

NEVER CRY UNCLE

By

Milt Erhart



The pain from my twisted arm forced up between the shoulder blades with my freezing face pressed against the frozen ground was almost unbearable. "*Say Uncle, you little punk, and you can get up.*" No way, I thought. A little more squirming will relieve pressure just enough; besides, the teacher will be ringing the bell any minute now.

Clearly, since the teacher hadn't come outside for recess I should have "*held it*" until noon. Instead, I made a mad dash toward the outhouse, trying to out run the upper-grade bullies. Many daily major decisions as a 1st and 2nd grader revolved around ways to *outwit--avoid* upper grade bullies at recess. Pinned to the ground many times, I never cried out that dreaded word *Uncle*.

Walking into my young grandkids front doors a chorus of "*Let's wrestle*" many times was yelled out, being charged in hopes of knocking me over. I commented that an "*Erhart Never Cries Uncle,*" from my childhood determination to not *give in or admit defeat*.

Life in a real sense is a *wrestling match*. One can be very successful, winning virtually all of life's matches and then so much *rain falls -- everything goes wrong* that you feel pinned to the floor, working desperately not to be counted out. As a wise person said: "*What counts is not whether you hit the mat; but if you get up to finish the match.*"

My life story has been a pattern of significant successes, but also excoriating lows. Yet, somehow instead of crying *Uncle*, looking back and letting bitterness get to me, when virtually nothing was going my way, I kept endeavoring to open doors and *Never Cried Uncle*.

Life into my early forties was nearly a straight line of increasing professional and financial success. Then I hit major road *bumps*, followed by twenty plus years of prosperity. Thanks to the Great

Depression--Recession of 2008-2013, once again I found myself doing everything possible to avoid crying out *Uncle*.

Raised in a moderately religious home, I was instilled with a value system including purpose and goals in life. One goal was to better the lives of my fellow man. This value system ultimately brought me in conflict with superiors whose only mission was to control those under their authority with no interest in the betterment of the lives of those served, whether in the spiritual, financial or political arenas.

Life's twists and turns have also given me unique insights into the decline of religious influences in society and a front row seat to America's economic and political shortfalls. Shared are glimpses of the motivations that drive me forward, designed to help my descendants and readers alike develop purposes and goals for their lives.

This on-going memoir incorporates my parents' lives, their influence and significant contributions to family, church, and the Kansas City community.

Rarely are a son and community so blessed.



Writing one's life story has forced me to prod my memory, self-analyze, and pinpoint those experiences that created the person I am today. Humorous episodes, color, substance and references to historical and political events are included.

Noted Ancestors: Great Grandfather Tom Collins did two Civil War tours with the Iowa 5th. GGG-father Benjamin Brumbach (Brownback) housed George Washington and French General Lafayette at Valley Forge. Many GGG-Uncle David Rittenhouse, (astronomer, treasurer, mathematician, surveyor and philosopher) wrote the position papers used as the foundation of our Constitution.

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BEGINNINGS

Dad (*Clifford Eugene*) was born on Easter Sunday April 23, 1916. His siblings, three sisters, each had nine brothers?? Dad's parents, George William and Etta Frances Collins had been dating and at the Clinton, Missouri, 1891 county fair. They were offered a wagon, team of horses, cow, stove and household items to instantly get married! *Why Not! What couple would pass up such a deal and instantly agree to get married?!?!*

My only memory of Grandpa Will was visiting him in a Kansas City hospital shortly before his April 14, 1944 death. He asked me to shake his hand and I was so scared; refused for fear of dying too.

Mom (*Doris Maxine*), the youngest of seven children was born April 16, 1919 to William Henry and Josie Alma Browning Brownback. My only memory of this grandfather was shaking hands in his bedroom shortly before his 1946 death and then watching my uncles divide up the many horse harnesses in the barn. He chewed tobacco and once attempted to spit out Dad's car window, not realizing it was rolled up, making quite a mess.



Mom and Dad grew up eighty miles south of Kansas City some five miles apart in Linn and Anderson counties, Kansas, attending one room schools, with Dad the only boy in his family to attend high school, graduating from Garnett High, and Mom from Blue Mound, both A students.

Mom's home was one mile south of Centerville, ¼ west; ¼ south; ½ mile west—south side. House was to the right of gate. Dad's was also one mile south of Centerville, 6 ¼ west, road dead ends at farm. Concrete footings used to be visible a few hundred feet to the left.

When Mom was born her older sister Alice bemoaned having another baby to care for. But Alice became a second mother, Mom staying with her and husband Roy Smith in Blue Mound during high school years.

The families were uniquely different with the Erhart annual family reunions held each June in Iola lasting a weekend full of jokes, stories, and genuine nonsense. Brownbacks met the second Sunday in December to greet, see the new babies and spouses at Centerville Hall. They seemed more serious, conversations mainly revolving around cattle, grain prices, and weather. Compared to the Erhart reunions, they were quite brief, dad just warming up when it was time to go home.

The Brownbacks were successful well-known large farmers who also traded in horses and mules. While scouting for horses, Dad and Grandpa Will stopped by the Brownbacks on a Sunday. A few Saturday night's later Dad came over unexpectedly and Mom, deciding to live dangerously, went with him to a movie in Garnett! Dad studiously courted her, playing on his French harp tunes "My Blue Heaven" and "Red River Valley," **and it didn't hurt that he had a car!**



On date night Dad would start honking two miles away so Mom would know he was on his way. Mom was absolutely stunningly beautiful, and Dad had her picture permanently imbedded in the gear shift knob of his Model A. She was 17 when he asked her to marry, but mother Josie, insisted her daughter be 18. Nine days after her 18th birthday, they were married.

41" & Mattoon

After their April 25, 1937 wedding they drove to Kansas City, Kansas, where dad had found a job in a Safeway warehouse. Their wedding bed was the removed Model A seats in their new home, now under asphalt near current I-635 and State Street within a mile of the Kansas NASCAR track. Mom and Dad for over a year rented their house out and moved to 1415 Jefferson, Kansas City, Missouri, renting for less than they were getting on their own home. It is now covered by I-35, Northwest of Kaufman Performing Arts Center.



It is somewhat a mystery as to what Dad did those three years (1934-37) between high school graduation and marriage. From stories told and no doubt embellished at Erhart reunions, we know he spent time around Shenandoah, Iowa, picking corn by hand while staying with married brothers Forrest or Frank.



Brownback's - 1940



Erhart's - 1941

Dad and his brother-in-law Earl Beckett harvesting in the southeastern Colorado truck farms near Rocky Ford, including tales of friends at least driving

closely behind loaded watermelon trucks as they slowed down on a grade, one would stand on the front bumper lifting the melons off the truck and passing them back to the passengers. He also worked for a short time in a Cripple Creek, Colorado gold mine.

Late in life Dad began to point out family history sites. On a trip back from attending a musical show in the Ozarks, Dad drove us by cemeteries in Butler and Deep Creek, Missouri, plus Kincaid, Kansas, where his parents are buried. Collins, Taylors and Stamper names figure prominently in the Erhart background. Another time he pointed to a farm on the left south of Garnett stating a great-uncle used to live there, two of his boys fought for the confederates, their bodies never found.



1919		
G-Uncle	G-Gpa	G-ma
Will Collins	Tom Collins	Etta
Aunt Clara	Aunt Cleo	Dad



EARLY YEARS

In the spring 1943, pining for the freedom of the farm and dad with a job at the Sunflower Army Ordinance Plant, we moved NW of Gardner, Kansas.

Close to 143rd -- Edgerton to Spoon Creek Roads; I remember the house being on the west side of the road and could see the plant smoke stacks 1/2-3/4 miles NW



My first memories were sleeping in a back room of this house and ducking hard ears of corn Dad shucked and tossed into the wagon pulled by a team of horses, since we could not afford a corn picker. Mom raised chickens to supplement the family budget, selling both eggs and pullets, making dresses and clothes from the feed sacks. Once, traumatized, I watched as Dad destroyed 95 baby chicks to keep a disease from spreading.

My parent's hard work began to pay off, moving in 1945 to a larger farm half way between Olathe and Stilwell, riding the John Deere B with Dad. Except for bitter cold days, I walked the one and half miles each way to Cottonwood School, (191st & Renner) joined by two or three kids.

In addition to dodging bullies the teacher pulled my hair for minor infractions. If that didn't work, she stood me in the corner facing into the wall. Obviously not the most precocious first grader, yet somehow I still won the area spelling bee.



179th & Renner, east side



Second grade teacher Miss Calderwell excited my interest in reading, history, and math. She taught me again in the sixth grade. How chagrined I was when she expressed dismay in my lack of progress during her absence. I would do anything to please her, reading all 72 books in the school library.

On March 1, 1948 Dad and Mom's break came when we moved to the Foster place, though at that time it was one of the poorest farms in Johnson County. This 480 acre farm had at best 200 acres of tillable ground, the balance being woods, rough terrain, granite outcroppings, a cave rumored to be a rattlesnake den, with meandering Wolf Creek, a veritable paradise for boys and our city friends.

After WWII the Department of Agriculture soil conservation service was pro-active in providing guidance in crop rotations, and ways to limit top soil erosion. Dad absorbed this knowledge, turning the farm around. He left ground cover for birds and other wildlife between the fields and road. Mabel Foster, a very difficult person, previous to Dad never had a renter maximize the farm's potential like he did.

Professional golfer **Tom Watson** bought the farm in the 1980s, turning it into a showcase. He enhanced the initial care Dad gave it in the late 1940s and 1950s. The Overland Park Arboretum and Botanical Gardens abuts what was our old farm. Dad and Mom had their 64th wedding anniversary at the Arboretum, its Mission Statement and educational efforts fitting nicely with my parent's philosophy.



I was a second grader when we moved to the Foster place, walking one mile south to the Sunrise School. (191st & Switzer sw corner) The first half mile had no road, walking through dense trees amidst granite outcroppings, great cover for the ever present rattlesnakes, literally fearing being bitten at any moment. For years vivid rattlesnake dreams bedeviled me, *waking up screaming in fear!*

An even more dreaded fear was the deadlier "water moccasins." Swimming in Wolf Creek I spotted one gliding towards me and quickly scrambled out of the water. We also had copperheads and knew if one bit you chances of survival was nil. Believe me; walking around you kept your eyes open! While swimming in our pond I stepped on a "snapping turtle" who promptly took a bite out of the bottom of my left foot. Boy did my foot hurt, but we never considered going to the hospital or doctor, just learned to "grin and bear it."

The Foster tenant house was two stories, about 24'x48', four rooms on each floor, with no insulation or indoor plumbing. The only heat came from a downstairs wood stove. After Dad proved his value, *Old Lady Foster* in 1951 paid for indoor



Foster-Watson Cave-1981
Renee-Bruce-Gene-Me-Mary

plumbing which involved blasting rock 600 lineal feet to install the water line from the well which Dad and the church men performed gratis.

Indoor plumbing meant an actual bathroom and a kitchen sink with faucets. Before we used the outhouse and had a water bucket sitting on the kitchen counter.



Most of my farm childhood I used the outhouse to do *my job*, including at school. Winter time cold air blowing up from below meant you didn't waste any time and summers snakes could be a challenge. Once Wayne had to go so bad he sat next to a black snake curled around the adjoining lid. Catalogues once read, were the primary source of toilet tissue, slick glossy pages not appreciated.

I slept upstairs, and in the winter dressed and undressed beneath the covers. Baths were taken Friday night behind the stove, water being heated on its top, all using the same water, with Mom wisely taking hers first.

Summer nights could be stifling hot, sweating so profusely the bed sheets stuck to my flesh, while listening to snakes and mice movements in the walls. After long hot days in the fields, many times we went to a near-by rock quarry's cool pond, jumped in with a wash rag and rough lava soap.

Winter evenings we listened to our radio favorites, including Amos and Andy/Fibber McGee and Molly while playing dominos and checkers. Those two games sharpened our math and strategy skills. We didn't have indoor plumbing or television, but never consider ourselves poor. My parents never expressed regrets as to their social or economic status.

We were a typical hard working farm family determined to *get ahead in life*.

Initially, in addition to cattle, wheat, corn, milo, soybeans and alfalfa Dad tried raising sheep, with the herder living across the upstairs hall from me. The first winter coyotes killed 37. The herder ate with us, but never took a bath. Mom was more than upset at the smell and with the coyotes eating our profit, raising sheep was abandoned.

We had two milk cows up until I was about twelve, but our time became too valuable to spend milking, along with unpasteurized milk health concerns. Dad did virtually no mechanical repair work. Ed, a mechanic at 199th and Metcalfe was reasonable, doing all our work while we just kept on *running the equipment*. My parent's ability to focus on what was most financially productive showed their good *business sense*.

Before we abandoned milking, I had a small business of buying Holstein male calves shortly after birth for \$9-\$12 each, feeding them surplus milk and feed supplement. The first few days the calves would bawl for their mothers. By putting my fingers into the calf's mouth, it would start sucking. I then inserted the nipple at the bottom of the bucket with milk and supplement into their mouths, quickly shutting them up.

My parents qualified as two of the most generous persons to ever grace this earth. Their generous spirit and hospitality was constantly evident among the church families, neighbors, and many relatives. Being the only farm family in our church, we were a magnet for Saturday afternoon drop by's, which included hiking in the woods and exploring the caves and granite outcroppings. Dad on Saturday afternoons loved

to drive through the fields, checking on the crops and his beloved cattle. Big parties were the norm, which many times included a softball game.

191st & Plum se corner

Dad being a fun loving Erhart *full of the Old Nick*, was driving us to Grandma's house Thanksgiving when from behind a car kept honking, the driver waving his hand out the window, so dad pulled over near Osawatomie on U. S. 169. A supposedly deputy sheriff asserted he was going to issue a speeding ticket. Since the supposed deputy was neither in uniform nor driving a police vehicle, Dad took one look at his badge and responded: "*You could have bought that at any five and dime store*," put the 1950 Chevrolet in gear and out raced him to the county line, long before *Smokey and the Bandit or Dukes of Hazard*.

After WWII the demand for new automobiles was so huge you ordered and then waited. Dad ordered both a Dodge and Chevrolet at Olathe dealerships, the Chevy showing up first. The only new Dodge he ever owned was his very valued light blue 1996 Ram 1500, in Renee and John's driveway.



So. Cal. Christmas—New Years 1948-1949



Proud as peacocks we drove our new 2-door Turtleback Chevrolet to Southern California, Christmas 1948 visiting

friends, relatives, beach, orange groves, the celebrated "Knots Berry Farm," Sequoia National Park where dad got stuck.

Grades three, five and six were at the West Aubrey School two miles west. Brother Wayne and I would many times ride our horse Silver to school.

When Dad brought Silver home, he was basically unbroken with no saddle. For two years I rode bareback staying on by anticipating his every malicious move to remove me from his back, including bucking and suddenly swerving. If he was successful, it could take hours to catch him.



Edwina Jay-Me

Thus I became a very good rider and upon arriving at the schoolhouse liked to show off, rearing Silver straight up in the air. Sometimes he would fall over backwards while I slid off just before getting crushed. The teacher put a stop to this nonsense, insisting Silver be tied up immediately on arrival in the horse shed next to the school.

Silver's other antics included lying down in Wolf Creek, going under low branches or clotheslines and rubbing naive rider's legs against tree trunks. Once, coming home from school my girlfriend Bernadine was riding behind me, Wayne naturally forced to walk. She wasn't holding on very tight and Silver **bucked**, with Bernadine tumbling off!

Silver was named after the popular radio show Lone Ranger's white horse. After jumping on Silver I would yell "**Hi-Yo Silver Away**" imitating the Lone Ranger.

On a cold February morning Wayne, who had for several days been growing a large snow ball with considerable ice inside motioned intent to throw it at the window and I, inside, didn't believe a first grader he could hoist it that high, nodded yes. The large window broke, letting in the cold air, closing school. We took our time trudging the two miles home to our fate.



1952 W. Aubrey Students
Wayne- middle-Lee visiting
Bernadine by me on right

My elementary education paralleled the decline of the one room, one teacher rural school houses throughout eastern Kansas. Thus fourth, seventh, and eighth grades were at the Stilwell School with two grades per teacher. Consolidation sadly extended the school year into early May from mid-April.

Eliminating one room school houses meant school buses and we were at the tail-end of a 45-60 minute ride. Dad was always complaining about the wash board conditions of the rural gravel roads and the road grader's son also rode the bus. When going over especially bad stretches of road, naturally Wayne and I expressed dad's views regarding the road graders mistakes, his son responding angrily, so fist fights ensued. Wayne and I were then permanently assigned the back seat where the bumps were accentuated.

Manhood came on my 9th birthday when Dad brought home a new Ford tractor. I considered it my birthday present, plowing and cultivating much of the then several hundred acres Dad rented. On my eleventh birthday Dad traded the Ford for a three bottom plow four row cultivator Allis Chalmers WD, whereas the Ford was a two bottom, two row cultivator tractor. Our John Deere's hand clutch was too stiff and seat too high for me at ages 9-12.



Living on the farm besides snakes had other scary moments. Always in my mind was the death of a cousin whose skull was crushed when his dad ran over him with a steel wheeled mower. At age ten I was plowing full throttle when the Ford hit a big underground rock with such force, killing the engine, throwing me into the steering-wheel that I cried, it hurt so bad and caused severe stomach pains for the longest time. Mom worried I might have contracted the dreaded polio.

Later I fell under the hay rake, crawling desperately to avoid getting my head crushed by the heavy steel gear box wheel, screaming for Dad to stop, with him grabbing for the John Deere hand clutch, however he was on the Allis, which had a foot clutch, thus when he finally stopped the wheel had caught me in the mid-section, rolling me over and stopped on my abdomen. Another time running to inspect the combine's grain bin, I tripped, falling under a wheel, but fortunately the ground was soft with no injuries other than a sore leg. Except for my terrible stomach pains never went to a doctor to check if any injuries.

I played on Stilwell's basketball team, the most enjoyable aspect was riding home from small towns after games in the back of the bus and being kissed by the cheerleaders. Then I worried Mom would see the lipstick smudges. Sports were balanced by playing 1st alto saxophone in the Stilwell and Enterprise Academy bands



SUCCESSFUL FARMERS

In 1954 we bought 80 acres for \$15,000 just east of the Foster farm, moving there in 1955. It was a crowded three room house since there were now four boys, Lee born in 1948 and Stan born in 1951. Initially I slept on a mattress in the wash house rafters until indoor plumbing and two bedrooms were added later.

(191st & Antioch 40 acres on the northeast corner and 40 acres on the northwest corner)



After we moved that August the news was full of speculation regarding the disappearance of Mrs. Wilma Allen, Allen Chevrolet, and a prominent Kansas City car dealer. Speculation was she had been kidnapped while driving her new red and white 1955 Chevy convertible.

Dad and I were out looking for our cattle who escaped during the night after I left the gate unlocked. We suspected they went back to the Foster farm and after turning north off 191st (Tibbetts then) to the right saw Mrs. Allen's body in the hedge row. She had been in the August heat three days, not a pleasant smell or visual experience. The kidnapping and murder was a sensational story, thus we were pictured on the front page of the August 8, 1955 *Kansas City Star* as the ones responsible for locating Wilma Allen.

Reader's Digest, May, 1957 pages 230-235 provides a graphic accounting of Wilma Allen murder, stripped, begging for her life on the car floor, driven into the country and dumped.



Starting with no leads, the killer was apprehended 101 days later November 13 in Oakland, California, tried and executed in the Missouri Gas Chamber on February 24, 1956, just 103 days from catching him to execution. Justice was much swifter in the 1950s.

In 1955 we bought Mom's original home place, 540 acres for about \$65,000, some 55 miles south in Linn County. Many times I would drive down Sunday staying with Grandma Brownback in Centerville, working all week and returning home Friday night. We now farmed upwards to 1250 acres using hobby farm equipment by today's standards.

After the last boy left the farm Dad had only cattle on the Centerville place. Many times I flew home to KC and helped in the fall roundup to bring the cattle home either in several fifth-wheel trailer trips or a semi-truck.



The last round up was 2001. Dad drove his beloved Dodge pickup, I on a tractor and cousin Marion on his ATV. A stubborn cow refused to get in the corral, collided with the pickup, flipping onto her back. I was sure she was badly injured, and we had no rifle to shoot her. Then she bounced up and ran the opposite direction after her calf. We gave up, leaving them for the winter. A vivid reminder is the cracked pickup grill

molding in John and Renee's driveway. The entire roundup was absolutely hilarious.



Looking west from our house

Harvest time necessitated delivering wheat primarily to large grain elevators on either the Kansas or Missouri Rivers, depending on which was paying the most, about a fifty mile round trip. At fifteen I began driving the wheat truck through heavy traffic on U. S. 69, (today *Metcalf*) not wasting any time, usually early morning and during the noon hour, while Dad was taking a lunch break and short nap from running the new self-propelled 10' John Deere combine. If the trip took too long, then dad would unload a bin of wheat into a wagon, which meant I would hand scoop it onto the truck later.

Thus it was highly desirable to waste no time getting to and from the grain elevators. The trick was to hit as many green lights as possible, since gaining momentum after stopping with a truck full of wheat insured hitting the rest of the lights red.

On one trip anticipating getting through the intersection 75th and *Metcalf*, a big Chrysler suddenly braked for a yellow light. It was impossible to stop that quickly and thus I escorted the Chrysler through the intersection minus its rear bumper.



Green & Yellow—the most beautiful colors on earth

April, May, June and early July were extremely busy, at times working in the fields before breakfast and after supper. In 1954 I cultivated 180 acres of corn, plus milo and soy beans three times (4" 12-16" 24-30" high) with only a four row cultivator. I enjoyed the challenge of maximizing tractor speed, yet not to the extent of covering up those young precious corn shoots. The first cultivation, at two mile an hour took over a week.

Dad was extremely proud to be a Kansas farmer stating: *"If it wasn't for the Kansas farmer, much of the world would starve."* Usually he had two ball caps in the car rear window: *"Proud to be a Kansas Farmer"* and *"If Dolly Parton were a farmer, she would be flat busted too."*



Mom was integral to our success and could put a meal together in five minutes. A skill learned helping her mother feed her dad, brothers, and harvesters. She didn't drive any of the tractors, but she drove the grain truck, driving it into her seventies. During the busy season she ran errands, picking up parts and supplies. Mom did the farm books, paying the bills and expressing Brownback conservatism when appropriate.

Mom and Dad had a unique ability to make friends with absolutely everyone regardless of economic status, included; **pro-golfer** Tom Watson and Hilary who bought the Foster place in the late 80's. The Watsons invited them to numerous events, including Tom's 50th birthday.

Among the guests was Rush Limbaugh, sports and other luminaries. I worked the crowd, visiting with Ray Hunt, (*endeavoring to verify*) Pepsi board member and at that time on George Bush's presidential

exploratory committee. Dad and mom were Kansas City Royals season ticket holders and Dad was at the top of his game visiting with George Brett, Hall of Fame Royal's third baseman much of the evening.

Limbaugh was visiting with the husband of a beautiful couple and while waiting to shake his hand I started a conversation with her. When inquiring as to their occupation my "hoof and mouth" disease surfaced. She stammered they were part of the syndicate endeavoring to buy the Royals. Clearly I hadn't been reading the KC sports pages.



Watson turned the Foster place into a paradise, and now some fifty years later, on the very spot where as an eight year old I walked up and down the corn rows hoeing out cockle burr's and sunflowers, visiting with the *crème de' la crème*, overlooking a gorgeous farm and lake.

Dad asked Tom if he would give my sons, Gene and Bruce, golf lessons. Tom obliged, giving them their 1st lessons in Dad's alfalfa field. Tom was always considerate of Mom, taking her for spins in his Corvettes!!





Son Bruce, an OB/GYN doctor, helping
Dad in the birthing room



Stan & I attaching Indian Welcome Sign
"Hope you come see"



HIGH SCHOOL

After elementary graduation classmate Judy Sharp's father asked Dad and Mom if I could join Judy and attend Shawnee Mission High School in Overland Park due to its high academic reputation, instead of Stilwell. However, the pastor was putting tremendous pressure on our parents to send their boys to Adventist Schools and they dutifully consented. From an academic standpoint for at least high school, it was a terrible mistake.

They even stepped up their *work ethic* to cover the additional costs of Christian education and the farm purchases. Dad traded our 1953 Chevrolet 2-door sedan for a 1954 Chevrolet Station Wagon. He picked up 10 kids in addition to us three, traversing the 25 miles from home to the school at 18th and State, Kansas City, Kansas. He also drove a delivery truck for Lloyd Dowell's sheet metal shop and joined the teamsters, driving a large Euclid type dump truck for a short time during construction of I-70.

My first two years were at Kansas City, Kansas Junior Academy, attending Enterprise Academy near Abilene the last two. We, the inmates, ran KJA, an absolute riot, the staff having no control. The principal's daughter Mary Adams was my girlfriend. Date's were more formal then and it was a big-deal when we double-dated with her sister and boyfriend, dining at the old Kansas City Municipal airport.

I played a lot of softball those two years at school and relentlessly practiced against myself, catching fly balls and grounders off our back garage wall. Practice paid off when I caught a deep fly ball off the Kansas City, Missouri school principals bat, saving a win, a big moment for me and our small school.

At Enterprise I saved eight cents a day by giving up sugar on oatmeal and butter for toast which came in small packets and cost two cents each. This was substantial since school wages were 34 cents per hour at the dairy and 46 cents for print shop labor. Thus being scotch saved 40 cents a week, the amount it took an hour's work to earn.

Enterprise, an Adventist boarding academy, many times seemed anything but Christian. Friday night religious chapel was required. Being new I didn't know the pecking order and sat in the wrong seat, being poked and kicked the entire evening. The next morning my final reward for sitting in the wrong seat was being knocked unconscious in the communal shower.

However, I refused to *Cry Uncle*

and even though mom sensed something was wrong and probed, never let the folks know how difficult that first couple of months at Enterprise were. My ability to stay focused and block out the negative resulted in leadership roles, elected junior class pastor, senior class president and editor of the school newspaper.

Staying focused meant isolating those responsible for harassing me. It gave me the inter-personal skill sets to win the right friends, which led to my election as senior class president. Right or wrong I have a very hard time forgiving those who deliberately wrong me, endeavoring to never speak too, or acknowledge them ever again. This experience toughened me up mentally. Later as Boise pastor one of my non-Boise detractors complained that I never lost a policy or financial battle.

In Central Kansas the Women's Temperance Society while dwindling in influence was still a viable organization and gave me my first taste of



public speaking in their anti-alcohol oratorical contests at the urging of English teacher Winifred Metz. I won most of those contests and later as pastor saw the bad side of alcohol, with too many of the church women putting up with drunken husbands.

Mr. Coffman, academy print shop manager taught me to run linotype, Heidelberg, Kluge, flatbed, and offset presses; giving me an eye for layout and quality work and to this day can read pages upside down. Printing skills secured me above average wages during college, one reason I graduated with no debt.

Coffman was a rebel and mocked the petty schools rules such as it was okay to have a radio at the print shop, but not in my room. Yet the radio somehow made it daily back to my room. Dean Thompson, came in to take a room photo exposing the radio cord. He stated I would get no demits or fines since hadn't been given time to hide the radio.

Silliness of school rules again happened when going through chow line, girlfriend Sandra Eitel was accused of putting too many peas on my aluminum plate. The cook, Mrs. Erdman, physically knocked the plate out of my hand and onto the floor, charging me double for the meal. She disliked Dad intensely, always shaking a large serving spoon at him for joking and eating too much. Except for herself, obesity wasn't a problem at Enterprise.



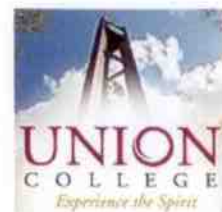
Looking back, Enterprise could be viewed as either the *glass is half full or half empty*. It helped me develop leadership skills, but the family separation destroyed our closeness. Late in life mom commented they made a big mistake in sending their boys to Enterprise. In all likelihood I would have developed leadership skills at Shawnee Mission High, thus sadly my high school education certainly left a lot to be desired.

UNION COLLEGE

In 1958 Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska, a 900 student liberal arts college operated by the Adventist Church beckoned, I being the first Erhart in my family tree to enroll in college. To pay for college, I sold religious books in rural Kansas, worked at the College Press, Christian Record Press, Lincoln Yearbook Press, cleaned restaurants from 1-5 a.m., picked up used clothes for a welfare agency, mowed lawns and shoveled snow. Initially an undecided major but admired Sidney Allen, a creative energetic religion professor and by Christmas officially became a theology student determined to be a very good minister in conformity to Grandmother Etta Erhart's wishes.



The trick was to get home Thanksgiving and other holidays since bus service from Lincoln to Kansas City wasn't direct. Eighty-five dollars bought a 1950 Studebaker Champion with a hole in the hood where a fan blade had previously exited. I figured providing transportation also for Ruth Ann Hagen, Vera Culbertson, and Gary Ferris, would pay for the car. It appeared to be a real bargain except the Studebaker lacked one essential element, *a reliable heater!*



Returning to Lincoln into the wind January, 1959 with the temperature at zero we nearly froze to death. Wrote Dad about the heater and spring break he had a \$300.00 1952 Chevrolet 2 Dr. Turtleback. Its heater did work for the next sixteen months, but a college junior *needed a car with some class!* In the summer of 1960 it was traded for a 1956 Mercury Montclair 2 dr. hardtop, a gorgeous car, regretting all my life ever trading it away.

Selling religious books was considered a must if one expected to be hired as an Adventist minister. After wheat harvest in 1959 I drove the 1952 Chevrolet 400 miles west to Garden City, Kansas pitching children's books to rural farm families. The hot western Kansas sun made me drowsy and the car was an oven, so every afternoon I would put an army cot together and sleep a few minutes under a shade tree.

Dave Dennis from Hutchinson who ultimately became director of the global churches auditing department and I shared a double bed in a very modest church member's home full of cock roaches. Before going to sleep, we would lie in bed and with our shoes smash upwards to 100 cock roaches on the floor. Jack rabbits are everywhere in Western Kansas. They are attracted to your car headlights and one night I hit twenty-five.



While attending Union the framework for establishing Shawnee Mission Hospital was taking place back home. I attended those board meetings on leave and during the summer.

Union was philosophically very broadening where three professors; Sidney Allen, Religion, Harry Reinmuth, Languages, Philosophy, and Robert Firth, Economics combined with the excitement of seeing a hospital take shape from scratch definitely influenced my psyche.

Dr. Everett Dick, a fellow Kansan, was a world renowned Frontier history professor. He instilled an understanding of the "nuts and bolts" necessary to settling the American frontier, such as the role of surveyors in creating the square mile grid west of the Ohio River and nature's obstacles in settling the Great Plains and arid west. By taking an extra four hours credit I ended up with a double major, History, 28 hours; Theology/Religion, 38 hours. Naturally, coming from the farm my thesis paper was *"The Beginnings of Dry Land Farming on the Great*

Plains," research and academic credit done at the University of Nebraska. *Yes the paper was dry!*



My freshman and sophomore roommates Gary Eitel and James Fisher were the same as at Enterprise. Gary was an electronics genius and Jim owned a refrigeration business most of his life.



Vern Usher from Oklahoma, roommate the last two years and I really hit it off. Vern loved classical music, was a very smart chemistry major who took no guff from anyone. Our dorm wing was predominately pre-med students and every spare waking minute at least one banned *Rook* or *Texas Hold Em* game was going on behind locked doors.

Vern and I both had strong moral compasses and hated injustice. We learned a student was threatening an African student during kneeling chapel prayer by pressing a hunting knife into his ribs. We confronted the knife carrier, making it clear if it ever happened again he wouldn't like the consequences. It stopped, and he didn't return after semester break.



Fellow students elected me to several offices, most prominent being the student body vice-resident for religious activities. Spring break 1961 five of us newly elected student body officers and our sponsor Dean Welch drove to South Lancaster, Massachusetts joining newly elected officers from the other eight U. S. Adventist colleges for a conference.

A major snow storm forced us to spend the night in a Chicago Heights fire station. While as a boy and youth traveled with our family numerous times west, this being my first trip east. It was a great trip

and later as a Maryland pastor, and working for Wall Street firms, made many forays into the gorgeous Mid-Atlantic and New England states.

Close friendships developed with three fellow ministerial students, Jim Hoehn, Keene, Texas; Dick Stenbakken, Denver, Colorado; and Gary Grimes, Enid, Oklahoma.



Jim became a successful large church pastor, ending his career as president of the Kansas-Nebraska Conference. Dick pastored in Worland, Wyoming; then entered the military as an Army Chaplain, ending up as a full colonel and command supervisor of all Alaskan Army religious activities. He retired early to become global chaplain ministries director for his church and is still active as a speaker and author.



Gary took particular pleasure in *rubbing it in* that Kansas habitually lost in football to Oklahoma. Finally revenge was mine when Boise State beat Oklahoma in the 2007 Fiesta Bowl. Gary pastored several Oklahoma churches and due to his extremely likeable personality became the marketing face for Adventist publications. Vern Usher married Linda Peyer, one of the most creative persons alive, spending thirty-eight years as an anesthesiologist in Portland, Oregon. Vern hasn't changed from college, just as sharp and energetic.

Junior year, Mary Harlan a vibrant coed from St. Paul, Minnesota sat across from me for cafeteria lunch. We were engaged after our 1962 graduation, marrying in St. Paul, June 1963, having a fabulous family of three children and eight grandchildren. Sadly, our marriage failed during the economic depression of 2008-2013.



SEMINARY

When a ministerial student graduates his home church conference usually provides a financial stipend to attend the Adventist Seminary. Due to the rift between New Haven laity and Kansas church leadership it was clear, since as a son of one of those New Haven radicals who might have a brain, pastoring in Kansas was not in the cards.

Hedging my *bets* applied and was accepted by Willamette Law School in Oregon (*probably subject to passing the LSAT*) and University of Kansas to pursue a Master's in history. However, driven to be a *difference maker*, I believed the ministry provided the best fit for my ambitions. Being a *difference maker* was fueled in part by a pact Dick Stenbakken and I made with each other our Union freshman year to be exceptional ministers, not just the *status quo*.



After flirting with Iowa and Florida, who offered a \$46 per week stipend, I accepted a \$60 per week offer from South Dakota to attend Andrews University, the churches Theological Seminary, at Berrien Springs, Michigan from September 1962-August 1963. The additional \$14 per week was serious money in 1962

since the sponsoring conference didn't pick up any tuition expenses. Another factor was the wheat on my own rented land wasn't going to yield much more than costs, if that, thus money was tight. Looking back wonder how different my career might have been had I accepted the Florida sponsorship.



The Seminary had recently relocated from Washington D. C. to the Michigan campus, every building including apartments brand new. Trevor



Delafield, son of a denominational leader, and Tim Work from Lancaster, California shared my apartment.

Dick Stenbakken and Jim Hoehn Union friends and I were together much of the time. Dick and Jim were now married. Their wives, Ardis and Roxy taught school and were good friends with Mary.

All three of us couples graduated as ministerial and elementary education majors. Dick, Jim and I rotated fixing a noon meal for each other. My first foray was *Mac and Cheese*. Dick took one bite and asked "*How did you cook this?*" I didn't realize you had to boil the macaroni in water first, before melting cheese on it. My cooking skills have hardly improved since.

Through the years we've remained relatively close to the Stenbakken's and Hoehn's. In 2006 our three couples spent nearly a week together in Branson, Missouri renewing old friendships.

Dick and Ardis took us on a June, 1992, 35-45 degree fishing trip off Seward, Alaska where fishing was so good, black sea bass virtually jumped into the boat. Dick being an Army Colonel had a military guard in a neighboring boat for protection and to prevent any serious mishaps.

Jim had the funeral services for both Dad (2004) and Mom (2010) who are buried at Pleasant Valley Cemetery 159th and Antioch, Overland Park, Kansas. Cousin-in-law Judy Brownback visits each Memorial Day the extended families graves, this being her twenty-third.



The seminary professors helped me expand my theological and philosophical horizons. Academic emphasis was History of the

Christian church, Dr. Kenneth Strand, department chairman, a broad thinker and at times ultra-conservative students accused him of heresy. I respected him and ended up being one of his top students.

Leif Tobiasen, professor of Historical Research literally terrorized us, promising an **F if your research had the slightest mistake in annotation or quoted from anything but a primary source.** Further your failure would be reported back to the sponsoring conference with the potential of losing your stipend. Plus writing research papers in the sixties with carbon paper made it difficult to erase just the slightest error in notations, thus you needed to be virtually a perfect typist.

Because of Tobissen, I do everything possible to get to the real truth about all issues. Too many of today's reporters and editors fail to meet such a standard. Sadly some academic research is skewed to validate preconceived positions or theories.

Mary taught in Duluth, Minnesota that winter. At January semester break I visited her with the temperature ranging from zero to minus sixteen below. Since the VW engine was in the back my legs were nearly frozen the entire five hundred mile trip. It is a wonder I didn't lose my toes to frostbite.

Graduation requirements included participation in a Field School of Evangelism. These schools were conducted by prominent Adventist preachers in big venue auditoriums for the purpose of attracting the general public to consider taking a serious look at the faith. Being practical chose Regina, Saskatchewan over Columbus, Ohio since my first assignment was Sioux Falls, thus found an apartment on our way to Canada, saving considerable back tracking and expense.

MY CAN DO--NO LIMITS VISION

Mary in 1994, writing to family and friends stated her husband was a person of "incredible vision and foresight." Her words and those of family, friends and associates have challenged me to look for those events or circumstances that make me who I am today.

To understand the vision, foresight, drive and "*what makes me tick*," starts with the role religion played in my parents young married lives. Grandmother Etta Erhart influenced them to be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist faith in 1938.

My parents were never overly religious, ignored the churches vegetarian emphasis, but did embrace much of the faith, paying a faithful 10% tithe and for the most part shutting down all operations from sundown Friday evening until sundown Saturday, attributed their growing financial success to their perceived faithfulness to God.

Adventists came onto America's religious scene in the 1840's to 1860's at a time of religious revivalism and tremendous societal turmoil caused by slavery and strong religious condemnation of the practice. They were also at the tail end of the Protestant Reformation which began in the 1500's. Like generations of Protestants before them, fervently believed they were the "*end of time*" church. This translated into a strong "*work ethic*" and a powerful commitment to grow their congregations and bettering the lives of their fellowmen.

In those years buried in the Adventist culture were these themes: "*To be more than just the reflectors of other men's thoughts.*" and "*Higher than the highest human thought is God's ideal for his children.*"

My entire life has been driven by these very powerful mental concepts. I strongly believed in these principles as a youth, pastor, stockbroker, brokerage firm manager, and politician. They still propel me forward, giving lasting purpose, meaning and direction to my life.

As a pastor my favorite sermonic empowerment message was from Proverbs; *"Without a Vision the People Perish"* incorporated both themes. *As a youth and all my life these powerful empowerment concepts are deeply embedded in my psyche.*

Today's society cannot even begin to comprehend the powerful and many times empowering aspect one's church experience had on a person raised in the 1940's—1950's. Present day anti-Christian media bias overlooks the internal unselfish DNA within committed Christians who established universities and hospitals to better their fellow man.

An equally powerful element in my life was the psychologically empowering *MY CAN DO—NO LIMITS VISION* generated by growing up in the Kansas City community during the 1950s. Greater KC is comprised of both Kansas City's and the surrounding suburbs. Johnson County being the southwestern Kansas side suburb was both progressive and affluent. It was the fastest growing county in the U. S. west of the Mississippi, second only to Marin County, California, in per capita income. In our minds Johnson County in the 1950's was the most dynamic community in America!

The primary Johnson County communities are Overland Park, Olathe, Leewood, Merriam, Mission Hills, Lenexa, Stanley, Gardner, Spring Hill, Stilwell, Shawnee and Mission. The general postal address for the 600,000 people in these communities is Shawnee Mission. So named because the Methodists established a Mission to convert the Shawnee Indians in the mid-1800's.

This *CAN DO—NO LIMITS* attitude was reinforced by our family farming success and my help in making it happen. Dad's success on the Foster place led to surrounding 10 acres to 320 acreage owners asking him to farm their land too. Within a few short years we were farming 1700 acres, nearly 1300 acres tillable including hay land and the balance pasture.

A look back to where Mom and Dad came from in 1937 and by 1955, one could only say; *WOW!* Poor as church mice when married, they now owned two farms and were well respected in their neighborhood and church. These two country kids had come a long way, but their most lasting accomplishments *were yet to come and I was privileged to participate!!*

All men dream: but not equally. Those that dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible.

T.E. Lawrence, "Lawrence of Arabia"



*Those of us charter members still alive at New Haven's 2005 50th Anniversary
Wayne-Mae Goodloe-Terry Hickman-
Mom-Darlene Quisert-Martha Speuler
Rexin-Me*

NEW HAVEN CHURCH SHAWNEE MISSION HOSPITAL

My teen age, college, and seminary years were dominated by the establishment of the New Haven Church and the Shawnee Mission Hospital, both in Overland Park, Kansas.

First, those of us living in Johnson County began questioning why we were driving to run down Kansas City, Kansas to attend church. Second, a fired former Indiana minister, **Paul Jackson**, now an insurance executive, joined the congregation.

Jackson constantly promoted developing an educational health institute high school then popular in the rural south to anyone who would listen. The chatter gained momentum and fall, 1954, Kansas church president Don Rees met with about thirty Johnson County laity in the downtown Overland Park Baptist church.

The group requested two things: One: Their own congregation separate from Kansas City, Kansas. Two: Moral support for a lay sponsored health institute high school. The president rejected the new congregation request since he didn't want another minister on the payroll. Then emphatically voiced his opposition to the health ministry vision stating: *"there would be a lot of red faces when it fails."*



87th & Antioch

Failure was a word not in the Johnson County group's lexicon and they were lived. His comments caused open distrust between them and Kansas church leadership that lasted twenty plus years.

Fortunately new Kansas leadership relented a year later, allowing a Johnson County Church to organize with seventy plus members, I being one of the charter members. These families, virtually all in the prime of their lives, were excited about their own church, visualized it growing to be the dominant Adventist church in Greater Kansas City, which it did. Originally it was named the Johnson County Church, but later at Dad's suggestion, renamed New Haven, meaning a *new spiritual refuge*.

Once they separated from Kansas City, Kansas this dynamic mix of personalities and egos now empowered, kept moving forward not only to find a permanent site to build a church, but to seriously discuss establishing an educational health institute in Johnson County. But as time moved along it became evident that what worked in the rural south wasn't practical in a progressive suburban environment. Thus the conversations quickly morphed into bigger and grander plans, first to an independent living/nursing facility **and then towards a hospital**, since none existed in Johnson County.



Mary Elmer Cliff Doris
Knott's Berry Farm-Anaheim

Elmer Armbruster an unstoppable dynamic TWA executive believed Jackson was on to something, along with Mom and Dad. It didn't hurt that Elmer and his wife Mary were close friends. When Mary later moved to California, Mom was absolutely devastated.

Elmer's brother Al, a newly graduated M. D., moved back home in 1955. Elmer and Al then convinced brother Ed to move from Rolla, Missouri to Overland Park. Elmer, when promoted to Los Angeles passed the baton to Ed. Ed was a successful salesman, later becoming a top stock broker with Kidder Peabody.

Jackson had a huge *ego* and liked to be called by his ministerial title, Elder P. T. Jackson. At a party in Elmer's backyard he told the men if they weren't going to call him Elder, at least P. T. When Jackson got done Elmer said "*alright Paul!*" Jackson took the *ribbing*, putting his trust in this adopted church family to accomplish *the impossible*.

Elmer was by far the most respected member of the congregation, so dynamic and influential that without his support Jackson's ideas would have never born fruit.

Looking back, my parent's role in establishing the Shawnee Mission Hospital can best be explained that they accepted people for who they were, offering no judgments. Jackson, an extremely polished speaker and smoozer, could also be pompous, arrogant, irritating, while Elmer was dynamic and *very aggressive*, both very capable of *rubbing you the wrong way*.

Dad and Mom listened, becoming the facilitating glue binding these personalities together toward a common good. Jackson and Armbruster were successful professionals, while the majority of the congregation was blue collar. Thus Mom and Dad, due to their support

This unlikely trio; a *former minster* with a chip on his shoulder", a *dynamic executive* and a *farmer* were the **original small embryonic nucleus** from which Shawnee Mission Medical Center spawned.

and personal financial success lent validity to the hospital endeavor among the congregation's non-professionals.

For me those were *exhilarating times* living both in a dynamic community and member of a fervent, progressive congregation. Virtually every week after church families ate together either in rotating homes or *Putsch's Cafeteria on the Country Club Plaza*, discussing the future of their rapidly growing church and potential healthcare facilities.



These families treated me as an adult, attending with dad many of the formative and at times tumultuous board meetings from 1955-1963. Driving home after each meeting we discussed the dialogues, personalities, ideas, which looking back was very empowering. **Shawnee Mission Medical Center with 504 beds**, plus satellite campuses, one of Kansas City's largest opened in 1962, the culmination of those many meetings and the vision all of us church families had in the 1950's and 60's.

As a footnote Jackson was clearly no ordinary minister. He had a persona and delivery similar to the famed General Douglas MacArthur. While he laughed and had a very human side, he had a "*presence*" about him that which commanded your attention and respect.



Jackson had developed health care connections due to his executive role in a Kansas City insurance company. This gave him access to both the business and medical community in the city. Clearly he honed those relationships along with the dynamic support of Elmer Armbruster.

He was still an ordained minister and knew who to consult within the extensive Adventist Health System for advice. Jackson utilized his contacts to work through the regulatory hurdles and start up challenges. He was relentless.

Jackson was a pragmatic leader, realizing his best path to achieving his medical/health outreach dream was through the shared vision of his fellow church members. It also gave him much more control than had he developed the hospital exclusively through his community contacts.

As the vision matured into an ongoing nursing home then hospital, Jackson ended up being both board chairman and administrator. This happened due to his second guessing every administrator, creating a revolving door, jeopardizing the brand new institutions survival.

The hospital was not operated by the Adventist denomination, but considered Adventist, its board primarily New Haven members. Jackson's fellow church/board members were in a quandary, recognizing a change needed to be made, yet without Jackson's initial vision there would be no hospital.

A year earlier the New Haven pastor needed to be replaced and the church men having no confidence in the Kansas leadership by-passed them, called Theodore Carcich, regional president in Lincoln and



Senator Dole Gene Walters Cliff Erhart

presto, he was transferred. They made another call to Carcich, a strong supporter of their vision who found Jackson a job at Andrews University in Michigan.

Credit must be given to their respect and compassion to find him a replacement job, avoiding the embarrassment of being fired by his friends. To Jackson's credit he led out in hiring Frank Salt as the new administrator who had the necessary skill sets to take the hospital to the next level.

I was at the 1963 board meeting when Jackson stepped down. It had to be gut-wrenching for him and Elizabeth to forever leave Johnson County. Yet at the meeting he showed graciousness and class, painting his departure in the *rosiest* possible light. He had lived in Johnson County less than twelve years, made an enormously positive lasting impact on his church and the Greater Kansas City community *very few in Kansas City's history have ever matched*, truly a leader *extra-ordinaire*!



Cliff Erhart (1960) with Shawnee Mission cornerstone box, Mrs. Russell Stover, Tena Mae Doud, unknown. Kansas Centennial outfits.

The precursor to Shawnee Mission Hospital was Pleasantview Health and Vocational Institute so named because of Jackson's initial belief the southern health institute strategy would work in Johnson County. He even brought in W. E. Straw, founder of those institutes in North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama to promote his vision. When he realized Elmer, my parents, and others weren't really on board with the concept, Jackson had the *good sense* to rotate and quickly move toward a nursing home and new hospital.

Dad, exhibiting the same boldness he had when *cold calling* Mom for a date, solicited the initial thirty acre hospital site from the J. C. Nichols Company, a prominent Kansas City Developer. Nicholas is best known for the Country Club Plaza, America's first mall. Nichols descendants have consistently been major benefactors to the hospital.

In April, 1962 I *emceed* the folks 25th Wedding Anniversary in the dining room of SM's 102 bed nursing home that was built in 1960-1961. This was the first *event* in the new facility with much of the church and original hospital board group there. Mom choreographed the entire program, a fun time full of jokes, laughter, and genuine nonsense. Dad of course played "*My Blue Heaven and Red River Valley*" on his French harp.



In my library I have a book "*Men to Match the Mountains.*" It is an incredible narrative of how ordinary men and women matched and conquered the mountains of the west! In the 1950's Greater Kansas City benefited from ordinary men, women and their families who pushed an agenda they thought was best for their community and church, *matching the New Haven and Shawnee Mission Mountains. They truly weren't ordinary; they were extraordinary to the nth degree!*



For thirty plus years Dad was the *de facto* church youth leader. Like my grandkids, the young men of the church were always trying to wrestle him down, never succeeding. He had monthly skating rink parties and usually a hay ride each year. In the 1990's a lady in Pleasanton, California shared that Dad's skating parties was the glue that kept her attending church.



My parents' starting in the 70's had a Missouri cabin where church families, youth, and relatives were always visiting them in those gorgeous white oak woods, the folks unaware there was supposed to be a generation gap. Annually they would have a big *corn feed* from their own sweet corn patch. It was hard to let that big copper pot go at the final auction. In turn the church dearly loved mom and dad.

In my most formative years I saw the impossible accomplished by average men and women with a vision. Many times I have joked those years gave me permanent *brain damage*.

Also deeply embedded in my subconscious was a (Sunday) Sabbath School illustration when about six. The teacher had the word *can't* on the board and then proceeded to erase the "*t*" so the word now read *CAN!!*



2nd New Haven Church 2004 Groundbreaking
Mom 4th from left Jim Hoehn 5th from right