

# Chapter II

## A Trip to Iowa

June 5-9, 2008

Narrated by Raymond J. Hobson

Album compiled by Sharon Hobson Cook and  
Gordon H. Cook

“The Rest of the Story” by Rebecca Herron

December 2008



This trip was accomplished within a very narrow time frame. The way opened for me to take the time to be gone to the annual Springville High School alumni banquet and get it done within four days.

I owe Rebecca Herron, the wife of one of the water board members, a debt of gratitude for her help in planning the whole trip by computer before we started.

I was suffering from a heavy chest cold at the time and was somewhat worried about pneumonia.

Rebecca took care of the scheduling of the car rental and driving while in Iowa and served as a dedicated tour guide.

On short notice and because of the big Iowa floods that caused many flight delays, the trip would not have been possible without Rebecca's able management.

I must add that travel has changed immensely since we last flew to Iowa!

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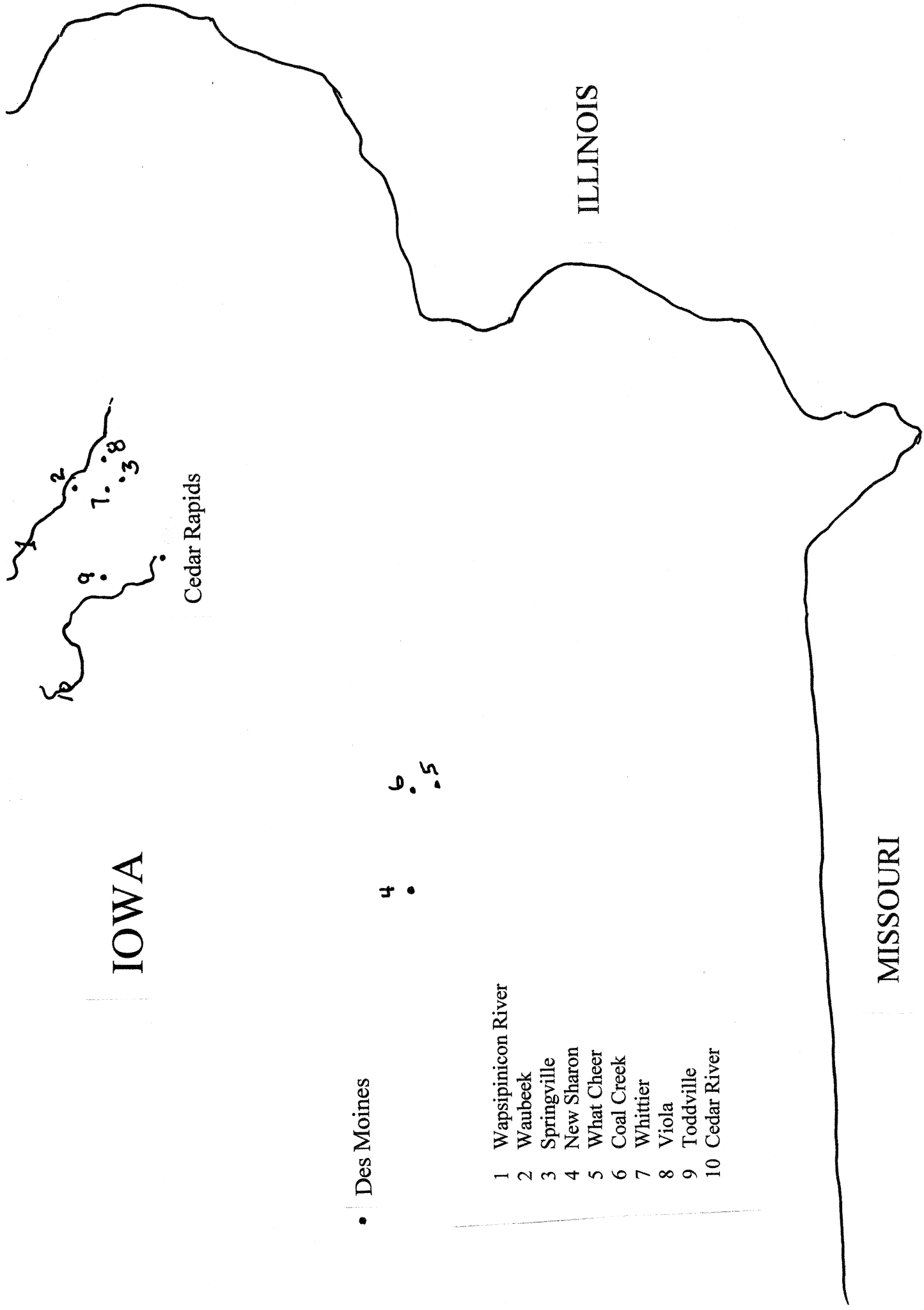
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Cedar Rapids

• Des Moines

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- 6 Coal Creek
- 7 Whittier
- 8 Viola
- 9 Toddville
- 10 Cedar River

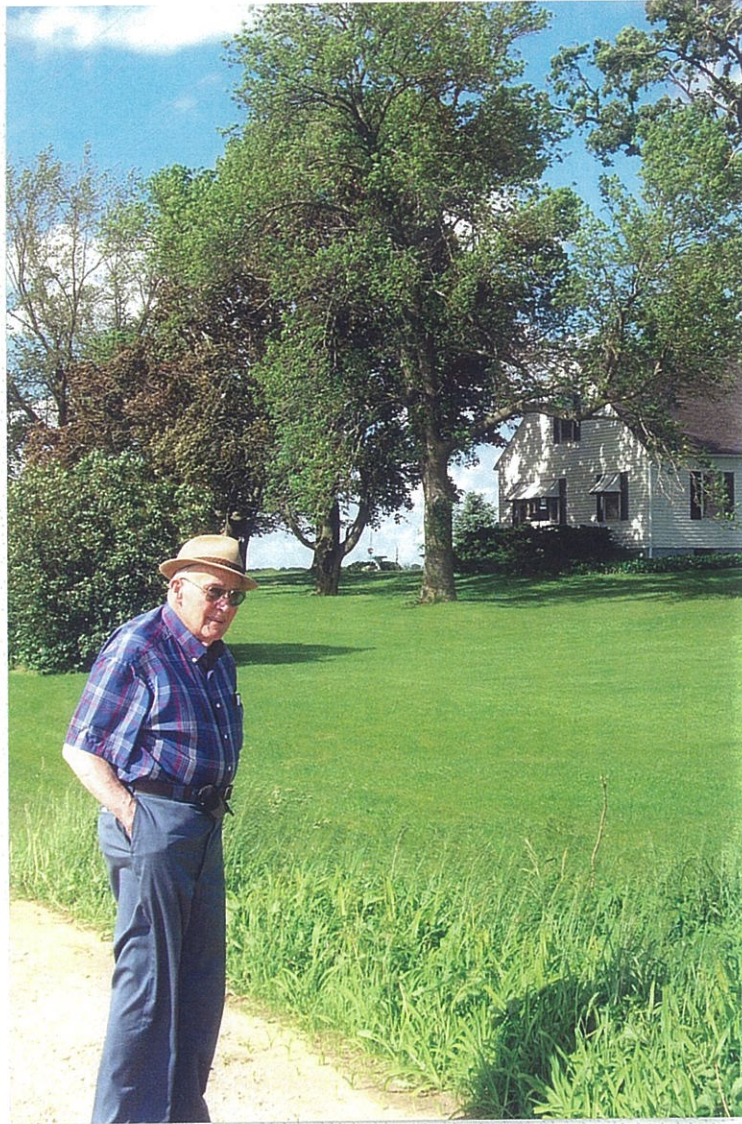






This is the old Friends' Meeting House in Whittier, Iowa which is three miles from the pictures of the Oscar Pierson place that I just described. We went to Meeting here and usually rode in a horse and buggy, putting the horse in the livery stables in back of the Meeting House. This was a weekly occurrence and a very necessary function in our small community. The school where I started going to school, in 1922, was a schoolhouse across the road from the Meeting house. The school is not there anymore. However, the meeting house is across the road from the old Community Club building that is still there and is still used for community functions. It will be described in a picture later in this narrative. You'll note there is a Historic Marker on the Meeting House. This house was purchased by the Friends and moved from a community called the Oak Grove Community Friends' Meeting some 12 miles east and south of Whittier near the town of Viola and so the exact age of the building itself is an unknown but very likely 150 some years old. Note the old benches; and I can still see the horses and buggies lined up along the front here for people to load into after Meeting to go home. This is a picture of me standing in front of the old Meeting House and a historic moment for me to comprehend.



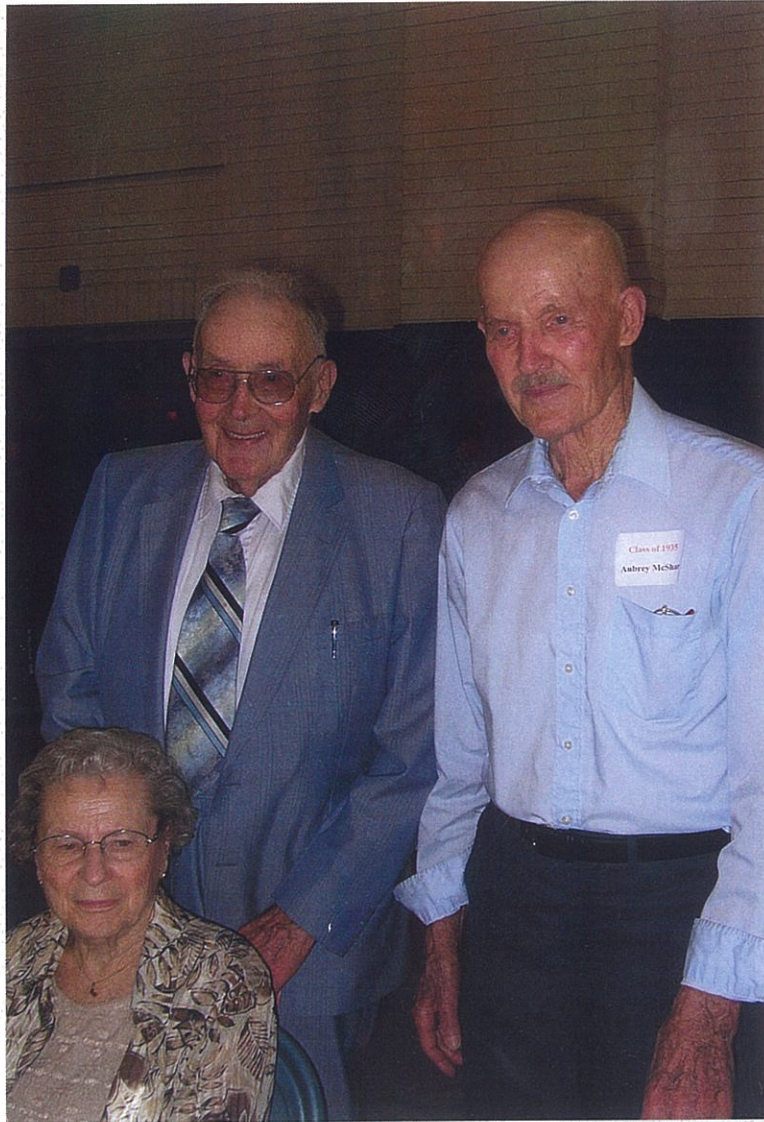


This picture shows more of the same building site and the new house that's there. Our old house was very old. The barn and the corn cribs are the same. We had 80 acres there; and many of my memories were of going after the cows after a big storm and wading in the flood water that covered the grassy fields and the feel of that warm water on the grass was one you don't forget. I remember the old house as having a wood staircase and a door at the foot of the staircase with a metal latch on it so nobody could come upstairs or go downstairs without moving that latch and you could hear it all over the house. We also used as a water source the rainwater off of the roof. There was a rainwater barrel at the back of the house that Mother used to dip out of to wash clothes on a washboard and hang them on the line after they were scrubbed by hand. Very interesting and memory provoking.



This picture is back in Whittier at the Meeting House with the Historic Location sign that's on the Meeting House behind me. It would be interesting to note that the cemetery for the Friends' Meeting was to the left of that building and of course is still there and very interesting for me to walk through and see the names on the graves that have been there for a hundred and fifty years.





The real reason for the trip to Iowa was for the high school annual banquet. I was in a class of 38 people who graduated in 1935. There are five of us left. Two of the remaining members of the class were not able to attend. The people here were me, Aub McShane and Bernice Bennett who was a very lively member of the class and recently, just before this picture, had lost her husband of some 60 years. We're in the gymnasium of the new high school at Springville, Iowa. The old gymnasium is in a building just behind the new high school, but is a music hall now instead of a gymnasium. The party was well attended. The real reason for the party was the fact that the girls' high school basketball team had just won the state championship, so there was some tall celebrating going on in addition to celebrating the graduates of the many classes that preceded us and came after us at the same school.



Another view of the Meeting House in Whittier, Iowa showing the back side of it and the location of the old livery stables that used to be in that area. The school house that I started to school in was directly across the road and we had grades one through eight at the school. It was supported by the members of the Meeting. I went to school there and walked from the Pierson place to the school for at least four years until we transferred to public school at Viola, Iowa. But I can still see the horses and buggies lined up along the front of that porch to load people up when Meeting was over and getting into the buggies and going home. Very nostalgic.





This picture apparently has no significance except for the fact that this is where the farm was located that we moved to from the Pierson place. The Lou Stanley place was located on this plot of ground and it's being farmed now with corn. However, the tree that remains in the middle of the field is one that we planted for shade for the cattle in the pasture. This is very fertile farm land and still is. There's one thing that doesn't change very much; the buildings change, the trees change, the people change but the land is the same. We lived there from about 1926 to 1936.





This is a picture of the Whittier Community Club Hall across the street from the Meeting House and next door to where the schoolhouse used to stand. This building has a lot of historic memories. Nearly all of the community functions occurred here including Yearly Meeting. There was a basement in the building where people could eat, with a kitchen in the far end of the room of the basement, and it was a very complete kitchen. One of the first times I ever saw Ellen was in 1935 when she was filling dishes at the counter (her mother was the official cook) and I was waiting tables and I liked the way she filled dishes. I asked her for a date at the same time that my cousin, Ivan Hoge, asked her for a date. Maureen Hampton, a neighbor across the road, advised her to go with Ivan because he would be more fun, so she went with Ivan and the next night she went with me and made her choice which pleased me immensely. Immediately behind the Community Club building were the village horseshoe pits, and there was always a horseshoe game going on there and that's where I learned to be pretty proficient at the game of horseshoe. In the wintertime we had town team activities and we played basketball in the Community Building; and in the summer, of course, we had a softball diamond in the pasture behind the building and just beyond that was the baseball field. It accommodated the long ball. In the pasture field beyond the baseball field was a pond that froze in the wintertime and on purpose was saved for cutting ice. The local people would get together and with their saws they would saw huge chunks of ice out of that pond and haul them to the ice house behind the store in Whittier and store that ice in sawdust. In most cases we would have ice to dig out to keep our refrigerators cold nearly all summer. The Community Club building served a lot of faculties and is interesting to me that it is still standing and in pretty good shape. For many years we made contributions to the Whittier Community to maintain these buildings and keep them up in shape. I think my last contribution was made 10 to 15 years ago and we contributed a substantial amount to the trust fund that made historic monuments out of most of the historic buildings in Whittier.





This is another picture of the Meeting House from another angle; and to the right of this picture in the trees about a hundred feet away is the location of my grandmother's cottage, Bide-a-Wee, that she lived in the last fifteen or twenty years of her life until she had to move. The trees in the meeting house yard are much bigger than I remember of course, but the same trees have survived for more than 80 years.





This picture was taken at Whittier in the Lawrence Smith house. Lawrence is a first cousin. His father was a brother of my mother. Lawrence is about the same age as Ellen, but about three years younger than me. He lost his wife some years ago. The girl looking at him is his oldest daughter, Mary Kaminstein, who lives in Whittier also and is a very fine lady with grandchildren of her own now. Lawrence obviously has faded pretty badly and was not sure of who he was seeing or what he was saying; but we did visit and he was lucid enough to appreciate the visit. This is taken at his home in Whittier and it had been the location of my grandfather's invention of the Smith Rotary Weigher that they manufactured there and attached to threshing machines to measure the grain that came through the elevator on the threshing machine; and at the end of the day you could count the number of bushels that had been threshed that day. It was a very good machine and very popular at the time and could even be used today on combines if they so chose. Lawrence has four sons who were busy that day, cleaning out and putting in the dumpster the stuff that had accumulated in the old factory behind the house, the Rotary Weigher Factory. I'm sure it was disturbing their dad to see all of that thrown away that had been accumulated over the many, many years that it had been since they developed and processed and built the Rotary Weighers.





This is a picture taken near Toddville, Iowa, at the home of Ellen's niece, Neva Lanning. They had a farm, she and her husband, over, further east from Whittier, near the Cedar River, but in the rolling hills so the recent floods did not disturb her. He passed away some years ago. She still lives there yet and rents her farm to a neighbor man who farms it. She is three years younger than her Aunt Ellen. Her mother was Mabel Benson who was the eldest daughter of George and Anna Benson, Ellen's parents. She was very surprised and pleased at our visit and is very sharp. She had the same kind of a job as our daughter, Lois, has with the Farm Service Agency.



This picture shows Aubrey McShane and Lorene McShane and me in front of their 120 year old house in Iowa. The house is on a ranch that her folks owned near the Wapsipinicon River which is a river that runs through Waubeek, Iowa and was the scene of most of our family picnics at riverside during the summers. When we had time we would go on community picnics not far from where this house sits. They were overjoyed with our visit to their place and they both looked very natural but, of course, showing age some. Aub and I met in the fourth grade and have been friends ever since then. (The picture of me is terrible and should be eliminated.)





This picture shows the site of the ranch we called "Oscar Pierson's place", that we lived on in Iowa (about 1921-26), from the time I was some 4 years old until I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade (1926) in school when we moved from there to a ranch closer to Springville, Iowa. This particular scene is not of the same buildings, but the same place where I grew up for the most part and I have many memories of this place. The space right in front of me is the reason the picture was taken. It was the site of a cane sorghum mill that my dad built and operated during the time that we lived there. He made sorghum for lots of the neighbors. They brought their cane to the place and piled it in piles. We ran it through the press and thence through a cooking vat that was 60 feet long with opposite end openings on each channel. We put the raw cane juice in one end in the right proportions and it came out the other end finished cane sorghum. It was a very popular food and one of the reasons that my wife knew us (and I married her later) was because her mother made a point of annually getting sorghum for their place in Coal Creek which was 80 miles from here. Very nostalgic picture for me even though none of the old buildings are there; but it is a good picture.





This picture is of the pasture field at the Lou Stanley place. Many, many mornings I would go from the barn to the far end of this pasture field to get the horses and bring them back to harness and go to work. The bare spots you see to the right of the picture is an old peat moss bed. Continuous water flowed from that old peat moss bed; and we had a hydraulic water ram established in that bed that would run from the water pressure coming out of the ground and push water over to the barn about 80 rods away and supply the cattle with water from the peat moss bed. Everything has changed, the trees have grown, but the peat bog is still there and you could bury a tractor in it and you wouldn't know where it went.



Again, the Lou Stanley place and I'm standing in what used to be the driveway looking at the building site. There was a big old house, a windmill, a well, a dairy barn, a basement barn with a concrete silo and concrete bridge. The milk house and feed room were under the bridge. We lived there and milked about 25 cows and were there until we sold out and moved to Idaho about 1936. But there is nothing left there to reminisce about except the knowledge of the location and what used to be.





After the trip became history and we survived a humungous flood on the Cedar River near Cedar Rapids and some of the heaviest rain I ever saw, we headed home and of course, had to go through security check at the Des Moines, Iowa, airport. I touched off the bells and whistles at the security check so I had to undergo a frisking to determine that there was no hardware on me. The result of this examination was to find that the rivets on my jeans were activating the metal detector. Rather embarrassing and obviously hilarious to people watching.

## The Rest of the Story

Ray and Rebecca's trip to Iowa  
June, 2008



Our adventure began innocently enough.

We had enjoyed a tasty supper sitting around our kitchen table, and as usual ---an interesting conversation. Ray is a frequent guest at our home. He's intelligent, witty and has had such a variety of experiences and opportunities. My husband, Mike, and I always learn something from the wisdom he's picked up in his 91 years. His remarkable memory continually amazes us. It's incredible all that man remembers!

Ray mentioned that his 73<sup>rd</sup> class reunion was coming up. An invitation had arrived stating there would be an alumni celebration and Ray was urged to attend. Where and when, I asked. Ray answered that it would be held at Springville High, Iowa, June 7. He said he'd only been to one reunion and out of a class of 30, there were only five schoolmates left. "Are you going, Ray?" I asked. "Oh, no, I wouldn't want go by myself," he answered.

I was thinking, wouldn't that be a fun trip! But ....June 7 was only a week away. Could I get all the details worked out in that short amount of time? I quickly decided to at least give it a try. I asked Ray if he'd like me to be his "tour guide", and I would arrange the travel particulars. Ray doesn't surprise easily, but this time he was taken aback. Quickly he recovered and being the gentleman he is, didn't want to impose. We assured him rather than an imposition, we considered it an opportunity. Ray was still sort of in shock I think, but agreed to take the next step, which was seeing if I could get our air flight arranged.



After Ray left, I got on the computer and in a surprising amount of time, found feasible flights to Iowa. Bright and early the next morning, I called Ray to get his approval. It's a go! We'd leave on a Thursday and return on a Monday.

It would have been more practical to fly into Cedar Rapids, but it was less expensive to fly to Des Moines and rent a car. It really was best as a rental car was necessary anyway. It also gave us a chance to see the countryside - me, a real tourist to the area, and Ray, a trip down Memory Lane. The plan was to stay in Des Moines that first night, in Cedar Rapids for two nights and back to Des Moines the night before the flight home.

Lois and I helped Ray get packed for the trip. He hadn't flown for at least 15 years; airport security has changed much.

June 5<sup>th</sup>, our take-off day, arrived quickly. I drove us in Ray's Buick into Portland and we left it at Thrifty Parking. The shuttle dropped us off at the United Airlines terminal, and soon we were in the security check line. He remembered too late that his pocketknife needed to be in his checked luggage, and sure enough it was discovered. Ray was then thoroughly searched. I couldn't help giggling - Ray Hobson is such a threat to humanity! I was standing at the end of the conveyor belt, guarding our carry-ons. I saw the security gal take Ray over to a machine & give brief instructions. Ray pressed a few buttons, and looked frustrated. Although it was against regulations, I crossed into the "secure" section to find out what was happening. Poor Ray - that woman had left him alone at a computer! It gave him the opportunity to package, address & mail his knife home, for \$7.25. But ....the machine was impatient and his package was whisked away before he could get the address typed in. I found a more responsible employee who assured us that we could pick up his favorite knife at PDX security when we returned.

We were a bit early for the flight, but it gave us some good people-watching opportunities. I struck up a conversation with an attractive young woman seated next to us. She was of perhaps Filipino ancestry, dark hair up in a pretty French twist; she had on a classy dress and heels. I complimented her and she graciously thanked me, stating that she felt women were entirely too casual these days. She was personable and we chatted for awhile.

We soon boarded. Because of our lateness on securing a flight, we ended up in the back rows on all our flights. Note to self: don't sit there again! What bumpy and sometimes scary rides! Ray with his long legs, sat in the aisle seat. Shortly after the seatbelt sign went off, came an unbelievable deluge of people needing the restroom. There were so many Ray was constantly jostled.

Our tiny package of peanuts and purchased box lunch didn't go far and we were hungry by the time we arrived in Chicago O'Hare airport. We had to walk to a different terminal for the flight to Des Moines. As we walked down a long hall (that actually went under the tarmac), we saw a place to get our shoes shined. There was plenty of time, so we took advantage of the situation. The shoeshine fellow was a young black man. Ray and I climbed into the chairs awaiting our turn. I noted the shoeshine man seemed to exhibit no personality with his previous customer. Ray and I had time to do more people-watching & were joking about them (kind-heartedly, of course!). And then, incredibly in this airport with its thousands of travelers, who should we see walking confidently down the terminal, but the Portland Filipino lady. We couldn't believe it! What a coincidence!

Soon it was Ray's turn for a shoeshine. The first thing the young man said was, "Size 14, right?" Naturally he was correct, and from then on the conversation was flowing. There were the inevitable big feet jokes: "do you charge extra" "small pets and children, beware" "we had to buy an extra plane seat for his feet" "Ray won't need a full length mirror after you get done shining his shoes", etc. Ray was a good sport and we all were laughing. During this time, another customer joined us. He looked to be a businessman, nice-looking, young, and eager to climb the corporate ladder. I offered to let him take my place as we had plenty of time to spare. He assured me he was in no hurry as he answered in a soft southern accent. Of course, me being a Texan, I had to ask where he was from. West Virginia, he said. Ray asked about the tobacco farms and soon we all were conversing so easily you'd be hard-pressed to think we were strangers. Oftentimes we laughed so loud, as people scurried through the terminal, they looked at us curiously- and I think a little envious. Here the four of us were from totally different backgrounds -- yet - as strangers we found a camaraderie.

Ray and I found this gratifying experience to be the first of many on this trip. It must have been our friendly faces, because we happened into many wonderful conversations with strangers. I'm always curious about others'

lives and Ray with his intelligence and rich experiences can talk about anything.

We finished our long walk through the terminal to our next gate destination. It was quite a hike and I admired Ray for his physical fitness. He'd been battling bronchitis and he wasn't going to let it beat him out of this trip. The terminal was narrow and full of people in a hurry. The few places to eat had long lines. It seemed best to leave the confusion and find our seats nearby our gate. It was wearing on both of us and we were glad when it was finally time to board.

It was around 10 p.m. when we finally landed at Des Moines. Ray reluctantly agreed to accept a wheelchair ride to the baggage claim. I had to cross my heart and promise not to tell anyone.

It was strangely quiet as we walked through the airport. There were hardly any other travelers. Very odd, I thought, this is a major city and airport. We retrieved our luggage and called the Best Western for the shuttle to pick us up. We went outside to wait in the quiet humid air. Barely had we stood there before sirens were blaring. What's going on? That's when I noticed there were no cars around. Suddenly, the shuttle van comes roaring around the corner, almost on two wheels. The driver leaps out, throws open the doors, hurls in our luggage, and yells, "Jump in, a tornado's coming!!!"

That was my introduction to Iowa.

We had to stay in the hotel "safe" room. Ray was Mr. Super Calm and me ....well, I was scared. We were exhausted and hungry; it had been a very long day. After about 45 minutes, it was determined the tornado avoided the area and we were allowed to go to our rooms. We were grateful to be safe and sound as outside there were fierce winds and a torrential rainstorm.

Bright sunshine and a few fluffy white clouds greeted us the next day. After picking up our rental car, we headed for the nearest restaurant - we were starving! All we had to eat the night before was trail mix; all the restaurants were closed.

Then it was down the freeway. We traveled on I-80, then north on 380 to Cedar Rapids. Everywhere we went, there were signs of flooding and the resulting damage to the fields. Ray was surprised the field corn and

soybeans hadn't been planted, but soon realized it had been too wet. He explained there was a window of time for cultivation; planting is usually in May with harvest in October. With the rain-caused delay, it looked to be a grim year for the crops.

As we traveled on the freeways, highways and country roads, I was quite impressed with Iowa's road system. It was well-designed and maintained. Another surprising plus was how lightly traveled they all were. Oftentimes we had the roads to ourselves.

We arrived in Cedar Rapids mid-afternoon. There was a conveniently-located Ruby Tuesday so that's where we had lunch. Afterwards I called the Days Inn (located in Marion) for directions. I explained where we were. The gal vaguely knew the road (she spoke with a foreign accent) and tried to tell me how to find their motel. So, Ray & I set off for what should have been a very short drive. 30 minutes later, and after a grand tour of the backside of Cedar Rapids AND somehow ending up back at Ruby Tuesday's, I called the motel again. This person spoke only a little better English. We decided, forget it, we'd backtrack to the freeway and simply get off at the next exit. Sure enough, we found the motel. I think the Iowa freeway designers should talk to the city street designers.

The motel was comfortable and we rested for a bit before heading out to explore. We first went to the old Pierson place. Ray was born in Fairfield, Idaho and at age 2, his family moved to this farm. They lived here until he was 11. His family rented this farm and raised sugar cane, corn, oats and the best watermelons in the county. Ray, being the only son in the family, learned to do a man's job early. This farm is where he learned at age 9 to drive a four-horse team.





It still is a beautifully maintained farm. Ray showed me where the sorghum mill used to be. With Dick, the old work horse, Ray's job was taking the sorghum stalks to the press & hauling away the remains.

We then went into Whittier where Ray showed me the Quaker school he attended. He and his cousins Ike Hoge and Lawrence Smith went to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade here. Like the old story, Ray really did have to walk three miles one way to school, and not surprisingly for Iowa, often in the snow.

The 150 year old buildings and homes in the town were in remarkable condition. Ray showed me a structure across from the meeting hall that used to be the grocery store and ice house. The school and the little stable, however, didn't stand the test of time. Neither did the school's outhouse. Ray admitted he may have tipped it over a few too many times.



Across the street at the current community center, was where Ray, at age 18, first met his true love, Ellen. It was at the annual Quaker meeting, and both were helping serve food.

Ray played basketball here at the community center also. His nickname in school was Hobby. One of his teammates was nicknamed Tore (taken from Popeye's nemesis before Bluto). Ray remembered Tore as being "real hairy."

From there we traveled a short distance northeast to the second Hobson home, called the Stanley place. Just before we got there, Ray pointed to a little hidden hollow. It used to be a popular necking place for kids. One time Ray and the neighbor boy sneaked down there and threw buckets of water on an unsuspecting couple. He said they weren't just necking, either.



There is nothing left of the home and barns anymore but the land is still being farmed. He pointed out the peat bog which was their source of water. A hydraulic ram was used to create pressure. This was also a rented farm; here they raised hay, soybeans, corn and oats.

Ray lived here from age 11 to 18. His dad eventually developed arthritis in both wrists, severely handicapping him for farming. His five sisters helped also on the farm, but Ray took the reins literally, at age 13. His dad would leave early for the fields and Ray did the milking, harnessing and driving of the teams. During threshing, Ray earned the reputation as the Best Bundle Wagon Driver. He was young but figured how to stack the bundles securely in the 8' wide by 16' long wagons. He took pride that he didn't lose any as he'd travel from the fields to the threshing machine.

Ray remembered one exciting incident that happened when he was about 12 or 13. His father had reprimanded him to never stop the team in the middle of the field and unhitch to come to the barn. He remembered these words one day as a big storm was approaching. He dutifully finished the long row and started heading for the barn as the storm was ferociously swirling around him and the team. Suddenly, he felt himself lifted up in the air and he was unceremoniously dumped in front of the team. The horses stopped obediently and waited for their young master. Ray picked himself up and realized a tornado had been born of this storm. He watched as it continued its way across the field .... and through the middle of the barn he would have been in had he not heeded his father's words!

I'm always amazed at the power of people in the old days. There was no mechanization, just sheer muscle, courage and determination.



It was interesting to hear Ray reminisce about the farms and his life as a youngster. I thought the area was quite pretty with its rivers, trees and



rolling hills. It was a surprise to see this type of terrain as I'd always pictured Iowa as mostly dry flatland.

It was getting to be late afternoon and time to visit Aubrey and Loreen McShane. Their place is out of Central City. Loreen was recovering from a broken leg (incurred during last winter's ice storm). Ray and Aub have been close since the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. That's a lot of years! Immediately they were immersed in conversation - just as dear old friends do. Loreen is a charming lady who is easy to like. She and I made some sandwiches for supper. They've lived at their farm for 60 years and have three children. They're still active in the everyday aspects of farming the hay, corn and soybean crops. One son farms nearby, and manages the folks' place. Aub is 91 and let's just say Loreen is younger.



Loreen insisted the two strong guys hold her up, 'cause she wasn't gonna be photographed with her walker. By the way, they also own a few cats ...

Another long day but oh, what a satisfying one. All those country roads we traveled were trips down Memory Lane for Ray. I was a keen listener. It was like stepping back in time and having my very own history teacher!

The next morning was sunny also and after breakfast we headed out to visit Neva Lanning (Ellen's niece) at her Toddville home. We didn't have her phone number; Ray instructed me to go down this road and that .... and at first we couldn't find her place. Finally, a road looked familiar to Ray. He then recognized an old graveyard and barn and after that he directed me right to Neva's driveway. A widow, she lives at the farm she and her husband spent most of their lives at. Her yard had such beautiful flowers and huge trees! We enjoyed a very nice visit and then Neva insisted we



drive to town for lunch - her treat. Neva is a very intelligent lady and like Ray, is knowledgeable about a multitude of subjects.



Afterwards, we went back to Whittier to visit Lawrence, Ray's cousin. Lawrence has dementia. I could tell Ray was sad and upset for his friend; it was a hard visit to handle. But Lawrence recognized Ray, which was gratifying. Lawrence smiled genuinely and I'd like to think his mind was clear for that time. Lawrence's sons and daughter were there cleaning out his shop. They recognized Ray immediately and we found Lawrence's children to be quite congenial. It was a very pleasant visit.



Soon it was time to go .... we had to get "duded" up for the big alumni banquet that night! We readied ourselves and concluded we'd be the best-looking couple that would be there. We should have left about 5:30 p.m., but the Belmont Stakes was on. We just couldn't miss a history-making moment. But darn it, Big Brown wasn't the fastest. Once again, no Triple Crown winner...



The Springville High School's parking lot apparently was THE place to be on this particular Saturday night. We finally found a place to park two blocks away. Aubrey and Loreen saved us a good spot at their table. The gym was crowded full of alumni from the 1933 to 2007 classes. I was introduced to Bernice (Bennett) Carnahan, one of the five classmates. Ike Hoge and Rachel Houver were unable to attend. We arrived just in time because after being seated, tempting smells from an abundant buffet drifted to our table. Luckily, we were served first. What a delicious meal!

After we all finished eating, a very nice recognition program was presented. The organizers had accomplished a wonderful opportunity for folks to get together. Their hard work was obvious everywhere you looked. The decorations, the food, the presentations and the sheer number of people who attended showed their success.

Bernice shared that the only reason she graduated was because she always sat next to Ray in class. Ray was the valedictorian. That alone is a feat, but Ray earned the honor despite his senior year spent on the farm helping his family survive. He did his school work at home.

Later Ray told me another story about Bernice. It seems they were in English class on a sleepy sunny afternoon. It was absolutely quiet in the room. That is, until in a loud firm voice, Bernice exclaims, "Ray Hobson, get your hand off my knee!"

Ray pleads innocent, but he said those nouns and verbs sure woke up the class!

What a fun evening!



We awoke Sunday to a terrible thunderstorm. It was like Iowa was saying, Ok, it's time for you to go home now. We had planned a leisurely trip back to Des Moines so decided to wait out the storm. We ate breakfast there at the motel and sure enough, about 11 a.m., the clouds cleared a bit. We hurriedly loaded the car & headed for Highway 30. We went back a different way, so we could see more country. As we traveled through the farmland to Marshalltown, we could see thunderstorms all around us in the distance. Somehow though, they missed us and we had a safe drive to Des Moines.

We stopped for coffee and pie at Tama. The little restaurant wasn't fancy, but it was popular. Not long after we were seated, an older couple sat at the table next to us. The fellow had a ball cap on, so Ray & he started up with the farmer talk and his friendly wife was easy to chat with also. They were quite personable and this pleasant conversation put the cap on our wonderful visit to America's breadbasket.

BUT, the next day our good fortune almost ran out. We went to the ticket counter to check in and get our boarding passes. That's when the real "fun" began. The agent quickly processed our passes, explaining because of the storms, the plane was delayed two hours. I went back to Ray ... and then it dawned on me, we'd miss our connecting flight! So, I hurried back to the agent, who by this time had several people in line. They were terribly understaffed, and by the time it was my turn, there were dozens of people waiting behind me. I explained about missing our Portland flight out of

Denver. The agent was stressed, and said to go to the gate to attempt to revise our connection.

We made our way to the security checkpoint. Once again, Ray was spotted as a potential terrorist. I almost had to go home without him. Fortunately, he didn't have to take his pants off.



Soon after we reached our gate, the United employee (again only ONE person), announced she would try to revise the travelers' connecting flights. Like a huge flock of birds, people flew into line. Understandably, it moved like cold molasses. I was worried. The other agent had told me our option was to fly to Denver; there we'd have to wait SEVEN hours for the next chance to Portland! I looked at the line once more and thought hey, why not call United Airlines? I called them on my cell phone and talked to someone probably in India. And, I'm not ashamed to admit I *took advantage* of Ray. Yep, I told them I was traveling with a 91 year old man who couldn't handle being stuck in an airport for seven hours. The clerk was sympathetic and set us up on a Frontier flight; our layover in Denver would be 45 minutes.

Finally, 2 ½ hours later, our plane was ready for take-off from Des Moines. The flights went well and late that afternoon we landed in Portland.

We stopped at the Shiloh Inn for one last meal together to cap off our exciting adventure. It really was a rewarding and heartwarming trip. For Ray, it meant reliving a youthful past and renewing dear old friendships. He



was able to see his best pal again. Probably most precious was that he was able to visit his childhood once more.

This trip took me back to a simpler time when hard work and your word meant survival. I enjoyed many interesting conversations with Ray's friends and family. Older people have seen so much and are wise from their experiences. Ray is a wonderful traveling companion... his sense of humor makes me laugh, his gentlemanly manners honor me, his stories are delightful, his intelligence always amazes me. I am grateful for the opportunity and will always remember this remarkable trip.

"The Rest of the Story" sincerely recorded by Rebecca Herron

Addendum:

#1) There were storms before our trip, but during our visiting time in the Cedar Rapids area, we were blessed with good weather. However, a few days after we left, severe rainstorms hit, creating devastating floods. The Cedar River and its tributaries overflowed into the cities and destroyed valuable cropland.

#2) The Ruby Tuesday Restaurant happened by chance in our story three times. The day before we left Oregon, we took Ray's Buick into McMinnville for brake work. We had lunch at Ruby Tuesday's while the repair was being done. It was the first time we ate there together. Then in Cedar Rapids, we ate at Ruby Tuesday and got the royal runaround there when we got lost. Finally, the capper: we decided to go out to dinner and review this story. Where did we go? Ruby Tuesday's in McMinnville, of course!

But we didn't realize the coincidence until we got in the Buick to go home.....