

Memoirs of

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Ray E. Wehmeier

Memoirs of Ray E. Wehmeier

December 2012



Photo 1 - Ray with his wife, Ruth taken on July 3, 1992.

To my lovely wife Ruth, who made all my wildest dreams come true.

I met Ruth when I was almost 21 years old and she was only 15. There was an age difference, but we were friends to start out with. She was a real nice girl. She played Air Force songs on her Accordion. We started dating in 1945 after I got out of the war. She was 18, I was almost 24. We got married on October 26, 1945, in the Christian Missionary Alliance Church in St. Louis, MO. at 6:00 pm. I remember her sister Dorlas came with her, and my brother Lee came with me. I can honestly say that all I saw that evening was her. I reckon there were about 50+ people, but then again all I was focused on was her. After the wedding we went to Southern Missouri to Poplar Bluff and Big Springs on the Current River. We did a lot of different things together. We took boat rides, and went out to eat at fancy restaurants. The honeymoon was an amazing experience for us. We went back to my home place by Newburg and I showed her around. Then it ended because I had to go back to work. The first few months flew by, because we were wrapped up in the fact that we were together and we were happy. I was fresh out of the service and it was hard to adjust to civilian life. She wanted to make our lives blend but again it was hard for me being fresh out of the service. It was hard for her to get adjusted to our new house, it had a wood stove and the whole house was heated by wood. She made it work though. I was surprised at how

fast she adapted to her surroundings. She learned fast especially when it came to what I liked. I remember one time, she prepared Spam for dinner, and I'd eaten it for so long that I'd become sick and tired of it. She'd thought she'd made something special for me. She then started to prepare macaroni and cheese, puddings, etc. She learned to cook by my sister June. We went to visit a lot and Ruth learned to make a lot of different dishes. She was very outgoing and made a lot of friends in as well as outside of church. Her girlfriends would come over and they would get their hair done, go to the movies, and listen to the radio, due to me working until 11 pm. She was an amazing musician/singer. I am dedicating this story and account to my lovely wife Ruth; I shall never recover from this loss, after over 66 years of marriage. Her family is my family and always will be. She passed away on March 22, 2012, after years of suffering and she completely deserved her final reward.



Photo 2 - Ray and Ruth, taken 1946.

After the loss of my wife Ruth, the house was lonely, and I moved to the Missouri Veteran's Home in St. James MO. May 1, 2012.



Photo 3 - Ray's Mother's Family 1931.

Don't forget who you are.

When I was young and just starting out in the world, these were the words my mother told me. They were words to instill in me a sense of confidence and inspire in me the meaning of Family Values.

With this in mind I dedicate this autobiography to those who made me into what I am. First in importance are my parents and my brothers and sister, my grandparents, relatives, neighbors, teachers, preachers, and the many good people I have known and worked with in my lifetime. Second most important is the environment that I grew up in.

Some of the Genealogy that started it all

The area where I grew up in is about 7 miles south of Newburg MO. The land was settled by many different kinds of people. The first people to get into the area picked out the choice farm land on the rivers and creeks. They selected sites with good water and land. Each succeeding group to move into the area were forced to homestead farther up the tributaries with less good tillable land and other resources. By the late 1800's the people were getting very poor land and were mostly depended on the timber and other natural resources for their survival.

My great-great-great grandfather, Will Hudgens, came to Missouri in 1833. That was 35 years before Rolla was established and only 5 years after the Meramec Iron works started producing iron. The Hudgens were well established on the Little Piney Creek. From his 12 children there are many decedents.

This mixture of truly real pioneers and the relatively newcomers to the area gave a unique environment to grow up in.

My father worked at various times as a nurseryman, for several years as a lineman for telegraph and electric companies. He worked in construction and several years for the Terminal Railroad. He was working at the later job during World War I and was not drafted.

During these years he was always interested in hunting, and in the construction business, was in contact with my mother's brothers and friends. They brought him to Mill Creek on turkey hunts around 1913 and 1914. I don't know how many trips he made, but on those trips he met mother. They were married in grandpa Hudgens' front yard, under a rose bush on June 6, 1915. He was 32 and she was 17. It worked!

My maternal grandfather, Isaac Sands Hudgens was 2nd generation Phelps County and was of Kentucky heritage. His grandfather was of the first dozen or so people homestead in this county, having tiled a claim in 1837.

The first Wehmeier that I have any record of in our ancestral tree is Christoph Henrich Wehmeier, born June 1769. He married Anna Margaretha Isabein Tielken on January 25, 1795, in Steinhagen, Westfalen, Prussia. Their 7th child was Peter Henrich Wehmeier, born August 22, 1808. He married Margaratha Catherine Louise Lutgen on the 16th of May. They were my great-grandparents. He died March 3, 1878 and she died January 12, 1901. They are buried in St. Paul's Lutheran Church Cemetery in DeBeres, MO. They were born in Steinhagen, Westfalen. Prussia.

Their child was Henrich Willhelm Weheimer, my grandfather, born January 21, 1840, in Steinhagen, Westfalen, Prussia. He married Katherine Bopp on April 3, 1864. He died in 1895 and is buried in the Park Hill Cemetery in Kirkwood, MO. My father, William P. Weihmcier, was born November 12, 1882 in Kirkwood, MO. and died May 16, 1975. On June 6, 1915 he married Clair K. Hudgens, born January 24, 1897, and she died August 13, 1975. They are buried in St. James, MO.

My father was the youngest of a large family and was only 12 when his father died and never seemed to know that his grandfather had come to America and died here. He and his brother Theodore, "Tate" were partially raised by aunts and uncles. After he was old

enough to make a living, he spent several years with his mother, being her sole source of support. During these years, after going to school for a few years, I think it was about the 4th grade he worked at various jobs for survival. The German language was his native tongue but he learned English well enough at an early age, that he didn't have an accent. The accounts that I have heard were his father fought in the Civil War. My queries to the National Archives show a William Wehmeier as being in Co. I, 5th US Res. Corps. MO. INF. I haven't found a way to verify if this is him or not.

Mill Creek, where it all started

I was born on December 21, 1921 on the home place. My dad had previously cut enough railroad ties to make \$25 which is what they paid Dr. R. E. Bruer to deliver me. I guess he was needed in as much as I weighed 12 lbs. Mother had prepared for Christmas by baking a lard stand full of fruit cakes for the holidays but I can't remember getting any. It became a tradition for her to make me one for my birthday.

The farm was located on a small but pretty spring fed creek that came through the farm. The house sat in a little hollow on the west side of the valley. The geologic structure of the land left a layer of limestone about midway in the hill which had eroded away over the centuries, leaving what is known as benches, similar to huge stair steps on the side of the hills. The tops of the hills were capped with a layer of sandstone, which caused them to be very steep at the top. These benches were large enough for fields half way up the main hill in many places. These were where we always had orchards and strawberry patches. One of these, south of the church, was 5 acres and was cropped. This field had at one time been the home of Indians. When plowing it we always found many arrowheads and other relics, at one end of the field was the remains of an old Indian cairn. There was a circle of limestone boulders about 20 feet across. It has been theorized that someone had removed these rocks from a central pile to see if there was anything underneath. There is 2 or more of these cairn remnants about a half mile east on the opposite side of the valley. They are on the north edge of a limestone glade of nearly an acre. Sometime for some reason this became known as Indian Point.

The area of the hills behind the house was a pasture of about 30 acres. The top of the ridge was about 300 feet higher than the house. The area is high enough that Rolla can be plainly seen from this hill. The large sandstone rocks around it were a favorite place for us to play when we were youngsters. This sandstone formation that caps these hills is the

same that covers much of the western Phelps County. In many places this sandstone has collapsed causing the high sinkholes as King and Slaughter Sinks.

The first Hudgens to come to this area was the Will Hudgens family, in about 1833. His son, Dabney Tucker Hudgens, was about 18 years old and rode horse back with the covered wagons from Washington County, Kentucky. Ballard William Hudgens was the son of Dabney, and was born August 23, 1840. Isaac Sands Hudgens, my grandfather, was the first child of William Hudgens and Elmira Sands. He was born September 5, 1861. Ballard William Hudgens was a prosperous farmer and also a Methodist Preacher. He gave each of his sons a farm when they got married. My grandfather's farm was on Mill Creek and next to the farm where I grew up.

My maternal grandmother was Hattie Niles, born August 10, 1863, in Delaware, County, New York. Her parents were Joseph H. Niles, born August 28, 1828. He died January 31, 1909. Her mother was Mary C. Babock, born November 13, 1831. She died December 11, 1904. The following is her will, preserved in a family book, hand written on tablet paper, frayed in places and hardly readable.

"April 21, 1904. I, Mary C. Niles write my will and give my 2 daughters my things at my death. To Rose, my feather bed, that my mother gave me. 2 pillows with wide strips, my best comfort, 2 quilts, the blazing star and diamond quilt, a straw tick, half of my silver knife and forks and teaspoons and large spoons, my cashmere shawl, and half of my trinkets and pictures, these things go to Rose. My gold watch I want Charlie to have for a keepsake. To Hattie L. Hudgens, I will leave my featherbed that my grandfather gave me, 2 pillow cases, a comfort, these quilts, Album star quilt, half of my silver knives, forks, teaspoons, and large spoons, silver butter dish, my red glass dishes, and pitcher cake stand, blanket shawl, half of my waring clothes, Album part of my pictures, my mother's large picture, the table cloth that Edward gave me, half of my napkins, all of my red carper trinkets, I wish for Rose to have half the value of 2 rocking chairs, and ____ table, Hattie you take them, send Rose the money for half of them. The dresser and the washstand, and pitcher and bowl go to Hattie also half of the new set of dishes."

It seems that, in that time it was customary for the woman of the house to be the sole owner of her household goods, and designate to whom she wanted to receive them. My own grandmother, Hattie Hudgens left the following;

"Dear Clair. When I am gone, I want you 4 girls to divide all of my things: 6 quilts, 2 blankets and dresses, and 6 pillows. In the trunk there are 7 sheets, 11 pair of pillow slips. 14 scarves, 10 towels, 4 large table cloths, 2 small ones, and 12 napkins. Mama."

My mother also left a short note with the one from her mother and grandmother. "My dear children, of worldly things, I haven't much, but love for you. It's more than tongue can tell. I'm leaving it all to you. May the good Lord watch between me and thee, while we're absent one from another. Mother Clair."

One other thing that she kept and I still have is a braid of her mother's hair and a lock of his from the time they were married March 23, 1881.

When I was in High School, mother and father purchased a portable typewriter for me. During the war, mother learned how to operate the typewriter by the hunt and peck method so she could get more on the V-mail letters that she so faithfully sent me.

In the box of mementos I found the following typed account of her memories and more than anything a tribute to her mother.

My Mother Hattie Niles Hudgens

Married at age 17, first lived on Little Piney at Grandfather Hudgens Mill. They custom ground corn, also fed hogs around the house where mother lived. Lavern was born there. One day an old sow found the baby eating something that smelled good and grabbed for it and got a baby hand, mama was drying a skillet and she threw it at the hog, making her drop the baby.



Photo 4 - Mother's Family 1931.



Photo 5 - Ray with his mother.

Mother had many experiences while yet very young. She was at a friend's house when the time came for her friend to give birth to a child. Mother did what was required, with success. That summer, she helped 13 babies into the world, without a loss. I remember when a neighbor came for mother. His child was choking with membrane coupe. Mother ran her finger down his throat and pulled out a long gristle, saving the child. She went to the smoke house and told me to bring her hot water and lye soap to bathe in before coming in where we knew it was contagious.



Photo 6 - My Mother.

Mamma always seemed to take the hardest losses and disappointments in a way that I have always wondered about. When Aunt Dora had trouble, Mamma would worry about her, but Mamma just took her trouble silently.

She told about Dad and the 3 oldest boys, when they were little and had picked a big sideboard load of corn. They were given the job of driving the load home. The team ran away with the load and the three little boys on the load. Mamma saw them coming and ran in front of the team and swung herself off the ground by the bridle bits until she stopped the team.



Photo 7 - My Dad with his hounds.

Our home was always open to the lonely, they would come and stay a week just for company. I can never say enough good about my mother, in her old days I often cried because I had so many cares and sickness that I couldn't care for her. My good parents are one of the most cherished that I can think of. Mama was tall and slim, and weighed about 105, very blonde and blue eyes and better looking than any daughter she had.

Just one more "I Remember Stories"

Joe was young and a little wild, he planned to take a girl to a dance, Mamma found a half pint in his pocket. She poured it into her camphor bottle and refilled it with tea. Joe never said anything about it.

The Niles family came to Phelps County when the end of the railroad came to Arlington, MO. in about 1865. They were of English ancestry and brought many

refinements to the way of life in the Ozark Hill. The Babcock families were in the dairy business, and were closely related to Stephen Moulton Babcock. (1843-1931), who developed the Babcock test for determining the amount of butterfat in milk.) The Niles tried dairying and making cheese in Missouri, but had trouble with a certain fly that ruined their cheese.

My parents moved to Kirkwood, MO., to establish their first home. This is where my only sister Wilma June was born on June 9, 1916. My mother was somewhat of the tomboy type, having always worked outside with her father and brothers. Mother was not happy living in Kirkwood, and in 1918 they moved to Mill Creek to the adjoining farm to Grandpa Hudgens.



Photo 8 - Home Place looking up the hill.



Photo 9 - Sister June, Clarence, Ray, Lee, and Allyn.

Of my own family, I was the middle child. The first was my sister June born in June 9, 1916. Then, my brother Clarence, 2 years later, 3 ½ years later, I came along, and 6 years after me, was Allyn. We didn't have what most people would call sibling rivalry because of the age difference. June and Clarence tried to raise me and always bossed me around. Years later, I tried to keep my brothers Lee and Allyn on the straight and narrow path, and I even bossed them once in a while. The difference being they wouldn't listen to me.

My biggest regret is that by the time my little brothers got big enough to be REAL buddies, I was already gone from the house.

In 1933 when June got married and left home. I thought I had lost a sister when really I had gained a brother, who was as close and helpful to me as any other brother could have been. I even had a 2nd home to go to anytime I was in Rolla and didn't want to drive 17 miles home. All of us boys were lucky in that when we were married, we just added another member to our family.

In the mid 1930's, we decided to clean up this pasture with goats. To do this: we had to put in goat-proof fences, to cut all of the shrub timber and let the goats kill it by eating off the re-growth. As we did this improvement, all then desirable trees, especially the Walnut and White Oak that my brother Clarence, and I climbed and trimmed. They are still standing as beautiful examples today. By 1939 when I graduated from high school: this hill was completely clear of brush and vines. Today brush is so thick, you need a Bulldozer to get through it.

Running through the valley, was the spring branch, from the spring behind the church. This was a source of water for the cattle, and sometimes for irrigation. There was a crossing out in the field from the church for the use with the wagon. A foot long to get across, when gathering the cows. In the summer: when it was dry, the wagon wheels would dry out causing the iron rims to come off. It was always a job for one of us boys, to park the wagon in this spring, branch at night during the summer. That way: the wood could swell, and hold the rims on. The banks of this branch were covered with Willows and other softwood species and in the dry summers, Clarence and I spent a lot of time cutting these trees, so that the cows had something green to eat. Between the barn and the spring branch was a patch of ground that was very wet natured. This field was used for hay. When I was about 6½ years old, my main contribution to making hay, was to carry fresh water to the workers. One day, when I was taking some fresh water to

my brother Clarence in this field, and walked up to behind the hay rake and I was bitten by a Copperhead on the left side of my foot. We had the almost new 1928 Chevy car at that time, and they rushed me to Newburg, to the doctor. He lanced my foot several times: as the snake had bit me twice. I remember my leg swelled up real bad and I had a lot of pain. I never did like snakes after that, and we had a lot of Copperheads around then. I can remember killing 6 in one day after a big rain that drove them out of their cover.

On the other side of the valley was Mill Creek, where I spent much of my free time. At that time, there were many Meanders in its channel. Every time the water came to a bank or a tree, it undercut the bank, and left some of the finest trout habitat anywhere. In those days, by agreeing to let people fish on your land, the conservation would bring trout from the hatchery at Neosho, MO. and stock the stream every year or two. I was on the creek almost every day getting cows to come home or something. I had every big trout spotted, and would crawl on my stomach, to the bank and throw grasshoppers to see what was there. I have seen trout there that were at least 30 inches long. Dad caught one that was 7 pounds one time. When I was very small, my dad became acquainted with some people from St. Louis, who were stuck in the mud on our road. And they were looking for a place to fish. That was around 1925. They came to our place for the next 15-20 years, and became great friends. It's unbelievable how many nice fish they caught! The trout were the glory fish, but, the fish we enjoyed the most were the Spring Sucker Runs. At times we would snare with a little copper wire, and may as 50 at a time, and some as early as when the snow was still on, and we would just throw them back in the snow. There would usually be some left over for the summer: and that is how we spent most of our Sunday afternoons, baiting for a mess of Suckers.

Today that is classified as a trophy trout area, but with the way the channel has been straightened out, there is very good little habit. There were several people from Newburg and Rolla, who would come and fish at our place, and dad never refused anyone that would ask. One person I particularly remember coming to fish was Ted Roemer, our druggist from Newburg. He always took the front cover off all the magazines that didn't sell and brought a bundle of them to us. They included detective, and railroad magazines among other subjects. Having something to read that interested me, probably had more to do with teaching me to read, than school did. The stocked trout were fingerling size, and I am sure we had Natural reproduction. I think our house was probably the nicest house in our neighborhood at the time. It was a large house

built on a T pattern. The front part had a hallway and a stairs in the center. On the right, was a large bedroom, and on the left was the parlor with a big Bay window. Upstairs were 2 bedrooms over the front rooms, and at the end of the hall upstairs, were 2 more bedrooms that were used by us kids. Especially in the winter when the only heat was what seeped upstairs from the wood stoves below. The kitchen was on the western end of the house, it had a walk-in pantry on the north side about 8 by 10 size. The house was nearly new when the folks purchased the farm from Hallie Ferris, and had been built by Jim Hopkins. When they made the trade for the farm, my parents let the Ferris family make a lock stock and a barrel trade. The Ferris' took over all of the home and furnishing of my parents' home in Kirkwood, and we took over all of their possessions on Mill Creek. That kind of dealings sound strange today, but when you have to move by train, it's complicated.

After dad and mom bought the house and moved, dad immediately began some renovations. He had been in the concrete business in Kirkwood, just before he moved and was good at his trade. First, he built a concrete porch most of the way across the front of the house, with wide concrete steps and a concrete path at the entrance. The center of the house where we used for a dining area and living room was dark, so he expanded the room to include a porch from the north side into the living room, and put in all windows on this north side. He hand dug a basement about 15 by 25 feet under the front of the house, and had a stairway from the living room to access it. All of the dirt had to be carried or wheeled away from this hole. He then built a back porch on the south side of the kitchen and living room and screened it in so we had much cooler place to sit, and eat in the hot summers. Sometime in the early years of occupancy dad dug out all the dirt in a small spring, about 100 yards up the hollow. He even dug out the dirt and found a small cave. He walled up this spring, and put a roof and door on it so we had a cool place for perishables, especially milk and butter. He then put in a 1/2 inch galvanized pipe to bring water to the house. We still had to go to the spring to get some cold water, and I can still remember when I was in my single digit years and I would get under the feet of my grandma Wehmeier, who stayed with us in the summers. She couldn't speak good English, and would say. "Ray go get some vasser." A little later dad built a "milk house" near the main house that was about 8 by 10. He built it out of concrete with field stone, "Cobble stone exterior." It had 2 large holding tanks with the water from the spring constantly flowing through. These tanks were used to put our cans of milk in and stir to cool the milk. We also had a hand cream separator in this building. It had a bell in the handle so that when you got the separator going at the proper

speed, the bell would stop ringing and you turned the valve on and let milk go in and the skimmed milk would come out one spout and the cream would come out the other. Later, he put in a water line to the barn lot, and ran water to the animals we might have confined in the lot. This tank was a used bathtub and we occasionally used it to take a bath in the summer. Of all the buildings that once stood at this homestead, the only one that's still there is the spring house up the hollow from the house place.

For several years, all we had for the livestock were some log barns and hay shed. In 1930, dad needed a barn that was suitable for dairy cows, so he proceeded to build a 32 by 40 rocks and concrete barn. This barn had 12 inch walls with smooth concrete and the inside and cobblestone on the outside. There was a large hay loft upstairs and concrete walkways and managers to feed the cows. This was state of the art in its day, and tight enough that with the body heat of the cows it wouldn't freeze on the inside during the winter. When the barn was finished in the 1st year and before it was filled with hay, many of our friends and neighbors were invited, and barn dancing was held in the hay loft in celebration. In back of the house on the sunny hillside, dad built a chicken house that was a for runner of the earth homes today .It was dug into the hillside on the north end and had all screened windows on the side to the winter sun. Also in this hollow, we had a combination granary and hog house. This was built about 6 ft. off the ground, so that the animals could live under it. It also had lean to shed on one side for additional shelter. One year we had about 25 calves that were fed in front of this building. When they were about a year old, a buyer came to look at them. He offered \$7.00 per head. Dad wanted \$28.00 per head. They couldn't get together, and dad kept them for another year and sold them for \$ 25.00 per head. Dad didn't complain because during that year the banks failed and if he had sold earlier he would have lost all his money in bank failure.

In this somewhat flat area in the hollow: behind the house, was room for several activities. One of those was our mill. This is a burr mill was stuck out far enough, that a mule could be hitched to one end, and went around in a circle around the mill, to tum the burrs that ground whatever was needed. Most of the time, this was corn on the cob that was ground for the cows. At times, when money was scarce, we would grind shelled corn and make whole grain cornmeal that we would use for cornbread. This mill sat on a box that was open, at one end and was made from a large White Oak, that we cut on the hill and dad hued these sides that were 4 inches wide and 18 inches deep by 10 feet long. He did this with a broad axe, much as he did many times to make a railroad tie. I still have this broad axe. This is also the area that we used for butchering our hogs in the winter. This

process involved killing and bleeding the hog. Filling a barrel with scalding hot water, dipping the hog until the hair began to slip. Then we would pull the hog out, and put it on a platform of planks and scrape all the hair off. After the hair was removed, we would hang the hog by the hind feet, on an A-frame scaffold, and proceed with the process of removing all the insides. When finished: it would hang to cool overnight.

When I was small, I enjoyed this butchering much more than later. As with several other jobs, that were too big for one man, there would be a trade off in labor. My grandfather and mother's brother, Clarence, would often come and help us, and later we would help them. After the carcass had cooled usually the next day, the cutting up would begin. All of the fat could be cut off was cut into about 1 inch squares. These were put into large iron kettles for rendering. Preferably this was done outside because hot grease over an open fire is very flammable. After this was cooked at a rolling boil for quite a while, the lard was put into a can of about 5 gallons. This is called a lard stand, and I believed it weighed 30 pounds. The fat meal that had not liquefied was put into a lard press. This had a hand crank that pressed the fat so that all of the lard would flow out leaving a 6 inch disk about 1 inch thick. This was called cranklin and was so tasty to munch on or some used these cranklins in cornbread. All of the red meat that trimmed from the better cuts was then ground into sausage. This was a hand grinder and was hard work, but the result when properly spiced was well worth working for. If we had a larger amount of sausage than we needed to use immediately, mother would cook it and can it in quart jars. In the summer when the meal was getting strong tasting, canned sausage was a treat. All of the hams, shoulders, bacon, etc. were laid out on the table, and nearly covered with salt and seasoning mixes to draw all of the moisture out of the meat for curing. After this salt process: perhaps a month later, the meat hung in a tight building and a slow burning Hickory fire would be used to smoke the meat for a couple of weeks to give it the Hickory flavor. In years when we were not using the little concrete "Milk house" for processing milk, this became the smokehouse. It worked so well and didn't have a threat to burn. We had to drink smoked water for a while.

In some years we would kill a beef and this building was varmint proof and we would also hang the beef here while we ate on it. With beef, it wasn't cured and we just cut off a roast or steak as we needed it or canned it. In the spring, when the weather started to warm up a little, it was imperative that any fresh meat we had was preserved immediately if not sooner. Beef was always cut up, cooked, and canned in its own gravy. This was good eating, but, a lot of work on mom and dad. Dad always helped when there was a large canning job to be taken care of.

Across the road from our house was the workshop. This was the center for many of our activities. It had a vice, anvil, forge, drill press, and a good assortment of useful hand tools. My brothers Clarence, Lee, and I always had a few sacks of Walnuts to crack and munch on when we were loafing. The shop was where all of the animals with saleable furs were processed. These would be stretched on boards to dry and hung on the wall. Some years, the shop would have the whole ceiling with furs hanging down. This is where any serious repairs took place. When I lived on Mill Creek we didn't have any electricity. Anything that needed to be fixed was fixed there in the shop, or it didn't get fixed. It was in this shop that dad would fix our wagons. This included every piece of wood on the wagon except the hub. It took a great deal of skill to make spokes and wood rounds on a wheel. When he had the wheel complete, he would take it to Newburg to Perry Blue, for a new rim to be welded and sweated on. One year he fixed another wagon while they made 500 fence posts for him. The shop is where most of the shoe repair took place. With 3 boys kicking rocks around on those hills, it took a lot of repair. Mother's uncle Fred Niles had a shoe repair store in Newburg, and dad would get all of the needed repair materials from him. By the time we boys were grown we could get a respectable job of repairing our own shoes. In 1928, we got our 1st car, a 1928 Chevy touring car. When we got it, we had to have a garage, and it was built on the north end of the shop, where we could enter or leave by backing out into the main road. The 1st car that I can remember seeing was a Star belonging to Stonewall Yelton, in 1926. The area of our farm was not large as some of the farms go, but the land was good, and we had access to many acres of otherwise unused land. To the immediate south of our house was a tract of "College Land," this was land that was granted to the land grant colleges in the United States. In this case the University of Missouri. It remained in their ownership until it was sold to the U.S. Forest Service in the 1930s. Also joining this was "Railroad land that had been granted to the railroad to sell and use to build railroads across the nation. "This was also sold to the Forest Service, during the 1930s." Up until that time, the neighbors built fences that would divide the land and each used the land much as if it were their own. There was one area known to locals as "Board Bolt Hollow." This area grew some of the finest straight Black Oak that were suitable for cutting into bolts that would make good shingles, or "Clap Boards." At times, dad would make this type of roof for buildings in the early years. Later, when galvanized roofing became available this type of roofing was discontinued. These pastures gave enough area to pasture a few cattle or sheep.



Photo 10 - Dad feeding pigs 1944.

In the mid-1920s, dad purchased 80 acres of land from John Hopkins, that was about 1 ½ miles from home in the light hollow . This farm had about 15 acres of open land. Dad always said he raised enough corn the 1st year to fatten out enough hogs to pay for the farm. There was an apple tree in the field that was thought to be a York Imperial, anyway, at times we would get more than a wagon load of apples off it some years and bury them under a lot of straw and dirt in the garden. We would have apples to eat all winter long. There was a large Ebb and Flow spring near the center of the fields. This spring, would have a pool of 20 feet wide in the spring and early summer, and run a branch the length of the farm. When we were working on this farm, we could take potatoes and a few other things, and depend on getting 1 or 2 squirrels to fix for dinner. This was standard procedure. We always had time to cook and rest while the team ate and rested. Some years we would raise crops, and/or hay on this place. When we had hay there, we would walk the 1½ miles and feed the cows every day in the winter, usually before going to school. Most of this time we boys would have a trap line to run on the way there. We would trap for Possum, Skunk, Raccoon, and Fox. Several years when we needed it, we also had pasture up the hollow that extended to the Sickle Spring, which was the only source of water in the dry summer because the Ebb and Flow spring would dry up completely. This spring is evidently in the same water as the big Yelton spring a mile south on Mill Creek reaches it's Ebb and Flow patterns at the same time. In the late 1930s, we also purchased much of the land belonging to Tom Harris and joining us and extending into Hog Hollow. All of this land was sold to Morris Dewitt in 1945: along with the home place. All was later sold to the U.S. Forest Service, and became as the Dewitt place. At the time I was growing up, the main portion of the "Dewitt" place was occupied by W.T. Wilkins. Some said it was awarded to Mr. Wilkins out of a bad accident; he had while working for Greisidick Brewery, and was particularly controlled by the brewery. The Wilkins farm was at that time about

2100 acres and joined us on the south. At the cross fence, between the properties was a lane that was a cross country road in the early days. It was always kept open for wagons or horse traffic. This road went across the creek, up the hill, and across a long ridge and came out on the east end at Vesie. Today, there is a riding trail over the east end of this end, for trail riders in the National Forest. When this area was heavily populated this road served to make our area part of the communities to the east. Mr. Wilkins did not wish to use much of the land to the north of this road, and let us build a fence along the north side of this road. As long as I can remember we used this pasture of about 800 acres for pasture or as our own. After the Forest Service acquired the land to the east, around the Natural Bridge cave, we also paid the Forest Service for this pasture and ran cattle clear to the Kentucky Road. Mr. Wilkins was a good neighbor, and always let us hunt and fish or cross his land anytime we wished. We usually walked up the Light Hollow, which is just opposite the road leading to the lake and spring. Once when he had a large flock of sheep in this pasture, we found where the wolves had killed about 35 of his sheep the night before. Sometime after in the winter 1935-36, dad killed a wolf in this hollow that weighed 60 pounds. Then draped over the rear bumper of a car, it touched the ground on either side. This hollow is also the area where the Niles family started their dairy and cheese factory. In 1945, Morris Dewitt bought the entire Wilkins farm. My dad did the rock and concrete work to enclose the spring that is the source of Mill Creek. Later on Mr. Dewitt obtained all of our holdings, as well of several other farms, and farmed it until he died and his wife sold the entire acreage to the Forest Service.

About 1/4 mile to the north of our house, was Hardester Hollow and Creek. This Valley is several miles in length, and at times of heavy rains, it would get up and isolate us for a day or two. After cars became popular, many would get stuck in the loose gravel trying to get across it. In these cases, dad would hitch the team to the cars, and pull them out. In the early summer, this creek was warmer than the water of Mill Creek, and was our favorite swimming hole until it went dry in the summer. We did swim in Mill Creek, but the spring water was so cold, that we didn't linger much longer than it took us to get clean.

About 1/2 mile from our house, was grandpa Hudgen's house, and we spent a lot of time there. It was on our way to and from that Yelton School which was about a mile from home. We usually found time to stop and get a cookie from grandma. Grandpa had a good farm; most of the hills had been cleared of timber and sprouts. He always had several sheep as well as cattle and hogs. Just south of his barn where Highway A (currently AA) meets the Mill Creek road, he always had a large patch of tobacco. In the fall, he would cut it and put it

in hands, to hang it in a shed to cure. He always smoked a pipe and used his own tobacco. I am sure that he gave a lot of it away, because he couldn't have smoked as much as he raised. On the cleared hills, across the creek, where he ran his sheep, I can remember seeing dogs chase foxes up the ridge, when we were going to school. Now these hills are so grown up with timber, that you couldn't see the dogs chasing an elephant. Across the creek and downstream about 1/4 mile from grandpa's house, is a large hollow known as "Campground Hollow." Known for a spring and former campground, this is a hollow at least a mile in length that extended into our farm and on south into the Wilkins' farm. Across the valley from grandpa's house, was a small hollow, with a nice spring nearby. When my mother's brother Clarence Hudgens married Lillie Yelton, they built a nice house in the hollow, where they lived and he farmed until grandpa died in 1935. From 1935 until 1993, the farm belonged to the Clarence Hudgens family.

In the Hardester Hollow, was the Ben Gable family, and the Dunivan family. After Ben Gable died, his son, Eugene Gable operated the farm, and now his son Leon operates the farm. In Hardester Hollow, just above the Gable house, is Mill Creek Cemetery, where both my grandparents and my great-grandparents are buried. When we were teenagers, if someone was to be buried there, the neighbors would dig the graves, and I helped dig a good many of these graves. The Gables are the only family that still lives in the old community where I grew up. Lawrence Stevenson still lives 2 miles up the creek.

Even with all of the land that we had under fence: in the dry years, it was hard for us to find enough pasture to feed all our cattle. In the summers, I would take the herd of cattle, and let them go along the roads and eat what grass that was growing wild. Sometimes: I would go alone and sometimes Clarence or Lee or sometimes 2 of us. In the summer of 1936, when it was very hot and dry, we teamed up with the Gables and we took both herds, and herded them together for the whole summer. This was quite a task, as we had about 100 head, and grazing them on completely open and unfenced land. We had a pen at some old German peoples' place on Highway P. We would put the cattle in this lot at night, and then be back early the next morning to let them out to graze. This was tiring work especially when we had to walk 2 miles to the cattle in the morning and walk 2 miles back home at night. Sometimes this routine would go on for 3 or 4 weeks without a day off. There would usually be 3 of us to keep the cows in control. Sometimes we had a horse to help keep cattle rounded up, but most of the time, we were on foot we grazed the cows over several thousand acres: most of it was timber land. There were few fields along Highway P. One of these is now one of the best stands of large pine timber along Highway P, just west of the

junction, with Highway A (currently AA). In the early 1930s: this field was the site of the community baseball field. I wasn't big enough to play on the team, but I was always there cheering on Sunday afternoons. Several of the boys who played there later played some professional baseball. This and another field on Highway A (currently AA), were used by people during the Depression to put a tent and make a home for their family. One family was the Jackie Merrill families, who were in desperate condition, and survived by the generosity of the neighborhood. When the children went to school, they hardly had any clothes to go to school. A few years ago, I heard that one of these boys went to the military services and worked as a medical corpsman. He later went on to school and became a Medical Doctor.

The area that we herded our cows over went from Knotwell Lookout tower on the east, to Tator Hollow on the west, to the Shott farm near Arlington on the north. On the south we went to the Hanley cave and the area around it, some of the time there was water in this hollow, and we made a pen between the cave bluff and the banks of the branch with poles and penned our cattle there. During the day when it was very hot, we would spend the heat of the day sleeping and loafing in the cool mouth of the cave. Many of the days while the cattle were bedded down during the heat of the day, we would pitch horseshoes for our entertainment. We didn't have any regulation horseshoes but would use shoes from the largest horses we could find. This wasn't very professional but we were all equal. When we were herding the cattle, we always had our rifles with us and some squirrel dogs. We killed many squirrels and supplied the families with this meat. When we killed squirrels in the morning, we would clean them and pack in Hickory leaves to keep the flies away, and put them in a spring to keep them from spoiling. The present day health departments probably wouldn't have approved of our methods, but we were survivors. One day on the way to the cows, we crossed a plowed field on the Gable farm, and saw a deer track in the mud. This was the 1st deer track any of us had ever seen in Phelps County. It was about 2 years later that I saw my 1st live wild deer. We always had a few occasional wild turkeys, and would have the dogs' tree one or jump roost at night when hunting. We did not have any coyotes in our area at that time. My mother told stories about the old timers, seeing panthers' and their tracks at times. We didn't see any of these but either panthers or wolves were chasing our dogs sometimes when we were hunting at night. When this happened, our dogs were so scared, that they would get between our legs and would not leave us for the rest of the night. We boys would stay just as close to dad as the dogs did. At the time we were herding the cattle on open range, the Forest Service was just beginning to acquire much of the land,

and to give fire protection to it. My brother Clarence was old enough to be the 1st civilian to be hired to man the Knot well lookout tower. In the spring of 1936, he was hired during the 3 month fire season, that spring at \$70.00 a month. This was big money for a country boy in those days. Later on he was hired full time by the Forest Service to man the tower and other duties. After he left this job, and went into the Army, my Uncle Clarence Hudgens was hired for this job and worked there until he retired.

During the summer when we were herding cattle, my brother stayed home, and helped our father with the farming. This left me, at the ripe age of 14, to be the mainstay with the cattle. In the Gable family, the one about Clarence's age, Eugene was needed to help that family with farming. That left Albert and Virgil to take care of the cattle. It was just occasional that it would rain or something that Clarence and Eugene would relieve us.

For several years in the early 1930s, dad would rent pasture from the Shott farm which was about halfway between Highway A (currently AA) and Arlington. We would drive the cattle to this pasture and then go to see about them every 1 or 2 weeks. This farm had started out to be an orchard and had fields of apples and peaches. This was my 1st experience with Golden Delicious apples. We bought them for 25 cents per bushel. Needless to say, that when they were in season, we pigged out. Another year we rented pasture on the Woodruff farm. This farm was near the Hudgens Cemetery, on the Little Piney River. My brothers and I drove the cattle down Mill Creek, and up the Piney Road, past Newburg, about 5 miles, and in the fall drove them back home. Our cows seemed to develop a kind of homing instinct. One time, in I think 1935; we had a herd of cattle on pasture at the Shott place. Someone tried to steal the whole herd and went so far as to get them all placed in an old garage. When a truck came to get them, the truck lights came on and scared the cattle and they broke out and came through all the fences and came back home 3 miles away by the next morning. We often would drive a few cows or on occasion: just one to Newburg, where there were stockyards and we could load them on a train. When I was small I can remember a cattleman by the name of Stewart who made arrangements with my dad to have a lot for a cattle drive that they were making from Spring Creek to Newburg. We had a load of corn ready to feed them during their overnight stay. Mill Creek was the best way for people on Spring Creek to get to Newburg, as they could cross the flat ridge by the way of near King Sink, and then down Mill Creek without having to worry about the gasconade and lower Little Piney River. At the spring just south of the Mill Creek Church, there was this Yellow Willow tree, about 3 feet across the stump. The

story was told that this tree got its start by a drover, sticking his driving stick in the mud, and it took roots. This was the only tree of this variety in the area.

In the mid 1930s, we had a flash flood on Mill Creek. This washed out the dam on the lake at the Wilkins spring. A wall of water went down the creek, trapping several cattle. We had 2 of our cows float down the creek, and swim out on the railroad fill at Arlington. The Williams brothers who had a store at the time, put them up and inquired around until they found out they belonged to us. Dad took Clarence and me to Arlington and we drove the cows up the Piney Valley and Mill Creek to get them home. When I was in my single digit years, the stock laws were passed. I don't know what year that was, but it was a gradual transition for perhaps the next 10 years. I remember that dad had 2 mules that were raised on open range. One time they followed an old gray mare, and she took them to her home, in Relfe, and dad had to go over there and bring them home. That was about 10 miles from home. Everyone in the area had his own earmark. This was cutting part of the ear off in different places so that each farmer could identify his cow or hog. This worked when if the farmer could catch his young animals and mark them before someone else did. I used to know my dad's mark: but at this time, I have a few blank pages ... My mother told me of getting her trapped in a wagon, when 2 bulls on open range appeared, and started fighting near her house when she was a girl. With all kinds of bulls and cattle running together on the open range, you never knew the sire of your calves, and the cattle quality suffered. At the time of open range, if you had a field of corn or other crops, it was your responsibility to fence the other people's animals out of your field or farm. During the 1920s, most of the people made their living off the land .Some by open range cattle and hogs: but nearly everyone made their cash by timber, mostly by cutting railroad ties and hauling them to Newburg for the Railroads. There would usually be several wagons going to Newburg, everyday hauling the ties 7 miles to Newburg. The railroad was always a big part of our lives in those days. Many of our friends, neighbors, and relatives worked for the railroad in one capacity or another. When we were working in the fields or the woods, we could hear the different trains arriving and leaving Newburg, we knew the schedule of the Blue Bonnet, the Texas Special, and other main line passenger trains and could nearly set your watch by them. When you went to town, you usually had to wait to get across the many sets of tracks to get to town. The 1st time I went to St. Louis, it was by train, and this was the exciting mode of transportation for many years. Our big excitement when in town, and waiting for trains to pass, was to watch the rich people as we called them sitting in the fancy dining cars and watching the bunch of poor country bumpkins.

One of my earliest memories is my 1st trip to Rolla; I must have been about 5 years old. I know we took the Hack, a 2 seated version of a buggy, which was lighter and had a smoother ride, than the wagon. There were several families including my grandfather Hudgens, to get to Rolla, we went up Little Piney to Baker Slough, and then crossed the Piney bottom to the mouth of Beaver Creek. We then went under the railroad where the road still goes today. I remember the fair was held what is now Buchler Park. The big attraction of the day was the fly over of the 1st airplane that most of us had ever seen. Except for ice cream and soda pop, I don't remember very much. After an exciting day, I must have fallen asleep all the way home. There is very little evidence left to show where this road to Rolla once was in the bottoms across Little Piney Fields. At one time, my father told me of a story that Grandfather Hudgens had told him. His father Ballard William Hudgens had buried the bushwhacker Wild Bill Wilson in this area of the Piney Bottom, in order to keep the Union troops from knowing he was dead. I don't know if this story is correct but Wild Bill Wilson was his nephew, and he was a Methodist preacher. This story holds as much truth as any other of the other stories about Wild Bill Wilson. This story was not told until many years after it allegedly happened.

There are many other remnants of old roads that were main routes for wagons and horses. One of these started at the lower end of the Vernie Gable farm. It crossed the creek, and went east up the ridge and came out at the top of the hill on the road to Flat, went on east past Point Bluff School and down to Little Piney and crossed at the upper end of the Jim Brown farm, continuing down past the Piney past the Hudgens cemetery and the Sands farm. I went this way in a wagon the 1st time I ever visited these cousins on the original Hudgens homestead.



Photo 11 - Ray plowing behind a team in 1941.

Raising the crops to feed the livestock

In order to have enough feed for the cows, horses and hogs, to live through the winter, a lot of time was spent planting, cultivating and harvesting. The primary was corn. This was planted about May if possible. Sometimes due to weather, it could be planted as late as July 4th. The first process was to plow the ground with a walking plow. It took a good team and about a day to plow an acre of ground. Ten acres of ground would be a good crop for one farm. Counting the plowing time, the time it took to smooth the ground and plant it, nearly a month's worth of time would pass. When the corn was about 2 inches tall, it was time to cultivate. While dad was cultivating, we boys and sometimes my sister would walk the rows, with a hoe and a pocket full of corn and pumpkin seeds, and replant any spots that had failed to come up. Also cut any bad weeds that threatened to damage the corn. The cultivator was a tool that straddled the row, with 1 horse on each side, with the operator walking behind with a plow handle, in each hand that could flex either way to get weeds out of the corn. In order to drive the team, he had a continuous leather rein wrapped around his back, and would twist one way or the other to guide the team.

In the late summer and fall, when the corn would start to mature, the normal process was to cut the corn and shock it, so that one shock was about 12 rows square. This was a very hot and tiring job, after the corn was shocked, it could just stand there, without getting much weather damage. We would usually go to the field, and shuck a wagon load of corn, and throw it into the wagon as we shucked it. The fodder was then thrown on the wagon

later, and was hauled to the cows, as much as if feeding hay. The yield per acre was never too good, as the only fertilizer that the crops received, was the manure that we hauled out of the barn. There was no commercial fertilizer in use, at that time in our area. In the fall, the ground around the corn shock, was often worked up with a disk and wheat was planted around the corn shocks, this saved the process of plowing. Wheat and Barley was planted in the fall, and Oats were planted in the early spring, sometimes as early as February, if the weather was suitable. The harvesting of the Wheat, Oats, and Barley, took place starting in June. We used a Binder to cut these crops, this machine would cut the crop, and run the stalks with the grain across revolving canvas platforms, and gather it on the other side and tie it into bundles. While dad was cutting the crop, it was the job of us boys to carry the bundles to one place, and set them on end into a shock of about 10 bundles in each shock. After we had finished the harvest, we would then go back with a wagon, and haul them to a central location, and stack them in a large stack with the grain. On the inside and gradually taper the stack as an upside down cone. In some areas where there was a lot of grain, the farmers could get a threshing machine to come early in the season, and thresh their grain before any weather damage could take place. In our area, there were not enough farms to attract the custom operators, early in the season. Sometimes it would be fall or at least late summer, before we would do our threshing. This always was an interesting time of year. All of the neighbors would trade off labor, and follow the threshing machine, throughout the neighborhood. Men would throw the bundles of Wheat from the stack into the thresher; the concaves would chew up the Wheat, and separate it from its hulls. Then wind and sieves would refine this separating process, with a huge pipe blowing the straw into a stack or barn. The grain would be elevated, and come out into a measure that would keep count, and dump it into a sack every time it got to a ½ bushel of grain. The stackers would load these sacks onto wagons, and they were hauled to the granary, and put into bins. While the men were doing the threshing, the women were doing some of their best cooking, and we were blessed with some of the of the finest meals ever put out. After working with the threshing machine a person always had a good appetite. These threshing machines were powered by different types of power at different times. The early ones had the old huge steam engines: that burned wood and we had to have a pile of wood, ready for them to burn to make their steam. In later years: they started to use Farm all tractors, and we thought they had really gone modern. These old steam tractors did not have good brakes, and the operators would sometimes cut a tree to drag behind them when they went down a big hill. When the operators got to a good place to stay and eat, they knew that they wouldn't fare well, at the next place would fake a breakdown so they could eat at our place, and run to

the next place finish, and go on without eating and sleeping at a particular farm. One other type of custom operator that would come through the neighborhood occasionally was a buzz saw when this type of wood making was involved, we would have a large pile of pole wood piled in one place. The saw was placed so that 2 or 3 men could carry the wood to saw, and one man would throw the cut wood into a pile. One of the things that we did that was memorable was to make sorghum molasses. In that spring or early summer we would plant sorghum cane. In the fall at the first frost, we would take strips of boards with notches in it. And go down the rows of cane, and strip all of the leaves off the cane. We would then cut off all the heads to use it for chicken feed. The next step was to cut off the cane at ground level and pile it up. The process of hauling it to the mill was like hauling ice as it was so slick you couldn't keep it on a wagon. Our juice press was 3 large steel cylinders that were powered by a mule hitched to the end of a long sweep, made from a small tree and about 30 feet long. The horse went around and around while someone poked the stalks of cane in between the rollers. The juice ran out into a barrel on one side and the pulp "pumies" came out the other. The cooking fire was built in a type fire pit about 10 feet long, 2 feet high, and 3 feet wide, this was built of flat rocks with a large pipe chimney at one end. A large pan that dad had made, from Sycamore for the sides and flat galvanized metal, for the bottom was placed on this flat surface. This molasses pan as it was called, held almost the entire barrel of juice. The fire was built under this pan, and it took most of one day, to cook this juice down to molasses. All of the time that it was cooking, someone had to skimming the impurities off the juice as it was boiling. While one person was skimming the other would be squeezing another barrel of juice.

The important thing about making molasses was to know when it was ready to take off the fire. Too early it would be green and taste like cane juice, if boiled too long, it would be too thick to use as syrup. Sometimes, we would make as much as 100 gallons. In the winter, we used a lot of molasses, to cook with for the sweetener. Mom made lots of Molasses bread.

In the summer, we often planted a large patch of turnips. We would eat a lot of turnips, and would pull them up by the wagon loads, to feed the cows. In a good year, we would have wagon loads of pumpkins to feed the cows. The turnips would keep for several months, if we put them in a pit and covered them with straw and dirt. The pumpkins kept well in the barn.

Chickens were an important part of farm life. They were to domain to my mother. She had an incubator that would be brought into the house, when there were eggs to hatch.

Sometimes she and dad would go Flat, to get setting eggs from the Havin family. They had some pure Brown Leghorn chickens: and we liked them because they were not so bright, and didn't seem to attract the foxes and hawks as the white chickens. The eggs that we sold were an important source of income .and paid for the groceries and other incidentals. In the summer, when all the pork meat was getting strong, the young cockerels were a primary source of good frying chickens. Many a times, I had gone out and shot a head off a chicken, cut the rest of the head off; scalded, picked the feathers cleaned, and cut up the chicken for mother to prepare for dinner. Of course it was part of the farm job, to furnish the corn, wheat, and other food the chickens needed.

Canning and gardening were very important in a place where we depended on raising almost all the food we consumed .We had a cherry tree in our front yard and would get usually get to can, 50 quarts of cherries, from this tree. I can remember picking cherries in the very top of this tree, and mom telling me a favorite rhyme: "The higher up the cherry tree, the sweeter grow the cherries. The sooner you kiss the pretty girls, the sooner you will marry. "We would pick lots of blackberries, and at times of good harvest, would can many as 150 quarts of these berries. We always had lots of strawberries. They were a lot of work, but, there were several of us to keep the weeds out. When strawberries were in season, we had strawberry shortcake every day. Mother made her shortcake like very short biscuit dough. By pulling a thick layer of berries on lop, and in between 2 layers of shortcake, and covering this with cream she was able to make this one dish. We canned some strawberries, but quite often, we would sell these to stores or individuals. The going price in the mid-1930s was 25 cents for a quart. We also picked wild Gooseberries, and canned a few of these, but you really earned them. My sister June wanted a new dress when she was along about 16, so she went out and picked enough Gooseberries to buy the dress. Some years we had real good patches of wild Huckleberries to pick they canned much easier than Gooseberries. We had so many that one year we sent 10 GALLONS of Huckleberries to mother's sister in Henrietta, Oklahoma. In the fall we had a lot of little seedling peaches to get ripe. Some of the best ones would be canned and many would be made in to Peach Butter. Some of the peaches would he sliced and put on the roof in the hot sun to be used as dried peaches in the winter. We also used this method of preservation with apples. My brother, Clarence and I would open a window and sample these dried fruits from time to time. I am sure I would never have thought of it if it hadn't been for him leading me astray. We had several nice Concord grape vines, on the hillside to the north of the house. Dad used to like to make some of these into wine, and I believe that is why he had so many

friends who wanted to come and fish at our place. He would never let us boys partake in his handiwork, but this is another of those places where my brother insisted that we see what it tasted like. We used a lot of grapes to make jelly this was a good place to stop for a quick snack after school.

One of our most important crops was our Irish Potatoes. We would plant nearly an acre of them, on a gradual sloping field just behind the barn .This ground was gravelly, and could be worked early in the spring, before other ground was dry enough. We usually planted our potatoes on about St. Patrick's Day. It took them about a month to come up and about that time we didn't have hard freezing weather. After they came up and the weather warmed up, the potato bugs would start eating on the vines .We boys would take a bucket with a little oil in the bottom, and walk the rows and shake each potato vine into the bucket, to get the bugs off. We finally started raising some guineas, and they liked to eat these bugs, and they helped us out. Late in the summer, when the vines died down, we would dig these potatoes, by carefully plowing the hills of potatoes out of the ground, and all of us would pick up potatoes and put them into the wagon .Then, we would put them into the cellar underneath the house. We would have a bin of potatoes 30 feet long, 3 feet wide full of potatoes. We would need them because they were a main source of food for every day. Another staple in our food supply was sweet potatoes. For a few years, we would go to the Rinney Franz farm, a couple miles from our place, they lived out on the ridge to the west. They always raised sweet potatoes slips; these were plants that sprouted off a sweet potato. They would be broken off and transplanted to grow, and make more sweet potatoes. Once my mother made this trip by herself on horseback, and on the way home, went to sleep on the horse. When she woke, the horse was standing at a gate in the road, waiting for someone to open it. We would sometimes plant as many as 1000 of these plants on a ridge through the garden. When we harvested them, they were put in paper lined flour barrels, and stored in the west room upstairs above the kitchen. There was just enough warmth that they could keep all winter. We ate sweet potatoes boiled, mashed, baked, AND sweet potato pie. After school it was good to find some sweet potatoes in the oven baked with the skin still on and ready for hungry schoolboy. After dad got a lot of his farming operations under control, he started raising his own sweet potato plants. He built 2 big hot beds in the garden .These were pits, with big logs around them. He would fill these about full of horse manure, and the top about 6 inches of dirt. Then, he could cover the bed with old windows in cold weather. The horse manure would heat and cause enough heat to aid the plants to sprout, and grow in early in the spring. The sweet potatoes were placed just under the dirt, and would

produce plants that could be picked off them about once a week. He got them to growing so well that he sold plants to the whole neighborhood. The going price for sweet potato plants was 25 cents per 100. He also grew all of his own tomato and cabbage plants.

We always had a large early garden near the house, where we could work in it, anytime we had extra time. We raised onions, parsnips, radishes, and other vegetables for the table in this early garden. When the weeds started to grow big enough to pull by hand, we boys would pull them and take them to hogs, for some extra green for them to eat.

We would plant a late garden down in the field, where we could water it in the summer. This garden included lots of tomatoes for canning, as well as our watermelon and cantaloupe patch. The spring that started above the church we called the Big Spring, later on the Topography Map, Elm Spring ran in a meandering direction down through our meadow, and crossed to the creek about opposite our house. In the summer, dad would dam this up with a shovel, and make a pool of water about 2 feet deep. By pulling a sluice box about 12 feet long, that extended out over the pool, a couple of us could stand on a couple of boards with buckets, and dip water into this trough and run it into a ditch. Doing that, we could irrigate the garden, it was a little work but in the hot summer we didn't mind getting a little wet at times. This little field was usually where we had our sorghum cane planted. We had to be careful, not to let the cows get into this crop, or the prussic acid on the cane leaves would kill cattle. Once we had some heifers get out during high water, and they went up the Harris road and got into his cane field, and 4 of them died before they could get to the center of the patch.

This spring was a savior to us in several ways. In 1 or 2 very dry summers our spring at our house got so low that we had to get our own drinking water here. When the water was so scarce, at home we would haul milk to this spring and stir it until cool, and then cover it and leave it there for the milkman to pick up. This spring was strong and still is, during some of the worst summers, and the height of the Depression. We had a large garden just across the road from this spring. By damming up the spring, we could run the water through a small ditch, across the road and out to the sweet corn. Dad had a large of cucumbers, pole beans, tomatoes, and sweet corn. We would sometimes pick 6 or 7 bushels of cucumbers at one picking. Dad would load this produce into the car and take it to Newburg. Fortunately in Newburg, there was the railroad, and these people still had work and had a little bit of money. The cucumbers and other produce were in good demand and sold quickly. He got a dollar a bushel for cucumbers. This crop made \$300 one summer, which was far more than he made on our cattle.

Our cattle operation in those days was not very sophisticated. We had some beef cows and some dairy type as well. The beef type was pastured in the rough type of land. We kept the steers until they were 2 or 3 years of age, then we sold them, it took a good steer to bring in \$75. At the height of the Depression, we couldn't even sell them except to the government, and the top price they paid was \$20 per head. They would pay \$4 for a small calf, and condemn it and let you kill it there, and take the meat back home. Our dairy program was more advanced than our beef program. Dad bought some Jersey Bulls from some herd that was in good stock, but it seemed that we always got bull calves from this cross. Jersey Bull calves were only good to send to market at about 2 months of age to be butchered for veal.

For a while when we first got going in dairy, we sold sweet cream, and someone would pick up the sweet cream everyday on this route, and take it to the market. After a year or two of this method of marketing, the Pevely Dairy started buying Whole Milk. This milk had to be ready for the milkman to be picked up and in St. James by 7 AM. This meant we had to get up and milk to cows VERY early. We usually got up at 4 AM and did the milking before breakfast. When I was in high school in 1938, I was taking care of the cows for our neighbor Paul Baker. I got in this bind because my mother was in the hospital, and Brother Clarence and dad had to be in Rolla. And I had to milk 22 head of cows' morning and night by hand and then go to school. Our horses and mules were an important part of our farming operation. Our main source of power on all our equipment was always mules. We had 2 mules, Maud and Red, that helped raise me. They were raised early in their life on the open range. When dad was able to finally catch them, he tied them to a tree with a log chain, until they got broke enough to be halter broke.

After years of use, they became very docile animals. Once when dad and mother were going up the hill where Highway A (currently AA) now runs and this was no more than a rutted trail, the wagon axel hit a stump in the middle of the road. This pitched my mother and baby Lee out of the buggy, and they landed on the doubletree up against the rear legs of the mules. The mules never moved a muscle until they were safely back into the hack. My brother would take these mules to the J place, and plow, cut hay or other chores, and lead them each way with instructions that mules had never been broke to ride. He didn't want us to get hurt. Being good boys, we decided that we should break them, so that we could ride home. We proceeded to ride and they never did buck a single time. Red got to be one of our favorites to ride, while checking the cows. These mules were of different

sizes: with Red being smaller. Dad offset the hole in the double tree, so that the larger mule had to pull more of the load.

In the mid-1930s we raised a lot of mules. Some of these sold for as much as \$150 each. One that was a medium sized mule was Jin, we kept her and used her on things like the binder, when it took 3 mules to pull the heavy machinery. She became an excellent riding mule, and made the trip to Little Dry Fork when dad moved. Dad kept Maud and Red until they died. We also had a couple good riding mares. The first one that we got was old Bet. I was too young to ride when we first got her: but rode her after we both got older. In the mid-1930s, we got a younger mare, Dixie; she was my brother Clarence's horse. When he was in high school, in Newburg, he rode her the 7 miles to Newburg and back home for the entire school year. He could do anything with her. Our hay was a very important and necessary crop. We had to have it to feed both the cattle and horses. We cut this crop with a horse drawn Moore. This was driven by the power of 2 wheels that had steel teeth that gave them traction, to turn the gears to run the four foot sickle that did the cutting. After the hay had dried, it was raked with a dump rake that would be dumped every 20 or 30 feet and again every time you went around the field so that you had a long window. It was then that shocked into nice little stocks throughout the field. This protected it in case of a rain, and let settle into nice little flakes, for forking onto the wagon.

We then pulled the wagon up in front of the barn, where there was a wing that stuck out about 8 feet, in front of the barn. There was a steel track that ran from the center of the roof, back into the barn. A large rope held a hay fork that would be pulled down, to the hay wagon and be set with teeth to unload the hay. On the other end of the barn, and the other end of the rope, we would hitch the team, and pull the fork full of hay to the loft, and dad would pull a trip rope to dump the hay when it got to the proper position. This would make a large mow down through the center of the loft and we would spread it out to the corners of the barn on rainy days. In the winter when we fed the hay, it would be packed and hard to feed, so we would take a hay knife, and cut the hay out every 6 feet so it could be forked off for the cows. We had a hole about 4 feet square at one end of the barn, and pushed the hay through the hole. When Allyn was little he fell through this hole on his head and got a concussion.

After the haying was finished, it was the custom to go to the Gasconade River, for a few days of fishing and relaxation. Sometimes there would be half dozen families on this outing, including Hudgens and his family. There were at times as many as a half dozen wagon loads of us, with all the supplies we needed for a week. We went up the hill where Highway

A (currently AA) now runs and on out Highway P to the county line. It was then known as the community of Clementine. After crossing Highway 66 we went down a long hill to the river at what was Millers Ford. Wagons would sometimes cross the river at this point, which was about 2 mile below where the Big Piney River runs into the Gasconade. We would put up a big tent and whatever was needed for a camp. The horses and mules were tied to the wagons, and fed the many horse weeds (giant Rag weed) that grew in abundance .The men would do all kinds of fishing, gigging, trotlines, and my dad's favorite was always throw lines. He would put a rock on the end of a small line and about 4 hooks 2 or 3 feet apart. He then used worms for bait and threw the lines out into the river. He caught Drum, Red-horse, Suckers, Catfish, and Bass. On occasion if we needed more supplies, some of the men would paddle and pole a boat up the rivers to Hooker store to get whatever was needed.

It is said that this is where I learned to crawl, while we were camped out and fishing. I think the men fished, while the women cooked and took care of us kids. At least it broke the monotony of the farm life.

I was there on a camping trip, when I was about 5 years old, when I saw, one of the last, Tie Rafts, float down the Gasconade River. It was 8 feet wide and about 100 feet long, with several men on top of it, steering it while it was floating down the river. For a great many years: this was the way they got the ties from up the river, to the railroads for shipment to other places. When I was in high school, and going every day to Spring Creek, we had a good view of the bluffs by the Pillman Cave. Just north of the cave was the scars of an old Tie Slide. From the top of this bluff the ridge runs all the way back to Flat and Edgar Springs. Men could haul their ties to the top of the bluff and slide them down the 500 foot bluff to the Big Piney River. Other men would put them together into the raft, and take them down the river. There were other places where slid the ties into the river at least 20 miles farther upstream.

The trips to the river continued for my dad and us boys after grandpa was gone. These trips hold many memories and were a big holiday for us. Our hogs were not as glamorous as other parts of the farm, but they a very important part of our lives. Usually we would have 2 to 4 litters each year. In years when there were lots of acorns, they would eat enough of these, so that they were cheap to raise. We would finish them on corn; usually we would butcher 3 or 4 of them for our meat, and send the rest to market. It took a nice hog to bring \$15 in St. Louis. These old sows that we had were good weather forecasters too. When a cold snap was coming, you would see these sows going back and forth to their hog house, with a big mouth of leaves with each trip. They would have a big bed of leaves by the time it

got cold that night. One time we had 7 young sows to have pigs, at about the same time and we had 42 little pigs of the same size, running around the pasture.

The Church

The church that was on our farm was an influential part of our lives. This was what was called a circuit church. The preacher had as his charge 4 different churches, and would preach at our church once a month. He lived in Anutt, MO. And also had a church in Lake Spring, and I don't know where the 4th church was at. On all Sundays, we would have Sunday school, except in the hot pan of the summer, which was our vacation as we kids called it.

The church, The M E South Methodist Church sat on our farm less than ¼ mile from our house. The date on the building is 1886. I have the original church record book, which goes back to 1860. The congregation was started by my Great-Grandfather Ballard Hudgens, a Methodist Preacher. I can remember that in 1936, there was a 50 year celebration, and they took out the cornerstone in the northeast corner of the church. They recovered the old Bible and other documents out there at the time of construction. They were in a much deteriorated condition and somewhat disappointing.

The church was built in a grove of trees, that were some of the finest I've ever seen, directly in front of the church was a Black Oak that was nearly a hundred feet tall, at least 3 feet across the stump, and maybe 40 feet to the first limb. At that time, there were many young trees, which had been used for hitching racks when they were young. Some still had twisted strands of wire between the trees. We used these wires to do our childhood stunts on. Most of the trees that had been used for hitching, had been chewed and pawed, and grew back with a few bulges a few feet off the ground. There is still one large White Oak just south of the church, that shows this early treatment. Next to the road, at the south edge, was a Chinquapin Oak. This tree is still there. There are quite a few of this variety on Mill Creek, but none that I know of in my present area. After my father moved to this community, he constructed a large set of concrete steps, and a porch on the front of the church, and these are still in good condition today. One of my first memories of going to church is that a team ran away with a buggy, and wrecked about a half an hour between our house and the church. According to my mother, the creek meandered clear to the west end of the valley when she was small, and there was a hole of water suitable for baptizing just in front of the church.

On many occasions, there would be a basket dinner on the premises, in front of the church. These were big times for us kids, as usually there were some of relatives and friends that were our age and someone new to play with. The dinners were always good and lots of food. Mother was always particular with us, to see that we ate food that was prepared by some of her family that was exceptionally good and clean cooks.

There was a pump organ in the church, that my sister June played, for the singing. Someway, mom and dad managed to get her to town often enough, so that one of the Teasdale Ladies could give her organ lessons. At Christmas time, the church was where we always had our school plays, and each of us would learn a piece to say in front of that whole crowd, our first chance at public speaking. That was what we had to pay for having the big Christmas tree, and Santa coming to our church. We were happy with a knife, horn or a game with anything shiny. In the mid-1930s, after my grandfather died and many others, it seemed that things started to die out. Probably the advent of automobiles had more to do with this than anything else. For some reason, it seems that the young men liked to go to town, to go to a church where there were more pretty girls.

My dad always participated in the church on Mill Creek to some extent, but he was a lifelong Lutheran, and he never had any intention of changing his allegiance. After he got a car, the family started going to Rolla on occasion to attend the Lutheran Church. After my sister June married John Munzert, and joined the Rolla church, it was even more inviting as we could get to see her. In 1935 my mother, my brother Clarence and I, also became members of the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Rolla. I still belong to this congregation.

Going to school

I think it was when I was about 3 years old, that I first showed my thirst for higher knowledge. At least my mother said my grandfather caught me following Clarence and June to school one day, and I was already ½ mile from home. They finally let me start before I was 5; I think it was just to get me out of the house. My first teacher was Burrley Dye, from Waynesville, MO.

Carrie Mihlflet (Underwood), Elsie's mother, said she taught me my ABC's when she stayed at our house, and taught school when I was small. I can't remember that, but I still know my ABC's.

When I was in third grade, there was a teacher at the Yelton School that my parents didn't think was well qualified to teach. My sister June was an 8th grader at the time, and they let her stay in Newburg to go to the town school. My brother Clarence and I started the

school year, by going to the Upper Mill Creek School, about 2 miles up the creek from our house. Something didn't go too well, I think it had to do with what was the proper tuition. We then changed to the Cook School: which was about 3 ½ miles cross country. There were 3 Gable boys, Eugene, Albert and Virgil to go with us on this long walk to and from school. We went over to the Gable house; up by the cemetery and alongside of the Campbell farm, to the Hanley Cave. We then had a woods road to the school, which was about ¼ mile from where the Ft. Wood Railroad crosses Highway J .This was a long walk for an 8 year old. In the cold weather, mother would put baked potatoes in our pockets for hand warmers. I remember one time, in the spring, when it got very warm and on the way home after school we got thirsty. We had all been in the Hanley Cave at one time or another and we all knew that there was a nice pool in the cave about 150 feet from the entrance. We felt our way back into the cave to the water and got us a drink without a light. I don't think I could or would do that today. That winter while we were in school the big item of the day was that Highway 66 was being constructed, from Newburg to the county line. This caused the highway to be detoured through Newburg and over Highway P. This caused Highway P to need much improvement. All of the men in the neighborhood needed to make some extra money, and so they would haul gravel from Hardester Creek at the lower end of our place up the hill to where Highway A (currently AA) runs now. They got \$1.25 for a one yard load. This was big money in 1929 and 1930.

I went to the Yelton School the rest of my Elementary years. There were so few pupils, that we would double up with the teacher, teaching both 7th and 8th graders together, and teaching 7" grade one year and then teaching 8' grade the next, switching back and forth for the kids every year. In the country schools, we only had an 8 month school year. I blame that for the meager amount of knowledge that I acquired in these years.

After I had graduated from our country school, it was decided that I would be sent off to a school in Concordia, MO., for my freshman year of High School. This was a preparatory school for the ministry. Just to get a little bit of extra, they let me stay in Rolla, and attend the last month of school at the Lutheran School. I stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Munzert, who were the parents of my brother-in-law John Munzert .

When September came, I was taken along with Frank Adams from Rolla to St Paul's College, in Concordia.MO. This was the most lonesome time of my life. I was so naive and so country that it was hard to cope with such a change. I soon found out how ill prepared I was for this kind of a schedule. My subjects were German, Latin, English, American History, Algebra, and Religion. We were intermingled with the college students and had to obey

them. The freshman had to do all the cleaning of the dorms and washrooms, wait tables and anything else they thought of. The only time I got to come home was for Christmas. I had no desire to go back for another year, and my parents didn't encourage me to either.

My sophomore year was still a problem to find a way to get to high school. I started the year by living with my sister June, about 5 miles east of Rolla, and going to Rolla High School. I rode with the Charles Elliot boys in their car. After about 2 months, I then stayed with the Munzerts in Rolla for the remainder of the school year. This was a good year, and I learned a lot and made a lot of lifelong friends in Rolla. This was the school year of 1936-1937 for my junior year of high school; we were to arrange a car pool from our neighborhood. There were 2 Gable children, Fern and Virgil and one girl my cousin Vivian Hudgens. We were transported by my families that winter. For my senior year, we FANALLY had a school bus. Our route included coming up Mill Creek road, and going across Spring Creek to pick up the kids from that area, and coming back over highways J and P to Newburg. This took over an hour on bus riding each way, but at least I got to stay home. Due to the transportation problems, it was very difficult to take part in extracurricular activities. If I stayed in town for anything, I would catch a ride with my uncle Sherman Yelton, when he got off work at the railroad at 11:30 at night. He had been married before that time to my mother's sister Hazel. He worked for the Frisco Railroad, and greased and oiled the locomotives in the passenger trains, as they stopped at the depot for service and passengers. When I went home, I always had to wait for him to get off, and I would spend the time at the Houston House, where I could always watch the layover engineers and railroad people play cards to pass the time. During the final year of high school, I was on the debate team. I was shy and not real good or well equipped to do any public speaking. During that year, the principal of the school, Mr. Hickman was the debate coach, and he took us to debates in places I had only heard of Cabool, Boliver, West Plains, and Columbia. Sometimes we spent the night. In these cases: families in the visited towns would take us to their homes for lodging. On one trip, Mr. Hickman took us to see a movie, The Great Waltz about Ira Gershwin. That was a great treat, as I could probably count all the movies I had seen on one hand up to that time. The first movie I ever seen was in Newburg, and was a silent movie, with printed dialogue on the bottom of the screen. Occasionally, I would go to a basketball game, on a few occasions I went on the bus to away games. Anytime I spent going somewhere, my brother Clarence would always give me a little spending money, as he was working for the Forest Service and had a little money on hand. On these long bus rides from school, I would often get off the bus where Highway

A (currently AA) now joins Highway P, and walk home for that mile. I could get home about half an hour sooner than if I had rode the bus.

On our bus route on Highway J, just before dropping off into the Big Piney River, was the farm of Brian Ousley. He was a very good stockman and farmer. His pasture was pretty well cleared on those hills, and is semi-open today. He had a huge herd of goats to kill the sprouts. We often saw Golden Eagles on this hill, trying to catch these young goats. Once they were able to kill 2 of these eagles, and let me take them to Rolla, where I had a friend that helped me do Taxidermy. I helped him some and he mounted these eagles, and I took them back to Newburg High School, where they were displayed for many years.

Our Entertainment

We didn't have very much entertainment that was organized. At school in the elementary grades, we played the games that we could devise in a small area and in short time available. We had ball games, dare base, and shiny. This consisted of a kind of hockey. With hooked clubs, and a beat up tin can for a puck. The big boys would hit it and the smaller ones would try to bring it back up towards the goal before someone tried to hit it again. Sometimes: the can or stick would leave a bruise on your shin, hence the name.

At home, music was important. When I was small, we at first didn't have a radio. The first one was a 2 tube crystal set, that had earphones, and only 1 person at a time could listen to the news from Jefferson City. After we got a car with a radio, we would set in the front yard by the car, in the summer and listen to the Grand Olé Opry on Saturday evenings.

On some occasions, my sister would play the Organ, my dad would play the Violin and Clarence would play the Guitar. Dad liked to sing as well. The neighborhood was very conservative, and some of the people frowned on such loose living, such as dancing. Dad and a couple of friends found some people who liked to dance, and they started having dances in our area and in others as well. This was after we had a car and could travel farther from home. At first I had to stay at home with my brother Lee, and they would take Clarence and June. One of the first dances I went to and tried to dance, was in the spring of 1936, right after I got back from school in Concordia, MO. I was still small for my age, weighing about 90 pounds. My mother and I stood under a mantel that night, and we were the same height 5 ft. 2 in. This dance was on the Big Piney River: well into what is now Ft Leonard Wood, at the Fred Graham home. On the way home that night, the creek had come up, and we couldn't get across. We went up the valley, to Relph where there was a

bridge. We spent the night there at the house which Senator Danforth now owns. The lady then fixed all of us breakfast in the morning before the creek ran out. After we did get home, we had to milk the cows, and I remember going to sleep with my head resting against the belly of a cow. These dances were what some would call square dances, but they were not devoted exclusively to just this type of dance. My dad never danced a square dance, he was a very good dancer, and preferred the Waltz. There was about any other type number. The musicians would stop and play a square dance about every 20 minutes. At the beginning of the evening, someone would make a list of all the groups and individuals that wanted to square dance. He wrote down the names of the men, and collected a prorated share of the cost of the music. I think this is where my dad got an expression that he sometimes used, like when some boy in the neighborhood would suddenly want to get married. "If you dance, you have to pay the fiddler." By using the system of having all of the dancers listed, and calling out their names when it was their turn to dance, all of us little guys got our fair share of dancing time. When it was our turn, we could choose some girl of our choice to dance with.

These dances rotated around the country, and we would just move out all of the furniture from what usually was the Living Room, roll up the carpet or usually the linoleum. We would put on a little paraffin on the floor, to make it a little slick, and we would just have a great time. The musicians would often come up from Rolla or the surrounding countryside, some were good and some would provide the beat. We usually paid these musicians about \$8 for the 2 or 3 of them for the night. My fondness for dances continued for many years. After Ruth and I were married, we still went to many of these until my legs gave out. One of our most solid customs was that at the end of the evening, about 1 AM. The musicians would play "Home Sweet Home." At that time it was the custom, each man or boy would dance the last dance with his favorite lady. Sometimes there were hard feelings when someone didn't get to dance with anyone. I remember that in some song, in my memory is a phrase, "Save the last dance for me." Perhaps this was the origin.

The years after High School

In the summer of 1939, I was at home helping with the farming operation. My brother Clarence was working for the Forest Service, and I became the big boy to help dad. Lee was also big enough to contribute a lot of help by that time. We helped with putting in the crops, and the routine work. Allyn was the old ripe age of 7 by then and he was the go-get-it boy.

When fall came, there was no way that I could go on to school, but I still had hopes. None of our family was in bad enough financial state, for me to get into the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps,) at that time. I could however, get in on an educational program. I enrolled in the CCC: they paid me \$30 a month; of that amount \$22 was put in a fund and given back to me when I was discharged. The remaining \$8 was given to me for monthly expenses.

The hitch in the CCC's was a valuable experience. During that winter, I worked at cutting wood, worked on the survey crew laying out boundaries, for a large refuge on the east side of Spring Creek. That's over to the ridge that now carries the road from Highway M, north past the Twin Ponds and King Sink. In the spring, I laid out strips for the planters to follow in the woods while planting Pine Trees. I also planted a lot of Pine Trees. Many of the Pine trees along Highway A (currently AA) were planted in the spring of 1940. Later in the spring I worked on the carpenter crew, and helped build a house behind Knotwell Tower, that was the first home that my brother Clarence when he married Alice Kienker, on May 19, 1940. About this time, it was time for putting in some crops on the farm, so I resigned from the CCC and came home to help out. The time in the CCC was a valuable experience for me as it was a lot like military life and when I did go into the military a couple years later, I could adjust very easily. When I got out I got a check for \$144 and that was the most money I had ever had my hands on.

After I helped out on the farm for the summer and fall, things were pretty much under control, and it got to where I wasn't needed. My aunt Hazel, mother's sister told me one day, that the Kroger store in Rolla was in need of some help. I went to work as a stock boy and checker for \$12 a week, and that was for 6 days and cleaning the store, after it closed on Saturday nights. I had only been working there for a little over a month, when the biggest news of Rolla's HISTORY hit the town, the Army was going to build Ft. Leonard Wood in this area. At the time, I was rooming in Rolla with Roy Charles. He worked for Pine Street Market, and I just ran down the street, after some discussion he decided to stay with his job, and I decided to seek work building the fort. I got a job as a survey rod man, a job in which I had some experience in. With this job, I was paid \$125 a month, and could live at home. I helped lay out many buildings, set the grades for the hospital, the railroad depot, laid our roads, sewer treatment plant, surveyed on the right of way for the railroad coming to the fort and many other things. This work only lasted a few months. My dad was working as a guard at the fort by this time, so when I was done working out there, I went home and put in the corn crop by myself.

My mother did her share of work at this time. There was a great demand for any place to stay, that the workers at the fort could even hang their hat. At one time, there were 11 men boarding at our house.

Mother hired one of their wives to help her with the cooking and housework. Dad butchered 7 hogs that winter and fed them to the boarders. I went with some of the fellows that stayed with us to look for work at some of the other military installations going up around the country. We went to Tennessee, Iowa, and St. Charles, MO. I was only 19 years old, and couldn't get a job because of my age.

I was having the age old problem of a 19 year old, my brother Clarence took me to St. Louis, for a couple of days and we did some car shopping. I had a cousin of dads that we knew at a Buick dealer, on Kings Highway that could be trusted. He let me have a nice Maroon Ford Business Coupe, with only 11000 miles. This car cost me \$435, and I had the money. Clarence drove back to Newburg, and I drove it home from there. I really didn't know how to drive good enough to drive in any kind of traffic. Shortly after I got the car, I was able to get work at the fort again. On this job, I worked from midnight to 8 AM. Driving home over the winding road: through the timber from Big Piney to Mill Creek would put me to sleep every morning ,and I would have to stop and walk around the car for a while until I would wake up. My job there was processing all kinds of plans on a blue print machine. The job played out by mid-summer, and I was looking for something else.

I heard that they were building Camp Crowder at Neosho, at this time and I thought I might get work there. When I got there, I found I could get work, but I would have to wait a week. I had an aunt in Oklahoma, my mother's sister Elva, and I decided to go see her, and then go to New Mexico where my dad's brother Tate lived with his family, that were like brothers and sisters to us. When I got to New Mexico, the 5 boys of my uncles had all kinds of work going and they let me work with them on whatever they were working on. My cousin Walter (Wally) had stayed with us for several months, during some bad years of the Depression, and we were very close in spite of him being about 10 years older than me. He took me under his wing, and taught me a lot about of the construction trade. One of our first jobs was to build a road, up the side of the Black Mesa which is in the northeastern part of New Mexico, and extends east to become the highest point in Oklahoma. We lived on a ranch and walked up the 800 foot mesa each day. We had Cats, Compressors and other equipment on top of the mesa, but it was a 50 mile trip into Colorado and back to get back on top of the mesa. This was the first time that I had run a jackhammer. We drilled holes for several days in the hard volcanic rock that formed the rim rock. We carried boxes of

dynamite up the hill, and packed the holes and blew off the side of the bluff. Then a man with a bulldozer pushed it over the edge, and we finally made the first and only trail off of this mesa, that could be traveled with any kind of vehicle.

We then went to Tex line Texas, and took out a big scale, and moved it to a ranch and built corrals, in which we could round up his cattle. We helped with the roundup, and loaded out 500 head of calves, to sell in one day. This roundup was very interesting to me. We rode horses all over the ranch to gather the cattle. There were many remnants of the old Santa Fe Trail that crossed the ranch and were easy to see.

After this, Wally had a barn to build for a ranch, several miles up the Cimmaron River. I went with him and we lived with this rancher. He cooked our meals and we had venison 3 times a day. About the time we finished the barn, Wally and Elvena decided to get married and they took my car for their honeymoon. I went back to the ranch and the old rancher took me on the first deer hunt I had EVER been on. We didn't get a deer that day, but I did get acquainted with the country. In 1992 I was going to the reunion of my WW2 outfit, and we went by the old ranch, and it was being run by the son of the original rancher. He took us through the old barn that was still in use after 50 years. He treated us like long lost friends, and Ruth said it was her first time to see a REAL cowboy.

While working up here I went with my cousin Ervin up into the mountains, south of Raton to a lumber camp to get lumber and posts for the corner of some windmills we were repairing. This was some of the prettiest country I have ever seen. Towards the last of my stay there, I helped my cousin Robert drill a water well. We stood over the well turning the cable all day long, as the heavy drill bit pounded on the rock in the bottom of the well. One day, the drill bit stuck and broke the top out of the derrick and it came down and just missed me.

On the first Monday in December, I left that area, and drove 735 miles back home. That was just 6 days before Pearl Harbor.

On the day of the Pearl Harbor attack, I was just looking around the farm, seeing what changes had taken place while I had been gone. Late in the day we turned the radio on and found out what had happened. We did have a good battery powered radio by that time, but still didn't have electricity, and we never did have any while living on Mill Creek.

Potpourri

One of my grandfather Hudgens favorite drinks was Iced Tea. In order to have ice a little longer in the spring and summer, he made an icebox. He constructed this box out of 2 sizes

of Oak boxes. He put the smaller box inside of a larger box, and filled the space underneath and around the sides with sawdust. Then he went to the bluffs along Little Piney below Newburg, and loaded the wagon with the huge icicles that formed in the winter. These would last for several weeks.

On grandpa's back porch was a hand dug well under the floor. This well had a bucket pump. There were little cups that held about a glass of water. They were attached to an endless chain that turned on a clogged wheel, and turned by a hand crank. As the cups started their decent into the well, they would empty into the side of the pump, and out the spout into a bucket. They didn't have a spring near the house as most of us did. A lot of people used a bucket pump; this was a 3 inch cylinder about 3 feet long, with a valve in the bottom. When this was dropped into the well, it would fill and the rope closed the valve when it was pulled out. There was a pulley over the well, to hold the rope and make it easier to pull the bucket out. You could then set in the water bucket and release the valve to fill the water bucket.

When I was small up to about 5th grade, we didn't have any water at the Yelton School. The best part of school was when the teacher would send 2 of us down to the spring at the Yellon house, to get a bucket of water for the rest of the kids. We didn't always go too fast. When they finally did drill a well in the front of the school, they put in a convectional sucker rod pump. Farther down the creek: at the Roy Hudgens house in lower Kaintuck Hollow and at the present picnic area they drilled wells that were artisan wells and still flowing by themselves today. There are artisan wells at the old Knotwell School, in Newburg, and 2 that I know of at the site of the Stony Dell swimming pool. The one on the north side of the old Highway 66 is on the property of my daughter and son-in-law, Donna and Harry Widener. The Kaintuck Hollow was almost a community of its own. On the lower end, less than a mile from the junction with Mill Creek was where my Uncle John Hudgens had his farm. He was Grandpa Hudgens brother. When his son Roy married Viola Dunivan, they built him a house up on the hill, a couple hundred yards from Uncle John's house. After a few years, they built a permanent home about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from Mill Creek. The valley was several miles long, had at least 10 homes up and down the hollow. Most of these were Yeltons and Graysons. Dave Grayson lived about due east of our farm on the old Dana place. He was a great fox hunter, and we would see him in the woods, opposite our house. Fox furs were a valuable type fur, and most of the people who hunted fox in those days hunted for keeps. They would get the dogs to chasing, the fox, and sit on some known crossing and wait, much as when hunting rabbits with a dog. When the fox came by, they

would shoot Mr. Fox. Many of the fox hunters in later years just built a big fire and listened to the dogs chase the fox. This was an excellent place to take a nip out of a bottle, once in a while and brag on their dogs.

Near the mouth of Kaintuck Hollow, was known to have some lead deposits. There was a tale that my mother told me: that in the early 1800's there was place where Mill Creek had washed down to bedrock, and there was a vein of lead exposed enough, so that the locals could get enough to melt down for bullets. They used to talk about lead mining taking place in the hills, east of Mill Creek and north of Kaintuck Hollow. I never did get to see these places, and they probably were mostly prospect holes. We did have a nice display of nice big cubes of pure galena (lead ore), in our school that had been found around these holes, by some of the Yeltons. Charlie Yelton owned the farm where the present Forest Picnic area now is and his house was across the field, in the mouth of the first hollow. It was in the hills behind his house where these deposits were found. Charlie Yelton had the supposed power to remove warts. One time my brother Lee had some bad warts, and he told Charlie about it, and sure enough the warts left. Another person who professed to have a special gift for healing was Susan Harris. Ben Gable's wife was a sister to Reber Harris. They were close friends and either had faith in her to stop bleeding or went to her as a last resort. The Gable's first horse got caught in some barbed wire, they thought that the horse was going to bleed to death, and sent one of the boys over for Susan's help. She told them to go on back home, and the horse would be alright. The bleeding stopped and the horse recovered .and it was never known why but you can't knock success.

Grandpa Hudgens and Uncle John were very close to each other, with Uncle John being just a couple years younger. The families were always very close. The family of Uncle John would always come to church, by our place on Sundays. After church, they would always stop at Grandpa's for dinner. Grandma and Aunt Dora were very close friends too. There were always family get-togethers, when some of their families were visiting. In the winter when it was cold, and they were traveling by wagon, they had foot warmers for the women and children. We had one for our hack too. It consisted of a steel box, covered with some kind of carpet, probably asbestos. There was a drawer that would be filled with burning coals, from the stove. This would keep your feel relatively warm, for most of the trip to town or church. There were trails through the woods to take short cuts in about all directions, these were made by tie cutters, and pioneers before our time. I once found half of an Ox shoe, on one of these trails. I lost it somewhere, and I wish I had it now.

In the fall of the year, after we had the wheat harvested, we would load the back of the car with sacks of wheat, and take them to the mill at Licking. This was an important trip for us boys. The miller would take us up into the mill and let us watch as the rollers crushed the wheat, and it run through the many sieves, to separate the bran and the shorts from the flour. We would take the flour home, and put it in barrels for the winter's supply.

Many of our neighbors did this, as there were many mouths to feed. Grandpa Hudgens always had a big heart, and would take in anybody who needed a home. They raised several children, who didn't have a home, and were like family. One of these was Levi Young, who later was the one who brought dad to Mill Creek, on his first turkey hunt in that area. During the Depression in the 30's, several of the families that were working, in and around St. Louis fell on hard times. They came back to Mill Creek, and they would build a small house out of Oak, in one of the hollows and make it a home until something came along. Grandpa and dad would help them out what they could. My dad provided a milk cow for one of mother's brothers. Building a little Oak house in a hollow, of the farm was a standard practice around the community, for any newlyweds. They would live in this makeshift arrangement, until they could get on their feet, and find something permanent. There were home sites on about every 80 acres, up and down Mill Creek. With the declines of the timber of the industry, most of these people moved away, many to the city to find a better life.

There was never any electricity and very few radios. We did have a local telephone line that was not connected to long distance. We each had our ring, such as a long and 2 shorts, and everyone would listen in to get the latest news. It was in the early 1930s that mother got her first washing machine. It was a Maytag with a one horse gasoline motor to run it, it lasted many years, until she finally was able to get electricity, and put an electric motor on it.

We got our first refrigerator in the mid-1930s. It had a kerosene burner to activate the refrigerant. This had to be lit once a day, and was quite an advancement in our way of life. We had been limited to have homemade ice cream, to those times when someone would brought a cake, of ice cream from town. Now we could make ice cream in the refrigerator.

The people on Mill Creek were a very self-sufficient group or people and even the depths of the Depression, none of them that I could remember had to go to the Government, for relief or any kind of help. We didn't have any more than enough to eat and wear, but we called the people that lived on the poor and dry ridges, "Poor Folks."

During the height of the Depression, there was suddenly a demand for White Oak staves, for making whisky barrels. A good many of the people in our neighborhood started making stave bolts. I was in school most of the time, but my dad and brother Clarence made a lot of them. They would take them to Newburg and sale them. The big hitch was that they didn't have any cash, to buy them with. They gave vouchers that promised to pay at some future date, or you could take them to Tom Stagg's store and he would accept them when you bought groceries. At least it kept food in our mouths. Dad was a good limber man and taught me a lot about the woods. I have as good of knowledge about tree species as most anyone. We knew to look to the moss on a tree, to find which direction was north, and if a tree didn't have any lichens on it was hollow. In the winter when rabbits were plentiful, we would set box traps for the rabbits, when we caught one we would hit it behind the ears with the side of our hand and break its neck. We would clean out the insides and hang them to freeze, then take them into town, and sell them for a nickel each. They were then sent to St. Louis.

Every spring there would be forest fires all over the country, they were set to burn off the leaves and brush, so that there would be more pasture. I remember fighting fires with wet sacks, to keep them away from our buildings and rail fences. When I was in the CCC the Forest Service was just starting to get on this problem. On some days: there would be as many as 50 fires sighted from the Knottwell Tower, where Clarence worked. I got the first government work I ever had, filling in for my brother on the tower. One Sunday while I was replacing him, I spotted a fire south of Newburg, and since there was no standby fire crew that day. I went and put out by myself .I fought fires all over the area of Ft. Leonard Wood, and clear to Success when I was in the CCC.

My Occupation

A short time after Pearl Harbor, a good friend and neighbor, Kenneth Grubb came over to see me. He was the local school teacher, and had my 2 younger brothers as students. He told me he had seen where there was to be a night course given MSM entitled Topographic Mapping and Surveying. He knew that I had been doing some of that kind of work and thought it might be an opportunity to learn more on the subject. We both enrolled and alternated the driving to Rolla. The teachers were Milton J. Hardin and Dan Kennedy. They were both personnel of the US Geological Survey Office at that time, before the class was over; Mr. Hardin offered me a job with the USGS, with the pay per month. I sure didn't hesitate! I went to work on the multiplex machine, which is a system where of projecting overlapping aerial photographs, and orienting them in their relative position at the time

taken. These were then scaled horizontally and vertically to fill known positions on the map we were making. The USGS didn't have over 15 or 20 people working in the Rolla Office at that time and we were all on the MSM campus. We were in the Harris Hall, which was the Civil Engineering Building at the time. Some were located in the Rolla Building. Dan Kennedy and I went into the service at about the same time, and he became Col. In charge of the mapping for Gen. Patton. He is still active around Rolla, and is in his 90s.

That summer was the highlight of my teenage years. I had a car to go where I wanted, and money in my pocket to spend. At first I stayed in a boarding house on Pine Street across from the campus. The last few months I stayed with my Aunt Hazel. She lived in the Hell House where the Stricker Clinic now stands. I would get home about once a week, but usually went to a dance on Saturday nights. We had a saying that the week ended with Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. During that last 7 months, before I went into the Army, and I was working at the USGS, I worked split shifts, which meant working one week from 6:30 to 8:30. The next week would be from 3:00 to 11:30 at night. When I got off work at 11:30, I would always go by the Blackberry Patch Cafe, for a milkshake after work. It was then located where Rolla Motor Parts now stands. These split shifts were good for giving you free time, especially on the weekends when you got off at 3:00 on Friday, and didn't have to go back to work until 3:00 on the next Monday. I worked this schedule for the most part of 20 years. During the summer when I was home, I would often go to Rolla by the route of the hill, on what is now Highway A (currently AA) and west on Highway P to Highway 66 at Clementine. The family of the Childers' had road side stand and home there for many years, and made and sold White Oak baskets. There were all sizes and shapes of these baskets, hanging in the front of the shop. I had gone to school with a couple of these kids when I went to Cook School. We called this spot "Basketville." A little farther down the road was a large truck stop that was known as Powellville, it was a major truck stop and that is where I usually got my gasoline, as much of the time it was 7 gallons for \$1. On down the road a couple of miles, was Stony Dell Swimming Pool. That was a place that I often went to in the summer. I spent a lot of time at my sister June's house that summer and her 2 little girls, Marilyn and Sally were my buddies. Sally was the right size to go through all my pockets to find a stick of gum.

Military Service



Photo 12 - Mom and me, 1943.

I was the first of us 4 boys to go into the Military Service. We all served at one time or another, but never at the same time, I was drafted and inducted into the Army on Aug. 20, 1942. They gave me 2 weeks before reporting for active duty. All of the Phelps County boys from that enlistment showed up at the Rolla Railroad Depot and boarded the train for Jefferson Barracks. This was perhaps the most apprehensive time in my life and for all of us. We had no idea of where we were going or if we would ever return, and if we DID return whether it would be 2 years or 10. My active duty began on Sept. 3, 1942. I was put into the Army Air Force Basic Training Unit at Jefferson Barracks. Some of the boys were shipped out to Infantry Basic training, and I was happy that I wasn't one of them. The 6 weeks of basic training was very rigid and consisted of lots of shots and examinations. I did well on my test and interviews, and I was put in a holding pool to wait for an opening, in the Air Force Photography School. For the next 2 months I was free to help in the orderly as assistant company clerk, and whatever else needed to be done. They let me bring my car to J.B. and go to town when not busy. It was during this time that I went to Brentwood, to visit my neighbor Virgil Gable on one Sunday, and he introduced me to Ruth Thomas who later became my wife. These months were enjoyable, and I got to come home to Newburg, a couple of times while I was there. One time while home, I brought my sister-in-law Alice and their 6 month old daughter Karen, back to St. Louis with me. I would drive all over St. Louis in those days: and never felt unsafe.

In late December, I got my orders to go to Lowry Field in Denver, CO. to the Photography School. We traveled first class on the MO. Pac. Eagle. We had Pullman accommodations and dining car privileges. The chef even saw to it that we got extra when he served us.

I arrived in Denver on the 21st of December, the day I became 21 years old. Then we got to the Field, the public address system was playing "White Christmas." I think that was the first time I had ever heard the number, I still think of that day when I hear the piece. The life at Lowry was a country club life, compared to many military bases. We had A passes, which meant we could go to Denver any time we weren't in school. The school was a good one, and taught us a lot about photography, from using operating cameras, chemicals, filters, processing film and printing. I was scheduled to stay at the base as an instructor, until I found out there was a new class in Photographic Mapping opening up. Former employees of the USGS were in charge of the school, and they immediately had me transferred to this school. I could have stayed in the US longer, if I had taken the instruction job, but I wanted to learn the mapping business. This school was at night from midnight to 7 AM. From 7 AM to 8 AM we would have calisthenics or running for exercise. Some days it was cold but not much different than here in Missouri. The school was a very good school. That gave a course in Trigonometry, and taught us how to make the many mathematical calculations, to rectify aerial photographs to the true ground plane. We didn't have any calculators, and did all of our computations by hand. When I finished this course, I was very skilled at my old arithmetic skills. Denver was a very hospitable town to the soldiers. I went to church and met many nice people. We could stay at the hotels for very little. The USO and the YMCA always had dancing and free food available. My boyhood friend and neighbor Mac Harris, Tom Harris' wife was in contact with me, and took me to the Brown Palace Denver's finest for a meal one night. I had other friends, who took me to amusement park dances, and other points of interest. We would get together and get a cab, and could ride these at that time, for a little bit of nothing.



Photo 13 - Ray in uniform, 1943.

In early April, we had a big graduation at Lowry Field, and we were sent out into the world, to be good soldiers. I was sent to Peterson Field in Colorado Springs, CO. and assigned to the 6th Photo Group. This was training and holding group, from which soldiers were picked, to form the squadrons to get ready for overseas duty. I was soon assigned to the 23rd Photo Recon Squadron. The squadron had already been assigned the planes, pilots, ground crews and other support groups. Our support group was the mapping unit, which includes printing presses and personnel. A lot of the time was spent in getting in physical condition for going overseas. We went to shooting ranges, practiced bayonet warfare, hand to hand battle, used our gas masks, and marched a lot. Over the 4th of July, we went on a 2 week bivouac. This involved a 2 week campout. From Colorado Springs we hiked for 3 days, over the side of Pikes Peak to Cripple Creek, an old gold-mining center. Each night, we camped out along the way in our pup tents, and after 3 days of marching we set up camp along a creek, in a nice meadow for the remainder of the time. This was like a vacation for this country boy. Each day we would take a hike for about 3 hours, and go to different parts of the surrounding mountains. In the afternoon it would rain just after 12 PM.

After the shower we would go fishing or pitch horse shoes or play ball. On a few occasions, we would go into the old almost ghost town, and see the sights. The main attraction there was the Silver Dollar Saloon. I didn't drink like some of my buddies, but I still enjoyed the distraction. After our stay there, we marched 25 miles, back to Colorado Springs in one day. We carried our full backpacks, and it was hard on some of the guys, that weren't as in good of shape. I was in good shape and never got a blister or had any trouble. After getting back to the base, the next month was spent getting our equipment packed, and getting ready to go overseas. During the early part of the summer, most of the unit went to Thermal, CA. For some desert training, but I was on the last of the alphabet, and didn't make this trip with the rest of them. From what they said, I didn't miss much except, they did go to Hollywood one weekend. During the last month I was in Colorado Springs, my mother and an old girlfriend came out by bus, to see me before I left.

About the middle of August we all loaded up aboard a train, and left for the East Coast for overseas duty. I was on guard duty for the trip, and did get a few special privileges. When the train stopped, we had to make sure no one got off, and didn't get back on. Everywhere we stopped; there would be War-mothers, to serve us drinks and cookies. We went by way of Chicago, Cleveland, and on to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. While at Camp Kilmer, Duke Ellington did a performance there. They left the outfit out one weekend, for a last fling in New York before we left the USA, as luck would have it I was on KP that day and didn't get to enjoy the sights of New York.

On Aug. 20, 1943 we went to Staten Island to catch our ship for overseas. We had a big ocean liner for our ship. It was a sister ship to the famous Moral Castle, that had sunk off the Atlantic Coast, a few years previous to this time. Our convoy was said to have been the largest to cross the Atlantic at that time. There were ships as far as you could see in every direction. That didn't give too much comfort when there was a submarine alert, and they would make all of us go down 2 or 3 decks, below the waterline on these occasions. We went through the straits of Gibraltar in daylight, which was a first for convoy. That night, we had an Air raid alert and we didn't care for that too much. As we went through the Mediterranean Sea we could Algiers and Oran. On the 3rd of Sept. we landed at Bizerty, North Africa. This is perhaps 40 or 50 miles west Tunis, Algeria. Until we could be transported to our new base: we camped out near the sea shore. They told us to dig fox holes: in case of an air raid and sure enough, there was an alert. It was a German Recon plane, but when the search lights came on, and the anti-aircraft guns started firing we dug some deep fox holes really quick. A 20 MM unexploded shell went through the barrack bag,

of a fellow in the next pup tent to me. It shook us up somewhat, and we thought we were really in a war.

Our new home was in an olive grove near the little of LaMarsa. While stationed there for about 2½ months, I got to visit the city of Tunis, but the Arab section of town, the Kasbah was off limits. About 5 miles from our field, was the ruins of the ancient town of Carthage, the headquarters of the famous Hannibal that invaded Rome. This was amazing to see the workmanship and engineering used so long ago.

There was no need for the mapping unit attached to in this area of the war, so I was doing anything that could keep busy. There were no barbers available anywhere around, and one day one of my friends talked me into cutting his hair. I didn't know much about it, except that I had seen my dad do it, he always cut the hair on us boys. I guess the job was good enough to make him cooler, because before a week had passed I was cutting hair full time. Without a clipper and just scissors and razor, it wasn't an easy task. I even cut the Colonel's hair on occasion. While there we found a true Turkish bathhouse in the area, and would go there and spend time in their steam room, and then get a rub down and after a few hours would come out being very clean.

When we landed at Bizerty, we saw all kinds of craft taking out for Italy, for the invasion of Salerno. This was the first place for the allied forces to make a landing on the toe of Italy. The invasion of Sicily was just winding down. Our planes flew many missions over these areas for intelligence. There were several bomber bases in North Africa, and they were flying into Southern Europe, to bomb the industrial complexes. The raid on Wiener Neustadt in Austria took place while we were here, and several of the damaged bombers, landed at our base on their return. Our photo recon planes made these missions to see what damage had been done.

Our planes flew over from the USA, they left Colorado before we did, and flew to Brazil and then to the Assention Islands. They had B25 for a navigation plane, on the way they got into some bad weather, and had to spread out the formation so they wouldn't run into one another. One plane got lost and never did make it over, that was our first fatality.

In November: we got orders to move again. The ground forces had to stop at Bizerty again and wait for transportation. We camped out in the rain and mud for about 2 weeks. This time we had pyramid tents where 6 to 8 men were together. This is where I started to learn to play the game Bridge. We bought oranges from an Arab that rode around the camp on a donkey. They were the sourest oranges that I have ever eaten. They were fresh fruit

though; we finally pulled out and had Thanksgiving at sea that year. We landed at Taranto at the bottom of the boot in Italy. We bought dried figs from the Italians and they were a good change. From here we boarded a captured Italian train and proceeded up the Eastern coast through Bari and Foggia to San Severo. The railroad yards in Foggia were in complete wreckage from our bombers. This area of eastern Italy is the agricultural bread basket of Italy. With all the good flat land, it was to become the main place for our bombers and fighters, to launch the Air Offense of southern Europe, we operated for about 2 weeks out of an air field called Foggia number 7. We then got enough temporary landing mats that just about every available man went out and built our own airstrip. This was close to San Severo and all personnel moved into an abandoned hotel. I think that we told them to get out. It was a good place to live. There were about 15 of us in one big room. That's where we spent Christmas of 1943. Several of our group could speak fluent Italian. We would hire ladies to do our laundry at their house, and they found one lady that agreed to fix a Christmas supper for us on Christmas Eve. There was about 10 in our group and she had chicken and homemade spaghetti and other things. This was the first time I had seen square spaghetti. Out through the door was an adjoining part of the house, were the cow and the chickens. When we first moved into San Severo, we could still hear the guns from the front line, and we did have a few air raid alerts but no trouble.

About the last of January, it was time to move again. We didn't know it at the time, but our outfit had been chosen to do the recon work for the invasion of southern France. By this time, it was determined that the mapping unit I was in was no longer needed, in that area as there were plenty of maps of the area, to be used for flight maps. I started looking for something else to be assigned to and found an opening in the Air Corps supply section. There were only 3 of us after I joined them, and we took care of all the parts for the planes, and other things like tools, flight jackets, pilot's watches, and air mattresses. Naturally as a fridge benefit, I was able to obtain all of the above. I helped get the parts and supplies ready, and we went by truck back to Taranto, and shipped out going to Sicily and on to Sardinia, landing at the southern port of Cagliari. We went via truck to an airfield near Sassari in northern Sardinia. This was a big airfield and had been used by the Germans. It was pretty well shot up, but we soon got it into a usable condition. We were joined here by Free French forces and by British planes and pilots. Most of the British planes were Mosquitoes. The weather was cold and we had to have heat in the pyramid tents that we lived in. Some of our brighter mechanics devised a way to get our fuel lines under the

ground and into the center of the tent and let the 100 octane gasoline drip onto some rocks in a barrel, this was not safe but we did stay warm.



Photo 14 - Supply Office in Safdinia, 1944.

During most of 1944, our outfit was isolated from most other parts of the Air Force. In order to keep the necessary parts and supplies for our planes, one of us in the supply department was almost always traveling to find these parts. Algiers, Oran, Naples, and San Severo were the usual places. We had courier planes within the group that made different flights between our different units. We had a B17, some C47s, B25s, and one P38 that had been taken out of combat duty. I flew in all of these types of planes; the P38 was used ONLY by our squadron. None of these planes were armored, because we wanted the planes to take pictures and run. The nose of the plane carried the cameras, and after we quit using them for photography, we moved all of the radio equipment from behind the pilot to the camera compartment. This left room for one passenger to sit just behind the pilot, with legs on each side. This was called "Piggy Back" I rode this way a lot of times. While we were in Sardinia I was sent back to San Severo, Italy to find parts and keep them flowing to our squadron. I was more or less assigned to the Group Engineering Officer. He let me have a jeep, to go anywhere I needed to go, around the many Air bases in eastern Italy. On one of these jaunts, I contacted Bill Aaron, at Foggia and we had a good visit. I spent a lot of time going to wrecked planes and getting parts from salvage. After 50 years, I can still remember part numbers that were engraved in my memory in those days. But where did I put my shoes yesterday? About midsummer, we moved from Sardinia, up a little closer to

the area we were taking pictures of. We crossed the straight between Sardinia and Corsica in barges, and went by truck to Bastia Corsica. We set up our camp in a grove of Cork Trees. By this time in the war, we were getting much better food and supplies. We got our first Cokes while in Sardinia. We got an allotment of cigarettes each week, I think it was a carton. I didn't smoke, but when we could buy them for 50 cents a carton, and trade them to the natives for \$10 to \$20 a carton, everyone took their allotment as good trading material. My overseas pay was \$50 per month and \$30 was sent home and put in my bank account. With a small amount of spending money, a little extra spending money was useful. While in Sardinia, a bunch of us bought a calf of about 500 pounds, and had a big barbeque. We could buy eggs from the local people, and had something to supplement our diet. They would also wash our clothes: and were easy to get along with, however on an occasional trip to town we had some of our trucks got shot at.

After we got to living in Corsica, they tried to make living a little bit nicer, and the quartermaster unit set up a big communal shower. It was big enough so that 50 men could take a shower at the same time. One day while taking a shower, I looked up and there was Billy Dean Fulton, and an Alexander boy from Newburg, They were operating the control tower on the airfield. We had a nice visit, were together again the next year in Florence, Italy.

Our unit was involved in making charts, along the southern France to get ready for this invasion. We were the first unit to use color photography, by piecing together enough color film to make a roll for our type of camera. We were recognized, for getting the information to identify the areas where the troops could land without being in water that was 100 foot deep. When the invasion did take place: there were 1000s of our bombers that went over our area, to and from this bombardment. Many of the crippled planes landed at our field on the way back.

As soon as an airfield could be secured, our planes moved to a field in south France, and the ground crews followed by boat. When we landed on the beach, we had to keep in a narrow area that had been cleared of mines. We then moved by truck, up the Rhone Valley to Valence, France which is a few miles south of Lyon. This area showed the most devastation, of any place I saw during the war. There were very few bridges left. We saw many dead horses that the Germans had used to pull artillery. We saw disabled tanks, both ours and the Germans, many trucks and even a railroad gun. We were only about a week behind the invasion forces, and it seemed like we were in the REAL war. At the field we took over, there were still our tanks there that had been shot up by the Germans, and their

big 88MM anti-aircraft guns around the field. There were big aerial torpedoes lying around the field. About a half dozen of us sat up housekeeping in an abandoned farmhouse on the side of the airfield, and got enough supplies from the mess tent to cook for ourselves. We made coffee in a gallon tin can using a blow torch for heat. There was an abandoned German warehouse in the town nearby, and we would go through it, looking for anything that we could use. There were many pairs of wooden shoes. Some of the fellows found an abandoned German Ford Diesel truck. They got it running and we built all of our parts bins onto this truck. When we got to Marsielle, they wouldn't let us take it to Italy.

We were in this part of France in the fall, and it was beautiful country. We were the only GIs in this area and were treated well. We met some of the local girls, but none of the nice girls, were allowed to go anywhere without a chaperone. Most of the people knew enough English so we could get by.

We were there for a month, and none of our mail had caught up with us. We had the parts for our planes we needed, and so I went with one of our pilots, riding "Piggy Back" to Corsica to look for these items. We didn't have much luck, and didn't find any of our mail. On the way back the oil cooler flaps failed to function, and our oil started to heat up and we had to make a forced landing, on the southern coast at an almost deserted airfield. We had to spend the night, and someone told us of a French family and took us to a very nice house, and they put us up for the night and fed us. The next morning, a mechanic came and fixed the plane, and we returned to the outfit. While we were in France, our pilots were flying missions into northern France, to get intelligence of that front. Some of the time they flew at 500 feet to get a closer look. We lost 2 pilots this way. When we went to a reunion at Colorado Springs in 1993, I was across the table from these pilots, and I didn't know that he had made it back.

When we left France about Thanksgiving, we camped for a week right in the heart of Marsielle, and had fun seeing what that city was like. We went back to Italy and landed at Leghorn, from there inland to Sienna, Italy. We pulled into this walled city in the dark, and I didn't ever go back into town in daylight. It was famous for its Briar Pipes, and it was supposed to grow the finest Briar in the world. Several of our pipe smokers shopped for pipes. Our billet there was a monastery, the walls were several feet thick and the building was big enough, to have a basketball court on the 4th floor. It was a warm place to spend the winter as it gets pretty cold in that part of Italy. We had about 10 miles to travel to the Airfield. There were lots of farmers using huge white cattle to pull their wagons. I have read

since that this is the place where the Cyanine cattle came from. We stayed here until spring, and then moved about 50 miles north to Florence, Italy.

In Florence we had an abandoned hospital for our quarters. This was our nicest place to serve. The food was good by then. We had a good Special Services NonCom. He had one of the latest movies for us almost every night. Every week or so we would get a ration of beer. We made trips to see the Leaning Tower of Pisa, went to a USO in Florence, went to the country club and some even went golfing. There were the historical places, like the Cathedral and the Ponte Vecchio a medieval bridge with shops on it.

In the spring, we had a softball league, with room for the diamond on our grounds. We had some very good softball players, and this was the first time I had a chance to play in an organized league, with players who knew what was going on. All of the time we were overseas we had a squadron softball team, and won the championship in several places. Each outfit would have their own bookie, and some games would have over a \$1000 bet on them. Money wasn't good for much of anything. There were a few souvenirs available, occasionally we could buy eggs, bread, wine or pay for our laundry. Consequently, we didn't worry much about our financial affairs. Every now and then, when I would accumulate a little extra, I would send \$100 money order home to be put in my bank account.

Fifty years ago this spring, was VE Day. I remember it very well. Commanders didn't want anyone going in town and do a bunch of celebrating. I was assigned to guard duty on the main gate from midnight to 4 AM. During the wee hours of the morning, I heard a rustle in the leaves, behind me was a little concerned. When I shined my light I discovered that I had a friendly little porcupine for company.



Photo 15 - Ray and friends at St Peter's Cathedral in Vatican City, Rome, 1945.

From May 7, to Aug. 20, 1945, we didn't have much to keep us busy. One of my friends and I hitchhiked about 150 miles, to see what the famous city of Venice was like. We found a place to stay in a USO camp, and rode the Gondolas, took tours of the canals through the city, toured the Cathedral and fed lots of pigeons. We really did have an interesting and educational time. Later, several of us were given a rest and recreation visit to the rest camp, in Rome for about 10 days. They had tours scheduled, and took us to the famous landmarks of Rome, including the Catacombs, Coliseum, famous bridges, churches, and of course to the Vatican City. We toured the St. Peter's Cathedral, and made audiences with the Pope. I missed that, but I do have a picture of 2 of my buddies and me standing in front of the Cathedral. Overall, it was an unforgettable experience.

The 3 months that we waited to be sent back to the good old USA, was a time of relaxation and frustration. We had very few missions or work to keep us occupied, and

there was always the thought that we might be sent for 30 days, and be reassigned to go to the Pacific.

In my 2 years' service in the ETO, I was fortunate to receive battle stars; "Campaign Stars" for all the campaigns that our outfit participated in, this was 10 campaigns. Each good for 5 points toward an early discharge. These campaigns were: Air Offensive Europe, Rhineland, No Apennines, Po Valley Sicilian, Naples-Foggia, Rome-Arno, So France, Air Combat Balkans, and No France. On Sept. 2, 1945, our ship arrived at Norfolk, Va. And we were back in the good old USA. The band was playing "Sentimental Journey." it truly was. I was shipped to Jefferson Barracks at St. Louis for my discharge on Sept. 7, 1945, having served 3 years and 18 days in military service.

At Jefferson Barracks, I was met by a wonderful girl named Ruth Thomas, which I had dated while at Jefferson Barracks almost 3 years before that time. It was a wonderful experience to see her running across the street to meet me after all those years. The next day, I went by where she worked and we went to her home for a few hours, before I headed back to my home in Mill Creek. I caught a ride to Rolla to the bus station and when I got there, my parents had given up on me getting home that evening, and went back home. I called around and found my sister June and family, at a dance at the Charles Dean Home. They sent my longtime friend Roy Charles in to pick me up. The next morning, June and Johnny took me home, and on the way we found mom and dad on their way to Rolla to find me. They missed me too. It sure was a happy reunion.

I spent the next few days at home, and after being with so many people for so long, I thought that the farm was the most lonesome place I ever seen. At the first opportunity that I had, I went back to the USGS, to see the people I worked with before the war. To my surprise, they wanted me to come back to work immediately, and at a much better salary than when I left. I put them off for 10 days, and went back to my old job.

When I was discharged, there were all kinds of veterans trying to get back in the swing of being a civilian again. Many of us were in the habit of having some kind of transportation, and doing as we wished. There were no cars for sale, as no new ones were produced during the war. We all had a little money on hand, but price ceilings restricted any sales except, at the prices set the government. Foods like meat, sugar, as well as gasoline were rationed. Nearly all of us were looking for jobs and housing. I was fortunate to have a job to go to. The GI Bill had been passed, and employers were required to rehire returning veterans. That didn't help if you didn't have a job when you went into the service. Many of

my friends found some land and went into farming. I was seriously thinking about of doing the same. My parents had an option on a nice farm east of Rolla, that was for me to take over, if I so desired. When I found a place for stable employment, other arrangements were made and dad sold the home place on Mill Creek, and bought and moved to the farm east of Rolla on Little Dry Fork Creek, in the spring of 1946.

About a month after getting out of the service, my good brother-in-law Johnny found a car that was for sale, and that was only because someone died. I bought this 1936 Plymouth Coupe, and it was a dog but at least I had wheels. It didn't take long for me and Ruth to decide to get married, and we were married on Oct. 26, 1945. We went on a short honeymoon to southern MO. The old Plymouth held together but not on the tires. We ran out of spare tires in Mountain View, and were lucky to find a used tire to limp back home. When we came home over the rough gravel roads of Edgar Springs, Flat and on down Mill Creek our tires barely made it, as the inner tube was sticking out of the side of the tire when we got back.

When we got married, that was the start of a new and wonderful life. One of the fellows at work was moving let us have the small house to rent, that was near work and where the UMR Stone hedge replica now stands. I was working in the Civil Engineering Building, Harris Hall. All USGS facilities were on the MSM (now UMR) campus when I started working. In May of 1946, we found a little house for our first permanent home. The house wasn't much, with wood heat and had a wood cook stove. By fall, we were heating with fuel oil and cooking on a hot plate gas 2 burners.

The property included a good 2 car garage on the back of the lot. I decided that this could be converted into a rental unit and give us some much needed additional income. I had to go through the Office of Price Administration, to get a permit to buy building materials, for the purpose of constructing housing for returning veterans. The garage was 16 by 20, raised it 2 feet and proceeded with my limited experience, to do everything but the electrical work by myself. By November, I had the house for long enough that when Ed and Erma Jean Haas, got married they moved in while I was still finishing it. At this time we put in a large propane gas tank, and gas floor furnaces as well as gas kitchen ranges, in both of the houses. At times: I still don't know how I accomplished some of the tasks, and I am sure that I had more energy those days than now. The OPA set the amount of rent that we could charge at \$35 per month. I could have never managed the financial requirements without the assistance of my father-in-law, my parents, and my brother-in-law. Banks didn't give out

loans without a first mortgage in those days, and I had to rely on friends and family to loan me money or be my security.

About the time I got the house finished, I was approached about being an agent for State Farm Insurance Company in our section of the state. At that time there had not been an agent in Rolla for a good many years and I took care of Phelps, Pulaski, Manes, and Dent Counties. I drove a lot of miles, but gas was cheap, and I sold enough insurance to build up the agency to good part time business. During all of those early years, until 1960, I worked shifts. One week I would work 6:30 AM until 3 PM and the next week would be 3 PM until 11:30 PM .This gave me a lot of time do extra things.

For about the first 5 years of our marriage; we usually went to Brentwood, to Ruth's parents' house on the long weekends, 3 Friday to 3 on Monday. In May of 1948, we had the start of many happy years of being parents. Donna was born on May 11, 1948. The feeling of responsibility was tremendous. For the first few years of our marriage: Ed and I fished, hunted Quail, Deer, and anything else we could find. For many years, we had partnership boats, motors and even a cabin on the river. They are still close friends. As our families grew, and we each became more involved with our own families, it was only natural that we wouldn't spend as much time together.

In 1950 I was assigned to a field project in Broken Bow, Nebraska, while I was there the Rolla National Guard unit, was called to active duty and headed for Korea. I was glad that I had already served my time. When I came back to Rolla, after only a month, Donna was already 1½ years old and didn't recognize me. By the next spring of 1951, our little 3 room house on Oak St. was getting a little small, especially after we found out that a family addition was on the way. We purchased a nearly new house, at 1013 Morell in the Ridgeview Addition, it was considered to be a first rate subdivision at that time.

On Nov. 5, 1951 our son Bill was born. I was sure proud to have a son. My good friend Ed Haas, said "Ray, he sure does look a lot like you, but maybe he'll grow out of it." Ed and I had a deer hunting trip, planned and I was to hunt near our friend's house, on the Big Piney River. They could anytime that Ruth wanted me to come home, if the time was there. As it turned out, Ruth got me up at 4 AM, when I planned to get up at 5 AM. I went to the Phelps County Hospital, which is its first year of operation, with my dear understanding wife. By around noon, we had our son. That was the day of the November snow storm. It was snowing when we went to the hospital, and didn't stop until almost 2 feet had fallen. My

good buddy, Ed Haas, killed the biggest buck he has ever killed, very early in the morning the road was so bad that it took until noon to get back to Rolla.

I really had the good Lord looking after me. My good mother-in-law came to Rolla, early that morning to see how Ruth was doing, and got stuck in town and took care of Donna for almost the whole week. Ruth's brother Bill, was at home in Lecombe by himself, and had quite a time taking care of everything, on the farm during and after the storm. Bill was a good baby, and we really enjoyed him. I always thought that we had much better and more experienced parents than Donna did.

In the summer of 1952, I was in a position within the US Geological Survey that I was in consideration for further Training, and consideration for advancement. This required me to enter a field and office training program, to learn all of the procedures used in making their maps at that particular time. During that summer, I trained locally to use the surveying instruments necessary, to accomplish field mapping. In September, I was assigned to do mapping in North Dakota. This was quite an experience for me as well as Ruth. With small children to take care of in a strange town and area. Fortunately, she has always been able to make friends, and adapt to adverse situations. During the 3 months we were there, both children had mumps and measles, Bill celebrated his 1st birthday, we did have one good outcome, and that was that my assistant, from Louisiana had his wife with him, and she was just as lost as we were and she spent most of her time helping Ruth with our 2 sick kids. We stayed there until a few days before Thanksgiving, before coming back to Rolla. After 2 weeks' vacation in Rolla, we were assigned to a project in Okeechobee. Florida. Arriving in Florida in mid-December was not a good time to find affordable housing. We had to live in a one room fishing cabin, for 2 weeks before we could find an apartment, such as it was. At least it was a 4 family affair, and we had 2 other survey families to share our misery.

I did my field mapping all around the north and west side of the lake, and did all of the mapping of an Indian Reservation. It was very interesting and including huge ranches, vast tomato fields, and many swamps. Several times we would get our survey truck stuck, and have to get a shovel and bury your spare tire about 3 feet deep for a dead man, then use a hand winch to get our truck back on solid land. When you are several miles from help, it gets apprehensive. In Florida, I had an assistant from Rapid City, South Dakota, and he didn't know any more about the country than I did.

We saw Rattlesnakes, Alligators, and learned what the wildlife of Florida was like, but probably the most dangerous encounter was often whole herds of bulls. One of my

experiences during our early years of marriage was the insurance business. Our new preacher, Rev. Ellerman moved to Rolla with his insurance, with the State Farm Insurance Company. When someone came down from Jefferson City, to service his policy, he was looking for a local representative. I wound up with the part time job. At first, it didn't take much time, but by the time I had to go to the field, it had grown to be a good sideline, and they wanted me to quit my job and go full time. They worked with me and got Ed Haas, to take over for me for the year I was in the field. At that time, I took care of the company business in Phelps, Pulaski, Maries, and Dent counties. Now I would guess that about 10 agents cover that area. I learned a great deal about the business, in those about 5 years, and it was beneficial ever since. Anyway when I returned from Florida, I had to make a choice and with 2 children and a good job, I chose to stay with the USGS. Many, who went the route of insurance agents, have made more money, but none of them have had a better life than I have.

We came back to Rolla from Florida in May of 1953: and got back into the rut of normal urban life. In the summer of 1955 my folks were getting to the point, where they wanted to retire from the farm, as dad was in his 70s, and he deserved to a few years of taking it easy. We worked out a deal where they received our town property, and we bought the farm. We moved to the farm, and I proceeded to try to operate in much the same way as they had. I raised corn, wheat, alfalfa, had a big garden, milked several cows, and sold the cream. This meant separating the cream from the milk twice a day and washing the equipment. Ruth made butter, took care of the chickens, and tried to can everything that was available in the garden and orchard. With 2 small children, it was more than she could handle, and after a year and a half, we had to quit that rat race and moved back to Rolla. We bought a house on North Cedar St. where we lived for the next 15 years. I kept the farm, but sold all of the livestock and machinery. I rented the farm out and as it turned out, it was the best move I could've made. In the summer of 1957, I had a serious knee surgery, and I wasn't able to do much of anything for nearly a year. I then put the farm cropland into a government program called the "Soil Bank" for 5 years. I bought a few cattle for the pasture land and started rebuilding our herd. People that I rented the farmhouse to would feed hay in the winter, and I had time to take care of the fences and manage the farm. By the time the land had come out of the Soil Bank program, Bill was happy to be with me out on the farm, anytime he could get loose. I had bought a few good registered cows, and with the entire farm I wanted a good Angus herd. I expanded the cow herd enough to utilize all the crops I

could raise. In the late 1960s, I bought all of my father-in-law's registered Angus cows and was starting to get a nice herd.

When Bill was in high school, he bought his first Angus cows and his first horse; with money he made mowing lawns in the summer. When he got to be 16, and could drive he started taking care of a major part of the feeding and cares of the cattle. He went to school to learn to artificially inseminate our cows to some of the best bulls in the country. The 60s were a great years for us, and like all of the other decades, it brought a lot of changes to our household.

In August 1968 Donna married George Michael Bell while they were still in college, at SMS and they were later to be the parents of our 3 grandsons. The 60s were filled with many good times, with our children's activities. Ruth and I were busy with our church functions. In my own case, I kept busy with hunting, fishing, softball, golf, bowling, service clubs, farming and you name it and I was involved. In 1970: the USGS needed me to do some work in the field for them again. Bill graduated high school that spring, and Donna graduated from SMS on June 7, and we left for Eagle River, Wisconsin the next day. Donna and Mike moved back to Rolla, and moved into our house with Bill, and we left them in charge with Bill in full responsibility for the farm.

The assignment to Wisconsin was like a vacation for us, as we were in a primary vacation spot, of Wisconsin that full summer. A friend of ours here had called ahead; to a school teacher friend of hers, and she let us rent her upstairs apartment, with everything furnished for only \$40 a month in a town where housing was very scarce. She treated us as family too. I had my 14 foot aluminum boat with me: and carried it on top of my survey truck, so all of our survey parties could use it access areas where water was a problem. We often left this boat on a nice lake on a Friday when working, and Ruth and I would go back on the weekend, to fish and mostly just relax. Several weekends were spent just sightseeing, up in the upper peninsula of Michigan. On one long weekend, we went by a large boat to Isle Royal, in Upper Lake Superior for 2 days, and flew back on a seaplane.

Taking off in that old Beech craft plane, on a choppy lake from Isle Royal, like to scared Ruth to death, and I haven't been able to get her back on a plane since. I had flown in many of the military planes during the war, including P38s, B17s, B25s, C47s, and others, so I thoroughly enjoyed the flight over the copper country and back to Houghton , Michigan . While we were in Wisconsin that summer, we had a lot of company from Missouri, Ruth's mother and father came along with her aunt Amanda and Clay. My brother Clarence and

his wife Elnora with their sons, Dean and Dale came by. Ernie and Sue Meschke and Hollie came for a couple of days. Floyd and Alma Haas came by at a time when Ruth was very sick; we got to know that people in Missouri hadn't forgotten us.

Shortly after we got back to Rolla, we celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary. Now as I write this, we are nearing our 51st anniversary, and it doesn't seem like 26 years could have passed since then. Where has all the time gone? The 70s were eventful years. In 1972 we bought the house and farm where we live now, that joins the original farm. This had previously been the farm of my Uncle Ed Hudgens, my mother's brother. After we moved here, we continued to enlarge our farming operation very slowly. On Feb. 21, 1977 I retired from the USGS after 35 years of service. Perhaps the biggest events of the 70s were the first grandchildren. Our first was Chad, born August 12, 1972 and the twins, Jason and Travis, born August 18, 1973.

Our greatest sadness was the loss of my mother and father in 1975. My father died suddenly on May 16, at almost 93 and mother got hit by a train on August 13, at 78 years old. Another of our big events of the 70s was the marriage of Bill and Reta acquired the original farm, tore down the old house and constructed a new one, where they live today. We formed a farming partnership with them, and continued improving our operation, for several years until I became 70 in 1991, and sold out to him and decided it was time to slow down and let him run the show.

During the 80s, the first big event was the birth of our first and only granddaughter, Rebecca Sue, born on January 2, 1980. I am sure that our greatest blessing has been to have our children and grandchildren close by, where we can see them grow and be part of their lives. A special event of the 80s was Donna's second marriage to George Widener on June 11, 1988.

The 90s

Time keeps on moving by. During these years of the 90s, one event that was of great importance was our first grandson. Jason marrying Erin Baize on September 31, 1994. February 10, 1998, Lauren Elizabeth became our first great-grandchild and on September 27, 2001 Nolan Thomas. Arthur Bell became our first great grandson.

The 2000s

During this time period, so far my only sister has passed on to her reward. We certainly miss her. As for ourselves, we continue to be blessed with our family. Rebecca has been married since May 25, 2002, Kevin Buntin, he is a Marine in Japan. Becky is in Springfield

furnishing SMS this fall. Jason and Erin have built a home just south of us on the road of the farm. As he gets older, he is letting Bill help with the farm. Travis, the other twin, is getting married this coming September 2003, and he lives in Springfield. Chad lives and works in Springfield and is the last of the grandchildren to marry for now. We are certainly blessed to have our family as close as we do. I must close this rumbling before I have to add another of decade happenings.

August 2012

After considering many options, I must add a few more pages of later happenings. Jason and Erin still live by us, and help us. Travis and Tina have blessed us with another granddaughter Addison, September 22, 2006. Chad who lives in Springfield has given us another great-grandson, Liam, January 8, 2007. Our only granddaughter Rebecca Sue did not have a successful marriage to Kevin Burien. Her marriage to Tony on September 8, 2010 resulted in our great happiness with Omero, November 3, 2005. Then twin girls Olivia and Aameah on December 14, 2006. The children are a great source of happiness. After all the great years of happiness, we had our great loss. On March 22, 2012 we lost my dear wife Ruth, after 66 years of joy and love. This left me alone at home and I now am a resident at the Veterans Home in St. James, Missouri. It is a great pleasure to live and I receive the best of care. I go home to our house on weekends sometimes. It's NEVER the same. Perhaps one day, Donna will make her home there. No two children could do a greater job of taking care of me, plus, the help of my grandchildren and in laws.