

FOREWORD

Those of us who grew up on farms in Wisconsin during the early years of this century will relive an exciting period in the development of our beloved state as we turn the pages of this fascinating book.

I was one of those—in a family whose mother and father were Swedish immigrants—who grew up on farms in northwestern Wisconsin, farms that had to be carved out of rocks and cleared of trees, farms that eventually became the dairy farms that created what is now America's Dairyland.

My two brothers, my sister, and I found out early that we were truly needed to perform all kinds of chores and that we were expected to be an important part of the labor force in the difficult, strenuous, and time-consuming task of transforming virgin forest land—with a generous coating of rocks—into productive farmland. At that time we looked upon the forests as enemies that had to be destroyed if we ourselves were to survive and provide a satisfactory future for ourselves on the land.

In those days, the answer to any problem we might have was not available in printed circulars, bulletins, or textbooks, and there was no county extension agent we could consult on farm and home problems. Nor were there educational radio or television stations we could turn to for information. In fact, as I recall it now, the answer, as practiced by our parents, was to work harder and work longer, but always to work, work, work. Even after all these years, I can still hear my father, who was a reasonably successful farmer in his time, extol the virtue of "a strong back and a weak mind."

As we grew up, we learned the virtues and rewards of hard work; of being self-reliant; of taking care of ourselves as a family; of providing our own entertainment; of getting along with whatever we

had; of being frugal; of persevering under conditions of severe hardship and stress; of working and living together as a family; of the Christian ethic and the importance of the church in our lives; of helping each other, not only ourselves but also friends and neighbors in time of need and crisis; of the importance of education; of honesty, dependability, trustworthiness, and integrity; and of being a citizen of the greatest country in the world, the United States of America.

In contrast to the situation today, we were largely self-sufficient and quite independent in our daily life and living. We did not need many outside services to carry on our farm and home operations. We raised most of our own fruits and vegetables. We had flour made from our own wheat at our local mill. My mother saw to it that we had an adequate supply of canned vegetables and fruits each fall to carry us through the winter. We made our own butter from the milk of our dairy herd and, of course, had our own supply of milk. We butchered our own meat. We provided our own horsepower with matched teams of horses, and we fueled the kitchen stove and furnace with wood from our woodlot. Coffee, sugar, salt, an occasional new shirt, a pair of overalls, and shoes were about the only things on our shopping list when we made our weekly trip to town in our horse-drawn buggy. We often traded eggs from our flock of chickens for these commodities when money was scarce. If we had a good year, there might be a store-bought orange in each stocking at Christmas.

The hoe, the ax, the crosscut saw, and the plow were our most important tools, and they received the heaviest use on our farms as they were being developed. Each of us boys and my father were experts in using them.

I am truly thankful and eternally grateful that I had the good fortune of growing up at the time I did and under the conditions that prevailed then. After saying that, however, I must confess that I didn't always feel that way at the time. I vividly recall how I envied the youngsters in our small towns who had much more freedom for extracurricular activities and who were not subject to the vigorous routine that characterized our life on the farm. Actually, I now feel it was the best preparation any youngster could have in shaping a career, which in my case would be firmly rooted in agriculture for my entire adult life.

Now, as I look back along the road of my yesterdays, I know that more changes have occurred on our farms and in our homes during my lifetime than in all previous recorded history. The scientific method and "book learnin'"—once looked upon with suspicion, hostility, and skepticism—are now readily accepted and widely used in modern farming and home-making. Their widespread acceptance and use on our farms and in our homes have had the net effect of shortening the workday and lightening the workload of the farm family, increasing their purchasing pow-

er, elevating farming to the level of a profession, and giving young people on farms better educational, social, and business opportunities. Science and technology have helped our farmers and homemakers attain a position in our society that cannot be matched by their counterparts in any other part of the world. And beyond our farms, they have helped to raise the standard of living of all the people of our state.

The pioneers who conquered the wilderness played a major role in helping to shape the tomorrow of what is now rural Wisconsin. They "built yesterday for today and tomorrow," and they did it exceedingly well.

I am heartened by the number of young people who are remaining on farms or who are moving to them because they believe that farming provides the base for the kind of life they want for themselves and their children. I venture to predict that farm life will provide them the same deep satisfactions and opportunities for development that they did for me in my growing-up years.

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