Writing Stories
Voices of the Valley

A Collection

Edited by Emily DuBord Hill and Erin Lord Kunz

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

This project began one morning with an idea and a question—how can we bridge the gap between the millennial generation and senior citizens in the Red River Valley region while creating a community art project? After several conversations between friends, a generous grant from the Community/Knight foundation, and the go ahead from the UND Writers Conference, the project came to fruition. We were going to create a collection of stories that delved into the lives of local senior citizens, written by local millenials. Every citizen has a wealth of knowledge and a story, and all stories can become works of art.

We cannot show enough gratitude to the writers of this project who were so intellectually generous, taking time out of their busy schedules to volunteer for a non-profit community project. Our writers showcase the ingenuity, dedication, and philanthropic spirit of the millennial generation. They all come from different backgrounds, spanning from university students to university faculty and everywhere in between. We believe that one strength of this project is the multiple perspectives and writing styles of all the participants, and we made the decision to not make the stories conform to one another in content, style, or aesthetics. We hope that you enjoy not only the stories themselves but how each writer crafted the story according to his or her artistic license.

Thank you to all of you who took the time to come to the Writers Conference Reading and to those of you who purchased a copy of the collection in your hands right now. All proceeds from this project go back to the UND Writers Conference, which we hope can continue as long as possible as another opportunity for community engagement. This project started with one idea and was made possible by the generosity and creativity of the Grand Forks community. We cannot express enough gratitude for your support.

Yours,

Emily and Erin

I. Shadows of a Small City

by Rachel Piwarski

The wind whipped across the plain and it brought the kind of chill that reaches into the human body and robs it of all its warmth. The snow reflected into the sky, making it a blue so pale that it was almost white. Larimore was a quiet town in eastern North Dakota, and it whispered with hopes of a pleasant spring to come, but the last warm day seemed too far away. As Hazel and I drove down West Main Street to see Anna Marie, I watched the few buildings fly by in a faded orange haze of brick and cement. We approached the stop sign and a window on the left laughingly displayed stacks of Pabst Blue Ribbon cans next to an American Flag. The occupants must have had a meticulous plan to craft their treasures so perfectly within the geometry of the frosted window.

In Larimore's Good Samaritan assisted living home, you wouldn't know such a bitter cold existed with its comfortably warm halls and smiling faces. The wind murmured occasionally against the building, but Anna Marie paid it no mind in her modest room. A shadowbox adorned the wall above her entertainment center and I stood staring at it, entranced like a magpie. Inside, a red velvet sheet of fabric bore fashion jewelry that made up a Christmas tree shape. In between the ornate earring pieces, tiny lights in the shape of flowers bloomed through the red in the spectral colors of the holiday season.

"Well, look at that," Hazel gasped.

"Yes, I made that, years ago," Anna Marie said, "I kept rearranging it over and over again to get it just right," she sighed in remembrance before she chided, "have a seat, have a seat."

"Where did you come up with an idea like that?" I asked as I moved a stuffed monkey with a medallion and realistic brown bear from her rocking chair to take my seat.

"I used to sing at weddings and funerals and things and the families would give me those clip-on earrings or other sorts of jewelry for me doing it, so I glued them into this shape on here and had Delmar drill the holes for the lights. Years ago."

So on a subzero January afternoon I came to visit Anna Marie in the middle of her Sunday devotional. I offered to sit with her until she finished, but she objected.

"No, that's okay. Let's go down to my room and visit," she smiled.

She revved up her Hoveround only to crash into the wheelchair next to her.

“Oh! Anna Marie, do you need some help?” the woman leading the devotional asked.

“I’m fine, dear,” she huffed, “Just need to get turned around here…ahh, reverse.”

She smashed into the table behind her. Forward. Crash. Backward. Crash.

“Uff da,” Anna Marie mumbled.

Hazel and I stared with wide mouths and wide eyes. Hazel let out a throaty, nervous laugh. Here we were, the ultimate sinners on Sunday interrupting the devotional to talk to Anna Marie. The music stand wobbled as Anna Marie flew by it.

“Let us help you, Anna Marie.” Hazel motioned for her to stop, but Anna Marie propelled forward.

“Here we go.”

She shot through the doorway and into the hall, her blanket trailing in the wind of the Hoveround’s momentum. The sleepy eyes of the residents stared at us, puzzled.

“Bye everyone, Enjoy.” I waved before dashing off into the corridor after Hazel and Anna Marie.

When we arrived in her bedroom Anna Marie announced, "I don't know that I have much to tell, really."

From devotional to supper to bingo time, Anna Marie sat at a table surrounded by other women in cat and bird shirts in wheelchairs. This life signified a quiet simplicity the young yearn for when they leave the nest to the big, wide world. After birthing five girls, adopting one son, and tending to various farmsteads all throughout her life, Anna Marie finally had a place to rest.

"It's nice to finally talk to you. You're Adam's girlfriend?"

"Yes.” Silence followed before I blurted, “Do you like it here?"

"Sure. I don't want to be all complaining."

"How’s the food?"

"Oh no. Oh gosh. I can't complain. Well, the soup—no, I can't complain. I just wish I could be back in my kitchen sometimes. You know what I mean."

"In local cookbook publications you will find Anna Marie's recipes," Hazel chimed in.

"Oh yeah?"

“Yes, she can cook very well. “

Anna Marie turned a menacing eye Hazel’s way. "I wish I could get back in my kitchen, but I don't know if I would remember what to do."

She rubbed her knees gently in circles as she talked; ornate rings caught the white light streaming in the window. A silver with turquoise ring sparkled like one of the pendants in the shadow box tree.

"What was your favorite thing to make?" Hazel’s words cut the silence.

"Crackerjack."

“Like out of the box?

“Well no, because I made it. She then turns to me and said. “I'm sorry but after all this time I forget. Your name is—“

"Rachel."

"Rachel. Okay, good. I have seen you before, but it feels like I am finally meeting you."

"Yes, finally."

“And it’s good to finally meet you.”

“You too, Anna Marie.”

After the quiet lingered again for a time, Hazel said, “Rachel wanted to ask you a question about how kids aren't what they used to be, and it's certainly right in a way. There are so many things that older generations don't approve of in terms of music and work ethic and things. What did your parents worry about with you and your generation when you were a kid?"

“Yep, I wanted to ask that question,” I sighed to myself.

“What’s that, Rachel?”

“Nothing. So what did they worry about, Anna Marie?”

I expected Anna Marie to tell me that her parents worried about the music she listened to or the dances she attended, but instead she answered:

"One thing that scared my parents was us kids riding our bicycles. I would come rolling down that hill and I would crash and scrape up my knees. One day in the summer they went to town and left all of us kids at home. We didn't have school, but

we had chores and things to do. Myrtle was mopping and I sat at the top of the stairs singing "Myrtle and Johnny k-i-s-s-i-n-g because she started going with this boy. He must have been a junior. She hit me with that mop and chased me out of the house and I hopped onto my bike. She kept trying to get me with that mop, so I tried to get away. As I started to go, though, I crashed into the barbed wire fence. I bled all over as my parents pulled up."

"Oh my God! Did they take you to the doctor? Did you need stitches?"

"Oh no. We didn't have the money for that. If you got hurt, oh well. You broke an arm? It'll heal. But I did run into that fence, and of course I was bleeding, but I got fixed up well enough and here I am."

I pictured her crashing her bicycle with the same fervor as the way she crashed her Hoveround in the front room upon our arrival. I thought about her as she biked around a farm town with green grass glistening in the sun until it went down at ten or so, when the birds stopped chirping.

“That’s impressive. So if that was your elementary school days, what were your high school days like?

"Well not too exciting, but one year we went up to the teen canteen to dance and whatnot. It must have been seventy degrees and I wore a dress and so did all the other girls."

The sun peaked out of the clouds and the grass emitted soft green hues as it pushed its way through the brown, spiky earth that the compacted snow pushed into submission all winter long. It was March and it was nice finally. The snow started to melt in the mucky, muddy way it generally did in the burgeoning spring. It was the time of year when twenty degrees seems like a gift, but on the day of Anna Marie’s dance, it was much warmer than that. Suddenly the sky turned and it got real cold and the sun went away and the clouds came out and pelted the land with snow. The rough shift in weather only serves as one example of the rough winter that ravages the North Dakota prairie without remorse.

"Dad walked up to the school and brought my snow pants. My legs would have frozen off otherwise. He brought all of us kids back home with the twine in his pocket."

"Twine?”

"So they could all hold on. We had to do that when I was a kid when there were blizzards out at the farm in Minnesota" Hazel answered.

"Oh. The storm was that bad? None of you could see?"

"No. And we could get lost and that would be it, you know? I heard a lot of people got stranded out in their cars and died because they didn't know the storm was coming."

Hazel didn't like the silence, but I was content with letting it sit. With letting the wind scream against the cold windows.

"Chores were important, right?" Hazel asked as she finally caved to her need to make conversation happen.

I didn't come for a lesson on chores. Growing up in an all-male household where my dad barely knew how to do his laundry encouraged me to do plenty of chores. I sighed.

"We had too many chores to have fun all the time, but we did do fun things every once in a while like pretend our rocking chair was a car or something like that."

Anna Marie didn't seem too concerned with chores either, in spite of all the sorts of things she had to take on in her adolescence and adulthood.

"So what did you do after you graduate?" I said, wanting to change the subject.

"Well I attended Mayville State for one year, and then I got married."

Hazel turned to me, "The fact that she attended college for even that one year was kind of…well, unheard of. It allowed her to go into special education and things like that."

"I don't know that I have ever thought of it like that—special education. I just love the kids. I love seeing them. People call it special education, but all kids are special," she said as her eyes lit up.

The conversation died down to a silence where the ticking of the clock took over, and I could not help but feel that I didn't know her any better. Not in the way that I had hoped. We all stared out into the white abyss, three generations of women separated by unique challenges and stories. Anna Marie rubbed her knees one final time. Her eyes like dark pools told me she may have had more to say. But Hazel yawned and I yawned and we got up and hugged Anna Marie. I rubbed the afghan around her shoulders and thanked her, for her insight, for her hospitality, for a glimpse at a life that may be mine a lifetime from now.

Weeks later I walked down Towner Avenue, the main drag of businesses in the dying town of about 1,000 people. Dust caked the windows of past tool,

television, and novelty stores. A sign that read “going out of business” in small black letters frayed in the windowsill of the tool store. An old gas station that was painted all white sat at the end of the businesses close to a senior center, library, and dive bar. It was a ghostly structure like so many houses and building in this old town. The wind rattled through the rickety buildings, and I knew it was time to go home. When Anna Marie was young, all of this was open land that people built up. And now here it is, crashing backward and disguising itself in the prairie’s bleak, winter oblivion.

Rachel Piwarski is a graduate teaching assistant in the English Department at the University of North Dakota.

II. Parachute Lessons in the Red River Valley

by Sam Rocha

"We had food, happy – we had a childhood I wish every child could have."

*

In the spring of 1880, four years after the Battle of Little Bighorn, following a miserable harvest, her father began the 500-mile journey north from his birthplace in Spillville, Iowa, to the Territory of North Dakota, along with twelve families, in covered wagons.

He was a young boy, not more than eight years old. These were Czech immigrants, first and second generations. Roman Catholics. Farmers.

They arrived in Grand Forks, a town of around 600 people, on the twenty-first day of May. The townships were still in flux, and land was being claimed all around. Nothing near town was available, so they kept moving north, along the Red River, and then west, to find ground that was not as prone to flooding. Upon settlement, the men returned to town to file homesteading paperwork. Those with a little money left bought a few boards for their shanties.

Their hardships were not in vain. Despite the debilitating and torrential rains and the mosquitoes, a small planting of potatoes, brought from Iowa, yielded a crop previously unheard of. The fertile Red River Valley would be their home.

Whatever resolve they found in the growing season was tested right away: the winter of 1880-81 is on record as being one of the longest and hardest ever, with multiple blizzards hitting from October to February. This was before the rotary snowplow.

The first house built burnt down a few years later. All they managed to save was an upright piano. This sent the family to live in the granary until a new house could be erected. But these sorts of struggles were routine, easily fixed by hard work and the dogged spirit that brought their people from Eastern Europe to the Northern Midwest of the United States of America.

*

Her father played the coronet in a band, with relatives and locals. "I wish they had recordings of some of that music," she reminisced. The band would practice in a circle. The kids ran around and around, dancing.

"We only went to town if we needed shoes. I was the third one down, so I hardly got to go because I always had hand-me-downs." In the first grade she wore high-tops, but couldn't recall where she got them.

The long winters were spent playing cards and, on Saturdays, listening to the radio. The Grand Old Opry was her program, on short wave, with differences in broadcast quality, but she was always listening, faithfully.

All her brothers served in the US military. One of them died in the Korean War. It took two months for notice to arrive, in a taxi, leaving her father, downstairs, in tears. It would not be her last loss, but she wears the pain with grace.

*

Veseleyville was the Czech settlement, the area claimed in the 1880's, northwest of Grand Forks and southeast of Grafton, with a Catholic Church and a two-room school. The language of home, on the farm, was Czech, but school was taught in English, by a bilingual Czech-American couple. Daily mass was in Latin. The day-to-day routine began with a commute to Mass and was followed, after a short walk, with school. When her teachers moved away to Grafton, just a few miles northeast of them, they might as well had been going to San Francisco. She stayed in school until the sixth grade. High school was further away and costly. Houdek was her last name.

Monica *Perkerwicz* took a Polish last name, from a young man she met where all the young folks—Polish, Czech, and the rest—met at that time: the dance hall in Acton. The local church was struck by lightening, and burnt to the ground, moving the sacred Catholic Mass into the secular town hall. Monica and her now late husband, Rafeal, were married there. Her sister, Cyrilla, married her husband's brother, Chester, just before the church burnt down. Two Czech sisters married to two Polish brothers.

They both tried out living in California at different, but consecutive, times, and both returned north. From 1978 forward she raised her family alone.

*

The flood came in 1997, the same year she lost her daughter to cancer; she stayed in campers Crystal City Sugar set out for their employees, when they weren't back at work. Still in mourning, she set her things on top of tables that would eventually be completely submerged in water.

*

Her eyes lit up across the table, after the sad and hard times of ’78 and ’97. She said, “Mom and Dad got hold of a parachute.”

“A parachute? Did you say a parachute?” I couldn’t believe it. A shocked grin took hold of me at the totally unpredictable segue that arrived without warning. A *parachute*?

The parachute was bombastic.

“Lots of durable fabric,” she explained. “Many slips made from that parachute material.”

No skydiving involved, nothing too special or bizzare, but a parachute nonetheless.

*

Imagine a world where a single parachute is enough to interrupt the norm.

Imagine a time where things like textiles are luxuries, not vanities.

Imagine an age of hard living, no romance of good old days gone by. No. An era of work and work and more work and harder work over and over again. A period of limited resources, where temporal and material things are not eternal and shopping is not a religious devotion.

Imagine a place that is not imaginary, but seems to be far away because there is today a great distance, it seems, between my keyboard and the Facebook notifications that interrupt my headphones that are streaming YouTube music. Technology is not the difference here. If anything, this story is one where things were *more* technologically advanced because those first technical instruments, the hand and the back, were not as neglected.

This fantasy is easy to forget as part of the real, the real place and community and people and dirt and water that will soon thaw-out, swell, and flood, that boundary as arbitrary as it is indomitable: the Red River of the North.

This river knows more than we do. Its memory is long and deep, much longer than pioneer settlers and American Indians and deeper than a nation-state. The current runs along a different path than most, tilted upwards by foundations that are beneath, moving at a pace that chastens our quick and narrow life today.

*

The story sounds like any other story, really, and that’s the point of the parachute. Ordinary stories don’t get told unless we have something to gain from hearing them – or unless we are talking to ourselves. The river runs without melodrama, it is

unconscious but alive, and teeming with life and catfish. But these lives that come and go hold something within them. Delight. It is not the plastic sort that scrubs everything clean and kills as much as it preserves. There is a simple, quiet, joy that can be found in the story of Monica Perkerwicz.

She loves to dance.

The whole point of the details – even the ones I left out – was that she wishes that kids today could have the happiness she knew as a girl. Notice, she does not long for it herself now; she is not suffering from naive nostalgia. Rather, she seems to see something missing in the lives we live today, something empty and absent that she never missed. She has known suffering and worked hard all her life, she knows loss and pain and heartbreak. And, still, it is she who has pity and empathy. There is no self-pity in this woman's heart. None.

And she's right: there is something she has that we've lost.

Where did the parachutes go?

*

"By today's standards," she recalled, "I guess we would be considered poor." She went on, with pride and resolve, "But we didn't know it."

"We had food, happy – we had a childhood I wish every child could have."

Sam is an assistant professor of educational foundations and research at the University of North Dakota.

III. The Hills

by Emily DuBord Hill

As I walked in, my grandparents are in the usual positions. My grandfather sat, hunched over in a wheelchair with a blanket draped over his back and shoulders. His rough hands together, smoothing out his purple veins with every half-asleep breath. He listened to the Grand Forks City Council meeting on TV. My grandmother sleeps solidly in her chair with the sunrays from the window warming her face.

They stir when they hear my dog's tags jingle as we walk in. Now, in their nineties and married 70 years this April, Bill is almost completely blind and Ruth has aches in her knees and hips. Together, they make a whole.

Sitting down with some cookies and coffee, we began talking about their history and the town they call home. The stories are the same from when I listened to them tell their lore while I sat on the carpet in front of them in their home on Almonte Avenue. However, when listening to these stories as an adult, suddenly their stories become relatable, haunting, romantic.

When asked about how they met, they both paused. Ruth smiled and said, "I think we've always known each other."

Bill was the only child of an independent widow named Helen. His father was a railroad man—never a conductor but he built the rail others traveled on. In 1921, when Bill was only two years old, his father came to his death at a young age. The cold days and nights working on the Northern railway a few miles outside of Grand Forks poisoned his father with consumption. In those days, when unexpected tragedies like this happened, extended families found it difficult to keep track of each other. Their ties to his father's side became blurred and broken. For most of his childhood, it was just Bill and Helen living in their house on Conklin.

Ruth was the daughter of Alexander McDonald and his wife Stella. Alexander owned McDonald's Fine Men's Clothing store, the only other men's clothing store besides Silverman's in Grand Forks County. Differing from Bill, Ruth grew up in a busy household with two sisters and two brothers and was raised in a now historic house on Reeves Drive.

In those days, neighborhoods blended with other neighborhoods giving children a large playground of friends to make. Bill and Ruth remember each other from these childhood outdoor games but it wasn't until they attend Grand Forks Central high School in 1935 that their friendship grew.

Looking at pictures of my grandparents when they were young, the only way to describe them is Hollywood misplaced in Grand Forks. In almost every picture I've seen, Ruth's strawberry blond hair is swooped up on the side of her face with a nearly perfect smile. Bill's sparkling baby blues and thick waves of hair makes him her perfect counterpoint. When interviewing them about 80 years later, Bill still remembers the excitement that surrounded him when Ruth asked him to the sophomore dance. "After that, we've been best friends ever since," he said as he laughed.

They went steady all the way through high school and even went to the University (that's what they've always called UND as if it were the only one in the world) together. He was an ATO and she was a Delta Gamma. He was going to be an engineer because he was good with numbers and had hands like his father. He wanted to build bridges, tunnels, and railways. She was going for a teaching degree in hopes of teaching English and Home Economics.

"Oh we had so much fun at the University," expressed Ruth. They both remember going to Sioux Hockey games when they took place in an arena called the "The Barn." Community members would leave work at four in the afternoon in order to get a good seat. Everyone would pack thermoses and sandwiches to eat as they shivered at the game. And the fans were as enthusiastic and devoted as they are now. "It was absolutely wild," said Ruth. They remember watching Fido Purpur play

and coach and how he was the one responsible for getting the "hockey craze" started in Grand Forks.

Along with enjoying many hockey games together as a young couple, Bill and Ruth loved to frequent the music halls in town. "We were pretty good at the jitterbug and the waltz," said Bill. "We loved it so much, that eventually when we were married, we built a tiled floor in our living room so we could invite the whole family over for a dance."

After a few years of college and with the war demanding more men to join the armed forces, Bill had no choice but to enlist in the army and leave Ruth in Grand Forks while she completed her studies at the University.

Bill fought in the Pacific and Guadalcanal for about four years. And it wasn't the battle stories that he chose to share with me during our interview. It was the story of how he kept courting Ruth even though thousands of miles away. "I always found time to write Ruth a letter. I would number all the letters so she would know how many were coming." Bill paused and an impish grin melted over his face. "That's how I kept the deal hot."

In March 1944, Ruth received a letter from Bill's station in the South Pacific. It expressed some romance and that he had been mildly injured in crossfire. He stayed in a hospital in Walla Walla, WA but would soon receive leave in April. But only for a week.

Ruth waited for Bill outside the train station in Grand Forks. When getting off the train, he embraced her immediately and proposed.

They were married on April 11th at St. Mary's Catholic Church, only a few blocks away from where each of them grew up. Because it was wartime, extravagance was considered unpatriotic. The church was not decorated; there wasn't mass, and only one attendant on each side of the couple. Bill wore his uniform and Ruth wore her new light gray suit. Her hair still remained swooped up on one side of her face, but all the other hair was gathered in the back, giving her a more conservative appearance. The

wedding photo, even 70 years later, radiates happy, triumphant faces.

Since they were married and his station assignment was in San Francisco, the army said Ruth could come and live with Bill during his duty. The army set the couple up in a small house in Carmel. Ruth was fortunate to get a job as a secretary to the general while she was in California. She expressed her gratitude towards him because he let her continue working even after she became pregnant with their first child. "This was not always the practice in these days," she said.

Ruth also filled her time as being part of the Army Wives Club. Even sitting in her wheelchair many years later, you can tell this is a sore spot of her time out there. "When we would gather, we had to sit according to our husband's rank! Can you imagine?"

A few years later, Bill and Ruth watched their two-year-old son grow and play in sands of Carmel Beach. The both realized that the busy, noisy life of Carmel was not the place where they wanted their family to expand. "California was a good time. We met good people. But we knew we wanted to go back to Grand Forks. Grand Forks was our home" said Bill.

Bill decided to leave the army and move his small family back to the town of their roots. Being back in the Red River Valley, brought a new house, new careers and more children. The house on Almont Avenue was picturesque Americana: white, two stories, green shutters, and a balcony off the master bedroom. By the end of 1958, the family, which started off as two, grew into a family of ten. Bill's mother moved into their home after Bill's stepfather passed away to help out with all the children.

After arriving back to the town they loved, Ruth received a teaching job at Grand Forks Central teaching English and Home Economics. "I loved the young people and teachers at Central. In those days, you were not only the students' teacher but also their mother during the day" said Ruth.

But Ruth was not your typical high school teacher of the 50s and 60s. She was never one to sit on the sidelines and it would be fair to say she was a revolutionary educator. She noticed there was a hole when it came to teaching the art of cooking to college students. What was the point of practicing fine recipes without anyone to enjoy them? With the support from the administration at Central High School, Ruth implemented the first Home Economics Restaurant in North Dakota. At the time, the old YWCA was vacant and the city agreed for her to use the building's kitchen and cafeteria. Ruth still talks about this time with the excitement as if it were happening

now. “There was an oven, fryer, even a dishwasher! The students and I invited every businessman in town. The most amazing part was that everyone paid!” This award winning program offered students the chance not only to cook delicious food for downtown employees on their lunch hour, but students also received the unique experience of practicing the art of etiquette and business before they graduated high school.

Bill beamed at his wife. “You can still go into Central and see her plaque. She was inducted into the Grand Forks Central Teacher Hall of Fame. Go through the door outside of the gymnasium. You’ll see it yourself.”

While Ruth made her career legacy at Central High School, Bill went to work with Ruth’s father at McDonald’s Fine Men’s Clothing. He discovered he had a talent for sales. He also found an eye for quality-made clothing. During the 50s and 60s, it was high time for men’s fashion. “I liked being part of it. There were so many customers and you got to know people from the community really well,” said Bill. He worked for a grand store full of beautiful fabrics during a time when shopping was quite the event. Still to this day, even though he only has limited vision of the periphery, he can tell by touch if your clothing is finely made or not. Though he hasn’t been downtown for some time now, he is proud of the fact that the McDonald’s Fine Men’s Clothing painted brick ad is still on the side of the building. Many engaged couples get their photos taken in front of it with very little knowledge of what is behind the ad—a family legacy.

No matter how busy they got with their careers, both agreed saying that they always thought of their children first. With seven sons and one daughter, there was never a dull moment in the Hill household. Some of their favorite family activities were to spend time out in their yard together. Bill built their children a large tree house in their back yard. The kids would spend hours up in the tree house, playing make believe, reading and writing plays. There was always something to do. In the winter, Bill would make an ice skating rink in their backyard. The kids and their friends never had to complain about a lack of excitement in the neighborhood.

In their retirement, Ruth and Bill focused on crafting and art. She sat outside in their screen house, painting watercolor scenes of what she saw in their garden and writing poetry. Bill spent many dark hours in the basement wood crafting anything from clocks, desks, frames for his wife’s watercolors, various birds such as ducks and swans, two sleek California dolphins in polished walnut, and dollhouse furniture for his granddaughters.

His strong and craftsman-like hands became famous in the Grand Forks area, landing him a large picture and feature article in the Life section of The Herald in the 1990s. The reporter asked, "What was the first thing you remember making with wood?"

Bill folded his hands in his lap and thought as his new grandfather clock chimed. A smile ran across his mouth when he remembered. "The first thing I ever made was a sailing ship. The Santa Maria, all rigged out in linen thread. I got the plans from Popular Mechanics when I was about 12 years old."

"What other types of wood do you use?" the reporter asked as he sketched wildly in his notebook.

"Basswood is the best for my duck and swan carvings. It's soft wood and you can put in a lot of small detail," he crossed his legs in the chair he was sitting in. "However, I prefer hardwood, black walnut is my favorite. Oh, and cherry. It has to be hardwood if you want to appreciate the wood."

The reporter suggested he should sell his carved birds at art festivals because "They look as if they are ready to take flight." But Bill's artistry was never a business. It was for his family. It was his goal that every one of his children would receive a handmade clock or at least something crafted by his hands.

Now spending quiet days together in a nursing home, they tell me they are still "buddies." It is amazing to think about how much history a married couple can make in one North Dakota town. Even though both are overwhelmed about the amount of city expansion they've witnessed over the years, Bill says, "Grand Forks is still a wonderful place to live. It is as energetic and industrious of a city as when we were young." Although Bill and Ruth do not get out as they used to, it is still very important to them to be civically involved. They go listen to the newspaper being read every day. They are well aware of what is being discussed on the city council. They rarely miss a UND

Hockey game on television. If there is one thing I've learned from listening to my grandparents' stories over the years it would be to love, cherish and know where you are from. During that afternoon interview, watching my grandparents sneak treats to my dog and boast with the nurse aids as they explained they were being interviewed for a big story by their granddaughter, I realized these near centenarians are unknowing pillars of the Grand Forks community.

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IV. Coming Home

by Alex Cavanaugh

It is a cool summer morning and the light is filtered through the trees and into the sunroom. The beds stir around the boy and he hears wet coughs and the nervous rustling of sheets. To his left another boy his age moans and turns over. To the right, the sheets are motionless. He presses the back of his head into the pillow and looks to the ceiling. The sun is warming his blanketed legs. The clock above the door shows 6:45—fifteen minutes until breakfast. He closes his eyes to sleep another five minutes.

He wakes, not knowing how much time has passed. The room has been cleared. He looks up at the nurse who gently shook his shoulder, and sees a doctor and another nurse standing over the bed next to his, the sheets and the body underneath still motionless. In another room a pan is dropped on the floor.

* * *

Art jerked awake, startled by a sound already far from his memory. It was dark outside and he sat up, allowing his eyes to adjust to the dim lights inside the tent. The stillness of the air around him was interrupted by heavy breathing and rolling in the beds around him. The room was filled with the sounds of men whimpering, snoring, moaning. He could smell the distinct odors of antiseptic and dirt. He laid his head back onto the pillow and closed his eyes, thinking of the warmth of the late summer sun in North Dakota.

In the morning Art was checked by an Army nurse, one of three making the morning bed checks. Some of the beds were now empty, but still positioned so close together that the nurses struggled to walk between them. This nurse, a woman near Art's age—25 at the time—checked his vitals and made notes on a chart. Her eyes had a distant look to them and it appeared her thoughts were elsewhere, escaping the repeated actions the work of the tent hospital demanded.

"Can you discharge me?" Art asked. Startled at this sudden interaction, the nurse looked at his face, which was young but did not betray the signs of experience. His skin was dry and tough from extended periods of time outdoors and long hours of work in the sun. His face, that of a young North Dakota farmer, had been further

shaped by the work that surrounded war. Behind his eyes, though, she could see the return of confidence, of a will to move forward.

The nurse looked at the chart in her hand. “I wish I could.” She looked at Art's face again. “You are looking better, though. Getting your color back. I'll talk to the doctor.” Her eyes came into focus and she had returned to this room, to these beds with men missing limbs. Both she and art had witnessed enough of the men's agony to last both their lifetimes.

Art had spent those weeks in the tent hospital reading papers, sleeping on and off. He was drained, but steadily regained strength enough to move on his own. To pass the time, he kept up with the news of the war, of the Allies pushing the German forces back into Germany. He couldn't allow himself to become homesick—he knew that his survival depended on concentrating at the task at hand. Had he allowed his mind to wander, to dwell on the home he had left in North Dakota, he knew the war would catch up to him. Hospitalization was all the more difficult in light of this struggle. Art was stuck, incapacitated, left with no task to keep him busy other than that of his mind and memory.

Nevertheless, as Art became physically stronger he also gradually regained the ability to own up to his Army philosophy: he would have to be tougher than the men around him, especially those in his company. Art was the youngest man he knew in the regular Army, and the other men often referred to him as “the kid.” This became so frequent that he formed a resolution that when the work became too tough for them, it would be just right for him. He would not let them break him. Art felt he had to grow up fast and grow up hard in order to prove himself to the other men. Now, though, he missed them, and saw them less as competition and more as peers, as brothers. After these three weeks away from his company, this group of wonderful men, he felt more alone than he had in some time.

That afternoon the doctor came to Art's bedside, checked the same vitals the nurse had checked this morning—Art hadn't seen her since—and authorized his discharge. He collected what few belongings he had with him: a shaving kit from the Red Cross, a toothbrush, and a set of dirty, worn fatigues.

He made his way from the series of tents that made up this Army hospital to the main road. Each tent was identical to the one where he had been the last three weeks, and Art realized there were hundreds, possibly thousands of young men

brought from both sides of the France-Germany border that this part of the war had brought them to.

He regained his bearing and started walking to where he had last seen his company. When he had last seen the other men, he had been working on a crew tasked with repairing a Bailey bridge. Before this job, the company built a rest camp in Paris for recovering soldiers and those who had spent extended periods of time in combat.

At the bridge site, Art had been feeling weak, and his company commander, a man named York, placed him on sick call. He reported to the medic as per York's order. The medic, however, had a different assessment of Art's condition. “A big man like you,” he said, “shouldn't be sick.” Art returned to work and within the hour had passed out.

After Art had collapsed, York had instructed another soldier to drive him from the camp to the hospital in a weapons carrier. Art was unconscious during the trip and had only a vague idea of where his company was. He could only hope they were still there.

Soon after his arrival at the tent hospital, Art was diagnosed with Malaria. The nurses and doctors were quick to attend to him, assigning him to a bed in a large shared tent that was mostly full of injured soldiers. “What a mess I'm in now,” he had thought to himself as he lay drifting in and out of consciousness, listening to the sounds of hurt and dying men for what would be several weeks.

Art walked about a mile and flagged down a jeep coming up the road. The jeep pulled up alongside him, the driver peering through the open passenger window. “Need a ride?” he asked. Tired from the lack of sleep and the lingering effects of his illness, Art didn't hesitate to get off his feet.

“Yes, please.” He got into the jeep and the driver pulled ahead quickly, jerking the wheels back onto the road.

“I'm heading to the blockade. Is that where you need to go?” the driver asked.

“Yes, I think so. Do you know where the 370th Combat Engineers are?”

“I know where they are,” the driver said, and the two men sat in silence a few minutes.

“Have you been in France long?” the driver asked.

"I've been all over." Art explained that he had come to the German border via Marseilles, and that he was in Corsica, Sardinia, and Algiers before that. In Algiers Art had been a part of the anti-aircraft crew that defended the naval base during its worst raid. That night, Bob Hope and Frances Langford were staying at the Aletti Hotel after visiting the soldiers at the base. When they had arrived they were assured by General Ike Eisenhower that Algiers was safe from German attack and that they would get a good night's sleep. A few hours after they addressed the men, the sky was ablaze as the anti-aircraft crews brought German planes out of the night sky one after another.

"I read about that raid," the driver said. "Where are you from?"

"North Dakota," Art said.

"How was the trip over?"

"It was all right." Crossing the Atlantic was the first time Art had been over a large body of water—he hadn't even swam in a river. As he was crossing the gangway onto the ship, a sailor had asked Art if he was scared. "You bet I am," he said. The sailor smiled and told him to follow the movement of the boat as he walked. "Walk with the waves," he said, "and you'll be okay."

During the voyage, there had been an attempted torpedo attack. Though the attack failed, several of the men lingered above deck, ready to jump overboard should the boat be hit. Meanwhile, Art heeded the sailor's advice and moved his body with the pitch and roll of the big ship, quickly adjusting to the lack of solid ground under his feet.

It had taken 13 days to reach the Mediterranean coast at Oran. There, the crew disembarked and travelled 20 miles overland by foot to Stony Point, where Art spent his first night on foreign soil. A young man from a farm in North Dakota, Art hadn't known blue as deep as the Mediterranean sea, or that palm trees could line highways.

The jeep was stopped by an MP at the blockade and the driver was informed that the vehicle was not authorized to pass. "I guess this is where we part," he said. The men shook hands and Art got out of the jeep. "What are you going to do?"

"I suppose I'll walk around the blockade and wait for my company," Art said. "Thanks for the ride."

"I'm just glad to help. Take care," and with a wave he drove off.

Alone now, Art knew he had to wait for a company truck to pass through the blockade. He thought of the driver, whose kindness saved him a fair amount of time and energy. Then he remembered the nurse, whose distant gaze struck him. Nurses, he thought, have the worst life in the war. He thought again of the men in the hospital that were brought in as he lay in his bed, unsure of how long they would be there, and of those that were there when he arrived and were still there when he left.

Art yawned, still tired from lack of sleep. His mind was still with the tent hospital, and invariably linked with another such period of uncertainty, years before, at the San Haven Sanatorium in Dunseith, North Dakota. When he was 15, Art contracted pleurisy and in July was taken to the hospital for treatment. Turning him over for long-term care was a difficult choice, but it was the only option available to his family. In the middle of summer, the farmers from Reynolds that bore and raised Art brought him North to the woods in the Turtle Mountains near the Canadian border and left him there. He spent six months at San Haven, and one morning awoke beside a tuberculosis patient who had died in his sleep. This was a constant reality at the hospital, where many of the patients died, their disease far beyond the scope of treatment at that time. Others spent years quarantined at the sanatorium in the woods, receiving treatment for the rampant disease. In Art's case, every day until December, when he was rid of the sickness and could finally return home, the doctors drew a pint of fluid from his lungs.

Art had a clear picture of that pint in his mind when a truck belonging to the 370th pulled up to the blockade. With the stillness of those woods around the sanatorium hovering around him, he approached the truck to rejoin his company.

Back at camp, Commander York called roll and seemed pleased to see Art returned and in good spirits. Taking Art aside, York told him it was good to have him back.

“It's good to be home,” Art said.

“I'm sending some men to the camp we built in Paris and I want you to go with them.”

“Sir,” Art said, “I don't have a penny to my name, and all I have are these ragged clothes I'm wearing. I haven't been paid in three months. And there are men who need to go more than I do.”

“Grove, this is an order,” York replied. “I'll loan you some money and see that you get some clothes.”

The next day Art was taken with the other men to the rest camp and over several days regained his strength. Though fall was approaching, the city was green and resonant with summer life. Art spent his time in Paris sleeping and walking in the sun, relaxing at the camp he helped build in the city that had not long ago been reclaimed.

After this period of recovery, Art rejoined his company and returned to duty. At this point the war was nearly over, and General George Patton's troops were in the final raids on the German opposition, which was at this point crippled and near defeat. Art was called into one of these raids for a dangerous mission—possibly the most dangerous of his entire tour of duty. Art was assigned to drive a truck loaded with fuel cans to tanks out in the field during combat. He later realized that had he, a clear target for any armed enemy, been hit, there would have been nothing left of him. Yet this task, which took place during Patton's final raid on Germany, was more dangerous than the various missions and challenges Art faced in the war. At present, though, it did not seem to him as ominous what he had seen in the hospitals, having recently witnessed the collective damages of war and having, as a young man, seen firsthand the scourge of tuberculosis. Each of these times he escaped death, and on the battlefield he managed to do so yet again.

Indeed, there were many points after Art first saw the Statue of Liberty as he left New York for the war that he doubted he would ever see it again. From the voyage overseas to the air raid in Algiers, the dangerous surroundings, the malaria, his final mission, and the return trip through violent weather that swept 22 men overboard, Art was astonished when at last he viewed the green figure rising tall out of the Atlantic.

In November, Art made his way from New York to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, where he was discharged, and travelled by bus to Minneapolis and then to Grand Forks. Grand Forks was in the snowless cold preceding winter as Art waited alone at a bus station for someone in his family to come for him. He called home and his uncle answered the phone, explaining that his parents had just gone to church and that when they returned they would come for him.

Art sat in the old bus station and waited, once again surrounded by the lingering quiet of certain North Dakota moments. These moments defined this place for Art, and they were what he knew he would always return to.

* * *

Art Grove was born in 1920 in a farmhouse in Reynolds, ND. He grew up on the farm and at age 15 was admitted to San Haven Sanatorium in Dunseith, ND with pleurisy. After six months of diligent care, he was released and he returned to the farm in Reynolds. In 1942 he was drafted into the Army and went to Europe in 1943. He served in Algiers, Sardinia, Corsica, France, and Germany. He returned to the United States after the war in November 1945. He married in 1947 and moved to a log house near Hillsboro, ND, where he farmed and raised livestock. Art's first wife passed away in 1950 and Art raised her son, whom he had adopted, until adulthood. Art married again in 1965. He and his wife retired from farming in 1987 and moved to Grand Forks, where he now lives.

Alex teaches composition at Lake Region State College. He lived in Grand Forks for seven years during his undergraduate and graduate study.

V. Remnants of His Love

by Alek Haugen

Words cannot do justice for the life of Raymond Sevigny. Though he can share from a seemingly endless wealth of beautiful stories, the words alone are lacking. They lack his infectious smile, his squinting, smiling eyes, and his spirit. At age 92, Raymond is far from the analogous mold of a fine, aged wine. Quite the contrary, in fact: He is a breath of fresh air. He is as spirited as he surely was as a young boy, riding his wagon through mud puddles on a farm east of Grafton, North Dakota.

Along with various chores caring for his family's cattle, chicken, ducks, turkey, and pigs, Raymond can share fun memories of his adolescence on the farm. Some of his favorite memories include working in the garden, playing "horse" with broomsticks, and playing hide-and-seek in the corn fields. On special occasions, such as when the family entertained company, Raymond's father would share with everyone from his storage of homemade beer in the basement. Everyone—no matter how small—got to have a glass of his father's beer. A parenting practice so contrary to the fears of society today, Raymond admires his father's trust and respect all the more.

Growing up in the 1920's and early 1930's, Raymond attended a Catholic School of the Nuns, the same school, in fact, as his father. Though Raymond loved school, he only received a seventh grade education. When discussing social, political, and theological ideas today, he is fair in raising the question: "Where do I get this information?" And his answer: "Well, I stopped to listen." Because of this history, Raymond holds a unique perspective on education. He is able to see that many people, though they go off to school, return unchanged. The problem, as he sees it, is that "they never get a sense of value." Only the briefest of conversations with Raymond is enough to prove that he values the heart much more than the head.

Raymond's story echoes of virtues and values waning in society today and tells of a way of life which is the unfortunate victim of progress here in the Red River Valley. He recalls days of freedom, days that were empty of worries, where three square meals were served (with real heavy cream, he adds), and no one—*no one*—worked on Sundays. According to Raymond, in making time for everything, our culture finds itself without time for anything. Raymond is one of the rare and wise who understands that stopping to visit with a neighbor is more important than

finishing his work, an attitude which helps explain the depth and breadth of his relationships even to this day.

Raymond is the doting father of seven children—three daughters and four sons, of whom he has been blessed with 32 grandchildren. Raymond married his late wife, Sophie, in 1947, and she is still the keeper of the glimmer in his eye, his eternal dancing partner. The two used to love to get away, squander 25 cents for a dance ticket, and spend their night lost in Polka dancing. In fact, Raymond unknowingly first met his wife when they danced together:

> "She claims we danced together, but I didn't know who she was," he recalls. "To me, it didn't make no difference who I was dancing with. When I came home [from the service], I went out onto the dance floor and I saw this pair of eyeballs. There she was. Of course, I always told the good Lord to give me a good woman. So, I got what I wanted."

It was a life of simple pleasures for Raymond and Sophie. Sophie's hobbies of fishing and boating were quickly adopted by Raymond. Their love for the outdoors often took the family on wagon rides to the country, where they would spend the day playing Frisbee and enjoying the fields. On the way home, they would stop at a country diner, and—when the children behaved—Dairy Queen, too. This was a favorite treat for the family, and one that Raymond often used as a threat…much to his amusement so many years later. Many of Sophie and Raymond's greatest adventures came during the twenty years they owned a motor home and used it to travel across the country. Among their destinations were Chicago, Milwaukee, South Dakota, and Montana. In one particularly humorous memory, Raymond recalls making an entire trip home from Chicago with a blown muffler. "Boy, was that a racket!" he laughs.

Raymond remembers these family outings with an obvious sense of pride and peace. Fondly, he remarks: "Oh, yeah. We had our days."

Raymond joined the United States Army in 1942 and returned home nearly four years later, in 1946. During his time in the service, he was stationed in Austria, Sydney, Brisbane, and, for two years, in the jungle of New Guinea. He still gets a genuine belly laugh when hearing the name of his company, abbreviated FARTC, which he and his comrades jokingly referred to as "Fart Company." Surprisingly, Raymond seems almost unaffected by his stint in the war. He is able to recognize that he "didn't go through Hell" unlike many of those around him, especially who suffered from malaria. One experience that did resonate with Raymond during his time overseas came in Manila when he met a young ten-year-old girl who sold the

soldiers bananas. Her mother had been brutally attacked and killed by the Japanese and she was enthralled by Raymond and the U.S. soldiers. When he showed her a picture of his home back in America, she assumed he must be a millionaire and begged to go home with him. He still keeps the picture of that house in his desk.

Perhaps a more formative experience of Raymond's life came in the years 1951-1953. During that time, he and his family moved to Minnesota where he tried his hand at farming. Unfortunately—and quite simply—it was a bad year for crops. Raymond's crops were damaged by hail and, worse yet, he had no hail insurance. Then, the following year, Raymond's wife, Sophie, got sick. Struggling financially and emotionally, Raymond and his family were forced to lean on the assistance of others: "I had nothing left, but the thing is: I always had help when I needed it. No kidding. When I needed help, it was there. Mostly on my wife's side, but some were total strangers, too."

In remembering their kindness, these were Raymond's words: "If I was to pay those people for what it's worth to me, I couldn't earn it. No. I couldn't earn it." I would argue that that sentence alone is enough to summarize Raymond's ever-present humility and graciousness.

Raymond worked several jobs throughout his life. He worked for a time at PV elevator, for the railroad in Grafton, for Charles Adamson in construction, at a bank, and for thirty years at Vilandre Heating, Air Conditioning, and Plumbing. At his first job after returning from the service, Raymond was paid a mere $0.75 per hour. Before going overseas, he had spent the winters working for a farmer and earning $15 each month. Ultimately, he declined a $100 raise and the likely possibility of one day owning the farmland himself. His reason: "I figured the folks needed my help back home. It wasn't to be."

"A lot of people now-a-days are looking for the 'big money.' I never had big money. The good Lord always provided, so I give the good Lord room for that, because he always provided." Raymond draws inspiration for his simplicity from Saint Francis of Assisi and from the Pope, who bears the same name. He recognizes that most quests for success are based on competition, or as he explains it, "being able to buy everything the neighbors have."

"The 'big money' you make isn't always the best stuff," he concludes. "I'm not a rich man, but I'm happy."

Clearly, Raymond's faith is a most defining feature of his character. Motioning to his many prayer cards, he laughs: "But don't make me a saint, now." Though he

fears that the world may be losing faith, Raymond remains devout. In all things—joy *or* suffering—Raymond gives thanks to God. Affectionately referring to Him as "the good Lord," the words are never far from his lips. He hardly acknowledges any so-called challenges in his life. "I just went along with it," he said. "I always depended on the Almighty." During the last years of his wife's life, for example, Raymond's patience and spirit were tested. Despite all the hardship, Raymond remembers it this way: "The good Lord gave me someone to take care of…and she was worth it."

If there's any warning Raymond would offer to the faithful today, it would be to ward off pride. He misses the traditional practices of the church, such as daily mass or blessing farmland and cars. He worries that people have grown too busy, or more aptly, that we've grown too busy with the wrong obligations. In fact, when he begins to explain why "It's too much pride," Raymond is brought to tears.

Raymond's love for his friends and neighbors at Valley Homes in Grand Forks, ND is also enough to bring him to tears. Though some at Valley Homes cleverly refer to Raymond as "Trouble," most of the many visitors who come through his door call him by name. "Now, that's not to brag about," he ensured me. "I appreciate it, though. People recognize me and I like that."

Raymond is able to acknowledge the good fortune in his life. Namely, he thanks God for his health. Despite his 92 years on Earth, he certainly does not *feel* old. This youthfulness is nothing new in Raymond; he claims that, at family gatherings, he was usually found playing outside with his grandchildren rather than mingling amongst the adults. Because he has been blessed with such persistently good health, Raymond takes every opportunity to care for those around him who have not been as lucky.

Raymond can easily recall several of the neighbors at Valley Homes who have impacted his life—all while he was surely impacting theirs. One in particular was a woman whose parents Raymond helped care for. She, herself, has suffered from Parkinson's disease for thirty years, and as Raymond remembers one of their most recent interactions, he cannot hold back tears. "She gave me a hug and kiss and, you know…It's working with these people. That lady appreciates it that I take care of her folks."

Another friend, a woman who lived down the hall from Raymond, left Valley Homes for another facility. Occasionally, he still sees her at church on Sundays, and—even after she has suffered a stroke—she remembers who he is and smiles when he playfully bumps her chair. As with all who know Raymond, she values his genuine friendship. "I was hoping you'd come," she told him at their last meeting.

"They look up to me," he said of his neighbors at Valley Homes. Speaking of another friend of his, whose husband recently passed away and who was soon after diagnosed with cancer, Raymond remarks: "I get that lady smiling…and I like to see her smile. I feel good about it."

No, words do not do justice to the life of Raymond Sevigny. Words can only produce dates and places and timelines and list of accomplishments. But Raymond never needed any of those things… Instead, he lived a life of love. He never separated his heart from his beliefs, his family, or his work. Raymond's life is told by the remnants of his love, which surely live on in his happy and healthy family, his grateful neighbors and friends, a very humbled member of the millennial generation, and all those who have the pleasure of knowing his story.

Alek is a Bismarck, ND native who is currently studying psychology/honors at the University of North Dakota. She plans to attend graduate school for a PhD in clinical psychology.

VI. A Simple Story

by Anna Claire Tandberg

When I arrived at the Wheatland Terrace assisted living facility, I had no idea where I was supposed to go. Gene Lautenschlager had asked me to call when I got there, so I did. He didn't pick up right away, but once he did and we started trying to find each other, I walked around a corner and saw a man talking on his cell phone; I knew it must be him. I waved, he waved back. It was an interesting way to first meet someone. I smiled and introduced myself; he shook my hand. Gene had a nice firm handshake.

I asked where he wanted to do his interview and he led me to the activity center. We sat down at a table and started talking. There was a newspaper featuring a large picture of Julia Lipnitskaia, the 15 year old Russian figure skater, and an article about her. I asked Gene if he had been watching the Olympics; he had not. I told him what the article said about Julia, how she won the first gold medal for Russia and how everyone loved her. He told me he was proud because he has Russian heritage.

Then I asked him about his life. Gene was born in Berthold, North Dakota, which is a small town about 25 miles west of Minot. He was one of nine children. He went to school there in Berthold. Since it was a small town, his school went from 1st grade through 12th grade and not every class was offered every year. Gene told me he had wanted to take physics in high school, but it hadn't been offered at a time when he could take it.

Gene was never really interested in sports in high school—that was part of the reason he had not been watching the Olympics. When I asked him later if he ever did any dancing, even when he was younger, he told me he had been a "stick in the mud" and was far too bashful. Gene told me that he had been the smallest in his class so he had shied away from things that might have led to being teased. He reflected that his shyness became quite a handicap.

Gene told me he went skating once on a frozen little pond near the farm he grew up on. He related that he fell on his head, and that was enough skating for him!

After graduating high school Gene went to a teaching college in Minot. He quit after a year and a half, because, as he said jokingly, "they were trying to make a teacher out of me, and I didn't want to be a teacher!" I laughed along with him, and he

revealed that he had only gone to that school because it was convenient. After that he worked in Minot doing office-type work. Then he was drafted into the Korean War.

I asked Gene what that was like and what he did. He told me he hadn't been in a combat unit; instead he was part of something called an observation unit. I had never heard of that before. He explained that his unit stayed close to the lines of battle. They watched the enemy and told the rest of the troops where they were. He was in the war for two years.

After the war Gene went back to college in Minot—to a business college this time. He graduated with a degree and worked for various businesses including an automotive dealer, a housing contractor, and a small electrical whole sale house. He stayed at the last one for nine or ten years. He told me he did a lot of bookkeeping for those companies. When I asked him if he liked what he did, he explained that bookkeeping came easily to him and he enjoyed it.

The last company Gene worked for moved to Williston and he moved with them. He was the manager there for four to five years when they started selling the company stock. Gene bought enough stock to own his section and became the owner of his own business. This is where he met his wife. In 1994 he sold the business and retired.

Sallyann was working for the company when Gene bought it. I laughed, and joked that that was a good way to get a wife! He told me he was about 40 years old when they got married so they never had kids together, however she was a widow and already had two children of her own: a boy and a girl. When Gene and Sallyann got married the children were already half grown. The boy was in junior high and the girl was a junior or a senior in high school.

Gene and Sallyann went on several business trips together, and before the kids went to college they came along on the trips too. They went to Washington State, Washington DC, Chicago, Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Saint Louis, and Hawaii, among others. He said Hawaii was his favorite because it was the most different. After the trip to Seattle the family took a car trip down the coast to Los Angeles. I asked him if he went swimming in the Pacific Ocean; he told me he had never learned how to swim but he did wade in. He confessed that he does not really like the water, and the he likes it much better when his feet can touch the bottom. I told him that my mom is the same way.

After Gene's father bought some land in Arizona the family went down to visit him. Gene and his wife also went to Florida at one point. I have always heard that Florida has alligators everywhere, so I asked if he had seen any. He had not. I asked him if he had ever been to Disney Land, he said he hadn't, but that while he had been in Florida with Sallyann they had gone to Disney World!

Gene said they went to Disney World in the second or third year that it had been open. I asked if he liked rollercoasters, and he told me that he and his wife did not go on any rollercoasters, and that there were not any rollercoasters there yet. He

explained that Disney World has been developed a lot since it first opened. He told me he wasn't even sure if there were actors dressed up as the Disney characters at that point. Gene said they just went around sight-seeing and it was quite an experience. He stated that he and his wife had always planned to go back, but it had never happened.

I asked Gene if he had had any pets. He told me his family had had a dog when he was growing up on the farm and his wife had a dog when they were in Williston. They lost that dog, and got another. When they lost that dog they decided not to replace it because they wanted to travel, and if they went off traveling they would have to do something with the dog, and it would have made travel more complicated.

Then his wife got sick and they ended up not traveling like they had originally planned. In retrospect, Gene realized that they should have gotten another dog to help keep her company. He expressed regret that they had not. His wife was sick for 12 years before she died about two years ago. Gene became teary eyed as he told me this.

After his wife died Gene became sick. About six months ago he moved from Williston to Wheatland Terrace. His brother took care of selling a lot of property that had belonged to Gene, including his house, a cabin he owned on Lake Sakakawea, and some land. He still owns 80 acres of land that was given to him by his dad. I asked him how much that was and he explained to me that each farm section of land is one square mile. Each square mile is split into four sections of 160 acres. His father gave each of the nine children 120 acres of land. Since his father owned last in a variety of areas Gene's section of land is separate from the area of land where his grandfather homesteaded.

I asked Gene where his step children lived; he told me that the son lives in Grand Forks with a wife and three boys. He said they visit him often. The daughter lives in Williston with one girl and two boys.

Gene told me Wheatland Terrace is nice. They get three meals a day and he is getting healthier. When he first started staying at Wheatland Terrace he was renting a two room apartment. It was small, and he didn't like it very much, because it was so small. He admitted that if he would have had to stay in the smaller room he would not have stayed. He moved into a two bedroom apartment, and that was much nicer. He didn't know how some couples could stay in just the two room apartment; he thought it must be very cramped for them.

Every time some other resident would come into the room, or we passed them in the hall he knew who they were and he would talk with them. Gene explained to me how this assisted living place sort of worked. It is a pretty big complex that has both apartments to rent and a nursing home. An activities coordinator puts on a lot of activities for the residents. Gene likes to go to those. They play bingo, they have afternoon coffee, and they have sing-alongs. Gene told me he tries to sing along.

Sometimes singers are brought in to perform for them. A woman also comes in and reads the news to them. They hold discussions about the news. She also helps them with different exercises that help with coordination and general fitness.

Gene reflected that even though there were maybe three hundred residents living in Wheatland Terrace, only about fifteen or so go to the activities. He told me that most of the residents stay in their rooms except for mealtimes. I thought this seemed sad. I was glad that Gene was not one of the people who just stayed in his room all the time; I was glad he got out and talked to people.

I asked Gene if there was anything he never did that he wanted to. He thought for a bit, then told me he had figured he would have traveled more. He had always wanted to go to Alaska, and he had wanted to see the east coast. He had been to Canada, and he had gone over the ocean to other countries when he was in the army. I told him that I am going to go to London over Spring Break, and that I would send him a postcard.

After we were done talking Gene asked if I wanted to see his apartment. I said sure, so he gave me a little tour. He showed me the dining hall where they all ate, since I had already seen the activity center he didn't need to show me that. His apartment was on the second floor and we took the elevator. The second floor has a big U-shaped hallway. Gene explained that since he liked to walk, and this hallway was very long, he would often walk from end to end. He informed me that he could walk around his hall three or four times and only see one of the women that help with the housekeeping.

Gene's apartment was very nice and clean. There was a walled off kitchen complete with all the kitchen utilities, such as a stove and fridge. He showed me his bathrooms, his office (which was one of the bedrooms, but he was using it as an office) and his walk in closet. He had lots of pictures on the walls of his living room and he had a television. I asked who the people in the photos were, and he pointed out his step children and his grand kids. There were a couple satin stitched pictures of a duck and a flower. I asked him who had made those and he told me his dad did.

After talking to Gene and seeing his home, we said our good-byes. I shook his hand again and thanked him for his time.

Anna is a sophomore at UND, currently studying Chemistry and Teaching.

VII. Honeydew

by Erin Lord Kunz

We'd been chatting for about twenty minutes when I relaxed into the sofa and took stock of my surroundings—paintings, pictures, the organized clutter of too many memories to properly contain. The house has an entryway leading into a receiving room with wood floors, a layout that treats company to their own space in the house during a time period when such care for guests was common practice. Casey Whitman had lived in the home for fifty years.

Throughout our conversation there was a massive brown dog sitting between us, and though lumbering and somewhat clumsy, it had not disturbed us since I arrived. She was sprawled out between my couch and Casey's, mediating the conversation and keeping an eye on us humans. I couldn't help but laugh when Casey told me that this wavy-haired giant's name was "Honeydew."

"Oh, she is HUGE," Casey said. "She has bumps and what have you all over because she is so old."

"Maybe like the dog form of wrinkles," I suggested, both of us laughing and admiring Honeydew.

As we sat talking in the receiving room, people came and went in a casual manner. A young man walked by in the background and Casey quietly said "hi dearie" in a relaxed inflection that suggested everyday interaction. I would learn later that her daughter Jean's family also lived in the house, which explained the warm and comfortable relationships in the home that are completely alien to my own familial encounters.

The family's ease seemed derivative of Casey's ease, who is the definition of pleasant--and not the unpleasant pleasantness, either, like the sort of Dolores Umbridge sugariness that makes your stomach twist. There was no training on how to treat guests kindly, just a genuine calm and absence of suspicion, another quality that was alien to my familial encounters.

I was certain I would have recognized Casey had I been at the grocery store, the gas station, or the park. She is the image of my friend plus 65 years, with the same bone structure, petite frame, and air of agreeable curiosity and welcome. It seemed comical—planned almost—that she was also wearing a blue flannel shirt, grey cardigan, jeans and blue sneakers, as if my friend's wardrobe had traveled along for 65 years as well. Casey is, in fact, my friend's paternal grandmother.

The elderly can be terrifying in the way children can be terrifying; blunt honesty has no time for feelings or political correctness. This was not my experience with Casey. She did not comment on my hair, the uncomfortable way my five-year old niece and 70-year old grandmother do; she simply said that she liked my hat. I was becoming suspicious about the lack of passive aggressiveness in this individual.

Because Honeydew's presence had declared it must be, our conversation was casual. Casey told me about her favorite food—chicken, corn, and mashed potatoes—as well as her least favorite food—tuna fish on Fridays, every Friday.

"I hate tuna. I hate it," said Casey.

"She really hates tuna," said Jean.

Apparently it will take a few more generations for us Catholics to realize the non-tuna options for no-meat Fridays. Casey doesn't particularly like cooking, and she said she got lucky because as she explained, "my mother was such a good cook so I didn't have to be." Casey's mother lived with her and her growing family, and now Casey's daughter Jean's family lives with her, in the same house on Reeves. Lots of familial history where I was sitting. Because of this arrangement, Casey never had to bother much with her meals, which to me sounded like an ingenious and life-sustaining plan.

There were two rooms to either side of me, and a staircase behind where Casey was sitting. Appearing from a room beyond the staircase, Casey's daughter came down from upstairs to sit and talk with us a bit. Offering information to our conversation about food, she said, "When it comes to sweets, she can match anybody." We had a lot in common.

Casey let out the heartiest laugh so far of the morning. "Ya, that's true. I can't gain weight since Whit died, but in the meantime I like candy and chocolate." I didn't ask what she meant by "in the meantime," but it seemed tragically romantic.

I drove up to this house on Reeves, an historic area of town, on a blustery and cold February day in Grand Forks, typical of North Dakota. All of the houses--large and small--shouted their permanence through stone walkways and dozens of windows and complicated geometries that suggested room after room after room--no open concept, modern architecture in this neighborhood. A Hide-and-Seek aficionado's dream.

Casey was born in 1925 in Grafton, ND and lived there for five years until her dad got a job in Fargo coaching North Dakota State University football. They lived a block away from the practice field, and one of Casey's earliest--and fondest--memories was going to the field by herself at six years old to watch the practices. She

laughed as she said how odd it would seem now that she was allowed to do this. She didn't have to tell anyone, no one followed her, no one told her she needed to go home. Perhaps the safety of the good ol' days could more aptly be described as the freedom of the good ol' day childhood--helicopter parents hadn't been invented by society yet.

Casey's husband was a mere five days older than her. They met at NDSU, and then they, as she said, "Just took off from there." Before their 50-year anniversary, Whit passed away.

Sitting in a Grand Forks home, Casey reminisced about Fargo—her time with friends, her family, her university studies. In some ways, Casey's story was the story of many North Dakotan natives who have traded towns with jobs, schools, and marriages, but have never left the Peace Garden State entirely. I am also one of those people.

Casey studied "a little bit of everything" at the university, and she really enjoyed being able to do so. She didn't focus in on any specific discipline, like students are "supposed to do now." Casey was almost apologetic for her broad education, though many modern students would probably like the opportunity to develop their intellectual selves in a liberal arts education without the constant burden of professionalization. As a progressive I am not one to be overly romantic about the past, but maybe this was one instance of how times have sadly changed—I was imagining Casey as a young woman, looking like my friend in her blue flannel shirt, grey cardigan, jeans and blue sneakers, reading a novel cross legged in the grass as other university students shuffled off to class together. Wistful, yes, but a much more desirable image than another commercial from a for-profit university berating young people to get their paralegal degree in total isolation from other humans.

Along with going to football practices and games, one of Casey's favorite childhood memories was going to the lake. She spent every summer at the lake, fishing and swimming and spending time with friends and family. The family is still connected to the property, and my friend, Casey's granddaughter, goes there now regularly when the weather is warm. Casey spoke fondly of her nights out as a young woman.

"We went out at night, probably raised Cain…we probably drank a little, I mean we had fun, so that probably had something to do with it."

This was the first indication of anything saucy from Casey's past, but I had a feeling that this sauciness was most likely as scandalous as a Catholic marrying a Lutheran in Western North Dakota.

It wasn't until I was packing up, getting ready to leave, that I made an admittedly lame joke about the weather in Grand Forks being bad that Jean offered an entirely

new series of information about Casey that we had not discussed in the official interview. Jean said that Casey preferred the winters, because she was scared of the storms that come with warm weather.

Casey was pregnant during the infamous Fargo storm of 1957, and the baby had died while they were seeking shelter in the basement.

Jean quickly said "I don't know if [the storm] was why it died," and with the most certainty during the interview so far, Casey replied sternly: "It was."

Casey was terrified during the storm and suddenly the baby, whom she could feel moving only minutes earlier, was suddenly quiet.

"It was during the storm you felt like the baby was quiet?" I asked.

"It *was* quiet," Casey repeated. "I had to wait a week until they took it. I never even got to look at it. I was on the bed, and they just removed it...and I never got to look..."

Casey's voice trailed off, and though she didn't seem overly upset while explaining what had happened, she was serious and confident in her recollection for the first time since we started talking. I was shocked by this development, given that most of our conversation had focused on family dogs and food preferences. Casey sat calmly and let the story breathe through her in a way that captured her strength. This was not a woman who was calm because she had shallow experiences; this was a woman whose experiences created her everyday calm.

Jean explained the impact of the Fargo tornado on the whole town, citing both structural damage and human deaths. She said if I looked up the event that there would be article after article about how devastating it was. Sure enough, when I googled "Fargo" one of the search suggestions was "tornado of 1957." I couldn't help but think of the infamous weather event that came to North Dakota forty years later, and Casey said that she remembered being trapped in her house as the flood waters surrounded her, having to shout across to neighbors because the water filled the streets and they couldn't even walk next door.

Had I missed my cue? Had I structured my questions incorrectly? The climax of Casey's story seemed to be pouring in unexpectedly as I held my gloves and the hat she had complimented earlier, yet Casey seemed as welcoming and composed as ever, as if we were still talking about Honeydew.

Jean then told me that Casey's father had fought in both WWI and WWII, and Casey had spent her later teenage years at a military fort in Louisiana.

"Oh did I have a time...it was so fun!" Casey exclaimed at this recollection. She was less interested in the weight of this political history than the anecdotes that came out of her adolescent memories.

"The first minute we got there I was standing by a barrel in our kitchen and who should come out? A cockroach. I had never seen one before. I was so scared of that thing. I didn't know what it was."

I was at a loss for all of this information that I had missed in my interview. I would also find out in a minute that Casey had lived in Germany for a year when she was first married, and days later from family members that she was also an accomplished painter and curler. Though severely questioning my skills as an interviewer at this point, I marveled that Casey's memories were not focused on the tragedy of losing a baby nor her resume of accomplishments and experiences—her painting, curling, traveling across the U.S., traveling across the world, etc. Her memories were focused on the details—a cockroach—and the details were wrapped up with her family.

It finally occurred to me to ask what her father's name was: Charles Casey Finnegan—the source of her own nickname. Her grandmother was born in Ireland, and, in the apolitical nature that had characterized the entire interview, she joked: "My mother didn't have an Irish thing in her body, but still got along well."

Our conversation was easygoing and affectionate—no suggestion of a much different or difficult time, and certainly no feelings of a grudging or frustrated attitude toward all the changes modernity had brought Casey.

Responding to this perceived issue of a grudge-less life, I prodded her a bit about getting married at 26, wondering if this was unusual for the time especially since Casey was able to attend university and work on her own before she was married. Being from North Dakota, I had relatives who panicked if perfectly self-sufficient women weren't married off and bearing children by 25. I had even married younger than Casey, more than sixty years into the future.

Responding to my gotcha journalism, Casey said, "We all just got married when we got married. No one was trying to get married before or after anyone else."

My prodding for a nonexistent grudge was obviously more of a reflection of my generation's panicked and angst-ridden news cycle, not a substantive response to the easygoing and calm person smiling at me while I asked meaningless questions.

I asked how raising children is different now than when she had her own family.

"I think in the olden days we were expected to do what we were told. My grandchildren are pretty good but they all do what they want to do, you know what I mean?"

I asked if one generation had better child rearing methods than another.

"That's a hard question for me to answer. People do what they want to do."

The experience of this 88-year old woman was to live and let live.

Casey continually asked my pardon for mixing up some of these dates and names and times, which is a generous apology considering that I can't remember what I ate for breakfast. Casey had trouble remembering the web of relationships, ages, and familial associations, but knew everything about the people as individual persons and boasted about her family's warmness and intelligence. The fact that the comings and goings of her children and grandchildren as we spoke were marked by gentle appreciation, and that the forgetfulness was often a source of humor and love, seemed to be the crown of her age rather than a source of strain, a sign of enough blessings to lose count.

"We were simpler," explained Casey, when asked what my generation could learn from hers. "I don't know what they could learn because everyone has their own way of living. That's hard for me to answer. I live quietly and simply and I don't really know what's going on in the world."

"Do you like Grand Forks?" I asked.

"I do, but I kind of miss Fargo. It was very small compared to what it is now. I like Grand Forks, but I keep thinking about Fargo all the time."

I was struck by the beautiful simplicity of our conversation and her self-effacing perspective on critiquing others for any reason, political or personal. I wondered if her draw to Fargo after all this time is something all young adults will eventually experience—a connection with their coming of age location, wherever that might be, no matter how much time had passed. This seemed simultaneously beautiful and terrifying.

Honeydew slept on, covering the rug with brown tendrils of hair.

Casey's grandson walked by, and she pointed him out to me: "That's one of my…grand-people right there." This was the forgetfulness Casey had apologized for earlier. Her grandson laughed and affectionately inquired, "Grand-people?"

"Grand person," Casey corrected, making her grandson a singular noun rather than plural. Their easy humor with one another suggested an intimacy and familiarity that few people are lucky enough to have with their extended family, even if first names are sometimes forgotten.

"I had a really good childhood," Casey said finally. "How many people can say that, really?"

Not many, I thought. There are too many who have hardship placed at their door as a birthright, and even more who could potentially have good lives but sabotage their own good fortune with worry and grudges and competition, things Casey clearly had no interest in. She raised her family in the house her mother lived in. Now her daughter raises her family in the house Casey lives in. The university she is so fond of and the cabin that holds most of her childhood memories is still part of the family.

The calm and welcoming woman in the blue flannel and sneakers could very well be my friend, a few years into the future, of course. Casey's humble self-possession has quietly transferred to her children and grandchildren. They have many of the same memories that their grandmother has, down to the exact setting. Such familial history is almost overwhelming and definitely unusual, but it seems so simple for Casey and Honeydew and her grand-people.

How many people can let their stories and accomplishments and personal heartbreak breathe through them without becoming hardened to pride or tragedy? How many people can beautifully relay happy memories and painful memories to a stranger, without separating the two, but simply with the knowledge that full lives contain both?

The gray February sky rolled its clouds eastward as I walked out of the Reeves house and into my car, and I readied myself for another predicted storm, though I consciously released my frown into the air at this thought. Casey's temperament is everything that mine is not, I realized, so just this once let me borrow her calm as the wind starts howling once again.

Erin is Co-Creator of the Voices of the Valley Writing Project. She is Writing Center Director and Instructor of English at Mayville State University and is pursuing her doctorate in Educational Foundations and Research at UND. She likes words.

VIII. Open Spaces are for Ghosts

by Laurel Perez

Priscilla Stroh (Pudwill)
Born December 22, 1935 in Bismarck, ND
Raised on a farm outside of Danzig, ND
Currently resides in Moorhead, MN

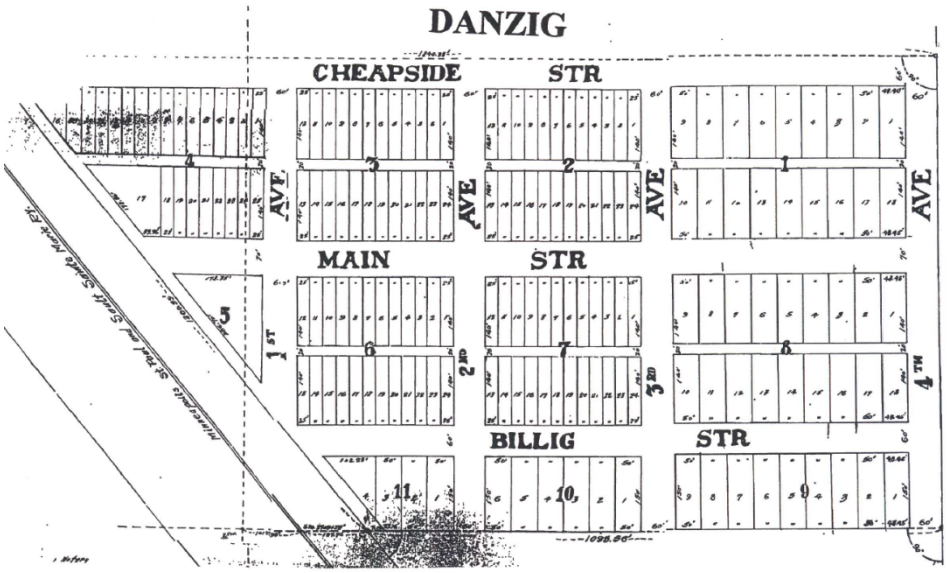
"We look at prairie and we see a great emptiness, a void that staggers the psyche and leaves much too much room for a mind to wander." - Randy Winter, "Nature Notes" (1987)

"That was my country—Terrible winds and a wonderful emptiness." - Georgia O'Keefe

Mary Taylor Young once said "The prairie is not a land to tell its story easily." No truer thing could be said of Alt Danzig or Old Danzig, known today as simply Danzig which was once a little village in central North Dakota, established in 1848. In 1786 fifty families from the district of Danzig natives of Prussia followed Von Trappe, and by ship they traveled across the Baltic sea to Riga, and spent the winter. Come spring they drove wagons to Kremenchug, where one group left to settle in a Swedish colony and the other in Elizabethgrad. Many were unfit to build a village on land given to them by Prince Potemkin, and poverty made it impossible for many to make any progress. Many returned to Germany, or fled the colony in hopes of success elsewhere.

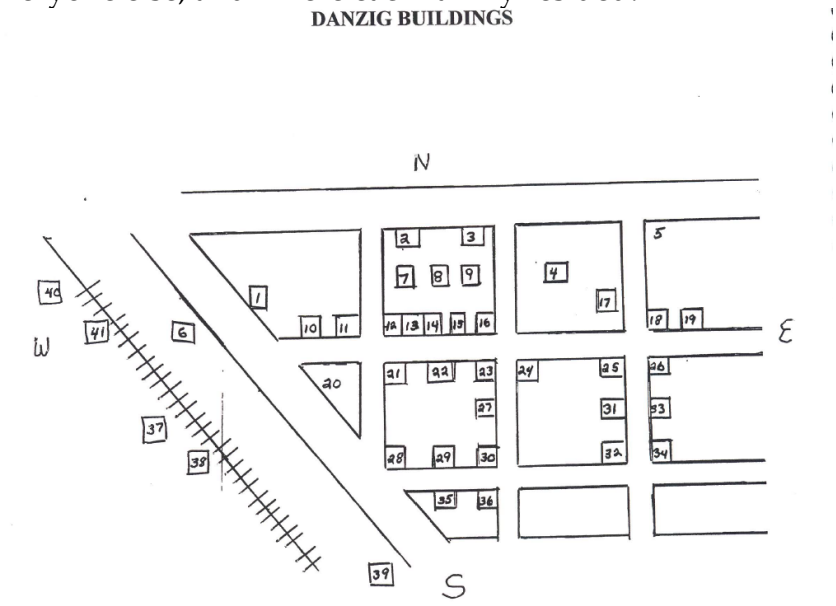
Soon only nineteen of the original twenty nine families remained. In 1803 another ten families arrived from the Bitau District of Further Pomerania, who were given permission by the Kontenius to settle there. The newcomers loved order, and brought the general disorder to an end, and built more houses and a chapel. A profitable water mill was built, and they planted in an adjacent forest; through trial and error they found the soil was rocky and trees had a hard time growing, but the black soil was well suited for cattle, sheep and growing grain and potatoes.

Danzig was wild and uninhibited before these families settled there. They arrived with little and built a new life on the prairie without knowing what that life would be like. They constructed and built earthen huts to live in, and knew nothing of farming.



All crown advances had been used for travel, and they had no knowledge of the prevailing language, and they suffered frequent crop failures in the early years. Many considered moving elsewhere as a result of despair from so much failure. Eventually better times came, and under State Councilor E. von Hahn trees were planted, and other aspects of colony life improved. Prior to Hahn's help there was disorder and excessive drinking which had prevented the colony from advancing.

Today it is a ghost town, forgotten by all but those who called it home for many years. In 1896 Paul Pudwill senior, Priscilla's grandfather built a home for his family on the farm at Wishek, just outside the town of Danzig, North Dakota—one of many railroad towns. The house, still stands made of mudbrick and a labor many North Dakotans have known, and far more will never imagine. The town had only what it needed to thrive, and everything else was close enough to walk to, everyone knew everyone else, and where each family resided.



DANZIG BUILDINGS

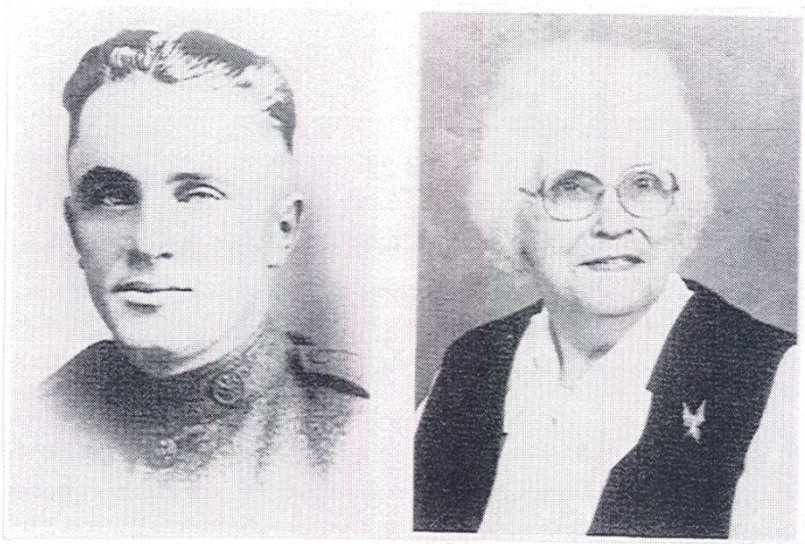
This is approximately were the buildings were located. The numbers correspond with the numbers on the map on the next page.

1. Pete Ernst House, then the Benkendorf House and Barbershop
2. Ted Dockter House
3. Carl Goehring Gas Station and Cream Station
4. Henke House, the Danzig Dray man, then the John F. Salzer House
5. Danzig Dump Ground
6. Danzig Soo Line Depot
7. John Hetzler House
8. Bogdau House then Arnie Johnson House
9. Carl Goehring House
10. Meidinger Store, then Schultz Store, then Aurebach Store, then Joe Schecter
11. Danzig Restaurant and Boarding House, then Breitling Store, then the Danzig Post Office
12. The Farmers State Bank
13. Danzig Hardware Store
14. Danzig Implement Shop
15. The Farmers Store, then Menthlowitz Store, then Kelber Store, then Groszhans Pool Hall
16. Danzig Pool Hall, then Art Johnso Store, then Joachim Store, then Olson Store, then Amos Brinkman, Sr. Store, then the Fischer Store
17. Danzig School
18. Janke House then Helmer House
19. Straub House then Wolff House
20. Danzig Park
21. Danzig Lumber Yard
22. Flour and Cream Store owned by Wm. Albrecht, then Albert Johnson, then Johnson and Gieser, then Silverlieb, then Weber Meat Market, then Helmer's Bar
23. The Blacksmith Shop
24. The Danzig Garage operated by Louie Goehring, then Fred Dockter, then Henry Stube, then Theodore Gieszler and Sam Eszlinger, then Art Iszler, then Albert Salzer
25. Zion Lutheran Church
26. Reformed Church
27. Danzig Light Plant
28. John E. George House
29. Henry Krien House
30. Lutheran Parsonage
31. Dickhoff House, then Sam Eszlinger House
32. Ted Pudwill House
33. John Weber House
34. Fred Gieser House then John Merkel House
35. Jake Goehl House
36. Schilling House then Groszhans House
37. North Elevator
38. South Elevator
39. Danzig Cemetery
40. Benkdendorf House, then barn
41. Danzig Stockyard

The farm once stood on acres of grassland, owned by Paul and his wife Florence. Some of the acres were rented out to other parts of the family. A German family, Paul spoke "Gruchek," a mix of German and Jewish shorthand that only Priscilla's mother and other early settlers could understand. Priscilla's future husband Norm lived on the part of the property owned by her father, and they were distantly related by marriage. She grew up close with his family. While he was out doing work on the

land, she often played with Norm's sister.

MR. AND MRS. PAUL J. PUDWILL (FLORENCE)



Paul Pudwill, a son of Paul and Katherine (Pritzkau) Pudwill, was born February 26, 1897, near Danzig, North Dakota. He married Florence Brinkman on July 13, 1932, at Leola, SD. After their marriage they continued to live on the Pudwill farm, which his father had homesteaded, until the fall of 1948 when they left to seek medical attention for Mr. Pudwill. They returned and settled in Wishek, ND. in 1949, and continued to live there until Mr. Pudwill died May 25, 1952.

Florence Pudwill was born at Canistota, SD., September 24, 1905, the daughter of Henry Brinkman, Sr. and Elizabeth Cory. While she was yet a young girl they moved to a farm north of Ashley.

She moved into the city of Ashley in 1956, and continued to live their until she died May 21, 1986.

They had one daughter, Priscilla, (Mrs. Norman O. Stroh)

The Farm at Wishik

Paul, Katherine, and Priscilla Pudwill at the Farm November 1944

The house was not some wood planked shanty, as those outside of this life might assume anything out of the gleaming marble and endless windows of the city. The house was built with hands rough from prairie life, hands that made mud bricks and created a space not unfamiliar. The house had a kitchen, lacking today's appliances but still held cupboards and dishes as we have today. A large dining area and living room, and a big bedroom. There was an outdoor biddie of course, as indoor plumbing was not yet a part

of regular life. Instead, they would rush through the cold nights of winter to use the space quickly. Since there was no refrigerator they stored their cold items, including canned fruits, veggies, sauces, and stews in the cellar below the house. In the winter they closed off the bedroom and built a large fire in the living room, where the family moved the bed and a fainting couch in front of the flickering orange light for heat. They had carpeting in most of the house, and plastic flooring in the kitchen. This of course was long before electronics.

Priscilla spent much of her time reading. Imagine her, curled up by the fire on the fainting chaise, a quilt in her lap, an unfinished primer book in hands chapped from helping with the dishes and the laundry while her mother worked at Hare Mercantile. This was a slower life than many of us know today, but it is lovely in that. She was never bored. When not helping with her father who was ill after the war and unable to work, or chores, she read anything she could get her hands on: Grimm's fairy tales, textbooks that were never quite finished in school, local ads, and magazines. There was also play on the farm; Priscilla played house with her now sister-in-law in the family tractor, and had she wanted there were miles and miles of space to run all the way into the pink horizon. An appreciation for such wide open spaces seems lost today, but many still remember that space. In North Dakota, some of the spaces have yet to be taken over by industry, construction zones, model homes, and paved roads, all filled to the edges with people, people, people.

The farm was hayland rented from the state, vast prairie grasses that bent in the Dakota winds. A lot was rented out to family as needed over the years, on a quarter of the land sat the house, surrounded by golden haylands. Chokecherry trees grew here and there, a large garden ran alongside the house, the family's meals came from the cabbage, potatoes and corn that grew here. Among the lettuce and peas grew hundreds of bright red strawberries, so many and so sweet. Despite little income from Florence's job in town at Hare Mercantile and Paul's pension of $60 a month, they always had enough meat; sometimes family would drop by with a few packages, and each year they would use their family hog for ham and bacon.

The family lived off the land for much of their food, but much of what they enjoyed is not far off from what we enjoy today. They made many stews, and served tomato soup over macaroni; they made meatballs, sauerkraut, German strudel, and dumplings, and flaky custard filled Kuchen. Aunties came over and taught Priscilla to make cakes, and mashed potatoes with fresh cream.

Just beyond their homestead amidst the fields lay a lake where the garden used to extend, it was not there one day, then it rained, the kind of nonstop torrents known to the prairie for hours and hours, overflowing the dam, and the next day there was a lake that still shimmers beneath a blue gray sky that is somehow it's own shade of azure, different than the sky of other places. It stretches on uninhibited and brings such hope to people who survive such harsh winters.

The family barn was built near the homestead, for the cattle in winter, and a hog or two. Black angus cattle with thick shining flanks wandered the land, and one red angus for the family's milk supply. Beside the haylands the Lutheran church housed the Danzig cemetery; the Pudwills cattle often grazed there to cut the grass among the headstones. A testament of the original families who travelled to build a village here, it too stands weathered by time, on forgotten land.

Priscilla's primary schoolhouse had two rooms and 2-3 students per grade. She had to use her imagination a lot outside of school; this was long before our faces were constantly aglow with screens. Her parents made her learn how to play the piano of course, and she still enjoys this sometimes today to relieve stress. The pounding of the keys, or the kneading of homemade bread can relieve much. She also used to wheel "Pretty Cat" around in a buggy around the farm, along with her dolls.

Danzig School District 28, School 3, in the village of Danzig. This photo is the new school which was built on the same spot in 1925. This was a two room school and was better insulated for the cold winter months. It had a basement and a school barn in the back to keep the horses and buggies needed to bring the students to school.

If you have never lived in North Dakota, you probably know that it is cold here, and assume that only buffalo and a few indigenous Eskimos or Native Americans are brave enough to live such a seemingly dull, and no-thank-you-freezing-winters kind of life. You may even think about the many other stereotypes, instead; stop with your city-talk: imagine clean air (if you can), so clean you won't cough if you inhale too much, imagine space, where there are no lines, no people pressing against you on public transit. A simple life doesn't mean a boring life, it means enjoying nature in a way those of us cramped in tiny studio apartments, and narrow streets may have never known, or have forgotten. We imagine wide plains full of grains and an endless sky as a space that only the ghosts of yesterday have walked, and that those who know it now are in

some way unreal. These spaces are still alive in many, and physically here, but forgotten. Some built upon, and some photographed for Ghost Town books catalogued as abandoned. These spaces are not dead, ghosts may roam them, but they are here, waiting for the solitary people who will search them out, and those individuals will be pulled into a wonderful emptiness.

Danzig District 28, School 3, in the village of Danzig.
The students in this photo are in no particular order: Rose Marie Babitzke, Celia Bauckhaus, Loretta Bauchaus, Zelmer Bauchaus, Dorene Eszlinger, Janice Eszlinger, Julia Eszlinger, Ardella Groszhans, Dennis Iszler, Marvin Obernauer, Duane Pfeifle, Priscilla Pudwill, Jeanette Retzer, June Roth, Clifton Bauchaus, Priscilla Bauchaus, Raymond Bauchaus, Vernon Eszlinger, Eldo Miller, John Miller, Eldavera Pfeifle, Jerome Pfiefle and Eugene Walker.
Teachers: Donna Mae Giedt and Vivian D. Aman.
PHOTO SUBMITTED BY MR. AMOS BRINKMAN, JR.

Priscilla and Norm with Elaine Brinkman 1975

Priscilla and Norman

MR. AND MRS. NORMAN O. STROH (PRISCILLA)

Norman Otto Stroh was born September 6, 1933, the son of Jacob J. Stroh and Louisa (Kramer) Stroh. He spent his boyhood at the family farm and working around Ashley, ND.. On October 20, 1956, he married Priscilla Pudwill at Wishek, N. D.

Priscilla was born December 22, 1935, the daughter of Paul J. and Florence (Brinkman) Pudwill. They made their home in Ashley for a few years and in 1959 moved to the Fargo-Moorhead area. They have four children, Paul, Ronald, Miranda, and Kevin.

"No problem with the interview. I know that I had a different life as a teenager than a lot of other people my age, and so will probably be biased, but all in all I consider it an honor."

- Priscilla Stroh on being interviewed for this piece

Laurel grew up in Portland, Oregon. She later moved to North Dakota to earn a Bachelor's and Master's in English. She is a poet, instructor, and master crafter and likes to spend her time knitting, writing, and generally crafting. Today, Laurel lives in Illinois with her husband and is currently working towards a PhD in English studies while teaching Composition.

IX. The Best Part

by Sara Tezel

Walking up to the residence of Duane Kargel, it doesn't look like anything spectacular. The large white walls covered in paneling seem empty, too generic, too traditional for the people inside. The men and women who live here created businesses, families, traditions; they've left a mark on the world and now that their days are decreasing, they're hidden behind large white walls covered in paneling.

After originally turning down the wrong hallway and passing many doors decorated with flags, faux wildlife, and pictures of people who don't visit as often as they should, I find myself in front of Duane's door. His door, like many of his neighbors, was decorated as if the front porch of a house. Unlike the other rooms though, his door holds a white board that boasts: My wife and I divorced for religious reasons. I thought I was God, she disagreed. I knock.

Almost immediately, the door opens and I meet the man I'm here to interview. He stands before me in soft green pants and a shirt that resembles wooden floors, also in a pale green color. The thing I notice almost immediately though are his suspenders; they have pigs all over them and add a bit of whimsy to his outfit. He welcomes me in and I glance around his apartment, his words falling empty within my head as I take in a map with multiple push pins, framed pilot licenses, and pictures of his grandchildren.

I'm led into the adequately-sized living room and seated on the couch to Duane's right. The cat, Inky, sensing my disdain the way they often seem to do, jumps onto the arm of the couch, where Duane immediately pushes him down. My eyes trail to the end table where the cat toys have been placed in a straight line. When Duane told me he'd like to meet a bit later so he could straighten up, these must have been some of the tasks he accomplished.

"My name is Duane Kargel. I'm 79-years-old. I live here at Valley Memorial homes in Grand Forks. I've been here for just about five years now and probably one of the most interesting, fun parts of my life actually."

My eyes raise. This was not what I expected walking into Duane's apartment today. I expected reminiscing. I expected sadness to coat his words as he talked about his youth, bitterness even; a man whose best times were behind him. The man I was anticipating is not Duane Kargel.

Duane begins talking about his family, both the one he made and the one he was born into; he states facts, snippets of stories, naming towns, schools, glossing over any potential story with the information he seems to have equipped himself with. Duane has prepared himself for this interview. "I was born in Drayton, North Dakota. I grew up in Crystal." He mentions his love for his parents, his older brother who shadowed him by eleven years. Mostly, Duane is giving me dates. There are stories in their somewhere; he just has to open up.

But this is the first time I've met Duane and while he is a charming and kind man, I am a stranger in his home. I am a stranger who came barreling in on a cold January day armed with a pen, notebook, and a recorder. Duane has no reason to open up to me, but I hope that as our meeting progresses, he'll find himself more comfortable.

"School wasn't really my forte. I had a '32 Plymouth Street Rod which was the love of my life, and believe it or not, I wore the black leather jacket and the duck's ass haircut with the brill cream. I was a bit of a rebel in my younger years. So much so, that eventually my father and the Grand Forks county sheriff thought I should be and maybe go off to the Navy because I was getting into a little bit of mischief. So I went in the Navy when I was 16-years old. My first time ever away from my folks and/or home."

Duane mentions his four-years of service with pride and says that he, like many veterans, regrets not staying in. But then he's done. On to the next point. On to the next cliff-noted story.

He mentions wives, three of them to be exact. He tells me that he and his first wife of 23 years "drifted apart for very personal reasons." That the next wife was a younger woman, as "many men are apt to find in their fifties," but their marriage only lasted a year. Duane's third marriage lasted for ten years and says their separation came from different ideas about life, but they remain close and talk weekly.

Throughout our brief conversation about his marriages, I can't help but feel each wife probably holds an amazing story. To be married for twenty-three years and find yourself drifting apart for personal reasons? I want to know these reasons, but again, I am a stranger in Duane's home and this is his story to tell. I let his first wife stay where she is and don't ask about how he felt at nineteen when he proposed to his seventeen-year-old girlfriend. According to Duane's timeline, he was in the Navy. Was he scared of losing her? I imagine a much younger man, a former rebel turned squid, looking into the eyes of a woman he thought he'd love forever. I imagine them growing, having the family Duane mentions proudly and who's pictures grace the refrigerator. Then I imagine their drift. Did Duane do something?

Did she? Or were they simply too young when they married and after raising a family, didn't know one another?

Wife number two is the sports car wife. "Found out rather quickly that we didn't have too much to talk about." Did Duane look at her and see black leather jackets and brill cream-ed hair? He speaks of her in one, maybe two sentences. Stating dates, giving information, and just moving on.

The third wife he met at an RV show. She was from Napoleon, North Dakota. Duane speaks of her, his friend, with a soft affection, and I wonder what led the two of them to divorce. "I told Kathy the other day that we really get along good when we're in separate states." All I have are questions. All Duane has are facts. The crash course on his love life is over.

After the Navy, Duane went to court reporting school in Minneapolis and worked at the police station, taking interrogation testimonies. The work interested him, so eventually Duane became a police officer. "I worked as a police officer for several years and then an opportunity came along and I was hired as a private investigator by a big corporation down in Minneapolis. And they had four fulltime investigators on their staff and we traveled nine states doing criminal investigations that were perpetrated against the, well frankly, it was the Red Owl food stores. And that turned out to be a very interesting job. I had the good fortune, or misfortune of, being involved in the uncovering of a mafia ring that was stealing cigarettes from grocery stores." For not the first time, my eyes raise. Surprise causes me to look at the man speaking instead of the quotes I am quickly trying to capture on paper.

"They were hijacking trucks and had shoplifting rings set up and they'd go in and steal all this stuff and other crimes and anyway, I was involved to the point where one of the Mafia lieutenants, Robert Max Curry, got sentenced to prison and shortly thereafter, they had put out a contract on my life and a couple of my detective friends from the police department in Minneapolis got that squelched somehow or other. It was a very, very interesting job." I snort, interesting is one way to put it. "But you know in all of the years I did it, not once did I knock on a door and have this beautiful woman in a negligee with a cigarette holder come and answer the door. Not one time. So television isn't really that accurate."

I laugh. Duane's stories are starting to have a bit more meat to them. I'm waiting for him to continue on, but he tells me he only worked as a private investigator for about four years when he found himself, quite accidentally, falling into the furniture business.

"A fellow that I met, liked me, and he says 'you know,' he says, 'I think you'd be pretty good in the furniture business, why don't you come and work for me?' And I did and that ended up being my career for 32 years. It was a lot of fun, lot of fun. Not nearly as romantic as they showed on TV."

Duane seems to have a very romanticized view of life. This is the second time, albeit both were mentioned half-heartedly, that he mentions being let down. That reality did not quite live up to what was on TV, the image he had in his head. I imagine his disappointment as he shows couples bedroom furniture, something missing from their interaction with him. Maybe their presence makes Duane reflect on his home life, but he ignores feelings of unrest, as he talks about financing and matching pieces. I'm ready for tales of furniture romance when he jumps to the next topic. Duane's timeline today has been sporadic and I can never tell what's coming next. I like the chaos.

"It seems like I've lived so much, and yet, I never. I don't. I always wanted to do something great and I don't know. I don't think I ever did something great. I always wanted to know how brave I could be, and I don't know if I ever found out how brave I was. I was in a lot of situations that we handled out of instinct more than anything, and I'm still here, so I must have done something right."

I pause, reflecting on that statement: "I don't know if I ever found out how brave I was." Duane left home when he was just sixteen. That was brave. He enlisted in the Navy and served overseas. That was brave. He married and had a family. That was brave. He worked as a private investigator who had a Mafia hit on his life that he speaks of casually. That was brave. Just when I find myself thinking of his casual, day-to-day, bravery, Duane speaks again.

"There was a time in my life when I had lost everything. I'd lost my business. I'd lost my money. I'd lost my family. And, I had one good friend left and he said, 'Duane,' he says, ' I want you to promise me one thing,' he says, 'I want you to go to Mandan, North Dakota and sign in to the detox center out there,' cause I had quite a bad bout with booze for years. So I promised him I would do that. Now at this time, I'd gone from the convertible, the airplanes, the giant motor home, down to an old beater car that cost me $125 and that's where my life was. So I'm driving out to Mandan, I stopped at a rest stop, at highway 2 and 32, and I completely broke down. I cried and I cried and I cried. And I've never been a very religious man as far as going to church, but I did have my own faith, and I said, 'God, please grant me two things. Grant me contentment and peace in my life,' and I said, 'I will never ask for anything more."

I imagine Duane sitting in a car covered more with rust and dirt than paint. I imagine his head cradled in his hands as he prays to God. I hear the cars whizzing by full of families on their way to vacations, destinations, unaware of this man who sits in a beat-up car on the side of the road. And I think about what it'd be like for Duane to give up. How it must be just as hard to keep going as it would to stay in that rest stop, waiting for God. And I feel both hopeless and hopeful.

"I made it out to Mandan and I sat out in the parking lot for…hours, trying to get up the courage to go knock on the door. And finally I did. They opened the door and I told them who I was and they said, 'Duane, we've been waiting for you."

We've been waiting for you. Those words and what they must have meant to Duane in that moment. We have been waiting for you.

"And, they took me in and got me registered and everything and they took me down to a little room that had a locked door and I was in there for three days. Detoxing. And I spent six weeks there. And I came out feeling like a different person. I guess that's when my life started over again. I had lost so much. I'd lost all the loving companionship of my children, so much. But when I got out of there, I went to Fargo. I got a menial job in a furniture store and things started getting better, and better, and better. And one day, all of a sudden, I'm comfortable again. I've got a reasonably good bank account, getting back to being a person again, and I thought to myself, 'my God, it happened. I've got peace and contentment in my life.' And since that day, my life has just gone forward."

Duane flashes ahead, choosing not to keep us in the room with a locked door. Deciding that there is no story to share about the first weeks out of rehab and how hard it must have been for him to get up and go to work and turn away from the familiarity of alcohol. Instead, we abandon his story of bravery, of sobriety, to focus on what matter most to him: family.

"When I lived in Climax, I had a very, very nice home. But I didn't realize how lonely I was in my own house. People don't visit like they used to. It took me years to get the love of my children back. I started by just sending a card, or a note, saying 'I love you. Please can we see each other?' And eventually, we all started communicating again and now my relationship with my four children is so strong that I can't believe it was ever gone."

Family is something that we circle back to numerous times. The family he was born into, the family he created, and now, the pseudo-family at Valley Memorial. Duane is a man who enjoys being around people. "Living in a place like this, you're never

alone. I step out that door and I've got more friends than I've ever had in my life. We have so much fun together and I love being with these older people, cause most of them are older than I am. It's such a great place for me to share myself."

Between the white board that he changes nightly to the amusement of his neighbors and making the rounds every day on his "little scooter" or walker, Duane is a man who enjoys making others happy. He looks for people who seem lonely. I wonder if it's hard though, trying to make connections with these strangers, but Duane has some words of wisdom to share, "All you have to do is look and them and say, "Where are you from?" These four words are the key to enriching other people's lives by helping them remember their past and sharing some laughs.

Then our time is up and I leave Duane with his stories and quiet bravery, taking the facts he gave me along with my pens, notebook, and recorder. All he has are his stories, I think as I leave. Stories and memories to keep him company in his moderately sized and decorated apartment. I am happy with the facts and data that Duane has chosen to share with me and I know that with them, I can create some stories of my own.

Sara is an extremely part-time student at the University of North Dakota. Seeing her on campus is akin to seeing a jackalope in the wild.

X. A Happy Man

by Dylan Schnabel

Paul Howard is a wonderful man.

He spends his days in 4000 Valley Square retirement community. He passes his time in his cozy apartment or in the facility's game room playing games or visiting with his friends and neighbors. Every Friday morning, Paul sings with the Valley Voices singing group. He helps clean up the coffee and cookies supplied downstairs. On December seventh of 2013, Paul and some of the other residents had the opportunity to meet local celebrities Mrs. North Dakota, Miss Grand Forks, and Miss Teen Grand Forks at the Empire Arts Center. The last time Paul played bingo, he got luckier than lucky. He ended up getting four bingos in under twenty minutes. These were the first things Paul had to tell me when we sat down to visit. I was shown picture after picture of Paul standing beside those local celebrities. Paul is a happy man.

Paul was born sixty-five years ago in 1948 in the small town of Warren, Minnesota. He was brought home to his older brother Bobby by his parents Joyce and Arthur. Not long afterwards, the family grew some more with younger sister Kathy, and then again with younger brother Leslie. In what seemed like a flash, Paul was headed off to Warren Elementary School. The days passed; some went fairly slowly, according to Paul and any other person who has ever experienced the time in between summer breaks we like to call the school year. Well, the days passed slowly, but not without excitement. The year was 1966. It was the last day of the school year. Paul and his younger siblings came home to see smoke filling the air. While they had been at school, something in the furnace room of their house had started a fire. The firefighters arrived quickly and saved the house, but the firefighters told the family that if they had been delayed only ten minutes, the house would have been completely consumed in the blaze. Another exciting moment came a year later in 1967. This was the year Paul graduated from Warren High School. He told me he was "definitely happy to be done with school." I know a large number of people who are recent graduates of high school who feel the same way about the subject.

After high school, Paul decided to move away from home. Shortly after this decision was made, he was living in a rented basement in Fargo, North Dakota. He made his living by pushing wheel chairs at a hospital in Fargo for the first two years. In 1970, Paul decided it was time to change professions. He got a job working as a janitor for Moorhead State Community and Technical College in Moorhead, MN. He worked at

Moorhead State Community and Technical College for twenty-five years, and when he was done in 1995, Paul received a plaque that thanked him for the twenty-five years of service. The plaque still hangs proudly on the wall of his bedroom. It is almost the first thing one notices when walking into his bedroom.

In 1990, tragedy struck when Paul's father passed. After Arthur passed, the family decided to sell the farmstead and move Joyce into town. Paul continued to work in Moorhead for five years after his father's death, at which point he decided it was time to move back home closer to what was truly important—his family. Since the family had sold the farmstead, Paul moved into an apartment where he delivered meals for Meals on Wheels on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. He lived in Warren for ten years before moving to 4000 Valley Square in Grand Forks in 2005. He's been there ever since.

Another part of Paul's life that is obviously important to him is his family. I was shown multiple photo albums full of pictures of only his family. His older brother Bobby never married, and neither did Paul. His younger sister Kathy married Bob and had a son named Jesse, while Paul's younger brother Leslie married Patty and had a daughter named Sarah. One of the objects Paul was most proud of was also concerning his family. Paul has a scrapbook containing news articles, pictures, and hand-written letters that detail his family and his heritage. Paul and I spent quite a bit of time talking about the items inside this scrapbook. Some of the pages of this scrapbook were filled with genealogies, important names and dates, and pictures, while other pages were filled with handwritten notes and letters made by Paul's mother, Joyce, in order to allow Paul to explain his life and his family's life to anyone who wanted to know.

When one walks into Paul's apartment, it's easy to see how Paul spends his time when he is in his apartment. Paul is a huge sports fan—a superfan—and his favorite sport is baseball. His favorite teams in all sports come from Minnesota: the baseball team the Minnesota Twins, the football team the Minnesota Vikings, and the hockey team the Minnesota Wild. His enjoyment of sports started in elementary school on the playground. Everyone seemed to love playing football, baseball, or some other sport, depending on the day and season. When he got to the seventh grade, he got the chance to participate on the school's sports teams. Paul played football his seventh grade year, his eighth grade year, and his freshman year. He also played basketball for about the same amount of time. He absolutely loved it. In football, he played on the offensive line, and he made a point to tell me he protected the quarterback. While his team never had a great amount of success, his words were, "We won some; we lost some." The experience was one of the opportunities he had

to find what he loved and what he had a passion for.

After high school, Paul took his enjoyment of sports further. He started going to professional games and collecting professional memorabilia. He has dozens of signed baseballs from lots of the Minnesota Twins' greatest players including Kirby Puckett and Harmon Killebrew. He also has multiple Minnesota Twins jerseys including the jerseys of players like Harmon Killebrew and Justin Morneau. The Minnesota Vikings are Paul's favorite football team, and he has a Greg Jennings jersey and an Adrian Peterson jersey to prove it; he also has signed memorabilia from other football greats as well. He has a signed picture of Joe Montana and takes great care to show it off every chance he gets.

Paul is a sports superfan, but not just because of the things he collects. He has been to multiple games of multiple sports. He has been to Minnesota Twins games held in Metropolitan Stadium located in Bloomington, Minnesota and in the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, but he has not been to a game in the new Target Field which is also located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He has also been to multiple Vikings games both in the Metropolitan Stadium and the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome. When Paul went and saw the Vikings in the Metropolitan Stadium, he watched the Vikings play the Green Bay Packers and the Baltimore Colts, who had superstar quarterback Johnny Unitas. When he watched the Vikings play in the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome, he watched them play the Green Bay Packers twice and the Pittsburgh Steelers twice while the Steelers had star quarterback Terry Bradshaw. While most fans would be content with collecting memorabilia and going to games, Paul is a superfan, and that wasn't enough. He seemed to go out and find the athletes. In 1983, his family took a vacation to Branson, Missouri. While they were there, Paul and his family ran into Walt Garrison, a fullback who won a Super Bowl with the Dallas Cowboys. Garrison even let Paul look at his Super Bowl Ring. Later, in 1985, Paul's family went on another vacation, but this time they went to Hawaii. It just so turns out that Paul's family went to Hawaii the same week as the annual NFL Pro Bowl was going on. Paul got lucky enough to even run into Joe Montana. Montana was getting on a bus to go from the National Football Conference's team hotel to the stadium where he would be playing the Pro Bowl game.

While Paul and his family had a knack for running into star athletes on vacations, there were at least two "big" vacations where they did not run into a professional athlete. In 1990, the family went to Disneyworld and had a blast, and in 1993, the family, minus Arthur, went to Disneyland. Paul's family is quite close. Part of the reason Paul moved to Grand Forks was his mother had recently moved to Grand

Forks and one of his siblings already lived in Grand Forks. They go see Paul's mother or they all gather at Paul's apartment. Paul greatly enjoys spending time with his niece and his nephew.

As I sat in Paul's apartment, I noticed it was easy to see what Paul cared about. His concerns were even easier to notice while we talked. Paul's house is filled with pictures. He has pictures of his family, pictures of his favorite sports teams, pictures of his favorite players, and pictures of his memories from the apartment in 4000 Valley Square. The pictures that stick out the most to me, mainly because they were the pictures I was shown again and again, were the pictures he had taken in the past few months and those of his family. As we talked, Paul frequently opened one of the photo albums to show me his picture of his family or his picture of his singing group. What is important to Paul is no secret. He doesn't hide his interests or try to be someone else. Paul Howard is Paul Howard. Paul Howard likes what Paul Howard likes and Paul Howard wants everyone to know what he likes.

There is one part of Paul's story that I have not talked about yet, and there is a reason for not mentioning it. Paul has a stutter. Now this is a part of Paul's story; he has had the stutter ever since he can remember, but it is not a major part of Paul's story. While this stutter can get quite intense and can make even basic communication difficult at best, and near impossible at worst, Paul has not allowed this stutter to define him. What is important to Paul Howard is Paul Howard. While the stutter affects Paul in a very noticeable way, Paul does not give into the stutter. He does not give up and, by doing so, does not allow the stutter to control him, to manipulate him, or to become him. While this stutter does not define Paul, it is a part of Paul's story. While he is not controlled or manipulated by this stutter, he is affected by it. Paul has gone through this crazy ride we call life with this stutter and has not given up.

When I first arrived at Paul's apartment, the first thing I expected to notice was his stutter as I had spoken with Paul on the phone the night before. I was wrong. The first thing I noticed about Paul was his infectious smile. Then I noticed the abundance of items representing the things he cared about. Then I noticed the pictures, partly because I was handed the open photo albums.

Paul Howard is a happy man. He has overcome adversity rather than falling to it. He spends his time doing what he loves in a place he loves being. He does not let things like a stutter impede on his overall quality of life. As a result, Paul's story is more about when he enjoys and the high points rather than every individual accomplishment or milestone designed for individuals. Paul Howard is an amazing

man with an amazing story, and I was lucky when I was allowed to be the one to convey Paul's story to the world.

Dylan is currently a student at the University of North Dakota.

XI. Idled Memories

by Rhiannon Conley-Pierson

Delpha starts from the beginning, from her beginning, in Badger, Minnesota. "I was born in Badger, Minnesota in 1925," she tells me. "I was born in Badger, Minnesota on a farm. I walked three miles to a country school in northern Minnesota. Badger, Minnesota." Delpha will repeat this exact phrase – Badger, Minnesota – several times throughout our interview, annunciating each syllable so that I can't possibly forget them. In fact, this is one of the few things that I can remember about Delpha when I finally sit down to write about her. Briefly I even forget her name, but I do not forget that she was born and raised in Badger, Minnesota.

The other thing Delpha told me that I haven't forgotten was about a horse. "My dad trained a horse … so in the winter time, on a day like this" – it was an especially frigid January morning when we met – "I could go to school on the toboggan. Then I'd turn the horse around, hang up the reins, and give him a handful of oats, and I'd say 'Now you go home.' I petted him and talked to him, and then in the afternoon my dad would send him off to come and get me. 'Okay, you go and get Delpha now.' And I'd see the horse coming, just loitering on, but when he saw me he quickened his step because he knew he'd get that reward."

The image of a small Delpha riding a toboggan to school on snowy winter days is stuck in my mind, and as cold as it must have been, as cold as I know snow and ice in northern Minnesota can be, the image is warm. She is wearing a red coat and the horse is a bright brown, and she speaks to him in Norwegian, the same language she speaks at home with her mother and father, the same language she proudly speaks to me in from time to time even though I don't understand. I can see her sitting hunkered down in the toboggan, warm underneath a deep pile of blankets and furs. Her bright little eyes peer out at the white, frozen world around her. The little school house comes into sight, a warm spot pinned into the frost, and a little smirk spreads across her face. Delpha likes school, so much so that she will someday become a teacher. But for now, today, in our shared memory, she climbs out of the toboggan and feeds the horse a handful of oats from a mittened hand. She turns him around and he trots off as she enters the one room school.

I imagine some mornings the horse doesn't go straight back and forth between the farm and the school, especially not on warmer days. Instead he wanders a little through the fields wondering where all the sweet grass has gone, nibbling at what he

can, remembering what the sun felt like on his back. I imagine Delpha and her father and mother are all aware of the horse's penchant for wandering, for idling, but they don't worry because they know he'll always come back "because he knew he'd get that reward."

Back in her room at Valley Memorial, Delpha tells me a few times that her 89th birthday is coming up. "I'm having a birthday pretty soon, along with Abe and George in February. You know, all great people in February," she laughs. She'll repeat this joke a few times, laughing each time. I picture her blowing out the candles on a birthday cake with Abraham Lincoln in his stovepipe hat, George Washington in his wig, and Delpha in between. Another joke she likes to repeat is one she picked up from her husband, Herman Berg. "I'm 101% Norwegian."

Her tone changes when she first mentions Herman. A little light comes on. We'd been busy talking about school, about Badger, Minnesota, and about her birthday plans that when he comes up she seems a little surprised. Surprised that he slipped her mind up until then. "I suppose I should tell you about that," she says. And so she starts from the beginning.

After attending Augsburg College in Minneapolis and completing her English and education training, Delpha began to teach vacation Bible school at Sharon Lutheran Church in Grand Forks, ND, an assignment she got through the college. "I worked hard, I had lots of students," Delpha tells me. She would stay late in the church finishing up one day's work and getting a head start on the next, preparing lessons and grading others. "And then the custodian…" her voice takes on a playfulness. The word "custodian" sounds cheerful coming out of her. The custodian was Herman Berg.

Delpha noticed that the custodian would stay just as late as she each evening, sweeping and dusting and straightening, maybe a little bit slower than was normal, maybe even going over the same spots twice. (Later the pastor would tell her the church had never been cleaner than in those summer weeks when she was teaching.) One evening her work took her very late into the night, and when she was finally ready to leave she felt a little afraid. It was dark out and she was in a new town, staying at an acquaintance's home in an unfamiliar neighborhood. She asked the custodian, Herman Berg, to take her home. "Oh, I guess I could do that…" she mimicked his faux-disinterest. She laughed. "Well, I didn't have to ask him after that."

Delpha finished out her summer employment getting acquainted with Herman. He owned and operated the local Bible shop and took care of his mother in

their shared home on Chestnut Street and at nights he cleaned the church. At the end of Delpha's tenure, her mother sent a penny postcard informing her that her parents would be unable to drive to Grand Forks from Badger to pick her up because they were too busy working the farm. Her mother left instructions to take the bus, and when she told Herman of the plan, he offered to drive her home. Delpha was hesitant, concerned about what might happen to her reputation. The young bible school teacher taking a long car trip with the custodian; it could paint the wrong sort of picture. She spoke with the pastor at Sharon Lutheran who chuckled at her concern and assured her that it was a fine idea.

The image of Delpha and Herman on a bright summer morning heading up north on highway 29 is tense, like all new loves are, but it's joyful and bright. Delpha's hands are folded neatly in her lap, both of Herman's are on the wheel. They spend the two hour trip chatting lightly, avoiding their impending separation by sharing stories and making jokes. It's a long trip and the hot air rising up from the road mixes with the smell of sunshine on earth and grass – not unpleasant but heavy. I imagine Herman doesn't mind driving, doesn't mind the heat or the extra money he had to spend on gasoline for a trip he wouldn't normally take. He doesn't mind the four hours spent in the car and would take the long trip over and over again, with pleasure, if she asked him to. He would drive the highways back and forth for the reward of her company, idling on the memory of her in the seat next to him, his eye catching here and there on a field of wildflowers.

"He was a wonderful man. I wish I still had him. He's passed away here a couple of years ago." Delpha turns in her seat and gestures to the photographs behind her. One in particular looks familiar, an image I've seen in many homes and scrapbooks. A young woman in white holds the hand of the man beside her, a church pew behind them, the two captured in time by their happiness, by the moment, by the photo. She shakes her head, ready to move on from this memory where together we've idled, remembering what the sun felt like the summer Delpha met Herman Berg.

There is pain in remembering what's missing, in remembering the best times with your closest friend, the house you shared, your wedding day, the moment you knew you were in love. But there's a reward in that pain, too. These aching memories hold photographs of cold days and warm, each full of laughter, of love. These mental images, these photographs are the rewards of a life well-lived, a long life spent with your closest friend who may be gone but lives on in the things you two shared, in the memories you can share, in the images those memories create.

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XII. For Eleanor

by Erika Gallaway

Eleanor and I were baptized in the same water, which shouldn't be too hard to believe. Considering the size of Northwood in 1924, you didn't get many churches to choose from. Even so, I could never quite shake the feeling that our connection started there, though you couldn't have convinced me back then. Eleanor and I weren't very close as children. As was expected, I roughhoused with other boys my age, running up and down the gravel streets of town, bringing mischief with us wherever we went. Eleanor wasn't much more than the glimpses I got of her during recess: a short, skinny girl with long brown locks of hair and a plain dress. As the years passed, we began to see more of each other, as there was never much to do in such a small town and people our age grouped together and socialized to pass the time. Eleanor always stood out from the other girls, who always came off as petty and giggly to me. She was more reserved, but her quick wit and sharp tongue kept her from getting prayed on for being different than other girls.

We weren't more than a month or two apart in age, and were in the same graduating class with another 15 or so students, our pictures next to one another in the school's photo album after our graduation. Mine didn't turn out terribly, but I was young and nervous looking, with sharp features and a patch of blonde hair deftly combed and gelled into place. Eleanor, on the other hand, looked exquisite— gazing out from behind fine, dark lashes— her brows arched and her nose slim. She smiled with curved lips and short brunette curls framed her face. I couldn't help but steal a glance at her while the photographer snapped the photograph: the mysterious, witty girl who couldn't take a bad picture.

It's a strange thing, you know, the connection that Eleanor and I seemed to have. We had spent so much of our early lives in close proximity to one another but hadn't ever really been more than acquaintances. I still couldn't shake the magnetic pull I felt when we *did* talk though, and even after I had been away from town for years, we found each other again. You could say it was that small town pull that brought me back to Northwood a few years later. It's the same pull that keeps people stuck doing what their fathers did and what their fathers' fathers did, and so on. But it's good for people like us I suppose— keeps us grounded. Granted, I still got my wings.

I was still fresh out of high school when the war started in full swing. Young men enlisted in the military and got their chance to take flight but a lot of them

didn't get to see what coming home again felt like. I was one of the lucky ones, serving as a Yeoman Third Class on the *USS Salerno Bay*. She was brand new, fresh off the dry dock and ready to sail. It seemed fitting: a ship and a crew perfect for each other, as most of us hadn't seen war yet either. I fit right in to the newness of it all. My uniform was a bit large and my ears stuck out from under the sides of my hat. During the formal pictures, I sported a fresh, crooked smile and looked away from the camera in the first frame. By the second, I had composed myself, returning to the sharp, stoic gaze present in my graduation photo. A lot of my crewmates were close to me in age— boys fresh out of high school who told dirty jokes and didn't quite fit in their uniforms. We all tried our best to act mature from the start but it was all for show. No one really understood the gravity of everything until later.

I held what could be considered a desk job, as my duties primarily dealt with paperwork for various officers, but the *Salerno Bay* had her share of action as well. Occasionally, my thoughts strayed to Eleanor. I doubted she had left Northwood, though she always talked of travelling the world. Eleanor tended to come off as progressive and ahead of her time— it was one thing that drew me to her at first, I think. You couldn't help but feel swept up in Eleanor's dreams and passions and resolutions just by listening to her talk. She was like a magnet, drawing you in until you don't want to leave. I thought about writing to her, but always put it off. Part of me figured that it was a bit out of place to reach out to someone I hadn't been extremely close with. Perhaps that was just an excuse. Morale is a sensitive thing while at war. A letter from her telling me to buzz off would just make the resulting time on board the ship gloomier. Instead, I kept a short, informal log of the more interesting things that happened while I was on the *Salerno Bay*. I wrote about the antics that played out amongst the younger crew members and the harsh command of the officers who kept us all in line. I wrote about the updates we received from the pilots who landed their planes on our ship and the war stories we told over plates of tasteless casserole in the cafeteria. Men spoke gravely of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and those of us who were new listened intently. Sometimes we would all lean in and discussed what we thought our side would do in response. Each night, I would retire to my bunk in the cramped quarters at the center of the ship and scratch down notes in my log until my eyes refused to stay open any longer. Then I would slip my pencil through the wire rings of the notebook and tuck it under my pillow before turning off the light.

For a while, we carried on with our duties like normal. The *Salerno Bay* was a hub for air traffic passing between the States and Japan, so there were always planes arriving on or leaving from our landing strip. Many of the crewmen spent their time

busily tending to the pilots and aircraft that came in, catching updates of the most recent happenings in the war. I felt relieved that I wasn't stuck in the chaos, but I'll admit that I often played with the idea of having a more interesting job. Every once in a while, the gray walls of the enclosed space would become stifling and I'd close my record books and paperwork before heading up to the main deck for a breath of fresh air. The second I emerged from the hull of the ship, I was met with the spray of salty water and gusts of wind off the sea, accompanied by the feeling of constant action that occurred on the main deck. The chaos was a nice break from the relative dullness of my desk job downstairs and I came up when I could to take in a few breaths of sea air— a few moments of sunshine— before heading back down to the offices.

For a while, it seemed as if life would carry on like that indefinitely, but it wasn't long before we were shaken loose from our daze and called to action. It was a warm August day when we were all called together and addressed by our commanding officer. We stood at attention in one of the larger spaces below deck while he spoke about the nature of war. It occurred to me at that point that perhaps the stories we listened to over dinner weren't as exaggerated as I had thought. He left us with the statement, "You may be here one day and gone the next." I remember scoffing a bit at his words and doubting much could happen to me while I was stationed behind that desk, but it wasn't long after that we all came to understand why we had been told to brace ourselves. America was still reeling from the attack on Pearl Harbor and everyone was looking to the military and the president for a sign of action. None of us really knew about the Manhattan project or the bombs at that time. The clearance level for such information was beyond our ranks. We just followed orders and kept our heads down when the situation called for it, wondering silently what exactly it was we were preparing for. On the 6th of August, 1945, our questions were answered. The *Salerno Bay* was just outside of Tokyo, securing military hold in the area, when we received orders to leave immediately and set course straight for Hawaii. The feeling in the air was tense and I couldn't help but notice the clenched feeling in my stomach while we all scurried to our positions and readied the ship to leave.

I remember talking to a friend who had heard rumors about a possible bombing plan by the Allies but at that point, it was no more than talk in our minds. We were four hours out when the same friend came into the office and called for me to get up on deck. While I loped behind him down the narrow corridor and up the ladder, he kept talking about a bad feeling he had in his gut that something was going to happen. We stood at the stern for several minutes, staring out at the sea

behind us. I told him that we should get back before we got reprimanded for standing around, and was just about to leave when he let out a short choking noise. Turning, I saw the distant sky light up as the first bomb landed on Hiroshima and the image of a hot white mushroom cloud ingrained itself in my mind.

By the time I regained my ability to process thoughts, the only thing I could think about what whether Eleanor could see the cloud too.

The rest of my duty passed by in a blur. It's hard for a person to process exactly what happened after the bombs dropped, to understand the sheer devastation that was the price of war. We were long gone by the time news of the fallout from Hiroshima and Nagasaki came out in more detail, stationed at Hawaii for a probationary period while the Japanese and U.S. governments negotiated the terms of Japan's surrender. My time in Hawaii was primarily spent reading and replying to my father's fervent letters. According to him, it was high time I came back home and started a civilian career.

I wasn't one to argue. The peacefulness of home had grown more and more enticing with each day I spent near the wreckage of Pearl Harbor and with each night I spent dreaming of that mushroom cloud. I began to imagine what my reception would be like. As nice as it was to picture a crowd of happy Northwood citizens, I kept in mind that I would be lucky if anyone other than my father and closest friends took the time out of their day to stand outside the community center while I rolled into town. It took a few months for all of my discharge paperwork to be processed but I eventually waved goodbye to the Hawaiian beach and the *Salerno Bay* and made the long flight back to the states. I was officially honorably discharged from the Navy on June 12th, 1946. The turnout for my homecoming was a bit larger than I had expected— a nice surprise as well.

After the welcome party wrapped up, I found myself standing on Main Street with my bags in hand and not really knowing where to go from there, metaphorically, at least. Physically, I slung my packs over my shoulder and hoofed it to my father's house. It wasn't much later that I got back in touch with Eleanor, who was no less beautiful or quick-witted than she had been in high school. It took a bit but I finally resolved to ask her to dinner and a movie. Of course, we took the trip to Grand Forks as Northwood barely had either of those options. I don't remember the details of the night as much as I remember our conversations. She had asked me about my time spent at sea and I asked her what had changed in town since I left. I can't say I was surprised when she shook her head and replied that nothing really

changes in Northwood. Of course, she was right. That night, I asked her if she wanted to date me and by some act of God himself, she agreed. Six months later, we married in the same church we had been baptized in as infants. I remember laughing to myself, thinking we really went full circle with that one.

It comes across as odd to me, even now, that I ended up doing the two things I never imagined I would do: living for months at sea and marrying the short, quiet girl with brunette curls.

Erika was born in Grand Forks and returned to attend UND. She is currently finishing her freshman year and plans on getting a double major.