Growing up in Bloomenheim – English - Plautdietsch Study Edition

Jack Driedger

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D. E. Copre

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Author's note

The targeted readership of this story is those of us who may have cut our teeth on the Low German language. This may have happened around the Faspa table or in the "big room" where our parents and neighbours visited and cracked sunflower seeds. Some may have been ashamed to admit it was their spoken language at home; some may have spoken it as their first language. Still others may have learned that when their parents wanted a private conversation, they used this strange language called Low German or Plautdietsch.

The number of Mennonites and their friends still conversant in Low German has greatly diminished due to lack of practice. As you read through my story, you may find yourself smiling or maybe even chuckling as you recall that time long ago. I hope you will enjoy your struggles reading as much as I enjoyed my struggles writing Enn Bloomenheim Oppjewossen.

Jack Driedger
2011

Enleidunk


Ekj schriew dit fa miene Elren, Jakob un Maria (Siemess) Driedja, toom Aunjedenkj. Wan miene Elren mie uk niemich omoarmden, wist ekj doch, daut see mie saa goed wieren. Wan dee mie waut vespruaken, wist ekj jeneiw, daut daut soo woaren wudd. Ekj kunn mie doa emma gauns opp veloten, daut miene Elren mie opprechtich behaundlen un met aule Needichkjeiten besorjen wudden.

Wan soo vál aus eene Dutz Lâsa daut Vejnieejen jeft, waut ekj hia jeschräwen hab, dan es mie daut Goot. Wäaemma mie to disch Sach unstastett haft, to däm saj ekj noch vâlmol Dankscheen.

Jack Driedger
328-120 La Ronge Road
Saskatoon, SK
306-651-3905
jimdee@sastel.net
1. Getting there from here

During the early 1930's horses and the Model T Ford were our means of transportation. We used horses for short distance travel as well as a source of power to farm the land. The Model T used gasoline which had to be bought with hard cash. We reserved it for driving longer distances.

I could usually count on an opportunity once a year to accompany Mother and Father to Saskatoon on the Model T Ford. Neighbors who rode with us were charged sixty-five cents for their return fare. Father was a careful driver. If we had no trouble along the way we could make the thirty mile trip to the city in an hour and a half.

It was exciting to watch the landscape flit by as we bounced our way to the city. Sometimes a jack rabbit jumped up from his hiding place to bound away in a zigzag course to elude a potential predator. Or a group of prairie chickens suddenly burst from the grass beside the road and flapped their wings with a whirl to gain height and glide to safety. If we were lucky, we might see a farmer working his field with a tractor instead of horses.

Saskatoon was a clean and exciting place where people dressed in Sunday clothes, even if it wasn't Sunday. Since reading opportunities were limited in the Village, I think I read every sign and billboard there was in Saskatoon. My favorite stores were the Fifteen Cent Store (Woolworths) where everything was fifteen cents or less, the Twenty-five Cent Store (Kresges) where everything was twenty-five cents or less and the Dollar Store (The Metropolitan) where everything was a dollar or less. I usually spent most of the money I had managed to scrimp since the last time I was here.

Eatons had an interesting machine in the

Von hia bat doa foaren


Ekj kunn mie jeweelenlich doaropp veloten, dau ekj eenmol dau Joa met miene Elren opp dän Model T met no Sasketun kunn. Wan onse Nobasch uk met kjeemen, schnald mien Voda an fiewunzastich Zent fa de Reis. Voda wia een vääsechtfa Foara. Wan wie opp dän Wajch kjeen Trubbel hauden, died dau ne Stund un ne Haulf, de dartich Miel no Sasketun foaren.

Daut wia oba intressaunt waut eena aules to seenen kjrieech oppem Wajch no Sasketun. Eensjemol hupst doa een Hos opp un wutschf auf, aus wan am een Hunt hinjaraun wia. Dan met eemol fluagen doa Raupheena opp un schlügen sikj mete Flichten enne Hecht bat see sachelkjes rauf kjeemen, wua doa kjeene Jefoa wia. Wan ons dau jlekjt, krieech wie sooga ein Gessolienkjätel to seenen, dee enne Städ Pied oppe Stap schauft.

En Sasketun wia aules oba soo schmock rein, un de Lied brukten aula sindachtsche Kjleeda, wan et uk nich Sindach wia. Doa wia soo väi to läsen, Jeschaftsnomes, Gaussennomes, Haundelsbekauntmoakungen, un soo wieda. De Stuaren, waut mie dau dolste intressieden, wieren dau Feftieen Zent Stua, wua aules feftieen Zent ooda bilja wia; dau fiewuntwintich Zent Stua, wua aules fiewuntwintich Zent ooda bilja wia; un dau Dola Stua, wua aules ein Dola ooda weinja kost. Jeweenlich vebrukt ekj aul mien Jelt, waut ekj mie toojjespoat haud von dau latste mol, aus ekj en Sasketun wia.

Bie Eatons hauden see eene wundaboare
shoe department that was about the size and shape of a small bookcase. At the bottom you could put your feet under the machine while standing and looking down from the top. An X-ray picture showed your feet inside your shoes so you could see whether your toes had enough room.

Saskatoon was a noisy place. Since there was no air conditioning, doors were kept open during hot summer days. Hence, whether one was in a store or on the sidewalk, it was impossible to carry on a conversation when a street car rumbled by. You had to pause until the noise died down before you could continue your conversation.

Father carefully parked the car in one of two central locations, either at the Market or at Eatons. From there we walked to do our shopping. I dreaded the elevators at Eatons. They invariably made me motion sick. I hung onto Mother's hand while waiting for the elevator car. Seeing the heavy weights and dangling chains sway through the glass doors as the elevator car moved up and down didn't help.

One time we went to an air show at the Saskatoon airport. The largest airplane I remember seeing was a three engine model. Hucksters shouted, "Hot dogs, fresh hot dogs". I had no idea what a hot dog was. I wanted Father to buy me one, but he told me they were hard skinned things that I wouldn't like.

When we were downtown we noticed that a lot of people were looking up at the clear blue sky. As we followed their gaze, we saw an airplane write the words "3 STAR", which was a brand of gasoline sold by the Imperial Oil Company.

Maschien, dee onjefää soo groot wia aus een kjienen Buakschaup. Eena kunu de Feet doarunja stääkjken. Wan eena dan rauf kikjë, kunn eena derch een Derchkikjka seenen woo goot de Feet enne Schoo pausten, ea eena sikj dee koft.

En Sasketun wia daut oba lud. Too de Tiet hauden see nich daut Toobehia de Jebieda auftokjeelen, soo aus vondoog. Wan daut de Somma dan soo rajcht heet wia, haud aulemaun de Däären op. Daut hilt sikj dan jlikj auf eena buten ooda bennen wia, wan doa eene Gaussenbonkoaa vebie fua, kunn eena sikj met kjeenem vetalen bat daut Jedäwa äwa wia.


Aus wie medden enne Staut wieren, wundaden wie, wuarom de Menschen aula enne Hecht kijkjen. Aus wie dan uk enne Hecht kijkjen, sag wie een Loftscheppee Dee Wied 3 STAR met Ruak schreewen. 3 Star wia eene Sort Gauselien, daut de Imperial Oil Haundelsjeschaft vekoff. Soon Jeschriew haud wie noch niemols ea
I'll never forget the day we went to Saskatoon to see the King and Queen on the occasion of their royal visit in 1939. We dressed up in our Sunday best. As a thirteen-year-old lad, I was embarrassed that I had to make do with a pair of scuffed work boots instead of dress oxfords like my older brothers had. It wasn't until several years later that I got my first pair of Sunday oxfords which cost Father $1.98.

When we arrived in Saskatoon, Father parked the Model T in Eaton's parking lot for the day. From there we made our way to a suitable place to see King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. It was a warm sultry sunny day. I had never seen so many people before. Hawkers sold balloons, cardboard periscopes, and soft drinks. One boy used a periscope to see the queen over the heads of the crowd. I saw one lady drink an orange drink out of a bottle with a straw. She got lipstick on the straw. How I wished I could have a nice cold orange drink!

After seeing the royal couple, we wended our way back to the car at Eaton's. Mother had packed a gallon thermos of coffee and homemade bread. Father bought some fresh ring bologna. What a delicious lunch! After some shopping and browsing, it was time to go home.

Although the Model T was a reliable car, I was embarrassed when I compared it to my uncles' 1928 Chevrolets. I thought their cars were the greatest. The Model T was high and the corners were sharp. My uncles' '28 Chevs were low with nicely rounded corners. The Model T horn had an embarrassing burp-like sound, whereas my uncle's car horns went "Ahoogah". Now
that was a real car horn!

During the depression, Father realized the car had become a luxury he could no longer afford. There was no money for gasoline or license plates. He was forced to place the Model T on blocks and eventually sell it.

Shortly after selling the Model T, our economic situation improved sufficiently for Father to purchase his first rubber-tired tractor. Since it was a small Allis Chalmers Model B tractor with a road gear and we had no car, we often used it for transportation to town or to the neighbors.

There were important reasons why the tractor was never used to go to church. Tractors reminded people of work. Working on Sunday was absolutely forbidden. A tractor at the church would have detracted from the solemn mood of the church service.

As economic conditions continued to improve during the early forties, Father was reminded of the convenience of an automobile. I was delighted when he bought a 1927 Pontiac. For me this was a great improvement over the 1927 Model T. Now Father had to learn to operate a standard clutch and gear shift. Although I had not yet driven a car myself, I knew how from watching other drivers. It was a thrill to teach Father!
Eventually Father attained a sufficient level of confidence and competence in the operation of the Pontiac that he did not need my coaching any more. One fall day during the slack season, when it was acceptable for me to be in the house occasionally to scan the newspaper, I noticed that Father had something on his mind.

He had just returned from a short trip with the Pontiac all by himself. He was pacing back and forth in our combined kitchen-dining area. He glanced out the window. Then he glanced in my direction. I hid behind the newspaper, pretending not to notice. I was sure that Father would soon have something to say to me. I also felt that it would be something good. Although Father seldom smiled, this time I detected a faint hint of a smile when he thought I wasn't looking. Father took parenting very seriously.

Without a warning, Father turned around, looked at me, and said, "Would you once like to try to drive?"

"Sure, I could once try", I replied casually to hide my excitement. Soon Father and I were settled down in the car. This time I was in the driver's seat and he was in the passenger's seat. I was determined to show Father that I could drive competently and responsibly.

I easily completed the short drive without a hitch. Although Father didn't say a word, I had a feeling that he was pleased with the way I handled the car. Father was careful not to spoil his children with praise, lest they become guilty of pride. The Old Colony Church emphasized the importance of humility. Father was a devout member of the Church.


"Jo, ekj kunn emol proowen," säd ekj soo ruich aus ekj kunn. Ekj wull nich haben, daut daut soo leet, aus wan ekj too sea oppjeräajcht wia. Ekj wull mie soo hanstalen, aus wan ekj kjeene Angst haud, ne Koa to foaren.

The next time we were in Saskatoon, Father took me to the Motor License Office and bought my driver's license for fifty cents. There was no driving test. Proof of age and fifty cents was all that was needed for a driver's license. I had reached another milestone towards being one of the big boys.

As surely as autumn followed summer and winter followed autumn, the amount of snow increased until we could no longer use "heeled" vehicles. It was a forgone conclusion that a car was strictly a summer vehicle. Father drained the radiator of the car and took the battery into the house for the winter.

During the long winter months we used two basic types of horsedrawn sleighs. The bob-sleigh was used for heavy loads. It had four runners which held either a sturdy grain box or a large hay rack, depending upon the need at the time. The caboose or bunk usually had two runners, although some of the larger bunks had four runners. The bunk was designed to carry passengers in relative comfort. It was closed in and heated with a home-made wood stove. We used sawdust soaked with kerosene as kindling to start the fire. The more comfortable bunks were furnished with salvaged car seats.

One winter when Father and I had built a brand new bunk, I was proud to be the first to use it when several neighbor boys and I decided to visit some friends about four miles away. While we were visiting at our friends' house, a typical howling prairie blizzard developed without warning. We soon realized that we had better get home as soon as possible.


Soo secha aus Hoafst Somma nofoljt, un Winta Hoafst nofoljt, kjeem doa emma mea Schnee, soo daut wie nich mea met Rädafoatieja foaren kunnen. Daut wia zelfstvestentlich, daut ne Koa blooss een Sommafoatich wia. Voda leet daut Wota utem Kjeela, un neem de Batrie em Hus enenn toom Winta.


Een Winta, aus Voda un ekj ne blitzniee Kabuss jebut hauden, freid ekj mie, daut ekj de ieeschta wia doamet to foaren. Ekj kroagd miere Nobasch Junges met mie met to komen, Frind dee onjefäa vee Miel auf wonden to besieekjen. Aus wie dan soorajcht em Spazieren wieren, funk daut met eemol gauns onverhofs aun to stiemen. Wie wieren ons uk fuaz eenich, daut wie
As we frantically hitched the team, the horses sensed the danger of the rapidly developing storm. Hoping to get home before the peak of the blizzard, I urged Tom and Sandy to a trot. That was a mistake. Within minutes they lost the trail!

After some careful thought as to what to do now, a couple of fellows volunteered to search for the trail. In order not to get lost, they shouted and listened for an answering shout from the rest of us in the caboose. Soon we had the horses back on the trail. Since the trail was rapidly getting covered under a blanket of snow, we realized that we had to let Tom and Sandy proceed at their own speed.

There was only one thing to do. We tied up the reigns to allow Tom and Sandy complete freedom, hoping they would plod their way home. As the realization of our precarious situation began to sink in, we sang and told stories to keep up our spirits. Fortunately, I had taken sufficient firewood with us to keep us warm. Sure enough! Good old Tom and Sandy got us home safe and sound.

If a howling prairie blizzard lasted for several days, all trails would be obliterated under fresh snow drifts of varying depth and density. The nearest town was six miles distant. People needed to get the mail, coal to heat their homes, and a few grocery staples such as coffee, sugar and

ons fekj oppem Wajch nohus loossaljen sullen.

Aus wie fekj aunspaunden, wieren de Pieed aul ziemlich fuchtich, aus wan see wisten, daut daa boolt wudd een grootet Owada sennen. Wiels ekj Tus sennen wull ea daut too sea stiemand, porrd ekj Taum un Sandie aun to dreblen. Oba ekj wort fuaz en, daut daut een Fäla wia. En een Poa Minuten feluaren de Schruggen de Schlädbon.

Na waut dan nu? Om een Stootskje besonn wie ons, waut wie nu doonen musten. Een poa Junges wudden erut gone, de Schlädbon sieekjen. Wie beräden daut, daut see schrieejen wudden, un dan horchen wan wie trigg schieejjen, soo daut see nich vebiestaden. Toom Jlekj hauw wie de Pieed dan uk boolt trigg oppe Bon. Wie wisten daut de Bon boolt gauns vestiement sennen wudd. Nu must ekj mie doaropp veloten, daut Taum un Sandie dän Wajch nohus finjen wudden.

Doa wia blooss eenatlei to doonen. Ekj bunk de Lienen toop un leet de Pieed gone soo aus see wullen, enne Hopninj daut see ons wudden jiekljich nohus fieren. Nu must wie daut toostonen, daut ons Toostaunt nich sea secha wia. Ons funk aul een bät Schis to woaren. Om proowen bâta to feelen, vetald wie Jeschichten un sungen. Toom Jlekj hauw wie jenuach Brenninj, de Kabuss woamtohoolen. Met eemol hilden Taum un Sandie stell! Na, waut dan nu? Wie muaken de Dää sacheljjes op. Daut stiemand soo grulich, daut wie nuscht seenen kunnen. Met eemol kunn wie jenuach seenen, daut wie wisten, daut de Schruggen ons werkjlich nohus jefieet hauden. Oba wia wie froo!

flour. Nobody relished the thought of being the first to reopen the trail.

The villagers had a very efficient way of sharing this ominous burden. Each family hitched a team of horses to a bob sleigh. Then they all traveled slowly to town in a convoy of eight to ten teams, taking turns at being the leading team. By the time they had traveled to town and back, the new trail had been driven over sixteen to twenty times.

During the Second World War, brother Willie enlisted in the army medical corps. When he was stationed in Regina, he decided to mail order a Federal government surplus army motorcycle. He made arrangements to have it shipped to our local railroad station. Willie asked me to arrange for brother Henry to pick it up at the station in Hague. If I would uncrate it, service it and get it running, Willie said I could run around with it for a week or so until he could come to get it. Of course, I jumped at the opportunity. Needless to say, this machine attracted a lot of attention, since it was the only one of its kind our area. How we managed not to have any serious injuries is beyond me.

It was not until around 1938 when brother Henry bought the first bicycle in our family. I was thrilled when he allowed me to learn to drive it. I dreamt about having my very own bicycle. In 1942 Father bought me a second hand balloon tired bicycle. What a Staut to foaren?

De Darpa hauden gooden Rot doavää. Wan de bestemda Dach doa wia, spaud jieda Enwona een poa Pheed aum Dob beltschläden. Dan fuaren see aula oppe Gauss, reed toom enne Rieej loossfoaren. Soo boolt aus see aula reed wieren, jinkj et looss. Jeweenlich wieren doa onjefää tien Foatieja. Daut dieed nich lang, bat dau vääaschte Spausel ute Pust wia. Ea de vääaschte Pheed too meed worden, fua de Fuamaun met sien Jespaun tosied, soo dau de aundre am aula vebliefoaren kunnen. Nu hauden siene Pheed dau a Deel leichta, wiels tien Foatieja ver an de Bon opjefoaren hauden. Soo deed jieda Fuamaun dau om secha to seenen, dau aule Pheed jilikjen sea schaufen musten, de Schlädbon optomoaken. Wan see dan ieescht entlich tus wieren vonne Staut, wia doa ne goode, hoade Bon, wiels de twintich mol äwajefoaren wia.


delight it was to have it all to myself! During the early forties, driving around with their bicycles on a Sunday afternoon was a favorite pastime for the boys in the village. The bicycle was also very handy for fetching the cows home from the pasture at milking time.

Aune 1942 koft Voda mie entlich een jebruktet “balloon tired” Foaraut. Oba daut wia mie ne Freid, daut ekj nu werkliech mien ieejnet Foaraut haud! Aune aunfangs vieetich Joaren wia daut fa de Darpsjunges aum Sindach Nomeddach jeweenlich een Vejniecejen, met äare Foarädä rom foaren. Daut Foaraut wia uk wundaboa hendich toom de Kjieej nohus holen toom malkjen.

Model T car

Model T Koa

Young men with bicycles

Groote Junges met äare Foaräda

Caboose for winter travel

Kabuss toom em Winta foaren
2. School days, happy school days

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, when their religious freedoms and privileges were gradually being eroded in Russia, the Old Colony Mennonites decided to emigrate. When they learned that the government of Canada would allow Mennonites to operate their own schools in the German language, they were convinced that it was the Lord's will that they move to that country. However, less than fifty years after the Old Colony Mennonites had settled in Canada, attendance at provincially operated English language schools became compulsory for all Canadian children, including the Mennonites.

To escape the perceived corruption of their children in schools operated by the state some Old Colony Mennonites left Canada during the nineteen twenties for Mexico and other Central American countries where they were again allowed to run their own schools.

For a while those Old Colony Mennonites who had decided to remain in Canada refused to send their children to public schools and were assessed fines accordingly. Gradually, however, the added economic burden of these fines forced them to give in to the law of the land and send their children to the "English" schools.

Father was one of the first in our village to send my older brothers to the "English" school. Many people resented our family giving in to the government during this time. Gradually, as they too started sending their children to the "English" schools, their resentment was forgotten.

At four years of age, I had a severe case of scarlet fever. I remember Mother telling me that I was totally deaf for several months

No School gone

Aus de Frieheit, äare ieejne Dietsche School to haben, waut de russlendesche Rejierunk de ooltkoloniesche Mennoniten vere achteenhundat Joaren vesproaken haud, emma mea wajchjenomen wort, entschooten de Lied sikj wajchtotrakjen. Aus de kanaudsche Rejierunk de Mennoniten aunboot de Frieheit to jäwen, äare ieejne Dietsche School to haben, trocken see von Russlaunt hiahāa. Oba dut died nich feftich Joa, bat de kanaudsche Rejierunk de Mennoniten befool, äare Kjinja no de enjlische School to schekjen.

Fuaz fungen de Ooltkolonia aun notoforschen, wua see nu han trakjen kunnen. Aulsoo kjeem dut bat doa, dut miere Bloomenheima aun nääjentileen-twintich Joaren no Mexiko trocken, wua see wada ääre ieejne dietsche School haben kunnen.

De Ooltkolonia, waut en Canada bleewen, wäaden sikj, ääre Kjinja no de enjlische School to schekjen. Daut died nich lang, bat de Lied Strof tolen musten, wan see ääre Kjinja von de enjlische School tus hilden. Schlieslich worden de Lied en, dut see boolt ääre gaunse Wirtschoft velieren wudden, wan see emma Strof tolden. Sachelkjes fungen see aun, ääre Kjinja aula no de enjlische School to schekjen.

Voda wia eent von de ieeschte en ons Darp, miene elre Breeda no de enjlische School to schekjen. Eensje Lied gnoaden doa ziemlich äwa, oba dut died nich lang, bat see uk ääre Kjinja no de enjlische School schekjen. Daut died je dan uk nich lang, bat aules tweschon onse Elren un de aundre Darpslied wada goot wia.
due to ear infections at that time. I continued to suffer with frequent colds and accompanying ear and throat infections throughout my childhood. I recall being horrendously sick with earaches at night with Mother standing helpless beside my bed while Father was snoring. Although school attendance was compulsory at age seven, my first day of school was postponed until age eight due to my poor health.

During my mother's school days, left-handed children were forced to write with the right hand. In order to make sure a left-handed child didn't forget to use his right hand, some teachers tied the child's left hand to his chair. When Mother heard about this from her older siblings she dreaded her first day of school because she was left-handed. She made sure she could use her right hand before she started school.

When Mother noticed that I too, was left-handed, she encouraged me to right with my right hand. I do not recall having any difficulty learning to use my right hand. As a matter of fact, I am grateful that I learned to use my right hand. Today, I find that I am ambidextrous in many activities. This can be an advantage in some situations.


Mutta vetald mie, aus see vere näajentieen hundat Joaren en Manitoba no School jinkj, bedwungen see linkjsche Kjinja mete rjchtje Haunt to schriewen. Eenjse Lierasch bungen soogoa een linkjschet Kjint de linkje Haunt aum Stool, soo daut et must mete rjchtje Haunt schriewen lieren. Aus Mutta soont hieed von aäre elre Breeda un Sestren, gruld ar no School to gonen, wiels see linkjsch wia. See muak sikj secha, daut see mete rjchtje Haunt schriewen kunn, ea see aunfunk no School to gonen.


The spoken language of the Old Colony Tus räden de Ooltkolonia aula Plautdietsch.
Mennonites was Low German. Their written language was High German. In order to become acclimatized to the school environment, where English was spoken, beginners started school after the Easter holidays prior to their first year in Grade One. Brother Willie, who was four years my senior, enjoyed school. By the time I was a beginner, he had already enthusiastically taught me some English and elementary mathematics.

As long as they observed provincial Department of Education regulations, teachers had a lot of freedom in the classroom. The teachers' authority was never questioned by the Old Colony Mennonites. Student promotions and failures were left entirely to their discretion. Brother Willie was a precocious young lad who asked a lot of questions. Some teachers found this an irritating intrusion upon their authority. Although Mother was a devout Old Colony Mennonite, she was an intelligent lady who had some difficulty conforming to all the constraints imposed upon her by the Church. Maybe she identified with Willie's frustrations. Father also had a keen sense of fairness. Hence Willie sensed a certain amount of support from his parents.

I suspect my first year teacher unloaded some of his frustrations upon me, since I was Willie's younger brother and tended to be relatively submissive. Hindsight tells me that I was wrongly placed into Grade One Junior for my first school year. At the end of June, I was promoted to Grade One Senior for the next year.


Soo lang aus een Liera de Kjinja lieed waut de Rejierunk velangd, scheen daut soo kunn hee enne School soo doonen aus hee wull. Daut wia gauns dän Liera siene Sach, auf een Scheela von eene Klauss no de näakjste jinkj.

Mien Brooda Wellem wia een ooltnäsja Benjel, dee emma väl to froagen haud. Eensje Liersch jefoll daut nich sea, aus wan see dochten, hee kjemmad sikj om Dinja waut nich siene Sach wieren. Wiels Mutta kluak un leichtlierich wia, kjeem mie daut ieremol soo vää, aus wan see sikj vedrekjt feeld äwa de ooltkoloniesche Bestrenjungen. Veleicht wia ar daut doaderch dietlich, daut Wellem emma soo nieschierich wia. Voda wia doaropp, daut een Mensch sull rajcht behaundelt woaren. Aulsoo wia Wellem sikj ziemlich secha, daut onse Eiren daut eendoont wia, daut hee emma soo nieschierich wia. Wuarom sull doa dan waut met looss sennen, wan hee enne School soo väl to froagen haud?

Wan ekj trijg denkj aun disse Joaren, jleej ekj, daut de Liera een bät vedrisslich wia, daut Wellem emma soo väl froagen deed. Wiels ekj ziemlich toojäwich wia, wudd mie daut nich wundren, wan de Liera me doawääjen een bät trijg hilt. Eena wudd denkj, daut hee mie wudd un de tweede Klauss stalen aus ekj een Joa en de ieeschte Klauss jewast wia. Oba nä, hee hilt mie trijg. Ekj sull noch een Joa en de ieeschte Klauss sennen.
The following September we had a new teacher. He must have sensed that something was amiss. When he asked me which grade I was in last year, I told him I was in Grade One Junior. When he asked me which grade I was in now, I proudly informed him I was now in Grade One Senior. I was astounded when he told me that I was not going to be in Grade One Senior but in Grade Two.

About a month later, he called me to his desk. I had no idea what to expect. I hoped I had done nothing wrong. Although our lesson was on page thirty-two of our reader, my teacher asked me to turn to page fifty and read it. Then he asked me to read page two hundred. Imagine my elation when he told me that I was now in Grade Three! Out of ten pupils in Grade Three, I ranked second from the top in academic achievement. I was too young and too happy to realize at the time how unjustly my former teacher had treated me.

Although our new teacher was one of my favorite, he had one most frightening characteristic. When he became angry, his temper was completely out of control. Whenever he strapped a pupil, it seemed that he did not know when to stop hitting. All the pupils were absolutely terrified when he went to his desk drawer to get the strap.

Parents in the village delayed sending their children to school in fall as long as possible. Most parents in the village had no interest in seeing their children excel in their school work. As a matter of fact, they preferred that their children not learn too much about the ungodly ways of this pagan world. Unlike our neighbors, our parents liked to see us do well in school.


Oppwool ekj disen nieen Liera väl rääkjend, haud hee een Karakta waut grulich toom enjsten wia. Wan hee emol soorajcht doll wort, dan scheen daut soo aus wan hee nich wist von opphieren, wan hee een Kjint schacht. De Scheela wieren aula gauns venejst, wan hee no siene Deschenschufloj dän Reemen holen.

Wan de School en Septamba aunfunk, hilden de mieeschtte Darpslied ääre Kjinja soo lang aus määjlich tus. De mieeschtte Elren wia daut gauns endoont, wan ääre Kjinja nich välwaut enne School lieeden. Rajcht jesajcht, wullen see nich haben, daut ääre Kjinja too väl von de gottloose Welt lieeden. Onse Elren wieren een bät aundasch en däm Stekj. An jefoll daut, wan
Willie and I considered ourselves fortunate to be among the first few students at school in early September. There was something special about the first week of school. The academic work load was very light, because our teacher did not want to have to repeat too much for late coming pupils. There was an exciting quietness in the air. Even the freshly oiled floor hardly creaked. Instead of the fifty or so pupils, there were only about ten or twelve. They tended to be the more studious people. A closeness developed amongst the pupils and between the pupils and the teacher that quickly disappeared when the more boisterous crowd returned to school.

There were two main reasons why children delayed their return to School in fall. Some were needed at home to provide manpower to get the harvesting and threshing completed during favorable weather before winter set in. Secondly, many children as well their parents simply had no enthusiasm for education and used every legitimate excuse they could find to avoid school. Even after harvesting and threshing was completed, attendance continued to be spotty until everybody had finished digging potatoes and butchering pigs.

By November school attendance was about as regular as could be expected. Preparations for the annual Christmas concert could now begin. Our teacher selected plays, recitations, and carols to involve every student in singing and at least one other presentation. Decorating the school and rearranging the desks was the highlight of our preparations. We couldn't wait to get at the decorations that had been stored in cardboard boxes a year ago. We knew that, once our desks were rearranged for the concert, academic lessons were finished until after New Year's day. Two days before the concert our teacher put all regular school work aside in order to devote all our energy to
rehearsing and polishing up for the big event.

Finally the day of the concert arrived! I could hardly wait until after supper when Father hitched the team of horses to take the family to school for the concert. My excitement continued to grow as the sleigh runners squeaked along the hard-packed trail in the snow, the harnesses jingled, and the horses snorted to remove the accumulating frost from their nostrils. Upon arrival at the school, the clear moonlight revealed several teams already tied to the hitching posts. The horses were covered with blankets to ward off the crisp cold air as thin columns of smoke lazily curled upward from the smoke stacks of the heated sleighs.

Upon entering the school, the hiss of the mantle lamp and the crackling fire in the huge Waterman Waterbury furnace made me feel warm and cozy. As we stomped the snow off our boots, I silently repeated my recitation once more, just to make sure that I really knew it well enough not to stumble.

The pupils had combed their hair and some of the girls even wore a ribbon. Some of the boys were lucky enough to wear a brand new shirt. If I would have had a sister, I'm certain Mother would have been tempted to put a ribbon in her hair. But, as a devout Old Colony Mennonite, she would have resisted the temptation to commit such a sin of worldly pride. I was proud of my teacher when he appeared in his store bought suit and tie. It looked as if he had even powdered his face after shaving.

The Old Colony Mennonite Church considered Santa Claus and the Christmas tree akin to idol worship. Since most of the families in our area belonged to the Old Colony Church, our teacher considered it prudent not to have a Christmas tree or a visit from Santa Claus. I don't recall it ever program tosied jeschowen wieren. Fa twee Doag deed wie dan nuscht aus fa daut Wienachtsprograum toreden.

Entlích wia de Owent hia, wua wie no jeluat hauden. Ekj kunn daut meist nich aufluaren, bat Voda no Owentkost emol de Pieed aunspaund toom nom Wienachtsprograum foaren. Je noda wie no de School kjeemen, je dolla wia ekj oppjerääajcht auf ekj miene Wensch uk werklích utwendich wist. De Sälestrenj kjlinjaden, de Schnee kjnirscht un de Pieed schnurkjsten daut ääre Näsen nich too fruaren. Aus wie no de School kjeemen, scheen de Mon soo kloa, daut doa ne Rieej Schlädes mete Pieed aunjetääajelt kloa to seenen wia. De Pieed wieren aula bedajkt von de Kold to beschutsen, un de Ruak von de Kabussen jinkj sachelkses jlíjk enne Hecht.

Daut feeld sikj oba wundascheen woam un maklich, aus wie enne School nen jinjen un de Mauntellaump juld un daut Fia en däm grooten Owen knostad. Aus wie dän Schnee von onse Steewlen auf trumpften, säd ekj miene Wensch noch eemol opp stellless opp, om secha to sennen, daut ekj dee uk wist.


Bie de ooltkoloniesche Kjoakj wia een Wienachtsboom un een Nätklos een Aufgott. Wiels de meeschte Lied en onse Omjääjent Ooltkolonia wieren, docht de Liera hee haud bätä wan doa kjeen Wienachtsboom ooda Nätklos enne School wia. Wie Kjinja haben doa uk goanich emol.
entering the pupils’ minds that we should have a tree or a visit from Santa.

Finally the hands on the clock indicated that it was time for the concert to begin. Our teacher stood on the stage and cleared his throat several times before people realized that he was ready to start. An excited hush meant that the time had arrived for the first item. After some nudging and coaxing by our teacher, we gradually got the courage to sing and speak loudly enough that we could actually be heard. The last item of the evening was the most exciting when we all got our paper bag of Christmas treats that the school trustees had prepared. Then it was time for the parents to gather their children and bundle them up for the trip home.

The horses hurried home at a swift trot in anticipation of their stall in the warm barn. When we got into the house Mother coaxed the fire in the kitchen stove back to life. As soon as we quit shivering, we dashed to our beds, undressed to our long johns, and jumped under the warm homemade wool quilts. In no time we were sound asleep.

There was little excitement in school after New Year’s Day. Every family in the village took a one-week turn transporting the children to school in winter in an open grain box atop a bob sleigh. To help keep the children’s feet from freezing in the bitter cold, the floor of the grain box had about a foot of fresh straw. Upon arrival at the school, we all rushed inside to gather around the huge black round furnace. Here we shared our experiences of the morning. Some had slept in and barely made it on time. Others told of their difficulties getting through the deep snow that had piled up during the night.
After we were settled in our ice cold desks for classes to begin, we dreaded having to take out our still-frozen books just when we finally got our hands warm. As one of the few pupils who enjoyed school, I looked forward to returning to our lessons after Christmas.

The school library consisted of a cabinet in the back of the room. The glass doors revealed shelves with old sets of Ontario Readers and The Canadian Readers. I recall reading Robinson Crusoe many times as well as some of the old readers that were no longer in use. How I wished we could get some new books for the library, but since the Depression was upon us, that was not to be.

Fortunately, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool had a mail order lending library. After you mailed a list of the books you wished to read, they sent them to you one at a time. After reading a book, one could return it postage-free by using the original wrapper. All you had to do was to wrap the book with the inside of the wrapper on the outside. Then they mailed you another book until the list was exhausted.

Metal syrup and honey pails served as our lunch kits. Our cloak rooms where we kept our lunches were at the opposite end of the school from the furnace. It was not uncommon for our lunches to be frost-bitten by noon. Lunch consisted almost exclusively of jam or syrup sandwiches. Fortunate indeed were the pupils whose parents could afford to provide peanut butter sandwiches. A thermos was a rare luxury.

Outdoor activities at recess were simple but exuberant. In winter we delighted in pushing each other off the hard snow drift.
on the north side of the school. If we got a fresh blanket of snow during the night, we played Fox and Geese the next day. The first thing to do was to make the wheel in the fresh snow. Everybody followed the leader to make a large circular footpath in the snow. Next we followed the leader to make the spokes of the wheel. Now we were ready to play Fox and Geese. One of us was chosen to be the fox. The fox then chased the rest of us geese. If he tagged somebody, that person became the fox. Any goose that stepped outside the spokes or rim of the wheel to avoid the fox automatically became the next fox. The hub of the wheel was a haven of safety for the geese where the fox could not tag them. It did not take long until there were so many footprints outside the spokes and the rim of the wheel that we had to give up the game until the next snowfall.

Anti-over could be played at any time of year. The players were divided into two teams. To start the game, one team gathered on each side of the school. The team that had the ball selected one member to shout, "Anti-over!" as he threw the ball over the school. The opposing team tried to catch the ball as it came over the roof. If they were successful in catching the ball, they ran around the school and threw the ball at the opposing team. Any players who were hit by the ball had to join the opposite team. The game was over when all players were on one team.

In summer we played ball, tag, Pump Pump Pull Away, Prisoners’ Base or Knock Off The Tin Can. I forget the name of one game that could be played by almost any number of players. The only equipment we needed was two pieces of wood. One was a stick about a half inch thick and two feet long. The other was a peg about an inch thick and four inches in length. Both ends of the peg were sharpened to a pencil point.

A two to three foot square was marked in the dirt. In the middle of the square we dug a small hole so about half the length of the peg could protrude at a forty-five degree angle.

To start the game, we positioned the peg in the hole. One player struck the end of the peg downward with his stick to make it flip upward. While the peg was in the air, he hit it with the stick to knock it as far as possible. It was the opponent's job to get the peg back into the square. This was done by hitting the end of the peg, thus flipping it up, and again hitting it while in the air. Each time he did this was counted as one stroke. The player using the least number of strokes to get the peg back into the square was the winner.

Everybody looked forward to the annual spring Arbor Day when our lessons were canceled for the entire day. Every family brought a tool or two to clean up the school yard. Some brought a rake or a fork. It was important that we had at least one "fire" fork to control a bonfire of the raked grass and leaves. Those who lived close to school brought a wheelbarrow. It was most important that everybody bring a lunch to be shared during the noon hour. We were especially concerned that there would be enough dessert for all of us.

At nine o'clock the teacher organized all the pupils into work crews. Some picked up refuse that had accumulated on the school yard while others raked. The wheelbarrow operators loaded the raked leaves and dead grass to be piled up in one or two huge piles downwind and well clear of the school buildings.

Shortly before noon the senior girls unpacked the food and got it organized. They were considered especially privileged because they could see which family had brought what.

Dan kraust wie een twee- bat dreeschoojet Veakaunt enne leed. Enne Medd groowd wie een kjlienet Loch soo daut de Halft von dän Stekjel doa bennen wie un dënde Halft schroz erut stuak.


Em Farjoa freid wie ons emma to Arbor Day. Dän Dach deed wie kjene Schooloabeit. Jieda Famielje brocht entwäda ne Forkj ooda ne Hoakj ooda ne Mestkoa no School toom dän Schoolhoff oppriemen. Daut wia wichtich daut wie weenichstens eene Fiaforkj hauden toom daut Toophoakjsel vebnrennen. Oba daut wichtichste wia daut een jeda waat to Meddach toom Äten brocht. Wie wieren uzhent beduat auf doa wudd jenuach Nokost fa aulemaun sennen.

Klock näajen säd de Liera ons waat wie aula to doonen hauden. Eensje lausen Aufgank toop un aundre hoakjten. De Mestkoafaora saumelden daut Toophoakjsel toop un fíeden daut opp een Klompen, oba nich too dicht bie de Jebieda, soo daut de Wint von de Jebieda no däm Klompen pust.

Aus et dan meist Meddach wia, pakten de elre Mejales daut Äten ut. Dee wieren jlekjlich, daut see kunnen seenen, wäa daut veschiedne Äten jebrocht haud.
At twelve o'clock the teacher rang the bell for all to hurry into the school to get washed for lunch. The boys competed to see who got to eat the most pieces of cake. I remember one boy who ate eleven pieces.

After lunch the outside clean-up was completed. Then came the big moment. Our teacher warned the pupils to stay well clear while he lit the huge pile of leaves and grass. After he was sure the remaining ashes were completely doused with water from the well, the teacher assembled us in the school for a final assessment as to how the day had gone. After standing at attention and singing God Save the King, we were free to go home.

Department of Education regulations required that children attend school until they were fifteen. Children who were especially anxious to be out of school stopped attending when they thought the teacher and local attendance officer would not bother enforcing school attendance laws any more. Being out of school and working full time on the farm was a sure sign of being one of the "big boys".


No Meddach dieed dau lang bat aules oppjeriemt wia. Dan wia wie entlich bat doa, wua wie aula no jeluat hauden. Aus de Liera sikj secha wia, dau kjeena too dicht biem Klompen Toophoakjsel stunt, stekjt hee däm Klompen aun. Soo boolt aus aul dau Toophoakjsel vebrennt wia, hold de Liera Wota vom Borm un goot dau Fia ut. Aus hee sikj secha wia, dau dau Fia ut wia, kjlinjad hee wada dän Kjlinja toom ons enne School nen roopen. Aus hee ons aula jelowt haud woo sea wie jeschauft hauden, sunk wie “God Save the Queen” un jinjen meed un froo nohus.

De Rejierunk velangd, dau aule Kjinja no School jinjen bat see feftieen Joa oolt wieren. Soone Kjinja waut dau nich aufluaren kunnen bat see feftieen Joa oolt wieren, hieeden soo boolt opp met no School gonen aus see soo dochten, de Liera wudd sikj aul nich doa met baudren dau see nich enne School wieren. Aus see dan mete School derch wieren un tus schauften aus een Ujewosna, wieren see boolt eena von de groote Junges ooda Mejales.
3. World War II

During World War II all males sixteen years of age and older had to register with the Department of Labor, National Selective Service Mobilization Section. Shortly after I registered, I received notice that I was to report to my doctor for a medical examination. In due time I received notice that, because of my physical condition, I did not have to report for military training for the time being.

Most of the young men in the village who were to report for military training applied for and were granted conscious objector status. Instead of reporting for military training, they worked in bush camps as an alternate service.

During the war the Department of National Defense constructed an airdrome about four miles from our village. The farmer who accepted the contract to construct the fence around the airdrome was called the "minister of the fence". To understand the humor, one must realize that many Mennonites pronounced the "th" like a "d". The airdrome was used for pilot training during World War II. It was common for pilots in training to fly at low altitudes to spook the farmers' horses when they were working in the field. Needless to say, this was most annoying to say the least.

One day we had a lot of excitement at school when an airplane buzzed over the school yard at recess. There were a lot of windows on the north side of the school building. When we were at our desks after recess, the airplane came straight for the windows. We were sure he was going to smash into the school, but he went up just in time to skim over the school roof. One beautiful Sunday afternoon, several boys
decided to ride our bicycles to the airdrome. We were foolish enough to walk out onto the landing area. The pilots had great fun buzzing us so low that we had to crawl our way off the premises. We were glad to get out of that one!

Hunting in winter

Oppe Jääj em Winta
Old Colony Mennonites showed little interest in hobbies. Hobbies were considered a sign of worldliness and immaturity. Mother enjoyed embroidery, reading, sewing and gardening. Mother was often lonely because she had little opportunity to talk about her interests. The only sewing equipment most of the other women in the village had was a spool of strong black thread and a couple of needles to patch clothes and to replace lost buttons. Mother had a good quality Singer sewing machine. She designed and made clothes. The only time Mother could talk about her interests was when our relatives, who did not belong to the Old Colony Mennonite Church, came to visit.

One of the few pleasures some of the women allowed themselves was the craft of making pictures with elementary basic materials. All they needed to make a unique picture with a motto or Bible verse were a scrap piece of glass, dark paint (preferably black) and some salvaged aluminum foil.

First, the piece of glass was carefully cut to form a rectangle. Then the back side of the glass was painted black. A Bible verse or motto was traced backwards on the painted surface, using ordinary tracing paper. Sometimes flowers were added in the same manner. Now the paint was carefully scratched off the glass between the lines that outlined the letters and flowers. Next aluminum foil was crinkled and taped onto the back surface with the shiny side showing through the glass. Sometimes people were fortunate enough...
to have more than one color of foil. When you looked at this from the front you saw the motto and the surrounding flowers in colored foil with a black background.

Cone-shaped lamp shades for coal oil lamps were made from cardboard. These shades helped concentrate light on the table top and also kept the glare of the light out of our eyes when reading. The top of the shade had a hole through which the lamp chimney protruded. Since the cardboard got hot and burned if it touched the chimney, we bent a piece of wire and fastened it to the cardboard so that it rested on the lamp chimney instead of the cardboard. Sometimes the shade was decorated with crayons or water colors or colorful pictures clipped from magazines or catalogs. One could even add a fancy fringe to the edge of the shade.

Although Mother had a lovely, colorful flower garden, I'm afraid I took it for granted and failed to appreciate it. Mother took great pride in her garden. One of the first things my aunts did when they came to our place was to look at Mother's garden. Besides flowers, Mother grew cherries, plums, currants, carrots, parsley, leaf lettuce, beets, peas, beans, watermelons, and muskmelons.

Sometimes I picked flowers or leaves from Mother's garden and carefully placed them between the pages of an old mail order catalog. If I left them in there long enough they became pressed flat and dried. These pressed flowers and leaves could be used to make greeting cards.

One summer a killdeer plover had a nest in our garden. It was so well camouflaged that we had to be careful not to step on it. It was on the ground between the rows of garden produce. The edge of the nest consisted of small pebbles. You had to


Eensjemol plock ekj Bloomen ooda Bläda utem Goaden un läd dee tweschen de Bläda en een oolen Eatonskataloo. Wan ekj dee doa lang jenuach leet, wieren dee schmock plaut jedrekjt. Eensjemol brukt ekj disse jedriejde Bloomen un Bläda toom Grusskoaten moaken.

look closely to distinguish the eggs from 
the small stones. Mother was careful when 
she hoed the garden not to disturb the 
killdeer's nest. We got a kick out of the 
killdeer's antics as it tried to keep us from 
too close. I do not recall whether 
the eggs hatched or not. I wouldn't be 
surprised if the cats got to them.

Father and my older brothers hunted 
gophers in summer and rabbits in winter 
with a small single shot .22 calibre rifle. 
After he had explained the necessary 
precautions to be observed, Father finally 
allowed me to use the rifle. I must have 
been about fourteen at the time.

When crawling through a fence, I always 
carefully laid the gun down first and pick it 
up after I was on the other side of the 
fence. Whether loaded or not, one should 
ever point the gun barrel towards any 
people or any residence. A gun should 
ever be loaded unless one was stalking 
prey. I was careful to observe Father's 
warnings.

A box of fifty .22 calibre cartridges cost 
twenty-five cents. Since a gopher tail 
fetching a penny, one could get the 
ammunition paid for if you were an 
accurate marksman. The price of jack 
rabbit skins started at a dime. Immediately 
after skinning the rabbit, we turned the pelt 
inside out and slipped it onto a board 
similar in shape to an ironing board about 
eighteen inches long and seven inches 
wide at the base. On our next trip to 
Saskatoon, we visited about four or five 
hide and fur companies with our rabbit 
pelts in order to get the best price.
We lived less than two miles from the South Saskatchewan River. Fishing could be justified since it was a means of procuring food for the table. For bait we caught grasshoppers with a burlap bag held open with a wire hoop at the end of a six to eight foot pole. Father drove the Model T Ford in the pasture at about five miles per hour, while one of my older brothers leaned out of the window to hold the burlap bag about two feet behind the front wheel. The wind held the bag open. As the grasshoppers became airborne when they jumped out of the way, they were scooped into the bag. Then we put the grasshoppers into empty beer or patent medicine bottles.

Our fishing gear consisted of thirty to forty foot lines with hooks tied to a six foot willow sharpened at one end and pushed about eighteen inches into the soft sand at the water’s edge. In order to get the grasshopper-baited hooks into the water, we attached a three or four ounce piece of scrap metal to the end of the line. We grasped the line securely behind the baited hooks, swung the weight in a circle and let


Onse Fescharie wia ne dartich bat veeetich schooje Angel met dree Hoakes aun ne sass schooje Wäd jebugen. Aun daut aundre Enj von de Angel bung wie een klijnjet Biet iesa. Hinja daut Biet iesa streep wie een läwendjen Graussshoppa opp jieda Hoaken. Wie stuaken de Wäd weenichstens een Schoo em Saunt un bungen de Angel doaun. Dan neem wie de Angel onjefää drei Schoo vom Enj hinja
go so the baited hooks landed in the river as far from the shore as the length of line allowed. Sometimes we tied a small bell onto the willow to signal a bite. Our catches consisted of chubs, gold eyes and the occasional sucker.

It was peaceful and quiet at the river. Father snoozed in the warm sun. Crows cawed in the distance, water lapped lazily against a few rocks, and the occasional insect buzzed on its way to nowhere. Young boys were great collectors of everything. It seemed nothing was discarded. Their collections included pieces of string tied together into one long string, bottle caps, buttons, empty sewing thread spools, discarded light bulbs, boxes of all kinds, foil from tobacco packages and chewing gum wrappers, and rubber bands cut from old bicycle and automobile inner tubes. Boys competed to see who could collect the largest ball of string or tin foil.

Handles for sling shots were made from the fork of a tree branch shaped like the letter Y. Rubber bands cut from car inner tubes provided the propelling power for the pebbles, which were cradled in a piece of leather. Spools and bottle caps served as wheels and pulleys on hand made toys. It is surprising what a young fellow with an imagination and a good pocket knife can produce.

Spring, when the willow bushes were sprouting new leaves, was a good time to make whistles. One needed a nice, green, straight willow branch about five inches long. After tapping the branch all over gently with a jack-knife handle, one could carefully slip the bark off the branch. It was important not to damage the bark. One end of the bark was then plugged, using a half inch length of the original branch that had been slipped out of the bark. A notch was cut into the bark about an inch from the opposite end. Then this
end was partially plugged, using a half inch plug that had the upper third removed. Blowing into the end with the partial plug resulted in a shrill whistle.

Green caragana seed pods could also be made into whistles. First the sharp end of the pod was removed. Then the rounded side of the pod was carefully opened so the seeds could be removed. Placing the pod between your lips with the round end inside your mouth and blowing hard produced a loud whistle.

If you held a blade of grass between your thumbs it served as a reed to make a loud noise when you blew through it. It was an accomplishment for any young lad to be able to make these whistles. Hand guns were carved out of a piece of soft wood about an inch thick.

The ends of apple boxes were an excellent source of wood for this purpose. A metal rod about a quarter inch thick heated red hot in the kitchen stove was used burn a hole through the length of the gun barrel. Next we made a plunger to fit the barrel. One end of the plunger was thick enough so it stopped the plunger from going all the way through the barrel. An elastic band fastened to the gun pushed the plunger into the barrel when it was pulled back and released. A notch cut into the handle held the plunger back until you released it. A pea or small pebble served as ammunition. A small wooden peg served as a trigger to release the plunger, which pushed the pea or pebble out of the barrel.

During the summer, young lads spent hours rolling automobile tires. We also rolled a metal ring salvaged from a wooden

Aust moaken wua eena de Baust raufjejlitsch haud. En dau Enj wua wie de Tank jeschnäden hauden, stopt wie een Stoppsel nen waut een bät op wia soo dau enea en dau Piepdinkj nen pusten kunn. Nu wia dau Piepdinkj foadich.


Een Biet Grauss tweschen de Dumess schauft uk aus een Piepdinkj wan enea tweschen de Dumess pust. Een Benjel waut disse Piepdinja moaken kunn feeld sikj ziemlich aum Buck jepenselt.

Een ladja Aupelkausten wia jenuach Holt toom aulehaunt moaken. Eena kunn doavon soogoa ne Flint moaken.

De Somma hab wie Benjels ons väl met Koareifen kulren vejnieejt. Wie kulladen Rinj waut von kjiene Tonkjjes kjeemen.
keg. We rolled the ring by pushing it with a stick shaped like the letter T. The staves salvaged from wooden kegs were made into skis.

Father was a very patient and humble man. He was a craftsman, although he would not admit it. Sometimes he hummed quietly to himself as he looked at a pile of scrap metal. I could tell that he was letting his imagination roam as he studied the shapes and sizes of the different objects. Then he placed a few pieces next to each other as he studied them. Finally he held them together in various positions. Then he slowly began filing, sawing, and drilling.

If I asked him what he was making, he would just say, "We shall see." As he continued with his project, he acquired that faint hint of a smile on his face with a slight gleam in his eye. I watched him for hours as he worked. Every once in a while he asked me to fetch him a tool, which I did with excitement and anticipation. Sometimes Father worked on a project for several days. Meanwhile I tried to guess what he was making. When I finally guessed correctly, Father seemed pleased with his son and with himself.

Father kept everything very low key. He avoided taking pride in his accomplishments and in having a frivolous relationship with his children. The Old Colony Church emphasized humility and discouraged any worldly activity that might provoke the wrath of God. Children must be taught to fear the Lord. Fear of one's parents was somewhat akin to fearing the Lord.

Parents somewhat reluctantly allowed their boys to play softball in summer. We had no ball gloves. Our equipment consisted of a ball and a bat. We played either on the school yard or in a pasture. Since any form of athletic competition was frowned upon, we very rarely played ball against a team from another village.


Wan ekj am fruach wart hee moaken deed, såd hee, "Na, wie woaren emol seenen." Aus hee sachelkjes wieda puckad, schmustad hee han un wada emol een bät. Mie wia dut am stundenlank beobachten intressaunt. Wan ekj daut entlich rajcht roden deed, wart daut sull senen wart hee muak, wia hee met sien Jung un sikj selfst gauns tofräd.

The public schools in the Municipality of Warman organized a sports day annually in the month of June. Schools competed in track and field activities as well as softball. Schools from the Old Colony Mennonite villages seldom participated in the Warman Sports Day. When we were no longer attending school, we attended the Warman Sports Day as spectators. One time when I was at the Sports Day on a particularly hot summer day, I was so thirsty that I blew the entire fifteen cents I had in my possession on three bottles of pop. It was the first time that I tried a bottle of Coco Cola. My conscience bothered me for years that I had spent all my money so frivolously.

During quiet summer evenings the big boys in our village liked to gather around a small bonfire on the side of the road allowance where they swapped jokes and stories that they would not want the parents to hear.

Sorrel leaves grew abundantly on the edges of our driveway leading from the yard to the village street. Shortly after emerging in early spring these leaves were very tender and juicy. We ate them by the mouthfuls. We boys challenged each other to stuff our mouths with sorrel leaves and eat the entire mouthful without once making a sour face.

In winter we played hockey. The skating rink, which was located on the frozen river, was enclosed by a board and the snow bank that took shape as we shoveled the snow off the rink. Sometimes we played against a team from a neighboring village. Shin pads consisted of Eaton catalogs, horse sweat collars, or binder canvas slats. If the goal keeper did not have a goal stick, he used a shovel to keep the puck out of the net.

I must have been about twelve years old...
when I got my first pair of skates from my brother for ten cents. They consisted of an unmatched pair of discarded work boots with blade skates attached to the soles. It wasn't until I was about sixteen that Father bought me a pair of secondhand tube skates. What an improvement they were!

There were several months during the winter when we had no milk for our cereal or cream for our coffee because the cows had dried up and did not produce milk until after they had calved in spring.

When parents went visiting they usually took their preschool children with them. The children entertained themselves while their parents visited in the parlor. Children were expected not to interrupt their parents while they were visiting. One game two or three children could play together was to page through the Eaton catalog and look for the star symbol which marked special sale items. The first child to call out "Star!" and point to it won one point towards his score.

Another form of amusement was to cut out the head of one of the models in a discarded catalog and then place it over the head of other models. A man's had placed over the head of a lady modeling girdles brought howls of laughter. We tried not to laugh too much, lest our parents begin to wonder whether we were up to something naughty.

The Eaton catalog provided the opportunity to window shop and fantasize what it would be like to be able to buy all those wonderful things. I spent many hours perusing the pages.

We had games such as Snakes and Ladders, Ludo, checkers, and my favorite game of crokinole. I became rather good at crokinole. Father was my most challenging opponent. When our teacher and his wife visited us at our house, I delighted in
beating him in a game of crokinole hands down. To be able to beat your teacher was quite an accomplishment.

The Old Colony Church considered a deck of cards a tool of the devil. I played my first card game when I was fifteen years old. I was amazed at the way the cards were designed. You could hold a dozen or more in your hand in a fan shape so you could see the comer of each card. Not only that, there was no right-side up or upside down! The first card game I learned to play was Pinochle.

Something I often wished I could buy was the series of Big Little Books that Eatons featured in their catalog. They cost fifteen cents each. One could get the complete set at a reduced price. Each book was approximately an inch thick. Hence, the designation "big". The pages measured about four by five inches. Hence, the designation "little". The one I recall reading over and over was about Dick Tracy. The book was generously sprinkled with line drawings to illustrate the story. I don't remember how I got the book. One of my cousins must have given it to me.

When I was a teenager, the price of rabbit pelts had gone up to fifty cents. It was one of my best sources of cash in winter. To catch rabbits, I suspended wire snares from a wooden frame about five feet square. A bundle of oats was placed inside the square. If anything startled the rabbits while they were feeding on the oats during the night, they bounded away to safety. As they bounded away, they were caught in the wire snares, usually breaking their necks. In the morning, I retrieved their frozen bodies, thawed them in the barn, and pelted the rabbits.

spazieren kjeem. Jäajen däm kunn ekj emma leicht jewennen.


One reason for saving money was the annual trip to the Saskatoon Exhibition. The neighbor boys and I filled up a car and away we went. Since money was scarce, there was no way we could afford to pay admission to the grounds. We cautiously circled the exhibition until we found a tree of suitable height and proximity to the fence. Some of us would casually sit under the tree as lookouts. One by one, we managed to climb the tree and jump over the fence.

Once inside the fence, we decided to see a few of the side shows. Since the weather was usually hot, the bottom of the rear tent walls were rolled up part way for air circulation. We went to the back of the tent, pretending to rest in the shade from the hot sun. Again, at opportune moments, one by one we slipped in under the tent wall. Sometimes we were quite disgusted when the side show was hardly worth the effort.

Although we were naive in many ways, we were not stupid. We were careful not to get hooked on gambling our limited financial resources away to the many hawkers on the midway.

Although Mother often had to manage by herself, she did not relish the job of chopping off a chicken's head. If Father was around, she asked him to do it. I never missed an opportunity to watch Mother butcher chickens. After the head had been chopped off, the body of the chicken jumped and kicked violently, while the head of the chicken lay on the chopping block with closed eyes and gaping beak. Mother then dipped the chicken into a large pot of boiling water to scald it. Then she plucked the feathers. After this she lit several large sheets of newspaper and held the chicken in the flames for a few moments to singe off the fine hairs. Then...
she removed the pin feathers.

Next came the most fascinating part. Mother laid the chicken on the table, eviscerated it and cut it up into its various parts. I enjoyed playing with chicken feet, pulling the different muscles that opened and closed the claws. When I blew into the esophagus, the vocal cords responded. I tried to imitate the crowing of a rooster.

I’ll never forget Mother’s delicious soups. Her chicken noodle soup was an unforgettable experience. Another mouth-watering creation was her cabbage borscht with fresh smoked pork or freshly butchered chickens. She also made borscht of sauerkraut and smoked meat and sausages.

Since money was scarce, I discovered a way of acquiring various items such as toys and flashlights without cash. I exchanged breakfast cereal box tops for these items. The only money involved was three cents for a postage stamp.

I was always looking for ways to make money. Advertisements in farm periodicals encouraged boys and girls to sell greeting cards on a commission basis. I tried this a couple of times. I soon learned that there was no market for such frivolities among Old Colony Mennonites.

Some of the advertising fascinated me. The box of toothpicks had a colored picture of lumber jacks on a huge log float with the inscription, “From Canadian woods to Kaybe goods”. The general store in town had a sign promoting Benjamin Moore paint that read, "Save the surface and you save all". Salada tea and Coca Cola were always advertised.
I remember reading a short comic strip that invariably appeared in every issue of the Free Press. It showed a family under stress until they discovered the merits of drinking Postum instead of coffee. Another advertisement always showed people admiring something like the Niagara Falls and using the words, "It's enormous!" This was followed by the words, "But not as enormous as Branvin value!" Branvin was a particular brand of wine. Another ad showed the picture of a binder with the caption, "The best binder in the world!"

I tried many ways of making money. Once I bought a case of soft drinks. I placed them in a container of ice cold water in the basement and sold them for a profit of one cent per bottle. I soon gave this up since the margin of profit was too small for the amount of work involved.

At one time Mother actually paid me five cents a month for collecting eggs daily from the chicken bam. For this, I was the victim of some sarcasm from my peers who had never heard of being paid by their parents for doing chores.

A visit by the Fuller brush salesman was exciting. It was fascinating to see his display. But oh, everything was so expensive! Old Colony Mennonites had very little practical use for his wares. The only item I recall Mother buying was a block of repellent that was supposed to get rid of house flies.

Provincial election campaigns were largely ignored because Old Colony Mennonites had little interest in world affairs. They believed that they were in the world but not of the world. Since there were few sources of entertainment, speeches by candidates in the rural schools offered some diversion.
from everyday life. Although I occasionally listened to political speeches, I resented the hypocrisy of the entire political process.

There were two main political parties in Saskatchewan at the time: the Liberals and the C.C.F. In order to get party supporters to consider the viewpoints of their opponents, I hit upon a novel idea. It cost one cent to mail printed material, provided one wrapped the material in such a way that it was exposed at both ends. I picked up C.C.F. propaganda and mailed it to anybody I suspected of being a Liberal supporter. To a C.C.F. supporter I mailed Liberal propaganda. In each case I stamped my name and return address on the wrapper. Hopefully this would serve two purposes. One was to get party supporters to read the other side of the story, and secondly to confuse them as to where I might stand politically.

It was not until I reached my late twenties that I took party politics seriously. I noticed that at Liberal meetings questions from the audience were not being encouraged. Liberal candidates seemed to feel threatened by questions. If the Liberal candidate was not sure of the answer, he and his supporters tended to cower the questioner with a deriding chuckle. Secondly, Liberal candidates’ statements tended to be at variance with what I read in our farm newspapers. On the other hand, C.C.F. candidates encouraged questions from the audience. Furthermore, every question was taken seriously and handled with respect. C.C.F. candidates even admitted that they didn't have all the answers. I also noticed that statements by C.C.F. candidates were supported by news items in our farm weekly. I was thirty by the time I cast my first ballot.

Too de Tiet wieren doa twee polietische Jesalschoften en Saskatchewan: de Liberal un de CCF. Om polietisch Jesalschoft Unjastetta bat doa to kjrieen, daut see no äare Jääjna horchten, schekjt ekj Liberal Literatua no de CCF Hauptkwatia, un CCF Literatua no de Liberal Hauptkwatia. Daut kost blooss een Zent jedrekjtet Stoff schekjen, wan daut soo enjerolt wia, daut et opp jieda Enj erutstuak, soo daut daut to seenen wia, daut daut jedrekjtet Stoff wia. Ekj stampeld mien Nomen doa enopp aus de Schekja. Ekj docht soo, lot see doavonn denkjen waut see wellen. Aulsoo haud ekj twee Zwakjen. Ieeschtsens wull ekj haben, de polietische Jesalschoften sullen läsen waut äare Jääjna to sajen hauden. Tweedens wull ekj an vedreien, wâm ekj unjastetten deed.

Aus ekj enne hinjaschte twintich Joa oolt wia, wort mie de Politikj een bät wichtja. Wan een Liberal-Rädna de Toohiera fruach, auf see wart to froagen hauden, dan kjeem mie daut soo vää, hee hopt see wudden nuscht froagen. Wan see am wart fruagen, un hee nich de Auntwuat wist, kjeem mie daut soo vää aus wan hee wull een Spos doavonn moaken. Tweedens, waut de Liberars säden, stemd lang nich emma met wart ekj enne Zeitunk lauss. En däm Stekj scheen daut soo, aus wan de CCF-Kaundedoten aundasch wieren. Aus wan see de Toohiera oppmunaden, Froagen väatoostalen. Nich mau blooss daut, daut scheen soo aus wan bie an jieda Froag ne wichtje Sach wia. CCF-Kaundedoten stunden soogoa too, wan see nich emma de Auntwuat wisten. Wan ekj enne Zeitunk kjjikjt, wort ekj en de CCF-Kaundedot haud uk de Woarheit jesajcht. Ekj wia dartich Joa oolt, aus ekj toom ieeschte mol wälen deed.
5. Friends and playmates

As a young lad, I often wished I could have a trustworthy friend. Unfortunately, it seemed that I was born the wrong year. My closest brother, being four years my senior, seemed rather remote. There were three boys in our village who were about two years younger than I, and two who were two to three years older than I. Only two fellows were close to my age, one of whom tended to be a recluse, which left me with only one friend with whom I could associate on occasion.

During our early teens, differences in age were greatly exaggerated. We were very conscious of two or more years age difference. It was the ambition of every lad to become one of the "big boys".

Big boys could do mysterious and exciting things like join the "bunch", where boys and girls could enjoy mixed company to play circle games. Sometimes a young couple even mustered enough courage to go for a walk after dark and do something really intriguing called schmunjen. Associating with younger boys could delay acceptance to the bunch. Hence, I hesitated to be identified with younger lads and, likewise, boys two or more years older than I were reluctant to have anything to do with me.

Although I did have one or two close friends at school, my contact with them was limited. Since they lived about five long miles away, it was almost impossible to see them outside of school hours. Because we were too young to be allowed to drive horses for our own purposes, walking was our only means of transportation. Another reason our parents used for not allowing us to drive horses on

Frind un Spälkommaroden


Aune ieeschte tieenella Joaren wia daut een groota Unjascheet, wan eena een poa Joa ella ooda jinja wia. Wie kunnen daut meist nich aufluaren, bat wie eent von de groote Junges wieren.

Groote Junges kunnen Dinja doonen wart kjieliene Junges nich doonen kunnen. Dee wieren enne "Bonsch". Ekj hab ieremol jewundat waut ne "Bonsch" wia. Enne "Bonsch" spälden see Kommarodenspell mete Mejales. See säden daut een Jung eensjemol em Diestren fa een "walk" jinkj met ne Mejal un dan schmunjden see. Wie haben jewundat waut Schmunjen wia. Wan eena too väl to doonen haud met Junges dee een poa Joa jinja wieren, hilt eenem daut trijg von een grooten Jung sennen. Junges, dee een poa Joa ella wieren aus ekj, wullen nuscht met mie to doonen haben, wiels see dochten see wieren nu groote Junges. Aulsoo feeld ekj mie fa een poa Joa ziemlich auleen.

Enne School haud ekj een poa goede Frind, oba ekj kunn mau selden met an toopkomen, wiels dee onjefàa fief Miel auf wonden. Wiels wie too junk wieren toom met Pieed foaren, must wie tofoot gonen. Noch eene Uasoak wuarom onse Elren ons nich leeten de Pieed aum Sindach brucken wia daut de Pieed, kракjt soo aus de Menschen, sikj ruen musten von äare Oabeit. Wan daut de Somma soo heet wia,
Sunday was that, just like humans, animals needed a day of rest from their labors. I didn't relish the thought of walking a total of ten torturous miles in the hot sun at 30 degrees Celsius.

Opportunities for social activities began to improve after I quit school at age fifteen. When I was sixteen, I became one of the big boys. On pleasant summer Sunday evenings the young unmarried people strolled on the village street, the girls as a group in front of the boys. Sometimes we sat on the grass on the edge of the ditch beside the road. If a young lad and girl took a fancy for each other, they tried to sidle up to each other when they thought nobody was looking. After dark they sneaked away from the rest of the group.

In winter we gathered in homes to play circle games. One circle game was called "The Miller Boy". To start the game, one boy had to be the miller boy. The rest of the group divided into couples. While the miller boy stood in the middle, couples consisting of a boy and a girl walked around him and sang:

"Happy is the miller boy who lives by himself. 
The turning of the wheel is the gaining of his wealth. 
One hand in the hopper and the other in the sack, 
The ladies step forward and the gents fall back."

At this point the couples broke up. The miller boy joined the rest of the boys as they walked around an inner circle anti clockwise while the girls walked around clockwise in the outer circle. Everybody joined lustily and sang:

"We're sailing East we're sailing West 
We're sailing over the ocean 
And every good man who wants a good wife 
Has gotta be quick in his motion."


Dän Winta späld de Jugend jesalschoftlichet Spell. Wan wie "Millerboy" spälden, must ein Jung de Millajung sennen. Dee aundre jinjen dan aus Poatnasch, een Jung un ne Mejal toop, rom dän Millajung un sungen, 

"Happy is the miller boy who lives by himself, 
The turning of the wheel is the gaining of his wealth. 
One hand in the hopper and the other in the sack. 
The ladies step forward and the gents fall back."

Nu jinjen de Junges un de Mejales utenaunda. De Millajung jinkj nu mete aundre Junges toop aun de bennaschte Sied enne Rund rom, wiels de Mejales aun de butaschte Sied dän aundren Wajch enne Rund romjinjen. Aula sungen nu lostich, 

"We're sailing east, we're sailing west, 
We're sailing over the ocean, 
And every good man who wants a good wife 
Has got to be quick in his motion."
At the end of the word "motion" the girls squealed with excitement as the boys quickly grabbed the hand of a girl. If a boy was fast and lucky, he could end up with his favorite girl. The lad who didn’t get a girl was the miller boy for the next game. This was repeated for as long was we wished or until somebody thought of something else we could do.

Although dancing was considered a sin, we sometimes danced to tunes from a harmonica, violin, guitar or mandolin. Brother Willie and I sometimes provided the dance music. Willie played the violin while I corded on my mandolin, which I bought for $1.60 from a friend. Sometimes the entire dance orchestra consisted of me and my harmonica.

Visits from my urban cousins were always exciting. We looked forward to exchanging an accumulation of "funnies". Some of my cousins' families subscribed to a city daily which included different funnies from those we received with the weekly farm newspapers that Father subscribed to. Some of my favorite comics were Mutt and Jeff, Bringing Up Father with Maggie and Jigs, The Gumps, Popeye, The Captain and the Kids, Moon Mullins with Lord Plushbottom, Uncle Willie and Kayo, Little Orphan Annie, and Gasoline Alley with Skeezix and Uncle Walt. The fact that my peers in the village had absolutely no interest in reading comics tended to further isolate me from them.

As far as I was concerned, daily farm life was no big deal. I couldn't understand my cousins' fascination with the farm. One of the first things they did upon arrival at our place was to race to the straw shelter in the pasture. The walls of the shelter consisted of two rough log walls two feet apart. The space between them was filled with straw. The ceiling consisted of more logs covered with a layer of straw. This shelter allowed the horses and cows to

Soo fekjs aus see dit jesungen hauden, schrieejen de Mejales wiel de Junges aula proowden ne Mejal äare Haunt to hoolen kjeejen. De Jung waut nich ne Mejal kjeech, wia nu de Millajung. Wie spälde din bat ons daut eeenolent wia, ooda bat wäm een aundret Spell biefoll.


Bie mie wia ons Läwen oppe Foarm nuscht besondret. EkJ kunn daut emma nich vestonen, wuarom miene Fadasch soo bejeistat wieren wan see bie ons wieren. Daut ieeschte waat see deeden wan see no ons kjeeemen, wia no de Strooserrei ranen waat bie ons oppe Weid wia. De Strooserrei haud wie soo daut de Pieed un de Kjieej em Schauten gonnen kunnen wan daut de Somma heet wia, ooda wan et buten kolt wia ooda wan et rääjend.
escape the hot sun in summer and the chill winds in spring and fall.

The straw walls were a great place for sparrow nests. My cousins removed all the eggs and baby sparrows they could find and destroyed them. Since the sparrows were just a nuisance, my parents were quite happy to allow my cousins this amusement. Occasionally they found a mouse nest with a litter of hairless young baby mice. I can still hear the squeamish squeals of my aunt when her sons proudly showed her the pink hairless baby mice they had found. One of my cousins had his very own bedroom where he had the freedom to put his favorite pictures on the wall. I dreamt that someday I would have a room all my own. Realistically, I knew that this would never happen.

De Spoalinja hauden emma Nasta en de Strooserrei. Miene Fadasch neemen dan de Eia un de kjliene Spoalinja waut jrod utjebroot wieren ut de Nasta erut un fetiljden dee. Daut wia ons gauns eendoont, wan onse Fadasch doamet een Vejnieejen hauden, wiels de Spoalinkjs blooss een Onjenieej wieren. Han un wada troff sikj daut, daut see een Piepamusnast voll kjliene, cole, hoalooasje Piepamies fungen. Mie kaun daut noch krakjt denkjen, woo miene Taunte sikj vefieed aus de Junges ar de kjliene noaktje Piepamies weesen. Eent von miene Fadasch haud siene ieejne Stow wua hee de Frieheit haud, Bilda aun de Waunt to haben. Ekj wenschte mie, daut ekj uk noch emol wudd miene ieejne Stow haben. Oba ekj wist uk daut soont niemols woaren wudd.
6. Farm animals: when you talk, they listen

I never had much use for horses. They were too unpredictable. I always felt that, regardless of how well-behaved they were, you could never trust a horse completely. You never knew what might spook them and you’d have an uncontrollable runaway. In spite of my basic dislike for them, I was able to relate to horses quite well.

We always kept several cats to control the mice on the farm. We had one cat that ate grasshoppers. When she saw a grasshopper hop, she watched where it landed and slowly crept up to within two to three feet of it. Then she pounced upon the grasshopper and ate it with a relishing crunch.

The family dog was my favorite animal. For several years we had two dogs whom we named after two of our favorite cartoon characters. The bigger dog was Mutt and the smaller one was Jeff. Jeff was much more intelligent and intuitive than Mutt. However, Mutt was a much better dog to help control cattle and horses. Hence, Mutt was our working dog and Jeff was our playing dog.

Brother Willie and I had a lot of fun teaching the dogs tricks. One was "Jeff over Mutt". Mutt stood still while Jeff jumped over him. Although both dogs disliked doing this, they complied to our wishes. Mutt hated having to stand still. Jeff always growled when he jumped over Mutt. It was his way of telling Mutt not to move when he was jumping over him.

Jeff was intelligent enough to crack peanuts. If we put a peanut on the floor, he gently cracked it open with his teeth so as not to crunch the nuts inside, dropped it on the floor and sniffed around for the

Wan eena to dau Vee oppe Foarm rät, dan horcht dau

Ekj hab nienich válwaut von Pieed jehoolen. Ekj feeld emma soo, ena kunn sikj niemols gauns opp dän veloten, eendoont woo onltich see sikj væastalden. Eena wist niemols, auf see sikj nich met eemol haustich vefieren un utkleiwen wudden. Oba wan ekj de Pieed uk nich jescheit feknusen kunn, doawääjen kjeem ekj doch goot foacidh met an.


Mien Brooda Wellem un ekj hauden väl Vejnieejen met onse Hunj aulahaunt Spos lieren. Eent wia wan wie såden, "Jeff, äwa Mutt." Dan gnorrd Jeff to Mutt. Dan wist Mutt daut hee stellstonen sull soo daut Jeff äwa am hupsen kunn. Wan de Hunj daut uk nich jleichten waut Wellem un ekj an aules lieeden, doawääjen deeder see daut doch, ons toom Jefaulen.

Jeff wia soo klukd daut hee festunt leednät to knaken. Wan wie ne leednät oppe Flua läden, deed hee dee soo natkjes mete Tänen opknaken, daut hee daut leednätkuarn doabennen nich entwei beet.
unshelled peanuts.

We had one favorite rooster that turned out to be quite a pet. During the long winter evenings, Father sometimes brought him into the house and placed him on the back of a kitchen chair as a roost. Coming from the dark chicken bam into the lit-up house made the rooster think morning had arrived and he crowed lustily. To carry the rooster back to the bam, Father placed the him on his shoulder as he walked from the house to the bam.

Spring sheep shearing time was interesting. The ewes looked so strange after they had been sheared that the lambs failed to recognize their own mothers. The poor mothers couldn't understand why their lambs were afraid of them. There was much anxious bleating. The lambs bleated because they were hungry and confused. The ewes were trying to coax their lambs to relieve them of the pressure in their udders. Finally the lambs would venture close enough to recognize the udder with the milk. With considerable relief to both mothers and lambs, the bloated udders were soon emptied of the overflowing milk supply.

Sometimes it was my job to herd our twenty or so sheep. When fetching the cows from the pasture at milking time, I chased them from behind. I had read and seen pictures in books of shepherds walking with their sheep following them. I thought I would try it with our sheep. When it was time to take them home, I called them gently with a "Matz, matz" and started to walk. Sure enough, it worked! At first they answered me with a bleat as they were grazing, watching me out of the

Dan schneffeld hee rom bat hee daut leednätkuarn funk un fraut daut opp. Wan hee romschneffeld pust hee de leednätschal tosied von daut Kuarn met siene Näs.

Wie hauden uk een besondren Hon waut ons Lieblinjstia wort. Aus wie die lange Wintaowents hauden, brocht Voda däm eenjemol em Hus nen un sad am opp ne Stoolenlän fa am toom bowen setten. Wiels Voda am vom Diestren en daut dache Hus nen jebrocht hau, docht de Hon daut wia nu zemorjes un kjreid aus aules. Wan Voda dän Hon trüg nom Staul neem, sad hee däm opp sien Schulla. De Hon saut doa gauns ruich bowen, wiel Voda met am nom Staul jinkj. Wiels daut een scheepja Hon wia, nond wie am Mista Scheepja.

Schop schäaren em Farjoa wia sea intressaunt. Wan de Muttaschop jeschoaren wieren, leet et dän soo framd, daut äare ieejne Lama an nich kjanden. De oame Muttaschop kudden daut nich vestonen, wuarom äare Lama fa an Angst hauden. Doa wia väl jaumalichet Jemekja. De Lama mekjaden wiels an no Malkj hungad un see beduselt wieren. De Muttaschop wullen soo jieren haben, de Lama sullen komen äare volle ledasch ladjen. Entlich kjemeen de Lama dichbie jenuach, daut see dee volle ledasch sagen. Oba dan wieren de Muttaschop un de Lama froo, de Muttaschop daut äare ledasch dän Druck entlich wort aufjenomen, un de Lama, daut see nu scheene, woame Malkj suen kudden.

Eensjemol wia daut miene Flicht de Schop heeden. Wan ekj de Kjieej vonne Weid nohus hold toom Malkjen, juach ekj dee von hinjen. Ekj haud jeläst un opp Bilda jeseenen, daut Schop dän Hoad hinjaraun jinjen. Ekj docht soo, ekj sull daut emol met onse Schop prooven. Aus et Tiet wia nohus to gonen, roopt ekj de Schop natkjes, "Mats, mats, mats,” un funk aun to gonen. Jewess! Daut schauf! Ieescht beauntwuaden see mie met een Jemekja un glupten no mie wiel see grosden, aus
comers of their eyes. I slowly continued walking towards the farm yard. Reluctant to leave the grass they enjoyed so much, the sheep finally stopped grazing and followed me home.

One day when I was herding sheep, I decided to take the violin with me. When I played the violin, the cows, who were grazing some distance away, looked up and came running towards me. They stood in a circle around me and stared at me with flaring nostrils. I didn't feel comfortable when I saw those large nostrils and wide open eyes. I decided not to play the violin in the pasture any more.
7. Walking to school

Walking to and from school could be an adventure in itself. It was not unusual for boys to socially ostracize a member of the group for no apparent reason. We lived at the end of the village farthest from school. The village was half a mile long. The far end of the village was a mile distant from the school. Hence, our house was a total of a mile and a half from school.

If I left for school early enough in the morning, I could join the other boys in the village and walk together with them. Occasionally, the boys who lived next to our house pulled a trick on me. They left for school early in the morning and got all the other boys to join them. By the time I was on my way to school at the usual hour, I found that all the boys had already left. They knew very well that I did not like to walk to school alone.

During the black blizzards or dust storms of the dirty thirties, we devised an ingenious way of keeping sand out of our eyes while walking to and from school. We placed our handkerchiefs over our faces by tucking one edge under our caps and the other edge into our buttoned-up shirt collars. The cotton handkerchiefs were thin enough for us to be able to see through them. Sometimes on the way to school in the morning we discovered sandpiles which the wind had created during the night. It was great to fun to play in them.

As soon as the weather was warm enough in spring, children shed their shoes to walk barefoot all summer. When school started in September, cold mornings called for shoes. Unfortunately, our feet had grown during the summer and we discovered that our shoes were too small. As a result of wearing shoes that were too small, I developed a severe case of ingrowing toenails.

Tofoot oppem Wajch no School


Aus daut enne dreieje dartzich Joaren soo schraklich stoof, funk wie een schoapsenja Wajch toom dän Saunt ut onse Uagen hoolen, wan wie no School ooda nohus jinjen. Wie stopten een Enj Schneppelduak väaren unja onse Mets, un daut aundre Enj un ons toojeknepet Hamd. Daut Schneppelduak wia denn jenuach, daut wie seeen kunnen nohus to finjen. Eensjemol, wan wie no School jinjen, funk wie schmocke, fresche Sauntdienen toom bennen spälen waut de Wint de vâaje Nacht toojjestowen haud.

When the soles of my shoes had holes in them, I developed a creative way of remedying the problem of getting thorns in my feet from Russian thistles. I cut out cardboard insoles and put them into my shoes. Even when I attempted to walk on my heels, cardboard soles didn't last very long.

Sometimes we were lucky enough to be picked up by hunters on the way to school. We couldn't understand why they would stop to pick us up and allow us to sit in their nice cars. Neither could we understand why they asked us whether we had seen any prairie chickens and where they might find them. Why would anybody want to come all the way from beautiful Saskatoon to shoot dumb prairie chickens? On a quiet autumn morning we could hear the popping shot gun blasts.

Most men smoked. To us young farm lads, smoking was a sure sign of manhood. Not having money to buy tobacco and cigarette paper, we made do with whatever materials might be available. On the way to and from school, we went into the poplar bluffs and smoke dried tree leaves. Sometimes we got sick if we imbibed too much. The worst part about getting sick was that our parents or teacher might find out about our smoking rendezvous. Then there was always the danger that the girls might tell on us.

There was slough at the far end of the village. In spring the water was a couple of feet deep. After school we caught tadpoles and put them into our empty lunch pails. During the still cool evenings you could hear the frogs croaking. It was good to

Wan ekj Lajcha enne Schoosolen haud, wist ekj mie Rot daut ekj nich Kurreispekjasch enne Feet kjrieech. Dan schneet ekj mie bennaschte Schoosolen ut von stiewet Papia, un stopt dee enne Schoo. Wan ekj dan uk sea proowd oppe Hacken to gonen, dieed daut doch nich lang, bat ekj daut Papa derchjeklunjt haud un wada Spekjasch enne Feet kjrieech.

Eensjemol jlekjt ons daut, daut een Poa Jääja ons met no School neemen. Wie kunnen daut nich vestonen, daut see ons en äare schmocke Koa metfoaren leeten. Wie kunnen daut uk nich vestonen, wan see ons fruagen, auf wie Raupheena jeseenen hauden, un wua see Raupheena finjen kunnen. Wuarom wudd een Mensch soo domm sennen un daut lange Enj von Sasketun bat hia komen, toom een Poa Stekj Raupheena scheeten? Wan daut zemorjes em Hoafst soorajcht stell wia, kunn eena de Schrootflinten puffen hieren. Voda schmustad emma, wan hee daut hieed.


Opp daut aundre Enj Darp wia een Puddel. Daut Farjoa wia dee emma een poa Schoo deep. Wan wie no School trijg em Darp wieren, jreep wie Kjielpoggen un stopten dee en ons ladjet Åtesamakje. Aum kjeelen, stellen Sommaowent hieed wie de Poggen
realize that the long cold winter was finally over.

Although there were lots of gophers, there were few within fifty feet of the road to school. They were routinely dispatched with the slingshot every boy carried. Robins and meadow larks were spared as they were considered useful birds. Crows were fair game. Blackbirds were not considered particularly useful and were in some danger of being shot, maybe because their color reminded us of crows. Red-winged blackbirds were usually left alone because they were somewhat rare and exotic.
8. Health care and home remedies

Medical treatment by doctors and hospital admissions were a last resort after all else failed. Very few people had money to get medical attention. There was no government Medicare. Children were rarely taken to a doctor. Families tended to be large. It was not unusual to see ten or more children in a family. Since the livelihood of the family was almost exclusively dependent upon the father, who was head of the household, he received medical help sooner than any other family member. Mothers also received medical help, since they were needed to look after the children and the farmyard, while the man of the house operated the farm. If a child died, the rest of the family could still function.

One of the few highlights for me was the visit of the Raleigh man. I couldn't wait until he opened his display case. His sales pitch was most fascinating. After he had exhausted his repertoire, he paused to look at my parents expectantly, not sure whether he should concentrate his efforts upon Mother, who seemed to be more receptive to his persuasions, or upon Father, who seemed to make the final decisions. He usually managed to sell a few items such as liniment, camphor ointment, or vanilla extract.

Colds were common. Sore throats were treated in several ways. One method was to rub the neck with Raleigh's or Watkins' camphor ointment and wrap a hot soft cloth around the neck. Sometimes coal oil was applied to the front of the neck. Mother also heated home made wine which we sipped slowly to soothe the throat.

To alleviate coughing, a dab of camphor ointment was put into a cup of water and heated to boiling. Inhaling the steam provided some relief. For severe chest pain.

Jesuntheit un Jesunheitsmeddel


Ekj freid mie emma, wan de Raleighmaun no ons kjeem. Ekj kunn dauj meist nich aufluaren, bat hee emol siene Schemmedaun op muak, wua ekj aul siene Sachen seenen kunn waut hee to vejkjepen haud. Wan hee miene Elren aules jewäsen haud, kjikjt hee hopnungsvoll no an, nich gauns secha auf hee mea Hopninj bie Mutta haud, dee sikj veleicht ea beräden leet, ooda auf hee dolla sull no Voda kjikjen, dee mea to sajen haud wan dauj toom Jelt brucken kjeem. Jeweenlich vekeft hee een poa Sachen, toom Biespel Liniment, Kaumfatsaulw, ooda Wanilla.


Fa däm Hoost koakt wie een bät Kaumfatsaulw met Wota un holden dän Donst en. Wan dauj Vekjilde dolla enne Brost wia, schmäad wie Samp un Mäl met
colds, we spread mustard between layers of cloth. Then we heated this and laid it on the patient's chest for several minutes or until you felt your skin tingle.

Earaches and toothaches were treated by applying heat. Some people claimed you could relieve a toothache by applying a heated onion wrapped in cloth. A trip to the dentist was warranted only when the pain became unbearable. When I had an ingrowing toenail, I was told that fresh cow manure would cure it. I never tried it.

A painful foreign object in the eye was treated by dropping two to three flax seeds in the eye when retiring for the night. This created no discomfort whatsoever. In the morning the flax seeds and the foreign object could be wiped out of the corner of the eye.

Sprains and dislocations were massaged by people recognized to have innate chiropractic skills. Some “chiropractors” developed considerable expertise. Some of their clientele traveled for miles. Although they might accept small donations, most Mennonite “chiropractors” charged no fees because they considered their skills a special gift from God.

As a child, I was often sick. When we visited people, I recall people asking my parents how old I was. I can still hear the comments of "My, but he's small for that age" and "Is he ever pale". My parents agreed that I was a sickly child.

I recall the horrendous ear aches I suffered, especially at night. Mother stood helplessly at my bedside when I cried.
Hearing Father snore was not comforting either. I recall saying, "Mother." Mother asked, "What?" "I am so sad." "So am I." When Mother replaced the cotton batten in my ears, it was soaked with blood. To this day doctors who see my scarred ear drums tell me I must have suffered some bad ear aches.

When I was about thirteen, brother Willie and I had our tonsils removed. Father took us to the doctor in Saskatoon with the Model T. The operation was performed in the doctor's office. We did not have the luxury of being in the hospital. We were anesthetized with chloroform. We vomited when we woke up. Then it was back onto the Model T and a long ride home. One good thing about this experience was that we got free ice cream when we woke up from the chloroform.
9. Communication

The residents of our village all shared the same mail box at the post office. Whoever went to town picked up the mail and dropped it off at a centrally located home. Here it was placed into a wooden box fastened to the wall of the passageway between the house and the barn. Residents of the village were free to browse through the mail to find their own. It was fascinating to speculate about the contents of our neighbors' mail. Holding an envelope up to the light sometimes yielded a tantalizing clue.

Many families subscribed to an English language weekly farm newspaper as well as the Steinbach Post, a German weekly of special interest to the Old Colony and Bergthal Mennonites. Glossy magazines were not encouraged. They exposed young people to worldly temptations. We looked forward to the arrival of Eaton and Simpson catalogs.

For events such as weddings, funerals, and engagement parties, a letter of invitation was hand written and delivered. The names of all those invited were listed on the back of the letter in order from the closest to the most distant household. This facilitated the orderly and efficient delivery of the single copy of the letter of invitation.

Sometimes weddings or funerals took place in the home of the family. The day prior to the event the family involved traveled to neighbors with a hay rack to borrow benches, chairs, tables, dishes and cutlery to accommodate the anticipated guests. Meals at these celeb-rations were simple, usually consisting of buns, lumps

Läsen un Schriewen


Fäl Lied kjrieejen ne wääjkliche enjliche Zeitunk un uk de Steinbach Post, ne wääjkliche dietsche Zeitunk waut uzhent interessaunt wia fa de Barjchtola un de Ooltkolonia. Ekj freid mie emma, wan de Eatons ooda Simpsonkataloo kjeem.

Toom Lied to een Gaustjebott soo aus een Bejrafniss ooda Velafniss kroagen, shreewen de Aunjehieeje een Breef bie Haunt. De Nomes wua de Breef hanjebrocht sull wieren aune hinjaschte Sied oppjeschräwen. De bowaschte Nomes wieren de nodste Lied un soo wieda bat de latste Lied waut daut wiedste auf wonen. Soo aus de Nomes oppjeschräwen wieren, soo wort de Enlodunksbreef no jieda Famielje jebrocht.

Mieremol wia daut Begrafniss ooda Velafniss bie de aunjeheieje Familje äa Hus. Dän Dach verhää fua de Famielje met een Heibaks de Nobaschoft runt Meeblen lieen fa daut Gaustjebott. De Moltieden wieren mau eefach. Wie hauden Tweebakjes, Zockastekja un Koffe.
Baking the buns was also shared by the community. The host family went from household to household with a large batter of dough. At each house they cut off whatever amount of batter the housewife felt she could handle. The dough was then rolled into balls and baked into buns. The quality of the baking varied according to the expertise of the bakers. Some women hoped people would find out which buns they had baked, while others hoped nobody would ever find out.

If a family suffered unexpected misfortunes, neighbors usually pitched in to help in any way they could. Mother often had me deliver fresh chicken noodle soup to poor Mrs. Wiebe, who was bedridden with arthritis for years. Once I delivered a donation of several pots and pans to some neighbors who had lost all their possessions in a house fire. Being somewhat shy, I did not relish the thought of doing these things. Mother helped me out by telling me what to say.

During the thirties, my oldest brother Henry and the neighbor boys rigged up a telephone, using existing wire fences for the telephone line. A battery-operated Model T ignition coil was used to call the neighbors to the phone. Gradually more people became interested in acquiring a telephone. Obsolete wall phones were purchased. As the distance of coverage grew, some telephone lines were constructed to replace the use of fences.

Since there was a limit to the number of telephones you could have on one line, we eventually had three separate lines with about eight phones on each. The
telephone central was located at our house. It was our duty to switch people to other lines as requested. All the work was voluntary, including our telephone switching services. Eavesdropping was very common. If too many people had the receiver off the hook, it became difficult to hear. Usually eavesdroppers were considerate enough to hang up before communication broke down completely.

Around this time brother Henry and one of the neighbor boys made their first crystal sets with which they were able to tune in CFQC Radio Saskatoon. During clear cold winter nights, they could occasionally get Denver, Colorado. In 1939, CBK Radio at Watrous operated by the CBC came on the air. These primitive crystal sets were capable of pulling in this station as well.

Battery operated vacuum tube radios with headsets and finally with loudspeakers followed the crystal set. For a while only two households in the village had a loudspeaker radio. During the long winter evenings the neighbor boys would gather in one of these homes to listen to the radio. The most popular radio programs were western music, hockey broadcasts, and world heavy weight boxing. Although we sensed that our parents did not really approve of our older brother having a radio in his room, the matter was never discussed.

CBC radio aired a farm radio forum. Farm communities were encouraged to form small groups to listen to relevant topics. The radio provided a free guide book for group discussion after the program. The discussion leader mailed in a summary of the group's consensus. The group that I led soon lost interest after a couple of shows and I carried on by myself for the rest of that winter.
Spring was a very exciting season for me. Around the beginning of April Father got the chick brooder from the attic and set it up in the living room. I think it held about three hundred eggs. A kerosene lamp provided the heat to hatch the eggs. A thermometer was placed inside the brooder to monitor the temperature. Father marked one side of each egg with a pencil so that when he turned them daily, he could keep track of which ones he had turned. I watched this daily routine with anticipation. I tried to imagine how the little chicks inside the eggs must feel as they were being turned around.

I looked forward to the end of April for two reasons. One was my birthday on April 29. Birthday gifts and parties were only something I read about. But I knew that on my birthday the little chicks would be running around and chirping.

The door of the brooder had a long glass window through which I could see the chicks emerging from the eggs. First I could see the egg beginning to move. Next appeared a few cracks in the shell. Gradually the beak appeared, then a bit of fluff. Finally, with a great struggle, the whole chick emerged. If this happened during the Easter vacation I could be home from school to watch all the excitement.

Years later Mother told me of a rather amusing incident. After the chicks were hatched, Mother placed them in a pen near the kitchen stove. The sides of the pen consisted of four boards about a foot high. Newspapers were placed on the floor to catch the droppings.
I spent hours sitting and watching the chicks play and scratch and eat. Mother made an enclosure at one end of the pen. The front of this enclosure consisted of a light piece of cloth hung in such a manner that the chicks could enter and exit at their will. If I made an unusual noise, all the chicks quickly scurried into the enclosure for safety. There they were completely quiet until they felt it might be safe to come back out. Eventually one or two chicks cautiously peeked out from under the cloth with a nervous peep to see if all was well. Gradually they all emerged from the enclosure and went back to their activities.

The first day when I returned to school, the little chicks refused to eat. When Mother looked to see what the problem was, all the chicks were chirping shrilly and craning their necks in an attempt to look over the sides of their pen. Mother realized that the chicks missed me.

What to do? Being intelligent and creative, Mother hit upon an idea. She rummaged around in the attic, got the biggest doll she could find, and set it in the pen. Immediately, the chicks chirped contentedly and returned to their scratching and pecking.

After a couple of weeks in the kitchen, the weather was nice enough to place the chicks in an outside wire enclosure. The lower part of the enclosure consisted of a wide board to shelter the chicks from the cool spring breeze. I got a kick out of nailing a potato on the board. The chicks pecked away at it until it was completely consumed.

By now it was time to till the land and seed the crops. Since our crop land was one to three miles from the farm yard, I didn't see

Ekj hab de Kjikjel stundenlank beoobacht soo aus dee spälden un romklewden un frauten. Opp een Enj Hock hunk Mutta een Kodda opp, soo daut de Kjikjel sikj doaunja vekrupen kunnen. Wan ekj enoa lud “brrrrrrrrr” såd, stusden aul de Kjikjel hinja daut Kodda, aus wan see sikj unja ne Kluck vekroopen. Dan wieren see muckstell un horchten, bat see dochten doa wia kjeene Jefoa. Dan kijkjten eent ooda twee Kjikjel een kjlienet bät von unja daut Kodda väa, un kijkjten un horchten auf doa uk kjeene Jefoa wia. Schlieslich wieren see wada aula äwadül un krautsten un freeten.

Dän ieschta Dach aus ekj trijg enne School wia frauten de Kjikjel nuscht. Dee rakjhaulsden blooss un kijkjten enne Hecht un schlemden. Dan foll Mutta daut bie, daut de Kjikjel sikj no mie bangden.

Na, waut dan nu? Mutta wist sikj aul boolt Rot. See wist krakjt waut see nu doonen must. See jinkj oppem Bän un socht no de jratste Popp waut see finjen kunn. Dan sad see de Popp em Kjikjelhock enenn. Fuaz wieren de Kjikjel gauns tofräd un krautsten un frauten wada.

Om een poa Wäakj wieren de Kjikjel groot jenuach, un daut Wada wia scheen jenuach, daut de Kjikjel nich mea brukten bennen sennen. Wie muaken nu buten een jratret Hock. De unjaschte poa Schoo wieren Bräda. Bowa de Bräda wia een poa Schoo Heenadrot. Wan ekj ne leedschock benna daut Hock aun de Brädawaunt noageld, hakten de Kjikjel oba jnietsch, bat see de leedschock gauns oppjefräten hauden. Wiels wie soo vál met an to doonen hauden viel see Kjikjel klien wieren, wieren onse Heena emma sea mak. See hauden kjeene Fercht fa Menschen.

Nu funk de Sodeltiet aun. Wiels daut Launt waut wie akaden eene Miel bat dree Miel auf wia, sach ekj miene Breeda nich ea aus
my brothers until they came home from the field after a day's work. I watched them unhitch the horses, water them, remove the harnesses and tie them up in the barn. Then they were fed and provided with straw bedding for the night.

I vaguely recall an incident when I could have been seriously injured or even killed by a runaway team. While one of my brothers was about to unhitch a team of horses at the end of a hard day's work, I stood in front of the horses. This was no place for a five-year-old lad. Something must have spooked the horses. Without warning they bolted forward. I just managed to get out of the way as they took off, wagon, hay rack and all. In their panic, the horses ran towards the pasture and directly into the barbed wire fence. There was considerable damage to wagon, fence and rack. The horses suffered cuts from the barbed wire. Fortunately, I escaped, frightened, but unscathed.

In spring Mother got Father or one of my brothers to plow the garden. I liked watching the plow turn over the soil, exposing the fresh black earth, as the horses arched their necks, straining against the load. The soft plop, plop of the horses' hooves on the dry topsoil, the creaking of the leather harnesses as they were being stretched to their limit, and the smell of the fresh soil triggered my anticipation of the sweet cold watermelons we would again enjoy.

Mother had two large gardens to plant. Mother did her work quietly and without complaint, seldom asking for help. As far as the rest of the family was concerned, the gardens were something that just happened. Now as I look back, I realize how hard Mother must have worked while the rest of us took it all for granted. To watch Father, my brothers and I slurping with every bite so as not to lose a drop of the deliciously juicy watermelons was sufficient reward for Mother to be motivated to plant her gardens year after year.
During summer vacation from school I had my opportunity to contribute to the operation of the farm. One of my duties was to make sure there was always drinking water for the horses and cattle. This meant pumping water into the trough from the well. We were fortunate that the water table was only about six feet down.

After Mother and Father had milked the cows, I cranked the cream separator. It took a little while until I mastered the skill of turning the separator at just the right speed. Turn the crank too fast: the cream was too thick; turn it too slowly: the cream was too thin. Although I did not relish this job, I enjoyed watching the cats as they lapped the warm foam Mother scooped off the top of the skim milk that came out of the separator.

We used the cream for coffee and whipped topping on pies and cakes that Mother baked. Cream was also a source of cash. One of the neighbors picked up the cream cans from each household once or twice a week with his Model T Ford which he had converted into a closed pick up truck. On his next round he returned the empty cream cans from the creamery and delivered the cheques. Some families shipped their cream in syrup pails. Some of the cream was made into butter. The cream was poured into a large butter chum. Now came another job I dreaded: I had to turn the butter chum round and round, pulling the handle back and forth, until I could hear the clunk of the butter at each turn. Sometimes it took ten minutes, sometimes it took an hour.

dochwoll wada Moot toom Goaden plaunten un dän Somma äwa weeden.

En de Sommamoonaten, em Juli un August, haud ekj de Jeläajenheit mete Wirtschoft to halpen. Eent von miene Veauntwuatlíchkjeiten wia secha to sennen dauj dauj Vee emma Wota toom supen haud. Daut meend Wota utem Born em Troch nen pompen. Wie wieren jlekjlich dauj wie blooss sass Schoo deep growen brukten toom scheenet Drinkjeswota kjrieen.


Then I enjoyed watching Mother knead the butter in a large wooden bowl and form it into one-pound bricks. Butter also served as a source of cash to buy groceries and other needed commodities.

Mother took the buttermilk down to the cellar to cool it off. Now we enjoyed another treat: fresh cold butter milk with a few small chunks of butter still floating in it. We never heard about cholesterol in those days!

My other chores consisted of cleaning out the bam, collecting eggs from the chicken bam, and weeding the garden. Eggs and garden produce were mainly a source of food for our family. If we had a surplus of eggs, they were sold for cash or traded for groceries in the general store in town.

Grasshoppers could be a big problem. The rural municipality provided grasshopper poison, which consisted of a mixture of bran soaked with an arsenic solution. One of the families located near the centre of the village stored the poison in a bin on their yard. From there the local farmers got their supply of poison as they needed it.

The best time of day to spread grasshopper poison was just before sunrise, when the grasshoppers were still inactive. We put a small pile of poison in a wagon box and drove slowly through the
field of grain. As we moved along, we dipped the poison bait by hand with a wooden shingle or small board and spread it on the ground with a sweeping motion. As the sun gradually warmed up the ground, the hungry grasshoppers began to stir and devour the poisoned bran. It was a very effective method of controlling the grasshopper plague.

By the time school started in September, grain harvesting was under way. Four horses pulled the noisy binder around the edge of the field of golden grain. The binder cut the grain stalks, tied them into bundles and dumped them in small piles of five to seven bundles or sheaves in a row. The binder was followed by the stockers. It was their job to place the bundles in stooks so that the heads of grain were up and away from the ground to dry. All members of the family stocked as soon as they were strong enough to lift the sheaves of grain.

Brother Henry had quite a sense of humor. No doubt it alleviated the dreariness of long work days. One day, when Henry was operating the binder, he spotted a dead rabbit. He had an idea. He carefully stuffed the dead rabbit into the middle of a bundle of grain stalks so that its head protruded above the heads of grain. Laughing to himself in anticipation of young brother Willie's reaction to the discovery of the rabbit, I'm sure the long hours of work that day went by much faster for Henry.

That night at the supper table Willie excitedly told us all about the dead rabbit he found tied up in a bundle of grain. In order to egg on Willie, Henry recalled seeing a rabbit jump up in front of the binder. Just as Henry anticipated, Willie concluded the rabbit must have been accidentally caught up in the binder, killed and tied into a sheaf of grain.

"Hey, we should tell the Free Press about it. Maybe they will publish it and we'll see
our names in the paper!” Willie shouted excitedly. Henry could not control himself any longer. He burst into laughter. Willie's chin dropped to the floor. He'd been had again by big brother Henry's wry and unwelcome sense of humor!

Flying ants were a terrible pest at harvest time, especially for the poor soul straddled high on the binder seat. They crawled allover you and into your shirt. Their bite smarted for hours. Even after you thought you had got rid of them, you would suddenly feel a sharp pain in your neck where an ant had imbedded itself in the hair that protruded from under your cap. Some farmers claimed that, since the top of the binder whip was several feet higher than the head of the teamster, hanging a burlap bag on it attracted the ants to the bag rather than to the operator.

About the time when school commenced, it was time to start threshing. Not every farmer could afford to have his own threshing outfit. A farmer who owned a threshing outfit moved it complete with threshing crew from farm to farm. The threshing outfit and crew consisted of either a steam or gasoline tractor, the threshing machine, and a half dozen or more bundle wagons and teams. Usually the farmer whose crop was being threshed supplied the grain wagons. The threshing crew consisted of twelve or more men. Threshing was a busy and exciting time.

Children were expected to stay home from school when the threshing crew was at their place. They helped move grain wagons and did the regular chores that still needed to be done, such as milking the cows and feeding the chickens. Whenever grain was bagged, children helped by holding the empty bag upright while it was being filled. Children too young to do physical labor had to take care of their younger siblings while their mother and older sisters fed the threshing crew.

Omm de Tiet wan de School aunfunk, funk daut Draschen aun. Doa wieren mau een poa Forarma waut een Draschkausten hauden. Dee waut een Draschkausten hauden, fuaren metem Kjäitel un Draschkausten un miere Mana met Pieed un Heibaks erunt draschen. De leejendeema wua see draschten must doattoo seenen daut doa jenuach Jeträajdfiera wieren.

The threshing crew received both board and room. Most of the time the meals were tasty and nutritious. The sleeping quarters the men were subjected to was a different matter.

It was quite a responsibility to provide a crew of men who seemed to have bottomless stomachs five meals a day. Breakfast was served in the farm house at about six in the morning. Around nine o’clock the men were eagerly expecting lunch and coffee, which was delivered to them in the field. The threshing machine kept running while the men took turns devouring their morning lunch. Then the dishes had to be taken home, washed and a big dinner prepared to be delivered out to the field by noon. Around three o’clock the men were ready for another lunch of coffee and sandwiches. Hopefully this would keep them going until supper, for which the men again returned to the house.

After supper, the horses had to be watered and fed and bedded for the night. The men usually slept on piles of hay in a granary. What child would want to miss all this excitement?

If the main course at the noon meal consisted of beans, one of the senior men had the privilege of commenting that tomorrow would likely not be a very good threshing day. Then it was the duty for someone to ask why. After a suitable pause, the senior stated that it would likely be very windy. This invariably resulted in boisterous and enthusiastic guffaws of laughter.

Harvest and threshing was followed by
potato digging. This was quite a chore, since every farmer grew enough potatoes for his entire family for the whole winter. Since there was never a guarantee of a good crop, we had to grow a two-year supply. Children as young as six participated by picking potatoes from the ground as they were dug and putting them into a pail, which was then emptied into bags by an adult. By this time it was getting late in the season and our hands got pretty cold picking up those cold potatoes as they were dug up from the ground. Unfortunately potato digging lacked the excitement of threshing.

Next came pig butchering, starting around the beginning of November when the fly season was over. School children expected to be kept at home to assist in baby sitting, fetching tools, and running messages between the men outdoors and the women in the kitchen. Families took turns inviting neighbors to assist with pig butchering. Many considered it an honor to be invited to help their neighbors. It was an indication that they possessed at least one of two things: either some equipment that was in short supply and that they were expected to bring with them or, what was even more complimentary, special skills that were greatly appreciated. I recall Mother aying one fall that they had participated in thirteen pig butcherings.

By six in the morning the invited neighbors gathered around the kitchen table for breakfast. One or two cauldrons of water to scald the freshly killed pigs were near boiling by this time. As soon as there was sufficient daylight, it was time to do the killing. I never failed to watch.

The pigs were aroused from their sleep, then carefully shot between the eyes with a .22 calibre rifle.
Father usually had the dubious pleasure of doing the shooting. Hindsight tells me that Father derived no pleasure from doing this job. However, since Father did not like to see animals suffer, he wanted to make sure that each pig would drop with the first shot. As soon as the pig dropped, its throat was slit deeply to assure thorough bleeding. Again, this was a job assigned to a select few who developed the skill to do what needed to be done with efficiency and dispatch. Then off to the scalding trough.

This trough was made of wood with a semi circular bottom. A couple of ropes were laid into the trough. Then the dead pig was laid on top of the ropes. Next the boiling water from the cauldron was poured over the carcass. The ropes were used to roll over the pig several times to finish the scalding. After scalding, the carcass was laid on a ladder on top of the trough and in a matter of minutes the hair had been scraped off.

Next the carcass was hung up, the belly slit and the insides removed. Although I hated the sight and the smell, I never failed to watch every move. By this time the women came with a large kneading pan to take the guts into the kitchen where they were cleaned to serve as casings for sausages. The men cut up the meat for spare ribs, hams, bacon, and sausage.

One of the tricks invariably pulled on some unsuspecting soul was to pin a fresh pig's tail on his back. A straight pin was pushed through the thick part of the tail and the protruding end bent to form a hook. It was very easy to hang the tail on the back of a person's jacket without him noticing. Everybody tried to keep a straight face as long as possible and took great delight leichta dee rein moaken toom Worschtstoppen. Oba ditmol wort an nich jefoodat.


Doa wieren een poa Mana waut vestunden een Schwien uttonämen. See schneeden daut Schwien lengdhan op un neemen aul daut Bennaschte erut. Wan ekj daut Jestank uk nich sea jelicht, doawääjen kijjt ekj emma to, woo daut aula jedonen wort. Nu kjeemen de Mumkjes vom Hus de Doarm holen toom rein moaken toom Worschtstoppen, un de Mana fungen aun daut Fleesch opptoschnieden. Eena kunn sikj doaropp veloten, daut et nu boolt een Spos jäwen wudd. Eent von de Mana neem polietsch ne Koppspald, un stuak dee derch daut dikje Enj vom Schwienzoagel. Dan buach hee daut aundre Enj to een Hoaken. Dan schlikjt hee sikj hinja eent von de Mana, soo daut dee daut nich enwort, un hunk dän Schwienzoagel hinjen aun sien Wanikj. De
watching the victim’s appendage swing from side to side as he walked.

Sometimes the host provided homemade wine. Wine accompanied by good humor made the time go quickly, despite all the work that needed to be done.

Spare ribs were deep fried in the cauldron while rendering the lard. The lard and spare ribs had to be stirred constantly to keep it at an even boil. Lean pork was ground and necessary spices kneaded into it. Then it was stuffed into the cleaned guts for sausage which, together with the bacon, was smoked a day or two later.

During the winter months, we had time to spend in the house reading, sewing, embroidering, cracking seeds, and playing games. We often visited neighbors during the long evenings.

Chores were a daily routine for the men in the family. First thing in the morning the cows and horses had to be fed. After breakfast it was time to return to the barn to water the animals and provide more feed in the hay racks and feed troughs. Using a stone boat, the manure had to be loaded and hauled to the manure pile. Around four o’clock in the afternoon the animals were again fed and watered. Just before the men retired for the night, the animals were again fed and straw was spread on the floor in each stall for bedding.

I envied some of our neighbors whose house and barn were joined, especially in winter when they did not have to go outside to do their chores in the barn.

Mana musten sea oppaussen, daut see nich schmustaden, wan de Maun metem Schwienzoagel jinkj, un de Zoagel von Sied to Sied schwaupst.

Han un wada kjeem biem Schwien-schlachten een bät Schnaups äwadäl. Met een bät Schnaups un Spos wia de Dach nich soo lang, wan see uk aula schaufen musten.


De Winta haud wie Tiet toom bennen setten un läsen, neien, utneien, Sotknaken un met Spell spälen. De lange Wintaowents wort uk väl bie de Nobasch jespazieet un Sot jeknakt.

Daut Vee em Staul must emma pinkjlich besorjt. Soo boolt aus wie zemorjes opp wieren, must wie daut Vee foodren. No Freestikj wia wie wada trigj em Staul toom daut Vee wada foodren, drenkjen un däm Staul utmesten. Wie scheffelden dän Mest oppem Mestschläden un fieeden dän nom Mesthupen. Om Klock vea foodaden un drenkjden wie daut Vee wada. Ea wie schlopen jinjen, foodad wie daut Vee auf un streiden Stroo oppe Flua bie jiedat Stekj Vee to Nacht.

Bie miere Lied em Darp brukten see nich erut gonen, wan see em Staul jinjen, wiels doa een Gank wia tweschen daut Hus un däm Staul. Ekj hab mie foaken jewenscht,
In order to have light where needed in the bam, we had a wire stretching the length of the barn about six feet above the floor. This wire went through the eye of a snap hook. We hung a lantern from this hook. We could then slide the lantern to wherever we needed the light.

We also hung a couple of gopher traps from this wire. When we milked a cow we clamped the end of its tail in the gopher trap. Then she could not swat us with her tail when we were milking her. Some people used battery clips instead of the gopher trap.

The stone-boat consisted of a flat bed of heavy boards or planks with two runners and a whipple-tree fastened to the front. In winter the stone-boat was used to haul manure from the barn to the manure pile some distance away. Sometimes I used it to hunt rabbits. It took a lot of practice to learn to drive a team of horses hitched to a stone-boat. There was nothing to hold on to in order keep your balance when turning comers or going up or down a snow drift. Fortunately the snow was usually soft if one happened to falloff.

Sometimes our well ran dry in winter. Then we had to haul water from one of the neighbors about a quarter mile away. We put a couple of barrels onto the stone-boat and put several wooden blocks into each barrel. The wooden blocks helped prevent the water from sloshing over the edge.

We usually had six to ten pigs. They were not kept in a bam. All they needed was a straw stack into which they burrowed to get away from the cold weather. At feeding time, we dumped a warm mixture of chop, table ort and dishwater into a trough. The pigs dashed out of their straw shelter to eat, then dashed back into their shelter out of the cold. One winter a blackbird had apparently forgotten to migrate south. It daut wie daut uk soo hendich hauden.

Om Licht em Staul to hebben wan et diesta wort, hunk wie een Latoarn opp een Drot velenjd dän Staulengank. Dan kunn wie dän Latoarn krakjt doa haben wua ons daut Licht fald.

Wie hungen uk een poa Musfaulen opp disen Drot. Wan wie de Kjieeej molkjen, brukt wie de Musfaulen toom de Kjieeej äare Zääjel hoolen. Dan kunnen dee ons nich biem malkjen mete Zääjel schlonen.


Wie hauden jeweenlich soo bie sass Schwien. Fa dän haud wie kjeen Staul. Aules waut dee brukten wie een Strooklompen wua see too Nacht unja kroopen. Wie foodaden an Schroot, Ort vom Desch un Oppwauschwota onen Seep. Wan de Schwien ons hieeden dit Drank em Schwienstroch jeeten, kjeemen see utem Strooklompen jerant, frauden fekjs, un randen trigi unja däm Strooklompen. Eene
stayed with the pigs, eating with them during the day and perching on their backs at night to keep warm.

During very cold days, my brothers and I watched the supply of straw dwindle with some apprehension. Sometimes we rationed the straw, hoping Father would not notice. We were hoping the cold weather would break by the time we had to hitch a team of horses to get more straw from the stack a mile and a half away.

The train was the only means of transportation to Saskatoon in winter. It took a sixteen-hour day to get five hours of shopping time in the city. To begin the day, we had to get out of bed about six in the morning to do our chores. Horses and cattle had to be fed and watered and the bam had to be cleaned. It was important that the horses had enough time to eat before taking us to town to catch the train.

By ten in the morning it was time to get out of our work togs, clean up and get dressed in decent clothes. Then we hitched the horses and we were on our way to town. In town we arranged for the horses to be kept in the livery barn until we were back from Saskatoon.

Then we were off to the railway station to purchase our sixty-five cent return ticket and wait for the train, which arrived at 12:30 p.m. if it was on time. It was a relief when we finally saw the white smoke billowing from the train’s smoke stack in the distance. It felt good to sit in the warm passenger car, watching the harsh winter environment flit past as the wheels clacked along the steel tracks. At one o’clock we arrived in Saskatoon. Since the train left at ten minutes to six for the return trip, we had about five hours to shop. At about six-thirty we were back in town.

Winta wia doa ne Spree bie ons dee vejäten haud toom Winta nom Sieden to flieejen. De Winta fraut de Spree mete Schwien un wia met an toop em Strooklompen too Nacht.

Wan daut de Winta soo kolt wia, gruld wie ons emma, wan wie musten no daut Flekj ne Miel un ne Haulf auf foaren Stroo holen. Eensjemol spoad wie dan een bät Stroo wan wie daut Vee auffoodaden. Wie hopten Voda wudd daut nich enwoaren. Wie hopten daut de Kold een bät noloten wudd, bat daut Tiet wia toom Stroo holen.

Wan wie de Winta no Sasketun fuaren, must wie oppem Zuch reisen. Daut no Sasketun foaren neem een sasstieenstundja Dach. Wie musten dan soo om Klock Sass ut zemorjes oppstonen un em Staul besorjen. Daut Vee must jefoodat un jedrenkt un de Staul must utjemest. Daut wie sea wichtich daut wie de Pieved daut ieeschte besorjden, daut dee reed wieren toom ons no de Staut Ossla nom Zuch brinken.

Klock tien wia daut Tiet daut wie ons rein auntrocken. Dan spaund wie aun un brochten ons oppem Wajch no Ossla, wua wie de Pieved utspaunden un en een grooten Staul leiden, bat wie trigj von Sasketun wieren. De leejendeema von dän Staul foodaden un drenkjen de Pieved fa feftich Zent wiel wie wajch wieren.

As soon we had disembarked from the train, we went to the livery barn to pay the fifty cents due for tending our horses during our absence. By the time the team had taken us home, it was after eight in the evening. After a couple of hours of chores and a quick snack, it was past ten o'clock by the time we got to bed. Needless to say, we had no problem falling asleep. And what a satisfying sleep it was, snuggled under the warm woolen quilts!

Mother kept a large galvanized barrel in the kitchen to thaw snow in winter. This was her supply of soft water for laundering in winter. To replenish her water supply, Mother brought in huge chunks of snow which she cut from the hard snow drifts. As a small lad, I watched her through the window as she cut the snow blocks. Then it was my duty to run to open the door for Mother. As Mother gently lowered each block into the barrel to avoid splashing, the snow slowly settled into the water and disappeared as it became part of the water supply.

Doing laundry was pretty well an all day affair. In winter the water was heated in a boiler that covered two burners on the kitchen stove. In summer Mother heated the water in a cauldron or feed cooker outside. Rain in summer and snow in winter were our source of soft water for the laundry. One year we received so little rain that we had to fetch water in barrels from the river about a mile and a quarter away.

The washing machine and wringer were hand operated. If one operated the machine without interruption, about ten minutes was sufficient to wash one load.

In order to save water and soap, the machine was not drained between loads. The cleaner clothes such as dress shirts, underwear and aprons were washed first,
followed by the dirtier clothes such as socks and work shirts. After all the clothes were washed, the machine was drained. In summer Mother poured this sudsy water on the onions in the garden to avoid maggots. Then we filled the washing machine with fresh water to rinse the laundry. Again the machine was not drained between loads of laundry. As a result, the water was quite soapy by the time we rinsed the last load. We then drained the machine, and refilled it with fresh water to rinse the laundry a second time.

Wan see aules jewoschen haud, goot Mutta de Luag opp de Zipplen em Goaden, toom dee von de Moden beschutse. Dan feld see de Wauschmaschien met reinet Wota toom de Wausch speelen. Krakjt soo aus ieescht, brukt see blooss eene Wauschmaschienfoll Wota toom aul de Kjleeda speelen. Ieescht speeld see de reinste Kjleeda, un tolatst speeld see de Kjleeda waut verhää daut schwienste wieren. Wan see de latste Wausch speeld, wia de ziemlich seepich. Wan doa jenuach Wota wia, speeld Mutta aul de Wausch noch eemol.

Sheep in barnyard

Schoop oppem Hoff

Tractor with binder

Gauselienkjätel met Binja
11. Sundays and religious holidays

Special holidays observed by the Old Colony Church were Epiphany, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, and Christmas. Epiphany was celebrated January 6 to commemorate the three wise men's worship of the baby Jesus. Easter consisted of three holidays: Easter Sunday followed by Monday and Tuesday. Ascension Day occurred on the Thursday thirty days after Easter. It commemorated the ascension of Christ into heaven after his resurrection. Pentecost occurred forty days after Easter. Like Christmas and Easter, it was celebrated for three days in remembrance of the first time that the apostles baptized a group of people. At this time the Old Colony Church conducted its annual baptismal rites.

On Saturday we prepared for Sunday. Hair were shampooed, baths taken, and floors washed. After the floor was washed, Mother sprinkled it with moistened sawdust. It helped to absorb kitchen spills and tracks from muddy shoes. Mother also washed the spittoon and put a layer of fresh sawdust into it. The spittoon sat in the living room.

Sundays and religious holidays were a day of well-deserved rest. Only absolutely necessary chores were done. It was a time for church attendance and visiting relatives, friends, and neighbors. The church services emphasized the significance of the religious aspect of our holidays. Christmas was also a time of gift giving.

We had no Christmas tree or decorations of any kind. They were considered blasphemous worldly activities akin to idol worship.

Sindach un Heljedoag fieren


Too Wienachten hauw wie kjeen Wienachtsboom ooda Schmocksachen. De Lied jleewden daut wi däm ärlich aus een
worship. Instead of hanging stockings by the chimney on Christmas eve, we put a basin at our designated eating place on the kitchen table. When our parents were sure we were sound asleep, they quietly put peanuts and candy into each basin as well as a small gift or two beside it.

Christmas morning we were allowed to get up about six o'clock. Like all children, we could hardly wait to get dressed to see what Santa had brought us during the night. Although our parents did not emphasize the Santa myth, they allowed us the pleasure of that childish fantasy.

I was fortunate to have loving and generous parents. Accordingly, I received more and better toys than some of my friends in the neighborhood. In the afternoon of Christmas day, the boys in the village invariably came over to see what I got for Christmas. Since I took good care of my things, I was not fussy about letting them play with my toys.

One Christmas I got an idea. In order to have a plausible reason for not letting the boys play with my toys, I asked for a special favor from Mother: would she please tell me not to get my toys out in the afternoon, because I had had plenty of time to play with them in the morning and it was time I did something else. Mother reluctantly granted me my wish. I suspect she did not like entering into a conspiracy. Needless to say, that afternoon my friends did not stay at our house very long.

Visiting was the only social activity for married adults. Since Sundays and religious holidays were designated a day of rest, that was when most of the visiting took place. There was a subtle unwritten code about visiting. People were very careful not to visit the same house twice Aufgottsdeenst. Enne Städ Heljeowent Stremp opphenjen, soo aus de Enjlenda dau deedeen, stald wie jieda ne Komm oppem Desch bie de Städ wua wie emma toom Äten sauten. Soo boolt aus onse Elren sik secha wieren dau wie schleepen, schedden see plietsch aulehautn Scheens en onse Kommen: leednät, Hausselnät, Stroonät, un Kende. Jeschenkja waut too groot wieren toom enne Komm lajen, läden see oppem Desch besied de Komm.

Wienachten zemorjes kunn wie nich ea aus Klock sass oppstonen. Wie kunnen dau meist nich aufluaren, bat wie emol oppstonen un ons auntrakjen kunnen toom kjikjen, waut de Nätklos ons jebrocht haud.


Eene Wienachten haud ekj ne ledee. Ekj beräd daut met Mutta daut see to mie sajen wudd, dau deut jenuach wia, wan ekj Vermeddach met mien Spältich späld. Nomeddach wia dau Tiet dau ekj waut aundret deed. Wan Mutta dau säd, dan haud ekj ne goode Uasoak toom de Junges sajen, dau ekj nich kunn mien Spältich äwadäl holen. Dän Dach dieed dauk uk nich lang, bat de Junges nohus jinjen.

Daut scheen soo de eensje Tietvedriefs fa befriede Menschen via dau Spazieren un Sotknaken. Wiels see aum Sindach un aum Heljedach nich schauften, wort väl jespazieet. Daut wia selfstvestentlich dau Lied nich toom tweedenmol de selwij Lied besocht, bat de Lied an besocht hauden.
before having received a return visit. Not returning a visit within a reasonable length of time was a subtle message that one's presence was not appreciated.

I had a widowed uncle whose visits I dreaded. The poor man missed his deceased wife terribly. He must have been very depressed. I could not understand why his mood would suddenly and unpredictably swing from hearty laughter to soft sobbing. These changes in mood were interspersed with quotes from the Bible. I found this very confusing and distressing.

When he stayed at our house for the night, Mother meticulously searched his bed for dreaded bed bugs after my uncle had left. Once a home was infested with bed bugs or fleas, it was nearly impossible to eradicate them. We did not have the insecticides that are at our disposal today.

See musten uk oppausseen, daut see nich too lang wachten, uk nich too schwind aundre Lied besochten. Wan see too lang wachten, dan leet daut soo, aus wan see de Lied nich väl rääkjenden. Wan see too feks kjeejen, leet et soo aus wan see too iewrich toom Spazieren wieren un aus wan see nich väl Frind hauden.

Ekj feeld mie emma onmaklich wan eent von miene Onkels no ons spazieren kjee. Hee wia een Wätmaun. Ekj jleew, hee bangd sikj sea no siene Fru. Wan hee emol schaftich wia, wist eeni niemols woo lang daut sennen wudd, bat hee met eemol loosshield. Dan funk hee jweeenlich aun ute Bibel to räden un bieaun to hielen soo daut ejk mie meist enjst.


Hockey players on the ice

Hockie Spääala oppem lees
12. The depression: no crops, no work, no money

During the Depression, people were very reluctant to apply for government relief. They hated to admit that they couldn't look after themselves. The day came when Father also had to consider applying for relief. It was late autumn. We had an ample supply of pork from the pigs we butchered and potatoes and canned vegetables stored in the basement. Since Father also had fifteen dollars in cash, he concluded that we could manage one more winter without government relief.

That summer we had no crop due to a severe drought. Father applied for relief in fall. For our family of five, we received between nine and ten dollars per month. After the first month had expired, Father realized that we did not need the entire relief cheque for groceries. However, since the purpose of relief was to supply groceries, Father decided to spend the entire cheque for food. Now we were able to indulge in such rare treats as freshly imported fruit in the middle of winter.

People tried various ways of making a few extra cents. Sometimes they went to Saskatoon to peddle garden produce, eggs and cream from house to house. One day Father took thirty butchered chickens to Saskatoon. He got ten cents apiece for a grand total of three dollars.

Farm implements were constantly being repaired to make them last as long as possible. If we bought any implements or tools, we bought used ones at auction.

De drieee Joaren: kjeene Arnt, kjeene Oabeit, kjeen Jelt

Aus de Lied daut soo oam jinkj aus dartich Joaren soo drieech wia, wullen see nich Nootlindrunk näm von de Rejierunk, wan et afens doaonen jinkj. Aus wan see jleewden, daut wia ne Schaund daut de Rejierunk an uthalpen must. Met eemol kjeem et bat doa, daut Voda sik uk must besennen, auf wie sullen Nootlindrunk nämnen. Daut wia em Hoafst, un de Winta wudd boolt hia sennen. Wie hauden jrod Schwien jeschlacht, de leedschocken wieren em Kjala, un Mutta haud de Goadenjemies enjekaunt. Wiels Voda noch feftieen Dola boa Jelt haud, docht hee soo, wie wudden noch een Joa onen Nootlindrunk kjennen derchwintren.


De Lied proowden aulahautn Wäaj Jelt to moaken. See fuaren no Sasketun un peddelden Goadenjemies, Eia un Schmaunt. Voda neem dartich jeschlacht Heena no Sasketun. Hee kjriejene tien Zent de Han, aules toop dree Dola.

Wiels kjeena nie kjeepen kunn, wort nuscht wajchjeschmäten. Wie hauden aula een Prellklompen lesa oppem Hoff. Wan doa waut entwei jinkj, jinj wie nom Prellklompen.
sales or wherever else they might be available. Obsolete or wrecked vehicles and implements were a good source of repairs. Parts that did not fit properly were modified to make do. A farmer with blacksmithing skills could even make an entire implement from scrap materials. A pile of junked implements and parts was a real asset on any farm.

A trip to the city invariably included a stop at one or more junk dealers. Another place to get junk was the Saskatoon nuisance grounds. Today we call it the landfill. Back then anybody could go to the nuisance grounds to salvage whatever they might find useful. I vaguely remember seeing the amazing assortment of things people had thrown away. Enterprising unemployed men built small shacks on the nuisance grounds. Here they lived and picked up scrap metal and a variety of other things which they sold for a few cents.

Although I did not witness it, I am told that some people picked up live chicks at the nuisance grounds that had been dumped by hatcheries.

We could not afford to buy coal for fuel to cook our meals and heat the house in winter. As a substitute for coal we pressed manure into bricks. In our village we had a home made manure press which was circulated from household to household as needed. The manure was pitched into the hopper. An auger pushed the manure through a rectangular tunnel. The manure came out of the tunnel in the form of a continuous bar about four inches high and eight inches wide. As the manure came out of the tunnel, we cut it into blocks with a straight shovel. The blocks of manure were approximately 4"x8"x10" in size.

As the manure blocks were cut, we carefully picked them up with a three-tined pitch fork and laid them on a stone boat. Then we took the manure blocks out into the pasture and spread them out on the


Ekj hab daut nich selft jeseenen, oba de Nobasch haben mie vetalt von Kjikjel toopläsen wan de Broodstazionen dee läwendich opp daut Aufmestaka aufjelajcht hauden, wan see toofäl Kjikjel hauden.

Wiels wie bie disse oame Tiet nich Jelt toom Kolen kjeepen hauden, wort Mest jeprast. Eent von de Enwona en Bloomenheim haud sikj ne Mestprass jemoakt. Toom Mest prassen must wie em Mesthupen growen bat wie bat däm Mest kjeemen, waut jescheit vefult wia. Dan stääkt wie dit vefulde Mest en de Mestprass. De Mestprass haud ne Schruw waut däm Mest ut de Prass erutschuwen deed. Wua de jeprasta Mest erutkjeem, schneet wie däm met een Spodem en Sooden waut onjefää 4 x 8 x 10 Zoll wieren.

Dan läd wie disse Mestsooden met ne dreetinje Forkj oppem Mestschläden un fieeden dee no een enjetundet Hock, wua wie dee oppe Wäs läden toom drieejen.
grass to dry in the sun and wind.

When the blocks were dry enough to be handled, we put them into stooks of three blocks each. Two blocks leaned against each other and a third block was laid flat on top of them. This allowed the air to circulate to continue drying the blocks.

When the blocks were almost completely dry, we put them into hollow stacks in a similar fashion to the way an Eskimo igloo is built. We made sure to leave sufficient space between the blocks to allow the air to complete the drying process.

The manure blocks were a good source of heat as fuel in the kitchen stove and the heater in the living room. They were easily broken into smaller pieces as needed to go into the stove. Although they provided a lot of heat, they also resulted in a lot of ashes which had to be carried out.

Eastern Canada learned about the suffering of the people on the Prairies. Our school received a couple of shipments of donated children's clothing from Ontario. In order to make the distribution as equitable as possible, our teacher divided the items into piles of approximately equal value, one pile for each pupil. Each pile of clothing was numbered and the numbers drawn at random.

I don't recall receiving a single item of clothing that was suitable for me or any member of our family. I sold the clothes I received for anywhere from five to fifteen cents per item. My generous parents let me keep the money.

One day we received the welcome news
that we could go to town to get our allotment of fresh apples that had arrived from Eastern Canada by train. What a treat! Generous Newfoundlanders sent us salted, smoked and dried codfish. We had no idea what to do with them. We couldn't understand how anybody could eat them. Father decided to discard them. He buried them on one of our quarters a mile from home. He didn't want a government inspector stumbling across them. It was common for government inspectors to appear for a variety of reasons.

Mother had ingenious methods of getting the most out of everything. Whenever we ate oranges, a rare treat, we saved the orange peelings to make orangeade. The peelings were soaked in cold water overnight. Sugar was added the next day and presto, we had orangeade. Surplus water melons were pickled in a barrel.

There was no garbage bag in the kitchen. Food scraps from the table were part of the feed for pigs. Anything combustible was burned in the kitchen stove. Canned food came out of sealers which were washed and reused. If the occasional tin can was opened, it was washed and used as a container for nails, screws or other small parts in the tool shed.

Mother had a sister who lived in Mexico with her family. Occasionally my aunt managed to scrape together enough money to buy a postage stamp. Mother was anxious to hear from her sister. Since my aunt could not afford to buy stationery, she waited until she could discard a page from their wall calendar at the end of the month to use as stationery. Sometimes my aunt wrote on both sides of the page. Unfortunately, one side of the page had the dates of the month. It was difficult for Mother to read the words that were written over the numbers.

Hard cash was a rare commodity. Hence,
we avoided using anything that had to be bought. Matches had to be bought. To save matches, men lit their cigarettes by applying the glowing end of a friend's cigarette.

Father had debts against his land for years. I recall him struggling to pay the interest, even if he couldn't payoff any of the principal. I remember how relieved he was when he finally got free title to the land.
Conclusion

As I look back, I realize that, although the word love was not spoken in our home, it was evident in the way Mother and Father took their parenting duties very seriously. Any promises they made were kept without exception. Although I remember Father spanking me, he never did so in anger. He did it out of concern for the welfare of his son. My parents did what they did in deference to their strong religious convictions and sense of duty. I dedicate these pages to my parents. Thank you, Mother and Father, for your unspoken and unconditional love.

Toom Schluss

**Dictionaries - Wieedabieekja**


Thiessen, J., Mennonitischn-Plattdeutsches Wörterbuch, Max Kade Institute, Madison WI, 2003.

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**Publications - Utgowen**

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Jack Driedger, *Growing up in Blumenheim, Saskatchewan, Life in an Old Colony Mennonite Village During the Thirties and Forties*, Saskatoon, SK, Canada, 2001.


**This Edition – Dise Utgow**


The “Bilingual English - Plautdietsch Study Version of 2014” used the orthography for Plautdietsch devised by Jack Driedger. This current Edition of 2016 uses the text of the previous Bilingual edition but employs the orthography for Plautdietsch which is given in the dictionary by E. H. Zacharias. This edition is intended to serve as reading material for students of Plautdietsch classes.