

My Family.

I am now eighty years old.
I have had a good life in countless ways.
Yet, if I could pick a decade in my life where
I would wish to dwell, it would be the 1950s,
when I was a boy living at home.

My Father was an admirable man.
Good, hardworking, respected by others,
generous, loved babies, humble, wise, and
meant what he said.

Pa believed in education.
He was the first in his family of thirteen
children to go to high school.

Once when my brother John
brought up a long division
problem during milking-time, Pa
stopped milking and taught math
with a carpenter pencil on the
white-painted barn door.

My Mother was a super Mom in
every possible way.
She was a great teacher, endlessly
patient, open-minded, curious, a
grand reader, loved learning,
welcoming to all, always knew
what you were up to, and my all-
time favorite cook.

I have always been immensely
proud of my three brothers and
four sisters.
Thirty-five years ago, when Gail
asked what my brothers were like,
I said they were all good Dads.
That told a lot.

Ann was always our big sister.

John was always my big
brother who had my back.



John, Tom, Ann, Ernie, Pat. Early 1949.



Ann, Tom, Baby Pat, Mom, and John. On the porch, Spring, 1950.

Pa on injuries and pain.

I was 13 when I burned the palms of both my hands holding on to a hot tractor muffler to keep from falling into a running machine.

At milking time, Pa said I would hurt at least as much in the house as in the barn.

He was right, of course.

I did my chores.

Once when Pa and I were milking the cows, I was nursing a broken bone, Pa showed me a long scar on the calf of his leg.

He cut that when he was a boy, splitting wood, with an axe he had just sharpened.

He wrapped big slab of his calf with clean rag and never told anybody.

That was a powerful lesson.

Croteau's farm was just two miles from our farm, over good gravel roads. Pa rented Anna's 80-acre farm from the mid-1950s until her son Ken was ready to take over in the late 1960s. I enjoyed many good days and evenings tilling and harvesting those beautiful hills in solitude.

The gravel road ran by our driveway in the 1940s and early 1950s.

The cars traveled slowly and made a lot of noise and dust on the washboard road.

If we were working or playing in the yard, and we most always were, we would stand at attention, because it was either "company" coming to visit or a neighbor passing by and they expected a wave.

In the late 1950s the County improved and paved our road,



John, Tom, Judy, Ernie, Teri, Pat, Ann. Summer 1955



John, Jim, Ernie, Tom, Judy, Ann, Pat, Joyce, Teri. DeMars Reunion at Anna Croteau's Farm, 1957.



Tom, Teri, Ann, Joyce, Pat, Judy, Ernie, Mike, John, Jim. At Uncle John's Place, east of Hamel. Summer of 1959.

making it suitable for high-speed travel and more traffic.

We celebrated each Christmas Eve at the farm of our birth until Pa died in 1987. This Christmas season photo was taken circa 1970 going by Mike's and Jim's size and ages.

Mom made everyone feel at home and welcome at our farm.

If a young neighbor kid was there at mealtime, they ate with us.

If one relative had a difference with another they could come to our farm.

It was a safe and neutral place. Our farm was non-judgmental.

The picture on the right was taken on Judy and Larry's wedding day.

Larry wanted to move to upstate New York to start a new life.

They bought a scenic farm there with enormous rolling hills.

When baling hay into big round bales, Larry had to take care that the bales did not roll away down the hills.

Judy resumed her career in social work. Pa and Ma drove to the New York farm many times to help Larry and Judy, and for fun.

They enjoyed driving trips.

This picture was taken on the occasion of our parents' 45th Wedding

Anniversary.

We celebrated the 45th because Pa was dying of cancer.

He helped Ma sell the Farm and schedule the farm auction before he died.

Then Ma bought a comfortable house in Buffalo to be closer to her four daughters.

Our Mother resided there until her death twenty years later, in 2007.

She missed Pa every day.



Jim, Teri, John, Ann, Judy, Joyce, Mike, Tom, Pat, Ernie. Christmas, circa 1970.



Tom, Ann, John, Judy, Joyce, Jim, Teri, Ernie, Mike, Pat. Judy and Larry's wedding day, 1979.



Jim, Ann, Teri, Mike, Ernie, John, Joyce, Pat, Judy, Tom. Ernie and Joyce's 45th Wedding Anniversary.

I know for certain that this picture was taken on March 11th, 2002, because it was dated.

My guess is it that it was at a memorial celebration for Pa, We have had many of those over the years since 1987. Our Father was much beloved by many.

Our Mother died in early 2007.

We had occasional family reunions at the Snake River Farm starting 1971.

They became annual Barthel-DeMars reunions starting in 1997, continuing for more than thirty years.

Pa drank infrequently, and then only beer. With a few beers Ernie talked more, smiled more, and was merry. He never drank to excess.

On occasion Joyce encouraged him to drink, although she never drank herself.

The photo on the right was taken in 1940s when they were young. Any of their children would guess that they were at a wedding dance and having a good time.

Our parents got along well. I can not recall a single disagreement, Ernie and Joyce loved each other very much. Tom Barthel.



Jim, Pat, Tom, Joyce, Teri, Mike, Judy, John, Ann. March 2002



Jim, Pat, John, Judy, Teri, Mike, Ann, Tom. Snake River Farm, circa 2017



Ernie and Joyce at a wedding party in the 1940s