

Local Folks

Jon Whalen, StoryTeller

Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society

2014

The road in front of our house, well, the road way down the hill from the house, was full of ruts during the winter months. Very little gravel and lots of mud. On the right side of the driveway, if you could call the slightly more graveled path up the hill to our house a driveway, this little old lady had a shack. I can't recall her name now. Funny. As many times as Grandma or Grandpa said "Here comes so and so"...and I can't remember her name? Maybe that's because Grandpa did call her a so and so much of the time. Sometime later she had a bigger shack built further up the hill away from the road. But when I first got to Hugo she lived right there in that shack and she was one of the grouchiest old ladies I ever met. She may not have been as old as I thought she was but then I was only nine and what did I know. She used to walk up the hill to our house and yell at Grandpa as if it was his fault that he had to make all that noise trying to get a good run through the mud and ruts to get up enough steam to make it into his own road with enough speed to maybe get up to his house. Everyone came roaring up around the turn by her house, she used to rant, making all that racket and waking her up at all hours. All hours? I don't remember very many folks ever traveling the roads of Hugo after dark in those days. It was hard enough to get anywhere in daylight.

Now and then Ed Brazill would come up the hill to visit with Grandpa. Most times Grandpa was out trying to put a new board or two (he was always building on something or other) or burning the little piles of brush we had piled in the back yard the day before. Ed never got to our house very early, just about the time for Grandma to call Grandpa in for breakfast usually. Grandma would be the one visiting with Ed. He was a nice old guy. Always had some new story to tell about something that happened somewhere in Hugo. He must have walked a long way to get all his information but when he did all this walking I don't know cause he was up in our kitchen an awful lot. Grandma would make him take off his wrinkled and unshaped hat but why I don't know. He took it off and put it right there on the table and sometimes wiped up his spilled coffee with it. And he would take one of Grandma's gooey goulashes home in it. A goulash was a pastry filled with fruit...not a muddy boot. I think it was something Grandpa used to enjoy in the old country. Anyway, that hat got so that it wasn't any too good at cleaning up coffee spills cause it was almost waterproof with all the dried food mashed into it. Come to think of it, Ed had a different smell than most folks. He could smell like Grandma's kitchen just by standing near one of Grandpa's brush fires. He could have probably made a pretty fair to middling soup with that hat.

Then there were the Norton's. They lived a ways down Russell Road, just past the Hershel's strawberry field as I recall, and past the road that went up to the old apple orchard just below the Hall place. One day Grandma and Grandpa took my brother, Daryn, and I to the Norton's to pick out a couple of geese. I don't know if the geese were meant to be pets or what. We never tried to hatch any eggs and one of those geese was just plain mean. Chased anyone who was stupid enough or maybe just ignorant of the fact that the gander thought the back yard was his kingdom to rule. The only way we got rid of him was when Daryn slammed his head in the outhouse door,

but that is another story. The Norton's goat herd caught brother Dale and I in the old apple orchard one day. We were shooting at ground squirrels, or diggers, as we called them, when we heard the bell on that big billy clanging away. It was getting closer at a pretty good clip so we climbed an apple tree. I think those goats would butt you if they could. Anyway, there we were, up a tree throwing apples at the goats trying to drive them off and all they did was stand there eating the apples we were throwing. They must have gotten their fill cause they finally went off towards home and so did we.

The Halls lived in this big old house by a pond just a ways above the orchard. I was in their house just once and I don't recall what for. Anyway, the Halls must not have ever thrown anything away. Their house had so much stuff stacked all over the place that you actually had to follow these paths through the house. No paint anywhere and it smelled like a really really musty library. Magazines and books took up all and every flat surface in the home. I'm not really sure they had electricity, But they had a neat pond that ducks liked. We used to take our trusty 22's and try to get a duck or two off the pond. I guess we should have just stuck to trying to get just one duck cause I don't recall either Dale or me ever bagging one let alone two. Shot up a lot of ammo up there in the orchard and around that pond, though. Then there was the time we were riding our motorcycles through the orchard and up to the pond. There was this narrow trail that circled the pond. Mikie was on my motorcycle with me and we were going like the wind to get up speed to make the grade up the face of the pond and turn into that trail. I guess Mikie figured we were going too fast to make the turn at the top and off he jumped. Then I was really moving and was going too fast to turn onto the trail and flew right on over into the pond. Like I said, I was only in the Hall house once, and I was only in their pond once, too. Took me a couple of weeks to get that motorcycle running again. We would see the Halls on the road going to church on Sundays. They rode on a sort of wagon thing pulled by their horse. The wagon had old used automobile tires so the Halls did have use for some new ways. They apparently didn't like folks just wandering around their property. One time I was out on a walk with Mother and brother Daryn and we were up on the Hall's property just walking along. It was nearly Christmas in 1957, I think it was. Anyway, a dog started barking over by the Hall place and the next thing we knew a gun was being fired and we heard bullets hitting the trees above us. We got out of there a lot quicker than we got there, I tell you. And Mom was so furious but we didn't want to go confront anyone...I mean come on...all those Christmas presents under the tree and all...who wanted to go get shot or even chewed up by a dog. I think I was more afraid of the dog. I got bit by a dog when I was littler and I don't to this day trust some dogs. You know how you can just look at a dog and you know if you want to hold out your hand or not. I have that ability honed, let me tell you. Well, these were just a few of the neighbors in the area during the mid to late fifties. Ah. I remember another name...Baldwin! Pop would loan one of us boys to Mr. Baldwin when we went to the Father/son dinner at the grange hall. There was another man that lived over by the Arnolds on Hugo Rd just above the school. One of us got loaned to him too, but I can't recall his name. We went to the dinners and I remember Dale and I had to get up and sing "My silver haired daddy" at one of those dinners. Good thing Dale can sing...he for sure carried us. I blurted out a few of the more noted words, like silver and haired and let Dale carry the tune and all. I myself can't hum a recognizable tune. I sound like the Hall's used tires on low air. You know the sound. Their horse kept better time than I can. Anyway, the dinners went well. I don't know if the dinners were meant to raise any kind of money for the grange or just to be get-togethers. I could

have passed them up, but Pop always wanted to go and I guess so did other men around the area if they were willing to take one of us boys along just to get to go themselves.

Adeline...Adelien....anyway Hartwig. She was a good friend to my grandma. She used to visit grandma quite often. I remember one time she came in her new "sports car". I think it was called a Borgward or something like that. Grandma and Adeline and Daryn and I went down the stairs to see that new car. Shiny...black...looked fast and really neat to Daryn and I. Grandma looked at it and said right away that she would rather still have her old 1951 Chev. Where you gonna get parts for that thing, she asked? Who's gonna fix it? Rudy don't know nothing about them little things. And it's too low...you'll get stuck in the ruts. Why in the world would you want anything like that? All your gonna do is have to have it towed up and down the road till you get out to the highway. Might as well have the Hall's cart and horse. Adeline just smiled and said she would be back again soon and off she went down the hill in her black little convertible. She did have a bit of trouble getting over the first big rut at the bottom of the driveway but once she got into the middle of Three Pines Rd she got it going pretty good. But that was the first and last time I ever saw that sports car.

Sometimes Dale and I would walk home from school. Every now and again Lucky Roe would come along in his Volvo, one of those cute little bubble kinda shaped things, you know? He would stop and give us a ride on home. He was a handsome and friendly guy. One time he showed me some drawings he had made of an invention he was working on. It was a tree pruner, he said, that had a long handle and a chain saw at the end. These days you see these sort of trimmers made by all the big yard tool companies but I had never seen one yet at the time. I guess he never got it patented because I don't see any of them with the Roe name on them. Don't know what ever became of Lucky but I sure remember him. I can relate lots of happenings from around here during the fifties. But I cant put it all into one sitting. Bore most of you, most likely, but probably just make a fool of myself by exposing the kind of dumb things my brothers and I did. Given time, I might remember more folks I knew then but maybe given time I will forget the ones I have already mentioned.