

Many of you will have no clue who most of these people are but I hope they remind you of some of your own loved-ones. We are all the product of our ancestors, with their quirks and foibles. Come along with me thru Memory Lane today and let's visit some wonderful folks for just a little while.

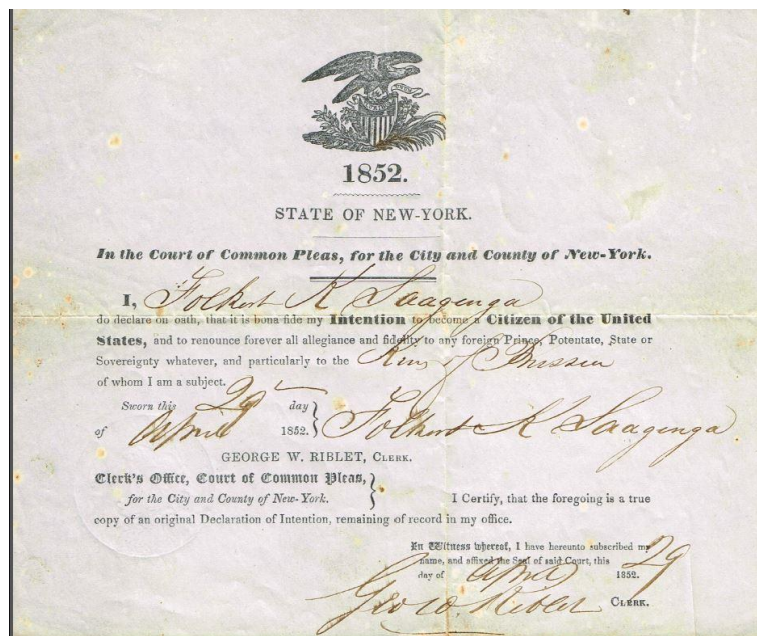
Gramma Hilka's Kids

Hilka Popkes, daughter of Sebina (Hartog) and Hiljo Popkes, was born on December 21, 1880 in Beerta, Holland. Hilka was the firstborn child. Her brother Klaas was born three years later, then Geert was born in 1887. Sadly, Geert died, at the age of 5, in January 1892.

Big changes were ahead for the little family as Hilka's dad left for America on the ship Westernland and arrived in New York March 29, 1892. In July Hilka, her mom and brother Klaas boarded the ship Illinois and sailed for America too. They landed in Philadelphia July 26, 1892 and found their way to northern Illinois. Can't you just feel the excitement (and fear) Hilka, then 11-years old, felt facing a new land? In a few years her parents moved to Minnesota but, by that time, she was working for Lukasdina Saaijenga and her family northeast of German Valley, Illinois.

Now for the rest of the story:

Lukasdina (Broesder) (1813-1899) and Folkert Karsjens Saaijenga (1822-1855), with their 3-month-old daughter Haukedina, arrived in New York City August 16, 1850 on the ship Orion from Germany. Folkert found work as a blacksmith in New York City and became a U.S. citizen.



May 19, 1853 their son George Folkert was born and in August that same year they bought the 80-acre farm (for \$250) near German Valley, sight-unseen, while they still lived in New York City. They moved their two young children, Haukedina and George, half-way across the country and began building their new life.

In 1855 Folkert died of a heat stroke. Suddenly, Lukasdina was faced with the arduous task of raising two small children and running an 80 acre farm by herself. In a booklet of notes kept by Folkert before he died, he listed paying Henry Sjoberg for helping put up straw. This was the man Lukasdina married August 21, 1856 at the Silver Creek Church in German Valley, Illinois. The marriage fizzled in 1867 and the children were put under the guardianship of a neighbor but Lukasdina and her little family continued to live on the farm.

After Haukedina married Peter Hicken in 1870, a number of young ladies were hired to help with housekeeping chores (and everything else around the farm, including shocking oats and planting potatoes).

In about 1898 teen-age Hilka began working for them. She, apparently, was a free spirit and gave George some headaches before they married. One of his diary entries tells that she had gone to a church meeting in German Valley and had not come home until after ten o'clock! Another entry tells of him arriving home to find her entertaining a neighbor's hired hand. He kept a close eye on her and she led him on a merry chase.

LukasDina passed away April 8, 1899 and Hilka continued to keep house for George. She was 21 and he was 48 when they married October 2, 1901 and they had nine children.



George was a farmer, musician (had his own pump organ and gave piano lessons), engraver, printer,



photographer, blacksmith, welder, author and inventor. One of his diaries tells of the day he tried out a telephone between an outbuilding and the house. It scared the hired girl and she dropped some dishes. He was always tinkering to improve his machinery. Family lore tells that he invented the manure spreader but did not get a patent on it. In the old blacksmith shop there were a number of tree stumps with two-foot-long rods extending upward from each. Atop the rods were metal pieces, shaped like various sizes of feet. He repaired the shoes of his large family there.





Hilka and George had 9 children, all born in the house on the home place northeast of German Valley: Folkert, Hilvin, Dena, George, Hattie, Bertha, Rosa, Clarence, and Harold. Sadly, I do not possess a picture of all nine kids plus Grampa and Gramma but below is a picture from about 1921. Back row: Hilvin, Folkert, and Gramma Hilka. Middle row: Dena, Bertha, George and Hattie. In the wagon are Clarence and Rosa. At the bottom left you can barely see baby Harold. You can bet Grampa George was taking the picture on the original home place.



The family lived on the home place until about the summer of 1922 when they moved into a large house in German Valley. January 4, 1925 George passed away from uremia.

German Valleys, Ill. Jan. 5 - Mr. George Saaijenga passed away at his home Sunday evening after a lingering illness of about one year. Several months ago he was operated on and was doing very nicely until about a week ago it was necessary to call Dr. Snyder from Freeport, but all was in vain and all that kind hands could do was done to save his life, but God saw best to call him home. His life work was ended.

Mr. George Saaijenga was born in New York, May 19, 1853. When he was 2 ½ years of age he came to this place with his parents and moved on a farm about 3 ½ miles northwest of German Valley in 1901 he was united in marriage to Miss Hilka Popkas, Mr. and Mrs. Saaijenga lived on the this same farm until about a year ago when Mr. Saaijenga health began failing him, when they moved to German Valley.

Besides his faithful wife he leaves to mourn his loss nine children — five boys and four girls Folkert, Hilvin, Dena, George, Hattie, Bertha, Rosa, Clarence, and Harold His life will be greatly missed his friends being numbered by the scores Mr. Saaijenga was always cheerful and happy though all of his suffering. Surely a kind father and a loving husband was taken from the home.

Funeral services will be held Thursday, services at the home and later at the German Reformed Church. Interment will be made at the Silver Creek cemetery.

Later that year Hilka purchased the next farm east of the old home place and moved her young family back to the country. She lived there until she passed away August 19, 1943.

HILKA SAAIJENGA DIES

Mrs. Hilka Saaijenga, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hiljo Popkes, was born Dec. 21, 1880 in Holland. At the age of 13, she with her parents came to the United States and settled near German Valley.

In 1901, she was united in marriage with George F. Saaijenga, after which they settled on the Saaijeng homestead, where they lived until because of the failing health of Mr. Saaijenga, they moved to German Valley. They lived there for two and one half years.

In this home in German Valley, Mr. Saaijenga died in 1925 and after a few months Mrs. Saaijenga bought the Strodman farm and moved there with her large family of young children.

Mrs. Saaijenga was in very poor health for many years; many times she was on a bed of sickness in the home and the hospital; many times her life was despaired of. Through all these years of suffering, however, Mrs. Saaijenga faithfully administered the Saaijenga estate and served as guardian of the minor children of the family. Even when physically unable to do any work, she supervised the management of the farm with all its work and business.

Finally the strain of bodily affliction became too heavy for her and she peacefully passed away about midnight, Aug. 19, in the Deaconess hospital, where she had been a patient for only two days. Though ailing for years, her passing came unexpectedly and suddenly.

She is survived by nine children: Folkert of German Valley; Hiluin of Moline; Dena at home; George in the armed services overseas; Hattie at home; Mrs. A. B. Meyer (Bertha) of Scotland, S. D.; Mrs. Harold Suess (Rosa) of Freeport; Clarence at home and Harold at home. An aged father, Hiljo Popkes of Rushmore; two brothers, Claus Popkes of Ellsworth, Minn. and George Popkes of Rushmore and a sister, Gertrude, of Laverne, Minn; and eight grandchildren also survive.

Funeral services were held here, Saturday afternoon at the Silver Creek Reformed church, Rev. P. H. Achtermann officiating. Prof. and Mrs. D. J. Waalkes sang several selections and Miss Kathryn Kroeshe was at the organ. Six neighbors: H. J. Buttel, John Buttel, Reint Poppen, J. P. Poppen, John Stradtman, and Dick Cornelius served as casket bearers. Mrs. Edgar Hutson (Barbara Ross), Miss Harriet Stradtman, Miss Margaret Buttel and Mrs. John Aeikens were the flower girls.

Deepest heartfelt sympathy is extended to these bereaved ones in this their sad hour.

Hilka and George now rest on a wind-swept hillside in the Silver Creek Cemetery on the west side of German Valley.



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Here is the nitty-gritty on Hilka's kids but no personal info is included for surviving descendants for the sake of privacy:

Folkert George Saaijenga was born March 2, 1902. He died January 30, 1989 in Freeport, Illinois.



He married Anna Ida Emma Pieper June 5, 1941 in Malcolm, Nebraska.



Saayenga-Pieper
 German Valley, Ill., June 10.—Miss Anna Pieper, daughter of Mrs. Martha Pieper, of Malcolm, Neb., and Folkert Saayenga, of German Valley, were married Thursday, June 5, in St. Paul's Lutheran church in Malcolm, Rev. S. W. Holstein officiating. The ceremony was witnessed by eighteen guests.

The bride wore a street-length dress of aquamarine and a corsage of pink rosebuds. The bride's mother was matron of honor and wore a navy blue ensemble. Arthur Pieper, the bride's brother, was best man.

A reception followed the ceremony at the Pieper home, the bridal table being decorated with pink and blue garden flowers and centered with a tiered cake.

The bride was the recipient of many gifts.

Mr. and Mrs. Saayenga will reside on a farm, owned by the groom's mother, east of German Valley, which has been refurbished and made ready for the bride and groom.

This Certifies that
Folkert G. Saaijenga
of German Valley, Illinois
and Anna I. E. Pieper
of German Valley, Illinois
 were by me united in
Holy Matrimony
 at *Malcolm, Nebr.*
 According to the Ordinance of God and
 the Laws of *Nebraska*
 on the *Fifth* day of *June*
 in the year of Our Lord 1941
S. W. Holstein
 Witnesses *Mrs Martha Pieper*
Arthur Pieper

Anna was born January 22, 1910 near Malcolm, Nebraska, the daughter of Martha (Manke) and Carl Pieper. She died November 25, 1987 in Rockford, Illinois.

Folkert and Ann fixed up the old home place when they married and it was the only house they lived in during all their years of marriage.



Ann was a crafter, gardener, seamstress, quilter and cook who gladly shared with everybody. Folkert dropped out of grade school to work the family farm for his ailing father and he tilled the land the rest of his life. He loved the land, barns, his restored Rumely Do-All tractor and his friends from the Antique Engine Club. Folkert and Ann were devoted to each other for 46 years.



They had 1 daughter. (That would be me.)



Hilvin George Saaijenga was born August 8, 1904 and died February 13, 1971 in Blandinsville, Illinois.



He was a very bright and gentle young man, even wrote poetry. The story is that there was a barn fire several miles north of his home and Hilvin was helping pitch hay out of the burning barn, timbers falling around him. It became obvious that the barn could not be saved so he was sent home, exhausted, walking through a driving rainstorm. Shortly after he got into his bed lightning struck nearby and he stood straight up in bed, screaming. Life was not good for Hilvin after that and, in March 1934, he was diagnosed as having “chronic deteriorating psychosis” and spent the rest of his life in hospitals.

Dena Luka Saaijenga was born December 14, 1906 and died February 8, 1997 in Roseville, Illinois.



Dena never married. A graduate of Central College in Pella, Iowa, she received her master's in education at University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. She taught schools in various Illinois towns, and then taught English for 26 years in Galesburg, Illinois until her retirement in 1972. The love of her life was teaching and she could not always understand when her students were less enthusiastic. One of her former students recalled needing to write a book report. He procrastinated, then at the last minute he raced through "Swan Lake" and turned in a feeble report. She gave him a "D" and suggested that he should actually read the book before making a report. In later years she took writing classes and wrote several wonderful stories about her growing-up years in northern Illinois. Dena was a "take charge" person and was extremely independent but she loved her "tea chats" with her sisters and enjoyed a good joke.



George Benjamin Saaijenga was born April 21, 1909 and died September 1, 1966 in Ames, Iowa.



He married Frieda Jansen Harbers October 12, 1957 in German Valley, Illinois. She was born March 8, 1919 in Hastings, Nebraska, the daughter of Anna (Ninnvemann) and Eilert Janssen. She died October 20, 1964 in Freeport, Illinois.



George was a whiz at electronics and his sister Rosa wrote about remembering him taking radios apart at the kitchen table when he was a youngster. He went into the Army in 1942 and repaired shot-up radios in bombers after they limped back to base in England. (Food supplies were scarce at that time in England so the Army fed their men oodles of locally-grown Brussels sprouts. He refused to touch them the rest of his civilian life.) His enlistment record notes that he attended college one year but I have no idea where.



George was a tool and die maker for Honeywell and a watch repairman for Luecke Jewelers in Freeport, Illinois, hauled mail around German Valley, Illinois and worked for Barber Coleman in Rockford, Illinois.



George had 1 stepdaughter.

Hattie Helen Saaijenga was born May 16, 1912 and died February 20, 1989 in Monmouth, Illinois.



Hattie never married. She was a graduate of Pleasant Prairie Academy at German Valley, Illinois, attended Central College at Pella, Iowa and received her Bachelor of Science degree in speech therapy from Bradley University. She also did graduate work at the University of Wisconsin and Western University at Macomb, Illinois. Hattie taught at the German Valley Grade School for 10 years, then was an elementary school teacher in Galesburg, Illinois for 31 years and was a certified speech therapist until retiring in 1977. She was a dear, sweet and gentle lady who was a teacher all her adult life and lived for her little kids. Below is a picture of Hattie and Dena in later years:



Bertha Clara Saaijenga was born February 4, 1915 and died April 4, 2006 in Sibley, Iowa. She married Andrew (Andreas) Behrands Meyer on July 20, 1934 in Wheaton, Illinois. He was the son of Antje (Ulferts) and Esdert Meyer, born November 29, 1908 in Grimersum, Germany, immigrated to the USA at age 17, graduated from seminary in 1939 and died in 1989 in Sibley, Iowa.



Andrew was a pastor of the Reformed Church in America and together they served churches in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Iowa. She played both the piano and the organ. They also translated church history books from the German language into English for several churches. Bertha loved to play Scrabble, knitted many garments and Afghans, kept a large garden and loved her family.

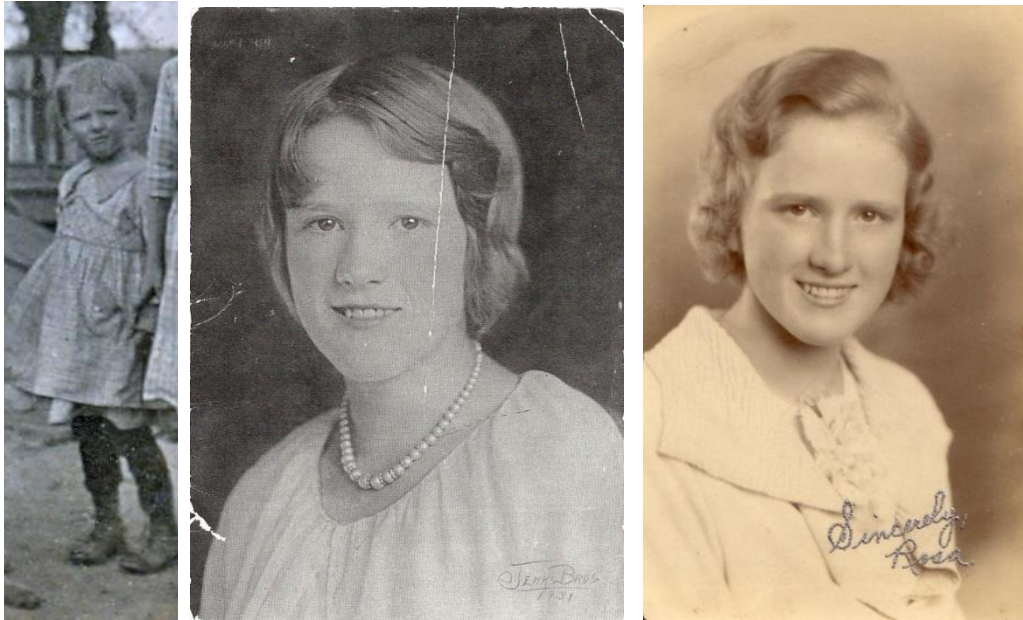
Her daughter Cindy commented, "There was always laughter in our house. The thing I admired most of all was her capacity to love boldly. She lived, loved and learned in big ways." They had 10 daughters and 2 sons.



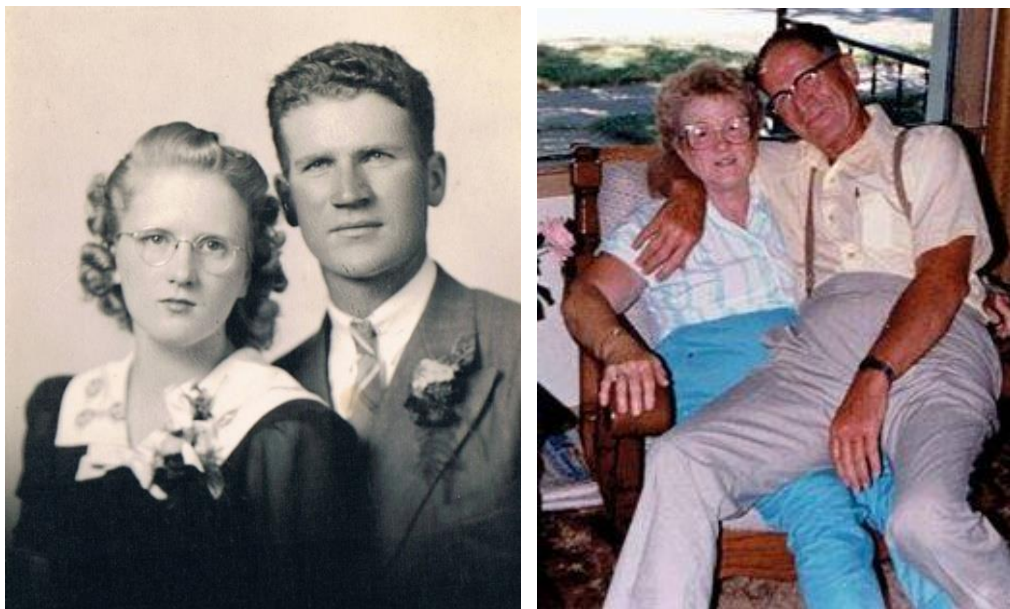
Below is one of the last pictures taken of the whole family at one of their daughters' wedding in 1960.



Rosa Minnie Saaijenga was born February 13, 1917 and died December 20, 2003 in Monroe, Wisconsin. That's her as a little girl, then in 1931 and again as a high school graduate in 1935.



She married Harold Leon Suess June 13, 1941 at German Valley, Illinois, son of Magdalena (Heihn) and George Suess. He was born April 29, 1918 near Scotland, South Dakota and died September 15, 1998 in Freeport, Illinois.



Harold and Rosa were a team all their married life, farming in South Dakota and Illinois. Rosie was an excellent cook and even published her own family cookbook. Her baked beans were phenomenal! She also was a crafter, could crochet most anything and made a beautiful black velvet wall hanging with a Christmas tree composed of bits of old jewelry.



One proud granddaughter told the story of the signature door in the Rock Grove house. “Grandma and Grandpa Suess’ house had a false cupboard in the kitchen. There was a door, but then just this board behind it. All the cousins – and some aunts and uncles – wrote our names on here, year after year. When the house was sold, somebody cut it out and I had it framed. It is hanging at Dad’s. It’s pretty special to all of us. It is totally still in the family!” That’s the famous door below:



Rosie never gave up on people. Once, when Harold was very ill and the doctors advised “pulling the plug”, she refused and he recovered and lived a good life for a few more years. Rosa loved music and encouraged her children to enjoy it too.



For many years Harold and Rose and their children presented musical programs. Most of all, they were just good people.



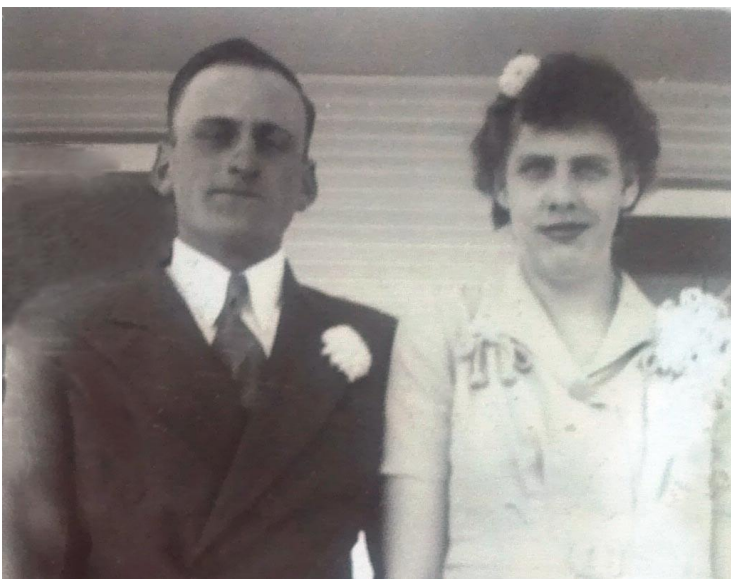
They had 5 sons and 2 daughters:



Clarence Henry Saaijenga was born March 16, 1919 and died August 14, 1990 in Freeport, Illinois.



He married Dorothy Jeane Anderson on December 16, 1944 in Pecatonica, Illinois the daughter of Mabel Emebine (Hoyt) and Carl Bernord Anderson. She was born November 4, 1923 in Seward, Illinois and passed away September 28, 1997 in Freeport, Illinois.



SAAIJENGA—ANDERSON

Miss Dorothy Anderson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Anderson of Pecatonica, and Clarence Saaijenga of German Valley were united in marriage Saturday afternoon at 3 o'clock at the home of the bride's parents. Rev. Berghult, pastor of the Lutheran church of Pecatonica, officiated at the single ring ceremony.

The bride wore a pale blue dress, and her corsage was baby chrysanthemums and pink rose buds.

Miss Hattie Saaijenga, sister of the groom, was bridesmaid. She wore a lilac dress with a corsage of baby chrysanthemums and yellow rose buds. The bestman was Charles Anderson, brother of the bride.

A reception for 35 friends and relatives followed the ceremony.

Clarence and Dorothy began farming in 1945 on the Saaijenga farm (first farm east of the old homeplace where Hilka moved her family after George died in 1925). About a year later they had sale and moved on.

The story goes that Clarence met Dorothy in Pecatonica and asked her to join him for a cup of coffee. She accepted and had coffee while Clarence munched down a big bowl of chili with his

coffee. Her Mom always knew when Clarence was bringing Dorothy home because he would always seem to get a flat tire and she would hear them coming...thump! Thump! Thump! Clarence was a very good gardener and he could grow anything and some things two or three times each season.



They had 4 sons and 4 daughters.

The picture below shows six of their children.



Harold Daniel Saaijenga was born April 21, 1921 (Hilka was 40 and George was a month shy of 68 then.) and died December 9, 2002 in Freeport, Illinois.

He married Betty Jane Sigafus January 13, 1945 in Lena, Illinois, daughter of Maud Lenora (French) and James Monroe Sigafus. She was born in February 5, 1926 and died March 4, 2001. Harold and Betty divorced.

His birth certificate below shows his name as Jeluson but he never was called that name.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
Department of Public Health - Division of Vital Statistics
COUNTY CLERK'S RECORD

REGISTRATION No. 867
Primary Dist. No. 5611
Registered No. 25-371

1. PLACE OF BIRTH
County of Stephenson
Township or Rural District or Village of Freeport
City of _____
Street or Hospital No. _____ St. _____ Ward _____
(If birth occurred in hospital or institution, give the name instead of street and number.)

2. FULL NAME OF CHILD Jeluson Saaijenga (If child is not yet named, make supplemental report, or district, when name is determined.)

3. Sex of Child Male A. Sex, male, or female B. Date of birth April 21 1921 (To be answered only in event of shared birth) (Year) (Month) (Day) (Year)

4. FATHER
FULL NAME Leo Saaijenga
RESIDENCE Medina Ill
COLOR W AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY 67 Year
NATIVITYPLACE (Name, State, if in U.S.; Name, Country, if Foreign) New York
OCCUPATION Farmer

5. MOTHER
FULL NAME Eltinge Dykko
RESIDENCE Medina Ill
COLOR W AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY 40 Year
NATIVITYPLACE (Name, State, if in U.S.; Name, Country, if Foreign) Germany
OCCUPATION Housewife

18. Number of children born to this mother, including present birth: 9
19. Number of children of this mother now living: 0

I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child, who was born above at _____ M., on the date above stated.

20. CERTIFICATE, BY ATTENDING PHYSICIAN OR MIDWIFE
Signature: E. E. Martin M. D.
Address: Freeport Ill Telephone: 212
Filed: Oct 10, 1921 by E. R. Gammill, Registrar
Post Office Address: Medina Gen. Deliv.

MARGIN RESERVED FOR BINDING - THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD
WHITE PLAIN, WITH IMPRINTING INK - THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD
M. D. No. 3
Registration of this birth on 13 1921



Harold was a gentle, soft-spoken, hard-working man and was a hired man for a dairy farmer east of Pearl City, Illinois for many years. He also loved cars. In fact, he traded cars so often that the state made him buy dealer plates.

Harold and Betty had 1 daughter, Margaret, who passed away in 1992.



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Gramma Hilka had 29 grandchildren plus 1 step-grand. I'm still trying to get a count on great-grands, step-great-grands, foster-great-grands, adopted-great-grands and great-grands-of-the-heart. That number is staggering. The occupations include farmers, air traffic controllers, electricians, teachers, nurses, classified government workers, a professional clown, artists, engineers, physical therapists, medical technicians, pastors, convenience store managers, veterinarians and assistants, heavy equipment operators, clerks in stores, bankers, truck drivers, musicians, computer programmers, office workers, stay-at-home moms, researchers, beauticians, manicurists, a meteorologist, mechanics and factory workers. One descendant works in a factory that manufactures chains for manure spreaders. Considering that Grampa George Saaijenga is said to have invented a manure spreader, he would be pretty impressed!

Do you suppose Gramma Hilka, when she was an eleven-year-old girl, coming to America on the ship Illinois, could ever have imagined all the marvelous descendants that would follow her? Gramma Hilka would be so PROUD of her "brood"!!!!!!

