MEMOIRS OF A MODEL-T MECHANIC

The story of George Charles Bernard (1886-1975), Butte County rancher and early-day automobile mechanic in the town of Deadwood, South Dakota.

by

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(1918-2006)

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by Jon M. Bernard

TO MY GRANDCHILDREN

When you are grown up (age sixteen or so) and are highly educated, and know almost everything there is to know about human nature and the complex, amazing world you live in, pick up this book and get acquainted with your Great Grandpa George Charles Bernard.

I think you will find him to be very interesting. You will also learn something of your Great Great Grandfather Pierre Ulric Bernard, and just a smidgen about your Great Great Great Grandfather, Ulric Ubald Bernard. Let's hope you will think it's GREAT reading. You'll probably exclaim, "Where did they get those goofy names!"

Gramps, 1986

A NOTE FOR OTHERS WHO MAY BE EAVESDROPPING

Originally I was certain that this work would fascinate the world. Thus you will note that I wrote it as if all humanity would be storming bookstores for copies. However, after the manuscript was reviewed by a couple of bright but overly honest nephews, I have decided to keep it all in the family.

As one nephew put it with utmost tact: "Gee, Baldy, if the reader doesn't come from Deadwood, he may be unable to relate to a lot of your B.S." The other observed, more respectfully: "It ain't commercial, Uncle Harry. Why there's hardly a speck of sex in the whole thing."

But family members and friends just might overlook this blunder and be pleased anyway. If you are, reward me by telling me so; if you aren't, pretend you never received a copy -- I can't stand much more honesty.

H.B, 1986

BEFORE CRANKING HER UP

Perhaps you have heard of Dakota Territory and one of its famed old mining towns, Deadwood. If so, it is a fair bet you have also heard of some of Deadwood's gilt edge characters, like Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, Preacher Smith, Poker Alice, Potato Creek Johnny, Seth Bullock, and maybe even Swill Barrel Jimmy. But I'll lay you odds that you've never heard of Frenchy Bernard.

Frenchy (or George, as he was mostly called) never made history. If he had been the crack shot who got his skull blown off while playing poker in Saloon No. 10, you'd have heard of him. But he wasn't that lucky. Or let's say he was merely the stinkin' varmint who gunned down Wild Bill. You'd have heard plenty about Frenchy Bernard -- but unfortunately Frenchy had no talent as an assassin.

If he had set out from Deadwood Gulch armed only with a King James Bible to preach to Crook City sinners, and end up face down on a pine-scented trail, you'd not only have heard about him but there'd be a monument to him, right near the spot where (as history assumed) a bloody Ind-eye-an gunned him down. But, alas, Frenchy was a Catholic layman, not a Methodist preacher.

He never had the dumb luck, like that pint-sized Potato Creek Johnny, to gaze into his gold pan and see the sun glinting off the largest nugget ever washed out of a Black Hills stream. He was never elected town sheriff like Seth Bullock was. Even when he ran for Alderman from Fourth Ward, he lost by a whisker.

So, if you've not heard of my Dad, it's because historically he didn't amount to doodely-do. Come to think about it, have you ever run across an automobile repairman in a U.S. History book?

He is gone now, but I tape-recorded many of the fascinating yarns he spun in his 80's, the same yarns you will be "hearing" as you read on. Most of the tapes were made while we played cribbage at the kitchen table. Usually he knew when I started up the recording "contraption", then promptly forgot about it. Had he suspected he was speaking to posterity, he no doubt would have omitted a few episodes and purified his language for the ladies.

Well, Dad it's too late for that now. All right, I'll disguise a few names and locations for you just to protect the guilty, but I'm letting the cards lay pretty much as you dropped them. And if I get any complaints I'll forward them you at Oak Ridge Cemetery. Fair enough?

Harry Bernard
Roulette, PA.

PARTS DEPT

CHAPTER ONE

MY BOYHOOD IN DEADWOOD

Sure, Harry, I remember Swill Barrel Jimmy. You don't say! They got him in a book? Well I'll be damned. I couldn't have been more than six or seven when I knew him. He used to get his grub by rummaging through trash barrels behind restaurants. Sometimes the cooks even set aside choice leftovers for him. He had a shack just a little way above Shea's Hardware. One day I was in his place, Harry, and you should have seen it -- from floor to ceiling it was piled up with shoe boxes and cartons, all containing a bite to eat: crusts of stale bread, half-rotted fruit, dried up cake. There was just enough clear floor space for his bed. And mice! My God, they were all over the place. But he didn't seem to mind the mice; they were his friends.

He was a fine-featured old duffer, with a beard and long, delicate fingers -- I remember the fingers so well. One day his shack caught fire and burned plumb to the ground. I wish you could have seen the mice high-tailing it away from there!

Our livery barn was close to his place, so after the fire he moved into our hayloft without bothering to ask. But Dad let him stay there until he found a better place, as long as he promised not to smoke. One bitter cold morning Dad went to see if Jimmy was all right and found him asleep, covered with an old quilt. When Dad lifted the quilt to check on him, there he was, naked as a worm, all curled up in old newspapers. He had made a nest for himself just like his mice did.

It didn't take long for the do-gooders to take poor Swill Barrel under wing. The ladies decked him out in a swallow-tail coat, a stove-pipe hat and black leather gloves, and he cut quite a figure. No, Harry, I don't know what finally became of him, and I never knew his right name; all I ever heard him called was Swill Barrel Jimmy.

My father and mother ran a boarding house in the section of Deadwood that used to be called Elizabethtown, near the livery stable I was just talking about. It was called the “Farmers Home” because it catered mostly to farmers who drove wagons of produce to town. We'd serve them meals, and take care of their horses and oxen. Some of those ox teams hauled freight all the way from Ft. Pierre on the Missouri River, and when the teamsters had gotten rid of their goods and turned the teams over to us, they'd head up town and get powerful drunk.

We lived at the rear of the house, separate from the boarding rooms and dining room. Aunt Minnie Rail and a couple other young girls worked for us, cleaning , waiting tables and the like, and believe me those gals were full of the Old Nick. One day when I was just a little shaver, they cornered me in a back room, stripped off my pants and drawers and tied a pretty ribbon on my thing-a-ma-jig. Then they opened the dining room door and trotted me in for all the customers to see. I sure never forgot that!

You talk about interesting characters; we boarded a few. One was a French Canadian, a grubby old coot, who was married to two Indian squaws at the same time. They took turns coming to visit him, and by one he had all sons and by the other all daughters. It wasn't unusual in those days to see French Canadians with Indian wives.

Do you remember that little history of Jefferson (South Dakota)] that my sister Regina sent us? Well there is an account about your grandfather and grandmother running the Farmers Home, but it is none too accurate. Calls it the "Farmers Hotel" and claims that some of their guests were Wild Bill, Calamity Jane, and the first Catholic bishop of South Dakota. That may be, but I sure don't recall any Wild Bill being there.

[I think I know why, Dad: he was in Boot Hill in 1876,
ten years before you were born.]

It was at the Farmers Home that I began my career as a roughneck. It's a wonder I didn't turn out worse than I did, because I was influenced by some pretty crude galoots there.

Once when I was maybe six or seven, one of them got hold of me. "Kid," he says, "how would you like to earn two-bits?"

I was never bashful when it came to making money, so I asked him, "What do I have to do?"

"Not much," he replied. "You know that snotty kid that comes in here on Mondays with his grandpa? Well the next time he comes in, I want you to smack him on the nose."

It was a generous wage, but I turned him down.

"Hey, Frenchy," he pipes up, "I never thought you was yellow!"

"I'm not. But that kid is twice my size, so how do you expect me to reach his nose?"

"No problem. He has to walk right past the staircase, right? Well you just stand on the second step up, and when he comes by, wham!"

So I whacked that kid on the nose and the whole room bust out laughing, and for a minute I was a big hero. But the kid turned belligerent, so I had to make a quick decision, which was to clear out of there quick. You should have seen me skedaddle!

[How do I explain this behavior to my grandchildren, Dad?]

My earliest memories? Probably when my mother took me to Rhode Island to visit her folks. It was my first train ride, and I was all eyes. I'd never seen prairies, and rivers, and split-rail fences, and blackberries. We returned by way of Canada where both my parents had lots of relatives. That's where I saw my first tobacco fields, and great big wild strawberries. Farmers raised mostly peas and buckwheat up there, and every morning we'd have buckwheat flapjacks with pure maple syrup. Say, did you know you can make syrup out of box elder sap? Oh, you didn't? Well, sure you can. It's not as sweet as maple syrup, but not bad. Now isn't that educational!

One thing I'll never forget on that trip is seeing my first circus, at a place in Canada called St. Germaine. It was just a crummy little circus, so poor that they would perform at one village, then walk to the next. But I thought they were wonderful. They had a five-legged calf that everyone was crazy to see. I suppose it was a regular calf with another leg sewn on him.

Another early recollection is of the time when they were laying the first railroad track into Deadwood from outside the Black Hills. That was in 1890, so I was close to five. It was about the same time that my father became a U.S. citizen. That wasn't hard to do because when Dakota Territory was split and South Dakota made a state any foreign-born resident who wanted to automatically got citizenship.

It's all gone now, but when I was a kid there was a good sized Chinatown in Deadwood, running from the "badlands" (Deadwood's vice district) almost to where we lived in Elizabeth-town. My cousin, Bernie L'Esperance, and I had some awful good times, especially during the Chinese celebrations. You take New Years, for example. The Chinese would shoot off so many firecrackers that when you walked down the street it was like walking on drifts of confetti. They didn't shoot off firecrackers one at a time like you kids did; they lit whole bundles of them and tossed them into the street, where they'd go pop-pop-pop all day long for a week. That was on their New Years, not ours.

The big cheese in Chinatown was Wing Tsue [Dad pronounced it "Soo-ee"] who owned a drug and general store and had several pretty little daughters. On holidays he would dress them all up in silk gowns -- oh, beautifully -- and he'd perch them up on a dais so they could greet the people. White folks were welcomed at these celebrations. There would be big bowls of nuts and fruits and sweets; and the best part of it was that it was free.

We knew an old Chinaman by the name of Mah Ling who had made a killing by gambling, then had brains enough to quit. Well, he was living the life of Riley, but he'd get lonesome sometimes and invite Bernie and me in for dinner. He was a bachelor, and just needed someone to talk to. He had a way of cooking rice that made it the best rice I've ever eaten. I don't know how he did it exactly, but it never came out mushy or all glued together. Sometimes he mixed a little pork with it, and sometimes a bit of brandy. And when he cooked it, he would clear the first water and drink it. Mah Ling taught us to use chopsticks, just like he did.

When I was about nine, our family left Deadwood and moved to Jefferson. After I grew up I returned to Deadwood and right away I went into that saloon -- gosh, can't remember its name. Right there by H & B's -- but anyway, old Mah Ling was there at

the bar nursing a drink. I recognized him, so I walked up to him and I said, "Mah Ling! Hello, Mah Ling!" But he just squinted at me. "What's the matter, Mah Ling, don't you remember George Bernard?"

He broke into a big smile, "Oh, little George Bernard? Have a d'link! Have a d'link!"

One of the honky-tonk girls in Chinatown had a son about Bernie's and my age, and we got to playing with him, so before long we were pretty familiar with the area. We even frequented the opium dens, not to smoke, but to pick up whiskey bottles that used to be tossed out in the back alleys. We'd sell the bottles we gathered, and they'd be reused. Old Man La Breche was our chief buyer. Once we included a cracked bottle in our delivery to him. Later, he noticed it and threw it out back of his saloon, where we found it again. After the third time he had bought the same bottle, he wised up, and on our next delivery, he said, "You got any cracked bottles in that sack?" We knew our goose was cooked, but all he did was find the cracked one and break it right before our eyes. "That's the last time you little skunks sell me that bottle!"

[And to think you were Roman Catholic, Dad!]

It was fun watching Chinese funeral processions. The people would walk up to Mt. Moriah to the tune of a band, carrying banners and bringing bowls of cooked rice and nice suckling pigs and other goodies, which they'd leave on the grave after the burial so the departed wouldn't get hungry on the long journey to wherever good Chinamen go. They followed that custom until the white people started stealing the food off the graves. Sometimes the whites kidded them, asking when do the dead Chinese come up to eat the food. Most of them would say, "When your dead come up to smell the flowers."

By the time I had grown up and returned to Deadwood, the Chinese had mostly all disappeared. Some went back to China - Old Teeter, for example. Old Teeter worked around town as a janitor and handyman for many years and got to be a town fixture. He was just about the last to leave. Lex Shostrom, the banker, was telling me how one day Teeter showed up to withdraw all his money. So Lex asked him why he wanted to

withdraw the whole she-bang. "Well," replied Teeter, "because I go China. Go see wife and chillins."

"Oh, really?" said Lex, "I didn't know you had children in the old country. How old are they?"

"Oh, I got chillins five, six, eight..." So Lex asked how can that be, since Teeter hadn't been out of Deadwood for twenty years. Teeter replied, "Well, I have brothers there." That was their custom - when a Chinese women married, she married the whole family.

There was one town floozy called China Mary. You may remember seeing her around town, because she was still living when you were a kid. What's that? She didn't look Chinese? Well, she wasn't but she consorted with them, and that's how come she got her name. I remember once, after going into the garage business, I was out front pumping gas for a customer when she came by looking pretty dilapidated. I asked her if she was sick. "No," she replied, "not sick. It's that goddam Jake. He beat me 'til me head was soft. You know, mister, its getting to be a hell of a country when a first class whore like me can't get but fifty cents and has to put up with a louse like Jake."

Reminds me of another "soiled dove" who roomed a couple doors down the street from us when we were living temporarily above the store that later became Odou's auto agency. I had me a pet chipmunk at the time, and I'd take him to school in my shirt pocket. Well, one day this shady lady sees me feeding apple seeds to my chipmunk, and she thinks my pet is so cute that she simply has to own it. Offered me a quarter for it. Well, I wasn't too keen on losing my only claim to fame at school, so I did a lot of hemming and hawing. She kept on persuading me, but still I resisted. Then she went out of her mind and upped her ante to a half-dollar, which was too much to pass up. So I dropped my chipmunk into her purse and she headed for her room.

Well, for a few days I missed that little rascal, and my conscience kept nagging me. This nun at school was telling all about some fellow who betrayed the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and here I'd sold my friend for fifty cents. Then one day on my way to school I saw this same woman walking toward me on the boardwalk. She flagged me down. "Say, kid, you

remember that chipmunk you sold me? I'll give you two-bits if you'll get him out of my room. The son-of-a-bitch bit my finger!"

The first school I attended was the nearby public school in First Ward. I lasted there one whole day. Somehow, I didn't measure up to the teacher's high standards of deportment, so she gave me a spanking. I forget why she spanked me, but it was no doubt undeserved. [He laughed here.] Well, by then I knew I'd had enough education and went home and told my parents I was all finished with school. We had a long discussion, and finally they agreed I wouldn't have to go back to school -- not that school, but I'd have to go to the Sister School in Fourth Ward, way across town up where St. Joseph's Hospital is.

The Sister School [St. Edwards Academy] was no big improvement. I remember once I committed some offense -- it must have been pretty terrible because my teacher sent me to see Sister Superior. That was supposed to be bad medicine. But she just gave me a quiet lecture and then she gave me a chunk of cake. After that I never minded being sent to see her, but my regular teacher was a horse of a different color; sometimes she'd beat hell out of me. One day I goofed-up and she told me to go and wait from her in the music room and she would "take care of me" after school. I knew I was in for a real shellacking. Well I was sitting there waiting, pretty blue, when who should down the stairs but Sister Superior herself, who roomed on the floor above. She sees me looking down-in-the-mouth, and she asks me what the matter is. "Well," I reply, "I don't feel too good."

"You mean you don't feel too well," she says.

"Yes, I also don't feel too well."

"All right," she says, "you come to the kitchen with me and I'll fix you up." So we go to the kitchen and she asks me where I hurt, and I point to my ribs. Then she asks the cook to bring her some salve, and she rubs some of it on my chest, then she gives me a piece of spice cake and tells me to go home to my mother. I don't know what my teacher thought when she came to punish me, and I never bothered asking.

One punishment that impressed me occurred at home. In First Ward, just above the freight depot, there was a warehouse with a long loading platform, beneath which was a hiding place where we kids liked to play. One hot summer day we got to fooling around in there and every last one of us wound up stark

naked, bare as dirt. We were just little tykes. Well, someone spotted us in the raw and told our parents. I got a good switching.

It was only a hop, skip and jump from the Farmers Home to the smelter, so there was a lot of activity around. There were narrow-gauge railroad tracks all over, and they'd run gold ore down there day and night. After dark, Bernie and I used to watch from my bedroom window and see the sky light up from the flames when they dumped molten slag. There was plenty of smoke and noise; things were sure buzzing- in those days.

> [The Deadwood & Delaware Smelter operated from 1890 to 1903, during which time its discharged slag formed a long flat barrier that eventually blocked a small creek and formed an excellent and secluded swimming pond, complete with trout, frogs, dragon flies and mosquitoes. Dad probably never swam there -- in fact I never saw him swim -- but many a Deadwood youngster, including me, has scorched his bare feet crossing that black lava on a hot day to take a cool dip in our beloved "Smelter". Today, the face of the pond has been dynamited; the swimming hole is no more. All that remains of the once busy processing plant are the stone foundations].

Every year there was a Federal Court session that always involved misbehaving Indians. So the Indians families and friends would all come to town by wagon and set up camp down where the rodeo grounds are now. Sometimes we'd see them butchering beef and cooking over open fires. Bernie and I got friendly with an Indian boy who showed us around the camp. He spoke no English and we spoke no Indian, but that didn't slow us down any. Once they invited us to eat dog stew with them. We were always hungry, so it didn't taste bad at all.

I remember when Chief Two Sticks was hanged at the Court House. My father told me to keep away from there, but you can bet that whenever something exciting like that happened, Bernie and I weren't far away. I seem to remember there was a Matilda Whitewater also hanged.

[Never read about Matilda, Dad. You sure that wasn't in a Louis L'Amour novel? But you didn't dream up Chief Two Sticks. He fought Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Sometime later he got riled up over the massacre of Indians at Wounded Knee, and appears to have retaliated by participating in the killing of four whites. Failing to convince a white jury of his innocence, he was hung, December 28,1894. George was then a lad of eight.]

You know down by the Northwestern depot, where that little creek runs down the draw and empties into Whitewood Creek? It runs under the road in a culvert now, but back then it was open and there was a narrow bridge over it, with about a foot drop off on each end. One evening a couple of fellows with their girls came down from the "badlands" in their buggy, hell bent for election. And when they hit the bump at the bridge, over they turned.

Well at this very same spot, later on, they were excavating to install the new culvert. Everything was muddy after a downpour, and just after the three workmen had planted a dynamite charge to deepen the ditch, they spied this Catholic priest approaching. So they figured to have a bit of fun at the padre's expense, and when he was just the right distance away they set off the charge. Well, my God! That poor priest was half deaf, and mud from head to foot. He just stood there stunned for a few minutes, wondering if the Holy Ghost had descended upon him, or what. Finally, as he got his face wiped off and could see, he spotted the three workers laughing. Now, this priest was no panty-waist, as his parishioners well knew but his persecutors didn't. When he realized what had happened, he walked straight to them and looked them over. You could see his milk of human kindness curdling. He takes off his black coat...he rolls up his sleeves...he tears off his Roman collar and throws it on the ground, saying: "There goes the priest! And here comes the man!" By God, he whipped all three of them. Surprising how some of those old-time priests kept in good shape just lifting knives and forks and wrestling with their consciences.

Did I ever tell you how we earned money selling whiskey bottles? I did? Well Bernie and I had another way of making

money that kept us pretty well in candy. A circus had come to town and after seeing it we decided to become acrobats. Of course we had no good trapeze equipment to practice on, but we did get good at balancing brooms on our noses, doing cart-wheels and back-flips, and especially at walking on our hands. We would go uptown by the bank and stop traffic by walking across the street upside down. There were always people there, so after we'd performed we'd pass our caps. We always got a few coins, enough for a bowl of chili, or an ice-cream, or a couple games of bowling.

> [Often when Dad came home from work he would entertain us children by balancing sticks on his nose and walking on his hands. Cousin Charlotte says she remembers that when he would visit in Jefferson in later years, all the nieces and nephews would be happy to see him, because he'd always walk across the parlor on his hands. Then coins would invariably fall from his pockets and the little ones would have a mad scramble for wealth.]

Walking on hands reminds me of the only time I can remember winning anything from Bernie. We had just performed our act and were bowling away some of our earnings. After as couple of games, things were getting too dull for me, so when Bernie threw his ball and left the five pin standing, I bet him I could walk down the alley on my hands, knock the pin down with my head and come all the way back without falling. Since this was at least twice as far as we usually walked, Bernie took the bet. By the time I reached the pin and nudged it over, I was about to blow a gasket, but I headed back up the alley and just made it past the foul line before collapsing. He paid without a whimper. That same night, he came to my room with a deck of cards and told me to name my game. When he left at curfew time he had won his money back and some of mine to boot. It was he who taught me not to play cards for money, because he'd always beat me. And I never forgot that lesson.

You know, Harry, I was with him the night he determined what his life work would be. We were watching the men play poker at the Bodega -- had been for a couple hours -- and Bernie was plumb lost in concentration. When I finally dislodged him and we were on our way home, he says to me

"George, I know now what I'm going to be. I'm going to be a gambler." And that's exactly what he became, a darn good one too. He wound up running a bar and gambling house in his later years and made a comfortable living.

I'll tell you a little story that shows what sort of man he was. I didn't hear this from him but from another guy who worked for Bernie. It seems Bernie hired a card dealer he didn't know much about. After a couple days went by, he noticed receipts were picking up, so he dropped in one evening to observe his new man. When closing time came, Bernie called the dealer into the office. "Blackie", he says, "you're bringing me in pretty good winnings. Tell me, do you always deal like that?"

"Yes, Mr. L'Esperance, that's the way I deal."

"Fine. I'll just pay you your wages and you can pick up your hat and coat and leave. You don't work for me anymore. I can make a good living here off house odds without having to resort to cheating."

The one thing I didn't have to make my life complete was a dog. Almost everyone else had one, so there were dog fights galore. Most men figured a good dog fight was almost as enjoyable as a good fist fight. You have to remember we didn't have TV back then; didn't even have radio. But my folks had enough problems keeping track of us kids without having dog problems too, so we were dog-less. But we never quit begging for one.

Then one day, Dad came riding back from St. Onge where he'd been visiting Uncle Vini, and lo-and-behold if he doesn't have sitting in the wagon seat with him the biggest, handsomest dog I'd ever laid eyes on. It was funny how Dad never let on that there was the least thing unusual about the company he was keeping, but he never said a word, just climbed off the wagon, got the dog down, then told me to get the team to the stable. By that time Regina and the little kids were outdoors, all squealing and bug-eyed, and the dog was wagging his tail and barking. Finally I got my voice: "Where'd the dog come from, Dad?"

"St. Onge," he replies.

"Whose dog is he?"

"Well, he's our dog -- whose dog do you suppose he'd be?"

"Our dog! What's his name?"

"Got no name."

"Let's call him 'Sport'. "

So "Sport" it was. And I was in seventh heaven. He was half mastiff and half St. Bernard, plenty big and powerful enough to take care of himself and all us kids. I thought no dog would be safe again in Deadwood if I turned Sport loose. I could hardly wait to see him strut his stuff.

Well, it turned out I didn't have long to wait. The very first time I took him out of the yard, a neighbor kid showed up with his little border collie. That little collie took one look at Sport and tore into him tooth and nail. I was plumb disgusted; my Sport just stood there flatfooted and let that pooch gnaw on him like he was a ham bone. Not that it hurt him probably, because he had such a mat of fur, but at the time I thought I'd never seen a bigger coward in my life. Good God, if there was one thing I didn't need in Deadwood, it was a yellow dog.

A few other times he got out and ended up having smaller dogs attack him. He'd come shuffling back into the yard draped with a toy bull or a mongrel and just stand there 'til they lost interest, let go, peed on our gate, and trotted off. Can you imagine my humiliation? Then one day a saloon keeper, who was also town mayor, came down the street in a cart, and he had this whopper of a big blue dog trailing along. I'd about chalked Sport off as a total zero, but I figured I'd give him one last chance to redeem himself. So I sicced him on the mayor's dog. To my amazement, Sport whipped that big dog in nothing flat. And then I knew Sport was no coward: he was just too kind and noble to hurt a smaller dog.

[I have to wonder whether a saloon keeper was ever mayor of Deadwood. Anyway, this pretty well covers what Dad told me of his early years there. Whether Sport's having whipped the mayor's dog had anything to do with the Bernards leaving town, I don't know. Later, as you will see, George returns as a young man.

By now you either suspect this fun-loving lad might turn into an interesting person or you have closed this book for good. Assuming some of you are still with me, you might tolerate a few background notes which explain how George got born in Deadwood in the first place. I know vital statistics can be dull, but they'll clear the path for what follows. I'll be brief.

It all started in Quebec Province, where our first ancestor settled following honorable discharge from the

French army after the Indian Wars (around 1670). He was offered a choice between return passage to his native France or a piece of land. He opted for the land, sent for his sweetheart, and began to populate North America. Curiously, his name was not Bernard – it was Brouillet - but I won't confuse you here with how "Brouillet" became "Bernard."

A few branches down the family tree, we run into Ulric Ubald Bernard, George's grandfather. He was farmer by nature, carpenter by trade, and lover by the grace of God; he had two wives (consecutively), and eleven children. Ulric Ubald left Canada in 1871 to ply his carpenter trade in rebuilding Chicago after the great fire. Four years later, after he had resurrected the city, he headed west and homesteaded a 160 acre farm at Jefferson, South Dakota, where in addition to farming he helped construct the very impressive St. Peter's Catholic Church.

Next appears Pierre Ulric Bernard (George's father). We'd better tell you about him because he plays a prominent role here. Called "Pete" or "P.U." by both family and friends, Pierre Ulric was born in 1861 at L'Ange Gardien, de Rouville, Province of Quebec. After four years of commercial studies at the College of St. Cesaire, he worked briefly as a book-keeper in Montreal. In 1881 he caught "gold fever" and ended up in Deadwood where the gold rush was in full swing. A year later he married Marie Louise Fontaine of Providence, R.I., and together they operated The Farmers Home (or Farmers Hotel). While in Deadwood they produced Regina, the first born; then in 1886 George Charles (my Dad); Agnes, Florence, and Cora. In 1897 they sold out and purchased a quarter section of land at Jefferson, where many of their French Canadian friends and relatives had settled. Jefferson lies a few miles above Sioux City in that fertile tip of southeastern South Dakota between the Big Sioux and Missouri rivers. In Jefferson they added three more children: Emma, Napoleon, and a Johnny-come-lately named Albert.

In 1900 they moved from farm to town where they operated a general store. P.U. was active in the community, helping to establish the first local telephone company, electric company, Farmers Grain Elevator, and

the First State Bank. He was a school board member, and with his wife, was active in church affairs.

I suspect one reason the family relocated from Deadwood was that P.U.'s wife, affectionately known as "Madame Pierre", was a refined and dignified woman (or so I have read.) Deadwood, with its numerous gamblers and prostitutes, may not have appealed to her as the optimum community for rearing a family, even though it lay in "the richest 100 square miles on earth." But that's only my guess. More likely, the reason for the move was the tug of family ties. Our family historian offers this explanation: "P.U. had become disenchanted with hotel management and yearned for the more active life of the farmer."

Whatever were the facts, I can imagine the postman dropping the deciding letter off at the Farmers Home. It would have been from his father Ulric Ubald, postmarked "Jefferson, S.D., and written in French:

> My dear Pierre and Marie Louise,
>
> Just a note. If you have ever considered abandoning the gold country, now is the time because there is a homestead relinquishment now available on a magnificent plot adjoining ours! This is marvelous land, as you well know, but you must act immediately or it will be gone. I urge you to come, and I'll help you get started. Maybe I'll even let you beat me at cribbage. Our love to you and the children.
>
> Papa
>
> P.S. Bring Sport!]

CHAPTER TWO

THE JEFFERSON YEARS

When we left Deadwood for the four hundred mile trip to Jefferson, we brought our dog, Sport. Dad had to ship him with our furniture in a boxcar; and all during the long confining ride the poor dog was sweltering, so that when we arrived he was half dead. We proceeded to my grandfather Ulric's place where he kept two dogs nearly as large as ours. Well, those two dogs jumped our poor dog, one on each side, and they gave him a real beating. He just took it. It wasn't but three weeks later that Sport caught them out in a corn field and killed them both.

We didn't have much of anything when we first hit Jefferson, just this mountain of a mutt, some furniture and a bare farm. The first thing Dad did was borrow a team from Grandpa Ulric and set out to buy a sow from one of Dad's cousins, Euclid Bernard, who lived eight miles away. It was blazing hot as we left, and that dammed fool of a furry dog of ours had to follow us. We tried to turn him back, but did you ever try to tell your dog to go home when he's not even sure where home is yet? After jogging along quite a way, the poor thing played out, and we thought he might die, so we dragged him into some shade, gave him water, and rested him. After he recovered, we moved on.

Euclid was glad to see us and eager to introduce us to his farm. The first thing he showed us was his garden. He was especially fond of his large, fenced in potato patch, full of beautiful plants with potatoes just about ready to eat. As we were eyeing the garden with Sport resting beside us, we heard this big clatter: there was a bulldog franticly circling the fence, trying to get in.

Euclid said to Dad, "Here comes King! Pete, you better grab hold of that dog of yours! King has never been bested!"

"Well," said Dad, "there's always a first time."

"But I tell you, Pete, he'll kill that dog of yours."

"Well, if he kills my dog, then my dog will be dead."

The bulldog finally found a low place where he could snake under the fence, and he bee-lines it for Sport and gives a mighty leap forward. Sport steps aside, and as King flies by, Sport latches on to his throat, and he never lets go. He thrashed that bulldog up one side of that patch and down the other. When Euclid finally sees that his King is dethroned and about to be done in, he hollers at Dad, "Call your dog off, Pete! Call him off!"

"Why?" asks Dad, "King ain't hurting my dog any."

"But your dog is killing my dog, Pete!" So Dad called him off.

Sport was still with us when Dad eventually left the farm and took over the general store in Jefferson [1900] As you might guess, he was store watchdog, but he got to be too conscientious and took to standing guard by the entrance and not letting strangers in. Dad had to choose between customers and dog, so Sport was forced into early retirement.

> [It occurs to me that "Dad" might confuse you because I call my father "Dad", and he called his father the same. Just remember this: when my father is speaking (which is most of the time) "Dad" refers to his father, Pierre Ulric Bernard, alias "Pete" and "P.U." Occasionally even my father called his Dad by these aliases.
>
> When I have the stage, I'll always be talking inside brackets [._.] so you know it is the humble director butting in. And when I say "Dad" you know I mean George, the Model-T Mechanic. One final complication: sometimes I tape-recorded bull sessions between him and his kid brother, Albert, who was twenty years his junior. Thus he will sometimes be addressing Albert instead of Harry, as in the following paragraph.]

Say, Albert, do you remember Cyril Montaigne who lived right across from Cousin Charlie Bernard? Well, Cyril and I used to have to go to church for catechism lessons, and we had to pass by Charlie's to get there. Charlie kept a very tall dog in

his yard. At this time I had me my own personal dog, named Dick, and Dick had quite a flair for theology, so he always accompanied me to catechism. One time, as we passed Charlie's, his big dog got loose and jumped Dick who wasn't even looking for a fight. I tell you, that was a nip-and-tuck battle. That Dick, if I was with him, never got bested; but he didn't have good sense, and when I wasn't around to coach him, these spiritual thoughts would hit him and he'd forget what he was doing and get himself beat up. If I was with him, all I'd have to say was: "get him by the leg, Dick!" And he'd do just that, and that usually put the put the quietus on it.

I remember one time especially: after we had moved from the farm back into town, I had the job of taking our milk cows out to Win Evanston's pasture every day. One morning I am driving them to pasture when I spy a "prairie schooner" coming down the road -- some pretty late pioneer going west. When the covered wagon reaches us it stops, and the driver turns his bulldog loose on us. I guess the man just needed entertainment to break the monotony. Of course, his bulldog knows what his job is and makes straight for Dick. But just before he reaches Dick, I yell, "Get him by the leg, Dick!" He does, and that poor bulldog screams, "A-r-r-r-r-r-r!" Then to my surprise the big brave frontiersman whips out his rifle: "Call your dog off, kid, or I'll shoot him!" Well, I didn't have to be asked twice. I got hold of Dick, but as soon as I did, I called that guy every kind of dirty name I could remember. His dog hadn't even scratched Dick.

Ed Rousseau had a bird dog. Did you ever see a bird dog fight, Albert? They're just like a wolf -- they don't grab on and hold like other dogs; they sit up tall and their jaws go snap! snap! snap! And when they connect there is a chunk of meat gone. That bird dog of Rousseau's would have shredded Dick if I hadn't been around to coach. Nowadays I've no desire to see dogs fight, but in those old days, we weren't too civilized.

I can't recall my maternal grandmother's first name just now, but her last name was Fontaine [it was Agnes]. She came all the way from Rhode Island to visit us at Jefferson when I was little. The very first day, she got awfully restless. "George," she says, "here's some money. Will you run into town and buy me a clay pipe? And you can buy yourself a few jaw-breakers." I

bought her the pipe and gave it to her. "Now, George, don't you go telling a soul about this pipe, will you? I swore I wouldn't. She told me she only smoked to help her asthma.

A few days later, a bunch of our kinfolk dropped in for an evening's visit. Some of the men lit their pipes, and I see Grandma's nose begin to twitch. Then one of Dad's uncles began to blow smoke rings -- real beauties. "Grandma!", I yell, all excited, "can you blow rings like that on <u>your</u> pipe?"

I remember the first spring we began farming. Dad seeded a field of wheat and had Regina and me running up and down chasing off wild geese. Some of those geese wintered around there. One year, I counted fourteen of them that stayed the year near Jack Enright's. The river would tack up into his slough in high water, and then when the water receded, it left fish trapped in pools. You should have seen them -- big ones, and they were so crowded you could pitchfork them out of the potholes.

The first hired man we had on the farm was Old Jake. He got his board and room and twelve dollars a month. Old German, he was. Used to mend his own socks and knit his own mittens. And no matter how little money he earned, when Fourth of July rolled around, he'd buy a keg of beer and really celebrate. That was the one day of the year when he'd splurge.

And work? My God, that man was a horse. He use to scythe along the fences by hand, and he would mop his head with a big red bandana that he kept tied to his overall strap. Sweat would just pour off him, but he'd keep plugging away. He was always the first one out in the field in the morning and the last one in at night. When Dad hired him we had a horse-drawn riding cultivator, but it was too new-fangled for Old Jake; he went right on using our old walking cultivator But even if he was dead set in his ways, his work was always done up right.

He came pret' near meeting his Waterloo one night. Mother and Dad had gone visiting and left us kids in charge of Aunt Antonia at our house. Old Jake was off working somewhere. Anyway, Aunt Antonia got to telling us ghost stories, and we were getting all spooked up, you know how kids can get. All of a sudden we glimpse a face at the window in the near dark. Well, we were half scared to death. I picked up a big knife we had laying there, as big as a corn knife, and I told my Aunt, "I'm

going to stand behind the door, and if anyone comes in that I don't recognize right away, I'm cutting his head off."

Luckily, my aunt rushed to the door and after verifying that it was Old Jake, she let him in. The last I saw that big knife was at my brother Nap's -- he had sharpened it for so many years that is wasn't much longer that a paring knife.

My father, P.U., had a fine sense of humor, sort of a dry humor. There was a young English girl who emigrated there and was going to work for us. When she arrived she was full of enthusiasm and full of questions about her new surroundings. "Where does the sun come up, Mr. Bernard?" she asked, meaning behind what tree or building. "In the east," Dad replied.

After we'd been on the farm for quite a spell, Dad got an opportunity to buy a general store in Jeff [Jefferson], so we up and moved into town where he thought he could make a better living. That store stocked everything from plug tobacco to plug hats, and I'd go and help out there when I could work it into my schedule. Albert, do you remember Old Lady Cartwright, the Cartwrights who drove the load of whiskey to town? She was a nice lady. Big family. Awfully poor. Well, she dropped in one day to buy eggs and I waited on her. We got eggs by the case from local farmers, so I went to the case to pick her out two dozen eggs. Suddenly I notice her standing beside me. "Wait just a minute," she says, "I want black hens' eggs."

"Lady," I says, "I sure can't tell which of these eggs were laid by black hens and which ones weren't."

"Oh, you can't? Well, let me show you, sonny." And she picks out all the biggest eggs there were.

"How come," I ask, "that black hens lay the biggest eggs?

That's when she sees that I'm catching on. So she winks at me and gives me a little grin, "Well, now sonny, it doesn't make much difference to you, does it? But it makes a big difference to me."

They weren't the only poor family around there. The Bill Duchenes were poorer than poor -- I don't see how they survived. We kept syrup in big barrels, and once she came in for some. I sure gave her more than full measure.

There was another lady I felt awful sorry for. Her first husband was a skunk. Died young. Her second was more of a fish. He was found dead in an alley, and when the finders reported the news to the wife she snapped, "Well, haul him to the undertakers -- I've got a big washing to do."

We had a fellow clerking at the store, by the name of Willis; and when Willis was sober, which wasn't often, he was a top-notch salesman. A couple of dudes with their girl friends came to town from Sioux City with a team and buggy. They stopped at a competitor's store, where the men went in to buy the girls candy. Willis happened to be there at the time, and when he heard what they were there for, he sidles up to them and whispers, "You gentlemen don't want to give your high class ladies cheap stuff like they sell here, do you?. Come up the street to where I work, and I'll sell you some good stuff." They fell for it and ended up paying twice as much for the same quality chocolates.

Another time, a stranger came in to buy heavy work socks -- Rockford Socks, I think they were called. They cost three pair for a dollar, and came in two colors, but the ones on display were all one color. "How much are these socks?" asked the stranger.

"Three pair for a dollar," answered Willis.

"Don't you have any better ones?"

"Sure," said Willis, "I've got some that will last twice as long, but they'll set you back fifty cents a pair. Still, that will save you sixteen cents a pair." That Willis had a fine head for math. [Better than mine, Dad!]

"OK, I'll take three pair of the better ones."

Willis reached under the counter and pulled out three pair of socks that were exactly the same except for color, and took the man's dollar and a half without batting an eye.

Its funny: even though he could sell socks, personally he never wore them. Why, I don't know. But even on below zero days he'd come clear from Sioux City wearing only shoes -- no socks, no overshoes. I don't see how he stood it.

Sometimes, Albert, I think I should have been a salesman instead of an auto mechanic. When I was about nine, I found the glass eye of a doll in the street. It was busted clean in half.

So I picked up a piece and happened to test its edge against a window pane, and by golly it made a nice scratch. There was a hired man at Aunt Alice's, and one day when he was a little tipsy I showed him my prize "diamond" which he didn't seem too impressed by. "Ah, go on, George. That's no diamond."

"Oh no? Well I'll just show you." So I scratched Aunt Alice's parlor window with it just as pretty as a diamond ever would. He was impressed. "How much do you want for it?"

"Well, I don't know what good diamonds are going for these days, but this one is worth at least a buck." Strike me dead if he didn't fork over a silver dollar for it.

Dad was no slouch at playing cribbage, but I see you don't take after him, Harry. Didn't they teach you to count in college? You know, another thing Dad was good at was Indian wrestling, He wasn't such a big man, but he was strong. There was cousin of ours, well over two hundred pounds, and he was a powerful man, I tell you. They were hauling a load of wheat to town once in a wagon, and a wheel came off. That cousin got under the wagon on his back, got his feet cocked flat against the wagon bottom and pushed that load high enough so they could get the wheel back on. Well, every time he'd come into the store, he and Dad would meet at the wooden counter, settle their elbows on it, grab hands and the contest would be on. Dad would always outwrestle him, and the fellow just couldn't believe it. "By God, Pete," he'd say, "I'll get you one of these days." But he never did.

I don't need to tell you, Harry, what I think of dead-beats. And Dad was just the same. One fellow owed him a long overdue bill, and Dad would send him a statement every month, with a little note included. Each month's note was a bit stronger than the previous month's. Finally after this went on way too long, Dad lost patience and his next note was downright abusive, which riled the debtor to the point that he noised it around town that he was going to exterminate him. The first time Dad got wind of this was when he was passing Dan O'Leary's saloon. Dan was standing in the doorway enjoying the spring sunshine. He greets Dad, "Pete," he says, "maybe you had better lay low for a while. Tony says he's going to gun you down."

"Oh, is that so?"

"That the story around town."

Dad thanked him for the news and went on his way toward the store.

As he was going along, behold he spies the would-be assassin, coming his way, but on the other side of the street. Dad crosses over to meet him. "Tony, I understand you are looking for me."

"Y-y-y-yes, P-Pete. Just want to p-p-pay you a little something on my account."

During the Spanish-American War a few clerks from around town went off to fight, and by the time they returned they were no-goods. All they did was bum around town trying to scrounge a buck anyway they could, so long as it didn't involve work. Well, one of our cousins who was absolutely non compos mentis fell into the clutches of two of them. Those no-account vets knew very well that this fellow was retarded, yet they coaxed him into a poker game. Of course they cleaned him out of money, watch, watch-chain, cuff links -- everything he had on him. After the fleecing, this poor creature came to the store and started telling Dad about it, and tears began rolling down his cheeks.

"P.U., they won my watch and chain and ..."

"They did?" said Dad. "Well, lets me and you go get it back." They found the louts in a poolroom. Dad asked them if it was true that they had got this man into a poker game.

"Yes, P.U., but we played him fair and square and he lost."

"Well, fellows, now it's your turn to lose. You give him back everything you got off him or I'll have you thrown into jail just as sure as God made little green apples." They obliged.

> [Dad had only nine years or so of schooling, yet he would zap you with Latin phrases and scholarly words rarely used in ordinary speech, such as "non compos mentis", "quietus", "inveigle" and "eschew". Where he picked these up I don't know unless it was from reading 0. Henry. Or maybe from his father who had studied Latin in Canada.]

Our neighbor, Jacques, got miffed at Dad one time. We had a good bull that Jacques would borrow for breeding his cows, and our bull liked that work so well he got to breaking loose and making house calls. Jacques's cows had no complaints, but

Jacques got tired of having to keep chasing our bull home. So one day our phone rings. "P.U., that damn bull of yours that I asked you to keep home was over here again and I shot him. Do you want to come and get him?" He hadn't killed the animal, just peppered it with buckshot to scare it off. Dad went and retrieved the bull, and didn't complain one word.

Sometime later, one of Jacques' steers got to breaking loose and visiting us --maybe he liked to see his daddy. He'd trample mother's garden and raise general hell. So Dad warned Jacques several times to keep his blankety-blank steer home. Finally, one day Dad rings up Jacques:

"Jacques, you know that steer of yours that's always over here? Well, you better get over here and butcher him before the meat spoils. He got in my grain bin, and I shot him." Dad hadn't intended to kill him, just scare him off like Jacques had done ours, but he was standing a little too close and shot a little too low and broke that steer's leg, so then he had to kill him. Jacques didn't say much about it, but he had fresh beef earlier than usual that year.

P.U. had more patience than most men I know, but I saw him lose it once. He was standing in the barn doorway with a calf between his legs, trying to teach it to drink milk from a pail. Did you ever try teaching a calf that, Albert? You shove their nose in the pail, and they snort and blow milk all over you. Dad had been having a devil of a time with this one calf, and about the third time he got a face full of milk he stepped back: "Why, you poor little thing!" he said sweetly, "Doesn't the pretty baby girl want to drink her good nourishing milk?" And then he gave her a swift kick in the rump and walked off.

When I worked at the store, I occasionally ran into a bearded old trader who would start out from Sioux City on foot with some item that he'd swap for a little better item. Then he'd swap that for another, and by the time he'd hit Jefferson he'd have a good calf or a mule or a cart that he could sell at a profit before heading back home. That's the way he made his living.

Albert, do you remember when I had my first fighting rooster, around 1900 or so? By golly, you are right -- 'you weren't even born yet. This Scotsman over in Iowa was selling out a nice farm so he could go back to the old country, and our

neighbor, Charlie LaBreche, decided to go to the sale. Of course, any farm auction was always occasion for men to get high, and Charlie got pretty well lubricated. The auctioneer put up a fighting cock and a hen, and just for the devil of it, Charlie put in a bid, which happened to be the highest, so he had to buy them. By the time he got back to Jeff he was pretty well sobered off and didn't want to take his purchases home for fear his wife would give him the devil. So he gave them to me. At the time, I had only a bulldog and a few lesser critters, so I was tickled pink to get this windfall. The rooster was a big, strong, beautiful thing, a regular Indian game cock.

Naturally, I was curious to know how good a scrapper he would be. I was down at the barbershop --not more than a brash kid at the time -- when Milt Havilland got to bragging about his ferocious fighting rooster, and about how if he didn't keep his bird hobbled, he'd kill all the poultry in the neighborhood. I listened 'til I couldn't stand anymore, than I piped up, "You just think you've got a tough rooster. I've got one that would clean his clock in short order." There were other customers in the barbershop at the time, so Milt couldn't just ignore the challenge. We set a date for the next Saturday when I had no school. Of course, word of the contest spread around town so that on Saturday when me and my rooster arrived, there were quite a few already gathered. Milt had his rooster in an empty shed where the battle was to take place; I had my under my arm. Mine was so tame I could just walk over anytime and pick him off the ground with no big flapping and fluttering. Milt finally opened the shed door and everyone grabbed a view spot. His fighting cock stood tall and proud in the middle of the clear area.

So when Milt gave the "go", I tossed my bird in there. As soon as he hit the ground he began to claw the dirt, flap his wings and crow. Milt's rooster could see his visitor wasn't making a social call, so he didn't make a move, just cocked his head to one side sizing up his opponent. Mine began making wide circles around his, the circles getting smaller and smaller as he went. All of a sudden: WHAM! Milt's rooster is a dead duck! Mine had gaffed him perfectly. Milt was a good sport and didn't get sore about losing, even if it was to just a kid. "Well," he said, "maybe that bird of mine wasn't the greatest fighting cock in Union County."

Poor mother! Dad had taken in a bunch of young roosters as payment for a grocery bill at the store, and we had them penned up at the cow barn. My own fighting rooster I kept at the chicken coop near the house. "George," she would say, "why don't you run down to the barn and fix us up a couple of roosters , and we'll have us a good supper." I was happy to oblige her on these occasions. I would, without her knowing, bring my rooster and his gaffs along. Mother had never specified how the victims were to be executed, so I'd let my rooster do my dirty work.

One day, Mother is washing some of these victims for the frying pan when she calls me, "I wonder what is the matter with these roosters, George. Look here." And she showed me the tiny gaff holes in their breasts.

Old man LaBreche, who had given me my rooster, lived next door -- or did I already tell you that? He had a fenced chicken yard right on the property line, and we had our coop adjoining his. Sometimes for excitement I would let my rooster through his fence without his gaffs on, and then I'd watch the fun. Pandemonium would break loose, and pretty soon Old Charlie would come running out with a broom, chasing my bird all over his yard. He never caught on that I was behind all the commotion.

My school friend, Dono Como, told me one day, "I've got a banty rooster that I bet can whip that chickadee that you're so all-fired high on. My banty is one mean son-of-a-gun." Well, those nuns in Deadwood had taught me 'Readin-, 'Ritin- and 'Rithmetic - but no Reticence - so I gave Dono my most pitying look and replied, "Well, Dono, if you have no more use for your banty, bring him over. But don't go begging me to bury him for you." You know, Albert, those banties are small but they can be feisty as all get out. No sooner does Dono toss his bird in with mine than he gives a might cock-a-doodle-do [the rooster, not Dono] and rushes toward my rooster. Mine greets his with a kick that sends him clear across the yard -- and that was the end of the fight. Didn't kill him, though, because we had agreed not to use gaffs.

When you outfit a fighting cock with gaffs, you trim his spurs back and fasten special little knives around the stubs. You can train cocks to fight. I remember when I was at Valley

Junction I used to drop over to Des Moines where they did a lot of cock fighting out on an island in the Mississippi. I used to watch a trainer work: first he'd keep pushing the fighters against a wall to strengthen their legs, then he'd keep tossing them into the air to strengthen their wings. He'd even put little boxing gloves over their spurs and set them to sparring with each other. Some of those cocks came from as far as Old Mexico.

[The observant reader will marvel at this Mississippi River transplant of Dad's. My 1945 Rand McNally Atlas is outdated, but if the Mississippi was near Des Moines in Dad's boyhood, it should still be there in 1945. Even though it is a pretty shifty river as Mark Twain often pointed out, it probably did not move a couple hundred miles. But then, my atlas doesn't show Valley Junction, Iowa, at all, so who are you going to believe?. Did you mean the Des Moines River, Dad?]

Let' see, Harry, that makes me five games to your two. You'd do better if you didn't forget to count your crib.

Talking about forgetting, reminds me: Paul Bernard and two of Charlie Bernard's young boys got arrested for stealing watermelons. Charlie had no beef about his own arrest but figured his boys shouldn't have been arrested, so he asked Dad to drive him up to Elk Point to see a lawyer. Dad harnessed his team to the buggy and they set out. On the way, they had a few stiff snorts from a bottle Charlie brought. Then when they reached Elk Point, they needed a drop more, so they killed a little time in a saloon. Naturally the session with the lawyer tensed them all up, so when they left his office, they returned to the saloon to get a shot or two to relax them for the journey home.

Next morning, Dad comes down for breakfast and says all he wants is a cup of coffee. He isn't looking too great, and sort of groans now and them. All of a sudden he gets up and grabs his hat and coat and starts to leave. "Where are going?" mother asks. "To catch a ride back to Elk Point -- I forgot the team and buggy."

[My forgetfulness comes from Grandpa P.U. Once I borrowed my father's '36 Terraplane to take a girl to the

movies, not that we couldn't have walked the short distance, but I wanted to impress her with wheels. After the movie, we stopped for ice cream at the Patio which was only a couple doors from the theater. Next I walked her to her nearby home, kissed her good night, then walked myself home on a pink cloud. Early the next morning , Dad shakes me out of dreamland. "WHERE THE HELL IS MY AUTOMOBILE!," he roars. The expression "rude awakening" always calls that scene to mind.]

Dan O'Leary was a drinking man, but he ran a good saloon. He was typical Mick, fresh from Erin, with the brogue and blarney and all. Jack Donnelly is in Dan's place one day, drinking at the bar with a few buddies. He and bartender Dan have a big disagreement and they both misplace their tempers. Jack starts to go around the counter to get his mitts on Dan's neck, when some of the boys grab him and tell him to calm down.

"Let him come!. Let him come!" yells Dan.

So they turn Jack loose. It isn't but a minute before Dan is yelling again, "Take him off! Take him off! He's scratching me eyes out!"

That's the same Dan who got hit by an automobile one day when cars had just made their appearance in Jefferson. This big car was coming down the Main drag, and Dan started to cross without looking. Gets himself bowled over. He lay on the ground all excited and shaking with fear, thinking this was the end. "Oh, Jeeee-us, Oh, May-reeee, Oh Joseph, help me – I'm goin' to die!" One of the bystanders pokes around him, feeling for broken bones.

"You look fine to me, Dan."

"Oh," groans Dan, "it's me insides that's all ruined!" But he wasn't hurt at all.

He had a son, Billy. Nuttier than a peanut wagon. He was a little older than you, Albert. OK, a lot older. We had a barn in back of Prothro's who ran the depot, and I had to go there and milk cows, so I'd be milking away and Billy would come in.

"Watcha doin', George?" he'd ask.

That's just how silly he was. I'd say, "Well what does it look like I'm doing?" He was forever asking damn fool questions like that. You don't say, Albert? He died young? Well, I'm not surprised -- he didn't have brains enough to live very long.

You've read of ruffians getting their eyes gouged out, Albert, but did you ever witness it? That little blacksmith who married the widow: he'd been in town for quite a while and seemed fairly peaceful, but he got into a fight with the guy who ran the poolroom, and that guy got him down and gouged out his eyes - they were just dangling out on his cheekbones like balls on a string. Someone with experience came along and reinstalled them into their sockets, but was that fellow ever a sorry sight.

I went through eighth grade in Jefferson. Milt Havilland, whose game cock died on my account, was my first teacher. I don't think he could pass a teacher exam today, because he didn't have much learning. Nevertheless, Milt was a darn good teacher. Arithmetic? God, when I came from Deadwood, I was so bad at it that Milt set me back two classes. But by the end of the year I was up with my own class again. So that just shows that just education doesn't make a good teacher. He had a way of making you see things real clear. That was at the old District Five school up towards Grandpa Ulric's. It seems to me the last time I visited there the building had disappeared.

Dono Como was my friend and classmate. Of course we had a school bully [Let's change his name to Butch, Dad] who was a cantankerous cuss. Dono was plumb at the other end of the scale, about as mild and peace-loving as a kid could be around there and still survive. One day as we are leaving school, he and Butch have a falling out. Of course Butch had only one method of settling disagreements. "You be down at the firehall at 7:30 tonight and I'll clean your clock. Or are you too yellow?"

So Dono goes home and he returns after supper dressed for the occasion in old overalls and a tattered shirt, looking almost as if the worst has already happened. Butch strides up to him all cocky-like. "Hit me," he says.

Dono ignores the order.

Then Butch picks up a twig and perches it on his shoulder. "Knock that off. I dare you. I double dare you."

Dono does it. That is all it takes to ignite Butch. He throws a haymaker at Dono, but Dono is prepared and 'beats him to the punch. And does Dono ever whallop him! Smack between the eyes! Down goes Butch, and the fight is all over.

That night we have band practice, and the last one to show up is Butch, sporting as lovely a set of black eyes as you'd ever care to see.

Once Dono and I got punished at school. I'd thought of a great idea: I told Dono to put a straight pin through a piece of cardboard and on the way in from recess to put it on my desk seat. Then I'd come in all innocent-like and sit on it, then jump up hollering bloody murder. The teacher would never suspect me and wasn't likely to pin it on Dono who was usually well behaved. So Dono agreed and did exactly what I said.

I came in after recess and the setting for this foolishness had improved drastically because there was the whole school board sitting up beside the teacher to observe classroom performance, which they did a couple times a year. I sat down rather carefully, just enough to set the pin in a little way, then I jumped up and shrieked. The teacher turned white: "George! What in the world is wrong!"

"This is what is wrong," I moaned, and pulled the pin and cardboard from my rump and held it up for all to witness.

Everyone had to stay after school. Eventually the teacher, who was also the principal, weeded out suspects he narrowed it down to me and Dono. Dono must have looked guilty, and when he sees the jig is up, he decides to save me and take the blame all by himself. He confesses.

"All right, George, you can go home," says the teacher.

"Hold on a minute," I says, "This was all my own idea. Dono didn't have any part in it, so I'll take the licking."

"No way George, you'll have to both take what's coming to you.

You can be first, Dono." And with that he had Dona hold out his hands palm up, and he came down with the ruler with a swish. Unfortunately, Dono flinched and pulled his hand back just enough so the big ruler whacked him right across the ends of his fingers. Hurt him bad. The fingertips started swelling and turning blue, the tears started running down Dona's cheeks, and then that goddam idiot of a principal started laughing like it was a big joke. I was never so mad in my life, well, hardly

ever. So I pipes up, "Mr. _____, you are the big cheese in this school, and we had this coming. So after you give me my medicine, you come on outside the schoolyard, and Dono and I will give you your medicine." But he was too chicken to accept the invitation.

I remember he had one glass eye, and one day he misplaced it at home and came to school wearing a back-up one, only it was a different color. All of us kids got a big bang out of that.

[The effort to shield the principal by using a "blank" name is somewhat feeble. After all, how many Jefferson principals had a glass eye of one color and a replacement of another? Sorry about that, but I couldn't let this story go untold.]

Some of my shenanigans were nothing to brag about, now that I look back on them. Like, for instance, the time your Uncle Armand [My mother's brother] and I set up our butcher shop. We must have been nine or ten at the time. I had gone over to visit at your mother's, and got to playing with Armand. We were hurting for something really exciting and educational to do, when I got the idea of setting up a play butcher shop in one of their outbuildings. We knew a little about the process from having watched Dad and others butcher, but we lacked subject matter. There were in those days plenty of stray cats around town, so Armand and I rounded up six or seven of them, took them to his house, slaughtered them, skinned them, cleaned them, and hung them up just like in a real butcher shop. But we weren't dishonest about it -- we never did try to pass them off as rabbits.

[This is sickening, Dad. I only include it because I think it will indicate how much your character improved over the next seventy five years.]

There was a storekeeper in Jefferson named Brouillet who had a daughter named Laura, and this Laura worked for us as a housemaid when we lived in the convent, which we had rented temporarily after the nuns moved out. I won't go into that. One day I was sitting in a chair tapping a straight pin into my leg with a twelve inch ruler. Did you ever try that, Albert? It takes more guts than brains, but actually it doesn't hurt much

if you bend your leg just right and tap the pin in with gentle little strokes. Feels like a fly biting you. Well, this Laura was watching me, plumb bug-eyed. When I had driven the pin half way in, she couldn't stand the silence any more. "Oh George, doesn't that hurt awful?"

"Naw," I replied, "there's nothing too it. Here, let me show you." She was game, so I pulled the pin out of my leg, sterilized it over a match flame, pulled up her skirt, peeled down her stocking and bent her leg just so. "Now, there's just one thing you have to remember: don't look. If you don't look, it won't hurt at' all."

So I began gently tapping the pin in. When it was about half way in, she couldn't resist having a little peek, and sure enough she panicked at the sight of it, jumped up and began tearing around the room shrieking. Naturally, if you move a muscle with something sticking in it, it hurts like blazes. Finally I had to tackle her to get her down to try pulling the pin out. Just then mother, who had heard the squealing, came in, and when she saw me wrasseling that young girl on the floor she looks more than normally upset. But after I explained the situation and how I was doing Laura a good turn, she seemed vastly relieved, almost thankful.

[Sometimes Dad would tell a story several times over a period of years. The versions were strikingly alike in detail, but in this instance the girl, though always a Brouillet, is sometimes Laura and sometimes Ida.]

Eventually our family moved from Jefferson back to the farm. I still wasn't very old and hadn't handled a gun yet. Dad kept a double barrel shotgun in a corner of the front porch near the door, but he always kept it broke down, so I wouldn't fool with it. One spring my Dad was away for a day, and I happened to see ducks and geese heading north. It was a good time to become a hunter, only I didn't know how to assemble the gun, so I took the sections to the barn, hitched up the team and drove out to find the hired man who was cutting trees for firewood. He wasn't particularly bright, so I was able to coax him into assembling the gun. I thanked him and started beck toward home. When I was a quarter mile from the barn I looked up and here comes this big flock of Canadian geese a-honking toward me from the Missouri. I grabbed the shotgun and shoved

two shells in it and waited. As the geese flew over they looked way too high for me to hit, but I hoisted the barrel and pulled both triggers. Just as I landed on my rump, I look and see a goose come plummeting down. It hit the field and bounced that high. [He measured out about four feet with his outstretched hands.]

I went home, broke the shot-gun apart and set it in the same corner it was in before. Along side of it I spread out that beautiful Canadian goose, and never said a word to mother about it. When Dad arrived that evening, he opened the porch door, and that beauty of a goose caught his eye. He just stood there glancing from gun to goose and back again, then he came into the kitchen and we sat down to supper. I was anticipating words, but he just kept looking at me and shaking his head, but he didn't say one word about it and neither did I. He had an uncanny knack of knowing when he had been bested; and when it happened, which was seldom, he not only knew enough to shut up, but he actually did shut up.

[Wish I had learned that, Dad.]

I'll give you another example: When I was thirteen/fourteen, I got to going to town at night and staying out too late. One day Dad cornered me and said, real business like, "George, the hour is midnight -- you get your tail home by midnight or you'll find yourself locked out."

"That's fair enough, Dad,"

About a week later, things were too fascinating in town, and I got home around two A.M. Sure enough, I was locked out. But there was a porch roof that ran beneath my bedroom window, so I was able to shinny up the corner post, climb onto the roof and go through the window to bed.

Come morning I woke up and went down to breakfast as if nothing had happened. Dad looked surprised to see me - but he didn't say one word, just gave me a long, cool look.

That Brouillet I mentioned? Laura's father? Well, he wasn't the same Brouillet I found dead. The dead one's name was Israel. They were brothers but I didn't know that at the time because they never associated. What happened was that my buddy and I used to practice running early every morning so I could place first in the Fourth of July races, and he could come in a close second, and we'd both have something to crow about. I'd meet him by his house next to the railroad station and we'd

cover most of the Jefferson streets by school time. To make a long story short, we came across this guy laying in a ditch. At first we figured he was drunk and passed out, but something about him looked peculiar, so we stopped for a look. The poor son-of-a-gun was too dead to skin. Say do you know something, sonny boy, there's a lot more left to that story, and thinking about that running has got me all tuckered out, so I'll tell the rest another day. Right now, though, I'm going to bed. [He did.]

In my early teens, I often got into trouble with local boys, and more often than not I'd find myself in fistfights. The Jefferson mayor had a son, a few years older than I, who attended college in Vermillion [S.D.] He would come home on vacation and witness my crude methods of resolving differences. "George, you wouldn't act that way up at Vermillion," he would say, "You'd get your block knocked off."

"Oh, is that so?"

"Your dammed right it's so. You wouldn't last long with those fellows -- they're tough."

That started me to thinking. I sure hated to accept a proclamation like I'd just heard without some sort of proof. And I'd never have proof if I didn't go to Vermillion and get it.

But how was I going to work that when I wasn't yet ready to cut out on my own. Then the solution hit me: why not go to college there? Of course, I wasn't but a couple years out of eighth grade and had no high schooling, and didn't figure to. But the idea of being college-educated sort of struck my fancy.

When I spelled out my plan to Dad, he was less than enthusiastic. He knew I wasn't prepared for college but I knew I was. It took me a couple of weeks of persuading, and I never coaxed so hard in my life. Finally, he surrendered, maybe just to get me off his back, and told me if I thought I could cut the mustard I could give it a try, provided I took only a few academic subjects to start off with.

It was arranged that I would go there with the mayor's son, and that we would be room-mates. If I liked the first year, and did real well -- which I had no doubt of -- I might just take a second year. Hell, it shouldn't take a man of my caliber more than two years to get one of them Doctor of Something degrees.

CHAPTER THREE

VERMILLION, LEAD, AND VALLEY JUNCTION

It was a sparkling fall day when the mayor's son and I arrived at Vermillion. A state fair was taking place, with a carnival and all. After we had checked in at the University, we walked down town to see the fun. Right off we ran into two young hooligans who were dealing a girl a heap of misery. After watching them for a few minutes, I decided I'd better straighten them out. I started in about as polite as I knew how, but immediately they got nasty. "Okay," I said, "I asked you politely, now you either lay off tormenting that girl or I'll clean your clocks for you."

They eyed me carefully, and then backed off. When we returned to our room that night, I said to my roommate, "Is that the kind of Vermillion toughs you were warning me about? They ain't a damn bit tougher than you, and that's not saying much."

He just withered me a little with a look, and let it slide by.

Actually, he had some instruction in fisticuffs and fancied himself to be a budding Fitzsimmons. He must have figured I had some ring potential too, because one day he told me he would give me lessons so's I wouldn't get myself killed too bad.

When we put on the gloves in the gym he showed me how to feint and bob and weave and move my head from side to side, and he danced around pretty impressive-like. After sparing a while, he apparently decided to show me just how elusive he was, so after we'd broken a clinch and both stepped back, he hopped one step forward and landed with feet spread wide, hunched his head down between his shoulders, and dangled his gloves down by his knees.

"Hit me," he dares. By now I was tense as a tiger. His head was a trifle slow in moving aside, so I knocked him flat on the floor.

What did I take at Vermillion? You mean studies? Penmanship, Bookkeeping, English, but mostly I took Athletics. I got on good terms with the Physical Education teacher. He gave me boxing lessons and always called me "Frenchy."

Whenever new boys would come along, he would stack them up against "Frenchy," so I never lacked for competition.

Once he had to be absent from his afternoon gym classes and he asked me to run them for him. I was pretty proud of being trusted, being younger than the others. One of the students got a little out of line, so I corrected him. "Pee on you, Frenchy," he says, "I don't have to take orders from you."

I told him once more, but still it was no soap. "Look here, bimbo," I said, "I've been put in charge of this class, and when I tell you to do something, and you're supposed to do it. At least that's my understanding of this job."

"Bullshit," he replied.

Thud! When he picked himself off the floor, I asked him, "Well, are you going to comply or not?"

He complied. Debating was never one of my strong suits.

Not long after I arrived at school one of our roommates came down with smallpox. Three boys from Jefferson and myself were quarantined with him. When Dad learned of the quarantine, he became concerned and phoned me. He first asked me how I was doing there. I told him I wasn't doing well in my class work but was doing great in boxing and was sure I could make the football team. He had no comment, but suggested that we boys should take a stiff drink of whiskey once a day as a safeguard against smallpox. So we sent out for a half gallon jug.

The New York Symphony was giving a concert at the college, but we were not allowed to go because of the quarantine. They were performing where we could hear them, so we opened all the windows to hear better, pulled up our chairs and our jug, and enjoyed the best concert I ever heard.

[The New York Symphony? In South Dakota? It's hard enough for me to imagine Dad purposely listening to a symphony. True, he had picked up a smattering of music himself, enough so that on rare occasions after coming home from work at Varie Motors he would unsheathe his black clarinet, wet his lips and wrap them around the mouthpiece, then began to depress the silver keys with his perpetually grimy mechanic's fingers. Then he'd apologize for being rusty, and say he once knew a musician who could "triple tongue" a trumpet.

But never do I recall him expressing fondness for classical music. In his declining years, after I had become a hi-fi nut, he and Mom would come to California to visit Julie and me, and I would subject him to huge doses of the "World's Greatest" (and loudest) music. Unfortunately, by the time I exposed Dad to the grandeur of Beethoven, he was nearly as deaf as the good Ludwig himself.]

Football was almost as much to my liking as boxing was. But we didn't play it like it's played now. Back then we drop-kicked, and the forward pass hadn't even been invented, so the game was mostly a bulldogging contest -- with very little in the way of protective equipment. Our coach's salary was so small that he had to run a barber shop on the side.

I think we have better athletes today. If an athlete pole-vaulted ten feet in those days, you were highly impressed; today they clear twice that height. And you keep hearing how marvelous the old-time boxers were -- Dempsey, Tunney, Firpo, Sullivan and the rest -- and how they could stand there and slug it out all afternoon. Well, I don't fall for that baloney. If they were hitting like they hit today, those guys wouldn't be going at it for thirty, forty rounds. It stands to reason: if today they jump higher, run and swim faster, throw farther, and every year keep breaking records, they also box better. They are just way better trained now.

I might have become a decent football player, but I'll never know, because before the end of my first semester I got hauled off the field with a broken breast bone. As it turned out, that ended my athletic career -- as a matter of fact, it ended my school days too. My Dad had been right: I was too young and too ill prepared for college, so no matter how hard I tried I couldn't keep up in my classes. I hung on as long as I was enjoying athletics, but after the injury, there was no more reason for staying. At semester's end, I said my goodbyes and prepared to go home.

You know, Harry, I've been lucky as far as health goes. Had pneumonia once, broke a breast bone, but I never got appendicitis or anything serious -- in fact appendicitis didn't exist then -- it was "inflammation of the bowels," and it was bad stuff. Most victims died of it, but I did see one young fellow in

Jefferson recover from it, but not without a lot of suffering. The first time I ever heard the operation called "appendicitis" was in Vermillion; an Italian doctor, named Calissie, called it that. That's the same doctor I was telling you about. You don't recall that? Then I must have been telling someone else. Anyway, this Doctor Calissie was summoned by a poor washerwoman who had a sick boy of about fifteen. The doctor diagnosed it as "appendicitis" and told the woman she had to get the boy to the hospital quick or she would lose him. The woman said she couldn't pay for hospitalization because she had no money. So the doctor took the boy home with him, operated on him, hired a couple of nurses, and kept him until he recovered. Never charged that woman a red cent! He had a big practice around Vermillion and wasn't the least bashful charging the well-to-do, but he wouldn't charge the destitute.

It was this same doctor who treated me for pneumonia. I decided that as long as I had to be in bed with that, I'd have the doctor fix an ingrown toenail that had bothered me for a long time. So he sliced off a hunk of toe, like they used to do for that. After I got on my feet again, I accidentally knocked the scab off and got my toe infected. He treated that too. When I quit college and was getting ready to go back home, I ran into Dr. Calissie on the street.

"Doctor," I said, "I'm heading back home and I'd like to know what my bill is so I can pay you." He seemed irritated that I'd bring up such trivia on a public street. "Well," he snapped, "I don't know what your bill is. If I ever get hard up, I'll let you know."

Years later, I got a postcard: "Send five dollars. I'm hard up."

Surgery in those days could be downright crude. Your mother's father was a doctor, you know. I saw him operate one time, and it sure gave me the willies. Some young buck was out hunting and as he was crossing a fence the shotgun discharged and damn near blew out the instep of one foot. I watched him being overhauled, and I tell you, Harry, that man suffered the agonies of hell - and no anesthetic but a slug of whiskey. But he came out of it. Lots of times, though, people died of shock after surgery. Your mother used to tell me she couldn't stand to hear her father's patients scream.

When I got back to Jefferson I was at a loss just what to do. It would still be a couple years before I'd be eighteen. I'd had all the schooling I figured I needed, but there was now the matter of working. You either went to school or you worked; that was clear. Dad always had work for me of one sort or another, but I preferred working for others, so I'd keep my eye peeled for opportunities. I worked plowing for Will Conners for a spell. I remember I was used to drinking coffee for breakfast, but the first morning I ate at Will's, his wife served up some sort of coffee substitute that was just becoming popular. Damn, I can't recall the name of that stuff. I drank it that morning but never again. Tasted terrible. That's right, Harry, it was Postum!

You were telling me, Albert, that when you were a boy you worked for an uncle who was the cheapest man in the world, and that he paid you ten cents for a twelve hour day. Maybe that's all you were worth. [Noisy laughter here on tape]

Yes, Albert, I knew that same uncle and I have to agree he never broke any records for philanthropy. But he was no worse than a woman where I worked once: I hired out to work for a farmer for room, board and a pretty slim wage. I couldn't squawk about the room because I'd slept on straw ticks before; I couldn't squawk about the wages because I knew beforehand what they'd be; but the board – my God! The first morning I came in for breakfast, that woman fed us oatmeal, and she put nice rich cream on her family's oatmeal but skim milk on mine. After I saw that, it didn't take me long to clear out.

I once worked in Iowa picking corn, and the owner had a little knot-headed mule -- the nicest mule in the world. When picking was over, I took the mule in lieu of wages and brought him home. He was the first head of stock that I bought all on my own. When finally I left home for good, Dad gave me what I'd paid for it. I can't for the life of me recall whatever became of that mule.

For a while I worked in a Jefferson restaurant selling candy and cigars and taking care of the lunch counter and slot machine. We used to get great big buns and huge hams from Sioux City -- delicious hams. You'd slice off a large slab and nest it in a big beautiful bun and charge a nickel for it.

Say, buddy, why don't you build us a sandwich while I go powder my nose. There's cheese and sliced bologna in the fridge. We can split a beer. Tea is fine, if you prefer. Got some chocolate ice cream too. I'll beat you another game after we eat...

Once I drove a load of potatoes to the potato chip factory in Sioux City. And one whole summer I delivered ice cream to all the ice cream parlors around Vermillion. Never lost my liking for candy and ice cream.

> [By this time the affection between Mom and Dad was well established. They were in fact school mates, though Dad was a year or so older. In addition they were first cousins and playmates from his earliest days in Jefferson. I remember him telling me that he first fell in love with her when she was six years old. At the time he related this, the love affair had strung out eighty years and seemed likely to be permanent.
>
> Mom's name was Stephanie Ann Marie Manseau, but he called her "Fan." Her father was Dr. Manseau, as before noted. Her mother was the former Emma Bernard, one of P.U.'s sisters. While Dad was still working around Jefferson after his Vermillion experience, Dr. Manseau died, leaving Emma with four youngsters to support, the eldest of whom was Mom. Emma's sister Alexina had been living in Deadwood at the time Dad was a boy there. She was the mother of Dad's cousin and playmate, Bernie L'Esperance. When Alexina learned of Emma's plight, she invited her to bring her children to the prospering mining area of the Black Hills. Emma moved first to Deadwood, but soon went to Lead, the site of the famous Homestake Gold Mine, where she operated a boarding house for miners. Thus during Dad's final year or so in Jefferson, his sweetheart was helping her mother at the boarding house in Lead.]

You ask, how come I left Jefferson? It was because I couldn't whip my father; he was bigger than I was. [He laughed.] No, it was because your mother had gone and I missed her. Besides, my memories of life in Deadwood were good ones. And by now I

was getting old, nineteen or so, and wanted to be on my own. Deadwood was the logical choice.

When I got to the Hills, I stopped off first in Deadwood to renew old acquaintances. I looked up Bernie at Aunt Alexina's, and Ma Ling and the rest. After some quick hellos, I ran up to Lead to see your mother and her family and got a warm welcome. After visiting for a few days, I decided maybe I should look for work in Lead. While job hunting I made friends with a likeable, scrappy little "Cousin Jack" who came from Cornwall in England. Ernest was his name, but I usually called him "Johnny Bull." He and I knocked around town until we were hired by the Homestake. Say, you weren't ever in a gold camp, were you, Albert? The first thing a miner does in the morning is go to the nearest saloon for an eye-opener. Though Ernest and I were only looking for work in the mine, we considered ourselves de facto miners, entitling us to our eye-openers. One stiff drink held us all day.

There were all sorts of nationalities in Deadwood and Lead: French of course, and Irish, Italians, Norwegians, Finlanders, Germans, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, Slavs and Cousin Jacks. Lots of these foreigners had been miners or woodsmen in Europe, and when they could come over here and make three dollars a day, they thought they were in paradise. Many spoke no English. The Montenegrins generally were big and strong.

I remember the first night I went to work down in the mine. I had shoveled my one-ton car full of ore and was taking it to the unloading station where the four tunnels met at the shaft. When I tried to empty my car it got hung up and the ore wouldn't slide out. Just then a giant of a dark Montenegrin walked by, so I flagged him down. "Hey, partner, how does a guy unload one of these contraptions?" He just gave me a blank look and walked off. Some disposition he has, I thought to myself. Pretty soon he returns with a ten foot length of drill rod and he shoves it between box and truck, applies some leverage, and presto, it's unloaded. There was nothing wrong with his disposition; he just couldn't speak English.

My first job in the mine was polishing shovel handles -- mucking. Both Ernest and I shoveled ore at first, then we worked up to the truck gang. We stuck with that for six months, earning $2.75 a day. You worked all day long for a

week, and on payday they plunked a few gold coins in your hand.

Once, at lunch time in the mine, I could smell the tobacco some Montenegrins were smoking. It smelled different from ours. I walked up to where they were sitting and signaled them that I'd like to have one of their smokes. They got the message and handed me a can of tobacco. I rolled me a smoke, and lit up. With the first lung-full I began coughing and sputtering, and they all began grinning. Boy! Was it ever strong. Next payday, I bought a half pound off them and always carried some with me. Whenever anyone bummed a cigarette, I'd give them some of that select stuff and watch the fun.

As I said, Ernest and I were partners for six months. Then we were told there was to be a cut back. We had a choice of going back to shoveling or being laid off. Well, it was a free country, so we quit, figuring the Homestake could do without us and we could do without it. We'd each saved up a fair bankroll, enough to keep us for a few months anyway. We got to thinking there would never be a better time to see some new country, so Johnny Bull and I hit the rails, heading east from the Hills.

We ended up in Des Moines after dark on a raw, dismal early spring day. "Where are we going to sleep, George?" Ernest asked.

"I don't know, but they must have cops in this town -- we'll ask a cop". We asked the first one we saw where we could get a clean room at reasonable cost. "Follow me, boys. I'll take care of you." We walked half a block and turned into a doorway. There was a bar on one side and a waiting room on the other. In the waiting room or lobby, we registered, then went to our room, poured water into the washbowl and freshened up before going out to put on the feed bag. After supper we gawked around town until we were tired, then returned to the rooming house. By the time we had walked up the stairs and down the dim corridor, we had seen and heard enough to know that this place was more than a rooming house -- it was whore house. That was the just the sort of police they had in Des Moines -- brought us to a bordello!

Both of us were leery of staying there because we'd heard all about crime and corruption in the big cities, but we had paid our fare and decided to stick out the night. So before going to

sleep, we dragged the heavy dresser in front of the door and lay our six-shooters near our bed to be handy just in case anyone came in uninvited. First thing the next morning we checked out of that flea-bag.

From Des Moines we went to Valley Junction, but we didn't look for a job immediately because we still had cash and didn't have to crowd ourselves. We laid around shooting pool and doing the things most goofy young fellows do.

Once, we were eating breakfast at a hotel near where we were staying. We'd eaten there frequently because the food was good and cheap, and the proprietor had a friendly young daughter waiting tables. When she sees us sit down, she comes over and tells us we'd better be careful.

"What's the trouble?" I inquired.

"The cops are one your trail. They're asking questions and keeping a sharp eye on you boys."

"Well," I says, "let them. We've nothing to hide."

Most likely they had observed that we had money to spend and no visible means of earning it. But we kept our noses clean and they never bothered us.

Finally, our pot of Homestake gold was showing bottom, so we went out to scare up jobs in the railroad yards. Ernest had had experience, he said, in firing stationary boilers. They hired him immediately. I had no such experience, so they put me to work in the cinder pits knocking fire out of the locomotives. You had to go into the pit, draw the fire and cinders, then light a new fire. [The tape was noisy here, so I may have garbled the job description.] Ernest was on day shift; I was on night shift. Twelve hour work days. Six day week.

We had worked nearly one week when I met Ernest coming off shift. "Hey, George," he said, "we are all through working here."

"How is that?"

"Because that job of mine is a man-killer and I'm quitting." Now, that surprised me no end because Johnny Bull was small but tougher than ten year beef. "I thought you told me you'd fired boilers before."

"Of course I have, but on that job I didn't have to do two men's work. Here they expect me and my partner to fire four boilers, but he can't take care of his two, so I have to help him. That's too much for me."

"Well," I ask, "supposing two men who could really work tried it. Could they cut the mustard?

“I know damn well they could." Then he got the drift, and his face lit up, "Hey, George, do you think you could get on as my partner?"

"You just watch and see."

So I hung around after my next shift and located the chief mechanic and got his attention. "Say, chief, you sure have a good Cousin Jack firing stationary. Right?"

"That's right. Ernest is a good man."

"How'd you like to lose him?"

"I wouldn't."

"In that case you had better hire me to work with him and get rid of that corpse you have with him now. That guy can't fire but half a boiler a shift, and if that team is pulling its load it's because Ernest is doing almost two men’s job. He says he's going to quit Saturday."

He thought for a minute. "You got any experience?"

"Chief," I replied, "I've shoveled corn, grain, gold ore, cinders, and manure -- both horse and cow. If you want to check my credentials, look at these." And I showed him my hands.

"Nice set of calluses, kid. You give me a day or two to get someone to replace you on your shift, and you've got a new job."

So I got out of the pits. Ernest showed me the ropes, and before long he was firing his two and I was firing my two. It wasn't child's play; we each had to shovel twelve tons a day. That's a ton per man for each working hour.

We fired together into mid-summer. Then they wanted me to change shifts and try handling the job with a new man, and they would also put a new man on with Ernest on his shift. I remember that as the hottest summer I ever spent; day and night it was sweltering, and with the added heat of firing boilers it was too much.

My new partner was a freshly-hired married man, plenty big and strong for the job. He got to coming in late, and I'd have to cover for him until he showed up. Then once he came in smelling of booze. I don't know just how far gone he was, but I said to him, "You're drunk."

"Drunk as a skunk," he grinned.

So I informed him that I couldn't fire boilers with a drunk. Then I grabbed the fire hose, turned the valve full on, and

aimed. The jet of water hit him in the belly and toppled him. He got a real good hosing down, which seemed to sober him enough to finish the shift, but it dampened his enthusiasm for working with me, so he quit.

After that they hired an old Irishman, forty/forty-five, a regular Patty. He had no experience, so I had to tell him everything to do and how to do it. "Above all," I emphasized, "keep a sharp eye on your ash pit. Whenever the ash starts building up too high, clean it out. If you don't and it builds up to the grates, you'll burn them out, and then there'll be hell to pay.

He said he understood me. So then he opened the boiler door, spit on his hands, grabbed his shovel and sank it into the coal pile. But he was standing too far back and missed the opening. After a couple of more shovelfuls he was hitting fine, and since he was trying to impress me he was going at it a mile a minute. I looked over at him from my boiler five minutes later and he was sitting on the coal pile mopping his forehead and panting like a wind-blown nag.

"Hey!" I yelled, "Keep that [expletive deleted] firebox door closed!" If you left it open, you lost steam pressure mighty quick. It was comical to watch him work: every time he opened the door and got ready to stoke, he'd spit on his hands before grabbing the shovel. He was so pooped out after half the first shift that he slept right through his dinner break -- didn't even touch his lunch.

Well, I got him through the fir…

> [The tape ran out here, as it often did, but as you might suspect, the Irishman lasted only briefly -- he forgot to watch the ash build-up and burned out the grates. Irishmen were easier to replace than cast iron grates, so ……]

I'll say one thing for Johnny Bull: he was the classiest little fighter I ever laid eyes on. He didn't go looking for fights, but if one were forced on him, he could take care of himself. One weekend he wanted to play cards, so we went to a Valley Junction card parlor. I like card games, but don't care much to gamble, not after the lessons Bernie L'Esperance taught me. So while Ernie played, I sat by the potbelly stove reading a ring magazine. The game went along smooth for a while, then one of

the fellows jumped Ernest about a misplay he thought Ernest made. I went on reading, but pretty soon they are all riding Ernest, bitching about this and that, and mimicking his Cornwall accent. Then I got up and walked to the table. "Look here, if you men want to play cards with my friend here, then play cards and keep your yaps shut. But if all you want to do is deal him misery, then by God, you're going to have two of us to contend with."

No sooner had I delivered this proclamation, than one of the players shoves his chair back and comes at me, and no sooner does he reach me than down he goes. Then, over goes the table, and over goes the stove. Ernest and I had brains enough to stand with our backs to the wall to see them coming. I floored one more of them, but little Ernest polished off three. He had a whallop like a mule.

[Sounds as if you've been reading too much Zane Grey, Dad. Did the stove really go over?)

It was at Valley Junction that I got my first "internal injury." A letter from home reached me telling me that your mother, who was then a young lady, had left Lead and gone back to Jefferson hoping to make a living with her music. She wasn't needed so badly at home anymore because her mother had remarried and no longer had to run the boarding house. So Fan thought she could get a job playing for the silent movies in Sioux City. She had learned music young, and when she was thirteen she was organist at St. Peter's in Jefferson. Anyway, she had no luck getting hired in Sioux City, so she was staying temporarily with my folks in Jefferson where she thought she might be able to get her old job back as organist. The position paid a little at this time, and was filled by one of the Authier girls whose father was a well-to-do banker in town. This Authier girl and Fan were close friends, and that girl said she would be happy to turn the job over to Fan just to carry her through until she could find something that paid better. So your mother approached the priest, explained her problem, and asked if she could have the job. The priest refused her, even though he knew Fan needed the work and the other girl didn't. Well, when I read of this, I was furious. And I wasn't the only one: Fred Bischard, the choir director, was a very good friend to your mother's, and when he heard she'd been turned down, he went to see the priest to get him to change his mind. But Fred was turned down too. This

Fred was a mighty good man, but he had a short fuse and exploded. I've heard that if ever a priest of God ever got a dressing down, it was that Father Robinson -- the sanctimonious son-of-a-bitch.

> [Wow! Isn't that a tad derogatory, Dad? If this book ever reaches staunchly Catholic Jefferson, your name will be mud. Let me assume that after your long absence from this world, you have a new perspective and might be willing to abandon your harsh judgment. You may now even want to "give the devil his due", as you probably would phrase it. Maybe Father Robinson mended his ways, so to help balance the ledger for you, I quote the following from "The Jefferson Centennial History" (1959 edition):
>
> "Father Robinson was loved by all his parishioners, and his kindness to the many less fortunate growing children of this parish will never be forgotten. As a fitting memorial, there is a large tombstone at his grave in the Jefferson cemetery, a gift of his parishioners."
>
> Accompanying this warm tribute is a photo of the priest as a handsome and austere young man. He appears also in a photo of two men on the old parish house lawn. One of the men is pushing a lawn mower through heavy grass, and the other is watching him push. Father Robinson is the one watching.]

I think I told you that it was hotter than the hubs of hell that summer. Ernest and I stuck to the job, but we got to thinking if you used up all your hell in this life you'd be shorted in the next. So why hurry it? There must be cooler places, like a mile high in the Black Hills. We had money now, so we began making plans for a move. But we couldn't agree on a destination. He had a yen to go east; I had a yen to go west. It had been too long since I saw your mother.

We packed our belongings, went out for ham and eggs, then to the railroad station. His train was leaving before mine, so we shook hands and said goodbye. That's the last time I saw Johnny Bull, but I've never forgotten him.

On the way back to Deadwood and Lead I stopped in Jefferson to see my folks, and let them see for themselves that I had survived all alone in the cruel world for better than a year.

When I informed them that I'd not be staying in town but moving on to the Hills to see Fan, my mother said, "Oh, haven't you heard?"

"Heard what?"

"Well Fan went home after she couldn't get work here, but she didn't stay long. She got an offer to play for the movies in Mitchell, so she's not in Lead." [Mitchell is about 130 miles northwest of Jefferson].

A few days later I wound up my visit and was on the train to Mitchell. I remember that when I left, my brother Nap was sick as a dog with the measles, and couldn't cane down to see me off.

Your mother and I had a good reunion, with no relatives around to distract us. I told her all about what Ernest and I had been doing, and then she told me about things at home, and how her mother had it much better since remarrying, and how the new stepfather was gentle with the kids. She said she was playing organ at the church in Mitchell besides playing for the picture shows. But she didn't know how long she would stay put because she would really like to go back to Lead if the Homestake Theater had an opening for a pianist. I think she missed her mama.

She told me, too, that the piano at the theater was located just behind the second floor balcony railing, and that one night she had jumped over the railing. Seems the projector or the lighting went kooky and for a few moments lit up a red curtain, which she immediately thought was on fire. She panicked and jumped over the railing, landing on some people below. She wasn't hurt but her dignity was damaged, because her hair got all mussed up and she lost some hairpins which she couldn't find in the dark. You know how fussy she always was about having her hair just so.

Anyway, we had a good visit together, but I figured I'd best get to working again, maybe at something that would have a future for the two of us. I could have tried farming, and I think I would have made a good farmer because I had some experience at home and was interested in anything that would grow. I'm pretty sure I was the first to plant alfalfa in Union County, or one of the first. But I wanted to try my luck in the Black Hills where everybody wasn't either my aunt, uncle or cousin.

On my last day at Mitchell, your mother had a matinee to play for. I told her I would pack my belongings, take them to the

theater with me, watch the movie, and afterwards she could see me off. I don't even recall what movie it was, but afterwards we walked to the nearby drug store. I'd liked to have held hands walking, but she was always too shy for that. When we entered the drug store, I told her to have a seat while I did some business. So I walked up to the manager and said, "Say, would you mind awfully much if I made my girl a chocolate ice cream soda? I used to be a soda jerk in Vermillion, and I know just how she likes 'em made."

He looked as me like I had escaped from Yankton [South Dakota's state mental institution].

"I'll even pay you extra for the privilege. It's a big occasion."

So he laughed and said go ahead. There was nothing your mother liked better than a good chocolate soda, and believe me, I made her one.

We sat there until I ran out of things to say -- that hadn't happened to me before, and it hasn't happened much since. So when it was time, we started walking toward the depot. When the train pulled out, I looked through the window, and I saw her there on the platform waving. She was crying, and I thought to myself, "Isn't she beautiful!"

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RANCHER'S APPRENTICE

That was the second time I had come up to the Hills from across the prairie, and I was just as excited this time as the first. There had been good rains that summer, so the Hills were still green and beautiful.

When I pulled into Deadwood, and started down Main Street I noticed that the street had narrowed a lot while I was away, and I was surprised to see it had a slope to it, when I had remembered it as nearly level. But by the time I had reached Aunt Alexina's the street was widening and resuming its old flatness, and the hills which looked so tall at first were squatting down to just the right height.

My intention was to see Bernie before going to Lead, but he was out of town and not expected back until the next morning.

Aunt Alexina insisted on me spending the night. "If you don't, Bernie will have a fit." I told her that her offer would suit me fine, because I was in bad need of a bath after the long hot train ride with soot blowing in the open windows. I was needing a good night's sleep to boot.

So I had me a hot bath. Aunt Alexina sent one of the girls to the butcher's for a chicken, and fixed us up a good supper just like I was somebody special.

The next day, Bernie pulled in, and we took off up town to celebrate my return. After a few days of getting all reacquainted with Deadwood, I told my aunt I figured it was time to run up to Lead to see Aunt Emma and then start job hunting.

On the way up town to get a ride to Lead, I stopped at Fischers Bazaar for a post card to send your mother, and for a box of candy for her folks in Lead. Then I grabbed the trolley to Lead and walked up Mill Street.

Fan's mother was looking a lot less worried than the last time I'd seen her, and she and the kids gave me a big welcome. She always did make me feel right at home. And what a cook! She had a way of browning a pork loin roast, with potatoes in the same pan. That still makes me drool to think about it. Well, nothing would do but she had to send Marian out to get a roast.

Then she fired up the oven, broke out her good china, opened a jar of spiced crab apples, and treated me to a feast.

They didn't yet know that I had visited Fan in Mitchell, so I told them about our get-together thee. Fan's mother was a natural worrier, just like Fan, so I reassured her that her daughter was doing fine at Mitchell and was able to take care of herself. But her mother was hard to convince.

Half way through the cherry pie, the mailman arrived with letters. One was from Fan, so Aunt Emma tore it open and began reading it to herself. All at once I see her cloud up and start crying. "Oh, that poor, poor girl!"

It was a while before she stopped sniffling, but finally I found out what was wrong. Fan had told her about my visiting her, and what an enjoyable time we'd had, and that I'd saved up some money in Valley Junction and hoped to get established in the Hills. Then she said she was too sick to work and had to get a substitute pianist to take her place until she got over the measles. Suddenly I realized what my parting gift to her had been -- measles that I'd carried from my brother Nap! But I figured it wasn't the best time to go into a discussion of communicable diseases, so I didn't mention Nap.

What year was that? Hell, I don't know. What do you think I am, some sort of World Almanac? My guess is about 1907-1908. I know one thing: my dad had encouraged me to take out a New York Life Insurance policy as a method of saving, and I remember I was getting itchy to find work so I could keep it in force.

The idea of going down in the mine again had no big appeal, even though I never regretted my experience there. But working in daylight was more to my liking. One day I read in the Pioneer Times that Goldberg's Grocery in Deadwood needed a bookkeeper. That might not be a bad job. I had learned the essentials at Vermillion, but had no experience. Still, a guy has to start somewhere, so I went to see old Jake Goldberg and told him all I knew about bookkeeping, which didn't waste a lot of his time. I also told him I'd make him a good hand if he just gave me a whack at it. He hired me. I suppose I might still be keeping books if it hadn't been for Uncle Vini.

Uncle Vini [pronounced Vine-ee and derived from Pierre Darvenie Bernard] was a brother of Ulric Ubald Bernard, so he was my great-uncle. He had joined the rush to the Hills, bringing his

wife and four kids from Canada. But instead of gold hunting, he took up farming. He was probably the first or one of the first to settle in the St. Onge valley. They added four more children to the ones they came with, so you have distant cousins all over that area.

It just so happened my first paying job after coming from Jefferson the first time was with Uncle Vini during harvest. He had five horses on the binder, two in the lead, and I'd ride one of the lead horses all day in the hot sun for fifty cents.

Well, Vini had sold his St. Onge holdings and bought a cattle ranch on Indian Creek, near Arpan, just north of Belle Fourche. His first wife had died and my sister Regina, who never married, came out from Jefferson to keep house for him until some time after he married his second wife [Mary Paradis, 1906]. Regina was still with him when I started work for Goldbergs, so the first holiday I got I decided to go up and see her. It felt good just to get out of that cubby-hole of an office.

You know something, Harry, that was mighty fine cattle country up that way, with the Black Hills close by to the south and good shortgrass stretching away in all directions. Miners and soldiers were big beef eaters. So were the Indians after the buffalo had gone. Cattle was big business. Most of those cowboy movies you see were about the days before barbed wire, when big cattle-men numbered their herds in the thousands. But by the time Uncle Vini took up ranching, the railroads had come and every Tom, Dick and Harry could take up a homestead and did. So the days of big operators was dwindling fast. Still Belle Fourche remained a busy cow town, and lots of small outfits were doing OK as long as long as they got rain.

During my visit with Regina and Vini, I eyed the countryside pretty closely. I soon decided that Vini had a nice spot here: enough water for stock, cottonwood protection near the creek bottoms, not too far from a decent-size town, and not more than a big day's drive from Deadwood and Lead. It was enough to make my mouth water.

The second night there, we had just finished a good supper and gone outside to sit and see if the sun was going to go down or not. Vini lit up his pipe; I rolled me a smoke, and we started jaw-boning.

"George, I been watchin' you. Seems to me you are doing more thinking than usual. You getting' any ideas, like maybe this is pretty good country for homesteading?"

I didn't answer right away, but I could see the upstairs office at Goldberg's with its little squares of glass that sort of jailed you in. Out here I could swing my eyes north and my sight could sail all the way to Two-Top and beyond with no window mullions to interfere.

"Cat got your tongue?" Vini asks.

"Who, me? Fat chance of that. I'm going to be honest with you, Uncle: if you were to sit there and tell me you'd pay a man good American coin of the realm just to work out here for you -- well I'd take you up on it right now."

He had only one other full time man there, a sort of shirt-tail cousin of mine, about my age, maybe a bit younger, named Luke Bernard. And sometimes there was another fellow who'd show up.

"Well," Vini said, "I can't pay big wages like the Homestake does, but I could make it worth your while. God knows I can use a man; Luke is too busy chasing around to be any great help".

I worked at Goldberg's until Jake could find a replacement for me, then I became a cowpuncher. I don't know if anybody else took me for a cowboy, because I never wore a cowboy hat. I liked my caddy hat that I'd worn in the mine, and that's what I wore.

Vini's brands were the "box cross" and "cam iron", and when I started with him he was running two hundred head north of Indian Creek and two hundred or better south. Most were shorthorn stock that he was upgrading with thoroughbred Herford bulls.

I hadn't been there long when one day Luke and I noticed a runty shorthorn bull wandering among the cows, where he had no business being, since Vini wanted only the Herford bulls to service the cows. Luke said, "Let's teach that shorthorn a lesson, George."

So we ran one of the big Herford bulls in where the little shorthorn was, and pretty soon the two of them are fighting. By golly if that shorthorn runt doesn't whip the big Herford! We tried out three more Herefords, but none of them could whip that shorthorn. He was smaller but he was way too quick for them.

In those days there were always plenty of drifters on the move, cowboys riding the grub line between jobs, or what have you. Most were honest, looking for a place to spend a night or kill a couple of days; others were on the shady side and wanted a place to hole up until it was safe to move on. We got our share of both kinds at Vini's, and hospitality was such that you didn't lightly turn any man away.

Regina and I were alone one evening when a cowpuncher stopped by. It was the custom for strangers to stay in the saddle until you invited them in; and if they were wearing a side arm, you expected them to dismount between you and the horse so you'd know they had no notion of pulling a gun and using the horse as a barricade. Anyway, we asked him to step down and come in for supper, and after supper we sat around the table chatting. Occasionally, Regina and I would shift unconsciously from English to French, which we spoke at home, but he didn't seem to notice it. Then all of a sudden a gust, of wind made a moaning sound outdoors, and this fellow says, "Un mot d'autre monde" which in French means "A word from the other world." We were surprised to learn this stranger was pea soup French just like us."

It was at Vini's that I first ran into McCracken, the notorious horse thief. He and his henchmen would go down to Nebraska to steal horses, then trail them up into Canada to sell. I hadn't been working for Vini long and was still pretty green, when McCracken and a couple of his men stopped in to spend the night. I was alone at the time, Vini having gone east to visit, so I didn't know these hombres. They weren't accustomed to introducing themselves as horse thieves.

After we ate, the one who seemed to be the leader said to me, "Say, young fella, we had to leave a nice cow pony down at the Belle Fourche River. He went lame on us, but if you were to go get him he'd make you a good mount." He told me the pony was a chestnut with a white hind foot and a blaze on his face, and he told me where to look for it.

So, the next morning after they had left, I got to thinking I could use a good free horse -- the price was right. I set out for the river; but when I reached the location he'd described, there was no pony in sight. At the nearest ranch I inquired if they had seen a stray cow pony, and I described him. At first this rancher looks at his wife and I suspect they don't want tell me. But then

she nods, and then he tells me I'll find him in the pasture with his horses. Just as I started to ride out to take a look, I see a figure suddenly dart behind a shed. Whoa, Nelly, I said to myself -- something fishy going on here. When I reached the pasture, I looked the stock over carefully, and that cow pony was there all right, and he was a real beauty. I wheeled around and rode back to the ranch house. "I just want to thank you folks," I said, "That's a nice pony but he's not the one I'm looking for."

The rancher looked relieved. "Well, it's a damn good thing," he said "The law is out there just waiting for someone to claim him."

Your great-grandfather Ulric came out from Jefferson to visit Uncle Vini while I was there. Vini asked him if he had ever eaten prairie dog. "No," he answered, "and I never want to." So a few days later Vini tells me to go out a kill a couple of cottontails and a prairie dog. When he fried up the cottontails that night he also fried the prairie dog, but he kept it on one end of the platter. Every time he'd pass Ulric the platter, Ulric would get the prairie dog end, so he got a belly full of it. When we had finished eating, Vini asked him, "Ulric, how did you like the rabbit?"

"Mighty tasty rabbit, Vini."

Vini bust out laughing. "That was prairie dog you were eating."

I told you about the first time I drank Postum. Well, I remember when Vini went to Belle Fourche one day and a grocer sold him some of the stuff. That grocer must have given him a good sales pitch. The next morning Vini asked his new wife Mary to make some for us. She did. As she started to pour me a cup, I declined.

"Ah, come on, George," he says, "You don't know what's good for you -- this here stuff doesn't rot your guts like coffee does; in fact it's beneficial. You won't catch me drinking coffee no more." So he puts a spoon of sugar and some cream in his Postum and lifts the cup to his lips like it's the Holy Grail. He takes a big swallow. "Um-m-m-m," he smacks his lips. Next morning, he has Postum again, but doesn't fuss over it. The third morning he takes one sip and turns to Mary. "Mary, throw that damn stuff out and give me some coffee -- I can't stand the taste."

That cousin of mine, Luke, was always up to something, usually no good. He had been that way ever since he was a pup. Someone told me that when Luke was only six he came in one day off the range leading a slick calf [no mark or brand]. If so, it was Luke's first head of illegal stock, but not his last. At the time there were some cowhands hanging around the house, and they made a big to-do about it, like it was awful cute.

This will give you an idea of how he was: He and Charlie Arpan went to a poolroom in Newell. There was a good saddle blanket hanging on a nail, and when Luke saw nobody was noticing, he "accidentally" hooked his cue under the blanket and dropped it off the nail onto the floor. They finished their game, and when it looked clear, Luke picked up the blanket and slipped out the back door. But the owner of the blanket happed to see him leave, and gave chase, but Luke got away in the dark. Now, Luke no more needed to steal that blanket than a dog needs to steal fleas, but I guess he just couldn't resist the thrill of it.

Luke played a good one on Uncle Vini once. Vini had a milk cow, Old Blue, that used to kick like a mule, but Vini just loved that cow; she was his darling. After he had moved in Belle Fourche and left me in charge of the ranch, he would come out now and then to check on things, and every time he came, the first thing he had to do was go to the barn and milk Old Blue.

One day, Luke snuck behind a partition next to the milking stall, carrying a sharp stick. About then, Uncle Vini enters. "Why, my good old Blue! Have you missed me?" And he pets her and whispers sweet nothings in her ear and starts to milking. Through a knot hole, Luke pokes the cow in the ribs. WHAM! Old Blue unleashes a kick that barely misses Vini. "Why, Blue, what's the matter with my poor old girl? Have those brats been abusing you? Another kick. Luke keeps poking until Old Blue finally is successful and lands one on Vini. That chills the romance, and Vini loses his temper. "Why you old slut!" And he gave her a kick in the belly. Luke was in hysterics when he told me about it.

Vini was sixty or so when he decided to move into Belle and enjoy city life. Or maybe it was Mary who decided, because she never liked ranching too well. Anyway, he had done well, and I guess he figured that I could run his ranch for him, with some

supervision from him. So he made a proposition and I accepted. He left me with Luke and another fellow to run the place, but I was to be the boss. Not long after he moved into town, he dropped in and told me the sheriff had come to let him know he suspected some shady stuff was going on, and that he intended to come out to snoop around. Vini had told the sheriff -- we called them marshals back then -- that he knew Luke could bear watching. "I know Luke, and if he breaks the law, it's your job to go after him. But don't you go bothering George. That boy does a good job for me and he minds his own business, so I say leave him alone." And he did. Still, when I think back on it, it is a wonder Luke didn't get us all in trouble.

I know for sure that Luke acquired cattle without bothering to buy them. I remember when lightening hit a huge old cottonwood, and because the tree had a big hollow in it, It toppled over. By God, that hollow tree had been stuffed full of cow hides, and I think I know who put them there. I used to try to tell him to straighten out while he still had a chance, but he'd just flash me a big grin, so eventually I quit trying. But he was a likeable cuss; and generous -- he'd give you the shirt off his back, but if you weren't careful he'd turn right around and steal you blind.

Sometimes in that country the winters were hard and long. It wasn't always easy to bring your cattle through alive, especially if it hadn't been a good hay year. Uncle Vini came out from Belle one late winter day, and when he sized up his herd he told me I was overfeeding them. "I'm not overfeeding them at all," I told him, "I want those critters to be alive, come spring, and I'm giving them just enough to see that they will be." But he ordered me to cut down their ration to what I figured was way too small.

"Well, Uncle, you are the big cheese here, and if you flat out order me to cut down that much, I will -- but don't blame me if you lose some stock."

He returned to Belle, and come early spring we had a terrible blizzard and cold snap. When it slacked off and the road was passable, Vini showed up to see how Luke and me and Old Blue were making out. As soon as he sees his cattle, he got all excited. "George, you're starving them cattle!"

"Now, wait just a damn minute," I replied, "I'm not starving your cattle; it's you that's starving them. I'm giving them exactly what you told me to. Let's have an understanding, right now: if you want to take care of your cattle, then you come out here and do it; but if you want me to do it, then you let me do it my way." He saw I meant business, and after that he never gave me feeding instructions. You know, Harry, I think there is one thing I'll never have to worry about when I get to St. Peter's gate, and that is that I mistreated any stock that came under my care."

[Right on, Dad! Chewed up dogs, gaffed roosters and butchered cats are not "stock" -- let's hope they don't appear on some other heavenly account book.

As you have noted in the preceding paragraph, Dad could be feisty on occasion. It calls to mind an incident related to me not by Dad but by my then brother-in-law, Francis Schopen, who at one time operated a radiator repair business in a part of Bernard and Gerber's garage. Francis happened to be doing a job for a customer who came from the Belle Fourche area, and discovered this man had once worked with Luke and Dad at Uncle Vini's ranch. That was just after Vini had moved into town leaving George in charge. This customer told Francis that George was feeling pretty important in his new position, and began ordering him and Luke around to the point they thought obnoxious. So they grabbed him one day and rolled him across an overripe manure mire near the barn. Francis thought this was hilarious, but when he mentioned the incident to Dad, Dad just turned and walked away. I hope from his high vantage point, Dad now sees it as humorous -- I hope!]

One time I took a boxcar load of horses from Belle to Jefferson to sell for Uncle Vini. Believe me, most of them were wilder than spring hares, fresh off the range as they were. I sold one of them to a rural mail carrier, and he had a terrible time getting it harnessed to the mail buggy, but finally he did, and they set off on his route, but that horse was plumb iron-jawed -- couldn't be stopped. They went the whole route without delivering a letter.

I sold another to a fellow who managed to get him hitched to a cart, and that horse kicked the cart to smithereens.

You don't remember Old Mustache, do you, Albert? She was one of that wild bunch. I forget the name of the guy who bought her, from Elk Point, he was. I had helped the buyer get her in his barn, but after I went back to Vini's, Old Mustache wouldn't let him in -- he couldn't get anywhere near that mare. So the owner came to town and started complaining to Dad about how I'd cheated him.

"Well, you knew she wasn't broken, didn't you?" Dad asked.

"No, Pete, I never thought to ask about that."

"Did George tell you she was broken?"

"No, he didn't".

"Well, in that case he didn't misrepresent the product, so I don't see how I can help you."

"But goddamn it, Pete, I don't know nothing about breaking horses."

"Well, I sure do," said Dad, “Do you want to sell her?"

Dad ended up buying her for about half of what I had sold her for.

Once Dad wrote me to brag about a new team of work horses he had just bought. The next time I went there to visit I saw for myself what he was bragging about. That was some team, great big beautiful animals. They could pull a plow all day long and never play out. They'd suck in a great big gulp of air and let it out all at one time, whoosh! They didn't pant like lots of those wind-blown nags you'd see around there.

When I look back now on the way they used to farm and see how it is done by machine now, well all I can say is that it was cruelty to dumb animals. A man would expect those poor horses to pull their guts out hour after hour, all the livelong day.

Whenever there was no housewife on a ranch, you were apt to get some curious characters hanging around. We had one such geezer by the name of Toe-Jam Bill, the most unsavory name in the West. He appeared to be just a grub-liner, moseying from ranch to ranch, and I don't know for sure if he was into any law breaking, but he seemed to know a lot about some who were. He left the ranch one morning, saying he was going to town, but he never got there - maybe he never got anywhere, because he disappeared completely. Rumor had it that crooks around there had learned that he was going to

testify against one of them on a horse stealing charge. But nobody knows what happened to him. Did they have a memorial service for him? Now what the hell kind of question is that?

In late fall we would drive the market cattle to the railhead for shipment. We would work them to a place four miles above Belle Fourche and pasture them there until the pens in Belle were clear and could handle our shipment. After the cattle were rolling away you felt like you'd really accomplished something.

As you might guess, even though we worked hard at Vini's, we had our good times too, but sometimes they were at odd hours. I recall one time, about two in the morning, when Luke and I were awakened by a big clatter in the yard -- our hounds were barking up a storm. When we went out to check, we saw a fellow coming along in the moonlight with something under his arm. It turned out to be a guy from Arpan carrying his game cock in a cage, looking for a rooster fight. At two in the morning!

Funny how we could get all lathered up over a little thing like fighting cocks, but there wasn't a whole lot of entertainment out in that country, and often we'd get desperate for anything that would take your mind off cattle. One day Adolph Bernard, one of Vini's kinsfolk from St. Onge, was visiting me. It was on a rainy, windy day when we couldn't do much work outdoors. After we did our barn chores, I said to him, "Duff," (I called him Duff, not Dolph), "let's us scare up a rooster fight."

"Fine," he replied, "but how you going to get them to fight when all you've got is a few eating roosters and some laying hens."

He was right, of course, and when you have that set-up, you normally don't see any action because one of the roosters soon gets to be cock-of-the-walk, and all the others respect him.

"How do I get them to fight?" I said, " Well," I'll show you how." I picked up the head rooster and took him to the house, where I tied some colored cloth on his wings, trimmed off some feathers, and blackened his comb with shoe polish. I brought him back to the coop. "Now you watch and see."

As soon as I tossed him in the coop, one of the other roosters jumped him and the battle was on. How come? Because the aggressor didn't recognize the disguised cock-of-the-walk. In such a case, all the roosters will take him on, but if the chief

cock crows, that ends it. Right away the others know who he is from his crowing, and they go back to being peaceful subjects.

The following spring I happened to go down to Duff 's place in St. Onge to cut oak staves. I stayed there two or three days. The second day was too stormy to go out cutting, so I said, "Let's stir up a rooster war to kill time."

"Great idea, George, but I ain't got no fightin' roosters."

"You just think you don't have fighting roosters." His wife kept some Rhode Island hens and a few roosters. The roosters were more Sunday-dinner candidates than fighters. I pointed to one of them and told Duff, "There, can't you tell -- that pretty boy is a fighting rooster."

"Ah, hell, George, they all take turns whipping that one."

"That's because he needs some coaching and encouragement. I'll show you what he can do." Of course, I didn't know how he'd act.

Anyway, I took the bird outside and fixed him up in a disguise like I had done before. By gosh if he didn't whip the first one who tackled him! Then he went on to clean up the others.

Just then, Frank Doodle came by and I showed him the new champ. "By God, George, I've got a white leghorn rooster at home he couldn't beat."

So we all went over to Frank's. Right in the middle of the fight of the century, Frank's wife Marie heard the ruckus, and stuck her head in the coop. When she saw red blood on her white rooster it made her blue. "Why, you crazy devils! What are you doing to my rooster!" And she grabbed a rake and began swinging at us. If we hadn't cleared out quick she'd have killed us.

I read a discussion once about which is the most courageous of all creatures. I had always thought the bulldog was the gamest, but it's not. They kept a bulldog and a rooster both without food until they were nearly starved. Then they put the bulldog into an enclosure with another bulldog and a piece of meat. The first thing he did was go for the meat. But the rooster, when they experimented with him, ignored the food and immediately attacked the other rooster.

It was around that time, before I got married, that a friend and I drove a horse and buggy all the way to Sundance, Wyoming, to attend a big dance that was being held in

conjunction with a stockgrowers convention. There was a girl sitting against the wall at the dance hall, and she was homelier than a mud fence after a rain storm -- bucktoothed, cross-eyed, just pitiful. I noticed no one much wanted to dance with her, so I said to my buddy, "Come on, let's show that girl a good time." So we asked for a dance and both of her eyes lit up and she flashed us a crooked smile. Well, my buddy and I damn near danced her legs off -- she had the time of her life.

It had been warm when we drove there, and we had gotten thirsty. Not wanting that to happen on the way home, we collared the bartender at the dance and asked him to pack us some beer in ice for our return trip. Lo and behold, in the morning there was frost all over. We shivered all the way back -- with only ice cold beer to drink.

I worked for Uncle Vini long enough to save up a little nest egg, some of which I put into another endowment policy with New York Life. All the time I was there, though, I got more and more anxious to be on a place of my own, so I could settle down and start me a family. I would need a wife, of course, but I thought I knew where I could find one in Lead. I'd need cattle too, but they weren't so expensive at that time; sometimes you could get a calf for a dollar. How much were full grown cattle? I can remember Uncle Vini shipping out two carloads of them and getting twenty-six dollar a head -- and he had to pay the freight.

The way I finally got started on my own was that I had worked all one summer for Vini without drawing wages. In the fall he happened to buy a bunch of mixed cattle which included eighteen heifers. He offered me the cattle in lieu of wages, and since it worked out to a fair price, sixteen dollars a head, I accepted. He agreed to let me run my stock with his until I found a place of my own.

It didn't take long. I was lucky enough to hear of a blacksmith who had homesteaded next to Vini's place, right there where Hildebrandt Creek empties into Indian Creek. Somehow the blacksmith had soon got a bellyful of prairie and wanted out. He had slapped together the minimum ten by twelve shack, and had just started scratching out a little earth dam to catch water, like you were expected to on a homestead. Well, when I first learned of this, I made a beeline over there.

My mouth was all set for having that place, but I didn't want to sound over-eager.

"How much?" I asked.

"Fifteen bucks. That ain't much, is it."

"It ain't much of a place either," I replied, "But I think I have just enough cash, so you've got a deal."

I paid him spot cash before could change his mind. Can you imagine! Fifteen dollars for the whole she-bang!"

So now I had me some land, a shack, and the start of a beef herd. I bought a second-hand wagon off Vini, loaded up my possessions and set out for my new home. On the way there I turned, on a little rise, to have one more glimpse at where I had served my apprenticeship. And as I looked, I caught sight of Snowball, my favorite of Vini's pack of hounds. He'd been out chasing coyotes when I had pulled out, but now he'd caught sight of me, and he was eating up that brown, dry distance between us as an awful clip.

Well, I knew better that to try to holler him home, so I waited for him to catch up. His tail was thrashing and he jumped all over me. "Snowball," I said, "let's you and me go ranching."

The next time I saw Vini in Belle I told him Snowball had adopted me.

"Good." he says. "On your way back, stop by my place and pick you out three or four more hounds to keep him company -- I'm overpopulated."

CHAPTER FIVE

A RANCH OF MY OWN

That first year on my ranch we had rain a-plenty. Even little Hildebrandt Creek, which often ran dry, was full to the brim. As far as you could see, the grass was lush and green. You know, Harry, I thought making a living out there was going to be no harder than shooting fish in a rain barrel.

The first thing I did was upgrade my shelter by patching the roof and replacing some broken glass. Then I cut a trap door in the floor and began excavating a cellar for storing food, and for use as storm shelter. Outdoors, I set to work completing the little earthen dam and figuring just where to locate the future barn -- and the underground vault I'd need to hold all the money I was bound to make. On my first trip to Belle, I went to see about getting me a cattle brand assigned, because you couldn't be much of cattle man if you didn't have your own personal brand. Mine was the arrowhead.

About that time, a great-uncle of mine came out to visit Uncle Vini, and after laying around a couple of three weeks he got the fidgets. So he came out to spend a few days at my place, and about the second day he is already nervous. Finally he says, "George, let's get going and build you a barn before winter sets in." I had nothing against free labor, so I hauled lumber from Belle, and we went to it hammer and nail. It wasn't the prettiest barn in creation, no Sistine Chapel for sure; but even if it was bare-bones construction, if you caught it just right against an evening sunset or in a light fog I thought it looked tolerably good.

But uncle was unhappy with it. He said it was a decent barn but that it needed a cupola on top to give it the finishing touch it deserved. Now, I had no spare money to waste on a pretty cupola , so I threw cold water of the notion. But he just didn't know how to take "no" for an answer. "A man needs some beauty in his life," he would argue, "especially out on this god-

forsaken prairie. If a man can't have some beauty, he really ain't civilized like them old Greeks and Romans were.' He said he'd build the cupola all by himself, even paint it, if I'd just give the word. Finally, against my better judgment, he prevailed and I went to town for more lumber. That uncle told me he was a carpenter by trade, the same as my grandfather Ulric Ubald was, but I think he was suffering from delusions of grandeur, because I never saw him cut a piece of wood the right size on the first try. By the time he had completed the tricky mitering and fitting of that cupola, I had me a pile of scrap wood damn near as high as the barn. He stuck around three more weeks just to admire his cupola, then took off.

My prospects at that time were looking bright, but I was starting to get more and more lonesome by myself after the barn builder left. Sure, there were the hounds and prairie dogs for company, and the rattlers and rabbits and owls and field mice, but after a while it got so they couldn't hold up their end of a conversation like they could at first. Sometimes if I was blue I would run over to Vini's or to Aunt Minnie Rail's, or to Fred Varies or Charlie Arpan's. Also I knew some folks from St. Onge who had moved up toward Two-Top. Every weekend I'd head for Lead to visit your mother. She had returned from Mitchell after she got over the measles, and was now playing for the movies in Lead and helping out at home. The idea of us getting married had crossed our minds from time to time in the past, but now it was on my mind on an hourly basis. She'd come out every so often to view my progress. Her being a doctor's daughter , I don't think she was terribly impressed. She'd taste the alkali water and frown, and I'd explain that the water in that pail was just for washing, and that the rainwater in the other pail was the drinking water. Then she'd notice the cracks all over and wonder how we were going to keep warm in winter. She'd seemed a might pessimistic, but then I'd tell her not to worry, one day we'd expand the place big enough to hold her piano. Then she'd brighten up a bit and maybe say how nice it was to see sunsets again just like in Jefferson. I'd steal me a kiss or two.

By now, Luke was a full-grown man, and he was a strong son-of-a-gun. Oftentimes before, in winter mostly, we would get to wrestling to kill time. Sometimes he'd pin me; sometimes I'd

pin him. It was always nip and tuck. I'll never forget the night before I left the ranch to pick up your mother and go get married: Luke came riding up to the house. He parked his pony and came in for supper, and while we were eating I told him I'd be away for a few days getting married. "Well, George, then this may be our last chance. Let's see once and for all who's the best man." So we stripped down to our B.V.D.'s so's not to ruin our clothes, and we started wrestling on the Brussels carpet I had just put down to cover the trap door and make us a nicer room. You may not remember those Brussels carpets, Harry, but they were rough as a cob. Well, neither of us could stand being second-best man, so we went to it for a long time, until my elbows were rubbed so raw from that carpet that they were bleeding.

The next morning I was all stiff and sore, and scabs were beginning to form on my elbows, so I wasn't in A-number-one shape for wedlock. Nevertheless, I lathered my face and wiped off the whiskers with my straight razor, and took me a sponge bath, and set off for the Big Occasion. I'd have put on a dress suit but I'd spent so much on that cupola that I couldn't afford one. When I reached Lead, I stopped at my friend Harry Essling's and borrowed his suit and put it on before going on up Mill Street.

We went up to Billings and went to the courthouse there to get a license to commit matrimony. I had no idea there was no charge for wedding licenses in Montana, so when the clerk handed me the paper I asked him how much I owed him. "Not a red cent," he replied, "We even give you our heartfelt sympathy."

[Because Dad told me very little about his courtship and marriage, I romantically visualized them as being days of wine and roses, full of joy, lacking impediments. I realize now I had no basis for such a view. Why, for example, were they not married in the church in Lead? With friends, bridesmaids, bouquets, rice, and beautiful choir music.? Were there family objections to the match? I doubt that, because Dad and Mom were first cousins and their parents' families were congenial. There was a church rule that forbade marriage between first cousins unless a bishop granted a dispensation. I remember hearing that the bishop of their archdiocese refused them permission, or maybe dilly-dallied. Dad was not

one to bite his nails and wait; thus I suspect they went where they were unknown. At that time, incidentally, marriage between first cousins was not so extraordinary. At any rate the marriage was legal, so now I can relax. Right now I am looking at the certificate, which reads:

"On June 1, 1911, a George C. Bernard and a Fanny Manseau were joined in lawful wedlock at Billings, in the said state of Montana, by Cyr. Tarewlyn, pastor of St. Patrick's Church, in the presence of V. Gonyea and M. Gonyea."

I think the Gonyeas were total strangers. Curiously, the certificate does not reflect Mom's real name but uses a nick name that she very much disliked in later years after "fanny" became associated with "buttocks".]

We didn't start with much but we were never happier. At night we had to move the table outdoors in order to have room to make up a bed. But it wasn't long until I found another homesteader who was abandoning his place. I bought his 10 by 12 building, hauled it home, and added it on. That doubled our living area to 12 by 20. Later we added again until finally we had space enough to accommodate your mother's piano, which we hauled by team and wagon from Lead. That was one of the very few pianos in the area, and sometimes on Saturday nights we'd have neighbors over for music and ice cream.

Visiting Aunt Minnie was always a treat. She hadn't changed much from the time at the Farmers Home when she and those Tetreault girls had tied the ribbon bow on my dickey. Did I ever tell you about that one? OK, then I won't rehash it here, but Aunt Minnie was still mischievous at times and no matter how rough her life was out there and how much sadness came her way, she was always ready with a quick smile, a laugh, and a warm welcome.

Once when Fan and I were newly married we ran into Aunt Minnie in Belle and told her we would stop by her place on the way home. She was all excited at this news because having visitors in that neck of the woods was a welcome break in the routine. She insisted we would have to spend the night with them, and we agreed. We hadn't yet stayed overnight with her, but later we often did because she was always so much fun to be around. Anyway, she started home and we hung around

town to finish our business. When we arrived, Aunt Minnie was frying chicken, and I thought she looked unusually bright eyed and bushy tailed. She had a sort of Mona Lisa smile on her face [right were smiles are supposed to be, Dad.] and I suspected she was up to something.

After supper we did up the dishes, then we all went out to watch one of those salmon-pink sunsets that your mother loved so much. We played cards and jawboned until bed time. After the bon soirs, Fan and I went to our room and got ready for bed. "Fan," I whispered, "that Minnie has something up her sleeve. I think we better go easy." So first I checked in the bed but found nothing unusual. Then I scooted under the bed for a look. Sure enough that Minnie had had one of the boys saw half way through the slats so we would come crashing down during the night and she'd be able to tease us. So we just quietly removed all the bedding and made us a nest on the floor. Next morning we re-made the bed and went in to breakfast and acted as if nothing had happened, which it hadn't. Minnie looked perplexed; I guess she couldn't understand why we hadn't crashed. But we didn't let on one bit, and she didn't either.

Say, Albert, did you ever see a dog work on a coyote? You were just talking about those greyhounds we had on the farm in Jefferson, and how brave they were, but I bet you never saw one of them tackle a coyote. Well, that Snowball I got from Vini was a white staghound, and he's the only dog I've ever seen take on a coyote all by himself. You just don't see that. Gosh, I remember when P.U. came out to visit Fan and me late one autumn, and the second day we woke up to find a couple inches of snow. As we were having bacon and eggs, Snowball shows up at the house with a fresh cut on him. I says to P.U. "Snowball just got him another coyote, Dad."

"Well that clears up that mystery," he comes back.

"What mystery is that?"

"The mystery of how your dog is such a great coyote killer. If every time he comes home with a scratch on him you assume he's killed a coyote, it's no wonder you bragged about it in your letters. You know damn well it takes more than one dog to kill a coyote."

"Sure, Dad, it takes more than one Jefferson dog, but it doesn't take more than one Snowball. "

He wouldn't believe me, even though I hardly ever lied to him. So I asked him to put on his duds and step outdoors so I could prove my brag. First we checked the other hounds and none of them showed any cuts, and none of them looked tired. Then we followed a set of tracks to where one dog had come up from the Hildebrandt Creek direction, and every so often we'd see a few drops of blood on the snow. That had to be Snowball's trail. We followed it for several miles over that big spread of country, and finally we came to where two sets of paw prints slanted off toward a neighboring ranch house. We kept going until we came in sight of the corral, and then on a little drift of snow we found one each dead coyote, killed by a Snowball. After that Dad never doubted my dog tales.

There were coyotes galore back then. Rattlesnakes too. When your brothers Pierre and Lawrence were babies, your mother worried about snakes getting in the house. And once one of them did. Crawled into Pierre's crib and we found the two of them sleeping together. I thought your mother would die. But we just stayed quiet and after the nap the snake moved off.

We had plenty of prairie dogs. Say, they are interesting to watch. It's funny how well they get along with weasels and owls. Owls, for example, like to perch on prairie dog mounds. They'll sit up there with their eyes fastened on you, and if you walk round and round them their bodies stay perfectly still but their heads rotate to watch you. It's a wonder they don't snap their necks.

And rabbits? They were thicker than hairs in the soup. I remember the first time Ben came from Lead to visit us. He must have been twelve, thirteen, and hadn't learned to shoot a gun. Well, he just couldn't wait 'til I took him out to get a rabbit. So after breakfast, I told him we'd go out. Right off, he jumps up and grabs the .22. "You won't be needing that, Ben, but you can bring it if you want." He wondered what I meant, but he didn’t wonder long. We went out a ways from the house. It had rained during the night, so I made me a couple of mudballs out of that gumbo we had around there. Rabbits were nibbling all over.

"Now," I whispered, "you'll see how we get rabbits for supper out here." I really hadn't expected to, but on the first throw I

stunned a cottontail enough for us to catch. "You see, Ben, that saves ammunition for bigger game."

But then I showed him how to handle the rifle and all he wanted to do all week long was hunt rabbits. I never thought of it before, but now I wonder if maybe that started him on his military career.

> [Ben was Bernard E. Manseau, my mother's younger brother. After graduating from Annapolis in 1922, he went on to become Vice Admiral (3 stars). As an example of his distinguished career as an engineering officer, he supervised the largest maritime salvage job ever attempted, that of refloating the luxury liner Normandie, then the world's largest ship, which while being converted to the troopship USS Lafayette in 1942 caught fire, capsized, and sank at its pier in New York harbor.
>
> It was Ben's example that inspired my brother Lawrence to become a navy officer. Submariner Lawrence only reached the rank of Rear Admiral (two stars), but even so it was enough to make us all proud of him.
>
> These men and their spirited wives were a source of great interest and pride to their parents, kinsfolk, and friends.]

One winter day, your mother and I bundled up warm and drove out to Belle Fourche in the buggy. Our clothes may have been bulky, and maybe not new, but they didn't strike me as poor enough to make us look like bums. Anyway, she wanted to buy a few items in a clothing store, so we walked in. There was a female clerk who started waiting on her but as soon as a local big-shot came in, the clerk left your mother and began waiting on him. Somehow that went against my grain and I walked over to the clerk and told her, "Lady, you go get the proprietor out here. Right now. And don't tell me he's not here because I saw him come in. Now get him!"

When the owner showed up, I told him: "I don't much like the treatment we're getting in your store. When I come in here to buy something, I assume my money is just as good as the next man's, and if it isn't I want to know about it. But if it is, then when your clerk starts waiting on my wife, she had damn

well finish before she trots off to wait on somebody else, and I don't care who he is."

The proprietor got my message, and said no slight was intended, and he got my feathers smoothed down some. After that we were always on good terms. I'm trying to think of his name – Lancaster, it was."

[I can almost hear Lancaster say to the chagrined saleslady, "Now what in hell did that Frenchman have for breakfast!]

Another time; I wanted to buy a hay rake. I went to J. C. Eckels' hardware store in Belle and found Old Man Eckels waiting on a customer who also happened to be wanting a rake, only he had no money. Old Eckels must have known him, because I heard him snap out, "Absolutely not! No money, no rake." The man stormed out. Eckels turned to me and says, "Well, what can I do for you, mister?"

"Not much, I'm afraid -- not after the way you treated him. I'm in the same boat, need a rake but have no money."

"Well, why don't you pick one out and pay me the first of the month?" He had been around a long time, and I suppose he had all the dead beats pretty well spotted.

Every once in a while, salesmen would come clear out to the ranch. There were the Raleigh salesmen and the Larkin people. Those were the Fuller Brush men and Avon ladies of that time, and sometimes they saved us a trip to town. Then, too, there was Sears and Roebuck. You could order anything from them: harnesses, coal scuttles, rupture trusses, groceries -- oh, you didn't know they sold groceries? Well they sure did.

When Uncle Vini moved into Belle, he was soon a well-liked and respected citizen. I went into the Butte County Bank there one day when I was strapped for cash and asked if I could borrow a small sum so I could pay my life insurance premiums. I hadn't done business there before. When I told the banker what I wanted, he said, "Fine, what is your name?" I told him. "Oh, Bernard? You any relation to Vini Bernard?" I told him Vini was my great uncle."

"Splendid," he says, "You just get Vini to countersign on this note and you've got yourself a loan."

"No sir," I replied, "I don't do business that way. This is a loan to me, on my word, and nobody signs with me."

He sat there with his chin in his hand for what seemed five minutes, just looking at me. Finally he smiled and said, "Ok, young man, you've got yourself your own personal loan." After that I never had a banking problem in Belle Fourche.

I remember it like it was yesterday -- the night your brother Pierre was born. [April 21, 1912] Your mother was pretty far along carrying him, and the day before he was born she and I walked out in the field, and we watched, oh, the most beautiful sunset! At four the next morning Fan thought her time had come.

I set out for Arpan to get a doctor -- she never wanted anything to do with hospitals. When we got back it was nearly dawn. The doctor took one look at her and he said, "Woman, lie down or you'll have that baby standing up!" [Dad paused a moment, remembering, then started a sentence he couldn't finish.] She never complained ....

[The tape grows quiet here as his voice trailed off to nothing. When I recorded the above episode, it was the day before Mom's funeral. My brothers Pierre and Lawrence and my sister Lorraine and some of Lorraine's youngsters had been keeping Dad company, but at the time he told me about Pierre's birth, he and I were sitting alone at the kitchen table. We could hear the buzz of conversation from the living room where friends who had come in to sympathize were chatting. Many of the episodes concerning the ranch were recorded that day and the next. I don't think Dad's memory was ever sharper; it was as if the present sorrow of losing his mate had honed his memory to its keenest. I recall particularly the moment his voice paused, then trailed off. In a few moments he tried to resume his stories but his voice broke, and he struggled to choke back the most desolate little rasping sobs. It was as if, for the first time, he suddenly realized the magnitude of his present loss -- as if there would never be another sunrise on their prairie, or another sunset to match the glorious one on the evening before their first son's birth.

After long minutes, he had beat down his grief and was sitting quietly. I looked at the leaden sky and the icicles hanging from the eves of the house next door, and I thought the silence had gone far enough.

"It's snowing again, Dad."

"Yes," he said softly, "and the wind is pushing it right along. Looks like we won't have good weather for the funeral tomorrow."

Dad thought he would never be happy again, but he didn't tell me that at the time. I discovered it years later: he was basking in the winter warmth of Los Angeles and being spoiled by my wife Julie's sunny affection. We were just sitting down to broiled steak on the patio when I noticed him grow pensive. He's thinking of Mom, I said to myself. All of a sudden he spoke up, "You know, kids, when Stephanie died, I was certain that I could never be happy again. He looked at the smoky sun drifting down behind the grey-green eucalyptus trees, and added with a sure and steady voice, "But I was wrong."

The following story he told me a few minutes after we had spoken of the falling snow.]

The winter before Pierre was born, your mother and I took a notion to go visit Uncle Vini in Belle Fourche. When we set out with our team and buggy the sky was a little overcast, but we didn't expect snow. Then as we got closer to Belle it began spitting a few flakes. By the time we reached Vini's, it was snowing like it meant business. In those days they didn't have contraptions stuck out in space keeping an eye peeled for weather conditions that you could learn about on TV. So you wore warm clothes and took a few blankets when you set out, just in case it turned sour.

The next morning we looked outdoors and saw a good foot or so of snow. Vini figured we should stay put, but I had stock to tend to and thought we could make it with the good team we had. So we started home. The snow had stopped and there was no wind to speak of, but it was 18 below zero.

By noontime a breeze kicked up and the sky began looking dirty again. And I began to feel uneasy. With cross winds, little drifts began making the road more difficult.

Just before nightfall we reached the Owl Creek crossing, roughly twenty miles out from Belle, but the team was fast playing out. I told Fan we weren't going to be able to make it home that day, so we'd have to find someplace to hole up for the night. There was a recently vacated old ranch house between

the crossing and our place. The owner had built a new house about a half mile away, but he sometimes used the old one for visitors. I told Fan we'd try to reach the old house.

When we finally got there the team could hardly move. I tried the door. It wasn't locked, so we went in and found a kerosene lamp and lit it. I helped myself to some kindling wood and got a fire going in the kitchen stove, then I went back outside and unhitched the horses and took them into the old barn where I rubbed them down and blanketed them. It was colder than a witch's tit. Luckily there was some old hay still in the loft and a few scoops of oats in a tub, so the horses would be fine.

Just after I returned to the house, the owner showed up on horseback. He'd seen the light in the window and wanted to make sure everything was OK. I told him our predicament and that I thought we'd best stay the night there. He said we were welcome, and he showed us where he kept some extra bedding and canned food and coffee. Then he said goodnight and left. The pump was frozen, but we melted snow for soup and coffee.

We were surprised the next morning to see the sun boring a hole though a clear spot just above the horizon. There was still a strong wind, but with the team fresh, we would make it home in good shape.

There were only a few miles to go, but we had no sooner started than the sun disappeared and the snow started again. I got Fan to the house about the time the blizzard struck in earnest. The first thing after starting the fire, I headed for the barn to put up the team and take care of our milk cow and calves. By the time I opened the barn door to go back to the house, I couldn't see to the end of my nose. [In your case quite a distance, Dad.] It wasn't the first time that had happened, so I was prepared. In the fall I always ran a rope along some posts from house to barn. Believe me, Harry, I was sure glad I could follow that rope home that day.

That trip from Belle had been scary. A couple more times out there we had incidents that gave me goose pimples. The first was the time I had been cutting hay in our haybottom by Indian Creek. Just before I finished forking a wagonload of hay we had a light sprinkle of rain. I drove the load up from the bottom toward the barn, and as I topped the grade onto the flat I looked toward the house and saw the roof smoking -- Oh my God! We're going to lose our nice little home! -- I tell you, Harry, that

is a rotten feeling, I put that pair of horses in motion, believe you me, but after they'd dashed a record quarter mile, I reined them in.

"What the hell is the rush!" I yelled. When I had seen no flames break through the roof, I knew we had been saved -- it was only steam rising from the dampened roof.

The second time, however, the flames were real enough. We had just finished eating, one noon, when I chanced to look to the north and saw what looked to be a band of smoke this side of Two Top. We ran outdoors and kept a close eye on it, watching it move closer and closer. I told your mother to collect all the gunny sacks she could find and wet them down and bring them to me. In the meantime I would harness the team and attach the plow and start plowing a fire-break between the barn and the oncoming fire. We prayed the wind would shift but it stayed steady, and before long the blaze had advanced all the way to the plowed break. You talk about fast moving, you should have seen us running around with a wet sack putting out sparks that were jumping the break. But by some miracle or other the wind died down, and the sparks stopped flying, and pretty soon the danger was past. I can't remember ever being any more thankful than that day.

I remember being surprised coming up from the haybottom another time. Just as the team made the flat, I caught sight of two horsemen heading for the house. When they saw the wagon they veered to intercept me, and when they got closer I could see they both had something serious on their minds.

"Morning," I said.

"Nice day," the bearded one said.

"You boys looking for anyone in particular?"

"Yeah," the talkative one replies, "my pard here is in bad shape and we're looking for a doctor."

"Well," I'm not exactly the kind of doctor you're looking for.

"Then how about going after one for us?" He wasn't smiling.

"Hell no, fella, I'm busy trying to get my hay in. If you want a doctor, go get him yourself." And I meant it. The talker looked me over like he hadn't heard me straight; then he thawed and gave me a little grin: "Kid, you don't recognize me, do you? Remember over to Vini's place when you were working for him,

and I said you could have a chestnut pony we had to leave at the river? "

Well, I had outgrown being a kid by then, but I hadn't outgrown the memory of that hot chestnut pony with the white hind foot and blaze on his nose. "McCracken?" I asked.

"Don't remember giving you any name, but I gave you a pony."

I told him I didn't recognize him at first because he wasn't sporting a beard that other time. Then I said there was no doctor around Arpan right now, so the closest one he could find would be at Belle Fourche.

"Belle Fourche!" he said, Well, we sure don't want to be seen around that town. Now look, here's the picture: my friend gashed a thumb a few days ago and now it's poisoning him. Thought we could make Miles City but he's hurting too bad. We need a doctor quick and we don't like towns much. How about giving us a break?"

He agreed to unload my hay and I agreed to run to Belle. I explained the problem to your mother, who was skittish at staying alone with two strangers, but I told her they wouldn't harm a woman, just fix them a bite of grub.

There were two good doctors in Belle that I knew. The one who was always sober was on a call at Beulah, so I located the other one in a saloon, because when he wasn't doctoring, which he was good at, he was drinking, which he was also good at.

When I told the doctor what I wanted, he was less than enthusiastic. "You going to stand there and ask me to make a thirty-forty mile round trip just because some saddle tramp hurt his pinkie?" Why don't he come and see me?"

"Because, Doctor, he's just a bashful country boy and can't stand big cities like Belle, if you know what I mean." Doc had been around long enough so you didn't have to draw him a picture, but he was still not enthused. "I ain't the only doctor in town, you know."

"Well, right now you are," I said. So I bought us each a shot of hooch, and then we stopped by his office for his tool kit and hip flask, and set out.

The sun was still up when we pulled into the yard. McCracken and his partner were both stretched out in the shade of the barn.

Doc took one look at the thumb and gave a low whistle, "U-m-m, tell me something, mister. When you thumb your nose at someone, which hand do you use?"

"The left one," moaned the patient.

"Well, that's a damn good thing, because this right thumb has got to come off."

He cut off the thumb, bandaged the hand, left us some medicine and instructions, pocketed his fee, and after we fed him supper he set out for home.

McCracken asked if we wouldn't mind putting his friend up for few days, and see that he stayed quiet and didn't have visitors.

"Well," I replied, "he'll have to sleep in the hay-loft because were pretty cramped. Now, as for visitors, he'll damn sure have some up there."

"Mice I don't care about, but no two-legged visitors. OK? And he says he'll be glad to pay his keep."

"Then he must be new around these parts. People don't take pay for this sort of thing."

"He's not extra bright, but you can see he means well."

It took that guy almost two weeks to recover, and Fan and I were getting jittery. We didn't know for sure if he was a fugitive, but the odds were way in favor of it. Anyway, one morning at sunup, I took a gander out the window and what do I see but this cowpoke trying to saddle his horse without using his sore thumb. I went out to see him.

"Morning . You going somewhere?"

"What gives you that idea?" he asks.

"Just got a suspicious mind," I replied.

"Well, Mr. Bernard, you and your missus been putting me up long enough. I want to go get me a job so I can pay you. That goddamn butcher took my last dollar."

I told him he didn't owe us a nickel, but he swore he wanted to pay and would come back when he had a paying job. I gave him a boost into the saddle, whacked his roan on the rump, and he rode off into the setting sun." [Early sunset that day, Dad!] Of course, I never saw him again and never expected to, but it wasn't exactly his doing.

It was maybe a couple months later I was in Eckels Hardware, and I overheard J.C. talking about a fellow they had just jailed for horse stealing. The man swore he was innocent and that he was just on his way to Arpan to pay a debt he owed.

He even had money on him to prove it. But there was some misunderstanding about the brand on his horse, so the law had tossed him in the hoosegow.

Ten years back, they'd not have given him the courtesy of a trial. But we had gotten civilized to a ridiculous point by then. Somehow he decided to pretend he was crazy. Kept on saying he was not a rustler but a sheepherder, which in that country was almost evidence enough of insanity. By the time the trial was over, by God, he had half the jury believing him, so the judge had him put back in jail "for observation." Well, they put him in for observation and that's exactly what he did: he observed that the jail security wasn't too tight, and he escaped. It wasn't but two months later he was nabbed in Moorcroft, Wyoming, keeping company with someone's horses with no proof of purchase. Of course the horses weren't talking horses, so they didn't testify against him, but their brands spoke loud enough to get him convicted. I think he really intended to pay for his keep, but God never wanted me rich.

Your mother and I had been on the ranch eight years and were just about as poor as when we started. It had been another dry year and so our finances were hurting. I had a good saddle horse, one that I was real proud of, but one I could do without if I had to. I decided to sell him to the Army. They were contracting for cavalry mounts at Belle Fourche right then, so I set out with a team and wagon because I wanted to haul back a load of coal, and I towed this saddle horse along on a halter.

Unfortunately, my horse didn't quite come up to government specs, and I was turned down. After buying and loading the coal, I hitched the saddle horse with the other two and climbed on him for the long trip home. We were almost to the edge of Belle when a fellow who lived along the road spotted me and flagged me down. Most likely he had seen us on the way into town, because he has his eye on my gelding. "Hey," he shouts, "do you want to sell that horse?"

"Which horse?

"The one you're riding."

"Well, I hadn't thought of it, but I would consider it."

"Would you consider swapping him for a mare?"

"Might. I need a mare more than I need this gelding."

He took me to his stable to see his mare. She was a beat-up old nag, blind in one eye. "I'm not interested in stock like your

mare," I told him. So he followed me out to the road where I re-mounted the gelding.

All of a sudden he pipes up: "How much you want for that horse?"

"Which horse?" I asked.

"The gelding."

I wanted a hundred-fifty, so I said, "one seventy-five minimum."

"I'll give you one fifty maximum," he came back.

In such cases, you let the maximum eat up the minimum.

"Mister," I said, "you've just bought yourself a good horse."

So I unharnessed and unsaddled my gelding, put a halter on him and led him to the stable. As I was removing my halter, this guy gets all excited, "Hey there, leave that halter on him!"

"What the hell for? You bought a horse, not a halter."

For some reason that makes him unhappy, but finally he sees I'm not going to budge, so he whips cut his checkbook and writes me a check, and I go on my way, tickled because I will be able to tell Fan we were in the chips again.

Well, I'll be damned if that check of his doesn't bounce sky high, so....

[Regrettably, the tape ran out here without my noticing it. I sit here racking my brain trying to recollect how that story ended, but all I draw is a blank. If anyone reading this knows the ending (unlikely at this late date), please let me know so I can rewrite this book.

A few pages ago, I wrote about the sad day before Mom's funeral when Dad was remembering bygone days. Now I recall another melancholy incident in their homesteading days, one that most any somber, bitter winter day reminds me of.

It is a story Dad never told me, but he told it once to my sister Lorraine and once to my niece Ann. It goes like this: They had been on the ranch for seven years. Pierre was five, Lawrence three. Mother was expecting another baby, but it wasn't due yet and she had not completed the usual preparations. On February 18, 1917, during a howling blizzard, her baby arrived unexpectedly, followed closely by a second one! There was no way to get a doctor, but they did the best they could, wrapping the twins in blankets and laying them in a laundry

basket. Keeping them comfortable was difficult. Dad said if he placed them too near the stove they got too hot and cried; if he placed them too near the door, they got too cold and cried. So he was forever moving them back and forth.

The first-born they named Albert; he was frail. The second, they named Robert. As soon as the storm abated, Aunt Minnie was able to come and help. She told them to be prepared to lose the sickly one; and, when he was ten days old, he did die. They wanted to bury him where they owned a plot in the St. Onge cemetery but had to wait until the roads were passable. Dad built a little wooden box -- probably from the scrap wood left over from building that barn cupola - and that was the coffin. They placed coffin with baby outside in the freezing air, not knowing how long they would be snowbound. We don't know the date of burial.

The remaining baby, Robert, survived nearly six months. When he sickened, Mother sent for Aunt Minnie again. As soon as she set eyes on the child, she said, "Stephanie, get that baby to a doctor!"

They drove the baby to Lead. Mother remained at Grandma's, but Dad had to return to the ranch to look after the stock. On August 12, in Lead, Robert died of whooping cough.

These twins sleep in the peaceful rural cemetery of St. Onge. I well remember accompanying Dad on his annual trip there to tidy the burial plot, and on the way there and on the way back, he would talk with his usual verve, but while we worked he was quiet as dust. It is a curious thing, I think, that although he was a skillful mechanic, he avoided all forms of carpentry as long as I knew him. Perhaps sawing those boards and nailing them together to make that tiny coffin was enough carpentry for one lifetime.]

You ask how come we left the ranch? I'll tell you why: we had gotten into the habit of eating three meals a day and we didn't want to break the habit. But we sure hated to think about leaving. Our first year there we had such good rain and great hay, and we were so happy. I put up 300 tons that year.

The trouble was that, after that first year, we had six or seven dry years in a row. I tell you, Harry, we could lie down with our heads in the grass and see a rabbit a mile away -- that's just how sparse it was. Of course, without good forage and hay, and with no other income, we simply couldn't increase our herd enough to give us a living income. Cattle was our only crop.

Finally one fall, I realized we hadn't earned enough that summer to get us through winter. I can't recall any tougher job for me than having to tell your mother we were whipped, because she loved the peace and quiet of the prairie, but it had to be done. "Fan," I told her, "we aren't going to make it go this winter unless I make some money, and the only way I know how to is by going to work at the Homestake if I can get on there. Then, come spring, we can give it one last try if you want to. It's got to rain sometime."

So we made our decision. I would leave her and the kids and go look for work. If I found a job we'd move to town at least until spring.

Strangely enough, it was just before we made this decision that I happened to be driving the wagon to Belle Fourche for supplies, and I came across a gentleman who was sitting on the running board of his new black Model-T Ford which was stalled in the middle of the road. He was looking real glum.

"Hello," I said.

"Hello, he said back.

"A man must be awful tired to have to sit right in the middle of us taxpayers' highway, resting like that," I joshed.

"Well," he said, "I wouldn't be sitting here if this damned machine would run, but it's plumb dead."

"Won't run? They tell me those Model-T's are running fools."

"Most of 'em are, but this one ain't."

"Well," I said, "why don't you let me take a look at her. Maybe you just overlooked some little thing. You got gas in the tank?" He had gas. The hood was already up so I started to see what the insides looked like. I wiggled wires and twanged on the fan belt, and looked at the plugs, and checked connections, but I couldn't see anything goofy to the inexperienced eye.

"OK, mister, stand back, 'cause I'm going to start this jalopy for you." He looked at me like I was some sort of nut.

I grabbed the crank and twisted that Model-T's front tail for all I was worth. All of a sudden the engine snorted, wheezed a couple of times, blew out a puff of smoke, and started going thronka-clunk, thronka-clunk, sort of uneven like, but after a minute its pulse was nice and even and the sheet metal stopped rattling.

When that man heard his Model-T purring, his face lit up brighter than a greenhorn's campfire. "Mister," he grinned, "you ought to be an auto-mobile mechanic!"

CHAPTER SIX

MODEL-T MECHANIC

You ask how I got to be an automobile mechanic, and did I start out as an apprentice or what. Hell no, I was never was an apprentice -- I was always a full-fledged master mechanic. [He laughed at my asinine question.] No, I'll tell you how I got my start. On my way up to the Homestake to see about a job for the winter, I stopped in to see my friend, Fred Varie. Fred had homesteaded not far from us , but he had seen the handwriting on the wall sooner than I and had moved to Deadwood where he started an automotive sales and service business. He told me he'd had a little training at the Model-T factory, and that he was doing pretty well. When he asked me what my plans were, I told him I was thinking of working the winter in Lead so we could get by until spring. "In fact," I told him, "I'm on my way up there now." Right off he said, "Gosh, George, I need a man myself; why don't you go to work for me?"

"Well," I said, "I'd like to, Fred, but I don't know anything about cars."

"Well, I didn't either when I started," he replied.

"OK, Fred, if you want to hire me under those circumstances, fine. I'll do the best I can for you."

So we moved from the ranch to town, and I worked for him as long as he was in business in Deadwood. Fred was a fine mechanic. He and his other boys took care of the tougher jobs while I learned on lesser stuff. But gradually I picked up steam until finally I was his shop foreman and he moved into the front office to take care of sales and management.

The first big repair job I did was for Harry Essling who was neighbor to your Grandma Hirbour up in Lead. I happened to be working alone the day he came in wanting his connecting rods taken up. I told him Fred was out of town.

"Well, George, do you think you can handle a job like this?"

I told him there was no reason I couldn't, so he said go to it. Well, I went to work on Harry's car with more than a bit of apprehension because, if I got stuck, there was nobody around to bail me out. I swore to myself I wouldn't leave a smidgen of slop in the fits, so I'd snug up every connection 'til it wouldn't move, then I'd loosen it half a whisker, then do it over again, until I thought everything was perfect. Those rods wouldn't be clanking, that's for damn sure.

About the time I was buttoning her up, Harry walked in and asked me if I'm done. I was just latching the hood. "Yup, Harry, your auto is all fixed and rarin' to go."

"Okay, let me fire her up so I can get home for supper."

He grabbed the crank, engaged it, and gave it some muscle. By God, that crank never budged an inch.

"Hell's fire, George, you got her way too tight."

"Too tight? Naw, she's just right, Harry. Here let me show you how to crank this thing." I took over the crank and planted my feet wide, and gave her a twist. Damn near pulled a ligament. So I gave her one more try, and the crank rotated maybe half a turn. By then my adrenaline is at high tide because all my reputation as a mechanic is on the line, and I need a victory bad. Then I broke out in a cold sweat, grunted, and gave it all the beef I had left. Over she turned, and over again, and then she started! It was a snug fit for sure, but I had oiled everything well, and after it had run a while those parts mated themselves beautifully, and it made him a good job. Why, it wasn't but three or four days until he could crank it without my help.

Before you were born and we were still living on the ranch, the second of the twins took sick and Fan and I brought him to

Lead for care. Your mother stayed there while I had to return to look after the stock. When the twin died, it was this same Harry Essling who drove out to break the bad news to me and drive me back to Lead. He's the man we named you after.

> [Most of the episodes in this chapter were recorded the day before and the day after Mom's funeral. When Dad mentioned the sad trip with Harry Essling, he stopped his narration and tears welled up, but they didn't spill over -- he wasn't an easy weeper. Now he got up from the kitchen table where Lawrence and I were trying to keep his mind off the day's sorrow by asking him about his early experiences in the auto business. He said he felt cold, so he turned up the gas in the old kitchen range. He wasn't the only cold one: Lawrence had opened a window in the adjoining room to get fresh air and had forgotten to close it. We had a laugh over that. Dad remarked that what with leaving windows open and with all the friends coming in out of the cold to pay respects, the month's gas bill was going to be a lulu. Then Lawrence's wife, Caroline, came from the living room and poured Dad a cup of hot coffee, and that perked him up to normal. I never saw the time Caroline couldn't raise a smile from that man. In a few minutes he was re-living his early days in auto repairing.]

How did we start Model-T's in below zero weather? The answer is: We started them with difficulty. Did you ever try cranking a real cold one? With those heavy flywheel magnets and that thick oil they used back then? You couldn't crank it. What we would do is jack up the rear end, set her in high gear, then turn a back wheel by hand. You could get way more leverage that way than by cranking.

Did I use alcohol? Now, Lawrence, ain't that a hell of a question to ask your father! Oh, you mean did I use alcohol in the radiators. Sure, an alcohol-water mix. Why didn't I use glycerin instead? Well, if you had ever used glycerin you'd know why: glycerin would get to boiling, and if you had the least bit of crack in your crankcase the glycerin would work its way in and stick your motor 'til you couldn't move it with dynamite. I've torn down stuck motors time and again. You'd have to

disassemble the whole works, disconnect the connecting rods, and clean every part with alcohol to get the damn stuff off. Believe me it was a nasty, stinky job.

Oils now-a-days are nice and flowing, but I remember that early-day lubricants could be awfully stiff. When I first started working on differentials, I found that out. For example, when you serviced a Model-T differential, you unbolted the two halves -- they split apart like clam shells -- and after you installed the correct number of shim plates to make a proper fit, you'd fill the cavity with grease and bolt her back together. Well, the grease we had then was so heavy that in bitter cold weather it would form a ball in there just like a fist, and that grease ball would actually roll around inside and not lubricate the gears at all. So if you weren't careful to cut the grease with a thinner before winter, you could run your differential plumb dry. We have a lot better lubricants these days.

One feature modern cars have that cars didn't have back then is the radiator thermostat. Without a thermostat those old babies would get cooling action right from start-up, which is OK in warm weather but no good in cold. If it was below zero, you couldn't get your motor up to decent operating temperature, so you'd see people throw old overcoats or horse blankets over the radiators and keep them on until the motor warmed up. If you headed into a wind at twenty below zero you could freeze your machine real fast. On my own Model-T there was a sort of Venetian blind contraption, a shutter in front of the radiator, that you could open or close to control air cooling action. Even after they were invented, thermostats were not standard equipment. If you wanted one you had to install it yourself.

There is another feature today's cars have that those old ones didn't -- an engine compartment so jam packed with gizmos and thing-a-ma-bobs that it takes you two hours removing stuff just to make a ten minute repair. It used to be you could go to fixing as soon as you opened the hood.

Were wages good? When I started working at Varie's, wages had sky-rocketed up to fifty cents an hour for a first-class mechanic. Myself, I was making only thirty-five cents. We put in ten hours a day, six days a week, plus overtime if it was real

busy. On Sundays, if I stayed in town, somebody was always asking me to fix something to get them out of a jam, so when that got to being too regular a nuisance, I took to going to early Mass, then out fishing, where I couldn't be located.

But even if I started in 1917 at thirty-five cents, my wages rose fast until I was getting top wages for mechanics in Deadwood -- which isn't saying much. Then finally I talked Fred into leasing me the repair end of his business and was able to hire my own mechanics. I made out better than before because I could make ten or twelve cents an hour extra for each man working for me. I ended up making nearly a dollar an hour. One year I drew nearly four thousand dollars, and that was big money at that time.

Not long after I started working for Fred, I got an opportunity to buy a good used Model-T off a fellow, and I was certain I could shine it up, resell it, and easily make fifty dollars profit. So I decided to get a loan at the bank. I stopped in and saw old man Wheeler, the chief honcho. I told him I wanted to borrow two hundred and seventy-five dollars. He runs his eyes up and down me and says, "I don't think I know you." "No," I said, "you probably don't. I just moved up here from the Belle Fourche area a short while ago. Used to do my banking at Butte County Bank."

"You know," he says, gloomy-like, "times are not very good right now."

"I realize that, Mr. Wheeler."

"And two seventy-five is a lot of money to risk."

"Well, I don't think it's all that much; besides there is no risk. I'm going to buy and re-sell a car and I'll have your loan repaid before the month's out."

He chewed on that for a while , then looked like a hen who's just made a decision to lay and egg. "All right," he smiles, "you come back in a few days and see what we can do for you."

So I walked out. Three days later I walked back in to open a savings account. I am standing by the teller's window when Wheeler spots me and comes walking over with a face full of joy.

"Well, Mr. Bernard, we can let you have that loan now."

"Oh," I said, "I don't need a loan anymore. I borrowed the money elsewhere and I already bought and sold that car; I'm just here to deposit the seventy dollar profit I made. The way I

figure it, if you were so damn careful loaning me money, this bank must be a safe place for me to squirrel away my savings."

What had happened is that when I had left the bank the first time, I ran into a gambler I knew -- Harry Essling's brother, in fact, and I told him about my experience and that I was about to lose out on a good buy. He asked me how much I needed, and I told him. He pulled out a wad of bills and dealt me a winning hand, just like that -- no note, no nothing. But I'm old enough to know banks have to be cautious.

That same bank financed Baggaley when he started up his automobile business, and Baggaley owed them quite a chunk of money. As a result the bank officials always had Baggaley's do their auto repairing.

It was my turn to work one Sunday after boss Varie got it into his head to have someone on duty everyday. One of these bank officials drove in and wanted to know if I could help him out.

"What seems to be the problem?"

"No power. She wouldn't pull the hat off your head."

"Well," I said, "then why don't you take it to Baggaley's where you always have your work done?"

"Because they're closed Sundays and I need it fixed now."

"You know, Mister," I flared, "it makes my ass want to chew tobacco the way you bankers give Baggaley your week-day business and come in here on Sunday just because Baggaley's mechanics are enjoying themselves catching trout."

That got his attention, and he returned my fire: "Now see here young man, don't you go off half-cocked like that. Baggaley owes us quite a sum, so we naturally have to patronize him. Matter of business."

"Your business," I replied, "but not my business."

Anyway he settled my feathers, and I went to work and got him back on the road. He appreciated it, too, because after I started my own business with Bill Gerber, the bank always threw me a share of their work.

We were getting a new car ready for Frank Hartley, a traveling salesman. All the preliminary checks in the shop went smooth, but after Frank returned from his first test drive, he was in low spirits. "She's fine at slow speeds on straight

stretches, but if I gun her on uphill curves, the engine shakes and she makes an awful funny noise."

So I took it out, and sure enough it drove well until I poured on the coal going up to Lead. It sure wasn't the kind of performance that was customary, and not the sort of problem you liked to tackle on a brand new car -- I thought that engine was sick and should never have left the factory. We went in the office and I phoned the service headquarters in Denver and told them the problem and that our customer wanted a new replacement car. Of course, they didn't like that idea one bit. They protested that there was nothing wrong with the motor; just keep our shirts one and they would send up one of their expert servicemen to adjust it for us.

When the expert arrived, I described the symptoms to him. I could tell from his questions there was nothing he didn't know about their product. He said we'd go for a spin so he could see for himself how it acted, then he'd know how to fix it.

We climbed in, started her up and she sounded great on the shop floor. We pulled out on to Main, turned left and started for the hill up to Lead. I was doing the driving and he was doing the listening, so I just eased it along, and as I approached a good steep up-grade I fed it a little more gas, not enough to strain anything or make a noise. "There!" I yelled across the seat at him, "Did you hear that!"

He looked bewildered. "Hear what? I don't hear a damn thing."

"You mean to tell me they send a deaf mute four hundred miles from Denver!" Of course, I had been babying Hartley's car, but then I gave her full throttle, and that motor started jumping and making a hell of a racket.

"Now I hear it!"

"Well, you're the expert. What is it?"

He listened some more, closing his eyes to hear better, then said, "It could be end play in the axle, maybe a loose generator mounting. Or it could be .... "

"Wait a minute," I hollered, "you got my question all wrong. I didn't ask what it could be; I asked what it is."

He looked over my way and gave a sheepish grin, "Mister," he said, "I don't know a damned bit more than you do what it is. The trouble will be wherever we find it."

"Now you're talking my language," I said. So we returned to the shop and ripped into her. I noticed that when we revved the

motor there was abnormal play between the front end of the crankshaft and the block. The rods proved not to be loose, but either the block cavity was oversize or the O.D. of the front bearing was undersize, because there was a definite mismatch that let the bearing clatter in the block under heavy load.

That expert turned out to be a nice Joe when you got to know him, and most of the experts were, but I've run across one or two that were so cocky you couldn't even talk to them.

I'll never forget the overheating problem of 1917. That year they put out a lot of cars that would overheat in the Hills, where the going can get tough. E.V. Cooper, the telephone manager in Lead, had one of them, and he hounded me to death to fix it. Finally I had to tell him, "That car's tuned perfectly, and there is no more I can do for you. Even replacing the two blade fan with the four blade one isn't enough to cool her. You've just got yourself a red hot mama, and if I were you I'd take it up with the people in Denver." So he complained to them, and they sent one each cure-all mechanic to Deadwood.

The expert wanted to try the car out for himself, so we set out. When we reached Poorman Hill he fed her the gas and she started to get a fever.

"Well, it's no wonder she overheats," he exclaimed, "you ain't got that motor tuned up right." But he kept on going up and just as I expected, the radiator soon started spouting steam. I noticed that it started just as we passed an old railroad tie lying along side the road. He turned around and started coasting down the hill. "We'll go back and tune this baby up right" he pronounced.

"What's that you say? We are going to do no such thing. I already tuned it up. Now if you want to waste your time tuning it over again, be my guest, but include me out."

He took his sweet time tuning her, and when he thought it was absolute perfection, he said, "Come on, let's try her now."

You know that gentle down slope, just after you pass Doc Smiley's place? Well, he gunned her right there, and she accelerated beautifully, which is no great wonder considering it is downhill.

"There," he yells, "now she's running like a car should!"

We headed on up Poorman Hill. Long before we reached the place where it had started to boil the first time, she was a-

hissing and gurgling to a fare-thee well. He stopped at the first turn around to reverse our course.

"Hey, " I said, "you see way up the road there, where that old railroad tie is?"

"Yeah, he said, "so what?"

"That's how far we got when this buggy wasn't tuned properly. So now, buddy, what your story?"

"Well, we'll just have to install a bigger radiator."

"Now ain't that a hell of a note, " I said, "first your company sells a man a new car, then they sell him a bigger radiator. Why in God's name don't they put the bigger one in to start with!"

So he had come four hundred miles for nothing. I had made some, but not all, of those overheaters serviceable by replacing the two-blade fan with a four-blade one which cooled a bit more efficiently. When that hot-shot saw me replacing a two-blader the day he left, he asked why I was doing that. I told him it was to get added cooling action. He just laughed. "Hell, mister, the extra power it takes to move a heavier fan generates enough heat to overcome what good the extra blade does."

That was this master mechanic's theory -- pure dog poop.

One of our very best customers putt-putted into Varie's one day. I'd gone over his carburetor several times, but it didn't want to stay adjusted.

"Carburetor again, Joe?" I asked.

"George," he replied, "that carburetor is making you guys a fortune, but it's driving me to Gayville [the Lawrence County poor farm, so called.]

I could see his point. "All right, Joe, I tell you what: I'll take care of your problem. It will cost you seven dollars and ninety-five cents, but I'll absolutely guarantee you'll never have a speck of trouble with this carburetor again."

"Fair enough," he said.

So he stood there while I removed the old carburetor and installed a brand new one. Then I picked up the old carburetor. "Now," I said, "I guaranteed you'd never have trouble with this carburetor again". And I tossed it in the scrap barrel.

Which reminds me of the carburetor salesman who came in one day. I think he was a little goofy. He had a big carton of

carburetors he wanted to sell me. I happened to replacing the one on my own car at the time.

"Well," I said, "I'm not in the market for carburetors today. I have a supplier here in town and he sells us good carburetors for a fair price, so I'm perfectly happy with my source." But he wouldn't take "no" for an answer, and that was the only answer I was going to give.

"Is this your car?" he asked. I told him it was.

"OK, you're replacing your carburetor, so why not put one of mine on and see if it isn't superior?"

I had run out of plain "no's" by that time, so I adjusted my tactics. "Well," I said, "if you insist on having me test your product in my automobile, OK, but you'll have to pay me to install it." It wasn't much of a charge, so he paid me and went out happy.

A couple weeks later he was in town and stopped by to see me. "Well, what do you think of our product now?"

"Your carburetor tests out satisfactory," I replied.

"Good," he smiles, "I'd like my money then."

"What money?" I asked.

"The money for the carburetor."

"Did I say anything about giving you money for it?"

"No, but you've used it long enough now and it's satisfactory, so my company will want their money."

"Well, give them your money -- I sure as hell won't give them my money for testing their products."

For some reason he was upset. "Then give me back my carburetor."

"That seems downright reasonable," I said. "But it will cost you for the time it takes to remove it." And I quoted him a labor charge that was about twice what the carburetor cost, so he just turned and stormed out. That cured him of sucking my eggs.

One evening close to quitting time Luke blew in from Belle Fourche wanting me to do a job for him on his Cadillac sedan. He liked that big Cad because he could drive up to Canada and haul back a bunch of bootleg whiskey in the roomy trunk. I told him it was quitting time but that for old time's sake I'd come back after supper and take care of it. He was happy about that, happy enough to tell me that there was a bottle of hooch in the glove compartment, and to help myself if I got thirsty. He knew I

wasn't above having a drop after emergencies like working overtime.

The job required that I run down to Joe Fountain's for an electrical part, a part that was lot's easier to install if you had four hands, so a man from Joe's came up with me to help.

Midway through the job I got a nature call and ran upstairs to the men's room. Before leaving I'd told my helper about the bottle and invited him to have a snort. As this was during prohibition and as this man was more or less permanently thirsty, he didn't need an engraved invitation.

We installed the part, and wrapped up the job, then I went home. Bright and early the next morning Luke comes in for his car. "Well, George," he yawns, "I'll have me just a little eye opener, then be on my way north." He reached over the door and into the glove compartment and fished out the bottle -- plumb empty.

"Hey, George, you goddam skunk! You drained my bottle!"

Well, I knew at once what had happened and explained it. Luckily he carried a spare in the trunk."

Luke had left his car with us on another occasion for a valve job, when Abe Blumenthal, who ran the New York Store in Deadwood, dropped in to talk to me about doing a job for him. He had a Cadillac, too. Abe is approaching me across the service floor when he spies Luke's Cad. "Say," he says, "those are my tires on that car!"

"Ah, go on,"

"No, I tell you, George, those are my tires. Someone stole them off my car when I was up playing for a dance at Spearfish." The Blumenthals had a dance band, you may remember.

"Well, Abe, you sure can't expect me to take the tires off a customer's car and give them away just on your word alone. Don't tell me the guy stole four tires off your parked car."

"Well he sure as hell didn't steal them off it when it was moving. Besides, he only stole the two rear ones. Now I want you to get me those tires back or I'm calling the sheriff down here."

"OK, OK, Abe, calm down now. I know the owner of that car, and I have a hunch you're right, but you don't want to bother the law with little things like tires, especially when you have no proof that they're yours. Let me see what I can do for you."

He agreed to let me try, and named a figure he said he'd settle for, which was the amount he'd spent for replacements. That evening I got Luke on the phone. "Luke, I hear you bought a couple of used tires off Abe Blumenthal -- the other night in Spearfish. You know, at the dance pavilion."

I thought for a minute the phone had gone dead.

"Luke? You still on the line? Abe says he wants his money or he's going to sic the law on you."

"OK, George. I was planning on paying him, but I plumb forgot. Be in first thing tomorrow and square it up."

How Luke stayed out of jail as long as he did is a mystery to me.

About the time I began feeling real confident as a Model-T mechanic, my friend Frank Hill, who was a traveling salesman, dropped in with his motor knocking like all get out. I listened carefully -- that was when I could still hear things -- and I felt the block for vibrations, and looked as wise as I could. "Well, Frank, I'd say your motor is knocking."

"The hell it is -- how did you ever figure that out!"

"Your motor is knocking, and furthermore, the reason is that you have a loose rod on number four, the rear piston."

"Nope," he said.

"Yup," I said.

"Nope," he said again.

"Well, Frank, that's all I can tell you. That's where this mechanic would start in."

"OK," he said, stubborn-like, "you start in, but that's not the problem."

"I'll tell you what, Frank. I'll tear her apart. I'll go over your rods, and if it ain't the number four rod, you don't owe me a nickel. That's just how positive I am."

"Have fun," he said, and left.

I went over his rods, and by God there wasn't any of them but were nice and snug fitting. So finally I realized I could do no good just staring into the engine compartment, so I buttoned her back up. It had to run properly; both timing and spark were perfect. I was just about to fire her up when Frank returned.

"She should be OK now, Frank," I bragged. So I started her and let her warm up a mite, then upped the throttle, and it knocked as loud as it did before.

Then Frank began to laugh, "So, George, you didn't find a loose rod, did you?"

"No, Frank, and so far it hasn't cost you a red cent. But I still say its got to be at number four, and it just occurs to me what might be the problem. Now do you want the son-of-a-bitch fixed or do you want to go knocking all around town and get arrested for disturbing the peace?"

"Well, George, I knew the rods weren't loose because I had them gone over in Alliance on my last trip. They tore it down and didn't do me any more good that you just did. So go ahead, but no-fixee, no-money."

"Fine, you've had your fun, Frank, now let me have my turn" This time I removed the number four connecting rod and told Frank he could keep it as a souvenir. Then I installed a brand new rod, buttoned her up and that took care of all the racket. It was true, that rod was not loose, but it was cupped. Not something you'd notice with the naked eye, but it was warped enough to cause the trouble. Frank got quite a bang out of it.

> [The tape is noisy here. I think he said "cupped rod" although I don't know what that means. Pistons look more like cups, especially if you turn them upside down. In the interest of accuracy I asked wife Julie to listen. She said it sounded like "cupped rod" to her too. It is ten years later now, but I managed to find an ancient man who said he had worked on Model-T's. I asked if he'd ever heard of such a thing and he shook his head no. But maybe his memory is shot.]

One spring after a big storm it was melting snow, and the garage floor was a wet, miserable place to work on. I got the welcome news that I would get time off to go down to Spearfish to join other Black Hill's grease monkeys in a great service seminar. It seems the factory had sent another motor master to train us. So two of us from Varies sloshed down to Spearfish to learn something.

The expert had a smart, long-winded, canned talk about stuff most of us were already familiar with, and he had a slick demonstration on carburetor overhaul and adjustment that killed time like there was an endless supply of it. I was getting fed up with his B.S. and I noticed the other boys were fidgeting

in the folding chairs, looking at their watches, and anxious to get started home before evening iced the highway.

The last thing we had to do was disassemble and re-assemble a carburetor, then hand it to the expert for his blessing. When my turn came, I handed him the carburetor. He removed the fuel bowl, and held the mechanism up to the light, closing one eye and squinching the other. "Um-m-m, not too bad, but you've got your float set a thousandth too low."

"And mister," I piped up, "you got your head set on backwards. What the hell do you mean by standing there telling us you can detect a thousandth of an inch variation with your bare eyeballs! Now, maybe you can tell those Denver dummies such rot, but you can't come out here in the boondocks and tell us that, because we know better."

Boy, the fellows came to attention real fast -- they were tickled pink that someone had taken him down a couple of notches.

You know, McGee, [McGee was a favorite salutation of Dad's, regardless of your real name], sometimes there is no substitute for first-hand experience; sometimes you can hunt in shop manuals 'til the cows come home and not get a solution to your problem.

There was a tourist in a Model-T broke down near Inglewood, and I was called on to go out in our big tow car and haul him to Deadwood. When I got there, he told me his car would run a ways then cut out on him, like something was shorting, so he was afraid he'd damage her if he kept driving.

Well, you know how that wishbone ball-and-socket and that flywheel and magnet coil set in a Model-T? And how the coil has practically no clearance from the crankcase? [No, Dad, I sure don't.] Anyway, I hooked on a long tow chain -- didn't have a tow hoist -- and started towing him up the first long up-grade.

But it had been drizzling, and now the drizzle was freezing and making the road slick, so I only got him half way up before my wheels began slipping. So we backed all the way down. I told him we'd give it one more try, but that this time we'd go back even farther to get a better run for the hill. When we were all set to go, I yelled, "Now hang on, mister! Here we go." And I gave her the gun. Unfortunately I'd forgotten to take up the slack in the tow chain, and I damn near jerked that tourist's head off.

But still we stalled out just shy of the crest. So back down we go.

When we reached bottom, I climbed out. "Mister," I said, "you are in somewhat of a bind. I can't get you over that hill, and I can't fix this thing out here in the sticks. Now, I don't know about you, but I don't aim to sit here 'til spring thaw and freeze my jewels." By now he was out of his car jogging in place to warm up. "But," I continued, "there is one more thing we can try. You say your car will run off-and-on; I don't see that it will hurt it too much if we start her up and then with a little help from your motor, maybe -- just maybe -- we can get you over the hill and down to town. It may ruin your coil but it will be no big thing to fix it in the shop.

He agreed to try, so we fired up his car and by God it ran just like new, no missing, no coughing, no belching. "Hey, look here, fella," I said all surprised, "I thought you say this car wouldn't run!"

"It wouldn't."

"Well I just fixed it." So I gathered my tow chain, collected my fee, told him to go ahead of me if he cared to, and waved him a goodbye. I guess we were both pretty happy.

What had happened, I realized, was that when I'd given him that sharp jerk, it shifted something just enough to give more clearance between crankcase and coil , this ending the shorting out. I had two more cars after that with the same problem. I'd hook one end of a strong chain to the front of the car and the other end to a tree, then I'd back up fast to give the front end a hell of a tug. Now, buddy, try finding that procedure in a shop manual!

There was another tourist, from Kansas he was, who stopped by once in his new Essex. Said he had been vacationing in the Black Hills but not having much fun because something was wrong with his car and nobody seemed to be able to fix it.

"Fine," I said, "now you tell me what you think is wrong."

"I don't know exactly; I can't pinpoint it, but it sure doesn't have the same pep it did back home. It acts sluggish."

"You're certain of that?"

"Of course. I wouldn't be wasting my money if I wasn't."

"OK then, let me drive you up Deadwood Hill and we'll see how she behaves."

We started out, and somewhat to my surprise she went right up that hill in high gear. So I said to the man, "When you bought this car, did the salesman explain the operation of the accelerator, like you have to press down on it when you go up hills?"

He mistook my humor for sarcasm, because he didn't crack a smile. We drove back to the shop, where I climbed out.

"OK, mister, I have reached a verdict: your car runs satisfactorily and I won't work on it for you because I can make all the money I need by doing legitimate repairs."

"Well, by God, I know it's not running right."

"Well, maybe you do, but I still say it is."

"It's a hell of note," he flares, "when a fellow can't even get a mechanic to fix his car."

"Mister, will you listen just one minute: I'd be more than happy to work for you if I thought I could give you something for your money, but I'm not going to take your money for nothing. Let me make a suggestion: drive yourself home and don't spend another dime on repairs until you get back. This car is still under warrantee, and if, when you get to Kansas, you still think it is deficient, then get your dealer to take care of it. That's my advice to you."

He left not looking too happy.

One day, oh it must have been five years later, I was just sliding out from under a car when a well dressed gentleman walks up. "Say, do you remember me?" he asks.

"Can't say as I do."

"Do you remember a few years ago when you absolutely refused to work on my Essex because you thought it operated properly?"

"Maybe I told you that because I always hated to work on those ass-aches. "

"And you said not to spend any more on it until I got back to Kansas because it was still under warrantee?"

"Oh, yes, now I remember."

"Well, this is my first trip back to this country, and I just wanted to tell you something: as I was driving out of the hills, I got to thinking you might possibly know what you were talking about. And, sure enough, when I got down on the plains again, my car ran the same as always. Thought you'd like to know."

In those days, when you went up Deadwood Hill in high gear, you had to have a well-tuned motor. When a flatlander

gets up here where it's a mile high and there are steep grades, he is apt to think his machine doesn't act too peppy. He forgets he's not driving across level prairie.

Manufacturers never recalled autos back then, not that I can remember. If a new car couldn't be repaired, it was always the repairman's fault. So it used to make me sizzle sometimes; you try pleasing the customer, and the franchiser, and the service center, and the factory, and it can be a real can of worms.

After Fred Varie sold out and relocated in Rapid City, I stayed on in Deadwood as service manager for Hanna Chevrolet. We had a transmission that kept wanting to jump out of high gear, and its owner was getting melancholy about it. He'd lean hard on Hanna, and Hanna would lean hard on me, and I didn't have anyone to lean on because I'd tried everything but Carter's Little Liver Pills on it. The service reps invariably swore the transmissions were perfect – that our trouble was in the clutch linkage adjustment.

Finally this customer came in again and started belly-aching to me that she was still slipping out of high.

"Leo," I replied, "there is not a thing I can do for you. And neither can Hanna, so why don't your go over his head and take it up with the chief honcho in Denver. Tell him I said there is no way that linkage can be adjusted to hold her in high gear, and that if they don't replace your transmission you're turning the matter over to your lawyer."

Denver said they would send us a trouble-shooter.

A couple days later a stranger comes in with his tool box and says his name is Merlin and that he wants to know where is that Chevy we couldn't fix. I told him I'd call Leo and have him drive down from Pluma -- in second gear, because he can't keep it in high.

When Leo arrived, I notified Merlin the Magician. He comes out of Hanna's office with a mug of coffee, and he says to me, "OK, Foreman, you get all your mechanics gathered around me and I'11 show you what's wrong and how to fix it, and then you'll all know how to adjust the linkage on this model."

So I called the boys over and he went to work, explaining very clearly every step in the adjustment procedure. When he had it all wrapped up, he asked if there were any questions, which there weren't, so he packed his tools and left. Leo drove

out of the shop with a big grin on him, delighted to have -- finally -- the luxury of three forward speeds.

Within the hour he was back again, madder than a hornet. "Where the hell is that son-of-bitch who fixed my car?" "He's on his way to Denver," I told him.

"Well, it's a damn good thing. She used to slip out of gear once in a while, now she does it all the time!"

You know, Harry, quite a few of that year's Chevys, had that problem, but I never could convince the factory people it was defective transmissions causing it. It was always linkage mal-adjustment. I couldn't even convince my boss, Hanna. He'd just say the manufacturer makes the cars so they should know more about them than I do. And I'd agree they probably did know more but didn't want to admit the problem existed -- new transmissions cost money.

In the end I got fed up. I was going to show Hanna I was right or go back to ranching. The Black Hills Power and Light Company happened to have a vehicle with the same problem, but I had a friend with the identical model truck and it never slipped out of gear. I told Hanna I would come in on Sunday, on my own fishing time, and prove my point once and for all. I'd remove the transmission that never slipped gears from my friend's car and install it in the Power and Light truck. If it performed properly, that would prove it that it was not a linkage problem but a faulty transmission in the Power and Light truck. It took me a couple of explanations to get this through Hanna's skull -- that's why he was working the sales end instead of the repair end. [Well, it's none too clear to me either, Dad.]

When I had the replacement completed, I got Hanna and we went for a spin up Spearfish Hill to Preacher Smith's monument. Nary a gear slip! She stayed in high perfectly.

"Well, Mr. Hanna, what do you say now?" I asked.

"Look's like the linkage was OK all along, George. You made your point."

I'd made my point, and it had cost me a mess of trout, but still I was pleased with my first successful transmission transplant. The hell of it was that I had to work until bedtime to get my friend's transmission back in his car so's he could drive to work the next day.

My boss Hanna had me go to Denver to attend a General Motors Service School for a week. I had never had any formal instruction about motors, so there was plenty for me to learn and I did my damndest to learn it. That was in 1928. I remember them telling us there would be no more tedious bearing-scraping procedure -- that was out. They were replacing it with a new boring bar procedure they'd just perfected. So they taught us to line bore, and everything was lovely.

The following year, I attended a second session, and at one point they had all the mechanics pair off and assigned us various tasks. My partner and I were told to start scraping a set of bearings. That struck me as an odd request, but we went ahead and started. In about three minutes I drew up a chair, propped my feet up on a sawhorse, and began reading a tech manual. About that time the instructor noticed me and walked over. "How come you aren't working?" he inquired. So I explained it to him: "Because last year you guys swore there would be no more bearing-scraping; now you want to teach me how to scrape bearings when I already know how. But what really bugs me it that you want both of us to work at it. You ought to know it's a one man job -- you set two of us doing it and he'll scrape a little more and I'll scrape a little less, and we'd never get it right."

He decided I didn't have to scrape bearings any more, and I didn't.

Say, Lawrence, remember when Bill Gerber and I invented that dingus for cleaning out clogged oil lines on Model-T's? We could make $2.75 real fast selling that device. And it worked mighty good. I took a trip down to Jefferson once, and I stopped in the Ford agency down that way to see if I could peddle a few. I'd brought samples along. They happened to be overhauling a motor that day and had it on the work stand. After watching them for a while and commenting on the weather and the economy and how good the crops looked around there, I finally got to the point.

"Say , do you fellows get many Fords in here with clogged oil lines?" They said it was fairly common.

"What do you charge for cleaning them out?"

They quoted a pretty fat figure.

"Well, at that price, you boys must make out like bandits."

"Oh, no we don't. Did you ever do that job?" And he went on to tell me all the rigamarole you had to go through.

"Ah, there's a lot easier way than that," I told him.

"Then I sure as hell would like to see it."

"OK, you're in luck. Now, if you'll just move over a bit, I'll show you how our little invention works." The oil lines were in plain view. "You just clog up a line so you know no oil could get through. Use some old oil and that candle wicking you have there." They stuffed some wicking and dirty oil in the end of the line and tamped it nice and solid.

"Now," I ordered, "get me your compressed air hose over here."

I attached the hose to our miracle invention, shoved the business end into the far end of the oil line and told them to give me all the pressure they had. One whish! and there was oil and wicking all over the ceiling.

"There, now how do you like that for quick cleaning?"

"By God," one of them said, "I've never seen anything do a job like that before!"

"Well, my partner and I will be making more of them, and I'll be glad to take your order."

Bill and I sold quite a few of them around the Hills, and they were so popular we decided to sell our brain child to Ford so they could distribute it through their dealers and make us rich. But we found out Ford was not easy to deal with. They claimed you didn't need any such gadget, and we kept trying to convince them otherwise. About the time we thought they were close to agreeing, they quit making the T-model. So we stayed poor.

No, Harry, I never did have a driving accident that amounted to anything, even if our roads were all gravel or dirt. You could pretty easily skid off a curve on a gravel road, especially if it was a bit washboardy underneath. But your brother Pierre had a dilly of a crash. Oh, you never heard about it. Well, that's because it's not something a father enjoys discussing. [He laughed]

What happened was that Pierre kept pestering me to teach him to drive the Model-T I'd bought and fixed up like new. He was old enough to learn by then, so I took him down to the fair grounds where it was safe and taught him the basics. There were no automatic shifts in those days, so it was considerably harder to teach gear shifting. With a floor full of pedals it was a

little like learning to play a pipe organ. Anyway, when it came time to unleash Pierre on the public, I decided to let him drive up to Grandma's in Lead. By golly, he went up to Lead and up Mill Street like he'd been born in the driver's seat. Talk about proud!

We finished our little victory visit to Grandma's, chewed the fat for a while at Kate and Armand's, then I decided I'd let him try driving down Mill Street and back to Deadwood.

He headed down Mill pretty cautiously, because Mill is about as vertical as a street can get. And I thought he was doing great for a beginner. Then a few blocks down comes another car from a side street. It takes a left turn and comes up the grade right for us. Well, Pierre sort of goes into a fit, and first thing you know, he is pulling choke and throttle levers and getting his feet all tangled in the foot pedals, and he gets too far to the center of the street. Before I could grab the wheel, we kissed that oncoming car. Luckily we were both going slow.

Well, I climbed out and the other driver climbed out and Pierre just sat there shaking. The fellow we hit had a beat-up old wreck of a car, so you couldn't tell our dents from the dozen others.

"Well, mister," I said, "if you have any idea how much our damage to your car is worth, I'll pay you right now. But if you want it fixed first, I can pay you later."

He stood there in his old overalls and his miner's cap and just looked from his car to ours and back again a couple of three times. Finally he smiled and said, "Mister, lets just call it a draw." That was in the days before whiplash was invented.

Your brother Lawrence had a more serious accident. He was still a kid, too young to drive but not too young to pretend he was driving. He sometimes hung around down at Varies because he liked the smell of new cars and gasoline, and because Fred had a pretty daughter. Well, we had just sold a beautiful new landau model to a fellow from up north, and we were preparing the car for delivery. The customer would be in for it in about fifteen minutes, so I had his car pulled up facing the workbench and I was letting it idle in neutral to warm the engine good for his first ride. I had to run upstairs for something, and while I was gone, Lawrence crawls in behind the wheel of that beauty and pretends he is driving sixty. His pal Buddy Sherman drops in looking for him, so Lawrence invites

Buddy to get behind the steering wheel and have a trial drive too. Buddy opens the door to get in and Lawrence starts to scootch over to make room for him. The car is idling in neutral all the while. Well, when Lawrence scootches over, he accidentally hits the shift lever, throwing the car into gear. It shot forward toward the work bench. In a panic Lawrence tried to hit the brake, but missed it and hit the accelerator. On the bench was a big iron vise with a sharp snout on it, and in a flash the snout was sticking through the new car's radiator.

I recall that our customer was not overly pleased when he dropped in a few minutes later. And I was not so happy either. I don't know how long Lawrence had to wash supper dishes to pay for the damage."

[At least a month, Dad, but it was no big hardship for a resourceful lad like him. Lorraine and I were younger and not as bright, so he'd bribe us to do dishes for him. A lousy little piece of candy or a chipped marble was all it took to get us into labor.

We were fair game for most any prank of his. Once he sent me to the library to ask old Mrs. Phelps, the librarian, for a book called The Sheep's Cud. Of course there was no such book so Mrs. Phelps just laughed as loud as the Deadwood Carnegie Library permitted, which was half a hair above a whisper.

I remember another incident where Lawrence made quite an impression on Dad. He and Ignatz Burley had found a sixteen pound shot-put and were shot-putting in the front yard on Denver Avenue when they spied Dad driving home for lunch. Thinking to play a little joke, Lawrence waited with the ball until Dad got a few feet away. "Here, Dad -- catch!" Naturally, Dad thought it was a softball. The heavy shot-put plunged through his hands, dropped on his foot, and broke one toe.

Another time, Lawrence and a friend found a small cache of dynamite on the hillside behind our house. When they exploded it for fun, it started a brush fire which confused the neighborhood momentarily.

We won't dwell on the "Lulus of Lawrence" overlong, but he and a friend found some other explosive device, a dynamite cap or a cartridge I think, and placed it on a rock to see if they could set it off with a hammer. The

friend lost a piece of finger; Lawrence had a fragment of metal driven beneath the skin of one arm, where it became a conversation piece whenever we had company. I mention his harmless pranks mostly to show that you don't have to have much sense to become a high-ranking officer in the United States Navy.]

There came a day when I got to thinking: Why should an experienced, service-seminar-trained mechanic like me be working to make someone else rich? The more I thought about it, the less reason I could find. I knew the business; I had a lot of people who had been satisfied with the way I treated them; I had learned enough penmanship and bookkeeping at Vermillion so's I could take care of business records and correspondence; and I thought if I only had a good mechanic for a partner I could make a better living and maybe get some of you kids through college.

Bill Gerber and I had worked together for years, and he was the best mechanic I had ever laid eyes on, so one day I broached the subject: "Bill, how would you like to be doing the same work and get maybe twice the pay?" It was a silly question.

"I'd like that fine, George. Thinking of us moving to Detroit?"

"No, Bill, moving nowhere but here in Deadwood. The way I figure, if you and me joined up and started a repair business, we would make out a lot better than we're doing here."

"Problem, George. I'm not a business man and I don't want to be one; I'm an automobile mechanic, and that's what I like best."

"That's all you'd have to be. I can handle the business end, and I can fix cars too, so you don't need to worry. We both have the tools we need, so all we have to do is find us a good place to set up shop, get us some company writing paper, a bank account, a notice in the Pioneer Times -- and we're on our way. What we make after expenses, we'll split fifty-fifty."

"You make it sound too good to pass up. I'm game, George."

No decent place was available just then, but we kept our eyes peeled for one, and before long we heard we could lease the old Treber building. It was well situated, not on Main Street, but on Sherman Street, close enough to downtown. Once it had been a brewery or a warehouse, and it sat right alongside the

railroad tracks. The ceilings were twenty feet high, there was a balcony and small office half way up one wall, from which point a stairway led to bachelor quarters above. Best of all, it had a pit and a moving hoist and concrete floors. Part of it was partitioned off and we could rent that part out for garaging cars. So we closed the deal.

Bill said, "Hey, we've got to have a name for our business, George. How does 'Gerber and Bernard' sound?"

"Sounds fine, Bill, but don't you think 'Bernard and Gerber' has a little better melody to it, plus it's in alphabetical order, so people will see it sooner in the phone book."

It was good that he agreed – I had already ordered the stationery.

CHAPTER SEVEN

One autumn day just at quitting time, after I had closed the shop and was padlocking the gas pump out front, a lady drove up and stopped. She asked if I could do a minor job for her, one that would take me only fifteen minutes or so. "Well, Ma'am, I just closed shop, but I guess I can fix you up. I'll need me just a couple tools so you wait here." She bubbled off a few words of thanks, and when I had my tools and was about to get busy, I noticed that she was not only spiffily dressed but also under considerable pressure to talk. From her North Dakota plates I assumed she had been driving all day, maybe with no one to talk to. Whatever the reason, she began unraveling at the mouth something fierce, so I just let the lady unburden herself.

After five minutes or so, she went to the trunk of her car and brought back a quart mason jar. "Look at this wheat," she said, "Did you ever see any nicer wheat than this?" I allowed as I hadn't. "Well," she beams, "I just came from down from North Dakota, and I've got two farms up there full of this beautiful stuff. We just finished harvesting the biggest crop we ever had."

As she kept on a-talking, I eyed her big Lincoln, a sedan so long you could barely see from one end of it to the other. And when I thought about that dazzler of a car and that bumper harvest I began to realize that the fifty-cents I was thinking of charging should be more like seventy-five cents, especially since it was on overtime. Then she started to paint me a picture of her lovely estate on the River Rhone, over in Europe somewhere, and how she dearly loved to spend half the year there and half in North Dakota. Wait a minute, I thought to myself, this sure is no seventy-five cent job; it has to be at least a dollar.

When I had finished and latched the hood, she asked how much she owed me. I hesitated for a few seconds, thinking how good it must be to inherit a couple farms and an estate, and own a few harvesters and a long Lincoln, but also I remembered my parents teaching me not to take advantage of people, be

they poor or rich, so I sliced my fifty cent charge that by now had reached five dollars way back down.

When I said the job was finished the lady asked how much she owed me.

"Well, Ma'am," I said, "you owe me an even two dollars."

Now two dollars was darn steep for those days, but she never batted an eye, she just opened her fat purse and handed me a five dollar bill. "Here, mister," she smiled, "keep the change and buy yourself a big see-gar."

What was the toughest job I ever ran into? Well, MacDuff, there were lots of them, but the one I remember giving me the biggest headache was old lady Glover's Pontiac. That was a dilly. She drove in from Lead complaining that her car ran fine but that oil kept coming out on her front floor mat. She was getting upset about always having to clean it and wanted me to find the cause and fix it.

When I took a look, I expected to see a little dab of grease that might have worked up from the clutch pedal, but instead there was quite a big spot of stuff, way too thin for grease. It was oil. Now how in hell is oil coming out when there is only supposed to be grease in there?

So I used the common sense that made me such a red-hot repairman: if there's oil in there when it should be grease, get the oil to hell out and put grease in like it should be. I pulled the plug and sure enough the cavity was full of oil.

"Mrs. Glover," I asked, "did you have a lube job on this car shortly before the problem started?"

"No, the only lube job I've had was on the last routine servicing at the dealer's."

"Well, whoever did it used oil instead of grease. You can't hardly get that stupid."

I cleaned out the oil and added grease, then I cleaned off her floor mat and got Mrs. Glover on her way. That would fix it.

Like hell. It wasn't but a week later when the phone rang. "Mr. Bernard, I'm back in the mat cleaning business again. It's just like before you fixed it."

I had her drive down and leave her car, because I got a feeling it would take a few hours to find the trouble this time. I had not worked on that model of Pontiac before, so before I blundered into her guts, I got out the manual on it to see how the lube systems worked. That model, as I learned, featured a

hollow crankshaft with a force-feed oiling system. I figured maybe there might be a leak around the catch pilot, letting oil into the transmission housing. So I tore it down, but nothing inside looked the least whacky. All I could do was sew her back together, add the right amounts of oil and grease, start her up and see what would happen.

I drove it outdoors and let it run for half an hour. When I went back to have a look, I noticed just a trace of oil beginning to ooze up from the root of the clutch pedal. Anyway, I was now sure of one thing: no one had mis-serviced it. That stray oil had to be coming from somewhere in the crankcase.

I did notice one thing abnormal. The motor was not operating smoothly; there was a funny little vibration. Thought it just needed a tune up, so I tuned her, but still it was rough. Bill had better ears than I, so I hollered for him to come have a listen. "Bill, could the main bearing on this baby be starting to go?"

He cocked his ear, puffed on his cigar. Pretty soon he feels the block. "Yep, George, I'd say the main is about shot."

Well, finally I could visualize what was happening. With a loose main bearing and a force feed lube system, a small amount of oil would bypass the bearing and be forced up against the end of the shaft of the reverse-thread gear that forces grease back into the gear-train to ensure constant gear lubrication. Because of its reversing design, it was actually sucking in the bypass oil and gradually filling the transmission housing, and having nowhere else to escape it was being forced out around the clutch pedal and onto the floor mat.

When Mrs. Glover retuned, I asked her to sit down for a minute, and then I explained the difficulty as clear as I could, and Bill confirmed the story. When I estimated what it would set her back to have a floor mat free of oil, it was a good thing she was sitting! But once we had those bearings snug again, the days of the oil gusher were all over.

> [If Mrs. Glover understood your explanation, Dad, she is lots smarter than this boy. I reached my peak as a mechanic the day I finally learned to adjust the front wheel on my bicycle so that it wouldn't rub on the fork.]

You know, when you're working alone and get completely stumped, it is time to get fresh brain power on the problem.

Take, for example, Everett Bacon. Everett was the best ignition man I ever knew. He worked a lot over a Joe Fountain's, and there was nothing Everett didn't know about ignition and carburetion so he never needed help. Except once.

He drove up one afternoon, looking a little down-in-the-mouth, and asked me if I would take a spin with him in the Packard he was driving. "There's is something haywire with this motor and I can't figure it out. She only runs good indoors, but she misses on the highway."

"Well, what have you done to it?" I inquired.

"Everything! And not just once."

"Did you put in a new set of plugs?"

"No, but the plugs are good; I tested them at least a half a dozen times."

Well, Everett, I've got a customer to take care of, but it will only be half and hour or so. You run back to Joe's and put in a set of brand new plugs, then you come back and we'll take her out and see what's ailing her."

I had just cleared the customer out and was standing in the doorway soaking up sunshine when here comes Everett driving back all smiles. "By God, George, this wagon runs better than new!"

In those days they didn't make spark plugs as good as they do now, and sometimes they'd give you fits. I had found out one thing: usually when you test a plug in the shop, the plug is cool and it might check out perfect, but that same plug in a hot engine can act up if there's the least little flaw in it, like a tiny crack in the insulator. Expansion, sonny boy. I learned never to take it for granted that a spark plug was good just because the tester said so.

One of my fondest memories of the car business involved a lady, a young school marm. Her name escapes me just now, but she had recently moved to Deadwood from up in Montana. And she was a pretty thing, I tell you. Needed her bearings taken up, and asked it I'd care to work for her. I told her I would be delighted, which was somewhat of an understatement. She had to teach a class at nine and wondered if I would drive her over to the school. I said I couldn't because Bill and Carl weren't in yet, but that if she left her keys in Lola Kersten's office, I'd have one of the boys run me over and I'd pick up her car and try to get it done for her before closing time. It was spring, I

remember, and it wasn't often that the smell of flowers overpowered the exhaust fumes at the shop, but that morning as she left, I thought the air smelled positively fragrant.

I was late getting started on her bearings, and when she arrived at a quarter to six and asked for me, Bill told her I was in the rear still working. So she came over to where I was stretched out under the car tightening the oil plug, and she started chatting about something, but I couldn't hear her because Carl was hammering sheet metal. So I scooted out from under the car on my creeper and there, practically rubbing my eyeballs was this magnificent pair of legs in a pink short skirt. For a few seconds I was in shock. I studied the situation, then I looked up -- which, considering my position at the time, was a thoughtless thing to do. When my eyes finally reached her face, I could see she was blushing; and then all of a sudden she smiles and blurts out: "Say, fellow, aren't you fudging just a little?"

I recovered as quick as I could, apologized, and we both bust out laughing. I wish I could remember her name.

Joe Gandolpho had been around Deadwood a long time. Once he had run an Italian fruit stand, and had a little dance band, but now he was on the road for Adams Brothers wholesalers. He drove a Model-T which we always took care of for him.

Joe told me about the time he took that Model-T on a trip east of the Missouri and it developed what he judged to be timer trouble. He took it to a garage and told the mechanic to install a new timer for him. The fellow asked him, "How do you know it's the timer causing the problem?"

"Because I had a bum timer before, and I think it's the timer, and that's what I want installed."

The mechanic grumbled that Joe should leave the car there and have it checked over before anything was done.

"Look," Joe said, "it's not your responsibility what is wrong or what is not wrong. I'm not paying for your opinion. All I want is for you to install me a new timer, and by God if you won't do it, I'll have this thing packed on a flat-car and railroaded up to Deadwood."

He was quite a guy, Joe was.

I was telling you of that section of the building we rented out for garaging automobiles. This same Joe Gandolpho kept his car there after he went on the road as a salesman. Of course, in the winter it could get mighty cold because we never heated that part of the building. Joe would keep coming into the shop and ask us to go out and crank his car for him. "By God," he would always say, "I just can't turn her over." It was no wonder because he never got any exercise just riding the highways.

"Well, Joe," I'd say, "it ain't as easy as turning an ice cream freezer, but you still should be able to start your own car." Nevertheless, we'd end up cranking it for him -- and sometimes it was damn tough to do.

One miserable morning, I was feeling half dead, and happened to be shivering just inside the front door of the shop, wondering if maybe I should go home, take a big snort, and crawl back into bed to die in comfort. I chanced to look out the window and here comes Joe Gandolpho walking over from Lee Street to get his car. He walked right past the parking section, and barges in.

"George," he says, "she won't turn over for me."

Any other day I might have questioned his manhood, but I was sick. "Joe," I said, "I saw you coming and you walked right past the parking area, and you didn't even try starting your car. Now I'm feeling lousy today, Joe, and I'm not cranking her for you. I've twisted that clunker for you a thousand times, but I'm all through."

He moaned that he had no way to get to work and that after all the business he'd done with Bernard & Gerber, we owed it to him to give him a little hand.

"Alright Joe, I'll help you, but beginning as of now, its going to cost you fifty cents a start."

He either had to agree or find some other line of work. But wouldn't you know, two months later, come the spring thaw, he bought a new car with a self-starter! So we never got rich off Joe Gandolpho.

You probably remember Dorothy Branch, the music teacher from Lead. I did repair work for her and her husband, oh I don't know for how many years, and even after Cecil died she kept bringing her car to me. And all through those years I'd mail her a statement on the first of the month, and right away she would

either mail me a check or pay in person. Never failed, good times or bad.

One Sunday when I was home making out my statements, I noticed her account failed to show a payment for the previous month. That seemed unusual, but I wasn't concerned because I knew they were good payers, and had probably just misplaced the bill.

So I merely listed it as a balance due from last month, then added the current month's charge, and mailed it.

Two days later she came in "red headed" -- really fuming. "Why, George Bernard," she snapped, "what do you mean by sending me this statement saying I didn't pay you last month? You know very well I always pay my bills right on time!"

"Well, Mrs. Branch," I said in my most considerate tone, "I know you have always paid right on time, and I'm not the least bit worried that you won't pay me, but I don't think you did pay me this time or else I'd have credited your account."

Well, believe me, Harry, that lady was upset. She was positive that she'd mailed me a check.

"All right, Mrs. Branch, let's not kick this around any more today. You just give me time to go back over my receipts and deposits, because if you paid me -- and I'm not saying you didn't -- then fine and dandy, but if I find no evidence, then I'm afraid your stuck." As she left I noticed her eyes looked even more formidable than usual through her thick lenses.

I went through all my papers, through the waste basket, in the crack behind the desk, in the john -- everywhere -- but to no avail. And my deposit slip showed no check for that amount. I was just getting ready to phone her the next morning, when I saw her pull up by the gas pump and disembark. I braced myself and waited for her to come in. She is looking mighty sheepish, with a wee streak of smile on her. "Mr. Bernard," she stutters, "I owe you an apology. I wrote you a check, just as I knew I had, and I mailed it, as I was sure I had, but I mailed it to my filling station in Lead."

"Well, Mrs. Branch, that's all well and good, but you should know by now that my place of business is in Deadwood." We both had us a good laugh about it. You just don't get any better customers than the Branches were.

During the second World War, automobile dealers and repair shops couldn't hire a decent mechanic, because all of them

were either in the armed forces or in defense plants. A garage would hire any punk kid who happened to have a grease spot on his coveralls.

Late one day, two fellows pulled into the shop in their pickup, wanting to know if I could help them out. I said I sure as shootin' could try; what seems to be the problem?

"We could barely get over the hill into town; she has no soup at all," one of them replied.

"Which way you come in from?" I inquired, not that it made a particle of difference because most every way in was over a mountain.

"From Spearfish."

I told them I had a full house, but to park by the door and I'd go get a few tools and see if I could do anything for them. When I got back I had them start the engine and I listened, then I told them to shut it off and began checking the spark plugs. No sooner do I start than one of them pipes up, "No, no, it's not the plugs, it's the carburetor that's screwy." Then the other guy butts in, "The carburetor my foot, she's starvin' for gas -- got to be the fuel pump." And they went on arguing, so I put my tools back in my tool carrier, sat down on the tail gate and started whistling. They stopped the chatter.

"When you boys decide just what the problem is and just what you'll allow me to do, then please tell me and I'll do it. And take as long as you want, because it's costing you five dollars an hour for me to sit here listening. Now, if you want me to find the trouble, you keep your yaps shut and let me start in. I've got my own procedures for diagnosing these contraptions, and I follow them."

That quieted them down. It couldn't have been more than twenty minutes later when I spoke up, "Now, which of you hombres is the driver of this stagecoach?"

"I am," the fat one confessed.

"OK, you grab the reins and we'll try her out."

"Hell's fire, man," he said, "there's no way you could have her fixed this fast."

"Well," I replied, "suppose you let your truck tell you that."

She went up Spearfish Hill in high gear, slick as goose poop.

"You know, mister," the tall one said with a big grin, "we aren't used to getting any of our equipment repaired in one day, not since the war started. My brother and I are farmers, and we have a combine and tractors and stuff. When we have a break-

down, we tow a vehicle into a garage to get it fixed and come back a week later only to find they've have a kid tear it all apart and he's still trying to figure out where all the parts go."

I can sympathize with that. Lots of times a poor mechanic will assume something major is wrong and start a big disassembly project. Like I told young Tommy Reminskey, if your car is running rough and you want to try fixing it yourself, start with the simple little things. Be sure the plugs are all good. Be sure you're getting good spark. Be sure you're getting gas to the carburetor. Then if is still runs rough, don't spend all weekend trying to adjust it and time it. Check your compression first. That's not hard to do but is often overlooked. You can adjust 'til hell freezes over, but if you don't have all your cylinders under compression, you'll never get her tuned up proper.

Now that automobiles are so plentiful, it is hard to realize there ever was a shortage, but right after World War Two the auto makers were unable to meet demands because of all the emphasis they'd been placing on war supplies. Today the only problem buying a new car is paying for it; back then the problem was finding someone who had one to sell.

I don't suppose, Harry, that you ever realized the trouble I had getting that new 1948 Ford four-door. That was just after you had married Julie in Iceland, and you wrote us that you would be bringing her home for her first visit to the U.S. By then our '36 Terraplane was getting tacky, so I got to thinking how nice it would be if you had a first class automobile to use when you were here showing Julie around the Black Hills. And the more I thought about it, the itchier I was to start the search. We didn't need a new car too bad ourselves, in fact if we did buy one, I didn't intend to keep it after you went back overseas. And there was no way to lose on a deal because everyone and his dog was eager to replace what they'd been nursing through the war years.

Well, I began beating a path to all the local dealers, finally ending up at the Ford Agency where my friend Henry was in charge.

"Henry," I said, "I want to buy a new Ford four-door sedan." I really wanted to buy a Chevrolet, but couldn't find one. Henry

didn't seem to hear me, he just started rummaging through the papers piled on his desk. "Henry," I started again, " I -- "

"Heard you the first time, George. Hold on a minute. Yeah, here it is." He pulled out some sheets clipped together.

"Um-m-m, I don't see any George Bernard on this list. You buying it under someone else's name? Because if you're not, you are plumb out of luck. You can see for yourself how many are on the waiting list -- and besides, doctors get first shot on any new units, so they won't be breaking down making their house calls".

It was true -- I had run into the waiting list story all over the Black Hills. "OK, Henry, if that's the best you can do, all right, but I've done you lots of favors, and I thought --"

"I know that, George, and I wish to God I could do you a favor, but the distributors are watching us like hawks, and if they catch us playing favorites on our list, they give us holy hell. You can understand that."

I could.

"But could you possibly sell me one just for a month or two? I only want it while Harry is here on vacation. I'll sell it back to you for what I paid for it, then you can tack on a couple three hundred and resell it as an almost new used car. I break even, you make an easy extra profit."

He loved the suggestion, but said he just couldn't risk getting caught at it. He'd keep me in mind and let me know if anyone canceled out on an order. That was my only hope.

So I thanked him and left. As I drove back to the shop I wondered if the old mohair upholstery in the Terraplane could stand another cleaning, or if I should get seat covers, and what would be the best color to hide what used to be that beautiful metallic bronze paint you'd see so often on caskets.

A few nights later, Henry's chief salesman phoned saying that some doctor had canceled a Ford order to try for a Lincoln, and that if I came down in the morning he could help me. I'd have preferred a color that wouldn't show dust, but otherwise the Ford was fine, so we made a deal and I was thankful for the good luck. Cost me $2,028.00 and it served the purpose.

The very next day after we drove you to the airport to see you off, I was at home watering the front yard when a stranger comes walking by. He spots the new Ford shining in the driveway and asks me if I cared to sell it. It was nice weather for horse trading, so I told him, "Not particularly, I just bought it -

but if the price was right …."

"I'll give you $2500.00 for it."

"Well, mister, if you have the money, you have yourself a new car -- maybe."

"Maybe?"

"I have to make one phone call before I can deal. Here, you water that dry stretch along the curb." And I handed him the hose, then went inside to phone Henry.

"Henry, this is George. You know that new Ford you sold me? I don't need it anymore. You want to buy it back for what I paid you? I've got a guy here who'll give $2500.00 for it, but if you want it at my cost, you can make beer money."

"Good Lord, George, I'd like to, but you know what I told you. Just can't take the chance. Any other time, but not these days."

So I sold it. Say, do you have any idea how many miles you piled up showing Julie the countryside? Almost exactly twelve hundred miles in three weeks. I'd have thought it would be lots more. [We parked a lot, Dad.]

In the wintertime it could get darn cold in the shop because of the sky-high ceilings. We burned fuel oil mostly, but we also burned the used oil we drained from crankcases. We'd store that old oil outside all summer in containers, then in winter we piped it to a big indoor stove. You know, Harry, that stored oil would settle down in those barrels nice and cozy, and in time all the impurities would settle to the bottom, and the oil above the sediment would be pretty clean.

A fellow dropped by one morning needing oil. Said he was fixing up an old clunker at home and had it about all stuck together but had no oil for it, and could I sell him some cheap.

I told him I had the best oil around, Quaker State, and that it would cost him thirty cents a quart.

He said he didn't want to spend that much and that he could get oil at Gamble's Store for fifteen cents a quart, which he probably could have except they were closed.

"Fifteen cent oil? Well, if that is the kind of oil you are looking for, I've got some Red Dog brand bulk oil, and I can beat Gamble's price -- and I tell you this Red Dog stuff is plenty good enough for your use. Let me just show you." So I went outside to the used-oil drum and dipped out a can from off the top and brought it in to show him. "How's this for oil?" I asked.

"Look's fine to me," he said, "I'll take ten quarts."

Some people will say I cheated him, but I never figured it that way. That oil was plenty good for what he was going to use it in, so I did him no harm. He saw what he was buying. He wanted it cheap, he got it cheap.

Bill Gerber, my partner, was just a natural-born mechanic. He was of German descent, blond, built like an athlete, handsome, and bullheaded. When he tackled an especially tough job he never gave up until he whipped it. You might have quit, I might have quit, but Will Gerber quit? No way. [Half the time Dad called him Bill, and the other half Will.] And I tell you, when he finished a job it was done right. If there was any shortcoming he had as a mechanic, it was his passion for tight bolts. They couldn't be too tight to suit him, so occasionally he'd strip a thread or twist off a bolt head, or break a wrench, but you knew if he fixed a car it wouldn't be shedding loose parts along the roadsides.

There was nothing too complicated for him to tear into. I remember when we were developing those devices for cleaning out clogged oil lines. We needed quite a few of a sheet metal part that was time-consuming to cut out by hand, so Bill said he'd would try making a die for stamping them out. Well, he was no tool and die maker, but he set to work and after a lot of hours he had a die that worked.

About the only disagreement we ever had was about working Sundays -- neither of us liked to, but if we were in a bind, I would and he wouldn't. Now that I think back on it, he was right. We could have used more trout.

> [That's what you think, Dad. Got so I never wanted to eat another trout as long as I lived. I recall going to the refrigerator, after we got a refrigerator, which was in 1934 just after I had scarlet fever, and I'd look for ice cubes for my after-school Kool-Aid and find only trays of frozen fish. If only Mom had not always over-fried trout, I might not have minded warm Koolaid.]

After, oh, I don't know how many years, Bernard & Gerber decided to expand -- thirty three and a third percent – by hiring Carl Spindler. That sure was no blunder. Carl had joined Ruth Brothers when he was fresh out of high school, not as a mechanic, but as a bookkeeper. Well, Carl started giving them a

problem: he could do bookwork OK, but he hated clean hands, so every spare minute he got he'd be out in the shop area "helping out." He'd come in nights and weekends and holidays for the sheer joy of fixing something. Of course Fred and Connie Ruth were nobody's fools -- at least they weren't back then -- so they closed the books on Carl and put him permanently in the shop.

He stayed with them ten years or so, until Fred died and Connie decided to drop automotive work and concentrate on machine shop jobs. Carl was a wizard with automobiles and liked that better than machine work, so he came to work with me and Will.

Around 1934, that was. We sure had no regrets getting Carl. Now that Will is gone and I'm retired, Carl runs the place on his own and makes a pretty good living at it.

My brother Nap down in Jefferson made pretty good moonshine during prohibition. I remember visiting him once and ... [Let's leave this one for a sequel. OK, Dad?]

Speaking of prohibition, you'd would run across some really low-grade rot-gut now and then. I remember one early summer day, the first hot day of the year, when a rancher from Whitewood dropped in to discuss an overhaul. Bill won the coin flip, so he got to drive the man to his ranch and drive the car back to be re-incarnated. It was so nice out we all wanted the drive.

Well, to make short work of this story, the rancher rummaged around his root cellar and came out with a jug of what was supposed to be fire-water and gave it to Bill in appreciation for the lift. Bill poured me a half pint of it to take home – he was rooming with us on Denver Avenue at that time.

It had been a sweltering day, and after supper I transplanted some strawberries, then took a chair out on the front porch and sat down to watch the sun fade off White Rocks, which it never failed to do. Your mother was at Fee's for choir practice, and you kids were down by Ostraner's playing Run-Sheep-Run.

Then I remembered the bottle of hooch in the car, and thought it would be nice to have a leisurely snort while relaxing. So I got it out of the car and had me a small swig to start. Didn't taste too good, nothing like I ever tried before. I couldn't believe it, so I tried one more swallow.

Right then Bill comes a-dusting up Denver, parks his car, and comes up the steps, looking dog tired.

"Looks like you need medicine, Bill. Here's that stuff you brought in today. See what you make of it."

He needed no coaxing. He took a mouthful and spit it out.

"George! That goddamn stuff ain't moonshine. That's wood alcohol, I swear it is!"

I hadn't taken much, and it was a good thing I hadn't, but even so, I got sick enough I thought I'd die. I couldn't even drink cold water -- had to have it luke-warm. That kind of made a Christian out of me, and it took a long time to recover. [You never did quite recover from Christianity, Dad.]

It was shortly before Bill died that a new priest came to town to run St. Ambrose parish. Within two weeks he had gotten close to the prime sources and knew all the gossip in the area, but that is neither here nor there. Anyway, he phoned me one day saying his car wouldn't start and would I come over to the rectory and take a look at it.

I performed my usual ceremonies for run-down batteries, checking the generator, and so forth. Then I knocked on his door again.

"Well, Father, it looks like your battery is dead as a coot, and I think it is beyond resurrection. You need a new battery."

"I was afraid of that," he says. "Will you get one for me at Montgomery Wards and install it for me. They give me a discount."

Without a lot of delay, I replied, "Hell no, Father. I don't work for Montgomery Ward. If you want to buy a battery from them, you go get them to install it. We only install the batteries we sell at Bernard & Gerber."

I don't think the man had good sense.

He's the same priest who wasn't going to bury poor Bill Gerber. Bill had a trick stomach, and died of bleeding ulcers. Died way too young. He was Catholic but not keen on regular Mass attendance. When he died it was believed he had not made his Easter Duty. [A Catholic's obligation to confess his sins and receive Holy Communion during the Easter season.] In those days, if you didn't do that, you could be refused a Catholic burial Mass.

Now, when I got wind of this from Bill's wife, Myrtle, I made a beeline for the rectory and pounded on the storm door.

"Look here, Father, I am being told you won't bury Bill Gerber from the church. Is that right?"

"Yes, that's right," he replied.

"No, that's not right," I said, "Bill Gerber was a good man; and he was good enough to respond whenever the church had some appeal for charity; so by God he is good enough to be buried from this church or any other church in town."

"But ...."

"No but's about it. I tell you, if he is not buried from this church, you'll be out of this parish by Christmas; I'll make your life so damn miserable you'll wish you never heard of Deadwood."

Just then I think the Holy Ghost descended upon him and opened his heart and mind, because he told me not to worry, Bill would be properly taken care of. And he was. That was the last thing I ever did for Bill.

[Amen, Dad! Now for a new subject. Dad detested dead-beats. Somewhere he had acquired the notion that when man A works for man B with the mutual understanding that man B will pay man A for man A's brains and labor, that if payment from man B is not forthcoming within reasonable time and without legitimate excuse, then that man B is scum of the worst kind -- the sort found on the bottom of bird-cages, for example.

In the following episode, you will note that the name of the deadbeat (not his real name, incidentally) is not capitalized. It is not that I am afraid of running out of capital letters, it is only that I am trying to convert Dad's spoken words to written words that accurately reflect the manner in which they were voiced. When Dad pronounces this man's name, I have the distinct feeling that he is using all lower-case letters.

One clarification: the recorder ran out of tape again, so I am trying to reconstruct the conversation from memory. While the facts are the truth in all their pristine glory, their wording is approximate, maybe more genteel. That's what Dad gets for sending me to school.]

Speaking of deadbeats, there is one name that always rings a bell -- bart klapper. bart blew into town from somewhere, like a dime-store cowboy, sporting a big Stetson, pointed boots, embroidered silk shirt, and string tie -- he had everything western about him but the honest smell of horse turds.

It wasn't any time at all 'til he had opened up a business, wormed his way into the Chamber of Commerce, spearheaded the Days of '76 celebrations, and led the big parades on a white stallion with silver-plated trappings. Nearly every week he'd show up on the first or second pages of the Pioneer Times and the Black Hills Weekly.

bart allowed us the privilege of keeping his big automobile running in tip-top condition. For a time it appeared to be a mutually rewarding arrangement: we'd work, he'd pay. Then I began to notice that every month his payments got slimmer and the balance due got fatter. When I broached the subject of payments, he always had excuses galore. One excuse, which turned out to be legitimate, was that he was in the process of setting up a business in Belle Fourche and it was eating up his cash. Before we least expected it, bart kissed Deadwood goodbye, leaving Bernard & Gerber holding a large empty sack.

When I finally got a new address on him, I started sending him a monthly statement, just like always, but nary once did he send us a buck. Month by month I would expand the message on the statement -- handwritten, naturally, because we never had a typewriter. Still my communication skills were to no avail. Gradually I became abusive, so much so, that the last statement I mailed him would have been enough for him to sue me for defamation of character and undoubtedly win.

Six, eight months later I am going to the court house one day to see the Register of Deeds. The sheriff is sitting on the front stairs sunning himself and sucking his cigar, his eyelids at half mast. Just as I start up the walkway to the entrance, wouldn't you know, out comes bart klapper, God's gift to the West. I let him come down the steps to the walkway where I am approaching, and when we met, I hit him. And I mean I <u>hit</u> him! When the sheriff comes out of his doze and sees what has happened, he starts to jump up.

"Now don't get excited, sheriff," I say, "I was just collecting a long overdue legal debt. This son-of-bitch has paid me in full."

The last time I saw bart klapper, he was on his hands and knees, looking in the grass for his front teeth.

[Sometimes Dad would relate such amusing tales at the supper table and Mom would start crying for no good reason. A long time later, after he had hung up his gloves so to speak, Mom confided in me that she was always afraid he'd hurt someone and have to go to jail. But somehow he was lucky. For one thing he kept the law informed of his activities, as if reporting them gave them a coat of legal varnish. Like the time he personally ran a transient out of town because he had given the beggar money for a meal, and after warning him not to spend it on booze had discovered him in the Old Style ordering a rye and water. He told the sheriff he had made a citizens arrest but that the suspect had escaped and fled town.

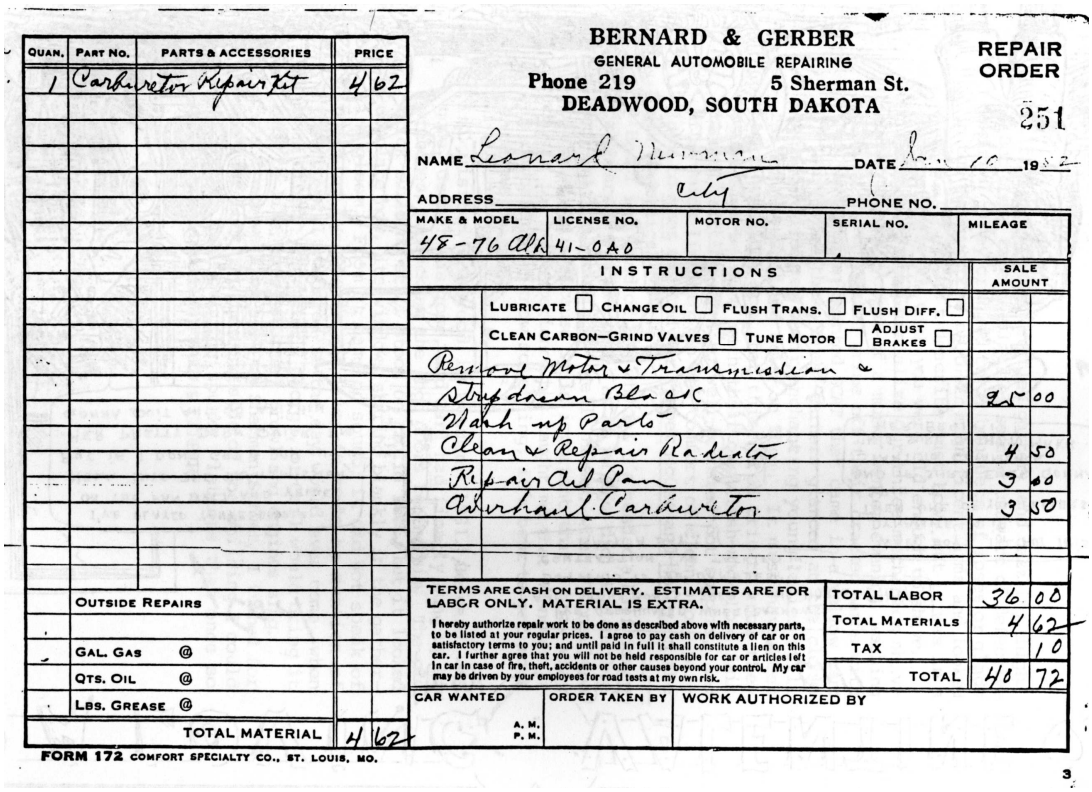
A couple years ago, old Denver Avenue neighbor, Henry Clauser, told me: "Harry, your father was a good man, but I sure wouldn't have wanted him for an enemy." Then he went on to tell me that once he had seen Dad arrest, try, convict, and punish a man all by himself. Dad had come home from work to have dinner, which he did every noon. He had his car parked in front of the house. While he was eating, some nut began siphoning gas out of our car right out in broad daylight. When Dad stepped out to return to work he saw what was going on. So he simply walked up to the man and knocked him cold. When the fellow came to, Dad made him pour the pilfered gasoline back into our car. Not only, that, he made him drain the remaining gas out of his own car and add it to ours. Dad was a firm believer in restitution.

But sometimes, he exhibited admirable restraint, like the time he pumped a tank full of gas for a town resident who paid him with a rubber check. Dad's old standby lawyer was Clinton Richards, who was D.A. at the time. Dad went to Clinton to get him to haul the criminal into court, but Clinton demurred, requesting a little time to send the man a pay-up-or-else letter, which Dad reluctantly agreed to. Dad wanted the S.O.B. jailed right now. A day or so later Dad goes to work to find the culprit sitting by the front door of B & G's, saying he wanted to square up his bum check.]

After Bill Gerber died, Carl and I worked by ourselves maybe eighteen, twenty years, I don't know. We never got any bigger as a business, but still we made decent livings and raised our families and got them educated if they had a mind to. Our misses may have been shy of fur coats and jewelry , but they managed. Sometimes they'd pick up a bit of mad money. Fan gave music lessons and Garnet had a sales route - Jewel Tea, I seem to recall.

What year did I retire in? Well, my memory isn't all that good anymore, but I know I was over 65, because when I reached 65 I still lacked some quarters to qualify for Social Security . When Social Security started it didn't include self-employed guys like us. Later they did, but I had to work beyond 65 to qualify for benefits. Lucky I did, because if we'd had to live off the income from our saving bonds and endowment policies we'd have barely made it. So Social Security was a life-saver for us.

That still doesn't answer your question: I'd say I retired about 1952. Carl bought me out. *(Invoice below Jan 10, 1952)*



QUAN.	PART NO.	PARTS & ACCESSORIES	PRICE
1		Carburetor Repair Kit	4 62
		OUTSIDE REPAIRS	
		GAL. GAS @	
		QTS. OIL @	
		LBS. GREASE @	
		TOTAL MATERIAL	4 62

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NAME Leonard Mumman DATE Jan 10 19 52
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48-76 Ch	41-040			

INSTRUCTIONS	SALE AMOUNT
LUBRICATE ☐ CHANGE OIL ☐ FLUSH TRANS. ☐ FLUSH DIFF. ☐	
CLEAN CARBON—GRIND VALVES ☐ TUNE MOTOR ☐ ADJUST BRAKES ☐	
Remove Motor & Transmission &	
Strip down Block	25 00
Mach ng Parts	
Clean & Repair Radiator	4 50
Repair Oil Pan	3 00
Overhaul Carburetor	3 50

TERMS ARE CASH ON DELIVERY. ESTIMATES ARE FOR LABOR ONLY. MATERIAL IS EXTRA.

I hereby authorize repair work to be done as described above with necessary parts, to be listed at your regular prices. I agree to pay cash on delivery of car or on satisfactory terms to you; and until paid in full it shall constitute a lien on this car. I further agree that you will not be held responsible for car or articles left in car in case of fire, theft, accidents or other causes beyond your control. My car may be driven by your employees for road tests at my own risk.

TOTAL LABOR	36 00
TOTAL MATERIALS	4 62
TAX	1 10
TOTAL	40 72

CAR WANTED A. M. P. M. | ORDER TAKEN BY | WORK AUTHORIZED BY

3

What calendars, Harry? Oh, you mean the ones we had on the wall down at the shop. Yeah, they were really something, but say, what time of day is it?

[I told him it was 10:15 P.M. We had about worn the cribbage board out. He said it was past his bedtime and we could discuss calendars tomorrow. But we didn't because the next day Julie and I and son George had to load our suitcases into our car and began our annual return pilgrimage to Los Angeles to worship at the altar of the almighty dollar. So it was back to Muddy Gap, to Independence Rock, to Casper to Rawlins to Little America, through Provo Canyon, to Las Vegas to Bakersfield to Los Angeles and back to our nest.

Ah, but the calendars! Dad and I never got back to the subject of the great Bernard & Gerber "art collection." Still I remember it well from the days when I was a young boy learning to become a janitor. Dad wanted me to become an engineer so I could flash clean fingernails and wear white shirts to work, but he must have considered janitorial science an acceptable alternate because that's what he started training me in - anything but auto repairing.

It was usually while I rested on the broom handle that I'd enjoy the artworks. Looking at them was an uphill job because they were hung on ascending levels above the open wooden staircase that slanted up the side wall to the top-floor rooms. The wall itself was a perfect background, its once white-painted bricks now grimed to neutral beige by decades of oil heat and exhaust fumes.

Two of the pieces were originals, 24 x 30-inch colored cartoons, framed in purposely mis-matched rough cut pine slash. One depicted the greasy trio, Bill, Carl, and George trying to start a decrepit touring car -- a car that wouldn't start even with the ultimate persuader, a stick of dynamite. This cartoon now graces Carl and Garnets spic-and-span little home on Williams street.

The other cartoon ended up in the Old Style Saloon, but is no longer there since the Old Style was made into a tourist attraction and renamed "Saloon No. 10."

Both originals were drawn by Elmer Kellogg, carpenter and cabinet maker, who roomed in one of the upper rooms. The cartoon the Spindlers have was a 1937 Valentine gift to "The Boys Downstairs."

The remainder of the B&G collection consisted of those huge hunting, fishing and girlie calendars that even today are sometimes encountered in parts stores and in dingy garages in remote hamlets.

Typically the Hunting Scene shows a suntanned, leather booted nimrod, dressed in whipcord trousers and red plaid mackinaw. His cheek snuggles his rifle butt. Downbarrel from his calm, squinting eye, towers a tall grizzly bear. The bear is equipped with oversize incisors that are slick with saliva and gleam whitely in the autumn sunlight. You will observe that Mr. Bear is badly in need of both manicure and pedicure.

The fishing calendar is less fraught with terror; it commonly portrays a tanned, middle-aged gentleman, perhaps an escaped office worker, whose upturned hat-brim is decorated with fishing flies, spinners, and lures. Rubber-booted and looking happy, he stands knee-deep in white riffles reeling in an airborne rainbow trout -- a twenty-two incher at very least. You will note that the weather is invariably perfect in these sports scenes: creamy cumulus clouds perpetually drift in greenish-blue skies. More often than not, bear cubs are skulking nearby, rummaging though the sportsman's brown bag lunch which he has carelessly left on the bank of the stream or on a rotting log.

Of course, the creme de la creme of the Bernard & Gerber display were the gorgeous girlie calendars. Whether the beauties were brunettes, blonds, or redheads, they had certain features in common -- some of them outstanding. For example, all were young, tall, graceful, semi-slender but not skinny. All were healthy looking, freshly washed, beguilingly coiffed, impeccably groomed. They always smiled. Most wore shimmery long gowns cut low at the bodice, yet not vulgarly low. Nipples were not in evidence through the silks and satins like they would be twenty years later. Even so, there was often a touch of the sensual. For example, careless seamstresses neglected to sew both sides of skirts all the way down, so you were treated to a display

of curvaceous calf, dimpled knee, ruffled garter, and dazzling thigh.

But these carefree lovelies seemed unaware of defective skirts. They cradled their bouquets of roses or gladiolas in the milky crooks of their magnificent arms and looked at you, oh, I can't describe just how, but it was in a way that made you wish you were old enough to shave.

Even now, I can visualize our three mechanics shivering at six o'clock on a murky winter evening, washing the day's accumulated grime off their cracked hands with that wintergreen-scented SCAT that came in a yellow can. I'm sure when these bread-earners glanced at the clock, they also noticed their enchanting young ladies still faithfully smiling down on them. It must have been heart warming, too, for this tired trio to know they would soon be home with their own flesh-and-blood fair ladies, sitting down to well-prepared hot suppers, and afterwards listening in the comfort of clean, cozy parlors to Amos & Andy or Fibber McGee & Molly on the new Majestics.

Had I inquired of Dad why B & G's needed a half dozen calendars, he would have, as he always did, a plausible explanation, such as: Well, Harry, when I consult a calendar it is because it is important that I know what day it is, and experience has taught me that whenever it is important to know something, it's best to get more than one opinion.

I visited Deadwood in autumn, 1981. Bernard was gone, Gerber was gone, and Carl had finally hung up his wrenches, padlocking the shop doors behind him. The old brick building still stood on solid feet, but it looked desolate now, its windows staring blankly in the gathering gloom. From it came no sound; it did not speak of bustling by-gone happy days; it made no mention of tomorrows. I wondered if the day would ever come when some other young Bill, George, or Carl would bring it back to life, make starters growl and engines sing.

As I was walking away up Sherman Street, I turned for one last look. On the long side of the building I could no longer make out the spunky letters that once so boldly proclaimed: **BERNARD & GERBER**.


A LOVING VALENTINE
1937
Carl
I'VE PLAYED YANKEE DOODLE ON THE FAN BELT, AND YELLED HELL INTO THE TRANSMISSION, BUT IF I DON'T GET A POP OUT OF HER PRETTY DERN QUICK, I'M GONNA QUIT AND GO AFISHIN!
Bill
I'VE OVERHAULED WHEELBARROWS, AND STONE BOATS - EVEN A ONE-HORSE - SHAY! BUT THIS IS THE DAMNDEST CONTRAPTION I'VE TACKLED IN MANY A DAY!
WAIT, BOYS, I'LL PUT THIS DYNAMITE IN IT, THEN ONE OF YOU FELLERS SPIN IT. AND IF SHE'S EVER GONNA START TO COMMENCE, THIS SURE OUGHT TO MAKE HER BEGIN IT!
GEORGE
R. KELLOGG

CHAPTER EIGHT

DUSTY DESTINIES

You weren't living in Deadwood when my cousin Bernie was murdered, were you? Well, that was a day I'll never forget.

That was after I'd retired, and I remember I was home killing some time reading the Sioux City Journal when the phone rang. It was Lea [Bernie's spinster sister] and she was so excited I could barely make her out. Occasionally she used to walk from her rooms at the Gilmore down to Bernie's place on lower Main. Well, she blubbered that she had gone down before noon and knocked on his door and he hadn't answered, which was unusual because he was always home at this time of day. Then she tried the door and found it was unlocked, but she couldn't push it clear open because something was blocking it. Finally she shoved hard enough to get her head in, and that is when she found Bernie on the floor, and he wasn't moving.

I told Lea I'd rush right down, and I did. Lea was waiting for me, sobbing. I could see Bernie was dead, with a big blue knot on his skull. So I phoned the sheriff and he came down for a look. After he had finished looking he asked me if I would mind staying overnight with the body, because it would be the next day before he could assemble the crime experts for a full-scale investigation, and he didn't want anyone admitted and nothing in the room disturbed. I said I would stay, but only if he left me a revolver, because I was edgy about staying there alone.

There was no doubt in my mind what had happened: an intruder had come in by the back door and was in the act of burglarizing the place when Bernie came home from work and unlocked the front door to let himself in. It took the burglar by surprise. He stepped quickly behind the door and when Bernie entered, wham! Knocked him cold with something. But that isn't what killed Bernie, as we learned later. No, he bled to death from internal injuries -- the guy had kicked him to death after he was down.

That night with Bernie was sure long. I did a lot of thinking about when we were kids and collected whiskey bottles. And how we ate dog with an Indian boy, and how we were going to become circus performers, and about the night he told me he was going to be a gambler when he grew up. When I was in

business in town I didn't move in the same circle he did, but I used to take care of his car for him, and we were always on the best of terms. You may think professional gamblers are all crooks, but I know there wasn't a dishonest bone in Bernie's body.

They never did convict anyone of the killing; maybe there was too little evidence and too many possible suspects. Probably every gambler in Deadwood was in Bernie's debt at one time or another. Sometimes if they overextended and couldn't make good on losses, he'd grub-stake them until they got on their feet. And sometimes he'd accept deeds to old mining claims or properties all over the country. More often than not, deals were contracted on scribbled paper, even made verbally. So, Harry, you can well imagine the can of worms his executor had when he went to liquidate the estate.

[A curious footnote: I was under the impression that Dad spent a lone vigil with Bernie's corpse, but he was not on watch alone. In discussing the incident with then brother-in-law Francis Schopen, I learned that Mom and my sister Lorraine were frightened about Dad's spending the night all by himself. He was an old man, after all. So they asked Francis (or he volunteered) to keep Dad company, which he did. Francis had a different theory of how the murder was committed. He thought the man had not entered by the back door at all.

Normally it was locked. Nor had he broken in by the front door or any windows. He had been let in by Bernie and was no stranger but someone Bernie knew and was not afraid of, most likely an employee, or a gambler. There had been a long intense discussion, a disagreement of some sort. No robbery. The man had lost his temper and came at Bernie who started for and reached the front door where he was slugged from behind and felled. The attacker kicked him savagely, leaving him slumped next to the front door to die, and then he exited by the back door for fear of being seen if he went out the front way. That's why the rear door was found to be unlatched. All this, Francis deduced from what he observed that night: It was evident that two men had been seated at a table smoking and engaged in conversation, most likely going over bills and accounts.

> Judging from the number of cigarette butts, it had been a long conversation; judging from the length of the cigarette ashes remaining in view, the conversation had grown intense. That was obvious because men chatting amiably tend to flick their cigarette ashes frequently, while men engaged in hot controversy are apt to forget flicking until the ash grows long and falls off or the cigarette exhausts itself in the tray. Evidently the killer had a fit of temper, and ……]

You keep reading about how good the police are in catching killers, and how the FBI always gets its man [J. Edgar Hoover's FBI at the time was at its prideful peak.] But I can tell you they didn't always succeed around here.

Like just after we moved to 5 Charles Street, when our neighbor Frank Peck went out to start his car in the morning and found it with a flat tire. He got his tire pump out and started to pump the tire and got himself blown sky high. Nitroglycerin in the tire pump. Never did solve that one. And then there was that priest in Lead, Father Belknap, who got called out to visit a sick person and on his way was shot through the head. And that Mrs. Neary who someone chopped up and stuffed into a furnace. Another instance of POLICE SUSPECT FOUL PLAY. So, add them to Bernie's case, that's four right there that went unsolved.

I remember when I myself was questioned about a dead man, but it wasn't the police making the inquiries, it was the great granddaughter of the deceased, and it was seventy years after I had found the man dead. Did I tell you about that? I didn't? Well, Slick Montaigne and I were practicing running for the Fourth of July races in Jefferson. We'd do a few miles early every morning around town, and one morning we discovered this body laying by the roadside. Anyway, not long ago, this young woman calls me for information. Seems she had got a bad case of genealogy fever and was trying to track down her ancestors. The fellow we had found dead was Israel Brouillet, her maternal great-grandfather. All she knew about him is that she had heard I had discovered his body. But she could find no record of his being buried in Jefferson, and as she needed his birth and death dates for her research, she wondered if I could help her.

I told her about how we'd found Israel and had notified the authorities, but that I didn't know him well and had not attended the funeral. I just assumed he had been buried from St. Peter's in Jefferson and interred in the cemetery back of the church, but she said she had written the present pastor and was told that no record of burial from the church was to be found. Plus the priest could find no marker in the cemetery for him. "Well," I told the young lady, "just because there is no church record doesn't prove anything. Maybe he hadn't made his Easter duty and wasn't given an official Church send-off. He still could have been buried in the cemetery. It was interesting talking about it, and then I asked her if she knew that the Brouillets in Jefferson and we Bernards came from a common ancestor. She didn't, so I explained how Michel Brouillet was our first ancestor in Canada, and he had three sons, named Raphael, Jean, and Bernard. For some reason, maybe just because there got to be too many Brouillets around those parts, this Bernard Brouillet decided to call his sons by his first name, so they all were given Bernard names. This woman [Patricia (Lavier) Mechling of Rapid City] was descended from one of the other two Brouillets. We had quite a chat, and she was all excited to see the genealogy book we have of the Bernard branch. She even went to Jefferson to visit people I thought I might be able to help her fill in the facts she lacked. But the last time I talked to her, the remains of Israel were still at large, though she did finally find records of him -- which proved her great grandfather was born and had died.

What's that you say? You want to know what ever became of Luke? You know, you sure turned out to be a nosey son-of-a-gun. Hey, do you have that fool recording machine turned on? Because if you do, you better switch if off for this one.

> [I reached over and pretended to turn it off. This deception gnaws at my conscience and I have been a miserable no good wretch ever since. I only hope, Dad, that I've changed enough names and places in this account to spare the sensitivities of possible descendants. There shouldn't be any of them, because Luke was single -- but I can't be sure.]

Well for starts, did I tell you about the time Luke stole that bunch of cattle? He and a guy named Big Red Horner stole a

nice herd across the Wyoming line and trailed them up to within twenty miles of Arpan. Must have been 1909/1910. Big Red wanted to split off his half and run them down toward St. Onge, so he did. Luke decided to let his stay in open country until things got cool, then dispose of them. Unfortunately, just before Big Red reached St. Onge Valley , the law catches him red handed, so to speak. So he's had it. Of course the officers are pretty sure he and Luke are associates, and since they are anxious to get Luke, they talk Big Red into implicating him and turning "state's evidence." In exchange for testifying against Luke, they said Big Red would be let off lighter. Red agrees and Luke is apprehended and tossed in the hoosegow up in Parsimony.

Of course, I figured he was a cooked goose, but Luke was not one to go out meekly. First thing he does is hire John T. Heffron to defend him. John T. is only the best criminal lawyer within five hundred miles. I understand even John T. advised Luke to plead guilty, because although Luke's reputation was soiled, this could be his first conviction and he might get off easy, whereas if he fought it and was convicted, the judge might make an example of him. But Luke would have none of that. "Mr. Heffron," he argues, "if I had wanted to go to jail, I sure as hell wouldn't have hired you to keep me out. Now, by God, I'm either going Scot free or take my medicine."

I took the day off and ran up to Parsimony for the trial. Old John T. put on quite a show. I'd never seen him in action before, although I'd heard a lot abut his abilities. He never gave that jury a whole lot of time to reflect on Luke's guilt; he just kept shining the spot light on Big Red Horner. Gosh, I'll never forget his final appeal to the jury: he started out nice and calm and logical and friendly, just like he was your next door neighbor, and then little by little he built up a head of oratorical steam, growing intenser and intenser, until he was nearly out of control. "Gentlemen of the jury," he says -- not exactly original, but there's more -- "I ask you on this beautiful warm morning when all of nature appeals to your higher, most noble instincts, to consider my client, who, but for the grace of God, could be any one of you. Place yourselves in his boots. Sit in his chair while the persecution, I mean prosecution, does its utmost to tear you from home and loved ones for an crime you had no part of. How would you feel?

If it were not so darkly threatening, it would almost be humorous, to see the persecuting attorney with not a shred of evidence go after my innocent client like a lion after a mole.

But now, gentlemen, you are reasonable men, otherwise you would not have been selected to decide a fellow human being's fate. And it is now to your reason I appeal, not to you hearts. You must not find my client guilty unless the evidence proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that he is.

Evidence! What evidence has the able persecution advanced? Were stolen cattle found in my client's possession? No. Not one critter. Was my client apprehended in the act of stealing? Not on your life. Not only that, but there is no evidence he was anywhere around the scene of the crime. Did the persecution -- I mean prosecution -- dig up a waitress to testify that she served him breakfast down there? Did a priest testify he saw him at Sunday mass down there? No. No. Then how can you beyond reasonable doubt know he was even in the vicinity? Were there witnesses to the alleged crime? No. Nary a witness. Why? Because my client was not in Wyoming at that time -- two of my client's honest friends have even so testified.

But if that is not sufficient, I only ask you to calmly examine Mr. Horner. Look at him slouching there, see his downcast eyes, see that miserable specimen of a man -- that Judas Iscariot -- that dirty yellow dog -- oops, let me not belittle man's best friend by comparison with this -- with this ..."

Well, by the time John T. Heffron concluded, the jury was just chafing at the bit to turn Luke loose and lock up Horner for keeps. Of course Luke was found not guilty.

It had been hotter than the hubs of hell in that courtroom, so after Luke was dismissed, he headed for the nearest saloon and I joined him at a table for a snort. Then some of the Bar BZ hands come filtering in to wet their whistles. They had all come to see Luke finally get what was coming to him because he'd been making free with their strays too long. So now they were upset.

After three stiff ones Luke stopped trembling, and after one more he began getting back his warm personality. He gets up and walks over to one of the Bar BZ boys he knew who was holding the bar down on one end. "Come on, Smitty boy, have a shot on Luke. This is my lucky day.!"

"Piss on you, Luke," says Smitty still rankling over the verdict.

When the Bar BZ boss hears Smitty using bad words like that, he moseys up and tells him, "Now Smitty, let's us not be sore losers. We'll all five of us have a drink on you, Luke, just for old times' sake." Then his smile fades and his eyes get hard, "But let me tell you something, Luke, you weaseled out of this one, but you watch your step because we got our eyes peeled for you and one false move and we'll get you just as sure as God made little green apples."

Like Heffron explained it later: the jury had no choice. All they had to go on was the word of a dirty yellow dog, a self-confessed cattle rustler..

They never did get Luke for heisting beef; he was just too cagey for them. I'll tell you just how cagey he really was: He stole some live hogs once, down around Bear Butte. Got 'em in a dump truck and headed for Deadwood to sell them to Russ Keller the butcher. He didn't want anyone hearing his strange cargo and getting suspicious, so by God he chloroformed them for the trip. They never woke up until they were being slaughtered. So of course those pigs never did squeal on Luke.

The Law maybe never would have got Luke if he hadn't decided to take up a different branch of the art: bank robbery. That finally settled his hash. I've often wondered why he did it; maybe he just needed more of a challenge, more excitement and less chance of stepping in cow crap. He and a couple of accomplices robbed the Second National Bank of Scum Creek. Two of the men were nabbed the next day, but by then Luke was high-tailing it for Chicago with the whole loot. If he had better sense he might have got away with it, but this time the big city was too much for him: he had to start shedding the hayseeds and making like Big Stuff, wining and dining the floozies, and spending money like it was water. Well, some of Chicago's Finest took notice and wondered where his money was coming from. It wasn't long before he was back in the State facing trial. This time there was so much evidence on him, not even John T. Heffron could have got him off.

Several years after they had put Luke away, I was working on a car when three well-dressed hombres walked into the

shop. I gave them the once over; one was holding a clipboard with papers on it. "Well, gentlemen, what can I do for you?"

The clipboard man answered," We hear you're a friend of Luke Bernard."

"The Luke Bernard from Belle? Yes, I'm his friend."

"Good. As you know, he's been in prison and we friends of his figure he's paid his debt to society, and we want you to sign this petition for his release."

"Well, hold your horses just a damn minute. I told you I was his friend, but what sort of friend would I be if I helped turn him loose when all his life he's been struggling to get in there? We taxpayers spent a lot of our money making his wish come true and now you want us to turn him loose just so we will have to spend more money to put him back in again? No, sir, you'll not get my name on that petition."

I suppose they thought I was some sort of son-a-bitch, and maybe I was, but figured he'd go right back to thieving, and he had done more than enough of that for one lifetime. The judge who sentenced him apparently thought the same because he gave Luke an awful dressing down. Said he had never come across a human being so utterly useless to himself and his fellow man -- and that was just the flattering part of his speech. So that's what became of Luke. Did he ever go straight? Yes, but it was only a couple hours before he died.

[I never became well acquainted with the illustrious trial lawyer, John T. Heffron, even though his son Tommy and I were boyhood chums. Oh, I remember seeing him at Sunday Mass, always neatly dressed, winter suits in winter and summer suits in summer, not like my one-suited father. John T. would sit there perspiring just like all of us did on a July day, but he perspired with rare dignity, as if he felt no discomfort. Flies did not distract him either. Most men shooed them away but John did not lift a finger in defense. Sometimes I suspected him of listening to a sermon, but mostly he seemed preoccupied with his own thoughts. I wondered what he was thinking; maybe he was conjecturing how if he had been Christ's lawyer at His trial before Pilate, the whole course of world history might have been changed -- what if Jesus had been found not guilty!

I knew Mrs. Heffron better. She was a charmer, a Swedish type, very sunny, very cultured. You could tell she was cultured because she would drive out forty miles just to admire autumn foliage. Sometimes she invited me to accompany Mary, Tommy and her on these pleasant trips through color-drenched canyons in their long sleek car. Once she explained to me how warm reds, oranges and yellows when splashed across cool blue October skies make the warm hues seem warmer and the cool hues cooler. "Color contrast" she called it.

Had I not been so all-fired bashful, I think Mrs. Heffron could have beveled off my sharp edges and toned up my tastes, because she had taste galore, and she didn't mind talking to me. I saw her do all those things that come natural to high-class ladies, such as paging through Harper's Bazaar, arranging pink and white peonies in cut-glass vases, reading Sonnets from the Portuguese, blowing her nose delicately into violet scented handkerchiefs, and listening to Galli-Curci sing that screechy "Bell Song from Lakme" on her snazzy Victrola.

Music was Mrs. Heffron's forte. I can still see her, this blond apparition, seated at their piano, swaying from side to side as she played, nodding her head and hunching her shoulder blades and doing all those things that make music come out alive and well. Mom used to teach music, and she told me that Mrs. Heffron "played with expression." And what struck me is that she wasn't always playing "My Wild Irish Rose" or that god-awful "Out Among the Black Hills and the Pines." No, she played classier stuff. Tommy would lower his lids and listen, then tell me this one was Show-pen and that one was Shy-cough-ski, and I wouldn't argue about it.

Every weekend you might have seen this tastefully dressed jewel of a woman closely examining Winslow Homers in the Deadwood Art Museum, if only Deadwood had had an art museum. Perhaps this civic shortcoming accounted for Mrs. Heffron's collection of art books, those endlessly fascinating volumes about Old Masters, with full-page reproductions, some even in color. So precious were these tinted pictures that they had to be protected with tissue paper facing sheets.

But it was not Mrs. Heffron who introduced me to the glories of painting and sculpture; it was Tommy. From time to time he would invite me in after school (when his mother and sister were out shopping) and he would break out the art treasures. I marveled that he was conversant with Correggio, Tintoretto, Veronese, and Titian, and could even pronounce their names convincingly -- correctly too, as I learned much later.

Pal Tommy must have been well taught at home because he didn't talk like most of my friends. He would say, "Yes, Ma'am" and "certainly", and where we would exclaim "Gee-willikers!" or "Criminy!", Tommy would say "Splendid!" And when he spoke , the predicates followed the subjects, and meanings came out loud and clear.

Tommy's favorite painter was some old Italian named Titian, (Tish-ian) Tommy called him. He was maybe the greatest old-time painter of female nudes. I'll never forget when Tommy told me, "Titian was great on red haired women." In retrospect it seems a trifle ambiguous, but I knew just what he meant at the time.

"Why," said Tommy, "he was so good they even named a color for him -- Titian Red." How can a guy. twelve, thirteen, know stuff like that? You can see he was no dummy.

If I were going to be honest, which I am, I'd have to admit that we paid particular attention to the nudes, or at least I did. I don't want to speak for Tommy.

Naturally these art works were strong medicine for a naive altar boy whose experience with nudity had been confined to Saturday night baths, plucked poultry, and those bare-bottomed, chicken-winged cherubs that always swarmed around the Blessed Virgin Mary in those sepia-toned religious pictures on the walls of St. Ambrose School.

One thing always perplexed me: why couldn't the husky women in those masterpieces afford to buy underwear, when they could afford velvet couches, lutes, alabaster crockery, and top-rate archery equipment.

When I left Deadwood and went to college, I re-discovered the world of art books. This time I noticed they also contained landscapes and still lifes. I even got a chance to read the texts for myself, because I no longer had to worry about Mrs. Heffron bursting through

the front door with an armful of parcels and catching Tommy and me red-faced.]

CHAPTER NINE

FISH AND QUIPS

How long have I been fishing? All my life -- well, almost. The first place was on False Bottom, when I was about six. But I only fished there once before we all moved to Jefferson, and it wasn't until we moved to Deadwood from the ranch that I tried it again. Pierre and Lawrence were just little shavers, and one Sunday they were pestering me to take them out fishing, so I decided to go out and try our luck on False Bottom where I'd got my start with my Dad.

It had been a dry summer, and when we got there the creek was just a trickle. It didn't look like we'd be overburdened with trout, and we weren't. I left the boys at a little hole in a clearing where they wouldn't get their worms hung up in the brush, and I wandered downstream, but it was no go. Just as I was about to turn back, I pulled in the line and, by God, if there isn't a beauty on the hook. Must have been a good three inches, maybe the smallest fish I'd ever landed. He was hurt, so I had to put his out of his misery. Then I dropped him into my shirt pocket and walked back to the boys.

"Any whoppers yet?" I asked them. They said they'd had nary a nibble, and they wanted to go someplace else where there were some fish.

"Ah, what's the matter? This False Bottom is a real fishing river."

"Yeah, Dad, well let's see what you caught."

So I pulled the minnow out of my pocket and hoisted him up by the tail like he was a fifteen pound salmon. They got quite a kick out of that.

In all the times I've gone fishing, I forgot to bring my license only twice. Once was when Lawrence was on leave from the Naval Academy. We struck out to fish below Deerfield Dam, and when we got there we parked the car on a little rise, took what tackle we figured we'd need, and left the tackle box in the car so that each of us could return for supplies, if we had to. I am having wonderful luck when I see two uniformed men approaching. "Catching any good ones?" one of them asks.

"You bet your boots I am!" I replied. And I opened my creel to show them. "Are you boys from the Air Base?" As if I didn't know.

"No," one of them chirps up, "We're game wardens. Could we see your license?"

I reached for my back pocket, then I remembered that I had left that license home in the buffet drawer. So it was time for some quick thinking.

"Say, I'd be glad to show it to you, but like a damn fool I left it in the tackle box at the car. That's my car way up there on that knoll. Now if one of you boys want to hold this pole, I could walk way up there and get it, even if my feet are giving me fits. Be glad to."

They saw it is quite a hike, so they said no, they'd take my word for it. As they turned to leave, one of them stops, "Where did you buy your license?

"Deadwood. Fish and Hunter's store." And that was the truth. "OK, we're going through there so we'll just verify that. Have a good day. You fishing alone?"

"No, my boy is upstream. He's on vacation from the Nav--" "Does he have his license with him?"

"Well, he damn well better have."

As soon as they were out of sight, I hurried upstream to find Lawrence. "Say, Joe Bush, did you remember to get your license yesterday?" He had forgotten. So I told him we'd better hightail it for home and get one on the way, just in case. But by then we had a nice mess of rainbows.

> [Dad sometimes addressed intimates by other than their own names. "Joe Bush" was one such substitute salutation. Another was "MacDuff", probably from Shakespeare's "Lead on, MacDuff!" Only recently did I discover that Joe Bush was not just a name he dreamed up; it was the name of the U.S. Army Indian policeman who arrested Chief Two Sticks, the chief hung in Deadwood in 1895.]

Sometimes I used to go out to catch fish and wind up catching cold instead. But I finally wised up. When I was younger I'd be wearing my B.V.D.'s, and on a warm day I'd work up a sweat, then a cool breeze would kick up and I'd cool off too

fast and catch cold. Now that I'm retired, I wear my long johns the year around and I don't seem to get summer colds anymore.

You know that gulch there that runs from Central up to Trojan? I was picking strawberries there one day when I stepped through a clump of box elder and discovered a beautiful little fishing hole. I didn't have any tackle along, but I sat down there to eat my lunch, and half way through a peanut butter sandwich I saw a big speckled trout jump. So I caught him a grasshopper and tossed it in. Wham! I kept on catching 'hoppers and gorging that big rascal. I figured by being real nice to him that day, he'd be nice to me when I had my tackle with me.

Speaking of grasshoppers reminds me of that fishing trip with Julie the first time you brought her home from Iceland. You had something to do that day, so I took her out to a special place I had previously lined up for her, after a bit of negotiating. About a month before you got here, I was walking back to the car from fishing on Redwater Creek when I noticed a growth of tall trees away from the creek. That made me wonder where they were getting their drinking water, so I decided to walk over to see if there was any water there. By Golly, if there wasn't the nicest little pond in the world, with trout jumping like crazy. It was a private pond, so I called at the farm house, where I knew the owners. They always let me fish Redwater on their land. I mentioned that I'd discovered their little pond and asked if there was any possibility of fishing it. They told me no, that they wanted to keep it as their own private fishing hole, so I real polite-like assured them I could understand that.

"Heck, I was only inquiring because our new daughter-in-law from way up in Iceland is coming to visit us, and I hoped to locate her a topnotch fishing place for her first trout fishing in the U.S. of A. My son keeps bragging of the great trout and salmon fishing in her country, and I just don't want her getting the notion that we don't have good fishing in the Black Hills. But you farmers pay lots of taxes to keep the country going, so it's only fair you should have your own fishing spot."

They were listening, so I kept going. "I wasn't intending to fish it myself, only give her a chance at it. I'd only be baiting her hook and taking the fish off for her if she was lucky enough to get one or two."

They asked if I would like a cup of coffee and a doughnut.

"Oh, no, thank you, but I'd appreciate a drink of cold water. It's awful hot out today."

I drank the water and told them their alfalfa was looking mighty good, then, just as I was about to leave, wouldn't you know, the woman pipes up: "You know, George, I get a little tired of eating trout. Maybe you and your daughter ought to fish it -- just to keep it from getting overstocked."

"Daughter-in-law," I corrected her.

"Whatever," she replied.

So that's how I got Julie a good spot. But I made one mistake: I took her out without laying in a supply of grasshoppers. It was a good hopper year, and so I thought I'd find plenty by the pond, but when we got started they were scarcer than hen's teeth. Gosh, the first time she cast out, she had a beautiful strike, but she missed it and lost her 'hopper. So I scooted around trying to catch another. She'd catch fish and I'd bait up her hook because in Iceland they don't have grasshoppers and she was wanted no part of touching one.

Actually, I'd made another mistake: couldn't find my 'hopper can in the tackle box, so I had no way to store up a supply for her. I would catch one, and hold it between my lips, then catch one in each hand so I had three backups for her. When she saw me with a 'hopper in my lips, she about died. I guess she was wondering what kind of revolting family she had married in to, but since her daddy was a professional fisherman, I figured she would understand you did what you had to do to bring home a catch. Well, she didn't lack for bait, and she had a ball that day.

Your brother Pierre was a fisherman, believe you me. About as good as any I ever saw. We used to like going out together. One Sunday, he and I set out bright and early to try our luck at Redwater, and on our way through Spearfish we thought we'd better stop in to Mass or your mother would be upset. As we were walking from the car to the church, we happened to meet Father Sibilisky, the church boss. "Listen, Father," I said, "there are some fish in Redwater waiting for us to give them their breakfast, so do them a favor and don't talk all day."

He looked startled at first, then gave us a laugh.

When he got past the Epistle and the Gospel and settled down to the sermon, he talked, and he talked, and he talked

some more. And every time he came to a good place to stop, he'd repeat the last dozen points for emphasis. Once in a while he'd give us a little grin, and go on. I think he did it just to aggravate us.

Funny, Harry, but I don't remember you ever catching much, but your brothers did, and so did Lorraine. She got her first fish on a pin hook in City Creek. Don't know what your problem was.

[I was no good at fishing. If a fish didn't jingle my line within two minutes, I lost patience and would wander off to explore ruined barns, or study sunlight through broken colored bottles, or watch red-wing blackbirds on quavering boughs, or examine bees on purple russian thistle, or marvel at dragon flies on dragon flies. In water I seldom caught anything, but in one glance across a meadow it was no trick at all to catch a glimpse of a meadowlark rising. And yet, fishing is in my fabric. We talked fish and ate fish. Not a Friday went by without fish for supper. I even married into fish, Julie's daddy being skipper of a fishing trawler. One of the first poems I heard was Dad's favorite:

Fishy, fishy, in the brook
Come and get your picture took
Daddy catch him like a man
Mama fry him in a pan.

I can see Dad now, reciting this poem in mid-winter as he re-ties guides on his bamboo fly-rod, and oils his Mitchell Spinning Reel, getting ready for the first of April.]

Your uncle Tom Burchell liked to fish, but we never got out together very much because I was a worm and hopper man and he was a fly man. He was crazy about fly-fishing in Spearfish Canyon, but I wasn't keen on that stream because there were so many tourists fishing there that you had to bring your own rock to stand on.

But I remember Tom wanting me to go there one day, and I talked him into going out to Rochford. I guaranteed him he'd get the limit and we both did. The reason I recall the trip was that we got a little more than we bargained for: when we'd caught

enough, we stopped at the ranch house on the property we had fished, and thanked the landowners -- which was always a good idea. The owner had just pulled in from town where he had been given a jug of moonshine, so he insisted we take a pint bottle with us to sample on the way home.

By the time we got to 5 Charles, the pint had disappeared. Tom said he wouldn't come in because he should get home before the effects set in. So I saw him off, then went to the kitchen sink to rinse off the trout I had cleaned on the creek. It was just about four o'clock. All of a sudden I began to get light headed, and then the fish began blurring in the sink. I'd wanted to get them ready for the pan, because I was half starved. I went in the front room and asked your mother if she would fry up supper a little early, and when she sees my eyes she knows immediately what has happened. By God, Harry, one drink and that woman could always tell it. Then I got a bit unsteady on my pins. I thought I hadn't had all that much, but I began to suspect the worse. My God, was I ever sick. That stuff was my second and last dose of bad booze -- it would have killed an elephant. You mother was plumb disgusted with me.

[This incident sticks in my mind because it was the only time I ever saw my father drunk -- or poisoned, as he claimed. Actually, Dad was moderate, but he didn't carry temperance to extremes. Aunt Kate always poured him one shot when they sat down for a game of cards, and he rarely refused a friendly drink, but that was not so common an occurrence. Also on winter evenings when he came home from Bernard & Gerber's he usually opened the closet in the laundry room where he kept his work clothes and had one good pull on a pint bottle he had on hand there for emergencies, such as being half frozen. After his reviving shot, he would come in, kiss Mom, as he invariably did when leaving and returning, greet us kids, and then sit down to supper.

So I never before heard Mom have to scold him for overindulging. Even on this occasion she did not scold -- she did far worse -- she ignored him. This was new experience for me too and I didn't understand it. "Fan!" he would plead, before the waves of nausea started, "Fan, fix me a little supper." Icy silence. And he'd beg

again, but she was deaf to his hunger. I was maybe eight at the time. Here was my father asking for what might be his last supper on earth, and Mom coldly turning him down, because obviously their love had gone forever. I was miserable. When she noticed me staring at them, she told me to go out and play until called for.

Dad was not at the table for supper. We ate in sorrow. Later that night I crept downstairs to their bedroom because I couldn't sleep thinking about the chasm of hatred dividing them. They were in bed, he was unconscious, maybe dead, but Mom was alive, saying her rosary.

"I can't sleep, Mom," I said. "My stomach aches." Actually the pain was a little higher.

"Well, why don't you crawl in here beside me and maybe you will feel better".

Dad was out of it, but his soft fitful moans and little retching gurgles assured me he was still alive. I got into bed with them, and the fact that Mom had forgiven him and was probably right now praying for his wretched soul, and that they were together in their nest, worked wonders for my illness. I fell asleep secure in the knowledge that love was not dead, it was merely sick to the stomach.

One winter the folks were visiting us in California, where Dad's brother Albert and his wife Eva also lived. When Dad and Albert got together there were jokes and tall tales to swap. Dad was no slouch at telling stories. Sometimes they were originals, sometimes not. A sampling follows:]

Say, Eva, that Albert of yours sure passed up a good chance to be a rancher when he sold that fabulous acreage of his up at Barstow [on the California desert.] He drove me up to show me his paradise, and he bragged all the way there. And the further we drove the worse the country looked. By golly, Eva, we have better land than his in the badlands of South Dakota. We were driving along and I asked him, "Say, Albert, are there any coyotes in this neck of the woods -- all I can see is buzzards."

"Sure, lots of coyotes, George."

"Well," I asked, what do those coyotes live on?"

"Jack rabbits."

"Jack rabbits? Well, I'll buy that story if you can tell me what the jack rabbits live on."

When did I first start telling stories? You mean funny ones? The first one I remember telling, Albert, was when Phillip Bernard and my Dad and some others were swapping yarns back in Jefferson one day. I was just a kid, maybe nine or ten, and nobody was paying me any attention, so I felt left out of the fun. After hearing them take turns telling jokes and seeing who could raise the loudest laughs, I was getting awful anxious to dip my oar in.

Finally they slowed dawn and I got my opening. I began telling one I'd heard at the barber shop, about a fat man. Well, no sooner does Dad get the drift of it than he started shooting me dirty looks, like I should shut up. I suppose it was because Phillip was a real Fatty Arbuckle , and Dad figured he would take offense. But I went on anyway and finished the joke, only I noticed I didn't get much applause.

Here I am telling one of the funniest stories in the world and these dummies are just looking at me. Then, all of a sudden, that big Phillip cracked a smile, then he let out a chuckle, and followed that with a snicker, and pretty soon he is laughing out loud. Laugh? He was shaking like a tub of Jello. Then the others saw it was safe, and they joined in, and pretty soon even my Dad was laughing. After that, I've never been bashful about telling stories.

Jello reminds me. Eva, do you remember Laurel and Hardy? I went to one of their movies once, and they were seated at a table having dinner with their wives. Each had a dessert consisting of a rounded mound of Jello, topped with a cherry. Well, that big Hardy gets a roguish twinkle in his eyes, reaches over to his dessert, starts to massage the cherry, setting the Jello all a-quiver. When his wife sees this gesture, she gives him a hoity-toity look and slaps his offending hand. Hardy's gesture was awfully risqué for those days. If they'd had film ratings then, that nonsense would have resulted in an "R" rating.

You remember when all the fuss was going on about colored people protesting about having to ride in the rear of busses and

being refused admission to white universities in the South, and all that big hullabaloo that was stirring up the country?

Well, at that time we only had one negro couple in Deadwood, and that was Louie Banks and his wife. They ran "Louie's Chicken Hut", a little hole in the wall specializing in southern fried thicken.

I ran into Louie one day and we began discussing the critical racial situation.

"Yassah, George," he says, in dead earnest, "all that rioting is getting me stirred up something awful. By God, I been a-thinking of not serving no more white folks in my restaurant!"

Serving reminds me: I was talking to Percy Russell one time and he was telling me about how his father, Mike, was an early pioneer in town, and how he was a dignified man and tried his best to run an orderly saloon. Calamity Jane walked into Mike's establishment one day, bellied up to the bar, and ordered a whiskey. Mike politely told her he did not serve ladies in his saloon. So Calamity pulled her revolver out and laid in on the bar and repeated her request. So then I asked Percy what Mike had done. Percy says, "He served her."

Sometimes when you get a bunch of guys together batching it, you see some fun -- no one wants to get stuck with the cooking. We had some cowpokes at Vini's once who were going to be around a few days. We cut cards to see who would have to cook. The loser said he'd cook on one condition, namely that the first S.O.B. who complained of his cooking would have to take over the job.

Two days go by without a single complaint, so the cook is wondering how in the world he'll get himself out of the job. That night he dumps a whole box of salt in the soup. The first cowhand to taste it, made an awful face and gagged. "Holy Moses, but this soup is SALTY -- just the way I like it!"

Two men went down to the Big Sioux River with their boat to do some duck hunting. One was native to Jefferson; the other was an out-of-state friend, there to hunt for the first time. The Jeffersonian brought his talented hunting dog with him to fetch downed ducks. They are all sitting in the rowboat in the reeds when the first wave of ducks flies over. Both men shoot and two ducks fall into the water fifty feet away. As soon as they splash

down, the dog jumps overboard and walks over the surface of the water and grabs one duck and walks back. He dumps the duck into the boat, wheels around and walks back and retrieves the second duck.

The dog's owner, of course, is not surprised. He knows he has an unusual animal, but the other fellow just sits there without saying anything. The same thing happens again and the dog walks out like he was on the Sea of Galilee. Still the visitor makes no comment. Finally the dog owner can't stand the silence any more. "Say," he says, "don't you notice anything peculiar about my dog?"

"Oh, yes," replies the visitor, "he's not much of a swimmer."

[As a rule, Dan stories were more on-color than off-color, but he told one off-color one to his brother Albert when I was listening. At the time, Albert was residing in a retirement area in Southern California, and he says he got a lot of laughs from the old guys there by repeating this story. Often, as in this story, Dad adds his own local color.]

There was a rickety wreck of an old man who was touring the Black Hills and happened to be in Deadwood during the big Days of '76 celebration. All the excitement of the parade and the carnival and the rodeo and the street music must have awakened old fires in his rusty carcass. He totters up to a policeman directing traffic and asks him if he knows if there is a place in town for a man can get a girl.

Well, the cop eyes him, sort of surprised like, but it isn't the first time he'd been asked that question. So he directs him to the "Three Nickels" at 555 Main, where all his desires would be attended to in a professional manner.

The oldster just barely makes it to the top of the stairs where the RING BELL sign is posted. He makes his wishes known to the Madam, who promptly puts him in touch with a fine young woman. When they reach her room and he is pulling off his clothes, the young lady takes one look at his scraggy, time-battered frame, and exclaims, "Gee, Pop, you've really had it!"

"I have?" he says sort of bewildered, "Who do I pay?

[Many of Dad's favorite jokes had to do with religion or the clergy. I don't think it stemmed from disrespect

because in general he did respect men of the cloth if he thought them sincere and not holier-than-thou. On occasion, as in the instance of Father Robinson, he could be downright harsh. Once I heard him refer to a minister who gave him offense as "That psalm-singing son-of-a-bitch," the alliteration of which I vastly admired because we were studying poetry at the time in Sophomore English and learning about similes, metaphors, alliteration and the like. Here then, are a few innocuous religion stories.]

A little Catholic boy was asked by his Protestant chum to go to a Baptist service with him. Out of curiosity the Catholic lad accepted the invitation. When he returned home later, he told his mother about it. "Well, Johnny," she said, "you know you are not supposed to go to other people's services, but I suppose just once won't hurt you too much. And did you find it interesting?"

Oh, yes, Mom! I especially liked their singing. They have lots of neat songs, and they're all in English so I could get most of the words. The one I liked best was all about a dog".

"A dog?"

"Yes, a dog. I think it was called 'Nero my Dog has Fleas' ".

Times got tough in a monastery in England, so the Friars decided to set up a fish and chip joint out on the busy highway. One of them would do the fish, another the chips, and another would serve drinks.

An American tourist happened to stop for refreshment, and being a wise-guy, like some American tourists are, he hailed one of the friars, "Hey, are you the fish friar?"

"No," replied the man, "I'm the chip monk."

My friend, Bono Como, and I were in the same catechism class in Jefferson. When it came time for us to make our first confession, we were both a little leery about it, but for different reasons. Ever since I could remember, the nuns at school had taught me that everything I liked to do was a sin of some sort, so I figured I'd be in the box with the priest all afternoon. But Dono was just the opposite, he was as good as they come, so he didn't know what he was going to say.

I go first and when finally I get excused, Dono is still waiting. Into the confession box he goes, but he doesn't say a word. Finally the priest asks if anyone is there, and if so to please speak up and confess his sins.

"I'm here, Father," says Dono, "but I can't think of anything to confess."

"How old are you, my son?" asks the priest kindly.

"Going on seven, Father."

"Seven! And no sins to confess? Why, my child, all little boys your age have something to confess. Haven't you ever stolen a nickel?"

"No, Father, but my little sister has!"

The Irish pastor is walking down the street in Dublin when he spies one of his male parishioners ahead of him. Suddenly the parishioner casts furtive looks to left and right, stoops down, picks something up and hastily puts it under his coat.

The good Father rushes forward and collars him. "Patrick! What is that ye have just stolen off the street. Come, man, show it to me!"

Pat reluctantly withdrew the object and held it out. It was a piece of horse manure. "Patrick! Why that's just horse manure!"

Patrick looked at the padre in admiration, "Gee, Father, it must be wonderful to be educated like you. I didn't know if it was horse or mule."

[Dad loved to laugh and give the gift of laughter, so he'd be pleased that I'm passing these stories on to you. You can no doubt see why it is difficult to remember him with sadness.]

CHAPTER TEN

THE SUNDOWN YEARS

YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE. This is HARRY speaking, bringing you a true confession: I don't know how to end this book.

Starting was a breeze, and continuing would be easy because there is more "good stuff" remaining on the tapes, but how to come to a brisk and fitting conclusion is worrisome.

How do I get Dad to stop talking when he's obviously enjoying himself? Dare I be brave and tell him to shut up? He never was one to take orders, especially from me, but this time I think I have him at a slight disadvantage.

OK, Dad, maybe it will go faster if I take over. So we're shifting gears. You move over and let me get in the driver's seat. From here on I'll do the talking. I'll even come out from behind those humiliating little bracket symbols and stop whispering from reduced margins. We'll speed her up to sixty, then skid into the final parking space. Right now.

But wait. Won't we be missing some good material? Like when you drove Old Doc Howe on his rounds during the big flu epidemic of 1918 because you knew the town so well you could get him to victims without delay, thus saving him precious time.

Hey, and remember when another doctor asked you to return a blanket to a poor widow in St. Onge -- the same blanket they had wrapped her flu-riddled husband in for his trip to St. Joseph's Hospital where he died. And how you wanted to turn that doctor down because you were afraid you'd bring flu germs back home to Pierre and Lawrence, but how the doctor told you to go ahead and do your Christian duty because that poor widow needed the blanket for her family, and how you

succumbed to your nobler instincts after being assured that if you took a big shot of booze before going you would not catch the flu yourself. Then how you brought the bug home where Mom was just ready to have a baby, and how that baby (who turned out to be me) was born with the flu and given no chance to live, but fooled everybody. I'm still ticked off about your taking that chance -- just for a destitute widow.

And shouldn't we cut in little Doc Leslie for a slice of immortality? Doc was a feisty bantam-weight ex-pugilist from Wales, not long on diplomacy. Aunt Alexina phoned him one day to come and administer to her spinster daughter Lea, who spent most all of her time being critically ill and eventually died of old age. This happened to be Doc's first visit to her home. When he knocked on the door, Lea, who had forgotten her death agony, got up and answered the door.

"I'm looking for a Miss L'Esperance," Doc said.

"I'm the old maid, Lea L'Esperance," answers Lea with a touch of humor.

"Well, by God, you look it!" snaps Doc in his best bedside manner.

And there was the one about Father Kipp of Deadwood, whom you referred to as "that saintly old rooster." And he was. He could hardly ever make a Lenten sermon on the sufferings of Christ without setting the pulpit a-wash in tears. And how he had no business sense and even wept asking for money to build the new church after the old one threatened to plunge off its precarious site on a nearly perpendicular slope. And how poor Father got rooked out of his New York Life Insurance policies by some flim-flam artist who got him to swap his good-as-gold policies for worthless ones.

Then the way you, the great dog lover of yesteryear, eventually became intolerant of the species after we moved to 5 Charles where you wanted to keep a spic-and-span place. We had a tiny front yard with two fir trees, plus a fire hydrant in the parkway. So strategically located were these trees and hydrant that there wasn't a one of the sixty-five dogs in the neighborhood who didn't unburden his bowel in our yard on a daily basis, which you didn't appreciate. And remember how it galled you that a High School official used to walk his mutt twice a day to the Post Office just to let the pooch poop on

grass, and how you told the owner you thought it was a shame that taxpayers had to spend good money just to provide a dumping station for his dog.

What's this? Now I find myself wondering if all this looking backward accomplishes anything. Maybe in trying to honor my father, I do him disservice. Am I painting a true portrait, or am I drawing a cartoon? Merely by selecting from his taped episodes, am I not unwittingly making him lop-sided? Isn't his nose too large? Haven't I made him bald by not describing his shock of silver hair? And where are his Gallic features: the eyebrows inquisitively arched, the prominent Adam's apple, the deep chest, the bowed legs that must too long have hugged horses' bellies. And look, you left out his eyes -- they are only ciphers, like Daddy Warbuck's eyes in Little Orphan Annie. You've created a caricature, not a portrait.

You should have shown more than blood-blistered thumbs, greasy coveralls, grasshopper-holding lips. Why didn't you toss in a few pages of his political writings, his letters to big shots? That would at least have shown a concerned citizen, a Democrat in a sea of Republicans, a believer in F.D.R.'s New Deal, a believer in bank regulation after the big bank failures of his day, a believer in Social Security, strong defense, and good schools. Yes, and a believer too in the necessity for big business to make profit and create jobs. My, how you detested U.S. fiscal irresponsibility in allowing national debt to swell. "There will come a day of reckoning, you mark my words! It can't go on this way forever." You sounded like a broken record. You should see our debt and trade deficits today, Dad. We just haven't learned a damn thing from you.

Remember how you could get so fired up talking politics up at Grandma Hirbour's? Your granddaughter, Anne, told me once, "There was one thing I learned, and that was never get Grandpa going on politics. It was just too dangerous."

So, in my hurry to finish your "memoirs", I'll not try to establish you as one of Deadwood's foremost thinkers on politics and economics. Besides, I lost my confidence in your judgments after you staunchly opposed the creation of Mt. Rushmore. "Pretty soon," you prophesied, "the goddam

government will have all our nice mountains reduced to granite chips. Big waste of money." You blew that one, Pop. Why it may be the only thing the government ever did that brings in more than it cost -- the concession sales of Pepsi and buffalo burgers alone does that.

But what bothers me most at this juncture is the question of Mom. Why do I let her lurk in the shadows? She disliked the lime-light, so that will be my excuse. Still, I should have coaxed her out, held her up to dazzling sunlight to be transfigured, as sometimes I thought my father transfigured her. Or, at the very least, I should have silhouetted her on her beloved prairie against a pink sunset.

I can see her now on the front cover of this best-selling paperback. She looms tall and in full color, with a flowing mane of jet-black hair; her hand is cupped over her eyes as she peers north toward the twin-blips of Two-Top. The artist has shown a prairie fire approaching their little shack. Dad is in the middle distance plowing the fire break; curiously, Mom's hair flows north, though the wind blows the fire south. Everything about her is beautiful and big -- but golly, her breasts were never that big, and never half bare like that! Oh well, what's the use of art, if not to sell great and highly profitable books like this one.

Somewhere, before we were diverted into repairing cars, the story of Dad's and Mom's romance was progressing chronologically. Maybe you wonder what ever became of it. Well, then...

They buried their twins in the winter of 1917, then in the following year they packed up little Pierre and Lawrence and moved to Deadwood where because of w-o-r-k they were never to know want again. They celebrated their Deadwood arrival year by bringing me into the world. Not content with me, they then produced my sister Lorraine around 1920. Even then they were not satisfied. Two more infants followed, but both died in childhood - Donald in 1922 and Ronald ten long years later. Because of their losses they never piled up a big family like earlier Bernards did. Great-great grandpa Alexis tallied eleven; Great grandpa Ulric Ubald chalked up and even dozen;

Grandpa Pierre Ulric slacked off with eight. Only four of us out of eight survived.

You won't believe it, but I never knew when my mother was pregnant. For one thing I was never told; for another, I was none too observant. Pregnancy in our family was as closely guarded a secret at the development of the atomic bomb.

In the case of the final pregnancy, I was a freshman in high school. My sister happened to be rummaging in the storeroom of our house and discovered, in the top tray of an old trunk, a neat stack of new baby clothes. More worldly than I, Lorraine deduced that Mom was expecting a baby, but do you think she would blab the news to me? Not on your life.

I remember returning home after a basketball game: Mother had been ill more than usual that winter and was stretched out of the sofa where she divided her time between movie magazines and Father Lasance's Prayer Book. When I kissed her and asked how she felt, she said she was not feeling well at all. "Mom," I chided, "for someone who is supposed to be sick, you sure do look nice and fat." She just smiled and hung on to her big secret. Shortly afterwards she had to go to the hospital, but I didn't know what for. I remember Dad hired a young woman from Nebraska to keep house for us, because it looked as if Mom would be slow getting well. All I knew was that things were not normal, and that made me very uneasy.

Then one morning as I was applying Brilliantine to my hair and getting ready to leave for classes, in walks Dad. That was unusual at that time of day; ordinarily he would have been at work by then, and he wouldn't have been wearing a suit and tie.

He sat down dejectedly at the table. Finally he took notice of me and he said, "Harry, you had a nice little baby brother last night -- but he died this morning." I shall never forget the tears that filled his eyes, the first I had ever seen him shed, and I can still hear the little sobs he tried to squelch.

There was nothing much I could say, so I left him there and went to school, but I might as well have stayed home for all the good classes did me that day.

Nevertheless, their declining years were blessed with much brightness, which I will mention briefly as soon as I swiftly dispose of a few darker experiences. As in most lives there were those unexpected, smashing shocks. Like the night their grandson's lovely and vital young wife was killed by a drunken

driver, leaving two motherless infant daughters and a broken hearted husband. Or like the long, harrowing, hopeless anguish of seeing another young and much loved granddaughter go lame and blind with multiple sclerosis. The girl was so bad off that she was unaware of giving birth to her second (and last) daughter and died shortly thereafter. Finally, there was the terrible bleakness of my mother's mental collapse, and the agony of witnessing Dad having to see her enter the cold, forbidding institution at Council Bluffs for a long period of shock treatment and therapy, a chancy course at her advanced age.

Yet, they were tough fibered folks, never devoid of faith, and always with a glimmer of hope, Dad always looked toward the light. Fortunately, happiness had a way of surprising them, as one is surprised by finding crocus at the edge of melting snow banks.

Mom was nearly seventy when she went to Council Bluffs, yet she eventually made a full recovery and lived to enjoy the most care-free days of her life. Some of us swore it was a miracle; others attributed it to new wonder drugs, such as tranquilizers, that allowed her to rest so that body and mind could repair themselves. How vastly relieved and happy Dad was at this turn of events.

After her recovery, Mom was never long on energy, but she went on keeping house, tending her indoor and outdoor plants, and cooking meals in her primitive kitchen -- the kitchen that we tried for years to talk her into letting us modernize. Were you to measure the length of her counter space, you'd get no more than forty inches. Without the sink and table she'd have had to prepare food on the floor!

As for Dad, he was basically robust to the end, discounting periodic bouts with lumbago. His hearing was shot long before he retired from Bernard & Gerber's. In fact, it was so poor in his last working years that he could no longer diagnose engine problems by ear, at least until he discovered the stethoscope technique: he'd place one end of a cut-off broom handle against the engine block, and the other end against the bone behind his ear. The "vibes" helped him isolate trouble spots. We kept pestering him to buy hearing aids before Mom lost her voice yelling at him.

He went so far as to try out Uncle Tom's aids, but summarily rejected them as no good. "All they do is hiss at me," he

complained. Once he wrote me, saying: "Write me more letters, Harry. I hear writing real well."

He was an avid reader of newspapers and magazines, and he gobbled books of all sorts, particularly Westerns, which he and Aunt Kate exchanged. He liked to watch sports, football and boxing especially. Golf was too sissy. Western movies on TV he favored because he enjoyed scenery, animals, and action, and he could get the drift of the story without hearing the words. In fact, if Mom were napping, as she often did, he would turn the TV sound off; it made no difference anyway.

He loved to pick wild chokecherries and raspberries, and knew all the best spots in the Hills; he was a studious and effective gardener, with deep rooted convictions about the magic of manure.

For an old man, he kept reasonably trim , not only by gardening and berrying and fishing, but also by shoveling snow. Occasionally in winter he would disappear into the garage, take a hand saw and rip old 2 x 4's lengthways, not to be building anything, but just for the exercise. When he was 86, he wrote me: "Well, Harry, I've still got plenty of get-up-and-go -- but mostly it is after I've gone to bed for the night."

Julie and I recall the fun we had with him once after Mom had died and he was visiting us in California. I was scanning the Los Angeles Times TV Section. "Hey, Dad, I see there's a John Wayne movie on the tube tonight. Called "The Cowboys." They say here that it takes place around Belle Fourche."

"The devil you say! We've got to see that, Harry!"

The story tells how cattleman John Wayne was strapped for competent cowhands to help him drive his herd from Belle Fourche to market -- Omaha, or Sioux City, I forget. Seems that all the good cowpokes are off fighting in France with Pershing, so John, who I guess is too old for soldiering, is faced with moving his cattle with the only help he can get -- young school boys. Since there are more boy applicants than he will need, he has to conduct qualification tests to select those most capable. Most are so green they don't know which end of a horse you feed. So John gathers these kids together and explains that it is going to be a tough job; he'll be a-needing gutsy kids who can stay in the saddle and wipe their own noses. Introducing them to a saddled bronc, he shouts: "That little dream-boat filly over there is named Crazy Alice. Now, if one you was to stay aboard

her, say for the count of ten, I might just bear that in mind when I do the hiring."

One young greenhorn climbs to the top of Crazy Alice, who immediately goes straight up, makes a U-turn in midair, and lands without a rider. The rider lands a few seconds later, flat on his back in a puff of dust.

When Crazy Alice is rounded up and calmed down to a mere frenzy, the second applicant approaches her grimly and tries to swing up into the saddle, but Alice is never there when the kid tries to mount, so fearless Duke Wayne simply reaches up to Alice, pulls her head down to his level and clamps on to her laid-back ear with his teeth. The kid then mounts with no trouble.

"Yeah!" Dad shouts, "I've seen that done many a time! You bite their ear, it takes their mind off the fellow trying to get on".

As soon as Wayne unclamps Alice's ear, she takes off. Dad is bug-eyed: "Wow! Look at that filly buck. Say, that kid is giving her some ride! By God, he's got himself a job for sure!"

When the kid finally proves himself and gets back on his own two feet and is catching his breath, Old John walks up to him with that asymmetric grin of his and asks, "What's your name, cowboy?"

"Name is Honneycutt. I'm fifteen. Everybody calls me Sonny."

All during this action the accompanying music is having conniptions, rollicking when the bucking is in progress, then broadening out as wide as the Belle Fourche prairie when the boy triumphs. The violins soar so high that only a dog can hear the glory. But commonsense-John doesn't want to ruin Crazy Alice by over-riding her, so they bring up another ornery cayuse. There are still plenty of eager kids who want a try -- I think John talked the schoolmarm into excusing the boys from class just to help John, so the soldiers in France can get a chunk of beef now and then.

The next kid mounts what seem to be a pussy-cat, but in a flash, that horse goes racing towards Montana alickety-split, not doing any high bucking but definitely going where he has a mind to. All at once the horse slams on his four-hooved brakes, and the would-be cowboy goes sailing over his head, landing fifteen feet away in some surprised sagebrush. "Yes, I've seen that too!" roars Dad. "A horse like that can be a hell of a lot harder sticking to than one of those high buckers. But the hats

those cowboys are wearing weren't like the ones back then. Ours came more to a point."

There was a commercial break right then, which touted Grape Nuts. Do you readers realize that Grape Nuts are not only good for breakfast, but for any time of day? That got us talking of cereal. "Yes, Harry, we had Grape Nuts when I was a kid, and Corn Flakes too, but not Shredded Wheat. That came later."

Wow, how interesting can it get!

After the movie, Dad's thoughts were still on their ranch near Belle Fourche. "Your mother and I had slim pickings in our last years there, but we were never happier. You didn't need a whole lot to scrape by on: we could go to town in the fall, and for only thirty-five dollars we could haul home a wagonload of groceries, enough to last us all winter: beans, bacon, flour, sugar, salt, coffee, potatoes, raisins. You could get a hundred pound sack of onions for a dollar. Cost us about two head of good cattle to pay for the load.

Bulls never brought us anything, a half-cent or a cent a pound, but now they pay good money for anything they can grind into hamburger."

It was nearing bedtime for us, so I gave Dad his nightly dish of ice cream. We chatted a bit more, and I told him of my work, which he always was interested in. Probably it pleased him that he had put me through school and that now I could buy the ice cream for a change.

As he headed for the guest room, he stopped.

"Say, MacDuff, when you and Julie come to the Hills next summer, we should drive up and see if we can find our old homestead."

It sounded like a great idea.

In the summer of 1973, Julie and I and son George hopped in our camper and drove the thirteen hundred miles to Deadwood. It is tempting to tell you how much our spirits always soared as we traversed those wide spaces and marvelous scenery, knowing we were getting closer and closer to the Black Hills. But you must already know the happiness of homing, so let's skip it.

After a few days in Deadwood I told Dad that we wanted to take him tomorrow to look for his old homestead. His ears perked up.

"Well, it might not be so easy to find it because the guy I sold out to was making moonshine there and burned the house down. And the country is all changed. There are buildings where there never were buildings before, and trees too. And big trees where there were only saplings, and they have fences all over."

It was true. Only a year or two before, Francis had driven him there to look and they ended up not finding the spot.

"I sure hope we'll have luck this time."

"Don't worry, Dad," said Julie, "we'll find it this time."

The next morning was brilliant, with a soft breeze blowing -- beautiful day for adventure. We left home in high spirits, and as we drove north, Dad excitedly pointed out places of interest, and commented on crop conditions and how much the country has been improved by water conservation practices. "That beauty of a farm is the De Rossier place. Chris and I caught our limits of trout there one day."

As I review the tape recording of our trip, I hear the noise of the truck engine and the wind whistling by. Dad was definitely "up" for this outing. He snapped out orders to me: "No! Don't turn that way, stay on 85 North -- that other road goes to Fruitdale and Nisland." We passed through Belle Fourche where he pointed out a building that Uncle Vini had once owned. Ten minutes later we started up a long incline.

"OK, fine! We're heading up the Indian Creek divide. We didn't come this way back then; we cut off at the Owl Creek Crossing back there a ways, but I don't think you can get through that way anymore. Let's keep going straight!"

When we topped the divide he told me we'd have to find somewhere to turn right and get down in the gully where the creek runs. "I don't know the roads up here, but we got to get down in the draw. Wait! There's a lane by that ranch house and it's going right. Take it! Take it!" He was barking orders like a top sergeant.

"But jeez , Dad, that's a private road and it says to keep out."

"Well pee on that, we ain't going to hurt their ranch. Go on I tell you!"

When you have a leader like Dad, you do what you're told. So I opened the gate and we dusted our way down a dirt road, stopping eventually at a wooden bridge that spanned a tiny stream. There were flocks of small birds flailing dense growth of sunflowers; we spooked two does who where peacefully drinking at water's edge; on a secluded pond paddled a dozen wild ducks, noisily quacking. Dads head swiveled from side to side like a search antenna, scanning the landscape for bearings. "Drive up on that knoll," he snaps. The knoll commanded a view of the stream and a few distant structures. "That's Indian Creek, and that has to be the haybottom -- not my haybottom, but I cut hay on shares there once. Let's see if we can catch that young fellow making hay over there." We drove to where the lad was riding his tractor and when he saw us he stopped.

I explained that we were trying to find my father's old homestead located near the junction of Hildebrandt and Indian Creeks. He knew where it was -- he used to see the ruin while cutting grass. So he pointed out the direction, and before long we pulled to a stop and began searching the ground.

Dad made the first discovery; he stumbled over a low ridge of earth. "This was my water hole!" he cried, "Sure as hell. Scratched it out with a stick, I did!"

Julie and I had spread out from him. Suddenly, I yelled: "Over here, Dad. Come over here!"

I had discovered the old cellar, filled nearly level with debris. He hurried over as fast as his 86 year old legs would carry him. He studied the shards of glass, rosy from exposure to years of sunlight, and bits of crocks and china, and melted metal that looked like lead or zinc. "Yup, this is our cellar! And right above it was our kitchen. The house originally was ten by twelve feet, then we added on a twelve by sixteen to make an L-shape. Made us a nice little place."

As we poked around in the rubble, Dad suddenly turned and walked off. Julie came to where I was standing. "Where's Dad going?" she asked.

"He said he's going to his barn."

"What barn? I don't see any barn." There was not a trace of barn structure, nothing but prickly pear, thirsty-looking grass, and a prairie dog mound. I remember him saying it was poor soil where the house was, and I could agree with him. We watched Dad as he stopped. He looked first toward Two-Top,

then toward the creek, then back toward us. I wondered if in his mind he saw the barn, with its pretty cupola, and his milk cow munching hay in her stall, and his work horses swatting flies with their tails, and Snowball snoozing in the doorway, flanked by his fellow hounds. Does Dad see his dark-haired young wife hanging laundry on the line on just such a day as this, with a warm wind perfect for drying? Does he see the family clothes flapping against that crystal blue sky? Does he see his double-barrel shotgun propped in the crook by the kitchen door, and the ice cream freezer on the small wooden deck, and does he hear the chatter of little Pierre and Lawrence as they play with the wagon he made them from a soap box?

In a while he returned from the barn that was not there. There were no tears to betray his nostalgia; he still brimmed with enthusiasm. "See this grass, kids? Salt fade, that's what it's called. Is it good for anything? You bet it is -- you turn cattle loose out here and that's the first stuff they go for. They'll clean it right up. Now, that clovery looking grass is buffalo grass, and this with the thin stem is wheat grass."

We completed our inspection with great satisfaction. On the drive home, he recounted the story of how he and mother had made that precarious wagon trip from Belle Fourche to the ranch in a snowstorm. But I could not think of snow because I kept seeing the country we were leaving behind -- country that very likely he would never see again. Somehow, though, I felt more grateful than melancholy, for I knew that although endings are inevitable, Dad and Mom in some explicable and wonderful way would always be on this prairie as seasons waxed and seasons waned, part of the living spirit of the good earth.

Mother did not accompany us on this trip. She had gone on a much, much longer trip the winter before. And we did not expect her back.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ROADS END

In May of 1968, Mom and her sister "Toto" of Lead boarded a Western Airlines flight to come visit their sister Marian, who was terminally ill and being cared for by us in our Los Angeles home. Under the sad circumstances, we had not expected their visit to be as pleasant as it really was. The three of them accepted the inevitable and made their last get-together in this world just as happy as they could. Eventually it was time for them to say goodbye. Mom was anxious to get home where Dad was eagerly anticipating her return -- and the coming of spring.

On the last of May, Mother wrote us as follows:

Dear Ones,

Our plane trip back home was good in every way. We had an hour's wait in Salt Lake, but stopped only ten minutes in Caspar, so the plane was right on the dot in Rapid City. The weather was nice all the way, but in Rapid it was overcast, and it rained a few drops on our way to Deadwood. Rosemary [Toto's daughter] met us in Rapid, and she wanted to show me her and Jay's new home, which is very nice. Everything is built-in, even their beautiful stove, which has two ovens, one small and one large, with a steel top that you can push in or pull out, just like my old kitchen cabinet. The house is actually nine years old, but everything looks new. The only fault I could find is that it is too spic-and-span. That Rosemary is so neat. Their yard is huge like yours, and since all the neighboring houses are modern it is just like a new Los Angeles subdivision.

Rosemary and Jay insisted we have a bite to eat with them, but Toto and I weren't hungry because we had had a fine meal on the plane -- roast beef, gravy, three little potatoes, pineapple cottage cheese salad, and string beans. Our dessert was a chocolate-and-ice cream roll that melted in your mouth -- I sure wish I had that recipe. It was the best thing ever. And we had all the coffee we wanted, so we took our time eating, and it made the trip seem very short.

Toto had to buy groceries at the Safeway, so that too delayed us. Your Dad had been waiting for me for two hours he said, and finally had decided our plane had been delayed. I was so sorry we were late; he actually had tears in his eyes when I kissed him.

I'11 never leave him like this again -- he was just too lonesome. So from now on, wherever I go, he goes -- that's settled. You see, the weather in Deadwood was chilly and gloomy and wet all the time we were away, so he couldn't work in the garden or go fishing either. He was plain miserable.

By the way, I forgot to tell you that where Rosemary and Jay took us for supper in Rapid City, we had the honor of shaking hands with Senator McGovern, no less -- that was the end of a perfect trip if you ask me!

To tell you the truth, coming from L.A. with all its grand homes and lovely lawns and everything, the old homestead didn't look so hot. But much to my surprise, the back yard with all its tulips in bloom was so colorful it lifted my spirits. The lilacs have frozen again, so we'll have none this year, but our gladiolas are coming up strong, and we planted plenty of them, so we'll have nice cut flowers for the house.

Saturday P.M.

Before I start frying the chicken, I am going to try to finish this letter. It's the same old story -- I just don't seem able to write. I am tired all the time here. I really think it is the high altitude -- I shake all the time I work, and am short of breath. Of course, at your place I wasn't working, so maybe that is the reason I felt better there.

Today is our 57th wedding anniversary, and a beautiful day it is. We are spending it very quietly ...

Your Mom

They were to enjoy four more anniversaries together. On Christmas day following their 61st anniversary, Julie and I phoned them from Los Angeles. They were both "fine" and in good spirits. Mom was 85; Dad was 86. They said they were looking forward to going to Christmas dinner at Toto's with Aunt Kate. While they were having Christmas dinner dessert,

Mom suddenly slipped off her chair to the floor. Her last mortal act was to pull her skirt down modestly over her knees. Three days later she was gone.

It was not her fault she broke her promise never to go anywhere again without Dad. We buried her during a blizzard. I recall the unearthly sensation I felt as the cortege moved from St. Ambrose down Main Street for her last auto trip. Big snowflakes were blurring the brick store fronts. I wondered how many times she had gone up and down that same street -- on her way to play piano for the movies -- on her way to Browns to buy us kids school clothes -- on the way to pay the monthly bills -- on the way to choir practice.

At the cemetery, Cleo Wells had erected a canvas barrier to protect the mourners from the storm. A brief graveside service was read by the priest as the wind whipped the canvas. Then, just as the concluding words were spoken, the sun slipped by a sullen cloud bank and dazzled us for a few moments before fading away.

Three years later, when he was shy of 89 by a few days, Dad followed her. On the day of his stroke, he had been outside at Lorraine's shoveling an early February snow. That same evening, when Lorraine was out (he lived with her now), he watched two football games on TV. His idol, Franco Harris, was starring in one of them. When he had his seizure, he was alone, but he was just able to reach his bed which was only six feet from the TV.

When Lorraine returned, she noticed his light was still on. That was unusual, because by now he should be sleeping. Upon checking, she found him on the bed, conscious but unable to speak clearly. At once she knew the worst. Dad mumbled something that sounded like "Too much f-football."

Lawrence and I came from California to be with him during his final days. Strangely, his hearing perked up to the point where he could understand Lawrence better than he had for years. His speech, however, was badly garbled. I think the last words of that I understood were those he spoke to us one afternoon when we sat down to visit with him. "Good boys," he muttered.

Even on his last day he retained his unvanquishable sense ofhumor. A middle-age female technician entered his room to give him physical therapy. She helped him flap his arms and flex his legs. He looked at Lawrence and me, gave us a crooked

grin, pointed the index finger of his one good hand to his temple and rotated the finger. The message to us was clear: "This poor woman is looney. Who does she think she's fooling!"

But, gentleman to the end, he tolerated her doing what she was paid to do, and generously nodded his thanks.

Lawrence and I were with him at the end, which came suddenly early that evening. Lorraine was working nearby in a nursing home. She had been notified to come quick, but when she arrived at the scene it was too late. She looked at Dad and simply said: "That good old man."

I suppose if I were asked for prime remembrances of my parents, I would have to say, about Mother, that it was the loving care she gave me when I was a sophomore in high school and was terribly sick with scarlet fever. Then too, I especially remember a few years later when she was fearful for my future and devoted wily hours praying for me.

As for my father, it was his optimism, his faith in me, and his unswerving devotion to Mom. I never forget how in his old age he told of their courting years. One incident sticks in my mind: he tells about leaving his sweetheart in Mitchell. She will remain there working a bit longer, while he will go the Black Hills to start a new life. He has treated her to a chocolate soda; they have said their goodbyes at the train station; he has taken his seat in the coach car. As the train pulls out, he sees his girl through the window, and he thinks to himself, "Isn't she beautiful." I suspect that moment was a turning point in his life … who knows?

I now go back to 2:00 P.M. on the day before Mom's funeral. I got up from the table where the family had all been talking, trying to keep Dad's mind off his present sorrow. "Dad," I said, "I want to go down to the funeral home and visit Mom. How would you like to come with me?"

"Fine," he replied, "I can use the exercise."

"I'll drive you if you want."

"No, I'd rather walk."

We donned overcoats, scarves, and galoshes, said goodbye to those staying home, and headed down Sherman Street. Neither of us had visited Mom because she had not been there long.

When we had walked the few blocks there, we entered Well's Funeral Home, and as soon as we entered, my glasses steamed over from the warm air. I pulled them off and wiped them, then glanced around. Here was the stand at the inner doorway, with the memorial cards free for the taking, and the guest book open for signing. There had been guests before us, but none was now present. Through the open doorway into the repose area I could see the gleam of her metallic coffin, and the banked flowers.

Taking Dad by the arm, I motioned for him to accompany me, but before we reached her, I stopped short. This is their moment, I thought. So I let him proceed on his own. When he reached the open coffin he paused, looked at her, then fell on his knees and covered his eyes. I moved swiftly to him. When he felt my hand on his shoulder, he arose and stood erect. I knew he would be weeping -- but, no, he was not weeping. He was smiling and there was a look of wonder in his eyes as he reached out and touched her cheek.

"Isn't she beautiful!" he said.

Additional Photos & Misc

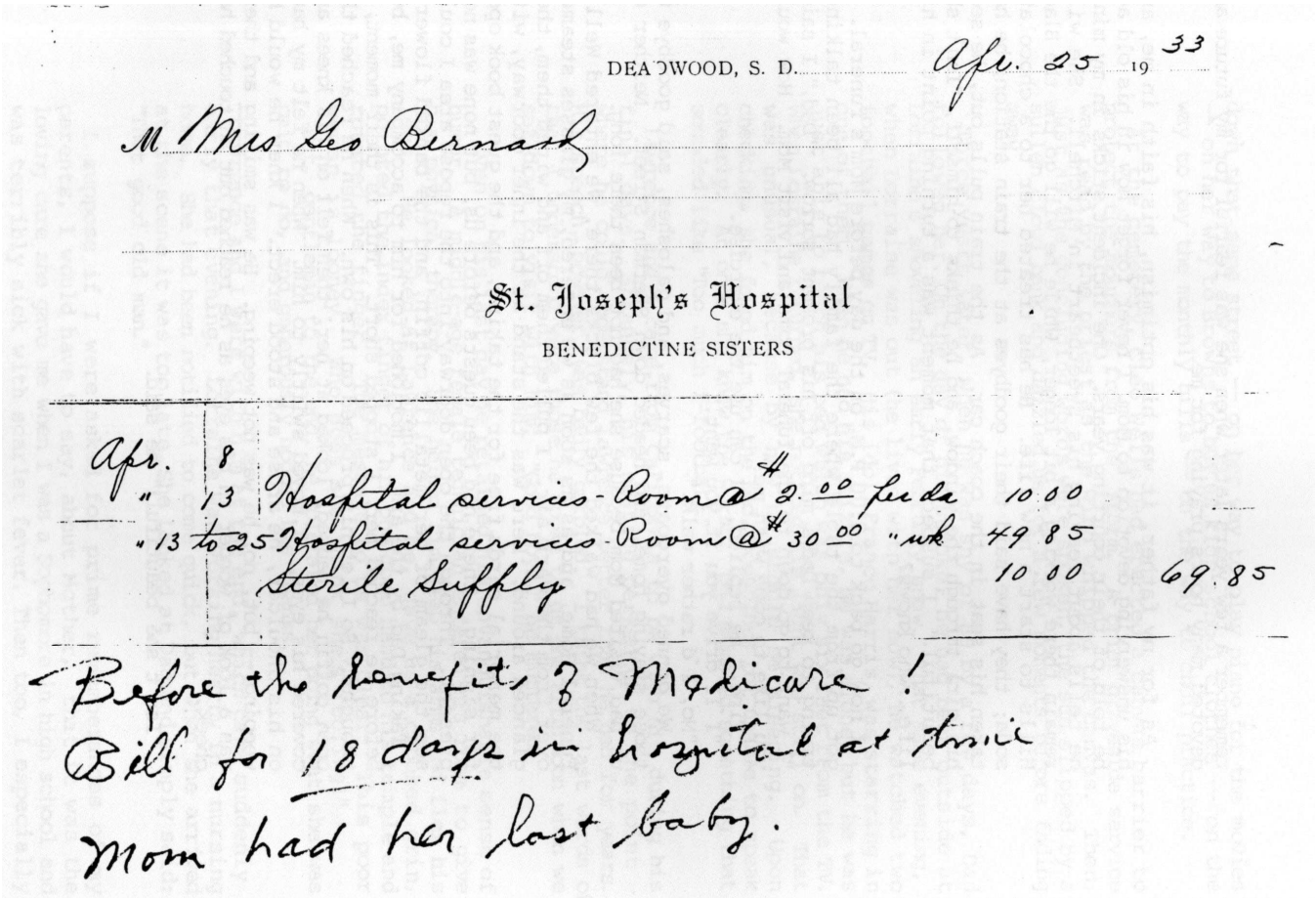
Pierre Ulric Bernard family, circa1911

Pierre Ulric Bernard (1861-1947)
& wife Marie-Louise Fontaine Bernard (1861-1947)
circa 1940

George & Stephanie Bernard, 1936

Stephanie Bernard, Lawrence & Pierre *front,* infant Harry
Deadwood SD (1920)

Stephanie & George Bernard, 1936
Gardening was a lifelong passion



DEADWOOD, S. D. Apr. 25 19 33

M Mrs Geo Bernard

St. Joseph's Hospital

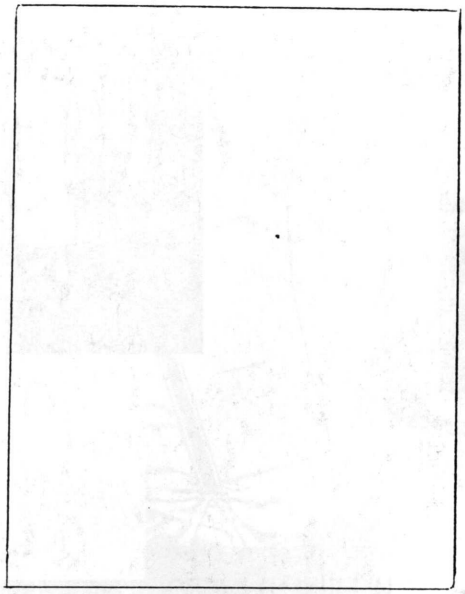
BENEDICTINE SISTERS

Apr.	8			
"	13	Hospital services - Room @ #2.00 per da	10 00	
" 13 to 25		Hospital services - Room @ #30.00 " wk	49 85	
		Sterile Supply	10 00	69.85

Before the benefits of Medicare!
Bill for 18 days in hospital at time
Mom had her last baby.

Hospital Bill for Stephanie's Last Delivery
18 days in St Joseph's Hospital,
Deadwood SD, 1933

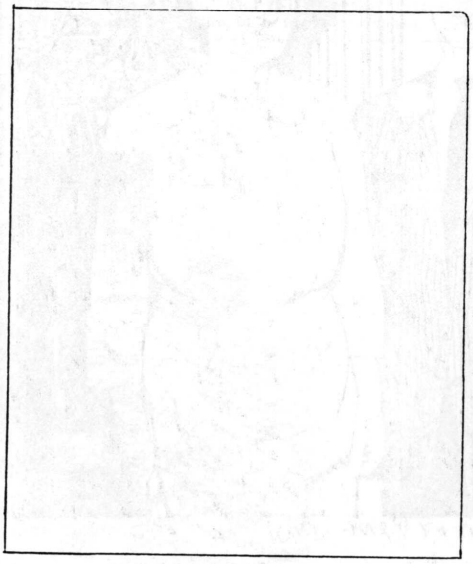
(for son Ronald, who did not survive the birth)



Bernard & Gerber Garage

[I've taken scads of photos — but not one of "BFG's"]

HB



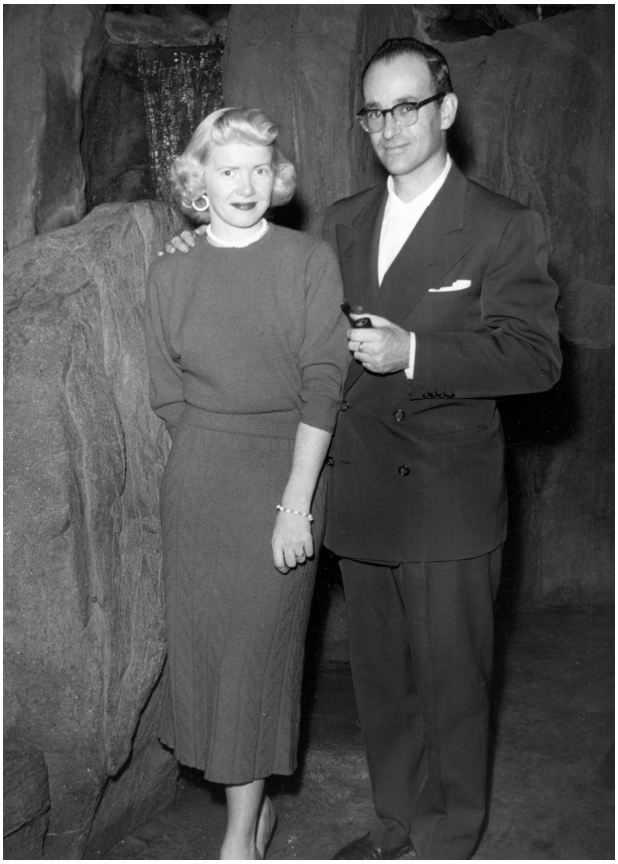
"Toejam" Bill

Who left Uncle Vini's Ranch one fine morning and disappeared... Completely

HB

Photos We Wish We Had!

Stephanie & George Bernard
Final Resting Place
Deadwood SD



Author Harry Bernard & wife Julie, 1960

In Closing .....

The following story was relayed to me (Jon Bernard) by George Bernard's nephew Bill Bernard of Hot Springs SD. It speaks to the kind of person Grandpa Bernard was .....

In 1971, at the urging of the state Democratic party, presidential nominee George McGovern made a campaign stop in Deadwood. He was running against the re-election of Richard Nixon, and was South Dakota's senator and a popular liberal figure, perhaps most well known for his opposition to the Viet Nam war. His speech was held in the town hall.

After the speech was over, some folks gathered out front, and George Bernard was introduced to Senator McGovern who was making his way to his car. They shook hands. "What did you think of the speech, George", McGovern asks.

"Didn't think much of it", Bernard replies.

"You didn't? I thought everyone in there seemed to like it. What was the matter?", McGovern asks.

"That's just the problem, Senator. You see, everyone in that room was a Democrat already when you walked in. You're concern is everyone outside this place -- they're the ones you should have been addressing".

McGovern lost the election to Nixon 38% to 60%.