocery store right after we were married; then on the railroad. Later, he worked as a foreman at the Rock Quarry for Tony Foster. He was earning a lot more money then. After that he got a better job working for Missouri Pacific in the Bridge gang as a carpenter. He also worked at Taylor Forge as an electrician. The Rock Quarry and Taylor Forge jobs were "fill ins" when the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant (run by Hercules) was shut down. He started at Sunflower during World War II and was made foreman 10 months later. He then became Area Supervisor over the South Acid Area. He was a good worker and well liked by his foreman who hired him.

Ray had a lot of confidence and once told the man who hired him, "I've never seen an ammunition plant, never was inside one, but I can do anything anyone else can do if you give me a chance"!

He soon drew high wages and he received a \$300 a month increase for inventing a device that saved the company a lot of money. He worked for Hercules for 20 years until the plant closed. He started working for Hercules in 1943 and within one year we paid for our house!!

Lee Is Born

In 1947 Lee was born and Dad was so proud to have a son! He came home and said, "I'm going to name him Lee", you can pick the other name. I was always slow about things like that, but he said "That's his name".

The Good Life

Our daughters were married after high school and college. Lee went into the Navy during Vietnam wartime, but he still ended up getting his college degree. Ray and I lived a happy life together, survived tornadoes, dust storms, ice and floods, the Roaring 20's, the Great Depression and the Flapper Days. We had good times and hard times but I always told Dad (and sang this song to him), "Though we haven't got lots of money, we may look ragged and funny, but we travel along, singing a song, side by side". He agreed and gave me a big hug and a kiss. We always asked God's blessings.

Trip to Germany

I always longed to see where "Papa" John Frey lived as a child and young man. To me a miracle occurred when my daughter Joan Scott (her husband Doug and daughter Carol) invited me to go to Germany with them September, 1991. What a happy surprise - I could not believe it was true!! I flew to San Francisco a week in advance and stayed with Joan and Doug at their house in Menlo Park, California. We spent a week making final preparations for the trip. Doug exchanged our money for German deutsche marks. He gave each of us a money pouch which we placed around our neck and tucked into our jeans. This way we could keep our DM separate from our dollars. We made a final check on our passports.

Finally, the day came for us to depart. We were delayed two hours at the San Francisco airport because they were so over booked. So, we ate a late breakfast at an airport restaurant. When I saw the huge Boeing 747 airplane, it looked like a big building to me. It held 400 passengers and was loaded to capacity. We flew over the North Pole, Greenland, Iceland and Scotland. We saw icebergs and the sun rise over Scotland. Next, we landed in London's Heathrow Airport. I was so excited to be in a foreign country! From London we took a smaller plane to Munich, Germany. We arrived there at noon after the nine and one-half hour flight to London. When we arrived in Germany, I couldn't believe my eyes. I saw so many boxes of Geraniums under each and every

window on every building. The flowers were not only in the cities but on every country house as well (including some of the barns).

In Munich we saw the "Glockenspiel" where the figures come out of the city hall tower and danced as music played. It seemed to work like a cuckoo clock. Afterwards we had lunch (sauerkraut, wieners and beer) in a bier garden. A Tyrolie group sang and gave toasts while others joined in.

Next, we went to Salzburg, a unique city in Austria loaded with flowers and shops - and the birthplace of Mozart. We then drove to Oberammergau where every ten years they present a live show of the crucifixion of Jesus called the "passion play". They paint pictures of story characters on the outside of houses, like Little Red Riding Hood in German. Religious pictures are painted on business buildings such as, Jesus in front of Poncius Pilate on the Pilate House building. The church bells in those cities rang every hour.

After two days in Salzburg we got lost trying to find our hotel, "Gasthof" in Oberammergau before 8:00 PM. When we finally arrived, our room had been given to someone else. Next, we drove to Bergesgarten, a town where many of Hitler's men lived. We took a special bus to Hitler's "Eagle Nest", which means "hide out". This road was especially built for Hitler. The road was cut through rock in the highest mountain in Germany. It was four miles long and passed through five tunnels, which were guarded by Hitlers men during World War II. After the last tunnel we got on an elevator that held all 58 persons on our bus. It took us up 400 feet in 45 seconds to the living room of Eagle Nest. By this time it was pouring rain which made it more scary. We saw all the things in the building, which is now a museum. I stood by the black marble fireplace and had my picture taken. Then Joan, Doug, Carol and I had ice cream and Kaffee Kuchen in Hitler's conference room. We had a scary trip down the steep mountain road which was only wide enough for our vehicle with no shoulder or guard rails! We had to lean back in our seats and hold on with all our might to keep from sliding out of our seats. The ride down the mountain tested my bravery. This little building was right on a peak with only enough space around it to park a bus. Looking down, it seemed like a mile or two.

We enjoyed eating and having a beer or glass of wine at the many outdoor cafes. Watching the people from so many different countries and trying to speak with them was a lot of fun. We managed pretty well with the German language that I remembered and what Joan and Doug had learned in a German class. They gave me a tape player, blank tapes and copies of their German lessons. I pronounced the words and made sentences, then sent the tapes to Joan. On their way to work each day they listened to them. It was surprising how much that helped us on our trip.

The next city we visited after Oberammergau was Meersberg, Germany. It was on a huge waterfront called Lake Constance. From there we went on a big boat to the Island Manai where we attended a Dahlia show. Thousands of Dahlias of every color were in bloom. On the boat back to Meersberg, we rode on the top deck so Doug could take pictures of the castles along the way.

We then went to Switzerland where Carol and I ate a hamburger and a candy bar. We sat on a bench by the Rhine River and ate our lunch. We only found two McDonald locations which looked like bank buildings with flower baskets.

After that, we spent two days in Frieberg. We drove to Triberg, where I purchased my cuckoo clock. It was truly an original clock made in the Black Forest where papa Frey lived. Doug rented a BMW to drive us around. We got lost so many times trying to understand the road signs and instructions people gave us. We were trying to find Grombach, a small village of 500 population. We finally found Grombach and the little town of Altensteig, which was just across the road where John Frey's sister lived. We found the church where papa was baptized on May 10, 1874. We talked with the minister who looked up the Frey family records. Next, we walked with umbrellas to the near by cemetery. We found all the headstones with Frey family names. We took pictures which to our surprise all came out - even in the rain. This 1300 mile trip was a dream come true! We returned to London via way of Frankfurt. This was a great trip for me at age 81.

My Values

If someone asked what my values are, I can sum them up quickly:

My Christian religion, my family, patriotism, honesty, sharing and caring.

I love to read good articles in books and magazines based on real facts.

I love to sew, crochet and at 77 years old, I'm trying to learn to knit.

I enjoy doing things myself to be creative.

I like to sing and take part in group activities, rather than hear it on TV or the radio.

I enjoy cooking, baking, canning and collecting recipes.

I love gardening, planting and caring for flowers, watching them grow and turn into beautiful colors. I enjoy working hard outside.

I sometimes watch sports and enjoy the ones I understand. I did like to go to Lee, David and Tim's football, basketball and baseball games. Now I enjoy hearing about the sport activities of our grandchildren, basketball, swimming, music and Scouts. I'm happy with all their achievements, each and every one.

But most of all, I treasure being close in touch with my family. Writing and receiving letters, as well as talking on the phone, mean a lot to me. I value the close relationship of our families and I always try to keep them in touch with each other. I encourage them to be happy with the other's accomplishments. During times of difficulty or sickness, we all pray for each other, and praise when there are accomplishments. I know it will always stay that way because we asked God's blessings on us all.

Now I'm enjoying all the cards, letters, phone calls and surprises from everyone. When I find a letter in the mail box, I can go hippity-hop to the kitchen and read it.

I am very happy.

The kitchen is my favorite place. It was especially happy after our retirement years when Dad and I had such a good time together even though he got another job after his retirement managing Rural District #2 Water Plant. He took this job so he could get another quarter on his social security.

He was really sharp in his figures. He told the directors of the water plant, "Look, I can work for you for \$200 per month, it will help me and look what it will save you". They looked at him and said, "Man, you must be crazy to work for those kind of wages after working in a Defense Plant". Dad said, "I'm not crazy, I just know how to figure"! Ha!

He always said if I reach in my pocket and the money's all gone, then I spent too much. He always believed in saving a little and drawing interest.

Dad always managed in later years to take me on trips. I got a lot of experience and learned a lot about history and geography. I didn't have the opportunity to attend college - I learned it the hard way.

I learned to store memories.

This is such a different era. Now all technical and computerized, it's another world. I hope I can see my way through. You kids have a good education now, and are able to meet any challenge!

Best of luck to you all. Now you take it from here, Lee

Your loving mother, Freda.