

The entirety of a series of Facebook message conversation over a period of months between Alan Keffer & Betty Miller Morris, daughter of Dwight Miller.

09/08/09 Betty

A pleasure to accept your invite, Alan. I know you the least of the brothers. And I don't think I realized until this picture, how much you look like your Dad did at your age.

09/08/09 Alan

Laughing...I wish I was that age for that picture is about 15 years old and I am considerably less jaunty these days. Yes, we hardly know each other at all...tho as I recall, you are the pretty sister. The best summer of my life was the summer Dwight went to Alaska and Daddy ran the store.

As we'd gotten in the habit of hanging around the store, we didn't immediately stop when your dad returned and took the store back over. Rodney Miller & I found a dozen or so empty, but really clean and very pretty, beer cans along the road and collected them. While we were going thru our collection in the bench in front of the store trying to decide what to do with them, your dad walked up and told us forthwith to get rid of those "piss cans" immediately. We did.

Can see him yet sitting at his roll top desk in the window, a picture of President Eisenhower tacked to the wall behind him. Thanks for writing...I'd love to hear some of the stories you were told.

09/08/09 10:29 PM Betty

By the way, that picture of you may be old, but it is about the age that I knew your Dad best.

09/22/09 7:36PM Alan

Have you read the autobiography Daddy wrote? Not a literary masterpiece by any stretch, more like simply listening to him talk. If not, let me know and I'll get a copy to you. Gives a better insight into life in the 40's than most of what I've read.

Are you now living on the fabled second floor? The few times I was privileged to climb the stairs I was awed by the decor...looked like something out of the magazines in Dr. Woodley's waiting room.

I spent many summer afternoons cutting privet in the hedges behind the building for your mother. She once gave me a pair of your dad's blue canvas shoes and a 1956 almanac which I prized most inordinately simply because she'd given them to me. Your mother always appeared a lady of taste and distinction to me, someone I admired and respected without really knowing very well.

09/22/09 9:54PM Betty

Hi, Alan. I do have it, and have actually read it several times. Made note, with humor, of the differences between our dads and the perceptions they had of each other. I don't know if you have heard the story, or not. But when your dad was first diagnosed, and was despondent and not wanting treatment, I went to visit him in the hospital. I told him that he and I might differ on a lot of things about my Dad, but one thing we could agree on, and that was that Dad had taught us all how to live until we die, and not sit around waiting for die.

I later had a sit down discussion with him in his office. He was so thankful that he had been given a while longer and felt that he had enjoyed and appreciated life and his family more than ever.

Sorry, if I have told you this before. Senility has set in with me, I think. I swore I would never be one of those persons who repeated stories to the same people, and now I know why people do it. They just plain can't remember what they have said to whom!

Were you with your Dad the night they found Dad? I believe Dale and Gary were, but I don't know about you. As much as I have missed him... to this very day, I am so thankful that he went like he wanted to go.... literally with his boots on. Dad had few possessions. I have his book case, some of his many books, and his well-worn German Bible. I wish so much that I could discover who has his over and under shot gun to pass on to my son. He was such a good Dad. I never appreciated how good until as an adult I discovered how much most of my friends had missed with their dads. He spent inordinate amount of time with me, playing, teaching, etc.

Mother was an interesting lady. Yes, one would have to say that mother's demeanor was most often impressive. She was brought up dirt poor, deserted by her dad, lost her mom while she was in her twenties, raised my sister alone, dated Daddy for 7 years before they married because of the divorce thing, and withstood the vile behavior of the 'ladies of the church. But she never taught hatred for what she experienced and never let on during her whole life that she was poor throughout her life, rarely having a spare penny until she went back to teaching after I went to school.

Oh, yes, Dennis and I live on the 2nd floor where Mom and Dad lived. Jaime Keffer lives on the third floor which was the attic that Dad finished off for my sister and BIL to live in when Charlie was on the quarter program at Tech and working in the shipyard on his off quarters.

10/07/09 11:32 PM Alan

Ivan Miller has been ailing the past couple of months...bad heart. Had a tick/tock (can't remember the official name) installed..ahhhh..pacemaker...but didn't work and he failed quickly.

Friday night son-in-law Willie Yoder and son Merlin helped him to bed and when he lay down he said, "This is the end"...and fell asleep and never awoke...I don't know other details, but later that night they took him to hospital where he died Saturday morning.

Funeral today was standing room only and very touching in honoring a simple man who created a successful family...was the hardest death I've experienced since Daddy died...I guess because of the family and lifelong entanglements.

Harold Bergey gave the eulogy, a nonet of Keffers/Buckwalters sang... granddaughter gave a beautiful recollection of life with grandpa for all the grandkids and Merlin a brief and telling story of Ivan's most recent ticket for speeding/reckless driving being dismissed by the judge with the pronouncement "Mr. Miller, your reputation precedes you, case dismissed." Harold Buckwalter talked of good times and Ivan's touching his life (very good in fact) and my brother Dale Keffer gave the sermon, more singing, lunch after...and another anchor leaves us but having left behind many who will take his place in their own ways.

Was sad, was joyful...Ivan would have loved to have been there but likely have thought the thing wasn't much deserved.

And while I'm writing...one of the stories my dad loved to tell about your dad...was the time he and whoever, found a dead snake and placed it across a path they knew Dwight would be walking...which he did...spied the snake...and retrieving shovel or whatever implement, proceeded to beat the dead snake to yet another death...which they found highly amusing watching from hiding and dearly loved to tell.

You're a gem Betty, I do enjoy hearing from you and writing to you and wish I knew you better and hope over time I do. If I may be so bold...the church is starting a "40 Weeks of

Love"...something from the Saddleback ministry with six weeks of small group study and participation and I invite you to join ours if you are of a mind...seems a worthy effort.

Alan

10/08/09 12:00 AM Betty

Thanks for responding about Ivan. With John in Florida and Ivan gone, there are fewer and fewer with a strong connection to Dad. I miss the church. But I can not be two places at once on Sunday morning, and really felt the Lord telling me to go help at Craddock.

The snake story is interesting because Dad had no fear of snakes. He would not allow a black snake to be killed, and I have seen him pick up small rattlers. But i am sure that it was hilarious to you guys.

When my son Dwight was on the Va Beach police force, he had a friend on the force who loved snakes. One night when they were both on duty, a call came out that a large poisonous pet snake had gotten loose and found in a neighbor's yard. As several police officers scrambled to be the first to get there, this officer pleaded with them not to shoot it that he was on his way. HE LATER TOLD A STORY ABOUT HOW HE AND SEVERAL FRIENDS WOULD PUT A BLACK SNAKE IN A WOMAN'S PURSE AND DROP IT ON THE STREET IN A BLACK AREA. THEN THEY WOULD PARK AND WATCH UNTIL SOMEONE WOULD STOP, GRAB THE PURSE, THROW IT IN THE CAR, AND DRIVE OFF. SHORTLY, THE CAR WOULD SCREECH TO A HALT AND EVERYONE IN THE CAR WOULD BAIL OUT.

Oops, sorry about the caps.

I would be interested in the 40 days. However, only a few know that I am having extensive heart surgery in November. Two valve replacements, hole repaired and artery unclogged. All of this has been coming on for some time as a result of the massive amounts of radiation therapy that I had back in the 60's and 70's for Hodgkins. But the time has come that I can not wait any longer.

And now I have to get some sleep. I am at the home of an almost blind friend in Aiken SC. I come down each year in October and we buy all of her Christmas gifts, and then I wrap them all before I leave. Lots of work to do!

Love. Betty

10/08/09 6:29 PM Alan

Hello Betty...

Laughing out loud here...at the pocketbook story...wish I'd thought of that in the days gone by. You do have a wonderful sense of humor.

Your take on your dad's opinion of snakes gives the story a different slant and makes me wonder of Daddy didn't put a "Buckwalter spin" on the tale. Buckwalters, never told a story that could not be improved by a bit of license, and never neglected to exercise the license. When I was a kid, the lore was that Dwight kept a black snake in the store for mice and one should never put a hand in the nail bins without checking first...never knew if myth or truth. Grin...I remember those circular bins, and time spent spinning them round and round just for the fun of it.

The closest we got to the snake story when kids...Rodney Miller and I put a cardboard box with attached string in the road by your Dad's store one night and when a car came by, we pulled it to match the car's dodging action. The driver was not amused, chased us, but we being young and spry got away clean.

Oh...and then there was the time we played "dead boy"...one of us would lay down by the road while friends hid behind the hedgerow. When a car stopped to investigate, the friends would inform the victim and he'd get up and run. Was my turn to be "victim" and I thought I heard a car stop, but got no call from Rodney and Dale who were behind the hedge, so I stayed put...looked up finally to see 4 guys coming to me rapidly....jumped up, crossed the hedge to see Dale and Rodney running across the open field at high speed, having abandoned me. Silliness of children, but happy times.

Goodness girl...you have a heart of gold to take the time you do to attend your friend and Christmas shopping in Aiken.

You must be a bit concerned about the artery clog clearing...and I'll remember you in my concerns and prayers. I've been fortunate to be mostly healthy (did require a stint in a leg artery a few years back for clogging) and even played softball again this fall for the first time in decades...for which effort I suffered a pulled calf muscle that is slowly healing.

How long have you been married? What was/is your career? What are your hopes and dreams? Is your son Dwight II still a policeman? Why is John in Florida? We planned to retire there...but too much family here and her Alzheimers isn't getting better, so I guess not.

Alan

10/09/09 12:12 AM Betty

I am a southern gospel fanatic.... kinda an old lady groupie. LOL .
Have also met some fantastic friends on Gaithernet, including the lady that I am visiting. We have been as close as sisters for 8 years, now. There are several small groups of ladies I have met on gnet, that "momma Lloyd" and I are both a part of.

Tonight we went to Augusta to hear the Hoppers, and tomorrow night the Whisnants will be here in Aiken. But my all-time favorite is Russ Taff, who both Momma Lloyd and me have been privileged to get to know well, both he and his family and wife Tori. You may have seen both Tori and Madi, their oldest daughter on my Facebook page.

Dad was hiding behind the door when they passed out humor and any form of jokestering. He was, therefore, so straight that he was an easy target. Of course, it bothered him not one little bit. But there was never a better Dad. And yes, the story of the black snake is supposed to be true, tho I never saw it. And I, too, loved to twirl the nail bins. There are so many stories that are great memories about the store, many involving the events around the war...the blackouts, boiling eggs by the pot full when a group of men would return from overseas, getting up at any hour of the day or night when there was a crash and making coffee and sandwiches for the crash crew to come in and snack and warm up if it was cold or rainy. Seems like most night crashes were during rainstorms.

But do you know, as many pictures as I have of the property, we do not have a single picture of the store front, or the Coca Cola boy that was painted on the store front at one time.

Son Dwight lives in Ravena, and works for Amerigroup as an insurance fraud investigator. He was injured when he was on the mounted years ago, and his back continued to give him trouble until it went out on him a few times, once while he was making an arrest, and the decision was made that it was time for him to take disability from the police department. He really misses police work. But in Va Beach, on has to be 100% to be on the force, even if they are plain clothes detective.

Have been reading about your baseball playing and could tell how much you were enjoying it. I think it is great that you are back playing again.

John Wenger moved to Florida because he needed to be living with one of his daughters. He was up for Melvin's funeral, but I was out of town and did not see him. He helped us build Dwight's first house.

I met Dennis my freshman year in college and we were married between our Jr and Sr years, so we are coming up on 50 years this coming July. I taught for a couple of years out of college, and then became a full time Mom, returning to work when the kids needed me to give them some space and distance as teens. Went to work for 8 years for the American Cancer Society. When Dennis had an opportunity to take early retirement from IRS, he did so, and I quit and we moved back to Chesapeake. That was 1988.

Love swapping stories with you. Love. Betty

10/09/09 5:42 PM Alan

Hello Betty,

If you are a southern gospel music groupie, then check out <http://songgardenmusic.com>and get to know my brother Dale, sister Marilyn and brother Lynn.

A few years ago Dale persuaded them to buy in with him in a Nashville recording studio which is now Song Garden. I enjoy gospel music, singing more than listening, and not familiar with all their groups but think the most famous is the Chuck Wagon Gang. I think the oil business is slowly taking second place in their lives and interests and Marilyn has become a gospel music promoter of some sort in support of their label.

Dale is the only one on Facebook...thru his wife Shirley as Shirley Miller Keffer and they live just down the road from you.

Almost 50 year's married??? Wow..that's a long, long time. We've been married 32 years but is our second time. First was to Evelyn Miller, daughter of Francis & Edna and that lasted seven years until she took off with my best friend...so classic you can fill in the blanks from supposition and be pretty close to accurate.

As I recall, none of E.R Miller's sons was overcome with humor, except perhaps Marvin. When Harold Buckwalter was adding on to his house, he acquired a "Mongoose Box" which was a box half rat wire and half plywood animal house in which supposedly resided a mongoose, exhibited with the tail sticking out the door to the house. After a proper introduction describing how dangerous the mongoose was and with victim leaning over the box, he'd trigger the release and the spring loaded top popped open and flipped the bushy tail in the face of the onlooker.

I was there, a young boy, one afternoon when your uncle JC was the victim...the spiel spouted, the trigger sprung, the tail flying thru the air....and JC moved not a muscle, didn't jump, didn't laugh...just shrugged and walked away.

Ach...I'm being paged....We're off to play spades with the in-laws...Linda's brother and wife...a 20+ year Friday night tradition.

I enjoy reading your writings and writing in return.

kisses and hugs...Alan

10/09/09 11:42PM Alan

Hello Betty,

Was called away to play Friday night spades with the in-laws before I could finish all my thoughts, which are never finished I hope. We play guys versus gals, but have been at it so long there is spirit but no rancor no matter who wins...just family having fun.

You mentioned the Coca Cola sign...and I remember it clearly..a youngster, sitting in the car with Mama and cranky siblings while Daddy was inside fetching whatever and mostly talking while we waited...and looking at that smiling Coca Cola fella with bottle cap hat....and later when Daddy rented the store from Dwight during your trek thru Alaska...the driveway of gravel and bottle tops of all variety, poured onto the drive over the years from the continually re-filled cap bucket on the side of the Coke box with the coldest water in Norfolk County.

That year was the most wonderful summer of my life...which I will describe later if interested...but was the perfect intermission between innocence and semi-responsibility.

You also mentioned the crashes during WWII. My uncle Carson Hochstetler was a film buff of that era and had a movie camera and time to chase planes and has films of crash aftermath etc....not too far off his genes, for Gramps had plates and plates of glass negatives from his youthful days before WW1 taking pictures in Ohio. He is not on Facebook, but his wife is as "Ruth Hochstetler" and I know they'd love to hear from you....he is Mama's younger brother.

You also mentioned John Wenger working on your dad's first house...which I assume was one of the row he built on Mt Pleasant Rd...which one? do you know? And a tangential story is Uncle Ira Miller and son Ivan (of this week passed) building the store and now apartment and abode you live in.

My sister Juanita (Neady to all who know her) and I embarked on presently unfinished project years ago to tape and write stories of older folks in the community and one of our subjects was Ivan...and one of his stories was building the store with his dad, watching planes land and take off while they were nailing and sawing and constructing, in the midst of the base being built across the road.

I'm about whipped from this day's events but wanted to put those things down before I forgot.

I love the community we grew up in and enjoy hearing a different sight on the same places which remind me of things I know but have dis-remembered.

Would it be possible at some time when life is more on track and you and John are here, that we could have dinner one evening to meet, re-connect, talk and explore memories?

Hope you have a wonderful weekend and a safe trip home when you head this way.

Alan

10/10/09 1:07AM Betty

First, I love to swap memories with anyone anytime about our community. You have an interesting perspective because of your age and adventures around the store. I/d love to hear all of your stories. So, tell me, did your dad allow people to play cards in the store the summer we were in Alaska?

I am glad you remember the Coca Cola boy. I get a blank look most of the time when I mention it, to the point where I sometimes thought I dreamt it. But I did not dream how livid my Mom was when we pulled in from a trip to Norfolk, and it was newly painted. LOL .

I goofed in telling you about John. It was my son Dwight's first house that he helped us build. It was on Pine Bark Drive off Benefit. We literally built it ourselves, but John helped walk us thru the paperwork and advised on an almost daily visit at first. He saved my hide one day when he

arrived just after Dennis has declared we had to redo the face plates because the distance across the foundation varied by as much as a half inch in some places.

John told stories of Dad helping him to train his first pet raccoon.

I know Neady well. We swap stories by email occasionally, and I have shared time with Neady and Viola together.

Did you know that the Navy came to Dad and asked him to take 4 rows of bricks off the top of our chimney? He refused, so they placed a red light on either end of the roof. I can truly tell people that I grew up in a red light district.

Would love to get up with you and swap stories, along with some of your brothers who remember Dad and the old community.

Blessings. Betty

10/10/09 1:39 AM Betty

Alan, I am friends with several of your siblings. I count Dale a blessing in my life and know about his previous partnership. Actually he told me one night at a gospel concert that..... the tenor from Liberty and Old Gospel Hour Quartet,.... can't say his name right now, was looking for backing and Dale told him to talk to him if the backing he was hoping to get fell thru. Knew Lynn and Marilyn were involved, and about the split. I am friends with both Shirley and JoAnn on Facebook as we have shared a love for SGM for some years. Renewed acquaintance with Gary shortly after our return to Chesapeake in 1988. He worked on our cars, lawn mowers, etc. until he took on the machine shop. And of course, Jamie lives over me. Viola and I have been very close for years, and I got to know Eric thru Sharon, tho I did not know him as a child. Neady, I got to know and really love while I was attending the Mennonite Church.

You are right about the ER Miller sons. The oldest three were real sticks in the mud, humorless guys. Dad was a brilliant man, who left the area and went to Goshen college, and would not be a part of the narrow, legalistic local Mennonite church again. Therefore, I discovered that one of the most Godly persons I have ever known was still considered Godless when I returned to the area. People were shocked to hear that he never left or lost his Christian faith, he just grew out of the legalism taught at Mt Pleasant. Of course, I did not get to know Ernest very well, and Clarence never spoke to me, even when I would greet him on the mail route just because I knew how much he despised me. Back then I was a terrible heathen. After Grandmother died, Maude did not allow me in the house again, until after Dad died, and Ernest never had me in his house until Dad died. Marvin was always kind to me. I took great delight in double dating with Harvey as a teenager, just because I knew I was helping him do something quite sinful. LOL. But Mom and Dad never raised me to hold grudges or hate anyone. I didn't understand shunning back then, and it is just as well. For a short time, I was friends with Annabelle Hobbs, but then her mom told Mom that I could not come to their house again, because I wore shorts. This was preschool age! Oki, enough. I gotta get some sleep!

Love. Betty the Heathen!

10/15/09 6:19PM Alan

You asked about Daddy allowing cards to be played at the store during your family's Alaska trek. To the best of my recollection, no, nobody played cards.

He did install a ping-pong table in the store that was very popular, especially with we younger types.

If cards had been played would have been Setback or Rummy, which we played at home all the time.

He did (upon Mama's insisting) eliminate the cigarette sales, which policy I believe your dad continued when ya'll returned. But mostly I think just continued running the store as your dad did with Philip Miller tending the store during the day and he at night.

Alan

10/15/09 10:57PM Betty

I was curious about the cards. I never heard that from Daddy, but Mother mentioned it late in life, and I was never sure at that point that she had it straight.

Are you talking about Philip, as in Va Door? I didn't realize that he worked in the store.

I was pretty disconnected at that time. I choose to go to summer school between my freshman and sophomore year, as I was dating Dennis and he lived in Fredericksburg. It was after my sophomore year that we went to Alaska, and they dropped me off in Richmond as we returned.... Dennis, again. We were married after our Junior year, and I never lived here until he retired and we returned in 1988. So for all practical purposes, I left home in September 1957.

We had rook cards in the house, but I never knew how to play. Mom and Dad did not play any card games, tho Mom took up Bridge again after she retired in 1970. I was very surprised to come back in 1988 and discover that Mennonites were now playing card games. Ha!

10/18/09 9:03 AM

Good morning Betty,

We always had cards at the house and played Rummy and Setback (something like Spades or Euchre) along with Parcheesi, checkers, etc and never thought anything wrong with cards even tho some of the more conservative Mennonites frowned on it and some even frowned on using dice for board games. Silly nonsense.

Daddy was a bit more liberal than most Mennonites and always great fun with a wonderful sense of humor, penchant for telling stories over the dinner table and loved to play games with us. One of our favorite, which always irritated Mama and not allowed unless Daddy started it, was to clear the floor (hardwood) and slide beanbags at each other in a sort of dodgeball thing..no winner or rules, just play.

Yes, Philip Miller of Virginia Door. He had just graduated high school and had worked as Daddy's helper in the electrical/plumbing business. During the day the store was a hangout for boys and not a few teenage girls because of the boys. Ed Yoder was Philips best friend and there a lot. Was quite interesting for me at age 14...an innocent and wonderful summer. At night it was a hangout for older fellas and there was a bit of checker playing but mostly just gab gathered around the Coke box...which had the coldest water in Norfolk County.

Saturday nights Daddy always went to Dwight's for groceries and stayed and talked a few hours. We kids always wanted to go along, but were almost never permitted. One night when I was about ten I hid in the back of the car and went anyway, exiting after Daddy was in the store. He looked surprised and asked "Where did you come from?", then laughed and bought me a Pepsi.

I loved listening to the "old" guys talk...Miles McDonald, Little Dick Mercer, Leslie Swartz, Celius Harrison and others. One of the few stories I recall was Leslie Swartz talking about your

grandfather's store when it had been up the road at the original location and he was a teenager and would ride his horse by the store at full gallop just to irritate "old E.R."

Alan

10/19/21 4:59 PM Betty

I love your stories and am keeping each and every one. Leslie was Daddy's best friend as they were growing up. Hilda and mother were friends, Baptist Sunday School teachers, and in the same book club. I always wondered why they were never friends as couples. I suspect that Leslie was just not interested in anything 'social'. The men did enjoy their nights around the stove, that is for sure. And Dad pretty much adopted Mom's friends from town as his friends. After all, they went together for 7 years before they were married. They did right much entertaining of their church friends from town during my childhood.

ER died before I was born, so I never knew him. The one story that I remember is that the bishop came to see him while he was dying, and chastised him for having a radio. He supposedly told the bishop that he could not do anything about it, that his son (my Dad) had brought it to him. They tell the story about Ernest that he would watch his watch and at the moment of 6:00 AM, he would click on the radio just in time to hear....."And now for the farm report" and then turn it off at the end of the farm report. Crazy, huh!

I was named after Dad's Mom. I am sure that Dad hoped it would help heal the break between his mom and him when he married my Mom. Unfortunately, it did nothing to help.

The mall will never be what the general store was to you. For all the prejudice and problems of the 50's, it was a much better time to grow up than what our children and grandchildren have had. I really feel sorry for the kids today with the pressures they are under in so many areas of their lives.

11/02/09 7:04 PM Alan

I'm saving your stories too.

Neady and I are compiling a collection of recollections from older folks in the community (very slowly) and those will be nice to include. If you're amenable, we'd like to sit down with you and hear stories of the Miller family of whom I think only you and Merlin and Mildred are still here to relate.

I had no idea there was such ostracism of your family. Horrible. When Jake Lehman was an old man, shortly before his death, he went with me and Mama on a ride to Nags Head just to get out and on the way he asked me "When you were growing up, were you taught that only Mennonites get to heaven?" I told him I didn't need to be taught, it was just in the air, something I grew up "knowing", until I got older because it seemed to be the opinion of everyone around me. He shook his head, and replied, "we sure got that wrong."

Do you recall the Bishop's name who chastised ER Miller about the radio? And who was Harvey dating and you dating on your double dates? I take it that even tho the parents may have been less than welcoming, the cousins were more open.

Interesting to hear your dad and Leslie were good buddies. Was Amos Wenger part of that bunch too? or Abram Buckwalter? When he (Amos Wenger) was my teacher at the Mennonite school he once talked about going skinny dipping with friends as kids in the canal at Old Landing, now gone...on the canal behind Ernest Miller's house...the road still visible until the new subdivision erased it.

Oh...another question..did your dad maintain membership in a Mennonite church in Gettysburg, Pa? For some reason, from what source I have no recollection, I have a memory of being told he traveled to Gettysburg twice a year to take communion.

Is amazing to me how easily kids accept whatever situation they're in without questioning justice or human kindness....until they grow up.

My awakening didn't come until I was 16 or so. The Mennonite boys had always played softball for the Fentress Fire Dept team as the church frowned on "organized sports", my Dad did, I did. But after one year playing for Fentress Fire Dept, James Mast & I decided to field a Mt Pleasant Mennonite ball team and went to the organizing meeting the brand new City of Chesapeake held for the coming season in 1963 or 1964.

They would deny it and swear on the denial, but Jimmy Calhoun and Harry Blevins (young teachers, assistant coaches, summer employees in recreation) ran the meeting and Harry asked if any of the teams had black members. Well, we did, Joe (Tic) Turner who lived in Christy Kurtz' farm-hand house next door to us. Neither James nor I said a word. Harry Blevens went on to say (paraphrase here) "Well, the time is coming we won't have a choice, but if you don't have any, don't."

To my everlasting shame I told Tic he couldn't play because they weren't allowing blacks in the league. He came to every practice, came to every game and sat in the dug-out with the team but didn't play. Is the one thing in my life that I wish I could re-do, for he'd have played if I had it to do over again. He's still a friend, now living in Amelia, Virginia and we've never talked about it. It just was how things were.

Do you remember that Kiff & Hughes, later just Kiff's, had bathrooms for blacks and whites? (equally nasty) And that blacks could come in, order lunch at the counter but had to eat outside? Seems amazing today. It's just how things were.

Alan

11/02/09 9:42PM Betty

Hi, Alan. Let's see if I can start a reply. Harvey is a bit hard to understand these days, but he and Polly are still a wealth of information, and love to talk. Harvey also enjoys the visits. And while we are talking about Harvey, IMO, the church owes a very big apology to his kids. I was protected by exclusion from the cruelty of the church, but Harvey's kids had to live with it. It is no accident that not a single one of them has ever returned to the church.

In high school, I dated John Forman. He lived down in Saint Bridges. My first car date was a double date with Nancy and Ben Jennings to go to Holiday on Ice with John. We dated all thru my high school days, even tho he graduated in 1954, I believe, and I in 1957. He went off to VT off and on, but we continued to date, off and on during that period. During some period of that time, Harvey dated Ruby Harris. I guess we did succeed in keeping it a pretty good secret. LOL Ruby died a few years ago, but Connie still lives behind her home place and back of Ed Yoder in that new house. She lives in an apartment in her niece's home. Harvey and Ruby and John and I double dated some, and Harvey also attended a number of parties at both Ruby's house and the Brook's house, between Swartz' and the old home place.

Rodney called the other day, and was talking, also about the amount of times you guys swam over at the lake. I was amused when I moved back here and learned it was being called Miller's Lake. I got a couple of calls asking for permission to fish there, and had trouble convincing people that we did not nor had we ever owned it. But I sure did about live there a couple of summers, particularly between my freshman and high school years.

The cousins were always welcoming. Mildred even baby sat for me some. Marvin was always kind to me. Maude was until Grandmother died. I was nine when she died, and I remember the

first time I went back up to the home place. I was accustomed to stopping in often, and Grandmother was distant, but not unkind. More, just reserved. My Dad was very much like her. Anyway, I went and knocked on the door, and could see Maude and Bergey sitting in there, but she totally ignored me as I pressed my nose to the window in the door and knocked repeatedly. I can only feel sorry for them, now.

I am not sure where Dad had a church membership. I really would suspect that it was in Goshen, because that is where he finished high school and went to several years of college. We did visit his old friends from Goshen in several areas of Pa, and Ohio and Indiana. We always visited with Silas Hartzler and his family and stayed in their home. Silas was teaching at Goshen then. I can remember how shocked and confused I was when I learned that Silas had a son who played in a dance band on Saturday nite. We also travelled as far as there each summer for Dad to attend the annual all-day reunion of those he had been incarcerated with him Petersburg. When he did not go to Park Place Baptist with Mom, he would visit the Brethren church and in later years, he went fairly frequently to TAB church in Norfolk, as it was starting.

Explanation: Dwight was drafted in the US Army in WWI and served as a conscientious objector in the Sanitary Corp at Fort Lee, Virginia near Petersburg

You mentioned Jake. Rosa and Jake were one of the few couples in the community that I remember as always be friendly and kind to Mom and to me. Do you know the story of the POW from WWII whose grandson contacted her after his grandfather's death to tell her how much he loved and talked about the Lehman's whose farm he worked on?

The name Jimmy Calhoun is familiar, but I cannot place him. Of course, I know Harry Blevins. I would imagine, and certainly hope, that he felt as badly about what he said and some of the actions he took back then as many of us do, when looking back with different eyes. For a number of years, I spent most of my summer days with 'Gussie', whose parents lived on the base as caretakers. She had a little sister named Celie. One summer, her cousin came to spend the summer and I learned about prejudice, in the reversed roll. They taunted me from across the street, and Gussie never came to my house to play dolls and sing hymns again. As I read this, I wonder why I am not screwed up! LOL .

I understand the shame you feel for not standing up for Tic, but I am sure that he has long since forgiven you. It was part of life then, even if it was wrong. I still sensed a great deal of a "them and us" mentality at Mt Pleasant while I was attending there.

We have a fair number of pictures that Dad took of himself with the younger crowd around here. I don't know who he was close to as a child besides Leslie, but he was away part of the time during most of the years between 1914 and 1921. It really shocked me when I came to recognize that he was somewhere around 25 when he went to Goshen to complete high school.

I remember Kiff and Hughes store, but do not remember the separate bathrooms. Not sure I ever had reason to know about them. Loretta Kiff, who is married to the Kiff son works at RiteAid at Crossroads.

One of the things that I keep hoping to do is to get in and read some of Dad's old diary's and go thru more of his pictures. Maybe you and Neady can motivate me to actually do it.

I wrote a term paper in college about the sociological structure of this neighborhood. I'll see if I can dig it out. You might be interested in my perspective of things.

This is very disjointed and unorganized. Forgive me. If I had to take time to organize it, I would not get it done.

I wrote to Ruth. Carson had no picture of the store front, but we did have several very interesting exchanges. I still would love to find a picture of the store front and my Dad's old

over and under shot gun for my son. He would truly appreciate having it. The only things that were really Dad's worldly possessions were his German Bible that I have, his many books, some of which I have, his roll top desk which I searched for and found too late to reclaim, and his gun..... oh, and his travel souvenirs. I have several things that he gave as gifts to his Mom and to Maude that Harvey returned to me. And I still have the quilt that grandmother gave me before she died, one that she put away to be given to me when I got married, and one with a very special story that I have to share in person. Let's get together and talk with Neady, also.

Betty

11/13/09 11:34PM Alan

Hello Betty,

A couple of stories I've heard for your elucidation and correction or insight.

First..that when Clayton Bergey was widowed, and considering your aunt Maude as a prospective bride he mentioned her to son Titus as such, and Titus, thinking he meant as a bride to himself demurred, at which time Clayton had to explain that he meant as his own wife, not Titus'. True??

oh...do you know who has Maude's diary these days?

Your insight would be much appreciated.

You mentioned Harvey as a source of old stories. Was my understanding that his Alzheimer's had so advanced that he doesn't communicate...if not the case, then Neady and I need to talk to him pronto...can you let me know?

Is good to find somebody as interested in the recent history of where we grew up as I am...glad we connected.

Do you remember Cayson/Caisson Lane...I know not the spelling tho I do have an early map that shows it without naming it.

Thanks...Alan

11/14/09 12:29 PM Betty

Oh, Alan. I have to laugh. I never heard either of that story about Clayton.

I was not in a position to hear gossip back then. By the time I can remember, Clayton and Maude were married. I do have a set of dishes that Harvey and Merlin think were given to Clayton and Maude as a wedding gift by my Dad.

Harvey doesn't talk much, but he can talk, and loves company. I think he might remember some stories. And Polly has taken a great interest in the Miller family history and lore and can probably share a lot of what she has learned and been told. Merlin is the most knowledgeable, and likes me, wants to chastise himself for not listening more in Dad's latter days when he tried to pass on the family heritage to us.

Merlin is not doing very well, either. If you want an opportunity to press him for information about the community, it probably needs to be done sooner than later.

I think that probably Glen now has most of the records from Harvey's wing of the family. I read some of her things while they were in Polly's hands, but I am sure that Polly would be very cooperative in helping you borrow anything that you wanted to read. I believe that Virgil is the

one of Merlin's kids who has shown the most interest. I have not actually talked to him. Gerry has lived here and probably is the most informed.

I do remember Cason Lane. Mom and Mrs. Cason were good friends after Mom's retired in 1970. There were two Cason girls. Dot married Bill Swain, and both of them died several years ago. I can't remember the older daughter's name, but she married Benny, a local, whose last name I can't pull up at the moment. For years when I was young, they lived in the little white house where Slabaugh has just built that new house across from the end of Lockheed.

Did you see the picture of the Coca Cola boy that I sent to you? It is the same boy, but not the exact same pose that I remember.

Ok, a new tenant to meet in the morning and give the key to a townhouse, and a house in Inland Waterway to see if it flooded. Better go to bed.

11/14/09 1:40AM Alan

The older Cason girl married Benny Benson...daughter Debbie Benson, a classmate, now married to William Sawyer who grew up on Centerville near the intersection of Centerville and Butts Station Rds and living on Fentress Airfield Rd next door to Rodney Miller. I understand she shot a bear last week off Blackwater Rd...not a bad thing for a 60+ year old lady...who teaches music and is a dear heart with the same hairdo she had in high school in 1965. They attend Mt Pleasant Methodist and have for years.

Benny's brother, Ben Benson...is something of the last name/first name there methinks...lives on Hickory Rd, attends Hickory Methodist and was in my Sunday school class there with wife Betty when we attended Hickory Methodist and a fellow Ruritan when I was. I think Betty may now be deceased...perhaps the others too....I don't know.

Geez...I know I'm getting old when remembering is more fun than anticipating.

Good luck with your prospective tenant tomorrow. Rents are flat and falling from what I can see as I've not been able to raise rents in three years now and is taking longer to find good tenants than it used to take.

And one more story...when Jake Lehman's father bought their first car, he was used to reins and when entering the garage, forgot the brake pedal, jerked back on the steering wheel while the new machine drove through the shed and out the back wall...the family swears it a true story. And Jake Lehman himself could stall a John Deere tractor by simply grabbing the spark plug and grounding it through his body without being flung off as most folks would have been...to which I can attest.

Grin..and we boys of youth enjoyed calling Jake's house, pretending to be Navy folks to tell whoever answered that his hogs were loose and out on "our" runway...laughing.

And Walter Shaddinger could, and did, carry 4 100 lb bags of fertilizer cradled in his arms and set them down...I saw and James Mast is my witness.

Alan

11/15/09 12:24 AM Betty

Hey, good to see you today. Yeah, I THINK this will be a good tenant. We have had a run of tenants with both husbands and boyfriends, and never know which may be living there from month to month. Of course, neither male expects to share in the cost of the rent. A large section of this younger generation is beyond my understanding.

Yes, Benny and Betty Benson. I didn't realize that Betty had died. It has been since Dot and Bill died that I think I saw her driving with Benny up at Crossroads. But time flies when you get old, so it may have been several years.

I did not know that you had gone to Hickory Methodist. I spent a lot of time there when in high school and dating John. The Best family was there, and their two girls were dating Robert Boyce and ... oh squat! I hate these brain interruptions. He lived next door to John, who lived on the corner of St Brides and Battlefield. It will come to me in a couple of hours. Anyway, it was a fun crowd and we had some really good times. John's oldest sister was married to Buck Tate. Mary Love Ives was my best friend and the Ives', Casons, and Tates were all related, tho I have forgotten exactly how. My sister dated Bill Tate, Bucks oldest brother a few times.

Our two children are adopted, because back then, they did not want people with Hodgkins to get pregnant. Mother had her first mastectomy the week before we brought our first home. Mother was not supposed to drive, yet. so Alma Cason drove her to Richmond to greet her newest granddaughter.

Enjoyed the other stories, also. After the children thought they had taken Jake's keys away from him, I saw him at Crossroads, driving, and said, "Jake, I didn't think you were supposed to be driving." He smiled that sweet smile and said, "I didn't drive far."

I remember Walter being a big man. Maybe he just looked formidable to a small child because of his speech impediment. He did remarkably well for someone of that era who had lost their hearing. But I loved that old Ford that he drove. Was it an A or a T? I think I remember that it was a T.

Yes, I find the remembering is often more fun than anticipating, these days. However, I heard something several weeks back that kinda woke me up. "When your memories are greater than your dreams, you are near the end." My Dad was still dreaming to his last day, even tho he also enjoyed his memories. And he was widely travelled for someone his age and background. He went by freighter to Europe, because that was the only way he could afford to go. That is pretty adventurous for a young Mennonite man from Mt. Pleasant in the 1920's. And oh how he valued reading and book knowledge. I don't think he ever read a novel in his life, but he sure spent a lot of time in reference books and his German Bible.

Wasn't right not seeing and talking to Ivan at the Bazaar today. He was another who loved SGM and the Gaither Homecomings.

Blessings. Betty

11/18/09, 1:17 AM Betty

Thanks for your very kind words. But I can be cantankerous and mean as a snake, ~~~ if I need to be. Just don't want you to hold any false ideas. LOL .

12/01/09 6:09 PM Alan

Betty,

Just in case you check in here before checking into the hospital tomorrow, I want to tell you that you'll be in my prayers and hopes and that I believe all will be well.

It has to be well, because you are going to sing in a chorus I'm going to organize for the drear days of winter. More on that in the future, but for now...rest easy, enjoy the attention and evidence that you are loved and admired and get yerse'f well. There is more yet that God would have you do.

Huggs and fondest hopes for you...Alan

12/10/09 8:54 PM Betty

Thanks so much, Alan. I am certainly glad I have had the wonderful privilege of getting to know you and swap stories, and I am counting on more such opportunities. I do appreciate your prayers and hope that there will be prayers of Thanksgiving, also. If not, I will be waiting on the other side, and singing in the choir. Do you know the Southern Gospel song about the man who could not sing in the choir on earth because he could not sing? Well, that is me, You don't want me in your choir. But I will be singing in the choir in eternity..... but not just yet, I hope.

Love you. Betty

12/16/09 9:11 PM

...popped into my head today.

You dad had leather shoes/boots on sale sometime in the '50s', guaranteed waterproof. My uncle Freddie bought a pair, put them on, then went outside in the rain, stood in the ditch at the back of the store until they leaked and wanted his money back.

I don't recall the outcome...just the story...heard more than once at the ice cold Coca-Cola box...the humor coming methinks from Freddie's effrontery and Dwight's resultant irritation.

Hope you're doing well....Alan

12/16/09 10:10 PM Betty

Ha! I love it. But then I AM not quite as humorless and serious as Daddy was.

12/28/09 5:57PM Alan

I was reminded of that story because Uncle Freddie is now driving my sisters crazy in search of the perfect orthopedic shoe (they have adopted him and cart him back and forth) ...paid for by Medicare of course. At last count there have been about six visits to the shoe store...Montagnos? and yet no solution. I'm tempted to tell him about Easy Spirit tennis shoes.

End of conversations. Betty's surgery wasn't as successful as hoped and she passed away May 5, 2010.