



Remembering...

An
Inter-generational
Project

Grinnell Senior Center
&
Mrs. Barger's 4th Period Creative
Writing Class

"The Life of Young Margaret Devilder"

Margaret Devilder has lived through many different experiences of hardship and happiness.

When she was a child she lived on a farm with her three brothers and her one sister, along with her mother and father. On the farm they had a hen house. Her father was always very much against the chickens, mostly because they would sometimes "poop" on the corn crop and cause much damage to it. Her brothers, sister and she liked the little roosters because they were so ornery. Margaret used to gather the eggs from the hen house. To gather the eggs she had to lift the hens up, while they pecked at her, and she got slightly angry when they did this. After the eggs were gathered they sold some and kept some for later use.

Her family also had from five to ten cows that they had to milk by hand daily. When Margaret was about nine years old she was milking a cow and it tried to kick her. Her brother George was standing near her at this time and saw what the cow did. He then grabbed a shovel and hit the cow upside the head with it. The cow bellowed and lay down. That was the last time that cow tried anything like that again. After milking the cows she had to carry five 6-gallon buckets full of milk. It was then placed in a cream separator and they sold most of the cream. They kept some for later use to bake with and use in

their coffee. The cream and milk they kept was stored in an ice box.

When Margaret was in eighth grade she participated in a spelling bee. She represented her school and there were many schools that participated in this spelling contest. Margaret was eliminated when she spelled "approximately" incorrectly.

She also played baseball, since softball was not played. She played against other groups of girls and sometimes they played with the guys. Margaret played first base. They played without uniforms, just in regular clothes.

Margaret participated in 4-H, attending many meetings. While in 4-H, she was in a play and performed as a cowgirl. She wore a leather skirt with little flip flaps around it and a hat. This play was about cowboys and cowgirls. Margaret considered herself a good actor and still does. The play was held in Brooklyn on the Brooklyn stage. Many times they went to other towns and did these plays.

Her family had a 40-acre corn field which they had to pick by hand. One time the stalks had blown over and they were lying on the ground. So they had to pick the stalks up and pick the corn off of them. This was very hard work. After they picked the corn off of the stalks they threw it in a wagon.

When Margaret was dating as a teen, it was much different than the way teens date today. Margaret was unable to date until she was eighteen. When she and her date went to the movie, they had to pay only eleven cents each. She met her first husband on one of these dates. She got married to him

and had many children.

These are some of the many things that happened in Margaret Devilder's earlier life.

- Mary Arvin (based on an interview with Margaret Devilder)



"Then and Now"

Hazel Freeborn is the fourth child of ten children; eight boys and two girls. The oldest of these children is 71 and the youngest is 56; all are still living.

When she was young, babies were born in the home. If a doctor came, that was great, but if not, there was no help in birthing. Hazel, being one of the oldest, remembers seeing and hearing many childbirths.

She remembers many chores. Even with ten children, there was plenty of work for everyone. She milked cows, washed clothes, and more. Her brother and she had to plow the corn. They were both too little to do the work by themselves. Hazel got to drive the horses.

Although they had a lot of work, there was still time for entertainment. During the winter, her brothers, sister and her neighbors would go sledding on their homemade sleds and toboggans. They made sleds with wood and put tin on the bottom of them so they would go faster. Sledding was enjoyed by everyone and Hazel spent many hours doing that.

Her father had to shovel the roads for his traffic use so he could go to town and get groceries or whatever was needed.

Hazel had to walk three miles to country school during the week. There were 8 grades in one room with just one

teacher. If a student liked and wanted to help a teacher, they would go in early, about 7:00 AM and bring in coal for the "pot belly" stove. And, never forgotten was the paper sack in which every student brought his own lunch. Boys and girls brought anything that was available, from pancakes to peanut butter to egg sandwiches. There wasn't a big variety since there were no refrigerators. If something needed to stay cool it was put in a bucket and lowered down the well.

Hazel's family moved some. She remembers the house her father had built. It was one big room. On one of the side walls were three beds, like bunk beds, but bolted to the wall. There were two children in each bed. Before living there, in their other house, there was just one bed with four children in it: two children at each end with feet woven between the bodies facing the other direction. Some of the beds were made of feather, but mostly the mattresses were straw. Her father also built the table for their home.

By the time she had to begin high school, a public school, they had moved to town. She went to high school, but, not knowing what to expect from a large crowd, Hazel walked home halfway through the day. She ended her high school career very soon, so her father told her that she must get a job, even though she was only 14.

She worked for other people: washing, cooking and cleaning. She didn't like hand washing clothes with the washboard. She remembers washing many bib-overalls with those boards. She

also remembers that hand-operated machines. She had to carry water from a creek, about a block away, to wash clothes and for baths. She worked for \$10 a month.

Hazel later got married. Her husband was in the service, so she traveled many places. She has been to almost all of the fifty states, including California and Texas.

Her husband fought in World War II and was in the South Pacific for two years and three months. When he returned to Grinnell by train, he didn't remember how to get to Broad Street, where he had lived.

They tried having a baby, but Hazel had a miscarriage. They wanted to adopt through an agency, but they had a four-year waiting list and, at 34, they decided they would be too old, so they adopted two wonderful children, a boy and a girl, through the doctor. She now has three grandchildren.

About twelve years ago, Hazel, her husband and children went to Spain for a week. They went in April and Hazel loved it. She thought it was very beautiful. She visited Old and New Madrid, the Cathedral in the Hills, and a cathedral in Toledo, Spain. The paintings on the ceiling were the most beautiful things she ever saw. She also got to see a bullfight. She can't remember who won, but she remembers how big the bull was and the red cape.

When they returned from Spain, they didn't realize the problem they were going to have. There had been a big storm that week, more like a blizzard. They had a terrible time trying to get home from the airport in Des Moines.

For Christmas this year, she took her whole family to Florida in October. Hazel liked it, but the grandchildren loved it, especially Disney World.

Hazel now works at the Senior Citizen Center for enjoyment. She works in the kitchen packing food and likes it very much.

- Tammy Benson (based on an
interview with Hazel Freeborn.)



"Memorable Moments"

Dortha Geurts was just a small girl in the sixth grade of a little community named Sully, when she and her identical twin sister, Doris, used to play pranks on anyone from their teachers to an occasional date. The Geurts girls were not uncommon; in fact, there were five other pairs of twins in the Sully School.

One day Dortha was to write an essay in class, but she didn't sign her name. The teacher had no trouble telling which Geurts' paper it was because Dortha had obtained a different type of reputation than her sister. She was known as the wilder of the two and not quite as smart. Doris was more of the perfectionist and Dortha just wanted to have some fun...like when the two went on a double date together. The girls dressed alike and Dortha wouldn't tell her date which one she was and she never did.

Later on in Dortha's life, she and her husband purchased a Shetland pony and named her Lightning. Lightning didn't like Dortha's husband at all. He couldn't make her do anything that he wanted. When work needed to be done, the Shetland would just stand still, but Lightning like Dortha. She would give the horse apples or some sweetcorn and then Lightning would cooperate. Many times Dortha would catch the Shetland for one of her five kids to ride, especially Mike, her son. Lightning loved to be ridden and usually it was the rider who got tired first.

Lightning had a special trick. Many times the family would find her out of her pen when they returned from somewhere. One day Dortha caught Lightning in the act. It seemed the horse would unlatch the gate with her nose, push the gate open, walk out, relatch the gate again with her nose and then shut it with her behind. This problem was quickly solved with a new gate.

The Geurts' also had a pair of twin black and white faced calves that Lightning used to play with when she wasn't giving rides or pulling the family in a cart.

Lightning had a colt when she was six years old, but the colt died at three months of age. Although the Geurts' tried, that was the only offspring Lightning had. She died when she was fifteen.

- Dave Harris (based on
an interview with Dortha
Geurts)



"One Wonderful Morning"

It was a cold winter morning and the sun had not yet risen. There was a light snow falling outside and a brisk wind blowing from the west. The stars were still out and the moon was creeping down the black blanket of the night. The moon reflected off the ground already covered with white drifts. The morning would soon come and the rooster knew it. He crowed three times.

Josephine was soon awakened by the crows of the rooster. She dressed warmly, knowing no matter how warmly she dressed, the coldness of the air would penetrate her clothes easily. She went out the front door and made her way to the chicken coop. The chickens were quiet at first, but once she entered the coop, the chickens were filled with noises. They rushed to their roosts and were ready to be fed. It usually took Josephine five minutes to gather all of the eggs. She usually gathered eighty eggs from her one hundred hens. After she was finished and had closed the door, the hens quieted again.

Josephine struggled to get to the hay barn through mountainous drifts and, once inside, she felt warmer. It must have been that the air was calm. She walked over the straw and hay to the stalls where the cows were

kept. There were six cows to milk; it usually took her an hour and a half or two hours to do the milking.

Josephine could collect four 14-quart pails of milk.

She ran back to the house with her eggs and milk, dodging the drifts. Inside the house her mother was not yet ready with breakfast, so Josephine soon pitched in and started peeling potatoes and putting the bacon and eggs in the frying pan. Soon she would have to start on her walk to school.

- James Haworth (based on

an interview with

Josephine Hartzell)



"Fires in the Morning"

With the break of dawn Ray crawled out of bed and made ready for his day at work. Bundling up in heavy clothing, he headed out into the cold for the short walk to work.

About 5:00 AM he arrived in the basement of Davis School to start the furnace. He poured a hopper of coal in the furnace and threw anything that would burn in with it.

It normally took ten minutes to get a good fire going. Then he would rake the vents clean of ash and sprayed the floor clean of ash and dust.

The shipment of coal arrived so it had to be taken care of. Davis usually received a half a carload of coal. The coal had to be loaded into hoppers for the two main furnaces and a bin filled for a third furnace that was used only on the coldest days to heat the school because it had to be shovel-fed.

The furnaces had to be watched all the time so he had to work on Saturdays and Sundays to keep the heat going. He was also in charge of the boiler which contained water that was used to heat up the radiators and it supplied hot water to the entire building.

- Tom Stoddard (based on
an interview with
Ray Hartzell)

"Tales of South Dakota"

Verna Carter was born August 10, 1916 in a farmhouse in Beetle County, South Dakota. She had two sisters, Opal and Norma, and a brother named Conrad. She remembers the farmhouse in which she was brought up as a very small and cold four room house. It was just like any other farmhouse in those days. She also remembers her father, Alan Bernard Carter, built an addition on to the house, so they finally had a kitchen with running water.

When she was four years old, she recalls one time when her father had told her not to stand between the horses when they were eating. One day she was out there feeding the horses and her father walked in between the horses and grabbed her hair. She thought the horses were going to attack her, so she ran back to the house.

In 1927 she and her family went on a family vacation to the Badlands and to the Black Hills. They drove an old Model T Ford, that went fast enough for them.

Throughout her childhood she used to help her dad on the dairy farm. She would help milk the cows, feed the baby calves, and clean the separator that separated the milk from the cream. She also had to share her tiny bedroom with her two other sisters. During this time she met a guy, Francis Janssen, who was a hired man, who would someday be her husband.

In 1934 she entered the South Dakota State College School of Agriculture. It was like a college and it was on campus, but it was different than the other college classes. Francis also got to go, because Verna's father paid both their ways. Soon, however, tragedy struck. Her mother died in 1938. Then her father wanted her to quit school, and go back to the farm. She refused and said she would run away because she wanted to go to school.

After she and Francis graduated, Francis had to work for her father, because that was part of the contract when her father paid for his schooling. In 1941 they were married and had a daughter, Elmira May Carter, in 1942. They then lived in a house that was built for some farmer's son and Francis' job was to test cows for any diseases. That didn't last too long, because they lived there for only one year. Francis decided to buy a farm near Troy, South Dakota and they stayed there till 1975 when he sold it. They then lived in a low-rent housing place with another lady, but then moved to La Bolle, South Dakota.

Francis passed away in 1981 from a combined stroke and heart attack. Her daughter convinced her to come and stay in Grinnell. Her daughter visits her every Sunday and takes Verna to her house for Sunday dinner. Now her daughter's husband has to move to Carol, Iowa, and her daughter wants her to come along, but Verna Carter has decided that she likes it here and wants to stay in Grinnell.

"On the Farm"

The sun was just peeking over the hill as Ada awoke from her night's sleep. It was 5:00 in the morning.

"Many things need to be done," said Ada, as she pulled herself out of bed and dragged herself outside.

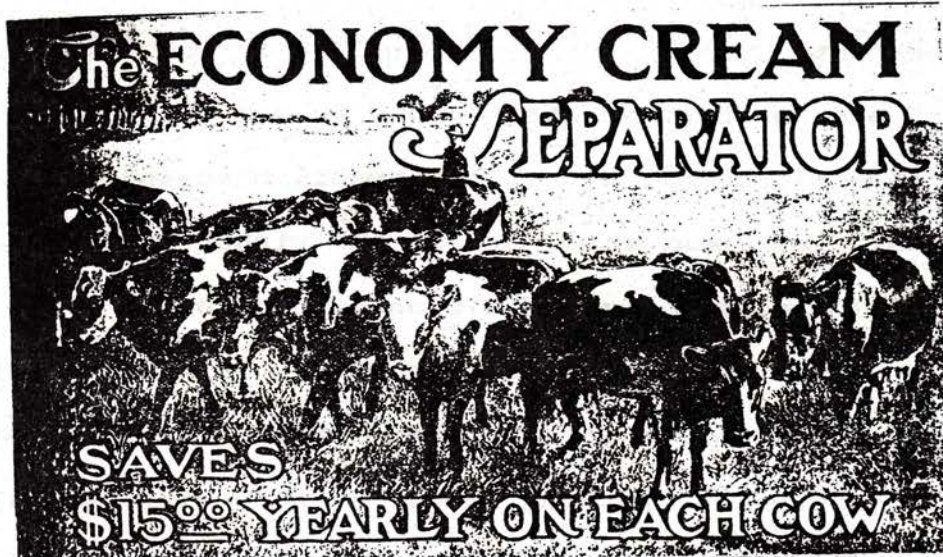
Farm chores are what awaited her. The cows needed milking and the chickens had to be fed, and after that was all done the separator needed to be cleaned. Ada started in on the milking, along with her brother and grandfather. Ada put the kickers in place and began to milk, being careful not to use her fingernails as that would hurt the cow. There were thirty cows in total and all had to be done before breakfast. After the milking was complete, Ada ran the separator. When all the milking chores were done, she started in on the chickens. Feeding and watering were Ada's job. Gathering the eggs was left up to the parents, and when all chores were finished, they ate breakfast.

Ada and her brother started off to school. It was a simple country school, but it lay twenty thousand miles from home...well, at least five, and in the winter it seemed even further. There were some days when people couldn't get through and if that was the case, she just didn't go. Ada reached school a little before nine in the morning. They all started in on their studies, nothing fancy, just reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling. Lunchtime came and they all pulled

out lunches brought from home. Ada's lunch consisted of a sandwich, cookies and an apple. After school was out, Ada and her brother took off on their long journey home.

She reached home and changed clothes so that she could do all the chores that were done in the morning all over again. After the chores were done they ate supper and Ada cleaned up afterwards. After supper, the children did their homework and maybe played a game of dominoes. Radio was forbidden by Ada's parents. Finally they were off to bed once again to get some sleep, for tomorrow she would start all over once more.

- Doug Mindrup (based on an
interview with Ada
Kennedy)



"A Friend"

Kathy Locay was the first of six children in her family. She was born in 1947. She grew up with baseball in her family. Her father was Jack Collum and was a professional baseball player. He pitched on four or five different professional teams.

Kathy went to elementary school up until fourth grade, she then entered a special education program. After completing the special education program, her family and her relatives all surprised Kathy by having a surprise party in their living room.

Kathy worked in a local restaurant here in Grinnell; she also worked for a short time at a nursing home. She did some work at the county home in Montezuma, where she took care of six ladies. She was told when she started that one of the ladies may harm her for no reason any time. Kathy watched carefully and never was harmed.

At the county home Kathy met an older lady aid, Lorraine. She was 67 years old. They became very close friends, and Kathy started living with Lorraine. They would play bingo and shop together. Lorraine taught Kathy how to cook and taught her responsibility.

Nine years after they met, Lorraine learned that she had breast cancer. Lorraine became very ill and had to quit her job. Kathy was living with her through her illness and

up until her death. She would clean Lorraine's house, help her walk and get around. She would do anything Lorraine asked her to do. Kathy remembered the time when she washed the silverware and it wasn't done to Lorraine's satisfaction, so Kathy had to wash all the silverware over again.

Lorraine had a miniature poodle named Mitz. It was gray and small enough to fit in a pocket. Lorraine had obtained Mitz when her husband died, after only two years of marriage.

Mitz became ill and had to be put to sleep. Lorraine couldn't stand to have the dog put to sleep, so Kathy took Mitz to the vet to be put to sleep, to save some of the grief for Lorraine.

Lorraine became worse and worse. It was then discovered that she also had lung cancer and then later brain cancer.

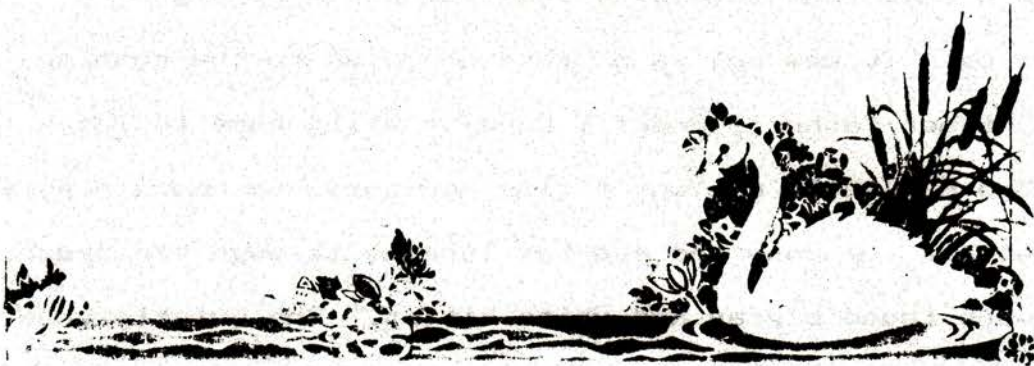
She was very sick and she asked Kathy to do one thing and that was not to cry at her funeral. It got to the point where Lorraine didn't know anybody. Lorraine's family said that it would be a good idea if she didn't see her anymore because Lorraine wouldn't know her.

Lorraine's birthday was on the 18th of January and she died on the 22nd. Kathy had lost a very dear friend. For two years now she has been doing volunteer work and living with her folks here in Grinnell.

After Kathy returned to live with her folks, she received two or three letters from Lorraine's family after her death, and then nothing else. No contact has been made since. She

doesn't feel badly, though, because she knew she did it for
Lorraine and not her family, and Lorraine knew it too.

- Shawn Mikles (based on an
interview with Kathy Locay)





"Warm Memories from the Country"

Idona Robinson was raised on a farm in Missouri. Her family consisted of her mother, father, sister and her. On this farm her father raised turkeys, geese, chickens and other animals.

At age seven, Idona had three pets: a dog, a lamb and a pony. The lamb's name was Jimmy Allen. He was very temperamental and would only accept food from her. He was tan and white in color and was later turned out in the pasture. She never really saw him again. Her pony was given to her by her father who got it in Corning, Iowa. It was a small Shetland pony that was about as big as a large dog. It was put in a crate and tied to the running board of her father's Model T Ford to bring home to Idona.

One day while she was riding her pony she heard a noise. She got off the pony and started looking through the brush. There she found a gray and white kitten. She quickly went home and asked her father if she could keep him. He said yes to his daughter's request even though they already had 18 cats in the barn. These cats were wild and would not go near a human. But the kitten, whom she named "Hitchhiker" was a special pet to Idona. It became a house cat that purred and cuddled up to her when she petted it.

Because of school, Idona didn't have many chores in the morning, but at night she had to feed the chickens, as

well as carry in coal and wood. Feeding the chickens consisted of going out to the barn to get the grain to feed the chickens. The grain was stored in a small bin inside the barn. She had to go out to the small woodshed next to the house to get the coal and wood. Her mother would sometimes need her services in bringing the water birds back to the chicken house from the creek down the hill from their house. They did this by making noise to scare the birds into heading for the farm. In the morning the birds were released to swim in the small duck pond that was in their orchard.

One of her favorite memories of life on the farm was going out into the woods and cutting down a Christmas tree. Her family would go out to the forest, cut down the tree of their choice and drag it home. When they got it home, they would string up popcorn and hang it on the tree. They also put up icicles made out of tin foil and glass balls. And, of course, they couldn't forget the star. It was a special time.



- Eric Van Zante (based on an interview with Idona Robinson.)



"Looking Through the Eyes of Carol Sammon"

Carol Sammon was born in 1909 in a house built by her parents in Jasper County, where she lived with her two sisters and brother.

They attended a country school through 8th grade. Every day, they walked two miles to school, unless the weather was bad; then their father would take them on a black horse named Bill or with the team and a spring buggy.

When she was nine and a half, her parents bought another farm house north of Lynnville. This meant they would only have to walk two miles to school. In their new two-story house, which had electricity, they would play dominoes and cards to pass the time. On Saturday nights, if they were good, their parents would treat them to a movie at the theater in Grinnell for 25 cents.

Carol occupied most of her time by doing chores and helping her mother around the house. She helped feed the pigs and chickens and collect eggs. She helped her mother in the kitchen by making butter. Her dad enjoyed it when they made butter because he liked to drink the buttermilk.

They also made homemade cottage cheese. They put milk in a blue enamel pan and set it on the stove to let it

curdle. They would stir it every few days, then pour it through a sieve. Her mother also taught her how to make cookies and bread.

Later, Carol taught school - grades K through 8. She used different methods of teaching. She taught by drawing pictures, then making sentences. She didn't have books for the younger children, but she did have Dick and Jane books for the other children. Many of her students walked to school and carried their lunch in a dinner bucket. The boys would walk to the neighbors and carry water back to school to put in a fountain to last the whole day. The 7th and 8th grade boys carried in coal in the winter to heat the school. At recess, the kids would play "fox and geese". The geese would run around and the fox would try to catch them. They also played "blackman" to pass the time. At Christmas, the children would put on a play and sing Christmas carols while the neighbor lady played the organ.

Mrs. Sammon was married in the Methodist Parsonage in New Sharon, Iowa. Then the newlywed couple moved to Ewart. She then discontinued her teaching career until her son was in 4th grade. In those days, they didn't want married women to teach in some townships.



Mrs. Sammon is now a widow living in Grinnell, Iowa.

- Jenny Anderson and Kim Weiss
(based on an interview with
Carol Sammon.)



"The Life of Ruby Simerman"

Ruby Simerman was born in the little town of Albia, Iowa, in 1917. Her parents had come over from England four years before. They had brought Ruby's older sister, Martha, with them to America. Ruby's mother had two brothers who were coal mining in the States, so Ruby's family came to America for better opportunity. Ruby's father worked as a coal miner near Albia, at the Avery mines.

Ruby was beginning her teenage years when the stock market crash occurred. Although she can't remember much about the Depression, she remembers one day when her mother gave Ruby her last three pennies to buy a pencil for school. Luckily enough, her family had plenty to eat, but not much of anything else that was a luxury.

She attended Albia High School, where for fun she would attend the weekly dances and sporting events. She later attended Albia Junior College and afterwards was hired as a teacher in a small country school. She taught about ten kids, ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade. A routine day went like this: Ruby arrived at 7:30 AM to start the wood stove. Morning recess ended and school began at 9:00. At noon it was lunch and afternoon recess. Then school got out at 4:00. She taught there for eight months and earned \$50.00 a month.

Ruby visited Washington, D.C. when she was seventeen.

She saw the Chicago World's Fair on her way and then proceeded to Washington, D. C. She met up with her sister, Martha, who was a secretary for the Department of Agriculture. With a special pass that Martha had, they visited the private rooms of the White House. Among the other sights she saw were: the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Memorial, Robert E. Lee's home, Mt. Vernon, and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. She also saw the world's largest roller coaster at a nearby amusement park.

A few years after she was married, Ruby joined the Department of Social Services in Mount Pleasant, back in 1943. Her job as a welfare worker was to verify applicants for admission. She later worked in Marshalltown and then in Grinnell, where she retired in 1954.

She now lives with her husband, a retired truck driver, on Prairie Street, north of 11th Avenue. She has two married sons. One lives in Cresco. The other, who lives in Sioux City, has a son and is expecting another child in March.

- Rob Cushing (based on an
interview with Ruby
Simerman)

"Vaneta's Chickens"

One part of Vaneta Rutherford's life was spent taking care of her many chickens.

Vaneta had two chicken houses with two hundred chickens in each house. The chickens took a great deal of time out of Vaneta's life. The biggest part of the time was spent gathering and taking care of the eggs. "The egge," said Vaneta, "had to be cleaned a certain way, and then placed in a wooden frame that was lined with burlap sacks. The sacks had to remain wet at all times."

The eggs had to be cleaned according to the hatchery. When Vaneta sold to the three local hatcheries (Redkins, Halderman's and Swift and Company) they had to be wiped down with sand-paper and then placed in the burlap.

When Vaneta sold to the Chicago market, the eggs had to be soaked in a sanitizing solution to insure the eggs were as clean as they could be. The eggs then had to be placed in thirty dozen cases and put into an ice-chest that sat in the corner of her porch. The eggs were then picked up by truck once a week.

The four hundred eggs were laid in big roll away nests. The nests were quite large and took up a lot of room in the houses. Vaneta would take a large bucket and collect the eggs at the same time each day.

The money that was earned from selling the eggs was

sent directly to the bank.

The profit was used to buy new chicks in the spring and to buy feed and oyster shells. The oyster shells were used as laying mash. Laying mash was eaten by the chickens to produce the hard shell around the eggs.

When asked if anything came to mind when she thought about the chickens, Vaneta told about this encounter:

"One afternoon," said Vaneta, "A storm was coming up from the west. I ran out to gather the eggs before the storm hit. When I got to the chicken house and looked in I saw a young deer standing in the lot with the chickens. I scared it so bad that it jumped over the six-foot high fence and was gone in a flash."

Vaneta took great pride in taking care of the chickens. She spent eight to ten years working with the chickens, and still enjoys visiting the farm from time to time.

- Jim Tingwald (based on
an interview with
Vaneta Rutherford)

