

Mom's first line of fire, "Shikinpoop, were you born in a barn? Shut that door!!", always rang out when I was a kid and left the screen door ajar. This reaction still puzzles me. Most barn doors I've seen were shut. Oh, well, she got results and no chickens ever walked into the house...although, one duck did waddle in one October day in 1973 when that duck chased Sam, the dog, right on into the kitchen. The duck got escorted back outside with a broom. (He may have been the next Thanksgiving dinner.)

Barns and I go way back and I just love seeing them along the way.

In 1898 the first barn on the Saaijenga place northeast of German Valley, IL, was built.

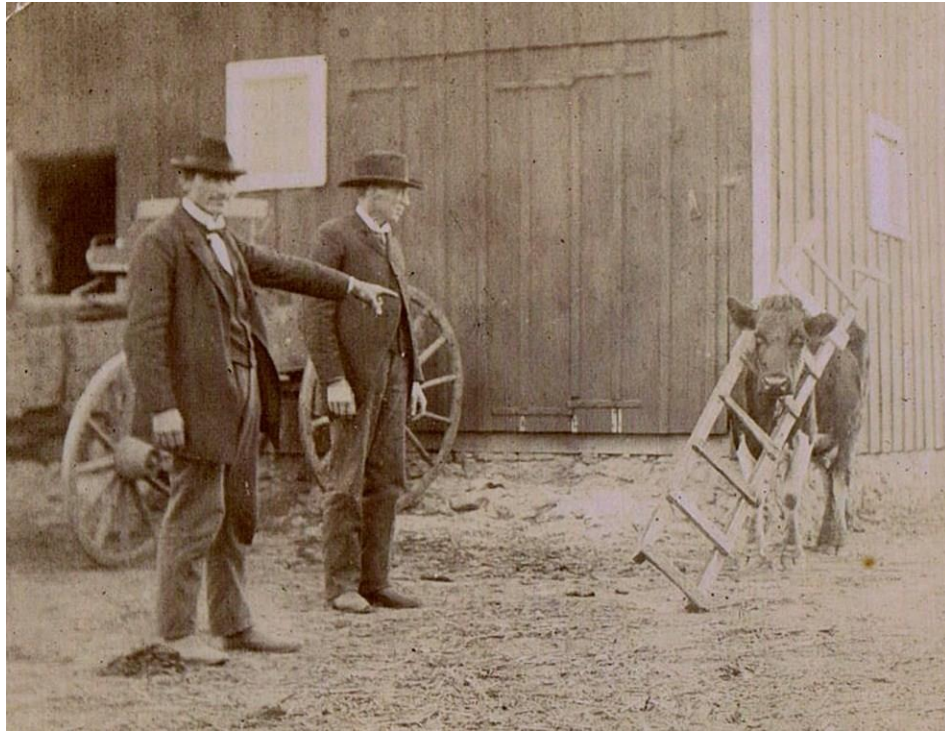


The picture below was taken from the windmill looking south.



Below: a calf has a bit of a problem. One of the men is John Baal, Sr. One fellow has his foot in a cow pie and is pointing out the calf's problem (not noticing his shoe has a problem too). The

other man is probably studying the situation, in typical German fashion, trying to figure out how to wrestle the varmint down long enough to remedy the situation. You will note that neither one of the guys is dressed for farm chores and I'm betting neither one of them came out of the day any cleaner than the first guy's shoe.



Below are two more really old pictures. This first picture was taken in 1910 at my kids' great grampa Henry Hoefler's farm near Pearl City, IL. Before balers the hay was pulled up into the haymow in big loose blobs. It looks here like some of that hay got away and is a big blur in the picture. Those two little girls beside the ladder probably got plastered with itchy dust.



This next picture was at the Joseph Faist farm, just south of Freeport, IL. Those four sons were mighty proud of their horses and their dad had reason to be mighty proud of his sons as the years passed. One of the sons was my kids' Grampa Clem.



Thru the years Jim and I have gone past some wonderful old barns. This marvelous structure (below) is on a backroad north of Buchanan, VA.



The moosey-cows still get up-close-and-personal to this next one.



Another one north of Roanoke bespeaks of better days.



Virginia Tech at Blacksburg, VA built a beauty for their horse program.



The good folks near Swoope, VA believe in keeping their barn in pristine condition.



And the people in Lancaster County, PA operate the same way.



This next barn is also in Lancaster County and, at first glance, it looks like it got hit with an explosion. Not so! These guys have their barn adapted to dry crops.



You sort of wonder how soon the bovine queens in this next barn will be visited by little green men.



Nahhh...not to worry. This spaceship is really the world's largest fully steerable radio telescope at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory in Green Bank, West Virginia.



This next barn at Snowflake, WV probably isn't anyplace I'd like to set up housekeeping real soon...but, oh, the stories that barn could tell!



Vermont boasts its share of stately barns too. In the picture below, I'd like to think that this farm was run by Larry, his brother Daryl and his other brother Daryl and they supplied milk to the Stratford Inn in the Bob Newhart show. Well, maybe not but this is my story so you'll just have to go along on this one.



Early New England farmers devised a neat way of dealing with harsh winters so many years ago. They actually attached their barns to their houses so nobody had to brave the storms to take care of the chores. That certainly did make dashing out for a gallon of milk easier on a snow-filled day. But the ripe aroma on a hot summer day may have gotten your attention. Very few of these remain today and those that do still stand have been converted to garages like the one below that was across the road from Larry and Ellen's house in New Hampshire. It looks like those folks had a healthy supply of firewood stacked inside it for the coming winter.



Even fellows who make model train layouts have a thing for barns. See the pretty one below in Bluefield, WV:



And the one in Roanoke, VA:



OK, enough with the barns that belong to strangers. Don't you just know this thing is going to get all personal now. Well, here we go.

Jim's model layout also has a farm with a scratch-built barn and corn shocks made of excelsior:



One of the prettiest barns in my childhood was just east of Malcolm, Nebraska, and belongs to the Lostroh family on Little Hillside Farm. Cousin Karna (Des Moines, Iowa) tells the history, “The story goes that Little Hill Side Farm Barn was built in 1927 on its current location because there was a grove of cottonwood trees on the spot. A sawmill was used to cut and trim the cottonwood. The 1st floor, main beams and upright studs (1 ½ stories high) were cut out of Cottonwood as well as the inside wood. Remember the large wooden ladders going to the haymow? The studs for the haymow were out of dimension lumber (2X6). The barn had cedar shingles and cedar lap siding. Cottonwood is not a good building material as it cannot withstand the weather elements.”



near Malcolm, Nebraska 1944

So many memories are fired up with this barn. Cousin Lois (Missoula, Montana) remembers those mules pulling the carriage below. That's Aunt Alma Lostroh (owner of the mule and carriage) beside the mule. The other two adults are my folks. Cousin Karna adds, "Ahh, the good ole days! The mules' names were Jerry and May. Queen was the mule us kids used and we could go where ever Queen wanted to go. No adults were needed to steer us in the right direction."



Lois also wrote, "I remember playing in the hay bales up stairs, the feed compartments, the cow stanchions, (the 'girls' all named after relatives Ü), Aunt Alma's 'separating' room, and, of course, the spectator mules - all keeping an eye on us." (The separator was a machine used to separate the cream from the "whole" milk.)

Cousin Bern (Bridgeport, Nebraska) remembers that barn as the place where he perfected his basketball skills. "The basket was situated just in front of the ladder hole to loft. One had to be careful when doing a layup or risk falling thru hole. It was also slippery on court because of the hay. Good part was when you got tired you could rest in the hay. I remember milking time well. Each cow had their own stanchion and if one got misplaced it caused confusion. Cats set up and opened mouths for a squirt of milk. I carried pails to separator and dumped it. Concerning mules names....there was Queenie, Amos, Andy. The pony's name was Buster. Uncle Louie let us set on mules while they ate. We practiced roping on sheep."

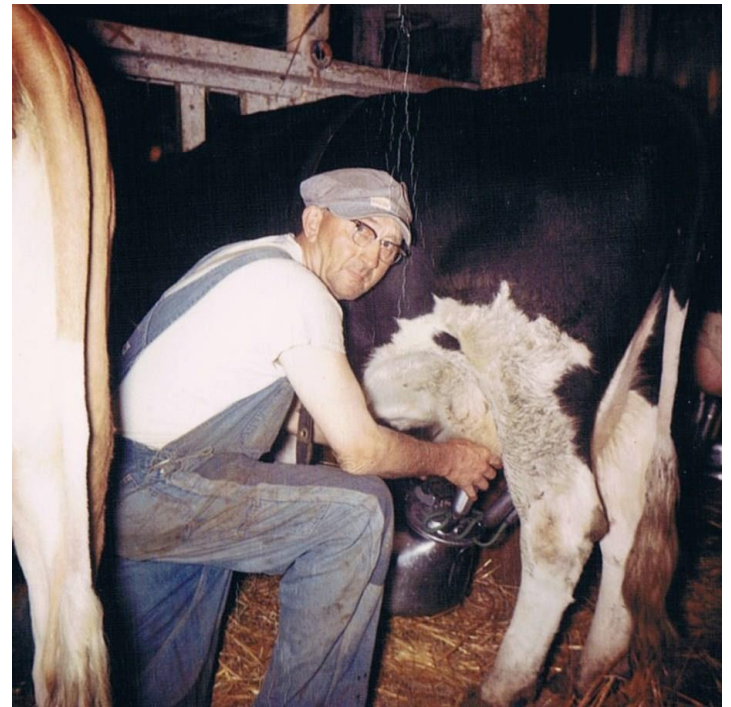
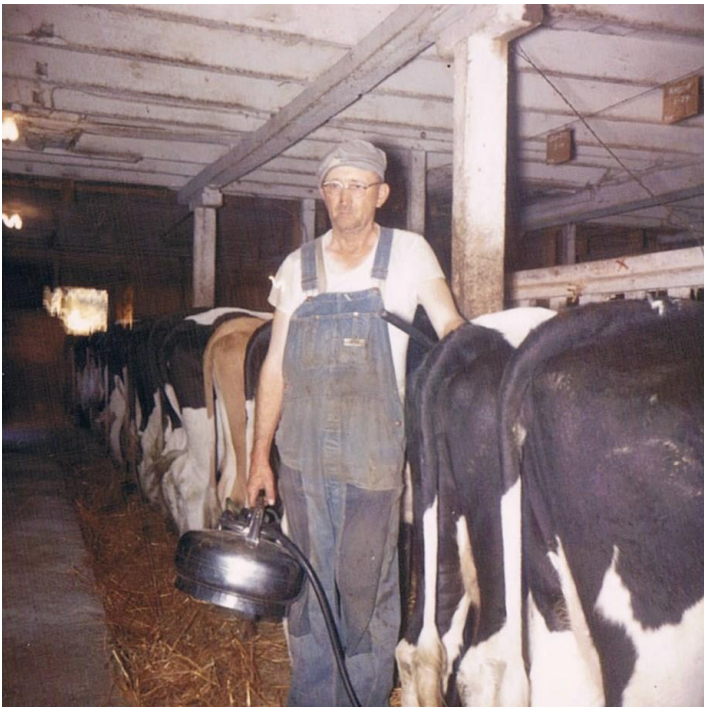
Etched in my memory bank is when I was staying at Aunt Alma's (about 1953) and looked out the window to see the early-summer, Nebraska-morning-sun silhouetting the barn and windmill. That barn, constructed with locally available lumber, is deteriorating and may not be around much longer but, oh!, the warm feelings the very mention of Little Hillside Farm evokes.



In 1999 Cindy and her mom-in-law Nell came to visit me in Freeport. Nell had never seen cows being milked so we visited Eldon DeWall's farm and Nell got a first-hand view of cows and calves. She is a fun lady and she had so much fun feeding calves in the picture below.



All you have to do to generate conversation is put a picture of a barn on Facebook and people jump in with their own memories of barns in their past...and I LOVE hearing the stories. The 1963 picture below of my dad prompted so much information.



John Mercier (Saratoga Springs, New York) warmly remembers, “ I remember helping with milking in barns like this with that type of milker. I went with my Dad as he worked part-time on a large dairy farm where I grew up. We got that cream for our coffee at another dairy farm every morning during deer season when we hunted with them on their farm land. Such great memories. In the country neighbors looked out for neighbors and there were not a lot of strangers around. Every dairy farm had plenty of cats, too, with plenty of litters; but they always had a home on a farm. Plenty of mice and milk to wash them down.”

Dan Abbas (Webster, New York) added, “I remember helping Folkert with the milking a few times.”

Cathy Kohlbauer (German Valley, Illinois) added lots to this story. “That is how we used to milk! Remember the Surge milkers and cows in stanchions! My dad used to wear bibs like that, too! I can almost hear the milker pump and smell the barn just from this picture alone! Now if there was a barn swallow nest on one of those beams! My mom wouldn't let anyone shoot them (sparrows)! They were sacred birds for some reason (those and robins - the rest were fair game!). We would watch as they would have 2 batches of hatchlings - when the last batch was out of the nest.....fall was on the way. The cats would tend to sit under the nest when the momma would kick them out of the nest - so it was "fly or be eaten" for those poor little guys!”

Cousin Sylvia Hillman (Rock City, Illinois) was part of the mix too. “In the summer time, we had to clean the gutters, etc. after breakfast. We'd hurry to get it done, then put on our roller skates, close all the windows, grab the scrapers, brooms, etc. and chase sparrows. We'd fly (skate fast!)

up the alley, jump the gutters, in front of the stanchions and take whacks at the sparrows to try to get them all. Don't remember, but I'm sure there was a #'s contest involved also. We all got pretty good at skating during that activity.”

I remember birds in the barn too. We had sparrows. I had a new BB gun that I used to pop them with but hit the fencer's glass globe instead. After that the sparrows were completely safe as long as they stayed in the barn. Truth is, my BB gun was banned from the barn.

The picture below is Dad's barn in 1960. This was behind the north row of stanchions.



Note the straw behind the cows in the above picture. Well, that ain't all straw, Honey! The straw is in a gutter to soak up liquid excretory exhaust. (There seems to be a whole lot of that on the farm, doesn't there?) At the bottom of the gutters was a barn cleaner system (for cow housing hygiene...golly, I just love that term..) which was a bunch of flites (flat, vertical pieces of metal), held together by “material mover (another politically correct term)” chains and it slowly worked its way around the perimeter of the barn, carrying with

it the material (you can substitute your own name for it here.) needing to be removed. The whole mess was dumped into a manure spreader, then spread on the fields and, voila! Home-grown fertilizer!

Wasn't that a fun subject? On we go! Milk was strained thru a gauze filter, poured into milk cans, then the cans were placed in a milk cooler. That's the thing in the picture above (behind the milk cans) that looks like a chest-type freezer. It held eight cans and was full of icy-cold water so the milk did not spoil. (Before Mom got a refrigerator, she put perishable food into tightly-sealed quart jars and dropped it into the cold water too.) Every morning Mom brought a jar of milk to the house and let it sit till the cream rose to the top. That "top cream" was the best for whipped cream and the creamer in our coffee and tea. This was before anybody insisted that milk had to be pasteurized and it tasted sooooo good.

OK, you knew it would happen pretty soon so we may as well waltz off on another rabbit trail.....I've written this in another story but, you are going to hear it again. During the nineties I often called a programming supplier near Indianapolis to order satellite dish programming for customers of Country Communications. I generally spoke with the same people there and one lady, Pat, told me a tender story from her childhood. As a child she lived in a city but spent some time with her grandparents on a farm somewhere in Indiana. Her grandparents rose very early each morning and always ate breakfast before the little girl and her grandpa went outside to do the morning chores. Grandma cooked hard boiled eggs on very cold mornings. Grandpa and Pat slipped a couple of hot eggs into their pockets. Those eggs provided a warm spot to take the chill off cold fingers. When chores were done, Pat and her grandpa climbed up on bales of hay and enjoyed a snack of warm, hard-boiled eggs and glasses of fresh-squeezed raw milk.

Phooey, the rabbit went thru the fence so let's get back to the barn story.



Each milk can had our ID number on it so they could keep accurate records at the creamery. For a while the cans went to the cheese factory in German Valley. I remember going to the cheese factory with Dad and seeing some men stirring big vats of milk...and it sure stunk!

Cathy Kohlbauer adds, "I don't remember the milk cans - we just ran the milk through the strainer right into the cooler. It had an agitator that would keep the cream from rising to the top. Then came the transfer system and then the pipeline."

Cousin Sylvia adds, "Yup! We had the milk cans. And, every morning after milking Dad took the milk cans up to Sunny Side Cheese Factory on US 20 west of Ridott Corners. We would fight every morning for a spot in the truck to go along. Only a couple got to go each day. Always loved watching the cans go down the roller tracks and into the factory. Automation at its finest!!!"

Dad never hauled our cans of milk during the time I was around. Instead, a large truck came each morning to pick up the cans.

Suzie Cornelius/Johnson (Freeport, Illinois) chimed in here. "Then my grandpa or uncles would come to the farm and pull it out of the ice water... load the cans on trucks and take them to the dairy." Actually, for a number of years, it was Sue's daddy, Elgin, who delivered the cans to the Dean Milk Company at Pecatonica, Illinois, about 15 miles northeast of the farm.

Dad had one cow named Boxcar who was at the end of the line of cows. He always told me the milkers did not work on her so I had to milk her by hand and it took all of chore time. Then one day I came into the barn unexpectedly and saw the milker on Boxcar. The game was over! It was my dad's way of keeping me occupied while he and Mom did chores.

A whole lot of cows went thru that barn. To facilitate record keeping each cow had her name emblazoned on a board above her stanchion. To keep easier track of genetic lines, the calves were named a follow-up of their mom's name...such as one line started with High Fly (The old girl was named that because she could kick like crazy); her descendants were Butterfly, Fruit Fly, Bar Fly...you get the drift. One line was all flowers, Lily, Violet, etc. That caused trouble when Uncle Harry came into the barn one day and spotted "Rose" above one four-legged lady. The next time Dad visited the Suess barn, he found one of their cows named "Ann".

One note to explain High Fly....dairy cows sometimes have an uncooperative side and can kick like broncos. They are especially expert at catching a pail of milk with their hoof and sailing it clear across the gutter behind them. The only beings happy at that point are the cats; Yum! Yum! (Dad had the cats trained to sit up on their haunches and catch streams of fresh, warm milk that he squirted across the gutter toward them....and those were some

mighty shiny, healthy cats.) To tame the rambunctious girls' dispositions at choretime, Dad used "kickers" which were two metal hooks, held together by chains, and fit around the hocks (reverse knee-caps) of the cows' legs.



In addition to the chain kickers, there was one other little trick that Dad used. During the summer those pesky flies created discomfort for the cows when they were tied up in the stanchions. The cows retaliated by swatting the offending flies with their long, swishy tails. This was not a problem unless those tails had been in direct contact with the "excretory exhaust" and they happened to swat the farmer in the face...not a pretty situation. Using a hunk of twine string, Dad tied the cows' tails to hooks in the ceiling while he was in the "firing range".

In the picture below, at chore time the cows were secured in their stanchion and then the feast began. They were treated to nice green hay, a big scoop of ground corn with lots of minerals added, and ensilage (chopped immature corn...the whole plant, fermented in the silo. More Yum! Yum! And that stuff stunk to the high heavens.) Those are water cups beside them in the photo below; they had drinking water during frigid winter days when they did not spend time outside. The cats, certainly no dummies, knew where to snooze, curled up in the soft hay.



Nephew Gary (Oregon, Illinois) “We milked when I was little and had a "pasteurizer" and always had fresh milk.” Those are Gary’s two grammas, Esther and Arvilla, beside the Greenfield family pasteurizer in the 1966 picture below. Grampa used it for a hat rack that day.



Gary continues, “Good memories of going under the portable clothes hanger/dryer by the heater (so nice, a warm "tent") to eat our breakfast with fresh milk before going to school. Nothing beats fresh food from the farm. The cats liked it also in the barn. My mailbox is a 4 X 4 cemented into a milk can with the mailbox on top of the board and has a nice farm picture on each side of the mailbox. I love it as a memory of the farm.”

In October 1963, because of health concerns, Dad and Mom sold their dairy herd and equipment. It had been a heap of hard work...twice a day, 7 days a week, for 22 years.

FOLKERT SAAIJENGA

AUCTION

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4

TIME — 1:00 P.M.

REASON — Due To Health Reasons

LOCATION—1 mile North of German Valley then 1¼ miles East. 3 miles South of Ridott Corners then 1¼ miles East. 4 miles West of Seward on Edwardsville Road. Watch for green arrows!

Lunch Stand On Grounds

49 DAIRY CATTLE

HOLSTEINS

A home raised herd, ABS bred for 13 years. Records of milk sold show this herd average to be 40 lbs of milk per cow per day for the 7½ months of 1963. 27 cows, milk age, all stages of lactation; 10 heifers, bred; 2 heifers, open; 3 calves, 8 to 12 months; 4 calves under 4 months; 3 Guernseys.

DAIRY EQUIPMENT

4 Surge units; 2 I.H.C. stainless units; DeLaval pump, ½ h.p. motor; pipe line for 28 cows; 14 water cups; 8-can milk cooler; 24 10-gal. milk cans; pails and strainers; wash tank.

MACHINERY

Case VAC tractor, cultivator; I.H.C. Endgate seeder; A.C. scour klean attachment; A.C. pick-up attachment; wagon on rubber; green chop box; feeder box; heavy duty Malco Mow 48 ft. bale conveyer with hangers and cut offs and 1 h.p. motor, like new; Patz barn cleaner, chain for 28 cow barn, like new; Cowboy tank heater; N.H. cylinder sheller; 18-inch barn fan, 1/6 h.p. high speed motor; Hume Reel with attachments for Case 6-A combine; also pick-up for 6-A combine; 20 cow chains; gasoline lantern.

FEED

1,200 bales alfalfa-brome hay; 450 bales straw.

CLERK — Cliff Clevenger

CASHIER — Lucille Lattig

AUCTIONEERS — Dale DeVries — Russel Ischier

LIBERAL SALE TERMS

FREEMPORT AUCTION SERVICE

The old barn (built in 1898) stood, loyally serving its owners many more years, as a pigeon rookery, then for storage. One summer day in the 1990s, it collapsed.

Many of the old barns are physically gone now but they live on in the hearts of those who worked and played in them. If you listen closely to the wind, you might just hear a kitty mew or a cow moo.