

I
Remember
It
Well



Alfrida E. Willke

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By Alfrida E. Willke

"Dedicated to my dear husband whose love and devotion has enriched my life and provided me with many of these wonderful memories."

I, Alfrida Kleinhenz, was born February 4, 1906 at St. Rose, Mercer County, Ohio. I was the daughter of John W. Kleinhenz and Elizabeth Kremer Kleinhenz.

I was from a family of twelve children. Ten children were born to John W. Kleinhenz and Elizabeth Kremer Kleinhenz, and two were born to John W. Kleinhenz and Catherine Tuente Kleinhenz.

The names of the twelve children are: Olive, Raymond, Leonard, Alfred, Hilda, Alfrida, Mary (died in infancy), Arnold, Pauline, Edna (died in infancy), Esther and Edwin.

I spent my childhood days at St. Rose, Ohio on the farm where I was born on February 4, 1906. It was the same farm where my great grandparents Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Kleinhenz lived, where my grandfather Arnold Kleinhenz was born in 1842 and where my father John W. Kleinhenz was born in 1871.

After migrating to America from Germany my great grandfather Joseph Kleinhenz purchased this land from the United States Government. It had been Indian Territory only nineteen years prior to that. It had never been cultivated. It consisted of eighty acres when my great grandfather purchased this land in 1837. More acres were added over the period of many years.

My father took over this farm in 1893 after the death of his parents who died at an early age. His mother - Bernadine Pohlman Kleinhenz, born in 1846 in Maria Stein, Ohio - died at the age of 47 years on Thanksgiving Day. His father died a month later on Christmas Day at the age of 50 years. He died of typhoid fever and his mother died of a hemorrhage during her menopause. After losing father and mother in such a short time, my father was again saddened the following August 1894 by the sudden death of his grandmother Mrs. Joseph (Maria Meiners) Kleinhenz, who lived in the same household. My father often spoke of his grandmother, an orphan, and only 16 years of age when she married Joseph Kleinhenz. She was born in 1816.

My father often mentioned how hard it had been for him to take over the responsibilities of family and farm after the death of his parents. He was 22 years old then. His sister Mary was 24 and married, Regina 17, Anthony 15 and Minnie 9. A sister Anna died in 1888 at the age of 14 of summer complaint (apparently appendicitis). Another sister died at the age of 4 months in 1890.

Two years after the death of his parents my father married my mother Elizabeth Kremer, daughter of Frank and Mary Seitz Kremer of Maria Stein. My mother was born October 19, 1874 at Maria Stein. During their courtship days my father would walk across the fields many times to see my mother who lived just two miles away.

My mother, like my father, had experienced sorrow at an early age. When she was 13 her mother died at the age of 34 of complications following childbirth. My mother was the oldest girl and second oldest of eight living children. So she had to take over the responsibilities of the house after her mother's death, who in her 15 years and 3 months of married life had given birth to 11 children. Three died in infancy.

My father and mother were married at St. John Catholic Church, Maria Stein on November 6, 1895. They lived on the previously mentioned farm at St. Rose. It was here that all my sisters and brothers and I were born.

The life of my mother was not one of leisure. She lived in days when one could not go to the store to buy bread and other baked goods because it was not available. So she baked her own bread, biscuits, pies, cakes and cookies. When she wanted chicken for dinner she went into the chicken coop, killed and

butchered the chickens herself. She used a churn to make butter and a washboard to wash clothes. Later she used a washing machine which had to be agitated by hand by pushing a handle back and forth. We butchered hogs in the winter and salted down the meat which lasted through the summer.

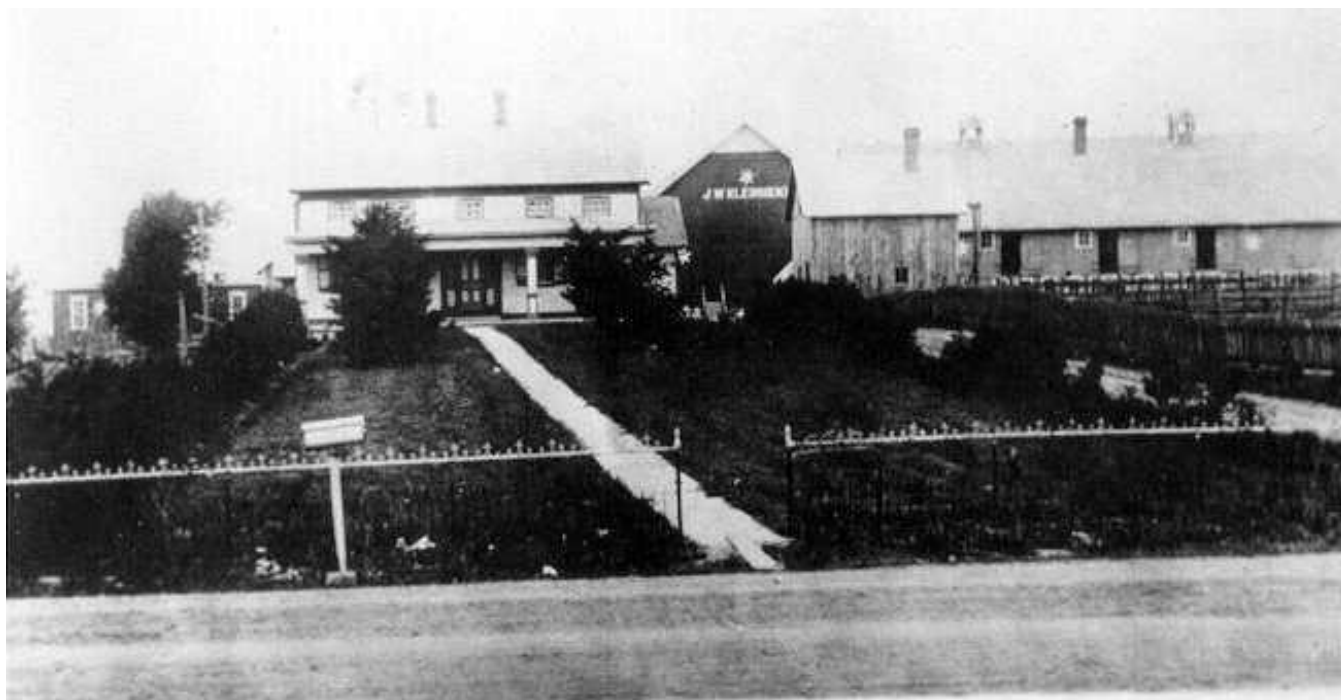


Photo: Kleinhenz farm home, St. Rose, Ohio. Picture was taken In 1918.

Our house had six bedrooms, a large living room, a large dining room which we used every day, and a large kitchen. The kitchen had a sink with two pumps, one for hard water and the other for soft water. These were luxuries since most people had to carry water in buckets from an outside well or cistern. Many times in cold weather we could not use the inside pumps because the pipes would freeze. We had no toilet or bathroom facilities in the house.

There were gas wells in St. Rose. We used gas for our kitchen range, heating stoves and for light. We also used coal oil (kerosene) lights because we did not have gas lights in every room. We also had to depend on burning wood in our kitchen range and heating stoves in cold weather because many times water in the gas lines would freeze and shut off the gas. My parents' bedroom was the only bedroom that could be heated.

My father was a man with a lot of ambition and determination. He was a farmer and also was a big operator in livestock, especially hogs. On his 130 acre farm he grew corn, wheat, oats and hay. He had six work horses to do the farm work for which there were no power-mechanised tools.

Wheat and oats were cut with a binder. The sheaves were then gathered and piled into shocks in the field to dry and later taken to the barn to be threshed. While it was threshed the straw was blown directly into the barn or on a stack next to the barn. The grain was put in a granary. Hay was brought in loose on wagons, deposited in the haymow by way of slings, ropes and pulleys. Corn was cut by hand with a corn knife, put in shocks and later husked by hand in the field. The corn was then stored in a corn crib.

We always had several milk cows that supplied our family with plenty of milk, plus a pint or two we would take over to the priest house directly across the road from us. We churned our own butter by using the cream we separated from the milk.

I have many happy memories of the days when I would take a pail of milk over to the priest's housekeeper, Alfrida Heitz. She always made a big fuss over me because I was named after her. She was a native of Germany so we spoke German to each other. When I brought the milk over she always had something to give me, either a small piece of candy, half an apple, cookie, sometimes a pancake or a piece of bread spread with honey. She never failed to give me something.

In the springtime we used setting hens to hatch chicks. We raised enough chickens to supply meat and eggs for our family. Our chickens were not confined to the chicken coop but roamed the barnyard freely. When we gathered eggs we would say, "We must hunt eggs," because eggs could be found in other buildings and places besides the chicken coop.

For water the windmill pump kept a supply of water in storage tanks for our farm animals.

In addition to a large barn - built in 1879 - Dad had a large two-story hog stable built in 1907. The second story of the hog stable was used to store corn and other grain. Dad hired carpenters to do this.

Having the carpenters there meant a lot of extra work for my mother since she had to feed them two lunches, dinner and sometimes supper every day. Mother always had help in the house since she was not able to do all the work herself. Dad had one, sometimes two hired hands who helped with the farm work and tend the hogs. The hired hands lived with us and were treated like one of the family.

I can recall a fire we had on the farm in the winter of 1912-1913. It was the days before we had fire protection so the fire had to be fought by neighborhood volunteers who formed a bucket-fire-brigade. If it had not been for the heroic efforts of my father the house could very easily have burned too, since a driveway was the only thing that separated the burning building from our house.

During the height of the fire Dad climbed on top of the roof of the house. As buckets of water were brought to him he alternated throwing one bucketful of water on himself and the other on the fire. By so doing he kept the house from burning. We lived across the road from the school and Dad gave much credit to school boys who came over to help battle the fire by throwing snowballs on the roof and sides of the house.

The building that burned was a two-story slop-kitchen. It was used to mix hot water with bran and other meal which was fed to the hogs. The warm mixture was put in a trough about 120 feet long by means of a big tank on tracks which Dad had devised. Dad's feeding methods were always on a big scale as he sometimes fed 1000 head of hogs at one time. The slop kitchen was soon replaced with another one just like it. That same winter my mother was preparing for the birth of her tenth child.

On February 10, 1913 my mother gave birth to a healthy baby girl. She was alone when the baby came. She had called my father and the doctor but when they arrived the baby had been born. Complications set in and my mother passed away eight days later on February 18 at the age of 38 years.

I was seven years old then. The memory of her passing is still very vivid in my mind. The day before she died she called all of her children to her bedside to say good-bye. The memory of this and the memory of the sadness and grief I saw my father experience left a very deep impression. Our mother's death was deeply felt by the entire community.

Dr. A. J. Willke, who later became my father-in-law, and who had delivered all of us children, did all he could to save my mother. I feel if the modern medicines that are available now could have been had then, she would have lived. There were no miracle drugs like sulfonamides, penicillin or antibiotics. There were no hospitals in Mercer County or in the surrounding area at this time, but my father was able to hire a registered nurse who came to the house to take care of mother.

I can particularly remember one of Dr. Willke's visits to our house to see our mother. He had come over one night with horse and storm buggy and had tied his horse to a hitching post next to my bedroom window. It was a bitter cold night. After a few hours the horse had worked itself loose and started for home in Maria Stein. The horse and buggy were later found about a quarter mile down the road.

The new baby, Edna, died 18 days later on February 28. Babies that were not breast fed had less chance of survival. Pasteurization of milk was unknown. Another baby Mary died in infancy in 1907.

When my mother died she had never used electricity and never rode in an automobile. In her 17 years 3 months of married life she had given birth to 10 children. Now there were 8 children: Olive 16, Raymond 14, Leonard 13, Alfred 11, Hilda 9, Alfrida 7, Arnold 4 and Pauline 2.

Olive and Aunt Minnie Kleinhenz, who lived with us, continued on with the household duties. Aunt Mary Fleck, who lived in Maria Stein, did our sewing and came over when extra help was needed, like at butchering and threshing time.

I started school at the age of 6 and attended St. Rose Public School which was located directly across the road from our farm. It was a one-room school where all eight grades (65 children) were taught by one teacher.

When I started school I knew and spoke very little English because everybody in St. Rose and the surrounding area spoke Low-German, the native tongue of the ancestors who had settled in this area in the 1830's and 1840's when they came from Germany.

We studied German in school as well as English. Around the year 1916, during World War I, it became compulsory to discontinue teaching German in the schools because it was considered pro-German. Yet our religious instruction, prayers and sermons in church remained in German for many years afterwards.

In school we studied grammar, arithmetic, geography, physiology, U.S. History and Bible History. A lot of emphasis was put on reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling.

Having all eight grades together in one room had its compensations in that we learned the art of concentration. While classes were being held, the rest of the students had to be able to block out the rest of the activity in the room so as to concentrate on their own work. Many times I learned a lot by just listening and observing what went on in other classes. All my teachers were men.

We started the school day by attending Mass. We would meet at school, line up in pairs, with the boys going first, and march together to church which was located a few yards from school. In church the boys would occupy the front pews on one side while the girls took the opposite side. We had the same seating arrangement in school.

It was amazing how one teacher could have perfect control over a roomful of children and teach at the same time. He had to instill into us a little fear occasionally by using a rawhide on the boys who misbehaved. This was done in front of all the children in the room after they had been told the day before of the punishment. One day a boy was spanked longer than usual. I found out later that while he was

being spanked he had bitten the teacher's leg.

In church on Sunday afternoon we had Vespers followed by Catechism instructions given by the priest. We had to memorize answers to specific questions for our homework. It was embarrassing when we were asked to stand up and recite, with everybody in church listening, and did not know the answers. Many times I felt like crawling under the bench.

When we greeted a priest we were taught to say *Gelobt sei Jesus Christus* ("Praise be Jesus Christ"). We never saw a priest in public without his Roman collar and priestly attire.

When I was ten years old my grandfather Kremer passed away on July 22, 1916 at the age of 67 years of an asthmatic-heart condition. He was born in Maria Stein on March 10, 1849. He was the only grandparent I knew, as the other three had passed away before I was born.

My memory of grandfather Kremer is seeing him come down the road with a white horse and buggy and bringing us stick-candy. He had a long beard. He was a farmer known for working hard and being very thrifty. Seemingly he passed this trait down to his eight children. Four of his sons - John D., Anthony, August and Frank - became successful farmers; one son, Sebastian, entered the priesthood; his three daughters, Katherine Evers, Anna Meiering and my mother married successful farmers.

My father often reminded me when I talked fast that I had inherited that trait from my grandmother Maria Seitz Kremer.

On February 14, 1917, four years after my mother's death, my father married Catherine Tuente who was born on August 1, 1889 at St. Patricks, Ohio. She was the oldest of ten children and the daughter of Ben and Anna Buddendick Tuente who were natives of Germany and lived on a farm south of St. Rose. She was 27 years old and single when Dad married her.

They had a big church wedding with an all-day celebration at the house. For their honeymoon they went by train to Buffalo, NY. They spent several days at Niagara Falls and also several days at the home of the owner of a Buffalo stockyards where Dad was shipping his hogs. I can remember mother saying when she came back that she had enjoyed a ride in an electric car on the streets of Buffalo.

It must not have been easy for our stepmother to come into a family of eight children ranging from six to twenty years and to adjust to a different type of life, as she was used to a quiet and secluded farm life with her parents.

We too lived on a farm but it was entirely different than she was used to. Dad was big in the livestock business and it seemed people were always coming or going at our house. All the business was transacted in the house where Dad had his office.

Our stepmother was very good to us children, taking the role of a mother that could not have been duplicated by many.

A year after their marriage, on February 16, 1918, my sister Esther was born. I was not told of her arrival and so was surprised when I was informed I had a baby sister. I can remember Dr. A. J. Willke coming over and delivering her in the home. Four years later, on January 16, 1922, my brother Edwin was born.

Mother was a very good cook and housekeeper. One of my happy memories is helping her bake cookies. She always wanted me to help her because I could do it the way she wanted it done. Another one of my specialties as a child was to straighten up the house. Whenever company was expected and the house had

to be cleaned up in a short notice they would appoint me to do it.

For many years mother suffered severe attacks of asthma. Evidently she was allergic to something on the farm because after moving to St. Marys, Ohio in 1927 she was relieved of her asthma condition.

Dad was always willing to experiment with new innovations and to adjust to change and new ideas. He was the first person to own an automobile in St. Rose by purchasing a Reo touring car in 1913. However he was a little skeptical about buying the first tractors that were available. He waited until he saw some improvement. Somewhere around 1917 he bought his first tractor, a Fordson. About 1918 he purchased a Delco system that was used to generate electricity for electric lights for our own use.

The first radio around 1920 must have been impressive. I can vividly remember all of us children gathering around Dad, who was sitting at his desk in our dining room, taking turns using the earphones to hear for the first time something over the air.

Dad had strong religious beliefs. Every morning before breakfast (we always ate together) we all knelt down to pray five Our Fathers and Hail Marys. In the evening, especially in the winter before we would go to bed, we all knelt aside our chair to pray the rosary. Most of the time I was asleep before it was completed but Dad did not care about that. The only thing that was important to him was that we knelt down and prayed.

I never saw Dad smoke. He was very opposed to excessive drinking.

I can remember how Dad proclaimed his patriotism during World War I (1914-1918). I listened to many heated discussions between Dad and some of his relatives and friends, still loyal to their German ancestry, who thought we should not be fighting Germany. Dad always came back with the response that we were now Americans and should forget our German heritage at this time.

In 1918, during World War I, we had a flu epidemic that brought death to many people. This included a hired hand who was called to active duty while he was working for us. He died six weeks after he was inducted while in basic training at Chillicothe, Ohio.

I can recall the Dayton, Ohio flood of 1913 and experiencing a tornado that struck St. Rose and the surrounding area on the evening of Palm Sunday, March 1920. It shattered windows in our house, took down our chicken coop and parts of our barn. It also blew down one of the small twin steeples that flanked St. Rose Church. I can plainly remember the wind blowing fiercely all day and then hearing that terrible roar followed by complete silence. The tornado came from the southwest, dipped down on the edge of St. Rose and Chickasaw, Ohio and then hit Moulton, Ohio squarely.

My father believed it was essential to get a good education. He was one of the few parents in this particular era who sent his children away from home for more schooling. There was no high school in the immediate area. It was not until 1921, when it became compulsory to attend school until 16 years of age, that a two-year high school program was available in Maria Stein, two miles down the road.

My three oldest brothers - Ray, Leonard and Alfred attended high school at St. Joseph's Academy, (Collegeville) Rensselaer, Indiana. The primary reason Dad sent them to school was to get a general education. A degree was not the important factor. Leonard, however, did receive a high school diploma, attended the University of Dayton for two years and later graduated from Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio with a Doctor of Medicine degree. He interned at St. Rita Hospital, Lima, Ohio for one year.

After they had finished the eighth grade my two older sisters, Olive and Hilda, attended St. Mary Institute, Minster, Ohio for one school year. It was a boarding school operated by the Sisters of the Precious Blood. Since my father thought so highly of St. Mary Institute he made plans to send me there too after I had finished the eighth grade at St. Rose Public School.

At St. Mary Institute I attended regular classes - a repeat more or less of my eighth grade education at St. Rose - with a lot of emphasis on handwriting, expression in reading, and religion. In the spring and fall the nuns would take us on nature studies in the fields and woods, something I had never experienced.

I took one-half hour piano lessons twice a week and practiced faithfully one hour every day. By Christmas when I went home for the first time, I could play some nice Christmas pieces and waltzes. I still remember how proud my family was of me and how happy and anxious I was to play for them for the first time. Sister Consolata also spent many hours teaching me embroidery work and a little hand painting. Besides that, just spending nine months away from home in the environment of nuns was an education in itself.

Last but not least they broke me of the habit of slamming doors. I had been reminded quite often to close doors silently, but since I did not heed that advice Sister Antonia punished me by making me stand for an hour in a corner of a big hall where everybody could see me. When I was asked later why I had been punished I told them I had slammed the door once too often.

I went home in the spring after the school year. That same summer, when I was 15 years old, it became mandatory to go to school until 16 years of age. So to keep the truant officer away from our door I again went to St. Rose School and repeated the eighth grade until I reached sixteen on February 4.

It was not until a few years later, when I wanted to go into nurses training school to become a registered nurse, that I wished I had been encouraged to go to high school. To enter nursing school required four years of high school which I did not have. I am sure if Dad had realized how much a high school education would have meant to me he would have gladly given me that opportunity.

Attending high school was taken for granted for my younger brothers and sisters since it was conveniently available to them. Arnold attended high school in Maria Stein for two years and graduated from Memorial High School in St. Marys. He is a graduate of Ohio State University, Columbus in the School of Civil Engineering. For her eighth grade Pauline attended St. Mary Institute, Minster and then went to high school in Maria Stein and in St. Marys where she graduated. She graduated as a registered nurse from Good Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing in Cincinnati. Esther also graduated from Memorial High School in St. Marys. Edwin, unfortunately, did not finish high school. Yet he held a very responsible job as Division Manager of Husman Refrigeration, a job he achieved because he worked hard for it for many years. Edwin and I always felt we missed a lot in life by not getting a good education.

I started to drive a car when I was 14 years old. At that time we had a Model T Ford coupe. We called an automobile a *machine*. We drove around 20 miles per hour and we did not need a driver's license. There were very few cars on the road then.

My first experience driving came when Henry, our hired hand, asked me to take him to one of our fields to do some work. The field was located alongside of a country road about one mile away. All I knew about driving was what I had observed. Since Henry was not too anxious to walk to the field, he said he would help me learn to drive.

Because I did not know how to shift gears, Henry got behind the steering wheel as we started out. When we were going good he left me slip behind the wheel. When we got to the field Henry asked me to slow

down just enough so he could jump out of the car. This would eliminate shifting gears. After Henry was out of the car I continued on by myself, going around a four-mile square until I reached home. I then turned off the switch to stop the car. Dad was surprised when he heard what I had done.

Arnold, too, started driving when he was 14 years old. He took a wall out of the garage when he pressed the gas pedal instead of the brake when he drove into the garage.

In 1936 it became a State law to take a driver's test and to be 16 years of age before we could drive a car. We needed a license to drive several years prior to that, but a driver's test was not required then. So I have never taken a driver's test.

Being now at an age when I enjoyed going out in the evening I looked forward to going to dances that were held in the surrounding area, particularly wedding barn dances that were very popular then.

All wedding celebrations were held in the home with an all day celebration following the Mass in the morning. If they lived on the farm the celebration would end in the evening with a dance in the barn. The dance was an open house affair. Everybody who wanted to come was welcome.

We soon knew all about the barn dances that were coming in the area because we always had a good time. These dances served as a place for young girls and boys to meet. We were never treated to food or drinks at these wedding barn dances. To get to these dances my brother Alfred four years older than I - was always ready to take me if I could get permission from Dad. Dad kept a close watch over me and limited my evening social activities.

On Sunday summer afternoons a group of girls my age would go to watch baseball games that were played by young boys in the area. It was here that I started to notice a certain young boy whose name was Ed. He played second base and sometimes pitched in the ball game. Here Ed and I became acquainted. Before very long we were looking for one another at dances and other places of amusement.

The following spring, when I was 17 years old and while we were at a dance in St. Henry, Ohio, he asked me for our first date. I could not accept the date that night because I had to ask Dad's permission first. So I told him to call me the next day. I had been going out quite a bit that week and realized I was overdoing it. I was not sure Dad would let me go. Yet I was anxious to go out with Ed. This would mean so much to me because I knew he was due to rejoin his family in Cincinnati in a few days and would no longer be in this area.

His family had moved to Cincinnati the previous year. But he remained in Maria Stein to finish his senior year in high school at Minster. He had been boarding with his brother and sister-in-law in Maria Stein.

When Ed finally telephoned for my answer that next afternoon I still had not found the courage to ask Dad if I could go. So while Ed was waiting on the phone I asked Dad. Dad gave his permission after I told him it was Edgar Willke who wanted the date. We double dated with another couple and went to a dance at Eagle Park in Minster. It was Memorial Day 1923.

At the dance Ed told me he was planning on going to the University of Cincinnati Medical School to become a doctor. He then asked me if it would be all right for him to write to me. I told him I would like that very much. Three weeks later I received my first letter from 1017 Lockman Avenue.

Now I had the desire to go someplace to broaden my horizons. That meant leaving home and the farm. I had a great desire to go into nurses training school, but that was not possible because I did not have a high school education.

Hilda at that time was working in Dayton, Ohio and staying with Uncle Ben and Aunt Mary Fleck. So I thought that this is what I would like - to be with them and Hilda. I was 17 years old when I left home for the first time to strike out on my own. During the seven months I was in Dayton I worked with Hilda in the factory at Delco Corp.

While in Dayton I attended many silent movies. A few years later when the era of silent movies ended I was enthralled by the first talking picture. It was a demonstration of an actor impersonating Abraham Lincoln. Another movie I particularly enjoyed back in 1927 was *The Jazz Singer* featuring Al Jolson. The movies usually included enjoyable vaudeville acts. Other forms of entertainment I enjoyed while I was in Dayton were dances on Saturday nights at Greystone and Triangle Parks.

One day while walking in downtown Dayton I noticed men working on high ladders at Third and Main Streets. I asked what they were doing. I was not too sure I was not being kidded when I was told they were installing a traffic light. I could not comprehend how it would work. So I saw the first traffic lights used in downtown Dayton. The first lights were merely red and green. Later the yellow caution light was added.

I worked in Dayton until spring and then returned home.

Olive, who had married George Thieman and lived on a farm northwest of Minster, was now expecting her third child. When she asked me to come over to help for several months I was happy to accept. I was there when their daughter, Hilda, was born in July.

When Olive married George in 1920 she had moved in with George's parents, Mr. & Mrs. Bernard Thieman. My association with grandpa and grandma Thieman that summer left many nice memories. Grandpa at 80 and grandma at 74 were still very keen and up-to-date. They loved and were interested in young people. So our love for each other was mutual.

Grandma Thieman usually would sit down with me the morning after I had been out the night before, wanting to know all about my evening out. Then she had some tales to tell me about her teenage days. One of her favorite sayings I found to be very true - "One never stands still; one either goes forward or backward."

For recreation that summer I went to dances and quite often had dates. When we went to dances with a date we would have the first and last dance together and for the rest of the evening we felt free to dance with whomever we wanted to. Boys and girls went out with one another as friends, more or less, and for companionship. One did not feel obligated to go steady with one person right away. Engagements were short and many times were kept secret until the couple was published for the first time in church.

A memorable date I had with Ed happened one time when I was home. I had been dating Frank for five weeks or more when I received a letter from Ed asking me for a date for the 4th of July. That day was a little special as far as dates were concerned.

When I told Frank I could not go out with him that night because I had another date, he wanted to know who this special guy was who I was going out with. I refused to tell him, but he made it a special point to find out.

Fifteen minutes before Ed came that night I saw Frank come into our driveway. I was talking with him at his car when Ed came driving in. Frank then left without hesitating, but still did not figure out then who this special guy was that I was going out with.

When Olive did not need me anymore with the work that fall, I returned home. I again ventured out to spend the winter and spring months (1924-25) back in Dayton where Hilda and I worked together at Delco Corp.

I was not happy with what I was doing in Dayton and had a great desire to go someplace for a change of scenery. I had tried for some time to find someone to go with me to California. But since that was not possible this adventure never materialized.

However at that time I had a friend, Stella Brunswick in Sharpsburg, Ohio, who said she would be willing to go with me to Cleveland, Ohio. I told her about my uncle there, Fr. Sebastian Kremer, C.P.P.S., who might help us find employment. So that fall Stella and I boarded a train in Dayton for Cleveland. We spent the first couple of nights in a rooming house since motels were not in existence yet. We had not informed Fr. Kremer of our plans of coming to Cleveland so we decided to wait a few days before venturing out to see him.

Fr. Kremer was my mother's brother. He was born in Maria Stein in 1881 and was ordained a priest in the Society of the Precious Blood on June 11, 1907 at St. Charles Seminary, Carthagen, Ohio. He had been pastor of our Lady of Good Counsel Church in Cleveland since 1918.

It was a big parish consisting of 1200 families with two assistant priests. The priest house was a large three-story building called the Mission House because it also served as the home for C.P.P.S. Missionaries when they were not on assignment and also for a few retired missionary priest. Fr. Kremer, often referred to as the "Big Boss," was in charge of all the responsibilities of the rectory.

Stella and I found a streetcar in downtown Cleveland that took us to the Mission House at 4423 Pearl Road. When we arrived Fr. Kremer was surprised and happy to see us. As we explained to him that we had come to Cleveland in hopes of finding a job, he immediately showed his kindness by inviting us to stay with him and offered to help us find employment.

After a few days he had pressured two families, who were his parishioners, into hiring us to help the ladies of the house with the housework. The fact that I was Fr. Kremer's niece carried a lot of weight in the arrangement.

The two families Stella and I worked for were Mr. & Mrs. Mayer and Mr. & Mrs. Schindler. Mrs. Schindler and Mr. Mayer were sister and brother who were in the lumber business. They could well afford help. But both Stella and I soon realized they would rather not have us around, particularly since we lived with them.

After several months Fr. Kremer's two housekeepers left. When he approached us with the idea of working for him we readily accepted. At the Mission House we had very nice living quarters. Our work consisted of cooking and baking, cleaning and making beds for approximately eight priests. Sometimes there were more and sometimes less. Another lady was hired to do the laundry while Stella and I helped with the mangling.

Stella and I soon became involved with parish activities. We joined a bowling league at the recreation center which was owned and supported by the parish. Often Stella and I witnessed a marriage when couples had to be married in the priest house. At that time mixed marriages could not be performed in the church.

Dad came over to see me several times when he was on the way East on business trips. One time when he came over he had a nice surprise for me. He invited me to go with him on a trip to New York City,

Buffalo and Boston where he was going on business seeing meat packers. Dad enjoyed major league baseball and had arranged this trip to coincide with the New York Yankees playing in the World Series at Yankee Stadium.

We went by train. The most remarkable thing I can remember about this trip is seeing the beauty of the fall colors of Berkshire Hills in Massachusetts. It was October and the colors of the foliage were at their peak. Nothing I ever saw later in all my travels surpassed the memory of this beautiful scenery.

I remember also going through large meat packing plants, seeing the slaughtering of hogs and cattle in mass production and seeing how the meat was processed.

In New York I did not go with Dad to see the World Series. I was so fascinated with New York City and the tall buildings that I preferred to go sight-seeing instead. I have often been sorry I did not go since I missed a chance to see Babe Ruth play. The following year (1927) he set a world record of 60 home runs in one season.

Dad loved professional sports. One time he took me along to Detroit to see Joe Louis, the prize fighter, in a bout.

While I was working for Mrs. Schindler in Cleveland I met her brother Leo, whom I dated for quite some time. He would call for me at the Mission House and take me to shows, parties and many nice places. He did not dance. For Easter he gave me the first corsage I ever received. When I received it I did not know what to do with it.

Ed and I were corresponding regularly. That summer we arranged to see each other at Cedar Point, a big amusement park on Lake Erie. Ed and a boy friend came from Cincinnati, while a girl friend and I came via steamer from Cleveland.

After I had dated Leo for a year or more, and our courtship was getting serious, I had to make a decision. Ed and I had made no commitments. He did not know about my romance with Leo. So the decision was entirely up to me. My decision was to quit seeing Leo. It was 1926-27, and Ed was a freshman at the University of Cincinnati Medical School.

After working for Fr. Kremer for 20 months, Stella decided to return home to Sharpsburg. I too was ready to leave but did not have the heart to tell Fr. Kremer. I stayed another two weeks, then decided to leave because it was not the same without Stella.

When I told Fr. Kremer about my decision to leave he was not too happy. I remember him saying, "Alfrida, what will you do after you are married, when you won't be able to go from pillar to post?"

Fr. Kremer left Cleveland in 1947 after having been pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church for 29 years. He had hard and difficult times during the Depression when the church and the adjoining school were supported by the parish, which was in great debt. But due to Fr. Kremer's ability for raising money, which required hard work, he had the pleasure of seeing the completion of a new beautiful church when he left.

His last appointment in the Society of the Precious Blood took him to Ft. Wayne, Indiana. While stationed there he died in an automobile accident in 1955 on State Route 127 just south of junction State Route 33 while on his way to Chickasaw to attend the funeral of his brother Frank. Fr. Kremer was 74 years old when he died.

Upon returning home in 1927 after my Cleveland adventure, my parents were in the process of moving from the farm at St. Rose to St. Marys.

Over the years Dad's livestock business (hogs and some calves) had grown tremendously. He had big ideas for expansion. In 1924 he bought a large abandoned factory building in St. Marys that had been the American Chain Co. This he converted into a large stockyard.

In 1927 it became necessary that Dad leave the farm where he had lived all his life (56 years) and move to St. Marys so he could devote full time running the business. Ray, Alfred and Hilda had already moved to St. Marys and were working full time at the stockyards.

Over the years the business eventually expanded to the degree that by the time of Dad's death in 1944, he owned 20 branch yards located within a radius of 35 to 40 miles from the Union Stockyards in St. Marys. All livestock was trucked from the branch yards to St. Marys yards. Here it was sorted and shipped to Eastern packers via Nickle Plate Railroad.

By hiring help, going strictly into grain farming, and keeping all his farm implements, Dad was able to continue the operation as manager of the 130 acre farm at St. Rose.

Photo: Kleinhenz home in St. Marys, Ohio. Picture was taken In 1981.

When my family moved to St. Marys a house was rented for a short time at 243 N. Wayne Street. Later a large brick house was purchased at 518 W. Jackson Street. The house was built around 1895-1901 and was called the Decker Property. It was built so big and extravagantly that the builder never lived in it because he went bankrupt after it was completed. It had 12 rooms, spacious halls, four wood-burning fireplaces and four of the six bedrooms had large lavatories with hot and cold running water. When my family moved into it, it was extensively decorated with new carpeting, velour drapes, beautiful chandeliers and furniture. They lived in it for 17 years. When Dad died in 1944 mother sold it. It was converted into a nursing home.

After spending several months at home, after my return from Cleveland, I ended up working in Detroit that winter as a waitress and doing factory work at Zenith Corp. I went to Detroit because Mary Dorsten of Guadalupe, Ohio, who went with me, had relatives there.

The following spring I received a letter from Dad asking me to come home to work in the stockyards' office because Hilda, who had been working there, was very ill with tuberculosis. I came home and took over Hilda's job. I worked at the office for the next three years, or until I was married.

Hilda had a hard battle. She had been sick for a long time, coughing and losing weight, before the doctors diagnosed her illness as tuberculosis of the lungs. X-rays were not as dependable then as they are today. Hilda took complete bed rest at home, since there was no other specific treatment. When she was not making satisfactory recovery Dad sent her by train to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to a dry climate which was supposedly helpful for tubercular patients.

While in New Mexico she had a phrenectomy operation in which they partially collapsed her one lung. After several years of illness she did recover.

Getting adjusted to life in St. Marys meant some changes for me, particularly since I was a new girl in town and the daughter of a prominent businessman. I was not confronted with these challenges when I worked in Dayton, Cleveland and Detroit. These challenges, I think, reflected on my childhood days on the farm, where I had lived a secluded and sheltered life. Yet I had the determination to learn and fall in

line and do the things my friends and peers were doing.

Soon after my arrival in St. Marys I was asked to join a bridge club, which I graciously accepted although I had never played bridge or any other card game before. I was asked to be president of the Young Ladies Sodality at Holy Rosary Catholic Church. I accepted that although I had never conducted a meeting before or had even attended a meeting where a president presided. But I kept plugging along and was accepted regardless of my many blunders.

At that time St. Marys had a big amusement park called Gordon State Park, which was located along Lake St. Marys. This amusement park had a large roller coaster, boardwalk, speedboat rides, other concessions and huge dance hall with big-name bands providing music. The band stayed in St. Marys for several weeks at a time. Dances were held almost every night. Since dancing was my favorite pastime I enjoyed many nights dancing and listening to big-name bands that came there.

Gordon State Park was promoted around 1924 by Harold Neely, a prominent businessman of St. Marys. The park reached its peak around 1929. Around that time the roller coaster was destroyed by fire. Due to this catastrophe, plus the beginning of the Great Depression which started in 1929, the park was forced to close after five years of operation. The large dance hall was replaced with a smaller one which was used only a short time.

It was five years now since I had my first date with Ed. In those five years we had corresponded regularly. He came to see me about six or eight times during that five year interval. The time had come when we would see one another more often.

Edgar J. Willke (Ed) was born in Maria Stein on November 6, 1905. His father, Dr. A. J. Willke, was born in Cincinnati on January 8, 1865. His mother, Caroline Vander Horst Willke, was born in Minster on April 7, 1876. They were married May 8, 1894 at Minster and took up residence in Maria Stein where Ed's father was a family physician.

There were eight children, all born in Maria Stein. Ada was born in 1895, George 1897, Marie 1900, Lucille, 1903, Edgar 1905, Alois 1908, Marcella 1911 and Margie 1917. Twin boys died in 1899.

By 1922, when Ed's parents saw their children leaving home one by one, to go either to college or work in Cincinnati, they decided to leave Maria Stein and move to Cincinnati so they could be with their children. Ada, George, Marie and Lucille were gone. Ed was soon to follow.

Another factor that helped them decide to leave Maria Stein was because George, who had completed his medical education, was willing to take over his father's medical practice in Maria Stein.

Ed was a junior at Minster High School when his parents moved to Cincinnati. He remained in Maria Stein the next school year so he could finish his senior year at Minster. It was during this year that Ed and I became acquainted and interested in one another.

After Ed finished high school in May 1923 he joined his family in Cincinnati. He worked for one year at Powell Valve and a short time at Union Central Life Insurance Company before starting school at the University of Cincinnati for his two years of pre-medicine. Ed was going into his junior year of medicine when I started living and working in St. Marys in 1928.

That summer I spent my first weekend with the Willke family when Ed asked me to come to Cincinnati for the wedding of his sister, Marie, to Al J. Goeke that was to take place on Saturday July 28th.

I will always remember the consideration and kindness shown me by the Willke family especially his mother. They must have sensed the uneasiness I was experiencing on my first visit with them.

For the next three years Ed and I saw each other more often. Since he had a very busy schedule with school, his internship year at Good Samaritan Hospital and working at times to make ends meet, I made frequent trips to Cincinnati to spend the weekends with him instead of him making the trip to St. Marys to see me.

On my trips to Cincinnati I would sometimes take the Big Four Railroad which I boarded in Wapakoneta, Ohio, and other times I would take Dad's Buick car. At one time we had a Buick sports car with rumble seat.

During our courtship days Ed gave me many boxes of my favorite Maud Mueller candy. In addition he gave me a beautiful four-piece set of silver jewelry - necklace, earrings, brooch and bracelet - which later I wore on my wedding day. A few months before our marriage he gave me an expensive eight-place setting of 1847 Roger Brothers silverware.

For many years I wore Ed's fraternity pin (Omega Upsilon Phi) and his high school class ring which he had made smaller to fit my finger. The pin and ring were not a symbol of an engagement but only a sign of our love and devotion for each other. We were both still free to do as we wanted to.

About nine months before our wedding we became engaged to be married.

Ed's decision to practice medicine in Maria Stein came in the spring of 1930 when his brother, George, asked him if he would be interested in taking over his practice, since he had decided to leave and take over a position at Kneipp Sanitarium, Rome City, Indiana. This complicated matters a little since Ed still had to serve one year of internship before he could practice. However, arrangements were made with Dr. T. H. Will to take over and keep the practice alive in Maria Stein for that one year.

A few months before Ed had completed his internship we set our wedding date for July 21, 1931 which was also the date of my father's 60th birthday.

Soon after that Hilda and Pauline held a dinner party at our house for close friends and relatives, to announce our engagement and the date of marriage. They planned a clever way to do it. Aside of each place setting was a gilded English walnut in which the nut meats had been removed. One side of the nut was hinged with tape so that it could be opened. After the dinner everyone was asked to look inside the nut. There they found a note saying "Ed and Alfrida July 21, 1931."

Three pre-nuptial showers were held for me. Ione Keller of St. Marys, one of my closest friends, had one for me in her home. Olive had one in her home in Minster and Marie Goeke had a surprise shower for me in her home in Cincinnati.

The day before the wedding the cooks Mom had hired were busy preparing food, baking an angel food wedding cake, and a birthday cake for Dad.

The morning of the wedding I awakened early to find it raining. It rained some while we were going to church but the day turned out to be one of beautiful sunshine.

That morning when I walked down our beautiful winding stairway leading from the second floor to our large reception hall downstairs, with the long train on my dress and veil flowing behind me, I felt very glamorous. I often wished I would have had my picture taken then.

Our wedding Mass at Holy Rosary Catholic Church started at 9 A.M. I can remember seeing my uncle, Fr. Sebastian Kremer who performed the ceremony, Fr. Edward Lehman pastor, and Fr. Roman Schwieterman of St. Charles Seminary, Carthagen, standing at the altar when Ed and I entered the church.

The Helmstetter Trio - Maya, Agnes and Mathilda played the organ, cello and violin as Ed and I walked down the aisle. We were preceded by Hilda Thieman as flower girl and Jack Willke as ring bearer. My sisters Hilda and Pauline served as attendants with Pauline serving as bridesmaid. Al Willke served as Ed's best man. Miss Bea White, a friend, sang the *Ave Maria* and the Holy Rosary choir sang the Solemn High Mass.

After the Mass about 80 guests came to our house for the all-day celebration. The bridal table in our large dining room looked very beautiful with all its decorations. On one table was our wedding cake adorned with a miniature bride and groom. On the other table was Dad's birthday cake with 60 lighted candles. The tables were arranged in a U-shape in our dining room which could seat 30 people comfortably. A three-course dinner was served at noon with the Helmstetter Trio furnishing music on the piano, cello and violin. Mother had hired four young girls to do the serving and to help with the dishes and other work that had to be done.

That afternoon Ed and I were taken for a ride on a spring wagon drawn by a horse, down Spring Street - the main street in St. Marys. The spring wagon and horse, which was used at the stockyards, was decorated with our wedding colors and had a bench on the back where Ed and I sat. In the driver's seat was an employee from the stockyards, a black, wearing a high black top hat. This was the first time something like this had ever taken place in St. Marys, so it created a lot of attention and enjoyment.

Supper was served to all guests. In the evening a wedding dance was held at the Community Hall at Maria Stein Station. The dance was for all young people who wished to come. We furnished the hall and the music for the large crowd. Having a dance there was a gesture of good will since we were planning to make our home in Maria Stein.

While everyone was dancing and having a good time, Ed and I managed to slip out of the side door unnoticed. We had arranged with Julitta Link, my cousin in Carthagen, to change from our wedding clothes to traveling clothes at her home. We had a new Model A Ford coupe. We spent our honeymoon night at Mercelina Hotel in Celina, Ohio. The next morning we left for a trip to Chicago and then drove along Lake Michigan to Detroit. We returned home from our honeymoon a week later and went to our furnished home in Maria Stein.

We were not strangers in Maria Stein. Ed had been born and raised there and I had been born and raised in St. Rose, a small town two miles to the west.

A few months before our marriage Ed purchased the house and property, where he was born, from his brother George who had practiced medicine in Maria Stein from 1922-1930. The house, office and a large barn were built by Ed's father around 1900.



Photo: Wilke house and office, Maria Stein, Ohio.

(Note: This photo is similar but not the exact one published in the original book.)

This house now became our home. It had four bedrooms, living room, dining room, small bathroom, kitchen, utility room and cellar. It was here that our four children were born: Marilyn, April 4, 1932; Bill, February 18, 1934; Janet, December 9, 1936; Rosann, September 6, 1940. Marilyn and Bill were born in the home. Janet and Rosann were delivered in Otis Hospital, Celina.

Our home was comfortable although it did not have all the modern conveniences. We had no central heating system, no bathtub or shower, no hot running water and no electric refrigerator. We used an outhouse most of the time because a chemically treated toilet system, which George installed, did not work efficiently. Although Ed and I missed having all the modern conveniences we did not think too much of it as we had been brought up without the conveniences electricity could provide.

The first time the convenience of electricity was supplied to the people in this area came in 1925 when the Dayton Power & Light ran an electric power line along the main road (now State Route 119) of Maria Stein. Electricity became available to rural residents by 1927.

About twenty feet from the house was Ed's office. It consisted of a waiting room, treatment room and a drug room. It was heated with wood and oil stoves.

For the first ten years Ed did all of his own bookkeeping. Since we lived next to the office I helped a great deal by acting as his receptionist, answering phone calls, and assisting him whenever help was needed.

Our only telephone was in the house.

Ed had office hours every afternoon and evening except Thursday and Sunday. Many patients, however, did not observe office hours and came in at their convenience. They would take the liberty to stop when they saw him outside, or if they knew he was home because they saw his car in the garage. Many times we were disturbed at mealtime.

Competition among the doctors was very keen. If Ed was not available, patients did not hesitate to go somewhere else because there were eight doctors in the immediate vicinity. Minster had three, St. Henry had two and Yorkshire, North Star and Chickasaw each had one.

Ed made many house calls. There were still a few mud roads and sometimes in bad weather he had to walk long lanes to see his patients.

All babies were born in the home. About three or four months before the baby was due the husband would come in to engage Ed for the delivery. Sometimes he was called on a delivery without being notified ahead of time. Anaesthetic during the birth was usually given by the husband.

Ed gave very few shots because whooping cough, diphtheria, measles, polio, mumps and tetanus toxoid vaccines had not yet been discovered. Neither did we have sulfa, penicillin and antibiotics. Sulfa became available in the early 1930's, penicillin in the 1940's and antibiotics in the 1950's. Since Ed gave so few shots he sterilized his syringes in the house on our coal oil (kerosene) stove. Smallpox vaccine had been discovered at this time and so was insulin for the treatment of diabetes. Tuberculosis of the lungs, which had been very prevalent before this, was on a marked decline.

Of the early years of Ed's practice, the one thing I can remember the most is the terrible car accidents, farm accidents and others that came to the house or office. In later years such accident victims were taken directly to the hospital. Many of these accident cases were treated in the office. The more serious ones were taken to Otis Hospital (estab. 1915) and Gibbons Hospital (estab. 1923). Both were located in Celina fourteen miles away.

In 1930, one year before we came to Maria Stein, a new public grade and high school was built directly across the road from St. John Catholic School. It was called St. John Public Grade and High School. Prior to this Maria Stein had two elementary schools and a two-year high school program. The two-year high school program continued in the new building until a charter was granted in 1935 to teach all four years. The first class to graduate from St. John High School with a four-year degree took place in 1937 with four students graduating.

We attended St. John Church which was built in 1889. The village of Maria Stein and the surrounding area that comprised St. John Parish (142 families) was practically 100% Catholic. For the first year or two while we were in Maria Stein all sermons, prayers and religious instructions were in German. After that there was a gradual transition to the English language.

Our children, Marilyn, Bill, Janet and Rosann all received the sacraments of Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Matrimony in St. John Church.

In 1936 we had a new coal-burning furnace installed which heated the entire house and also the office. To accommodate everything to one furnace the drug room on the north side of the office had to be moved to the west side. Along with the furnace installation at that time we had a modern flushing toilet, bathtub and shower put in the house. This necessitated drilling of a well, as our cistern did not supply us enough water to meet the demands of these new conveniences. Later we enjoyed hot running water when we installed

an electric water heater. The icebox was replaced with an electric refrigerator.

This was the era before supermarkets. I had to do a lot of canning, preserving and baking. We had a large garden. There were no such thing as frozen foods, instant coffee, cake mixes and other prepared foods. We had no home deep freezers. We used unpasteurized milk.

I was quite fortunate in having good help in the house during the growing-up years of our children. Mrs. Voskuhl, who lived next door, worked for me for almost twenty years. She did all my washing and ironing and heavy cleaning. It was the day before wash-and-wear clothing, automatic washers and dryers. So washing and ironing was a full day's work for her. Wash day was always on Monday.

Mrs. Voskuhl came to stay with our children and take emergency calls whenever Ed and I had an evening out or for our long vacation trips. Consequently the children became very attached to her during the many years she worked for us. When the children were small they would go to her house to keep her and her husband Tony company. In the summertime I can so well remember seeing them together in their front porch swing thoroughly enjoying one another.

When our children were around eight and nine years old we felt it important to send them to summer camps, as part of their education. All of them attended Fort Scott Camps near Cincinnati for several summers. The girls also attended camps in Michigan. This later helped Marilyn, Janet and Rosann to receive certificates that enabled them to become swimming instructors and lifeguards at local swimming pools during the summer months while they were in college. Bill attended Culver Military Academy summer school at Culver, Indiana for six weeks when he was fifteen years old.

At one time we owned a surrey and a horse called Lady. This was a lot of fun for all of us especially our children. Lady was an unusual horse in that she was very versatile. We could ride her; she would pull the surrey; she was a show horse. Bill entered her in many rodeos and horse shows in the area and received quite a few ribbons and medals.

Ed's office needed improvements after eleven years of practice. The waiting room and treatment room, built by Ed's father, and the drug room, added by his brother George, was not adequate for Ed's ever increasing practice. In 1942 three more treatment rooms were added to the rear of the office. The wall between the two original rooms was adjusted to increase the size of the waiting room and allow for a large hall. Along with the remodeling of the office, the porch between the house and the office was closed in and furnished with windows and screens.

On Sunday, December 7, 1941 we heard the news on the radio that Pearl Harbor, Hawaii had been attacked by the Japanese. That evening when we gathered with our pinochle club at the home of Lawrence and Loretta Goettmoeller at St. Rose, I can remember it well how worried and concerned everybody was that we would enter World War II. At this time it was also imminent that we would join our allies in Europe where a war had been raging since 1939. Germany had invaded Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland - the start of World War II. The day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor the United States declared war with Japan and three days later (December 11) war was declared with Germany.

We saw many young men leave home to go to war. Included were two of my brothers: Arnold and Edwin; and three brothers-in-law: Irv Klug, Hains Landen and Dick Stroh. Arnold was in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge at the time of our father's death on December 27, 1944. He did not receive the message that Dad had died until ten to fourteen days later.

Arnold was married and had a small baby (Kenneth) at the time he was sent overseas to Europe. He did not see his wife and the baby until two years later at the end of the war.

Edwin was not married. He served in the Navy on a battleship in the South Pacific. While there he was very sick with malaria fever. But he was all right when he returned home after almost one year in the service.

On April 12, 1945 the world was saddened, and I can particularly remember how sad I felt, when news came on the radio that President Franklin D. Roosevelt died. He was in his fourth term of office as President of the United States. On May 7, a few weeks after his death, the war in Germany ended.

That same year I remember it well when on August 6 I heard by word of mouth about the terrible atomic bomb the United States dropped on Hiroshima. On September 3, 1945 Japan surrendered.

The major hardships we endured on the home front during the three years and nine months of war was the rationing of gasoline, meat, butter, sugar, canned goods and coffee. We listened to the radio and heard about the terrible bombings and shellings. And I remember seeing the long casualty list in the paper every day. We did not realize how terrible it all was until the war was over.

My father passed away at the age of 73. His death was due to generalized arterio sclerosis. Until several months before his death he was still able to manage the stockyard business that he had established in 1924 at St. Marys.

Around 1936 my brothers, Ray and Alfred who were comanagers with Dad in the business, developed serious health problems which disabled them from working. Ray developed tuberculosis of the lungs and was sick for nine years. Alfred had mental problems from which he never recovered.

In 1945, a year after my father's death, my mother (stepmother) sold the stockyard business to Chas. Miller & Co. - North Bergen (Jersey City), New Jersey - one of the meat packers where Dad and my brothers had shipped most of their hogs. That same year Mom sold the big house on West Jackson Street and moved to a smaller house on North Walnut.

In 1950 the 130 acre farm at St. Rose was also sold. The farm had been in the Kleinhenz family for over 113 years. It was the place where I was born and spent my childhood days.

Mother was living at 241 North Spruce in St. Marys when she died March 17, 1978 at the age of 88 years. Death was due to infirmities of old age. She and Dad are buried in Gethsemani Cemetery, St. Marys.

Ed and I enjoyed sports. We hunted rabbits, pheasants and squirrels in the fall of the year. I enjoyed particularly squirrel hunting with my 20 gauge Remington shotgun. Ed gave me the gun a few years after we were married, when he realized how much I enjoyed hunting. Twice we had the fun of hunting pheasants in North Dakota and Kansas where game was plentiful.

Another of our interests, which commenced in the 1940's was bowling. We bowled in leagues for many years in Celina and nearby towns of Coldwater, Fort Recovery and New Bremen. Around 1945 I took up golf for the first time. I played at Northmoor Country Club (between Celina and St. Marys) until the Mercer County Elks Lodge N. 2170 (State Route 127, south of Celina) started an eighteen-hole golf course in 1960. Ed would join me, once he took up golf around 1955. After this we went on golfing vacations to Florida, Arizona, North Carolina and other places.

Besides hunting, bowling and golfing I became interested in various organizations. As a charter member of the Auxiliary Knights of St. John (1945) I served as their first vice-president and later served two years as recording secretary. In 1947 a band was organized for the first time at St. John School. At this time a Band Mothers organization was established and I became a charter member and was elected treasurer. I

was drawn to this spontaneously since all of our children played in the band.

After giving it much thought we went ahead, in 1950, with plans to build a new house. Having the office next to the house had been convenient for Ed all these years but it was also depriving us of a lot of privacy. So we decided to have the house and the office in separate locations. After selling the property to St. John Parish, the office building was moved a quarter mile west on land we had purchased from Tony Voskuhl. Once the office building was in place, more rooms were added: a large treatment room, utility room for the furnace and a bathroom.



**Photo: Our now home built In 1950-51, Maria Stein, Ohio.
Picture was taken in 1965.**

A quarter mile west of this new location we purchased one-and-a-third acres at the corner of State Route 119 and Rolfes Road. On this property, obtained from Henry and Agnes Streacker, we had a new home erected. The architect was Ferd Freytag from Sidney. He designed a two-story structure that has the appearance of a one-story. The brick veneer house has four bedrooms, two bathrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen, den, utility room and a two-car garage. There is no basement.

While we were in the process of moving the office and building a new home, Ed's mother became very sick with cancer of the bowel. She had always been very interested in what we were doing. But when she showed no sign of enthusiasm for this, we knew she was very sick. She died February 25, 1951 at the age of 74 years, just two months before we moved into our new home. She was buried in St. John Cemetery, St. Bernard (Cincinnati) next to Ed's father who had passed away on January 27, 1941 at the age of 76 years. He died of a coronary after being sick for several days.

When we moved into our new home April 18, 1951 we bought our first television set. We could get only one station. The picture was black and white, the reception poor, yet we enjoyed it. I remember how Mrs. Voskuhl enjoyed watching I Love Lucy with us on Monday evening after she had done a day's washing and ironing.



**Photo: Our family (1966). Standing: Marilyn, Bill, Rosann.
Seated: Janet, Mother and Dad.**

The 1950's were also memorable in that we saw our children graduate from high school and enter college. They are graduates of Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. Marilyn, Bill and Rosann received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. Janet received a Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary Education. They had received their basic education at St. John Grade and High School located across the road from St. John Church. There was one exception. Bill attended high school here for one year and then went to Culver Military Academy, Culver, Indiana for the next three years. Here he could obtain a better education because in our school some of the basic subjects could not be had that would prepare him for college courses planned.

After graduation from college they left Maria Stein to find better job opportunities elsewhere. Marilyn's first job took her to Cincinnati where she worked in different phases of merchandising at H & S Pogue Co., a large department store. Bill was first employed in Evansville, Indiana where he worked in sales for Standard Oil of Indiana. Janet taught Spanish at Fairview High School, Dayton. Rosann worked at Proctor & Gamble, Cincinnati and later at Crane Co. in Chicago where she was a computer programmer/systems analyst.

On September 10, 1955 Marilyn married Donald J. Schwieterman. He was born at New Bremen on

September 4, 1931. He is a graduate of New Bremen High School, Cincinnati School of Pharmacy and the University of Cincinnati Medical School.

In the spring of 1959 when Don was serving his internship at St. Mary's Hospital, Cincinnati, I can remember Ed and I going over to talk to him to see if he would be interested in coming to Maria Stein to start his medical practice. Ed, after twenty-eight years of practice, had more patients than he could take care of and needed help. He had given up obstetrics a few years earlier to lighten his load.

Don and Marilyn, after thinking it over, decided to come to Maria Stein. Since he and Ed would be sharing the same office, it meant making some improvements: the waiting room was converted into a reception room; a new waiting room and a large treatment room was added for Don.

Bill married Esther Hausfeld on June 16, 1956. She was born at Maria Stein on December 26, 1933. She is a graduate of St. John High School, Maria Stein and attended Miami University, Oxford. Before her marriage she worked at New Idea Corp., Coldwater as a secretary for several years.

Janet married Andrew J. Niekamp on June 14, 1958. He was born in Celina on August 21, 1933. He is a graduate of St. Henry High School. He then attended the University of Dayton School of Business Administration and went on to Ohio State University, Columbus where he graduated with a Doctor of Law Degree.

Rosann married Robert H. Spitzer, Jr. on October 26, 1968. He was born in Detroit, Michigan on March 26, 1940. He is a graduate of Detroit High School. He attended college at Xavier University, Cincinnati where he majored in chemistry. His doctorate in Metallurgical Engineering he obtained at Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Since the time I was a young girl I had a great desire to travel and see the world. This became a reality after Ed and I were married. Our first trip was the World's Fair in Chicago in 1933. Marilyn was a baby then and I was pregnant with Bill. Several years after that we planned a trip to New York City and Washington, D.C. This was followed by a trip to the West Coast by train in 1939.

Through the years Ed and I have been in every State of the Union (49) except Alaska. We have set foot on six continents: North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. We crossed the equator twice: in Quito, Ecuador and Kenya, Africa.

Before each trip I did a lot of reading and studying in order to know about the history of the places and countries we were going to see.

I enjoyed photography and brought home many beautiful and interesting pictures. For many years I gave travelogs -with slide presentations to many groups and gatherings. I showed them many times in schools to children for educational purposes.

The interesting part of my travels abroad was to see and study the various cultures of the people in different parts of the world. To see how religion influenced their lives was evident by the many beautiful cathedrals, churches, synagogues, mosques, shrines and temples we visited. I was fascinated by the many ancient ruins and amazed at the accuracy of these structures, built without modern tools and instruments.

Since I was subject to seasickness, all our trips were by plane with the exception of a Caribbean Cruise. Motion sickness is something I inherited from my mother.

In the twenty to twenty-five years we traveled overseas we saw big changes in air travel. Our first trip to

Europe in 1954 was on a four-engine prop-plane (Pan Am) carrying sixty passengers at 300 miles per hour. It was considered the fastest airline in the world then. Ten years later, when we made a trip around the world, we flew the 25,000 miles by jet, averaging 550 miles per hour.

The 1960's led us to space travel. Already in 1959 when I saw an article and the pictures of the original seven astronauts in the newspaper it was hard to visualize and almost impossible to believe what they were planning to accomplish. We had seen the un-manned satellites but could man go into space? If anyone had told me when I was a child that a human being could go to the moon and that I would actually be able to see it in my living room on an instrument called television I never would have believed it. Yet I saw that mission accomplished on July 20, 1969 when Neil Armstrong of Wapakoneta took man's first step on the moon. By 1983 I had seen the space shuttle Columbia - a research and development vehicle - make five successful missions into space and the Challenger - the Columbia's sister ship - make two successful missions. All of this I can appreciate because I witnessed so many drastic changes in travel during my lifetime.

When I was a child we used a horse and buggy as the means of transportation. At the age of seven I can remember my first ride in an automobile. There were few cars then traveling on graveled roads that gave way to over-crowded super highways. The prop-planes gave way to jets and along with the progress in air travel came better and bigger air terminals.

The 1960's was also the decade that saw the beginning of the computer age. Computers had big advancements in the 70's and by the early 80's home computers became popular. All this I consider fortunate to have seen even though I won't see its full magnitude.

On November 20, 1963 our country and the entire world was shocked to hear of the assassination of our President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas. A few hours later I saw Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson, who was with Kennedy in Dallas, sworn in as the nation's 36th president. He took the oath of office on a plane at Dallas Airport before it left for Washington.

I was one of the millions of television viewers who saw Lee Oswald, the accused assassin of President Kennedy, being shot to death by Jack Ruby while Oswald was being transferred from the city jail to the county jail in Dallas.

On August 9, 1974 President Richard M. Nixon resigned as President of the United States after the House Judiciary Committee recommended he be impeached for the Watergate scandal. This was the first time in the history of our country that a president was forced to resign.

In the 1960's I saw the beginning of many drastic changes in the Catholic Church. In October 1962 Pope John XXIII summoned to Rome Vatican II - the 21st Ecumenical Council - the most important religious event in this century. Bishops from all over the world met for these council meetings which lasted two to three months for four consecutive years.

Many of the teachings and changes that resulted from Vatican II were contrary to what I had been taught in catechism during my childhood. To update I made yearly retreats, attended Adult Education classes and became involved in C.C.D. which began at this time. This helped me to understand and adjust to the laws of the Church and to look at all these changes with an open mind.

Prior to Vatican II, retreats were being conducted at the Precious Blood Sisters' Convent/Shrine since 1953 at Maria Stein. When the Maria Stein Retreat League was organized in 1956 I was elected its first secretary. Later I served several years as treasurer and on the council for twenty-four years. Weekend retreats expanded to full-time retreat facilities when a new retreat house was built in 1960-62.

After taking courses in Christian Doctrine and Methods of teaching at St. Charles Seminary, Carthagen, I taught C.C.D. from 1965-70.

In 1964 I became interested in genealogy and so began to write a family history. The book, which has many pictures in it, starts with the history of both our ancestors, gives a detailed account of our children's lives, then our travels and about things in general. The most interesting part of writing this history was that I could trace my ancestry right here in Mercer County, since all eight great-grandparents settled within a two to three mile radius from where I lived in Maria Stein. All eight grandparents came to America from Germany in the 1840's. My only regret is that I did not start writing this family history while my father and Ed's parents were still living. They could have given me some information about their ancestors that I would have treasured. Yet, after much time, effort and research the history was completed July 1970. I named the book *This Is Our Life* and gave a book to each one of our children.

Ten years later I started to write my autobiography, *I Remember It Well*. In the beginning I had the support of Emily Knapke of Maria Stein, a young girl of 21, who helped me outline the first 25 years. Emily at the time was confined to bed with a bodycast due to a back ailment. Once motivated by Emily's interest and enthusiasm I had the courage to go on. It has and is taking untold hours of work, concentration and perseverance to write this history of my life. But I enjoy it.

Only with a helping hand did I have the time to write and do other things I enjoyed doing. For seventeen years (1966-1983) I had one of the Thobe girls (sisters) - Joan, Lynn, Nancee and Beth - help me with the housework while they were in high school.

For several years I was a Grey Lady doing Red Cross volunteer work at Valley Nursing Home in St. Marys. One year I volunteered my services helping children with learning disabilities in the Special Education classes at St. John School. Both were instructive and rewarding experiences for me.

In 1968 Adult Education classes were offered at Marion Local School. So I gave Beginners Bridge lessons. In 1976 America's Bicentennial Year - I took a six-weeks, noncredit course in Mercer County History (1776-1976) at Wright State University Western Ohio Branch in Celina, the County seat.

The following year (1977) Marilyn and I took a six weeks credit course in Local History at Wright State. Marilyn encouraged me to take this course hoping that it would boost my morale - always somewhat low due to the haunting feeling of having missed college. At the termination of the course I wrote a book report on the Frontiersmen by Allan W. Eckert, a narrative on the winning of the Northwest Territory. For this I received a certificate for three credit hours of college work.

Ed and I became the grandparents of five girls and fifteen boys. One grandson is deceased. Since our children always lived relatively close to us we had the pleasure of seeing our grandchildren grow up. We enjoyed and looked forward to attending their Baptisms, First Communion, Graduations and other special occasions.

Ed and I created special occasions for them. When they reached the age of 9-14 years we took them for a week vacation to a dude ranch out West. Ed and I had been going to dude ranches in the summer since the 1960's. In 1974 we took our entire family of twenty-seven for a week to Rimrock Ranch located in the Absaroka Range of the Rocky Mountains between Cody, Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park. We had seventeen grandchildren then as John and Stephen had not yet been born. At the ranch they rode horses, went on an overnight pack-trip, breakfast cook-out, river-float trip and participated in various other ranch activities. We ate our meals together at the lodge. It was a week of fun for everybody.

For many years we had the entire family home for Christmas and at other times during the year, which

have left memories that can never be forgotten. I am sure that many hundreds of bottlecaps can still be found under the attic floor boards where they were hidden as treasures during the time our grandchildren were playing bottlecap games.

At this time of writing (1983) twelve of our grand-children have graduated from high school. Five have graduated from college and are employed in their respective fields. Seven are still pursuing higher education.

Marilyn and Don have lived for the past twenty-four years in Maria Stein where Don has been practicing medicine as a family physician. They became the parents of six sons: Bill was born in 1958, Joe in 1959, John in 1961, Jim 1962, Bob 1964 and Tom 1967. John died December 14, 1961 at the age of nine months from hydrocephalus and spinal bifida.

Bill and Esther have lived for the past five years in Dayton where Bill is Sales Manager for the U. S. Chrome Corp. of Ohio. Before that they lived in Indianapolis, Indiana, Lexington, Kentucky and Stevensville, Michigan where Bill worked in sales for National Cash Register. They became the parents of five children: Nancy was born in 1957, Mary 1960, Joan 1961, Edward 1964 and Carol 1968.

Janet and Andrew lived for the past twenty-one years in the Dayton-Kettering area where Andrew has worked in the legal profession. Since 1965 he has been an assistant prosecuting attorney of Montgomery County (Dayton). Janet began teaching Spanish at Alter High School, Kettering in 1971. She was head of the Language Department for many years there. In 1979 she received a Masters degree from Wright State University, Dayton, in High School Administration. At present she holds the position of Academic Director of Alter High School. For many years she has coordinated tours for her Spanish students to Mexico and Europe. Janet and Andrew became the parents of five children: Cindy was born in 1959, Andrew 1961, Mark 1962, Jack 1964 and David 1967.

Rosann and Bob have lived in Lafayette, Indiana for the past fourteen years where Bob has been professor of Materials Engineering at Purdue University. Before coming to Lafayette Bob worked in the Metallurgy Division of Argonne National Laboratory at Argonne, Illinois. Rosann and Bob became the parents of four boys: Mike was born in 1960, Jim 1973, John 1976 and Stephen 1977.

On July 19, 1981 Ed and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. The fact that all our children, their spouses and all nineteen grandchildren were present made it an especially happy occasion for us. A Mass of Thanksgiving was held at 1:30 P.M. The grandchildren's participation in the liturgy made it a very beautiful and meaningful ceremony. Following the church services a reception and a champagne' dinner were held at the Knights of St. John Hall, Maria Stein for 250 invited guests (relatives and friends).

The previous May of that same year was also another half-century milestone. At this time Ed was honored by the entire community with an open house to commemorate his fifty years in medical practice. People came from far and near to congratulate him. Many were families he had treated since he came to Maria Stein, in 1931.

1983 marked a 90 year history of Willkes (father and two sons) serving as physicians in Maria Stein. Ed's father started his medical practice in 1893 when he opened an office one-quarter mile east of St. John Church. The two-room office he built in 1900 is still a part of the office today. It, however, could hardly be recognized now since it was moved to a different location and many additions have been made to it. The latest addition was in 1982 when Don and Marilyn had it extensively redecorated and updated with new and modern equipment.



Photo: Our 50th Wedding Anniversary, July, 1981.



Photo: Our Family at our Golden Wedding Celebration, July 19, 1981.

Photo Not Available

Photo: The office after the latest addition In 1982.

Changes in the structure of the office building were not the only things in the fifty-two years Ed has been practicing. Many other changes have taken place: we went from unlocked office doors to a security alarm system; from no telephone in the office to a sophisticated communication system; from walk-in clientel to patients by appointment; from babies delivered at home to being delivered in the hospital with different techniques such as the Lamaze method; from simple bookkeeping to a more complex one because of taxes, insurance, Medicare and Welfare. We saw the emergence of heart surgery, orthopedic surgery (joint replacement) -and great advancements in the entire field of medicine. Great progress was made in the treatment of cancer.

In the past fifty-two years the people of Maria Stein have not changed. They are still the same hard working, industrious, saving and proud people who have prospered and kept up with the advancements in their way of living. On the farm one can see the large siloes, grain bins, huge herds of cattle, big chicken houses and immense-sized farm equipment. The one-man, small farm is being eliminated.

The community has always taken great pride in their schools. In 1955 the district schools of Marion Township and the Osgood Village School of Darke County were consolidated to form the Marion Local School. For this two new buildings were erected in Maria Stein on State Route 716: the high school in 1958 and the elementary school in 1964. Additions have been made to these structures since then. The 1982-83 enrollment was 870 with 77 high school graduates.

Although Maria Stein has doubled in the amount of families since 1931 (288 in 1983 according to church records) the population has not doubled. The birth rate has diminished. Many of our young people are employed elsewhere while residing in Maria Stein.

During my lifetime I was blessed with relatively good health, though I tire easily and lack endurance. It seems I need more sleep than the average person. At the age of 30 I developed asthma and allergy attacks. Always I have to be on guard to avoid things that bring on these attacks. Some of the causes are flowers, certain cosmetics, sprays, dust and smoke. In 1963, because of a hyperthyroid condition, I had to have goitre surgery. My sister Olive and brother Leonard had surgery for this same ailment. Then in 1976 I began having chest pains (angina pectoris) whenever I exerted myself. This meant I had to learn to pace myself and to cut down on physical activities.

Heart disease was the cause of death for two of my sisters and three brothers. Olive died at the age of 67, Ray 62, Leonard 67, Alfred 66 and Pauline 66. Edwin, however, died of cancer of the liver at the age of 55. Still living are Hilda (79) in Centerville, Ohio, Arnold (74) in Columbus and Esther (65) in St. Marys.

My heart condition and breathing is aggravated by cold weather. So Ed and I decided to go to a warm climate for the winter months. On Christmas day 1977, after spending our last Christmas together with our children and grandchildren - which we had done for so many years - we left for Green Valley, Arizona where we spent the winter. After the second winter there we decided to go to Florida because it was not as far. The second winter in Florida we discovered Mt. Dora (pop. 6200), a small town in the central part of the State. We liked it so much that in April 1982 we bought a condominium at 110 N. Tremain, called Lakewood Condominiums. After spending the winter months in Florida we return to Maria Stein.

Here we are again near our children and grandchildren and remain an integral part of the community. Ed resumes practice of medicine, plays golf and works in his vegetable garden. I enjoy an occasional game of

golf and, like the past twenty years, do a lot of walking when the weather is nice. Together we belong to a pinochle club begun fifty years ago, and a bridge club started twelve years ago.

I feel in my lifetime I have been very fortunate. I was blessed with good parents, a fine husband and a family one has every reason to be proud of.

Alfrida E. Willke

July 21, 1983

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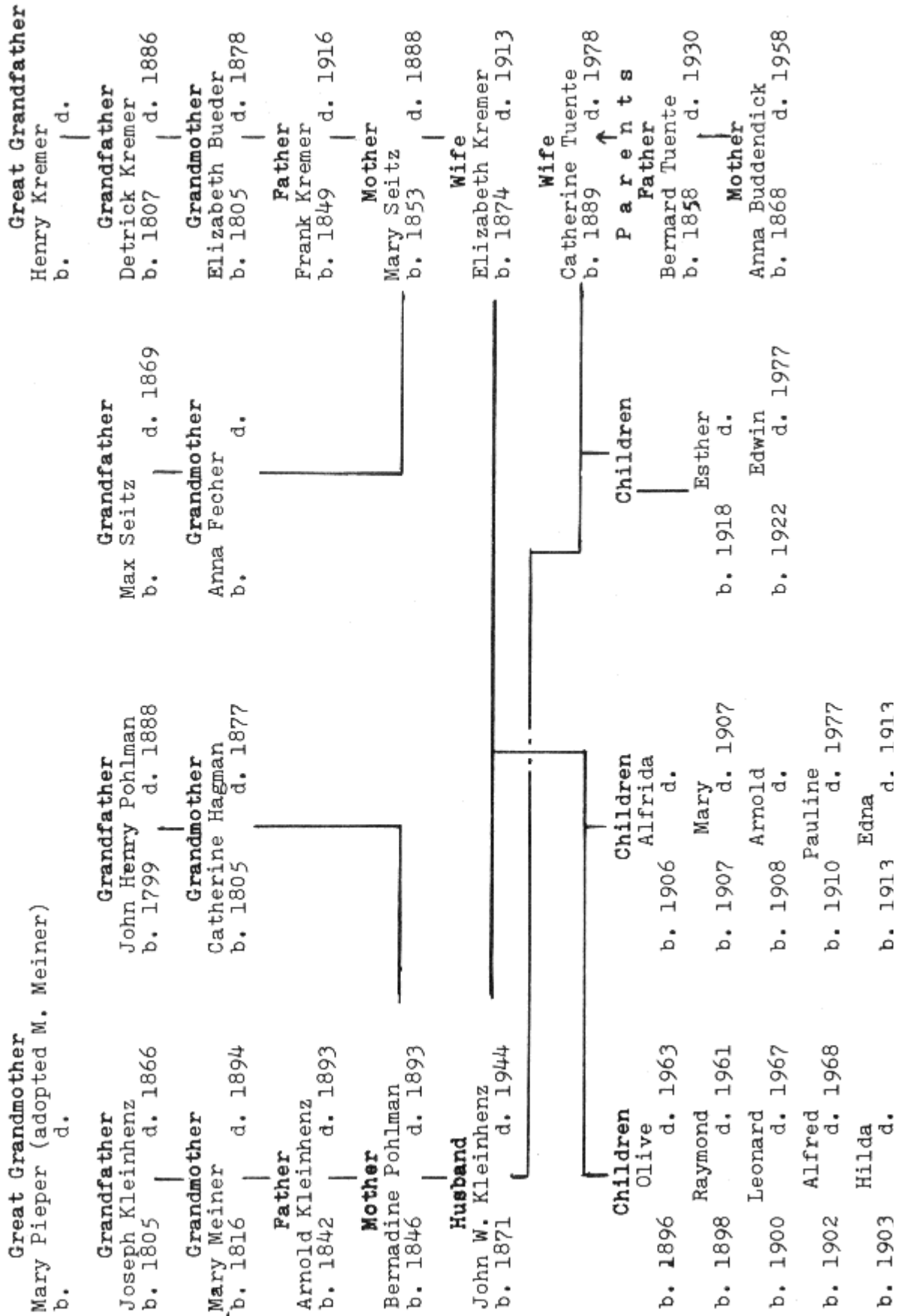
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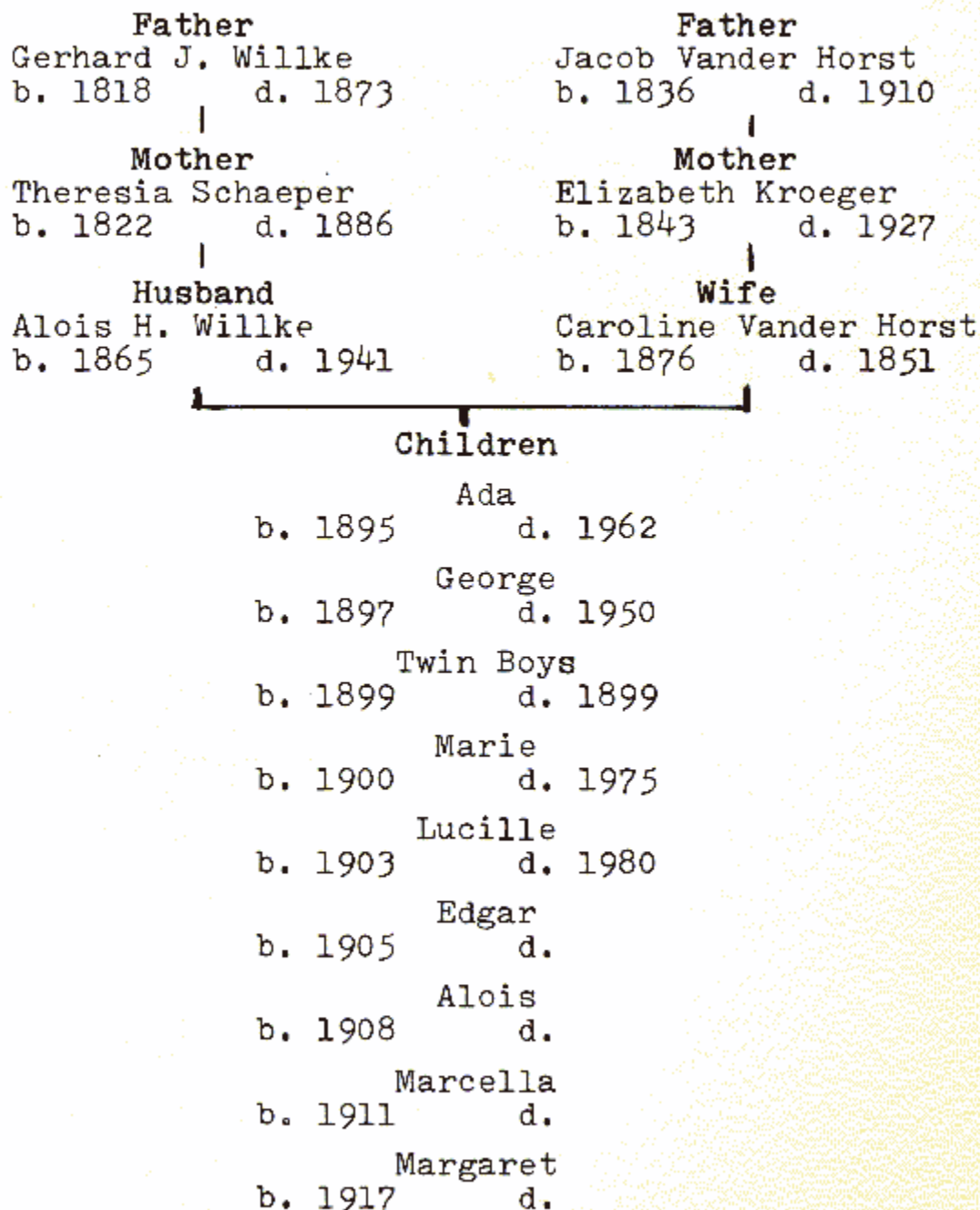
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Family Tree Pages Follow

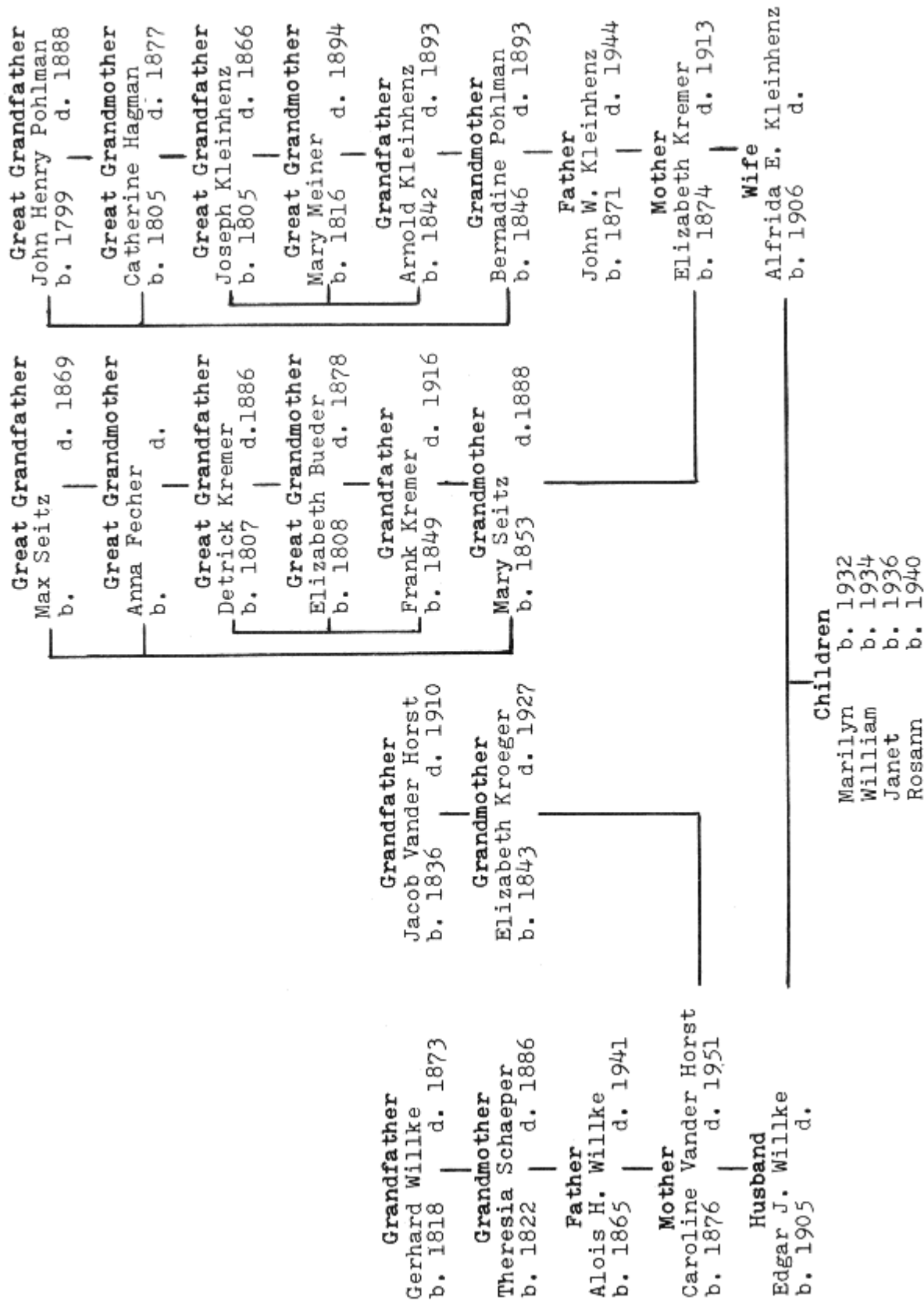
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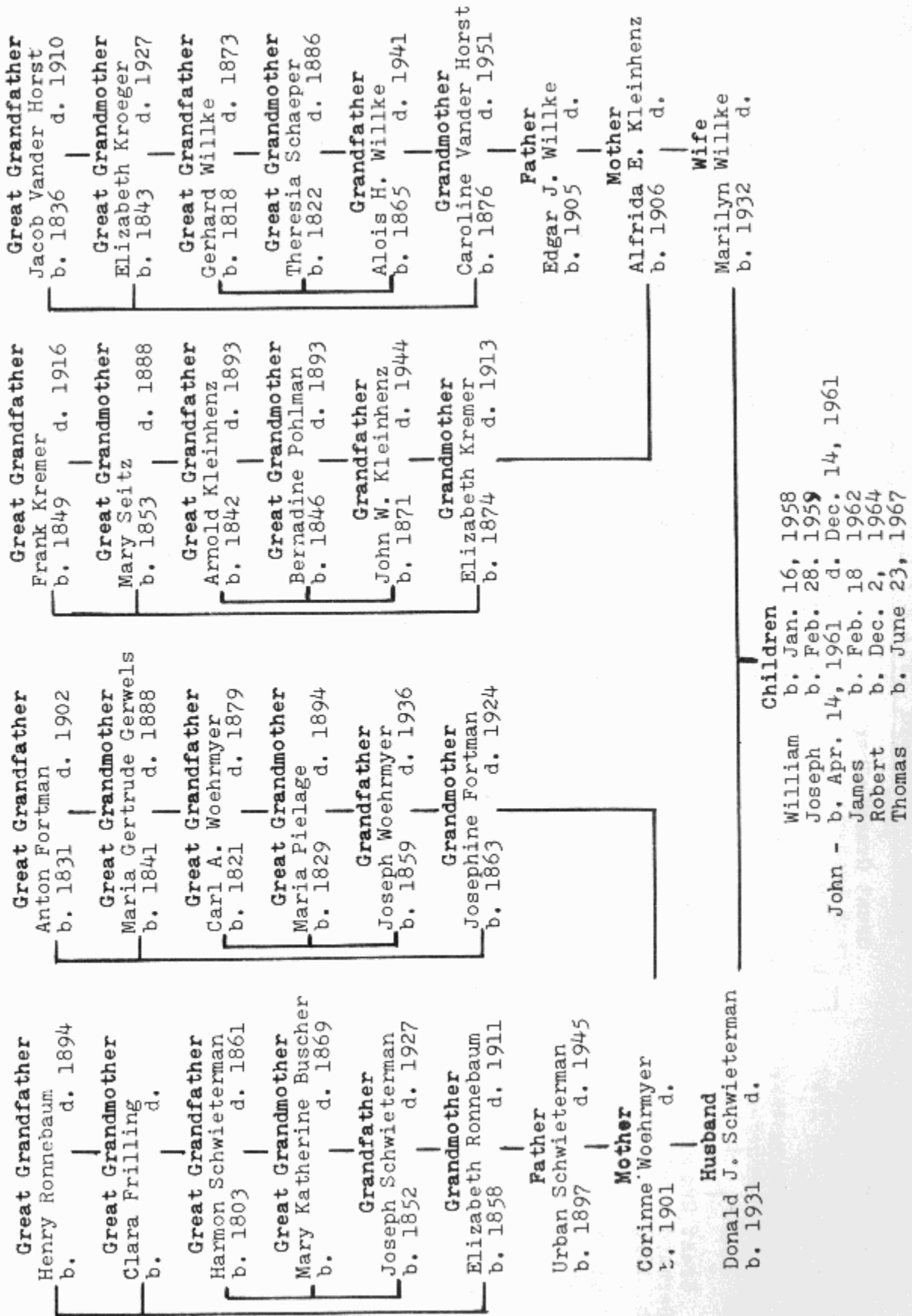
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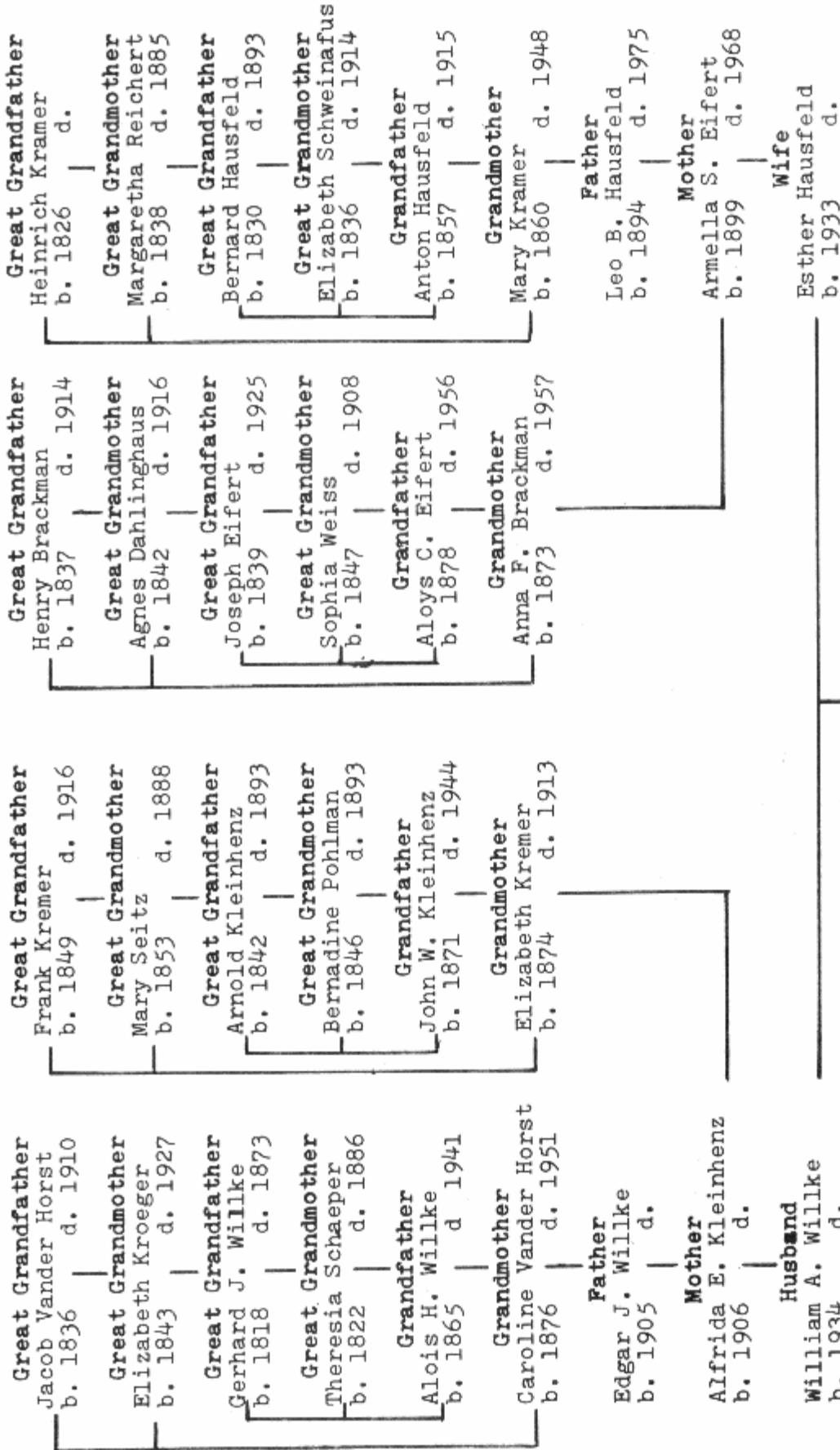
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Schwieterman - Willke F A M I L Y T R E E



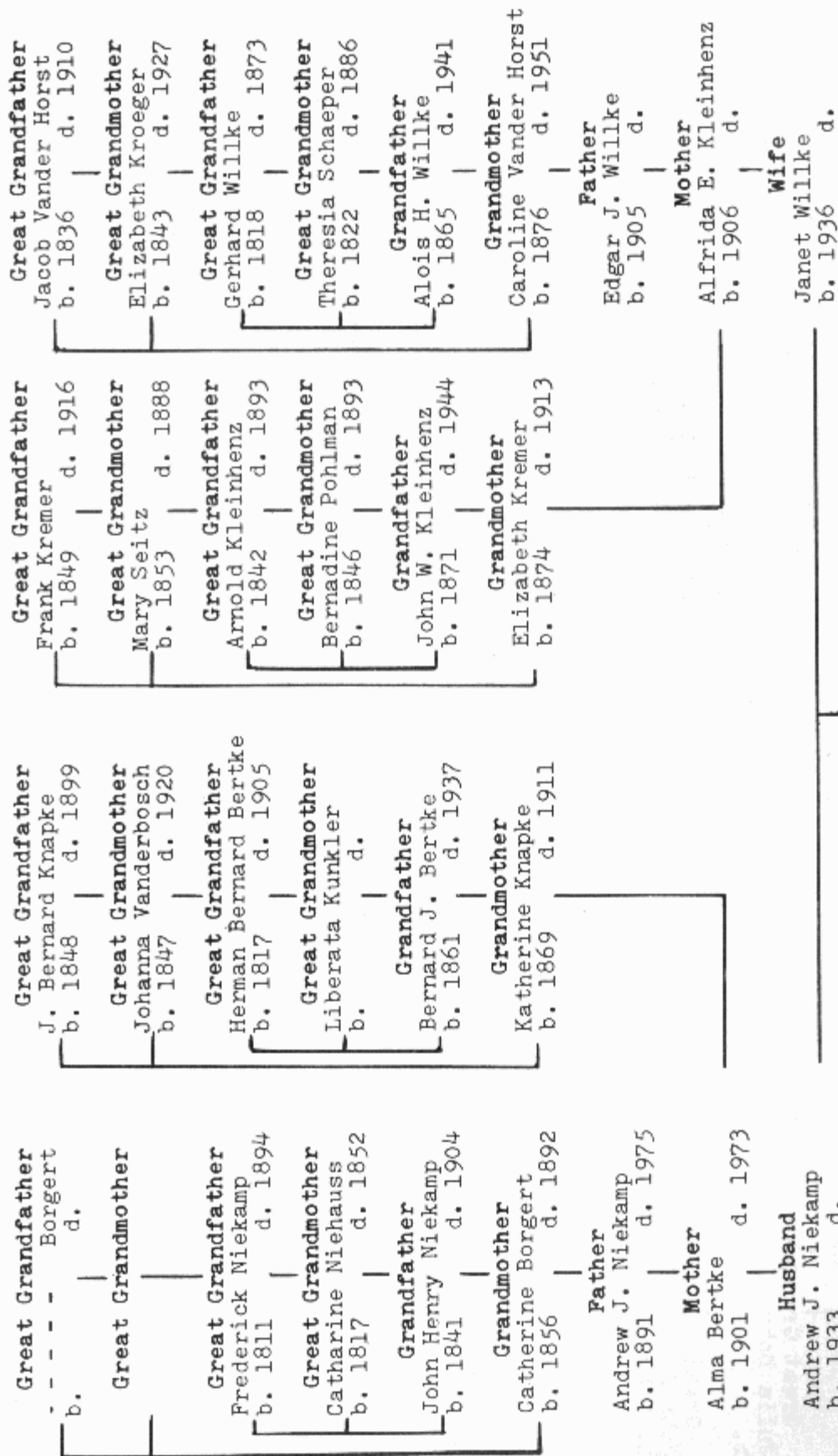
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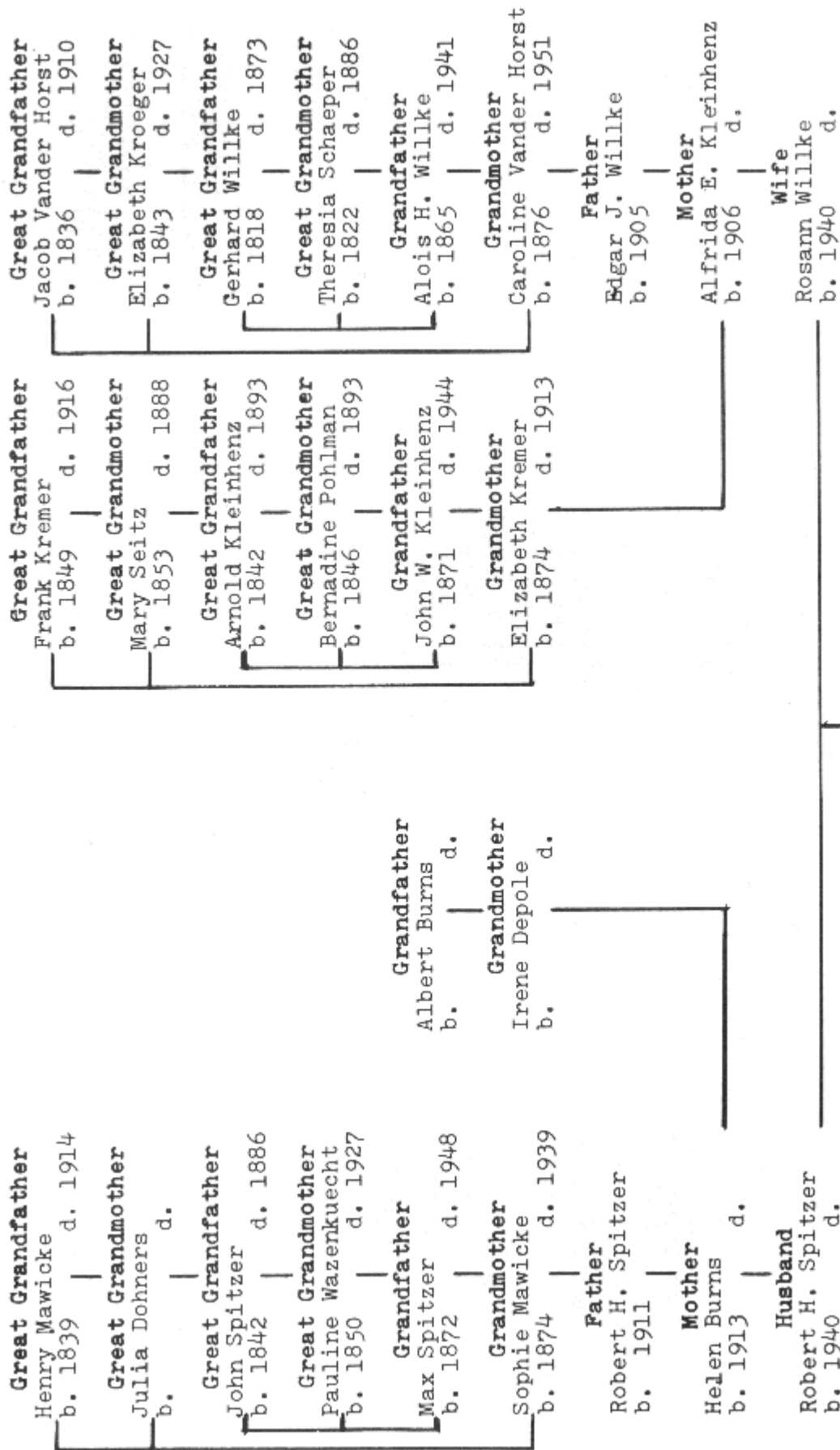
Children

- Nancy b. July 30, 1957
- Mary b. Dec. 8, 1960
- Joan b. Dec. 25, 1961
- Edward b. Mar. 1, 1964
- Carol b. Oct. 10, 1968

Niekamp - Willke F A M I L Y T R E E



Spitzer - Willke F A M I L Y T R E E



- Children**
- Michael b. Feb. 13, 1970
 - James b. Sep. 7, 1973
 - John b. Mar. 22, 1976
 - Stephen b. Oct. 20, 1977