

Martin County, Minnesota

Family Stories & Biographies

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I Remember

By Marian Elaine Schwager Ehlers

September 27, 1912 - November 24, 1990

I was born and raised on a farm a mile east of Sherburn, Minnesota known as the Tom Clancy farm on September 27, 1912. My parents were Herman and Minnie (Schultz) Schwager. I lived there with them and my sister Marcella Abline Dorothy Schwager (Christian) and brother, Harold Schwager until I was 9 months old when my grandfather sold my dad a farm. This farm was 3 miles north of Sherburn. I lived there until I married on June 27, 1937.

My dad was a dairy farmer. He also raised hogs and chickens and one year he raised geese. The geese always stayed on the front steps during the night and what a mess that was in the morning. They were quite mean and the ganders would chase us kids if we came near them. I hated them and was scared of them too

My dad milked twenty to twenty-five cows twice a day and sold the cream to the creamery in Sherburn. He fed the skim milk to the hogs and young calves. I usually had to help with the chores and feeding.

It was my job to turn the separator that separated the cream from the milk which we hauled to the creamery each Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The separator had to be turned at a high speed and it was quite a job so we'd take turns spinning it. It was hard to get up early in the morning to separate the milk and cream. I did like to sleep and my mother had to call me several times before I'd get up. I also had to feed the little calves some of the warm milk each night and morning and pour milk into a big barrel for the pigs and haul it down to where they were fed.

Dad showed me how to teach a new calf to drink milk. You'd put your hand in the warm milk then in the calves mouth and let him suck your finger. Once the calf learned to drink a few times

like that he'd drink alone. We usually had 8-10 calves in the pen and with two pails you had to remember which one you had already fed so you wouldn't feed it twice. The cows were black and white Holsteins so you would have to try to identify them by their markings

Day after day it was the same thing all over again. Winter, summer or holidays it was the same. All the animals had to be fed and they let you know when they were hungry.

When I was old enough to drive the car I hauled the cream to the creamery and brought butter back. Each month we got a check for the cream we brought in -- sometimes as much as \$200.00.

Minnesota Winters

The Minnesota winters were very cold. We kids slept upstairs and the windows were usually frozen over with ice. We always had a feather bed that we'd sink down into which would be much warmer than a mattress. We always had flannel sheets instead of percale because they were warm. When we got ready for bed we'd always dress by the heater downstairs and then dash upstairs and crawl into the cold bed.

In the winter when the lake was frozen over we would go to town in the sled over the lake. It didn't take long, but I was always glad when we got on land although the ice was 2-3 feet thick. The lake was always full of fish houses where fisherman would cut a hole in the ice and put the house over the hole. Then they would sit in the house to fish and stay out of the cold. They still do it on some of the lakes.

Also, in the winter we would go sledding down the hills in our pasture. We had a toboggan that held four to five kids. It was fun. Sometimes we would hit a rock and fall off the toboggan and roll in the snow. All the neighborhood kids joined us usually on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Afterwards we usually went into the house and popped popcorn or had hot chocolate. Once in a while we'd go sledding at night in the moonlight, but it seemed like we never got warm the entire night after that. The folks always had lots of wood to burn and when it was real cold dad would buy coal. The coal lasted longer than the wood so we didn't have to watch it close.

In the winter, when it was real cold which it is in Minnesota, dad took us to school in the bobsled. We had an old horse blanket made out of one of our horses that died. Dad would put straw in the sled and cover us with the horse blanket. Sometimes if it wasn't too cold he'd let us ride on the sled runners. I can still hear the jangle of the tugs. The one end was of chain and if you didn't take up all the end there would be quite a bit of chain to dangle. It was a pretty sound as we rode to school in the sled. Dad had a heavy full length sheep lined coat that he wore with a standup collar that he put up and a wool lined cap with sheep skin lined ear muffs. All you could see of him were his eyes, nose and mouth and if he was out long enough he'd have white frost around his nose and mouth where he breathed.

We also went over to our neighbors, the Ekstrand's. They had twelve kids in the family. Their's was an old square house with no rugs on the floors. They had a pump house just off the kitchen and we thought it was a treat to go out and pump water. Our pump was outside and in the winter it was so cold when we would go out and get water to drink. We had a bucket of water in the kitchen and we all drank out of a dipper. What a way to spread germs, but guess it didn't do

too much damage as I am writing this on May 28, 1988. I will be 73 my next birthday in September.

Christmas

Christmas wasn't too exciting on the farm. We never had a tree. Mom would put a wreath in the windows and on Christmas Eve dad would knock on the door and say look what Santa left out on the porch. It was a doll for us girls and skates, sled or a wagon for Harold. On Christmas morning we had a good breakfast and always had a big supply of oranges and apples, nuts and ribbon candy. We always had duck or goose or chicken for Christmas dinner as that's what we raised on the farm. I can't remember having turkey until years later.

Christmas and the school picnic at the end of the school year were the highlight of the year. Each pupil had a part in the Christmas program and we practiced several weeks before the big night. We always drew names and exchanged gifts . We always gave the teacher a gift and she gave us one. Some man in the district was Santa Claus. There was always snow at Christmas and we used the sled and horses all winter. We never drove the car in the winter. Dad would fill the sled with a good amount of straw. We would sit in the sled with a couple of blankets over us. The horses harnesses made a jingle sound as we went to the program. It was usually cold and clear so all we could see were the stars and the moon and the top of the trees as we went past the farms on the way to the school.

School

We went to District 26 to school which was a one room schoolhouse with ten to twenty-five kids. There were eight grades taught by one teacher.

Sometimes we had a basket lunch social at school to raise money for playground equipment. The wives and/or mothers would put tissue paper around a box and make bows and ribbons to make it attractive. The men would bid on the box lunches and whoever bid the highest for a basket or box, would be who you shared your lunch with after the program. It was fun. The lunches usually consisted of sandwiches, pickles, sometimes a salad and usually jello. I can also remember helping to make cream puffs for the lunches. It raised a lot of money besides being fun.

We had a school picnic the last day of school in May or early June. It was usually held at Seiverts Point on Fox Lake. If it was raining we had it at the school house which all the kids hated as we had been there for nine months and wanted a change. That was the day we got our report cards to see if we passed or not. We always tried to hide our cards so the other kids couldn't see what our marks were or if we passed or not.

We studied a little and if we needed help with arithmetic or any other subjects dad and mom would help us. Dad was good with numbers and mom usually darned socks at night or mended overalls. Dad read the paper and figured up his bank account and then went to bed early. Sometimes we would all play ball out in the front yard. I don't know how they did it getting up so early and working so hard all day, but they did.

After 8th grade I went to high school in Sherburn. I usually walked to school when weather was good. Otherwise we shared rides with other families that had kids going into town to school.

I graduated from high school in 1931. My high school days weren't very exciting. I had to study hard to get passing marks and I wasn't too popular as country kids never did rate too high with town kids. They were the leaders and we followed and did what they said.

One year my dad bought Harold and me a horse and buggy to take into town to school. We weren't the only ones doing it so we didn't feel embarrassed. My dad rented a barn in town to keep the horse so every noon Harold had to go to the barn and feed the horse. The barn belonged to Mr. Blowers who was my Uncle Arthur's father. This is also the place my parents bought to live in after moving off the farm. My youngest brother Roger, lived in this house with my parents. Roger eventually bought the house for this family. It is now the home of Roger's son, Steve and his family.

Clothes

My mother and everyone else in those days sewed all of our school clothes and the dresses we wore everyday. No girl or woman ever wore slacks or jeans as we do now. We all wore dresses and long stockings and usually black sateen bloomers which mom made for us. When it was hot we would roll our long stockings below our knees. We thought it made us cooler, but I'm sure it didn't make any difference. No woman or girl was seen with bare legs. Our dresses were below the knees and had no style at all.

My winter dress was navy blue serge. It was always itchy. My black stockings were held up by a regular harness over my shoulders and there were garters for each stocking back and front. These were very uncomfortable along with the itchy dress.

In September when school started again we all got new dresses, underwear, shoes and stockings which were usually black. Mom made us several pairs of black sateen bloomers (panties). We carried our lunch in a dinner bucket like a tin pail. Mom always cooked a hot supper at night. We boarded the teachers most of the time so we always had a good meal at night.

Garden - Canning

My mother always had a big garden so we raised most of our vegetables. It was a job to weed and toward fall or late summer it was canning time.

We put carrots in sand and they kept most of the winter. As the potatoes grew they always had potato bugs which us kids had to pick off. We carried a soup can or vegetable can with a little kerosene in it and dropped the bugs in it. In the fall Dad plowed out the potatoes and us kids had to pick them up. We usually had enough to last all winter. Then in the spring we'd have to cut them so an eye was in each part and we'd plant it again.

We canned everything we could -- beans, corn, tomatoes, peas and a vegetable soup. We also made sweet and dill pickles. We usually butchered hogs and my mother made our own ham and

bacon and the best smoked sausage I have ever eaten. We usually bought a half of beef and canned most of it. It was good.

By the time I got married I could cook almost anything and knew how to can fruits and vegetables, but living in town we didn't have a garden because we lived in an apartment. One year we did have a garden at Garret and Marion's (Ehlers). We raised a lot and had a big crop of tomatoes. My dad always did his own butchering so we had fresh meat.

Hay

We'd go out in the field with a hay rack and lay out a sling on the wagon, fill it to capacity and then lay out another on top of that and we'd fill it. Then we put the hay in the barn. We had two horses on a large rope to haul the hay up in the barn then when it got far enough in the barn someone would trip the sling and drop the hay. We'd do the same with the second and third loads until it was all in. I helped make hay. Dad usually cut the alfalfa. It would dry for several days then we raked it with a team of horses and a rake.

One year when I was quite young my dad built a new barn that is still being used on the farm that I grew up on. When the barn was finished we had a barn dance. Music was furnished by a neighbor family that played old time music. It was fun and I can remember it clearly. I didn't dance at that time so I just stood around. In the winter we would have house parties. We usually danced in the kitchen which always was the biggest room in the house.

The farmers had an organization called Farm Bureau. There was a meeting once a month with each member taking a turn as host. They always had a lunch and sometimes played cards after the meeting. Five Hundred was the game.

Sister Margaret's Death

My youngest sister, Margaret, died the summer of 1931 of kidney problems. She was sick most of the summer and on August 10 about 6:00 PM she passed away. I will never forget the days following her death. Her funeral was very large -- a procession of about two miles long. The church was full and lots of people stood outside.

Threshing

Threshing time was busy and exciting and a big job. All the neighbors helped each other. Oats ripened in July and August was threshing time. John Krohn, a neighbor, owned the threshing rig which was a big steam engine and grain separator. He would bring it over the night before. Us kids couldn't wait until that time came. The big steam engine was always put right in the front yard only a few feet from the front door.

John Krohn would start firing up the steam engine about 4 o'clock in the morning so he was always there for breakfast. By 8 o'clock in the morning the neighbors were all there to start working. They had their racks and would go to the oat fields and load up the bundles and bring them to the thresher. They would put it in one bundle at a time to separate the oats from the straw. Oats would go into a wagon and the straw shot out onto a pile called a straw stack that

was used for bedding for cows and horses during the winter in the barn. One man handled the oats wagon. When it was full he took it to the elevator that was up on the granary roof and emptied the wagon in the oats bin. This was fed to the animals in the winter. Some of it was hauled to town to be sold.

My mother and I cooked the food to feed the threshers - dinner and supper. There were at least twenty-five men and some were there for breakfast. We served sandwiches, cookies and coffee around 10:30 a.m. and a big dinner at noon. It was hot, hard work as we only had a cook stove that burned wood or corn cobs.

The men never washed in the house so we'd put a basin outside on a bench with towels hung on a nail. Usually eight or ten men would come in at once to eat so we had to have it all ready by noon as that's the time they quit to eat and did they eat. My mother was a good cook so it all tasted good.

My mother made several pies in the morning as we had to have the oven available to cook a big roast beef for the noon dinner. We also cooked potatoes, a vegetable and probably coleslaw , bread, pie and coffee. Then we would wash all the dishes and get ready for another lunch about 3:00 PM. After that we prepared supper for any of them that wanted to stay. Usually they went home about 6:00 p.m. as the farmers always had chores to do. The next day was the same as the day before which was usually hot and humid as August always is in Minnesota.

When one farm was done they would move onto the next farm. During threshing time my mother and I always did the chores as Dad and Harold were late getting home. We didn't have a bath tub or shower so Dad would bring in the wash tub and put it in the kitchen and take a bath. A shower would have been wonderful, but they weren't available and we didn't have modern plumbing.

If it was Wednesday or Saturday night, almost everyone went into town as the stores were always open so farmers could come and buy whatever groceries they needed.

Silo Filling

Silo filling was about the same as threshing only we had a silo filler instead of a thresher. It was done later in the year and we used corn to make silage instead of oats. The silo filler had big pipes going up the side of the 40 or 50 foot silo and the shredded corn was blown into the silo. This was called silage and was used as feed during the winter.

It was Harold's job to throw down enough silage to feed the cattle each morning and night. Each one got a scoop full. It was sort of scary to climb up there, but it had a protective hood around all the steps so we couldn't fall. I did it several times when Harold wasn't home. I really hated to climb the outside steps and crawl into the silo.

Each cow had their own stall with their own feeding bin and when we got running water piped into the barn each cow had their own drinking cup. Water always flowed into it. As they drank we could hear it in the house. The pipes would make a banging noise as the cows drank which could be heard in the house.

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Fourth of July

The Fourth of July was always spent at Fox Lake Park. We usually had a big family picnic. There was a band concert and a ball game which most men went to while the women stayed around the picnic table and talked. We all ate again after the ball game then went home to do chores - milking and feeding the animals. After the chores were done, we'd go back to the park for fireworks then home. There was a bath house at the park and most of us kids went swimming. We never had a bathing suit, but rented one at the bath house with a towel for 25 or 50 cents and we could swim all afternoon. The bathing suits were black cotton and all out of shape. They looked terrible, but we had fun I guess.

Days of the Week

Monday was wash day. Tuesday was ironing day. Wednesday we put clothes away and mended on Thursday. Friday didn't have anything special. Saturday we cleaned the house, washed windows and lamp chimneys and changed paper in the cupboards if needed.

Sunday was Sunday school and church and a day of visiting. We usually went to a relative's house. Sometimes to Alpha to Aunt Emma Waswo and Uncle John. Emma was my mother's older sister. They were very close as after her parents died (her mother when she was 9 years old and her father when she was 11 years old) she lived with Aunt Emma. It was more like going home to her mother.

Wash Days - Monday

On wash day which was always Monday, we'd fill the boiler with water the night before so it would be hot by 8:30 when we'd transfer it to a Maytag washing machine with a gasoline motor. And on a clear quiet day we could hear all the washing machines in the neighborhood. Louella Soper, Dora Lund and Mary Bloomer all had a Maytag and we could hear them all. We hung clothes on the clothes lines and sprinkled them Monday night and ironed on Tuesday. The irons had to be heated on the cook stove so we had to keep it filled with coal or wood even though it was hot outside. We would iron one or two pieces then go after another iron. We usually had three irons so when one was being used the other two were getting hot. Sometimes I would get up at 5:00 a.m. to iron before it got so hot.

How We Did the Laundry:

The washing machine was a Maytag and was run by small gasoline engine with a long galvanized exhaust pipe. We usually opened the door enough to let it hang out of the door to let the fumes out. In the summer we moved the machine outdoors. We had two rinse tubs - one with clear water and one with bluing in it. The machine had wringers on it. We had a clothes stick to take the clothes out of the machine and put them up to the wringer and they'd go through and take the water out which would run back in the machine. From this tub we'd move the wringer and put the clothes through to the bluing water and from there to the clothes basket and then out to

the line to dry. My mother was very particular on how to hang clothes - white ones first, dark clothes and grimy ones in the back.

Carbide Light System and Electricity

Later on dad put in a carbide light plant. We had lights on the wall in each room with a glass globe and with it came a carbide iron which we really appreciated. It was lit with a match through holes in the base of the iron. The carbide lasted about a month. It was in a big tank out in the yard away from the house. Two cans of carbide were dumped in the water in the tank and that formed gas. It was piped to the house and barn and that lit the lamps. We also had a three burner stove which we appreciated too especially in the summer so we wouldn't have to start the cook stove on a hot day to fix a meal.

We were the only people that had a light system like that so we felt pretty proud about it. The rest of the neighbors had to use kerosene lamps and lanterns.

Later on electricity was put in for the country people. That was really a godsend as it was so much better than the carbide system. Now farmers are just as well situated with modern things as the people in town and have modern houses and all the same conveniences as city people.

When I was growing up I always felt that town kids were better than I was. It shouldn't have been that way but it was. Country kids were always considered not as good unless you had a car to take you places. Now in 1985 it's different. I've seen this when I've gone back to Sherburn to visit. Everyone associates with everyone else. Country people or town people, they are all together.

Bread and Jelly and Jam

My mother always baked bread at least twice a week. She would save the potato water at noon then when it was cool she dropped a dry yeast cake into it and let it sit until after supper when she would make a dough sponge and wrap it up and let it set until next morning when she would add more flour and make the bread. Her bread was so good, but it was a treat when she would buy a loaf of bread from the store. Sometimes at noon she would make us a treat and pinch off pieces of dough and fry it in fat, lard or butter. It would be nice and brown and crusty and was so good. By the middle of the afternoon the bread would be done and we would all have a piece with butter and jam.

The jam and jelly making was always a competitive project. Each aunt tried to have better jam than the other and they would compare and exchange recipes. Pectin was never used - only sugar and berries cooked a certain length of time and then left standing to thicken, sometimes in the sun and sometimes just in jelly jars. We canned meats, vegetables and fruits and made pickles which I have continued to do in my married life.

Sausage, Lard, Meat and Canning

My mother cured the hams and bacon with smoke and salt and made the best smoked sausages I ever ate. After they were made and tied in a circle, we hung them on a long stick and put them

in the smoke house for several days to get the right smoke taste. Then we fried them and were they ever good. People drove for miles to eat Mom's sausages. My Uncle Andrew Carlson would come from Fairmont (30 miles) just to eat sausage. Canning the beef was a big job. It was cut up in chunks and put in a quart jar with some salt and pepper. The jars were put in the boiler and on the cook stove which was kept full of fuel to keep a steady boil for four hours. This was usually done in the winter or fall so a fire felt good and wasn't hard to keep it going.

From the pork we cut off all of the fat and cut it into small pieces. This we put in heavy kettles on the stove to render out the lard. What was left was called cracklings which we didn't do too much with. Once in awhile Mom would put a few in fried potatoes for supper. The lard we used just as we do Crisco or oil now.

Sometimes Mom would make soap out of the lard if it got rancid. Soap is made with lye and homemade soap really made clothes white. If we had too much rancid lard she'd make soap for other people in town. Instead of detergent we would cut up a bar of soap in the boiler while heating water and we'd have nice suds when we put the water in the washing machine.

Home Made Sausage

My parents made the best homemade smoked sausages and people from town just loved to come out and eat with us when Mom fixed sausage. One couple we enjoyed having was the butter maker and his wife - Tony and Myrt Wisdorf. I got to know them well by taking the cream to town and when they visited at my parents house. He quit the butter making job and opened a small neighborhood grocery.

One night the Wisdorf's teenage son came home and wanted the car. They refused because of a cold stormy night. He became angry and took his father's gun and shot his grandmother and mother then waited for his dad to come home and as he opened the door he shot him and took the keys and car and left. He was caught down in Iowa the next day and put in prison for several years. He was released several years ago and is married and has a family of his own. We think the Wisdorf's deaths attributed to my dad's heart attack as he thought Tony and Myrt were the best of people.

Family Dinners - Winter and Summer

During the winter and summer it was a custom to have family dinners. Mostly my dad's side of the family (Schwager's). All the families would come, kids and all so sometimes it would be 20 to 25 people.

We'd fry chicken, cook mashed potatoes and gravy, vegetables and pie or jello or whatever we chose to fix. I remember my Aunt Rose dicing up bananas and then whip cream and pour over them. It was good, but rich. We would stretch out the big oak dining room table and set as many as we could. Then clear it off again and set it again. That usually took care of everyone.

The men would play cards as soon as dinner was over so the table was always cleared so they could play Smear, a card game played with money. They all smoked cigars so the house was full of smoke.

About 5 o'clock it was supper time and we went through the whole process again with what was leftover. Maybe make a freshly made potato salad and jello and cake, cookies etc. Then everyone would go home to do chores before or after supper then back again so men could play more cards. Us kids would get tired and fall asleep most anywhere.

Our cars were slower so it took time to get home. Everyone lived near each other so it was no problem. Just a nice Sunday and ready to start another week.

Grandma Minnie Schwager - Hair and Hats

My mother wore her hair long. It almost reached her hips so she combed it straight back and made a figure eight knot with the long hair. Her hair was black or real dark brown. Then she'd put a fancy hair pin in it. It was made out of celluloid and had sels (??) in it with teeth like a comb to put into the knot. She usually left some sideburns - then would take a prong curling iron and put it in a lit kerosene lamp that we used for lights to heat it and then curl the strands of hair with the hot iron. It made sort of frizzy sideburns.

I can remember one hat she had. We called it her airplane hat. It was black straw and a large brim on one side and a narrow brim on the other side. It had a big colored feather plume on the top which bent so it laid flat and the ends turned up. She always had a hat and always wore one every place we went. Every town had a millinery store where they sold only hats. So on Saturday nights when we went to town I can remember going with her to buy a hat.

Mrs. Nettie or Nellie Calvin owned the millinery store in town. She was the mother of the Calvin brothers that owned the Chevrolet garage and from whom Dad bought several cars. I think he owned more Chevrolets than anyone in his family.

Medicine and Illness

The world I grew up in is quite different from the one my grandchildren are growing up in. I was born September 27, 1912 on a farm a mile east of Sherburn, Minnesota. Dr. R. C. Farrish was the doctor who delivered me and he was our family doctor for many years.

Medicine has certainly improved today to what it was then. No one was ever taken to the hospitals. You just called the doctor at his home or office and he came with his little black bag making a house call.

I am sure my youngest sister, Margaret, would have lived longer if there had been better medical services. She died when she was 16 years old of kidney disease. Three doctors came out for consultation they called it, but nothing happened to improve her illness. Dr. Farrish would come out and walk from bedroom to kitchen and stand and look out the window. I suppose he was thinking.

My mother had an illness which Dr. Farrish said was ersiplis (spelling???) so he put red mercurochrome all over her face and up into her hair. She looked terrible and was that way for a couple of weeks. I don't know if it cured her or not. It finally got better and it took forever for her to get it off her face.

Another time I can remember she had rheumatism in her leg and couldn't walk so she put her aching leg on a chair and slid the chair along to move about the house. She couldn't do much so us kids had to do all the work. We weren't very old. I was only about 8 years old and Harold was about 10 years old and Marce about 12 years old. It was a hard go, but she finally got better and was able to do the work she had always done.

We had the usual colds and one winter the whole school had an outbreak of whooping cough. We were all out of school with it for three months. That year I didn't pass the grade in school so I was behind a year. By spring we were all over it, but it seemed we coughed and coughed for months.

Chickens

My parents raised chickens too. They usually had leghorns, a small white chicken. They laid a lot of eggs which was our reason for raising them. In early May they would order chicks from a hatchery. Some years it would be a thousand tiny little fluffy chicks. Each one had to be dipped so they each had a drink of water that had a few drops of medicine in it to kill germs or bacteria which might kill them. This done, we would put them in the brooder house - a small building heated by an oil burner heater to keep it warm for them.

Before we went to bed we'd have to check to see that they weren't piled all together. If they did some would smother and die. This happened several times and we lost a lot of chicks that way. As they grew my mother dressed spring chickens (that's what they called them) to sell to people in town. Usually about \$1.00 for a chicken all ready to fry or fix the way they wanted to do.

When they grew older they started producing eggs which my folks sold in town. It was usually my job about 5 PM to gather the eggs - sometimes we'd get 250-300 eggs a day. After supper we'd pack them in egg cases to haul into town the next day along with the cream from a couple of days milking. We usually hauled cream to town Monday, Wednesday and Friday. They made the butter at the creamery and we'd usually bring home 5 pounds twice a week as we used a lot of butter in cooking and baking. At the end of the month my parents would get a check from the creamery for the cream we brought in.

Another job in the fall was to catch chickens. In the summer they would roost at night in the trees near the chicken house. When it got cold they still went to trees so it was a job to catch them. We had to do it at night. We would take a flash light or a lantern and flash it in their eyes so they couldn't see us then get a hold of their feet and bring them down and put them in a coop and when it was full we took it to the chicken house and let them out. We'd usually had to do this two to three nights as there was always some that got away the first night. It always felt so good to get into the warm house after that for hot cocoa or tea to warm us up.

Raising Hogs PDad raised hogs too, and about a year later he sold them. They were usually shipped by freight train to Chicago to the stock markets. They had to haul them into town where they were loaded on the train. Sometimes he'd ship 100 - 150 hogs at one time. That's the way the extra money came in. They had payments to make if anything was bought, but Dad usually had cash to pay his bills. They very seldom bought anything unless they could pay cash for it.

Groceries

If we needed groceries we bought and charged them for a month then Dad paid the bill. He usually got a couple of cigars and for us kids a sack of candy for paying the bill. We never bought many groceries as we had a garden and raised everything and in the fall canned a lot of it so we very seldom bought much other than flour and sugar. My mother always baked bread. It was a real treat if they bought a loaf of bread. We really liked it for a change.

We usually bought a roast for Sunday dinner, as during the week we ate chicken so we wanted something different for Sunday dinner. We usually went to town on Wednesday and Saturday nights as the stores were open late. Farmers came to town to visit and stock up on food they needed and just some time to get away from home. Sometimes us kids would go to the show and then get an ice cream cone. Wednesday night was band concert night. A bandstand was moved to the center of the street and the city band played for a couple of hours. It was enjoyable. No one had radios or televisions so that kind of music was a real treat. Then it was time to go home.

Playtime

Our play time was spent out of doors in the grove. When it was windy we would climb in the trees and sway back and forth in the wind. With a little help with our bodies we'd sway quite far. It was fun.

My sister, Marce and I would build a play house between the trees and we'd make furniture out of wooden boxes and separate the rooms with string or twine. We made cupboards, chairs and beds. There were always plenty of wooden boxes as my parents bought apples and other things packed in them. Then we would bring all of the dolls and dishes we had and play house.

Sometimes the neighbor kids would come over to play too. The farms were quite far apart so we didn't have too many kids to play with. Harold and his friends would go in the pasture and snare gophers or kill snakes.

In the summer we'd play in the hay barns and put on shows. Nina Ekstrand was good at organizing things like that. She had a big family so it didn't take many more kids to get a show going. Old clothes, hats, chicken feathers and whatever we could find we used to make costumes.

My best friend was Arlie Blanchar. She lived on the north shore of Fox Lake. She had two ponies that we rode. I would stay with her a lot and when I did I was always afraid to go to sleep at night because they talked about a badger that lived down by some of the big trees where we played. At night I'd have dreams about those badgers. I never did see them, but just listened to other kids talking. I guess the older kids were trying to scare the younger ones.

I can remember one time I was in the pasture and a swarm of bees swarmed over my head. I ran and threw my coat over my head. They didn't leave so I kept running but they kept up with me. I finally dropped down to the ground and they flew over my head. I laid there awhile and then got up and went home.

We always had bees in between the walls where the two parts of our house came together. When it was hot there would be thousands of bees flying above the house and near the back door. In the summer we never could go out the back door because of the bees. They would get in the house too and fly into the windows. There would be bees flying or crawling around too. We seldom went barefoot because of them. I got stung several times and it did hurt. Mom would put a soda pack or mud pack on the sting. Sometimes they would swell up and get real red and would itch. My mother was allergic to bees so her stings usually were infected and she'd be sick. She never went to a doctor as they usually got better by themselves. They were a nuisance.

House Parties

We used to have house parties in the winter time. Sometimes the adults would dance, usually in the kitchen, and at other parties they'd play cards.

The card game was usually the game called Five Hundred. They would bring out anything that looked like a table to play on. Sometimes there would be 8-10 tables playing and it would be progressive Five Hundred. When the night was over you'd add up your score and find out who was the player with the high score and who was the player with the low score. Both players got prizes.

Lunch was always served - sandwiches, cokes, jello and coffee. It was always good. The house was usually full of smoke as most of the men smoked cigars or cigarettes. It took days to air the house out. We kids would be so tired we would go to sleep anywhere.

Farm Bureau

Dad belonged to an organization called the Farm Bureau and once a month he would attend Bureau meetings. Later they called it the Farmers Club. The meeting usually began with a potluck at noon and then a meeting and discussion in the p.m. It was fun and the adults benefited from it. In the summer it would be a picnic. Sometimes there was a ball game between townships.

Harold - Warts

My brother, Harold, had warts all over his hands. One Sunday we went to visit my Aunt Louise and Uncle Rudolph Gruntz (Spelling ?). Aunt Louise was my mother's oldest sister. When Uncle Rudolph saw Harold's hands he took him aside and got a piece of salt pork meat. He rubbed Harold's hands with it and said a hokus pokus (a few words and motions with his hands over Harold). He then took the pork and buried it out in the grove. He said when that meat has rotted away Harold's warts would be gone. Eventually they were gone. Whether that did it or not -- we don't know, but they were gone and never came back.

Aunt Louise

Aunt Louise was my mother's oldest sister. She took care of the family after their mother died. She was very deaf, but managed to run the household. When my youngest sister was born, she

was named Margaret Louise. Margaret died at 16 years of age in 1931. When our second daughter was born we named her Cynthia Louise. Our youngest daughter, Debbie named their first daughter Jennifer Louise.

When our oldest daughter was born I liked the name Janet, but my sister Marcella had a daughter before me and they named her Janet. I chose Janice for her name as it was as close to Janet as I could get.

Grandpa Schwager - Barber

My dad in his early years was a barber. My folks told about them getting up on Monday mornings at 4 o'clock to do the washing before dad opened up the shop as they had to wash all of the barber towels. Each person he shaved had to have a cloth to steam his face. There were no automatic washers so they scrubbed them all on the washboard and hung them all on the line to dry.

A few years after they were married he quit the barber business and started farming. His feet and back were in bad shape from standing all day in the barber shop so went to farming. My brother Harold was born in Wellsburg, Iowa and when I was born, 2 years later, they were living on a farm east of Sherburn, Minnesota.

Our only source of heat was a cook stove in the kitchen and a heater in the living room. We burned mostly wood and sometimes coal which lasted longer. Before winter set in the men would saw wood. Neighbors helped each other and there would be a big pile of sawed wood. Before it snowed it was our job to haul the wood into the wood shed out of the snow. It was usually cold outside when we did it.

Door Locks

We never locked the doors at night or when we went away from home. No one ever bothered the place or took anything. We always had dogs that seemed to take care of the place.

One time I can remember it was cold and sort of blustery out when an emergency ring on the phone came through. When there was an emergency the telephone operator in town would send out about a dozen short rings. Everyone would listen to find out what was wrong - a fire or accident. This one time it came after dark and it was quite late. An elderly couple in our neighborhood had a quarrel and she left and started out on foot so all the neighbors were called to help find her. My dad left in the sled. We were all so afraid that mom pulled the shades down. We didn't have locks on the doors so we put chairs under the door knobs and pushed tables or whatever we had against them. Nothing ever happened and finally the short rings came on the phone again that she had been found. Dad came home soon afterward and all was well.

Phones

We were on a country phone line with about a dozen other farm families. Each phone line had a different ring. Ours was a long and 2 shorts. Others were the Lunds with 3 longs and a short, Ed Bloomers was 3 longs.

When the ring was for you, you would answer it. If you wanted to call someone in town you would ring a long ring and the operator would say "Number Please" and you'd give her a number which was connected to a residence or store in town. Then the operator would put in a plug and it would ring in and you would get whomever you wanted to talk to.

For a long distance call it was more complicated. Operators would have to go from town to town until they reached the one you wanted. It took a long time to get a call through.

On our phone line anyone could listen to whoever you were talking to. It wasn't a good thing to do, but sometimes we did and enjoyed it. It was gossip and we knew what the neighbors were doing.

This gives you an idea of my younger days and how we lived.

Summer - Storms

Summertime's were always hot and we had lots of storms. More than once we would go down in the cellar for fear of the storm being a tornado. Several times we would be awakened at night to go down in the cellar. By the time it was over we weren't sleepy anymore. The next morning we'd find trees blown over and one time part of the barn roof was ripped off and the wheel on the windmill was bent over. We were sure it was a small tornado or a big wind. Sometimes there would be hail storms. One time I can remember the hail was as big as hen's eggs. That time the corn was ruined and oats were pounded into the ground. That year farmers suffered a big loss,, but the next year they planted again and hoped it wouldn't happen again. They still plant corn and oats, but it doesn't seem like these storms happen much anymore.

My folks never had a vacation. One week end I can remember the families on my dad's side drove to West Bend, Iowa to see a religious monument called the grotto. It was built by one man (a priest) out of rocks from all over the world. They took a picnic and spent the whole day and were home late. A few times they drove to Atlantic, Iowa to see a cousin of my dad's. It was usually an overnight stay. Other than that they were on the farm all of the time to milk the cows twice a day and do all the other things there were to do.

Quilts

As my mother sewed our school clothes she'd put the left over pieces away and in the winter she would make a quilt. Mostly the crazy quilt design. One winter the women (my aunts) were making grandmother's flower garden quilts so my mom started one. I can remember helping trace the pattern and cutting out the pieces from scraps of leftover material from the dresses she made.

My grandmother made a lot of quilts too. She gave my folks a couple. They were the crazy quilt design made mostly of wool pieces so they would be warmer. These quilts had old blankets in between the sewn covers and were tied with yarn. Each of us kids had one on our bed that grandma made.

My mom usually made her quilts out of cotton pieces. She made a particular flower garden quilt pieced together one winter by lamplight. She would set the kerosene lamp real close to her on the table where she sewed.

My aunt Ann (my dad's sister) made a quilt for each of her grandchildren. That is all she would do all day as she had to stay at home most of the day with her youngest son, Howard, an invalid from birth. He lived in a wheel chair all his life. He died of pneumonia at about 40 years old.

Aunt Ann would have quilting parties and invite several ladies in town. My Mom and us kids would go along. That is where I learned to quilt and also how to use a thimble. Quilting is putting a cotton bat between two layers - the design on the front and a plain backing with the bat in between. They would trace a design on where there was some plain material and the women would sew small running stitches on this design and around each patch. This would puff the quilt up a little and make a beautiful design on the back. She had several of these quilting parties in the winter months. These ladies could make one quilt in an afternoon. Aunt Ann always made a nice lunch and had something special to eat.

Sometimes dad would come and get us about 5 o'clock and she would have him stay for supper. He usually went home and did the chores then came for supper and stayed for the evening as everyone felt sorry for Aunt Ann because she was home with Howard all the time. Uncle Ed was there too and he did all of the lifting, but he was sort of overbearing and no one really liked him.

Toward the last, Howard grew to be such a big man they built a derrick on the ceiling. To put him into bed they put a strap under his arms and one under his knees then pulled him out of the wheel chair and dropped him into the bed.

Howard was a happy person and very childish. He laughed at anything and laughed very loud. Sometimes he's be so happy when people would come that he would laugh so loud and start singing cowboy songs that Aunt Ann would have to move him to a room all by himself until he calmed down.

He would have seizures and would swallow his tongue and choke. Aunt Ann would have a round stick close by and would put it in his mouth. He'd chew the stick and he wouldn't choke. He would froth at the mouth and his eyes got so glossy and starry. I hated to be around, but I did see the seizures once or twice. It's something you don't forget.

I have tried to tell you a little bit how I grew up. There is probably more and as it comes to me I will write it down.

Death's in the Family

The first death in the family I can remember was Uncle Charlie Peterson and his son, Ronald. They had the terrible flu that was an epidemic around the First World War. My Aunt Minnie Peterson called dad to come in, but Dr. Farrish wouldn't let anyone in the house it was so contagious. That night Uncle Charlie died and the next day Ronald died. They had a double funeral for them at 5:00 at night as there were so many funerals for all of the people who died from the flu. The undertakers and ministers were so busy not only in Sherburn, but the

surrounding towns as well. Aunt Minnie and Bonita were sick too so they couldn't go to the funeral. Bonita was their daughter.

My grandfather, Chris Schwager died early one morning in his garden. He was an early riser and had a big garden. On the morning of August 16, 1929 he went out in the garden to hoe and had a heart attack. Someone went by on their way to work and saw him lying on the ground with his hoe still in his hand. That was a shock to everyone. His funeral was large as he was a very prominent man in the county. At one time he was president of Sherburn National Bank. That was the first funeral I went to.

All of the embalming took place in the home and the corpse lay in an open casket until the funeral. Each night several friends came and sat up all night until the funeral. They had a photographer come in and take a picture of the person in the casket. My folks didn't get one that I know of. Whether they didn't want one I don't know, but I never saw one in our home.

My grandmother, Abel Schwager lived only until the next January when she got pneumonia and peacefully died at about 9:00 the night of January 5 or 9??, 1930.

All of my aunts and uncles, grandma and grandpa Schwager, my parents Herman and Minnie Schwager, my sister, Margaret are all buried in the Sherburn Cemetery south of town.

My aunt Lena Blowers, my dad's sister, and her family are buried in the Catholic Cemetery east of Sherburn and my aunt Lilly Routier, my dad's sister, and her husband are buried in San Diego, California where they moved to from Minnesota and lived for several years.

My mother's sisters and brothers are buried in the Jackson Cemetery, Jackson, Minnesota. Her parents are buried in the Kimball Church Cemetery north of Jackson, Minnesota. It is a small country church with burial grounds on the church property. We would go up to Kimball Cemetery at least once a year to shape up the graves.

I never did know my mother's parents as they died when she was very young. Her father remarried a few months after her mother died, but no one liked his new wife and they called her "the old lady". My mother didn't stay home long. She went to live with my Aunt Louise then later lived with Aunt Emma Waswo. At 16 she started working out as a hired girl doing housework. Then she got a job at the Sherburn Hotel where she met my dad. She was 19 and he was 21 when they married.

In 1937 Ernie and I were married and I moved off the farm where I had lived since I was 9 months old. We lived in Fairmont, Minnesota -- first right uptown and then after a year we moved to a third floor apartment in a large mansion that in its early years belonged to a wealthy family. The part we lived in was the servant's quarters and was across the hall from the ball room. It was a round large room with smaller rooms off it and balconies. We had friends living on the first, second and third floors so we were back and forth with them playing cards and visiting.

In 1941 we bought a new car and took a trip to California. Ruby and Stan Hansen went with us. We hoped to get work there in an airplane factory. We came back in two weeks, but Ruby and Stan stayed. He did get work in a month or two.

In the winter of 1942 Ernie went to Seattle with four other fellows. I moved out to the farm again and stayed with my parents until he had money enough to send for me. I rode out to Seattle with Margaret and Jerry Uvecestadet (spelling???). She was Margaret Hardin (spelling???) from Sherburn. For 3 months we lived near Boeing on Airport Way in a group of motels. It was very small and only had a 3 burner stove, no oven and one bedroom. Ernie worked grave yard or swing shift so I was alone most of the night and all afternoon. Mornings he slept so we didn't do much during the week and we didn't have a car as we sold our new one to get money to come out to Seattle.

After 3 months in the motel we moved to Rainier Vista Housing Project where we made many friends. Janice was born while we lived on Sears Drive. Cindy was born after we moved to Tamarack Drive. After World War II these houses were turned over to low income people so we had to move out.

We bought the house in McMicken Heights near the airport before Debbie was born. Cindy was about 2 years old. We lived there until 1976 when I had open heart surgery. After that we moved to an apartment for 3 years. Jan and her family moved into the house as she and her husband, Stan had just been divorced and she moved to Seattle.

We got tired of apartment living so we bought a mobile home in Auburn Manor. Debbie and Rob then bought the house.

This is about how I lived growing up. Probably a lot I missed to write about , but this just about sums it up.

Cute sayings of grandchildren:

When Stan and Jan moved to Fairbanks Alaska we took her and Stan Jr. and Maria to the airport. Maria was a baby so I helped Jan onto the airplane with all her luggage. There were a lot of servicemen on the plane and as Jan found her seat and settled in Stan Jr. was listening to a couple of servicemen talk and when one left he said good-bye and said it was nice knowing him. As I said good-bye to Jan and kids Stan Jr. said "Good-bye grandma. It was nice knowing you." We both laughed and I left the plane.

The next fall I went to Alaska for a week. Stan Sr. called and said Jan hurt her back and needed help so I went up. By the next day or so her back was better so I came home soon after. The next summer Dad and I went up in July for two weeks. Had a marvelous time. We made a trip to Mt. McKinley on the Alaskan train. It was fun. We stayed overnight in the Lodge. Exactly one month to the day after we left the lodge burned down. We saw bear, deer, caribou, musk ox and moose. It was enjoyable to see the Indian villages along the way with salmon hanging out to dry just like clothes on a clothes line. Stan Jr. was going with us and was already on the train when he decided not to go. We just got him off and the train started. Jan waited to see if he would go and

it was a good thing she did as he didn't want to go. While we were in Fairbanks we took a river excursion on a stern wheeler. We flew home after two weeks.

When Cindy and John went to Mexico in May 1985 we stayed with John Michael and Theresa. It was fun and we enjoyed being with the kids. We did get tired, but we survived.

One day we were talking about dogs and John Michael has always been fearful of big dogs and he said "I'm going to get a dog soon, but I don't know what kind I want because everyone I see has different hair and I don't know what kind I want."

Theresa wanted to go outside in her sandals. The grass was wet as it had rained that night. I went into the bedroom and got her boots and she said "No grandma. I can't wear them because there is no 'no'." She meant no snow. We all laughed about it and finally persuaded her to wear them.

Jennifer was flower girl at her Aunt Connie's wedding so now she plays wedding and wanted to wear her flower girl dress to Enchanted Village for an afternoon of fun rides. She was 3 years old. Melissa is too small to know what she's going to do, but I'm sure she will do things to make us chuckle.

When Maria was still in grade school we would go up to Jan's when she was living in our house and be with the kids when she went to work in the morning. One morning we noticed Maria was in the bathroom extra long. We were in the kitchen and when she went to school we noticed she was in a hurry to go through and she had a lot of makeup on. Maria had gotten into her mother's makeup and had plenty on. We made her take it off and she was almost late for school.

As time goes on I will add to the Schwager family history and will give you copies of what I do for myself. It will take a very long time and it will never really be completed. I will be working on this project for many, many years to come so please be patient and I hope you will look forward to each addition as much as I enjoy doing the work.

**Donated to the Martin, MNGenWeb Project
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EHLERS, Marian Elaine (SCHWAGER)

Mrs. Ehlers has written an extensive piece on her personal memories. [See above]

SCHWAGER, Henry

Henry Schwager was born January 4, 1877 at Davenport, Iowa. He was one of nine children born to Chris and Abel Schwager. The family moved to the Sherburn, Minnesota area in 1884 and purchased a farm in Elm Creek Township. Henry attended school in the Sherburn area. In 1894 his father purchased a farm on half mile east of Sherburn. Henry helped on the farm and

remained on the farm after his parents moved into Sherburn. He then rented the farm from them.

Henry met Rosa Witt, who had moved to the Sherburn area. She was born in Minier, Illinois on September 7, 1885. She was orphaned at an early age and lived with relatives in Lakefield, Minnesota, where she attended school and was confirmed in the Delafield Lutheran Church before coming to Sherburn. Henry and Rosa were married on March 7, 1910. After their marriage they lived on the farm and later purchased it from his father. He bought the farm in 1920 and remained there until they retired to Sherburn in 1947.

Henry was chairman of the Manyaska Township Board for twenty-one years and was on the Sherburn Creamery Board for sixteen years. He was Vice-President and President of the Farmers State Bank of Sherburn for many years.

Rose and Henry were the parents of four sons: Merlin, Gordon, Robert, and Chester. Henry died April 20, 1961. His wife Rose is still living at age one hundred-two years, a resident of the Trimont Nursing Home, Trimont, Minnesota since August 1, 1969.
(Submitted by Merlin Schwager for Sherburn Historical Book; date unknown)

SCHWAGER, Mr. and Mrs. Herman

Anniversary excerpts from Sherburn paper:

Mr. & Mrs Herman Schwager celebrated their 37th wedding anniversary at their home Sunday, January 16. A family dinner was served to the following group of relatives: Mr & Mrs. Walter Christian and family, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Schwager, Mr. and Mrs. Bert Schwager, Mr. and Mrs. AC Blowers, Mrs. Anna Steinhorst, Mrs. Bonita Elbert and children, Mrs. Minnie Peterson of this community; Mr and Mrs. Andrew Carlson of Fairmont, Mr and Mrs. Dick Waswo and family, Mr and Mr. Ralph Web Webster and family of Jackson, Mr. and Mrs John Waswo, Mr and Mrs Albert Jarmath, Mr. and Mrs Eric Olson and Madge of Alpha and Mrs. Bills and children of Fabian, Texas. Mr and Mrs. Schwager were presented a purse of money from the group in remembrance of the occasion. Mr and Mrs. Henry Schwager were unable to attend due to illness.
(Sherburn Paper, 1/20/44)

Sapphire Wedding: The children of Mr and Mrs Herman Schwager honored their parents with an open house, Sunday, January 20th in honor of their forty-fifth wedding anniversary.

One hundred seventy five friends and relatives called to extend their congratulations to the honored couple. Miss Marian Hansen had charge of the guest book. Presiding at the serving table were Mrs. Annie Klatt of Farmington, sister of Mrs. Schwager; Mrs. Arthur Blowers, sister of Mr. Schwager; Mrs. Ed Stoterau and Mrs. Walter Hansen.

Henry Schultz, Jackson, brother of Mrs. Schwager, and an attendant at the wedding, was present. Mrs. Minnie Schwager Peterson, the other attendant was unable to be there.

Mr and Mrs Schwager received many lovely gifts, including a silver coffee service from their children, and gifts of flowers, money, and objects of art. Friends of the family assisted the children in serving and the preparations.

(The Sherburn Advance Standard, Jan 28, 1952)