

SCHROEPFER FAMILY MEMORIES OF TOM BARTHEL.

My father, Ernie Barthel, was Alicestine's third younger brother.

Alicetine was my aunt.

I was born in 1946, so I am younger than all the Schroefer kids but Mary.

I am one year younger than Margaret.

Margaret, who we called Peggy in those days, and I were pals.

Between the ages of five and ten, I spent several days with the Schroefer family each summer.

Everyone was very good to me.

Somedays George would take me to work with him.

He was always building houses.

George was a one-man crew.

I wasn't really much help.

I could not manage a hammer well enough to drive framing nails, nor could I handle delicate work like small siding nails.

George would let me try, and fail, then correct the mess I had made.

George was a gentle man, with great patience.

My main contribution to construction was "picking up".



One summer I found a damaged bow and arrow set, in the town dump.

I repaired the bow in a way and played with it for days.

That Christmas George gave me a splendid hickory bow he had made.

That bow lasted many years.

George had a spacious woodworking shop north of the tiny cow barn.

The wood shop was framed like a small cattle barn.

Like all wood shops it was dusty, but George often was building something with aromatic cedar.

The shop had that sweet smell.

Much of the time George spent in his shop was devoted to making special wood items for homes he built.

George also built many toys in his shop.

One year he built a dandy toy cupboard for my younger sister, Judy.

When Judy grew up, she didn't have any daughters.

Judy gave that child-sized cupboard to my daughter, Shannon.

That was well over 50 years ago.

Fifteen years ago, I built a child-sized house on our playground for granddaughter Ella and placed the cupboard inside.

Since then, thousands of little girls have enjoyed George's toy cupboard, including Shannon's granddaughter Katrina.

When I was staying at Schroefer's it was my job to clean the gutter behind the Jersey cow.

It was an easy job.

All I had to do was get the manure to the wheelbarrow just outside of the barn.

I left that for George, or Melvin. I was not big enough to move a wheelbarrow of manure.

Melvin was much like George to me.

Gentle, kind, and soft-spoken.

He was around 14 years older than me, but he took me hunting/shooting in the woods.

That was a big deal to a young boy.

He had a single 22 rifle, with “shorts”.

Shorts were cheapest and safest.

I do not remember that we shot anything except cans and trees, but it was an adventure for me.

Ann Schroepfer was George and Alicestine’s eldest daughter, next after Melvin. We called Ann, Anna Mae when we were kids. I still recall her as such.

In the Schroepfer Family book, Anna Mae tells a story about Melvin shooting a gun west of the house.

That bullet struck his mother who was working in the kitchen, nearly harmlessly. The rifle was likely the same 22 caliber gun; Melvin was very likely using the low power bullets.

My Mother, Joyce, told the same story as a cautionary tale years later.

On page 12 it is mentioned that Melvin worked for a neighbor, Pat Brian, to help clear fields.

Ignatius Breun was a farmer who owned more than 200 acres of land north and east of the Schroepfer homestead. Ignatius was called Pat. The Breun family had four children, Bertha, Theresa, León, and Ed. The Breun children were roughly contemporaneous with Dorthey through -- Margaret. When Pat Breun bought his farm, only 40 acres were cleared.

I suspect that Ignatius is the ‘Pat Brian’ that Melvin worked for.

Bertha married Dennis Fehn, who founded the Fehn earth moving company on part of the Breun farm.

Bertha still lives on the original Breun homestead.

Melvin also mentions he did farm work for his uncles Ernie Barthel and Benno Barthel.

In the mid-1940’s both Ernie and Benno had farms in Otsego township.

One of the tools available to farmers to clear tree stumps was dynamite.

Dynamite was available in hardware stores by the box.

The boxes and primers were usually under or near the cash register for safety, but no special permit was required.

I vaguely remember helping Uncle Louie blasting stumps in the northeast 40 of Grandpa Barthel’s 160-acre farm.

I was older when Louie and I dynamited the wooden silo on the farm.

Louie did that to make room for the huge cement stave silo that is still there.

That took two tries.



Melvin



Anna Mae

I was staying with Schroepfer's on the evening when the new sewing machine arrived. It was amazingly more complex than the simple Singer machine. Anna Mae set it up in the main porch. There was terrific excitement among all the females of the household. It was bought on credit with payments due. Alicetine was very concerned about the cost, but Anna Mae assured her mother that she could make the payments with her wages. I am sure she did.

Dorothy mentions feed sold in printed cotton sacks that farm wives could use for sewing material.

I recall my mother, Joyce, giving instructions to my father on which patterns to look for when on our way to the feed mill in Elk River.

Dorothy also mentions a black beanie which she got for Christmas and wore to church.

Dorothy recalls stopping at the Millside Tavern for ice cream cones. My family did that too. My Father's favorite flavor was maple nut. He always ordered that.

Rosie mentions many things, among them hand-me-downs. I got hand-me-downs from our beloved cousin Teddy Barthel via my older brother John. Teddy was for many years an only child, so he got better clothes and toys. I always appreciated hand-me-down clothes. Jackets, sweaters, and caps were in good shape when they reached me. Ted got high quality, and John took good care of things.

Margaret mentioned that George made a green rowboat. I have many good memories of that wooden boat. The pond north of the house was full of life - tadpoles, frogs, turtles, cattails, flowers. Most years the boat was in the north pond, but one especially dry summer the boat was in the west pond. The last summer I stayed with the Schroepfer family the boat was broken. The cow had stepped through it.

I was impressed with the board games the girls had. There was a whole shelf of them, neatly stored. I learned to play Monopoly one rainy afternoon.



Dorothy wearing her tam



Rosie



Frank Schroepfer



Henry Schroepfer and Florence Barthel, at George and Alicestine's wedding



Henry Schroepfer



BARTHEL and SCHROEPHER FAMILIES eating watermelon