

Effie Memories

as told by
Vernie Johnson

Uncle Frank Dahlberg

My dad, Ward Johnson, came to the Effie country just after World War I. He came to work for Uncle Frank Dahlberg in a grocery store. Mother came a little later. They lived in a cabin sitting where Milo Aakhus lives today. Their second home was behind the big garage that Frank Dahlberg had built. Their next home was the frame house that Helen owns today. That is where I was born March 29th, 1923. I really feel I got here early enough to see and hear the many stories of the frontier days of Effie.

After Uncle Frank built the garage, he bought a big Buick. If you happened to be close to the garage and heard wheels spinning, you made sure you were not near the driveway because Frank was backing out. One day Frank had that Buick all polished up and Bob Anderson (my good friend in Effie) and I were invited to ride along to Mirror Lake where Frank had a tavern and a few cabins. Frank was a snuff chewer. He had the windows on the car so clean, he thought he had it wound down. Well, that window was not clean for long.

Bob and I were invited to go with Frank often. One time Bob and I gave him such a rough time for running over a partridge, he threatened to make us walk home. Still another time, with Bob and I in the car with him, Frank almost drove in the ditch to keep from running over a skunk.

Frank kept a boat in the lake. Someone shot a hole in the boat so Frank repaired it with a tin patch. The next trip to the lake, we found that someone had shot a hole in the patch. That led to words that Bob and I were hearing for the first time.

Old Dick McGraw

A big hay meadow lay west of Effie. Each fall many area farmers cut and hauled hay from that meadow to their homes. An old hermit, Dick McGraw, lived out close to the hay meadow. He was noted for living on wild meat. Being a hermit, folks teased him and asked him if he still liked to eat woodchuck. "It's OK", he said, " but I'd sooner have duck".

When Dick got up in years, he was brought to town by George Mehelich and hired as a night watchman in the Mehelich garage. When he died, George found a grocery slip from Holsman brothers store in Bigfork dated 1917. Twice a year everything was bought in huge quantities--100 pounds of flour and sugar, 50 pounds of lard and coffee, and so on.

Effie School

Our little one room school where I put in three years, stood across from where Milo Aakhus lives today (west of Effie). We all had to help carry wood to feed the big pot belly stove. We each had our own drinking cup and it hung on the wall by the water cooler.

There were girls in that school you didn't dare look at or tease a little. They could fight as good as any boy there. I saw one of the older girls take a yard stick away from the teacher, break it in half and hand it back to the teacher. I sure took a wide berth around her going home that night when I went home from school.

Our favorite sport was skate boarding. Each of us had a little short piece of board 8" wide and 20 " long. We waxed one side and rounded up the end.

We always all had a good jack knife that we used for playing nibble peg and making a poplar whistle in the spring. Of course we all had sling shots and a pocket full of rocks. Orville Rahier and Don Rahier taught me how to shoot. We all often had a partridge to take home for supper.

That was the last year for that school. We moved to the new school the following year. It was on the east end of town.

The School House Creamery and Bill Carlson

A few years after the school moved, a creamery was started in the old school. Before this, my dad bought cream brought in by farmers and sent it to Deer River on the train that came to Effie. He bought cream for Bridgeman and Russell for one year--1926.

Vernie's Memories of Effie

My memories of the old school house creamery are good ones. A young butter maker from Korstad was hired to make the butter. His name was Bill Carlson. He later married Gladys Anderson, the only daughter of Al and Emma Anderson. She was a sister of my friend Bob. Well, by the time Bill got the creamery on it's feet, I was making big bucks. I had a paper route of 17 papers and made a penny on each paper. I also had a fish box business, making them out of salvaged wooden meat boxes from dad's store. These boxes were from Swift, Hormel and Armour meat companies. I would fix them up and sell them through Bill Anderson from Effie. He let me sell them through him to Idlewild Resort for fish boxes for tourists to take their fish catch home. I got 10 cents to 50 cents for each box.

Myrtle and Carl Petersen had a restaurant that stood across from where the Effie Cafe is today. Myrtle made good pies so I would buy a whole banana cream pie for 35 cents and take it up to Bill Carlson at the creamery. We'd cut it in half, Bill would put ice cream on it and we would clean the pie tin.

The Effie Cafe

When the train tracks were removed, Tommy and Millie started a restaurant on the corner across from where the Effie Cafe is today. That is where all the kids in town learned to drink "Effie High Balls"--the pop of your choice in a glass filled with ice cream. A few years later Tommy and Millie purchased the lot and built the Corner Cafe, now known as the Effie Cafe, where it still is today. While Tommy was in the cafe, he had gas pumps and sold gas to the neighborhood.

One day a deer hunter passing through town stopped for gas and asked Tommy how he liked the deer he had shot. Tommy looked and said, "You had better go back to the farmer and pay him for his Guernsey calf!"

Kathy owns that cafe today and has done a wonderful job getting her cooking known all around. The Monday night special is a real social event these days. Her special on Monday is a huge hamburger and a platter of fries.

Miscellaneous Memories, Thoughts, and Stories

Carl Peterson gave me my first construction job. I built him a two stall toilet. Total cost for the job was \$6.00.

Vernie's Memories of Effie

I remember a blacksmith shop located across from the old school. There was a big livery barn next to the restaurant on the corner.

A big gravel pit to the north had a high bridge so that trucks could drive in below. A team of horses pulling slips loaded with gravel would then go up on the bridge and dump the load in a hole into the truck below. In later years, the M & O Paper Company in the Falls, bought land and made a pulp landing there. They landed a lot of wood cut by farmers.

My paper route was to the west end of Effie. One very hot, sultry day I knocked on just a screen door and things came alive. There on her hands and knees on a floor covered with soap, was someone scrubbing the floor. It was so hot that day, she had on the only item of clothing in need -- the big bell-bottom bloomers made from Beauty Rose flour sacks. I just slipped that paper on the door step and made tracks! Next week I sang real loud from a block away when I brought her paper.

Poole's Landing was one of the largest loading areas close to Effie. Tom Holmes and his wife, Millie were the cooks there. I remember walking with my mother to visit Millie at the camp. She made the best sugar cookies.

John Zimmerman and his wife and son, George lived in one of Poole's buildings at the landing. John and George made their living by going around and splitting wood for hire. John was a good customer of Peerless Chewing Tobacco. George became an amputee and learned the shoemaking trade. He had his shop in the log cabin behind the big garage.

Frank Dahlberg sold his store in Effie to Al Anderson. Seth Mattson, one of the clerks, bought an old building across the street and opened a clothing store. Vergie Poole who was the other clerk then started to work for Dad in his store. Later she got the post office and built that down on the corner.

Earl Poole, Vergie's husband, was known as Bud Poole. He had a few cows and had the first milk route in Effie. His son, Darrel, and I got the job of delivering milk door to door. Bud wondered why he had so many sway backed calves. Well, I ended up with a broken arm and Darrel got all skinned up. His calves improved soon after that.

My dad's store was next to the cafe and Seth Mattson's store. One of my jobs when I was young was to run the dust rag. If Dad couldn't see himself in the

silver, I had to do it over. After getting out of the service, I worked for Dad as a service trainee.

The war was over but many things were in short supply. One lady of some size came in often to see if we had gotten our order of Charmin toilet tissue. It finally came in and I put it on display and pretty soon here she came. She spotted the display and said, "Oh, Vernie, you have Charmin. I'm so happy because you know how I'm so touchy." That was more than I needed to know.

This same lady came in one Saturday night and while her husband went to look at the hardware, she went to the meat counter. "Honey, what kind of meat should we get for mother?" There was no sound from hubby. "Sweetheart, what kind of meat should we get for Mother?" Still no response from hubby. "Damn you, hubby, get down here and help me choose some meat!" *They* decided on pork chops.

Before the new road was built, there was a hill by the school. This lady had a team of horses and an old bob sled. She came to town for her supply of food and feed for her horses. Since she was going to the top of the hill, I thought I would hitch a ride to the top and ride my sled back down. She took her big snake whip, took one shot at me and took the hat off my head without touching a hair. As you can guess, I left right now. This same lady lived out on the John Peterson road and I rode my bike out there often. One time when I rode out there, she was putting in a new window in the log home. She was installing it with a broad ax. I didn't stop!

Dad burned wood in a big furnace to keep our store warm. He often took wood in exchange for grocery bills run up by our customers. He had a huge walk in cooler with an ice chest on top. It held 9 big cakes of ice. Dad filled it up with ice about once a week.

One time when Vergie was working for Dad, a lady came in, dressed in wide skirts and slips. All at once, she began screaming and dancing around like she was part of a war dance. Between Vergie and the lady, they got all the skirts and slips up and out dropped a grasshopper. That ended the dance!

The train came to Effie three times a week from Deer River. A big day for H.L.D. Leslie was the day his mail order bride was due in. She had been ordered from Sears Roebuck. Everyone within several miles of town came in that day to help meet the train. H.L.D. was all dressed up in a brand new pair of bib overalls for the occasion. Out stepped his bride to be, dressed real nice. Now you must

remember, I was only 8 or 10 years old but in one glance, I knew I could look a lot longer than I did when I dropped the newspaper on the steps and ran.

This bride had a nice black dress with white ruffles around her cuffs and her neck.. She wore a big black and white hat with a wide brim. She carried a big purse and umbrella. H.L.D. greeted her, gave her his arm and off they went to the honeymoon suite where everyone who came to Effie lived the first year. Later they moved east of Effie to Grass Lake which we all call Leslie Lake.

In later years logging went to what was called the shacker type. One , two, or three men would cut a lot of clean up timber. The horse was gone and modern machinery took over. The shackers traded at Dad's store.

One day one of the shackers came in and said he had ordered a mail order bride and she was due in tomorrow. A couple of days later, in they came to get some supplies and left. Thanksgiving day was nearing so again, in came the shacker and his bride. They began picking up supplies. She seemed to be doing a good job with one little chicken and some cranberries -- a perfectly natural menu for the day. Then she went back to the meat counter and got a little piece of ham. I happened to look at the shacker and his ears had turned red as a beet. They left but about a week later the shacker came in alone. I asked if he had his little wife working in the strip. "No", he said, "I had her on trial and anyone who needs two kinds of meat is too expensive. I shipped her back."

Viola and I married June 12, 1948 in the Catholic church. Nail kegs and planks were used for benches. Back in those days friends had a shivaree and, boy, they sure did! Then they made Vi and me take everyone down to the Corner Cafe. Ray Mattson was among the noise makers. He had his steel wheel barrow with him. They made me wheel Vi all the way back home. When we moved to the country in 1963, Ray gave us that wheel barrow. When I laid bricks for the basement of our new house, Viola mixed all the mortar in the wheel barrow. We still have it at Mirror Lake and it always brings back good memories--52 years now.

I am not a pro when it comes to buying gifts. Once, I remembered Viola's birthday about five minutes before closing time and went to see Seth Mattson next door. I spotted some nice bedroom slippers in the window, on sale for 50 cents. I knew a bargain so I took them home. Vi opened the box and the slipper I had not looked at was so faded, I found out right there that Viola accepted me as I was.

Vernie's Memories of Effie

Seth always liked teasing me. He was very good to every lumber jack, fixing them up with a new outfit of clothing for the winter. They could pay in the spring when they collected their winter's earnings.

The big garage that Uncle Frank had built, became a Ford dealership. owned by George Mehelich. He remained in business for many years before moving back to Cook where he had come from. He gave rooms in the garage to two people, George Zimmerman and Dick McGraw.

The store that Frank Dahlberg built was purchased by Al Anderson and became a Fairway store. Just down the street and next to the Fairway store was a building belonging to Frank Dahlberg but rented to Joe and Cora Peloquin. It was a food restaurant, pool hall and a barber shop. Joe was the barber. He also had a beer tavern in the building.

Across the street was a building my Dad built. He rented it out for a community building. It was used for the Northern Itasca fair, movies, dances and boxing matches put on by James Knight. Bob Anderson and I were the featured preliminaries one night and each got \$4.50. With that money I bought my first suit. A carnival came to town and Alvin Dorr and I got a job hauling water to the elephant. He drank an awful amount of water. He even took a bath in it. The lot east of the hall is where the fair held its' merry-go-round and other midway rides.

Just down the street to the east stood the Presbyterian church. Just across street corner from that was the Catholic church with the Lutheran church right next to them.

The WPA built a nice little fair building where the neighborhood had a nice little fair each fall. We also used that building for a skating rink.

Good Years with a Happy Ending

Everything has to end so I am closing by saying that I am glad I had a chance to grow up in Effie. I am happy for those good years. Viola and I enjoy a good family.

Vernie Johnson