

CHAPTER NINE

After Grace and I were married we became interested in theatricals. We lived on the west side of Madison and we became members of the Madison Civic Theatre. The first play was put on in the West Side High School auditorium and it was called "The Royal Road to Rome". I took the part of Fabius Maximus, the Emperor of Rome.

The play was put on in the early spring. There was a fountain in one scene and a water hose had to be brought in through a door which couldn't be closed entirely because of the hose. I was seated at a table near the front of the stage with only a toga for a costume. Grace and a friend of hers sat near the front and apparently saw most of my legs and asked Grace if I had shorts on.

Grace said, "He better have some on!"

As I was sitting there shivering I was supposed to eat a banana which slipped out of my grasp and went under me. That got a laugh from the audience.

In the Centennial commemoration of the First Dane County Board I took the part of Eben Peck in the Historical Skit presented in the Crystal Ball Room of the Hotel Lorraine on May 15, 1939. Albert Barton and I wrote the script.

On May 5th and 6th, 1938, I took the part of the "Interlocutor" in "Dark Town Minstrels" given at Trousdale Methodist Church in Madison.

In the Summer of 1934, the play "The Drunkard" was given, in which I took the part of the philanthropist, and Grace was the widow.

Also in 1934 I took part in the play "Getting Married" by George Bernard Shaw.

I was the butler "Oliver" in the play put on by the University of Wisconsin speech department called "March Hares".

I also took part in another play "The Nervous Wreck" given for the benefit of the Wisconsin State Journal Empty Stocking Club.

"Dulcy" a comedy in three acts was given in the Madison Masonic Temple and in which I again played the part of a butler, "Henry".

There were a number of short plays given by the Madison Civic Theatre in which both Grace and I took part.

I also sang as a member of the Madison Maennerchor, the oldest singing group in Wisconsin, for a number of years before moving to Mt. Horeb in June 1940. This is a German singing group. One year male groups from all over the United States sang in a Chicago auditorium, 5,000 male voices, it was a real thrill to be a part of it.

After we had moved to Mt. Horeb a group of Mount Horebites decided to put on a play called "The Song of Norway". While most of the original settlers of the Village were of Norwegian descent a lot of German settlers settled nearby in an area known as German Valley. Today the population is pretty mixed.

Grace became a director and I helped with make up for the men and Grace for the women. The play was given on a hillside on a ski area and people would sit on the hillside looking down on the stage. The play has been well received, and except for a couple of the main characters all are residents of the Mount Horeb Area.

As I had been in many plays and had acted out the part of a butler in many of them I knew how a butler should act and it hurt me to see young men try to act the part without knowing anything about the part. Eventually I couldn't stand it any longer so I tried out for the part and was accepted. During rehearsals I was asked to take the part of "Freddie the Fiddler" which had been taken by an older man who could play the fiddle but knew nothing about acting. So for several years I played both parts. I loved the part of Freddie especially because in one scene the small children gathered around me and marched behind me and I pantomined playing the violin and they followed as though I were the Pied Piper. The organist played in accordance with my actions and people thought I was really

playing the violin. But the best part was when I would meet some of the children uptown later and they would call to me "Hi Freddie". It was a real thrill to hear them.

On the morning of the day of the last performance of that year I went out to the woods on our property and fell down a big ravine and sprained my ankle and had to crawl home because nobody could hear me at the house which was a long ways away and a neighbor boy was mowing the lawn. That night I had to be carried on and off the stage. I had a sore ankle for six months, and the doctor told me I should have broken it, it would have healed faster.