

ONE MAN'S FAMILY

My father, George Diener, was born in 1865 in Chicago and died in 1930 at the age of 65 from a sudden heart attack. My mother was born in 1870 in Chicago and died in 1960 at the age of 90 from cancer.

My father had a rather rough childhood because his mother died when he was 7 years of age and he left home at the age of 15 to make his way in the world. He had various jobs in Chicago - he was a horse-drawn streetcar conductor, he was a Chicago policeman, and eventually he managed a department of Abbott Laboratories, which is a pharmaceutical plant. While there, he was overcome with some fumes (chlorine gas) in the making of some medicines and the doctor told him he had to move out into the country to save his health. However, during his whole lifetime, he was a wonderful father to me, as well as my mother was a wonderful mother, and I think one of the greatest things a child can have is good parents.

My mother was a telephone operator at one time and, also, was a secretary to a commission house on the Board of Trade.

We moved to Monticello, Indiana, in 1909 and located 1 1/2 miles north of Monticello along the Tippecanoe River (south of Norway on the hill). The river and all the countryside around it were beautiful and unspoiled by any commercialization. My father did various things. He didn't know much about farming. He raised some strawberries and various vegetables; we had dairy cows, hogs and chickens and always had enough to eat even though we didn't have much money. You can imagine what a wonderful thing it was to do

all the things a boy of seven could do in that type of surroundings - fishing, swimming, boating, etc.

The main reason my father located in Monticello was through Tom O'Conner, who dealt in real estate. Tom O'Conner was probably one of the leading citizens in Monticello at that time. He built the large stone dwelling at the corner of Broadway and Bluff streets, which still is a landmark in Monticello. Tom O'Conner had financial difficulties long before the disastrous 1929 depression; however, he made up practically all of his indebtedness, as far as I know. His son, Richard O'Conner, the only one living of the original Tom O'Connors, donated the land on which the White County Memorial Hospital is located.

Before my father was married, he had a chance to be head cook for Barnum and Bailey Circus when they made a tour around the world, but his brothers and sisters persuaded him not to make the trip. He loved to cook and he made every Sunday dinner as long as he lived when I was a boy and growing up. While on the farm, he made dinners for people and charged a very minimum charge in conjunction with a cottage on the Tippecanoe River called Ravinia, so called because three ravines merged together at that point, and was located across from a place on the east side of the river called Diamond Point. This was the second cottage in the area. He put an ad in the Indianapolis newspaper about Ravinia and we had quite a few customers who spent the week at Ravinia. It was mostly a fishing camp and, of course, fishing was very good at that time. One time in particular that I remember

was an occasion when two young women rented the cottage for a week and my father went to town with a horse and buggy and picked them and their luggage up and brought them down to the cottage. The girls were expecting a dancing resort so they stayed one day and went home.

He was also road supervisor while living north of Monticello. He took care of the roads and was supposed to keep order if there was any disturbance. At that time, the gypsies came in by the hundreds in their covered wagons with a whole string of ragged horses. They came to Norway and parked along the river and were not too well liked as a general rule. One night at 12:00 P.M. my father got a call to quell a disturbance in a gypsy camp northeast of Monticello in the Pike Creek area. When he got there, he found that they had had a death in their group who was the Gypsy King, and for some reason or other the horses had gone all over the territory and the farmers were upset about it. These gypsies were very excitable people and sort of lived off the land, however, my father quelled the riot. Many years later, we found out that one of the Norway boys had thrown a stick of dynatime in the horse coral and that was what scattered the horses.

I went to school at Norway, Indiana, in a single room where all grades were taught by one teacher. I think I got as good an education in reading, writing, and arithmetic as some of them do today. In fact, when I was in the fourth grade, I knew as much about arithmetic as I was able to understand about the new method of arithmetic at the age of 60. Apparently, today some of the children don't know how to read correctly - they read words instead of thoughts;

however, that is just my opinion. I think as much as Hoosiers like basketball, we could spend a little more time on some other activities including public speaking and some of the other arts. North White High School at Monon, Indiana, has a singing group called Val Hollows. Before Christmas this group auditioned and broadcast on TV channels 13, 8, and 18. Part of my admiration for this group is justified because one of them is my granddaughter, Michelle Diener. I graduated from grade school at Norway and went to Monticello high school for four years and graduated there at the long end of 16 years of age. I was third highest of 21 graduates, which is nothing much to brag about because there were so few of us. That included all of Monticello and Buffalo, Indiana.

From then on, I went back to the farm and Dad sold out and moved to Pulaski, Indiana, on a bigger farm (also located along the Tippecanoe River), where my brother, Earl, who is four years older than I, and I helped farm with my Dad. We stayed there one year and then moved back to the present location here at Reynolds in 1920. We drove our cows on foot from Pulaski to Reynolds - it sure was a long day.

My brother and I became more and more involved in farming and we started growing soybeans in 1919 and continued growing them from that point on. We cut them with a binder, in as much as we planted them as a small grain crop rather than a row crop such as corn. We did this without the use of herbicides and still had respectable yields and clean fields. After ten years of this endeavor, we decided after reading farm papers that a combine would harvest this crop better than the way we were doing it. We, therefore, looked around to find who had combines, since there were none in White County. We

went to three places: Kankakee Marsh, where a combine was used to combine wheat, the Ditton farm in Benton County used on oats, and one used on wheat on the Taylor Fouts farm at Deere Creek (the entertainer, Stubby Fouts' uncle). Taylor Fouts had an International #8, 10-foot combine with a 15-30 IHC tractor power take off, which we observed didn't work correctly when you ran into various conditions in the field, due to the fact that your power wouldn't be equal to the load and couldn't change the speed gear fast enough. We bought a Model #8 McCormick Deering, 10-foot combine with a Waukeshaw motor. This was the first combine in White County. From then on we continued to increase our soybean acreage.

About 1925, I became acquainted with the Remington Farmer's Mutual Insurance Company. I became acquainted with Daniel Biddle, Harvey Schuyler, and, also, Clarence Hansel. They invited me to be a part-time agent for the company. In fact, Clarence Hansel sold us our first policy. During my last ride with Clarence, as we left to go from Remington to Reynolds a week or two before he died, he told me that there was no one he ever seriously disliked.

I was married in 1928 to Althea Benning, a registered nurse at Mercy Hospital in Chicago. I got acquainted with her one summer when her family stayed at Ravinia. We were married Thanksgiving Day in Chicago - I was 26 and she was 24. Shortly after, in due time, we had four children - two boys and two girls and, of course, we all farmed together and we all had our chores to do. We had one family car and did not have my own car until 1939.

As the boys grew older, we increased our holdings until, eventually, we had 630 acres of land between my brother and I. During that time, we had a dairy herd and my brother discontinued active farming in the late 40's and he

particularly didn't want to have anything to do with dairying, so I kept the dairy herd together until about 1954 until my youngest son, Tom, got out of the service. Then after he got home, we had to make up our minds to either improve our dairy operation by paving the cow yard, putting in a milking parlor, putting in a self-watering system, and other things. At that time, after 40 years, I had all the dairying I wanted and I left it up to the two boys if they wanted to continue dairying or not. They decided to sell out and at that time we went into the seed business in a bigger way and built the main start of our seed plant in 1958. This business really started to grow after the boys took over in 1958 and we have grown beyond our foreseeable expectations. We still continued to farm, but we increased our operation in all kinds of seed, primarily soybeans, wheat, oats, barley, seed corn, alfalfas, clovers, grass seeds, chemicals and spray parts. We have always tried to operate honestly with something worthwhile to offer the farmer, which is the only way any business can long survive.

My two boys married girls from Benton County: Ruth Muller and Marge Brouillette. George has six children: Becky, Kevin, Mary, Mark, Chris, and Jane. Tom has five children: Mike, Michelle, Tim, Phil, and Steven.

My two daughters, Martha the oldest and Ann the youngest, became interested in religious vocations and entered the convent. Martha stayed in the convent four years and was a teacher at Monteno, Illinois, and prior to making her final vows decided to leave the convent. Ann was in the convent two years and decided she didn't want that vocation. After leaving the convent (about the same time) they had to readjust their lives, somewhat, so my wife and I arranged to have them make a trip to North Africa, the Holy Lands (during

the Easter season), Italy, France, Germany, Scotland, and Ireland. During this trip, Martha met a young man that she fell in love with and he fell in love with her - they were soon married. His name was Jack Gallogly and he is President now of Sloan and Company, an auctioneering firm (the oldest in Washington, D.C.) that deals with old estate household goods and period furniture and other articles that need appropriate knowledge. She has eight children: Mary, David, Regina, Eileen, Meg, Jackie, Terry, and Monica. Ann, my youngest daughter, married an insurance adjuster from Chicago and now has two children: Kathy and Jim. So, in all we have twenty-one grandchildren, the oldest is 19 and the youngest 4 years of age.

We developed a lake area in the 1950's. I was able to buy three tracts of land from three different people, totaling 140 acres, (also along the Tippecanoe River) that had a deep gully fed by springs upon which we developed three lakes with about 18 acres in area of water. We planted approximately 30,000 trees, some of which are 40 feet tall now, on some of the 8 to 10 acres of open land. We called it Wally's Woods (named by my wife, Althea). It is one of the few places where wild life and nature is undisturbed and is supervised as a classified Forest.

I probably wouldn't have the nerve to make this autobiography if it wasn't for the emphasis given to me by Norman Vincent Peale's Sunday morning talks at 8 o'clock. If I was as good a speaker as he, I wouldn't need to write anything down on paper and use the art of public speaking.

I have been connected all these years with the Remington Farmers and eventually appointed on the Board of Directors, and for some reason or

other, I was nominated to be President of the Board, which I humbly appreciate. On the agenda that Charles sent me for this meeting he said there will be a few remarks by the president, so I have taken the liberty to throw in what little I know about myself, my family and my activities. All this was assembled rather hastily on Friday, January 17, 1975.

I think we have a very worthwhile company. We have increased our insurance in the last year from 60 million to over 70 million dollars. We have not done too much increasing in rates and if we can keep the proper coverage to value, may not have to, but that still is an unknown factor and will probably be discussed after this meeting is over by the directors.

I thank you for your patience in listening to this autobiography and trust you might find something of interest in it.

Walter G. Diener