

Weeding Onions

Dad loved to garden. At least he did a lot of it. It seemed like a skill that was necessary in those 40's and 50's "to make ends meet." Yes, there were lots of ends to meet. Lots of work from folks that worked hard.

Most of the sentences in the descriptions that follow will begin or ought to begin with "I believe". Memories are generally images of the area – the garden, the weeds, the woods, the road ... Maybe these memories can be confirmed or denied by my brother, Roy, who was 15 months older and was always there.

My first memory of family gardening had to come from pre-grade school years. I just vaguely recall going to a plot of ground south of Main Street, south of the EJ&E and west of Colfax. I know who lived in that area – the milkman by the name of Reder. So as the pattern seemed to go, Dad probably rented some land that Reder tilled for him. My brain still only holds the image of a rather wooded area with a hill to the west.

On the way home from that garden, I recall crossing the Grand Trunk (now the Canadian National) tracks and Dad pointing out a buzzard sitting on the tracks. That is my only recollection of such a bird in the area. It was a sign of the times. In those days, there were milk cattle at Reders and probably a lot of other potential sources of carrion for these vultures.

In later years as Roy and I grew up, we rented land north on Colfax Ave. The landowner up there was a man by the name of Riehl. I believe we always had the same plot. We had to drive down a dirt road (now 40th Place) – two tire-tracks – and pull the old 35 Ford¹ off the road. The road did not have room to turn around. Leaving the garden required that Ma would have to drive down our dirt road to a tee where the tire tracks of another farmer ended our road. We would be facing the wide field of one of the commercial farms. Ma would turn around there.

The land for our garden was south of the road and Mr. Riehl did not plow right up to the road. We had to walk from our car through a grassy untilled area carrying our water and a few things to a clump of very small trees. (One of my favorite pictures of my Dad and I was taken as we sat by those trees. It was hidden in a pocket in one of my billfolds. I accidentally threw it away when I received a new billfold at Christmas around 1980. ☹) Riehl tilled south of those trees. Was it a half-acre? Maybe.

The garden was big enough to have a sweet corn patch, cucumbers, tomatoes, white potatoes, sweet potatoes, egg plant, string beans, lima beans, peas, green peppers, carrots, turnips, beets, and onions. There were also sunflowers and dill. To gauge the size, Roy and I seemed to enjoy the corn patch after the corn was harvested. I believe it was big enough that we could play hide and seek in there. Corn stalks served as spears in our play battles.

Garden work began with weekend planting before school had let out. Pa didn't get home till 5 PM as I recall. I don't believe that we were going out in the evening until summer.

Things started growing. I can remember Pa and Ma hoeing down weeds between rows. They always seemed to have lots to do. Things remained tidy.

As I recall, we had chores before play. That was the regimen. I only remember three chores that we had to perform. Two of them had a sporting nature.

We were occasionally asked to check the tomato patch for “tomato worms.” These were large green caterpillars who were found attached to the leaves or stem of the tomato plant. They gave away their position by leaving leaflets that were partly eaten or stems that were stubs where leaves were completely gone. I’m sure there was a competition about seeing how many we could find. There was a mild excitement with our quest. When we found one, it met a quick death under our heels.



Although I have never seen one of these caterpillars in Minnesota, I see that the U of M Extension Service documents a number of varieties of these worms. The caterpillars known as tomato hornworms range throughout the U.S. They reach a length of 3 inches. However, I believe they may not be as plentiful in Minnesota as in warmer climates like Indiana.

A second *search and find* operation occurred by the potato plants. Looking into Wikipedia, it turns out that we were assigned to look for “Colorado potato beetles” which we simply called potato bugs. These were a little more resistant to death by heel stomping. I recall they had a hard beetle shell. We would deposit the beetles in a coffee can. That can either had kerosene in it already or Pa would add it after the hunt ended.



[BB1] Finally, the chore of chores was much less exciting. I believe that quite often we were each assigned a number of rows of onions that needed weeding. It was solitary work. I suppose I was about 8 when I first began. All my little self had to know is what the onion looked like. That was simple. There were lots of weeds all the time. The rows were long and the sun was hot. The working position of choice was to be down on one’s haunches so that you could move slowly along a row. That got uncomfortable. Plus, the sound of the “heat bug” (cicadas) was ever present. I believe there were more mosquitoes in that area than I experience in Minnesota today. Breeding grounds were probably puddles in the wooded areas to the north and south of the garden. Farmers to the west had ditches for drainage and Cady Marsh Ditch was close. (The Cady Marsh Ditch or its relative drainage facilities is still used for flood control for the Little Calumet River just north of Griffith.)



The soil that we worked in was very sandy. That is true of that entire region that forms the southern shore of Lake Michigan. The first major road about ¼ mile north of the garden is called Ridge Road.

Topographically, the “ridge” was the remainder of an ancient shoreline of Lake Michigan. Hence the sand. But don’t think that it was poor for farming our vegetable crops. The area north of Griffith and all along Ridge Road was farmed by Dutch “truck farmers” who made a good life growing vegetables to be transported to the main market, Chicago. This northern Indiana region is still populated by many of the descendants of those farmers. Family names were: Scheeringa, Lokema, Zanstra, Terpstra, etc. Their farms are now gone – sold off and subdivided. Gone too are the numerous markets along Ridge Road that offered opportunities for vegetables — even by the bushel during canning season.

So I toiled in my rows of onions. ☺ The picture above shows me weeding something in about 1950. The granddaddy long-legs were everywhere it seemed. I am not certain when I lost my distaste for those harmless creatures. However, they did make my work interesting. They would run away as fast as I would jump to keep them off my fingers. Yuk. Tomato worms were much less yukky in those days.

A major learning came for this first work experience. The same learning would repeat and repeat throughout my younger years. Weeding the onions taught me that by applying myself and getting the



weeds out, I could go on to play or to climb a tree in the woods. It taught that the hard work would eventually end and the shady trees would eventually be mine. I would have clean rows of onions as my reward and a knowledge that those hot sandy hours pulling weeds would pass even if the self-same task would confront me a few days or a week later. It helped to know that the work helped the family. I am sure that my folks let us realize that they appreciated the help, but I know that they did not belabor the point.

As in many work or study situations in those early days, I knew that other kids were at home playing and I was at the garden. I know that such a concern was never expressed in words as a complaint or woe-is-me observation. Family activities were important to participate in. We worked together, played together, ate together and even in the Loretta Young motif “prayed together.”

Other Chores

Roy and I always talked about getting jobs when we were young. Sometime before I was eleven, we got the job of mowing the lawn for one of our neighbors, Mrs. Nywening. (Her son was a pilot for United Airlines. That gave birth to my early interest in aviation.) Her house was down south of ours on the

other side of the street. Roy mowed and I trimmed or picked up sticks. The “rule” was something like I had to be 11 before I could push the mower. Maybe so. The lawn did have a hill in front and maybe they feared that I would scalp the lawn. I can’t remember how steep that hill was or how shape was the break. Anyway Roy was bigger and I had to wait.

Now I know Roy must have mowed for some number of years. I have difficulty remembering him on the jobs. But we did enough business to be able to purchase a newer model push mower. It cost \$18 as I recall. It still did not replace our iron-wheeled wooden-handled mower that we left at home.

Heffernan's owned the *Stop & Shop* grocery before Welch took over. We did their corner lot for a long time. We also mowed for Dale Christenson regularly. And one elderly couple on Harvey always used us. Our clients just hired us and we would watch the lawn and mow it when needed. If they were not there when we finished, we just recorded the work and collected later. The price was generally a fixed amount for each mowing.

Snow shoveling was a little different. The price was usually dependent on the time it took and that was probably dependent on the depth of the white stuff. The charge was probably 25 cents per hour. Same game plan. We were hired and just showed up and shoveled after school and weekends whenever there was a snow event. Waltemath's on Harvey was one of the longest running customers. I believe we did Nywenig's for a long time as well. I also remember doing Dr. Lundenberg's (Sp) corner lot on Thanksgiving Day after a heavy snow. One very cold afternoon on a day that our school was let out because of below zero temperatures, we slaved to clean some other corner lot after that sidewalk had been trampled in the morning. Yuk. Heffernan's corner lot often took forever while the Joyce's directly across Lake Street was easier. One evening after a light snow, I finished Mr. Joyce's corner and he gave me a \$5 bill. I refused it, because it was so short a job. However, the nice old man insisted. (I was RICH!!)

The Ross Family from next door would go north to Three Lakes, Wisconsin every summer. Roy and I would mow their lawn while they were gone. In later years, I also got the job of weeding (my favorite thing ☺) Mrs. Ross's flower garden. So when they got home from vacation the garden would look good for at least one time during the year. Dr. Malmstone's wife had me do her gardens at least once and I did weed the flowers at Heffernan's once or twice. I could do it. I knew that. It just was far from my favorite work.

Another job that Roy and I did for several years was to work for the nuns at St. Mary's School after the school year. The convent at St Mary's housed 9 or 10 nuns in those years of the late 1940's and early 50's. Mom worked with Sr. Frabonia, the elderly housekeeper, on washing days. During our later grade school years, we worked with the sisters in late May and early June as they wrapped things up after a hard year of teaching and before going for a couple months to their “mother house” in Mishawaka, IN east of South Bend. We may have worked before the school year as well. The pay for this work was free books for the school year. Otherwise there was some fee for book rental. We got other items that I treasured as well. In particular, on a couple occasions, we were allowed to take National Geographic Magazines or, at least, the large maps that were often inserted in the magazines. I would take the maps home and study them carefully for hours.

I still think I had the unique experience of cleaning the shelves in the walk-in pantry in the convent basement. Another time, I helped polish the hardwood floors (just like at home) that were upstairs in the convent. I often wonder how we got so close to the sisters. Partly, it was Mother. We also donated produce to the nuns through Sr. Frabonia. For another couple years, our music sister was the blood sister

of my Aunt Marcella. However, I wonder if the word had not gotten out about my ambitions. I recall way back – maybe in first grade or maybe even before – when a couple nuns in conversation with my Mother asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I told them, “A bishop!”

About the time I was a freshman in high school, a little woman by the last name of Mole employed me to wash windows in the old high school on Broad Street. I know why she needed help. She was short and those windows were very tall. This was one of my first experiences trying to wash window without streaking them.

With all these jobs, I still wanted better employment. Something more interesting. More than once, I walked across the tracks southwest of us and inquired in the cabinet shop if they needed help. The answer was always, “No.” I probably still have 10 fingers because of that response.

Roy worked at the Griffith Theater *forever*. I am not certain how young he was when he started. That was his employment during his later high school years. I inherited the lawn mowing and snow shoveling business. (He didn’t ask anything for his half of that empire.) I joined him for a while as an usher at the theater about my freshman year in high school. But after a while, I told Mr Pollus (Sp) that I needed to quit. My hours on a Saturday afternoon, for example, would net me 2 silver dollars. I could get more working on lawns. I believe he understood. (Looking back, I should have saved all those silver dollars and again I would be rich!!! 😊)

Oh, yes. There was a short period when I helped clean the theater. That included picking gum off the carpet in the aisles and off the concrete floors, sweeping popcorn crumbs through crowded rows, and picking up candy wrappers and Jujube candy boxes. Things could be worse! My penultimate cleaning job was cleaning a crafts shop which I did several times. Ceramic pottery was made in the back work room. The job was to get the white powder off the floor. I would mop and rinse, mop and rinse, ... Every time the floor dried the powder still showed. I did a lot of sweating some late evenings.

So, in general, these jobs from early childhood and teenage years contributed to a work ethic. No doubt. I learned to give my time to sometimes boring, repetitive, and uncomfortable work. I definitely know that I learned to start a job with determination. Getting started on a task that would consume many hours was a mind-game. Just get started. As I recall, my little mind kept calculating a notion of a percentage complete.

My approach to payment was always to allow my client to set the price. In those days, it seemed that people always offered more than I would have asked. My only occasion to back away from a job was the theater job and then I probably took on more mowing ventures.

My Big Break – Christenson’s

Between my sophomore and junior year in high school, I caddied once in awhile at **Woodmar Country Club**, a nice Hammond, IN club. (It is now totally gone. In its place is a *Cabela’s Sporting Goods Store*.) I believe I did not caddy every day, but kept on mowing.

Now, I am certain that I had gone into *Christenson’s Hardware* and *Christenson’s Furniture* in Griffith to see if they had any work for the likes of me. Nothing was available. But I must have been on the mind of the hardware store manager, a man named Wilkins, I believe. One afternoon that summer of 1955, we

were surprised with a visit from Mr. Wilkins. His mother (and therefore he) had some relation to the Christenson's. It turned out that the mother was elderly, but owned one of the big ranch style homes in the development where Warner P. Christenson² (the patriarch of the family) lived. By today's standards, it was a big house, but the issue was that the lawn was very very big. Mr. Wilkins enlisted me to do his mother's lawn.

Note what I had mentioned in the last section. This was probably the biggest lawn I had ever signed up for. Remember I was always using a push mower. My fuzzy recollection puts me in the backyard of that house mentally calculating how much I still had to do. I remember doing the lawn although I am not certain how many times I did it. Whatever was the number of times that summer, that mowing job was a doozy!!!

Now where did that mowing job take me? I must have done something right. I am not certain if Mr. Wilkins appeared again on our front porch or if I was again looking for work at Christenson's. I believe the former. Somehow I started working in *Christenson's Hardware* nights and weekends during my junior year in high school. Mr. Wilkins was the manager. There was also Bill Schiesser³, Dick Schmal and some other guy working there at the time. For me as a "kid", this was a great place to work. Other friends were working as carry-out guys in groceries. (Roy was off to college by this time. I don't recall how long the theater lasted after Roy left. Mr Pollus sold out to Mr Resnik, the druggist, and the Griffith Theater was turned into the Griffith-equivalent of a CVS. ☺)

Mr. Wilkins hired me for "cleaning" light fixtures in the hardware store. Those lights were long fluorescent fixtures that were white enameled casings with the bulbs suspended below. They certainly were not fancy. But they were about the standard for lighting in 1955. The bulbs were 8 feet long and 60W. I don't know when the fixtures were installed, but no one had ever cleaned the tops of those white boxes. Lots of chalky dust was on top. I still had to clean all four sides of the fixture and the bulbs. I don't really remember how long this took. My memory was that I used a lot of Jubilee – a creamy white cleaner that smelled nice.

Work at *Christenson's* continued through 1955 to my graduation from high school in 1957. More on the summer of 1957 will be presented later. However, I might mention here that with the exception of the summer of 1957, I worked for *Christenson's* every summer and Christmas holiday period until the summer of 1962.

Back to 1955-56. When the fixtures were finished in the hardware store, I was assigned to do the same job on the fixtures in *Christenson's Furniture* next door. The only fluorescent fixtures were in the front showroom windows. Why that is interesting is because of one memorable event. I had just cleaned one front fluorescent fixture and had moved to start the second whose white chassis was attached to the prior fixture. The fixtures were suspended on long poles from the ceiling and I guess I moved that long assembly as I began cleaning. I looked over to see that last light bulb which I had replaced dropping very nicely parallel to the hard tiled floor below. Never again have I heard such a bang!! It seemed like every inch of the bulb's 8 foot length hit the floor at the same time. There were a million pieces – none of them big -- scattered over the show-window furniture and other merchandise that had the misfortune being near. I don't remember any problem. We just cleaned it up and hoped that we found everything. For that matter, I never remember getting "chewed out" for that or any other problem I caused in those years. (Nails used to come in 50 lb. cardboard kegs. I believe that at one time years later I began pouring a keg of 6 penny nails into a partly empty bin of 16 penny nails. *Whoops*. I poured enough that I

had to put the mixed nails aside until a week or month later when I had time to separate the two varieties. Horvat, who was the manager by then, made certain that I did the job. 😊😊)

After I had cleaned the furniture store's light fixtures, the hardware side people continued to find things for me to clean and ultimately many other tasks. Come to think of it, the fixtures were never cleaned again or replaced. So when I left, some other lucky kid should have been found to start their career.

I believe Mr. Wilkins died of cancer in 1956 or 1957. Dick Schmal (who just died in Lowell at age 94 in 2010) became the manager. That "some other guy" mentioned earlier was let go after having been caught carrying merchandise – a rifle – out the backdoor to take home. Although the total amount stolen was reputed to be considerable, Christenson's did not prosecute. For months after he left, we would find items that he had stashed as he waited for the time when he could safely get them to his car. I remember specifically finding one of the items submerged in a seed barrel in the back room on the way to the backdoor.

After "some other guy" left, Bob Horvat was hired. He was a tall lean young man who had just returned from his stint in the army. He lived with his wife and family down on 45th Avenue with the back of his house up against the Dutch truck farms. His house represented the beginning of homes encroaching into that agricultural area. Bob and I were good friends and I remember once helping him refinish his car one evening. Bob was the member of a Christian denomination and I remember going into his house after it got dark and watching Billy Graham on a TV rally with Bob's wife and kids.

As time went on, I cleaned all the display bins and shelves that contained merchandise. Gradually, I did sales work, assembly of floor models, hauling out heavy items for clients, etc. I loved to have to take a bag of salt to someone's car. Although there was a cart, I would put the 100 lb. bag on my shoulder and walk it out. Always wished I could impress someone, but no luck. Milorganite was a fertilizer and it came in 80 lb bags. We kept large quantities of each in the far-back warehouse.

During my tenure at *Christenson's* two summers were really fun. One year, Griffith was just about ready to have to get its water from the Gary/Hobart Water Company. Hence, lawn watering was going to become expensive. We stocked well points and pipe of sizes up to 2". People would come to us with a list of pipe lengths they needed to install shallow wells for their sprinkling purposes. I would then spend most of my day filling those orders. That included cutting pipe and threading the pipe. Most of the work was done by machine. I guess I enjoyed getting oily and dirty in the backroom of the hardware store. I was still on tap to clerk if things got busy. (I remember meeting my cousin Ruby while working back there. She had come home from Saudi Arabia and came to *Christenson's* to say hello to me. I was pretty grimy, but she was more interested in telling me that I should get a toupee. 😊 Ruby's hair was an unnatural blond. 😊 That was the last time I ever saw Ruby.)

Then the very next year – and I am not certain which came first – Griffith got natural gas. It was the same routine all over again. This time all of the work was with black pipe and sizes were generally all ¾ inch. Galvanized pipe would not work for gas because the galvanize material would flake off and clog up furnace orifices.

Lots of good experience. Right? Well, I did use that pipe-threading experience just once in about 1973 when I built a dog run for Herschel, Chris's St. Bernard. I can not remember where I got all the old pipe. It was mostly 1 ¼ inch pipe as I recall. I threaded it by hand in the garage (Renting a hand threader and cutter.) and built the dog run attached to the north side of the house. It was at least 6 foot tall. When I

finally built the dog house, I put it together inside the pen. It was an A-frame design with a door covered by canvas that opened toward the house. Herschel could stand the cold weather.

At Christmas time when I came home from school, I got employment as much as I wanted. That was everyday except the holidays, I believe. My job then was to put on the old Army jacket over my sweat shirt and spend my hours in the back two warehouses doing inventory. The warehouses were not heated. Some sections of the inventory went quickly, but we had areas like all the old Christmas toys that took a lot of counting. We kept an inventory of boxes of screws, bolts, pipe fittings, etc. This is probably more inventory than stores keep today. Nowadays, everything in stock is in the store and on the shelves.

Besides the store's regular products, I remember a few items left over from the house-building days. There was at least on toilet that I inventoried every winter and put out in front of the store every summer when we had a city-wide sidewalk sale festival. I can't recall if it ever sold.

I have memories of going out on the furniture truck on deliveries. George Grubby and I delivered a TV set to a house north of town on or near Christmas Eve. It was the last trip of the day. After dark. The wife of the house had bought the TV for her husband. We set it in the living room and hooked it up. It had a great picture. But the husband apparently did not want to pay for the TV and said he saw snow in the picture. We put the TV back on the truck. George was not a happy driver now. He backed out the drive, across the road, and into the ditch on the other side. To get out, we had to pack the furniture covering mats from the back of the truck under the truck's rear wheels. That worked, but it shot the mats back into the tall briars from which we had to retrieve them.

Another time, the furniture sales person made a nice sale of living room furniture; but to do so, he promised that we would move a piano as a favor to the client. It took 4 of us – all non-professional piano movers – several hours to pick up the upright piano at one location and deliver it elsewhere in Griffith. Milford Christenson got wind of it and those type favors were never done again! Of the group on that day, I was the only cheap labor. One of our group was even our union truck driver, Bob Bacon.

Remember my interest in lugging 100 lb salt bags? Well, one hot summer day, I, Bob Bacon, and Clarence Post had to go to a railroad siding east of town where *Christenson's* had part of a carload of salt. It was a box car, but it was not filled more than 4 feet high with bags. We had the furniture truck and took several trips to unload our portion of the salt.

Our first trip back to unload the bags was especially interesting. None of us were very bright, I guess. The load of salt was poorly distributed in the truck and too much was behind the rear axel. We made it the mile or so back to the hardware warehouse, but we had to go slow so that the front wheels were usable for steering. Mercifully, the wheels were not off the ground, but their efficiency was compromised.

We worked at least one full afternoon and, as I said, made many trips. I wore a tee shirt as usual and sweat a lot – as usual. The salt from the outside of the bag got to me. By evening, my arms were raw and so was my stomach on which I nestled each bag as I moved from box car to truck and truck to warehouse. I looked like I had “floor burns” for a while.

Well that is enough for my Christenson period. I was blessed to have that employment. Except for the summer of 1957, I and other college bound students had trouble finding jobs. The steel mills seemed to be moving away for this summer student help. More importantly, the industries on the North End of Indiana would always slack off in election years and years when there was a pending steel strike.

Christenson's helped with college and in many other ways. Still, I don't believe I ever earned over a dollar an hour in those years. For a period, I remember, that I could get overtime, but that stopped. However, I was permitted to work as many hours as I was needed and I believe that was over 40 hours most weeks.

Oh, yes. Dick Schmal eventually quit and went to work for a hardware store in Lansing, IL. After 1962 and probably when I was in Buffalo teaching, Horvat followed Dick to work at that same hardware. I visited them there one afternoon on summer. Then much later, maybe in the 1980s, I visited my cousin Helen Bielefeld who did book keeping for *Terpstra's* on the corner of 45th Ave and Colfax. To my surprise, Bob Horvat was their part department manager. Bob was within walking distance of his home.

Bob was always a smoker and died probably 20 years ago. Dick Schmal died last year in 2010. To my surprise again, he was noted in later years as a sort of Lowell, IN historian. I am sorry I never knew that. In fact, I believe I had seen his name on some articles, but could never believe it was "my" Dick Schmal. We should start expecting coincidences pretty soon!!! They are happening often.

While working at *Christenson's*, I still had other occasion jobs that brought in a few dollars during my senior year in high school. That year, I used up my study hall by being an aide to Mr. Fiscus who had been my physics teacher in my junior year. I don't even remember how I helped, but I remember that it was related to Fiscus' freshman algebra class. This was just volunteer work without pay. I enjoyed it.

In that senior year, I took civics from Mr. Stansczak, one of the football coaches. I believe that was just one semester and I might have taken another required course from Mr. Beck, who happened to be the main football coach. Well, I believe it started with Stansczak where I was given all his multiple choice tests (I don't believe there was anything else.) and got paid for grading them. Regularly weekly work. I don't remember how much I was paid. After Stansczak, I did Beck's the next semester. I was a student in those classes! I remember asking about "grading my own papers." Neither teacher had any problem with that. I must have had an honest face. 😊

The Summer of 1957

This was the reason I started this writing. It was an interesting summer. However, as I thought about it, I decided on the bigger view of work experiences I had from childhood through college. My attitude about work seemed to come from those earlier experiences like "weeding onions."

My summer work in 1957 was a summer at Inland Steel in East Chicago. Steel and to lesser extent oil were big industries up in "the north end" of Indiana. Gary had its US Steel. East Chicago had Youngstown Sheet and Tube and Inland Steel. Every one of us had thoughts of either going up to the "mills" or how to keep from going there when we got out of high school. Many of our fathers were able to look back on 40 years of work in the steel or oil industrial plants. I suppose Pa just had a little over 20 years in pipe-bending shop in East Chicago (Railroad Ave.)

Summer work was okay. It provided a lot of money for college. Roy had been at Youngstown in the summers of 1955 and 1956. He broke his foot up there in the summer of 1956 and he may have gone to the EJ&E Railroad work in 1957. I have no recollection of his traveling to East Chicago that summer when I went to Inland.

The companies may have come for interviews in the high schools before each summer. They needed the help to cover for their vacationing permanent employees. On the other hand, maybe the school counselors dealt with enrollment. Whatever was the scheme, my first memory of Inland was sitting in a small office in the administrative area signing a ton of papers. Notably, I signed up for becoming a United Steel Worker. I became a union man as I was expected to do.

As I recall, there was an entrance to the clock house that was in front of the company gates. You would go in one door, punch the clock, exit another door and go through the gates to your building in this huge steel plant.

I was assigned to the 96” plate mill which was just beyond the galvanized sheet making mill. *There* was a contrast to behold. The plate mill had lots of workers, dust, noise, a furnace, heat, a railroad entrance, cranes, etc. The galvanized sheet metal was all automated. It was relatively clean with some set of mills connected end to end and between which one could see a long wide strip of sheet metal moving through the processes of the various machines which would make the sheet metal into giant rolls of galvanized sheet metal. I remember walking through that building after leaving the plate mill as I went to the clock house after work. It was like a walk in another world – quiet and peaceful – compared to the prior 8 hours which I had just experienced.

Internet articles show that Inland closed the plate mill in 1995. It had been operating before 1920!!!! Pretty old. Other items I saw while searching the web was a mill for 160” plate and another for 210” plate. These were in newer mills opened in Gary or east of Gary (Burns Harbor) in later years. One of the facilities is named ArcelorMittal Burns Harbor Plate, Inc. It is, like most steel plants, just a unit of a huge international operation.

For what it is worth, here is a link to a YouTube video of the last day of production of the “100” plate mill of Inland Steel. What are the chances of my ever seeing that place again? Unbelievable!! I remember most of the places shown but the workers look to be Anglo or black. When I was there, the only Anglos were bosses, rollers, and mechanics.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfA6Y-h5ow0>

I tried to steal some still shots from this video in case the YouTube video disappears. Success!



Voilà. This is just the first attempt. It shows a plate on a “table” of small rollers visible just above the plate.

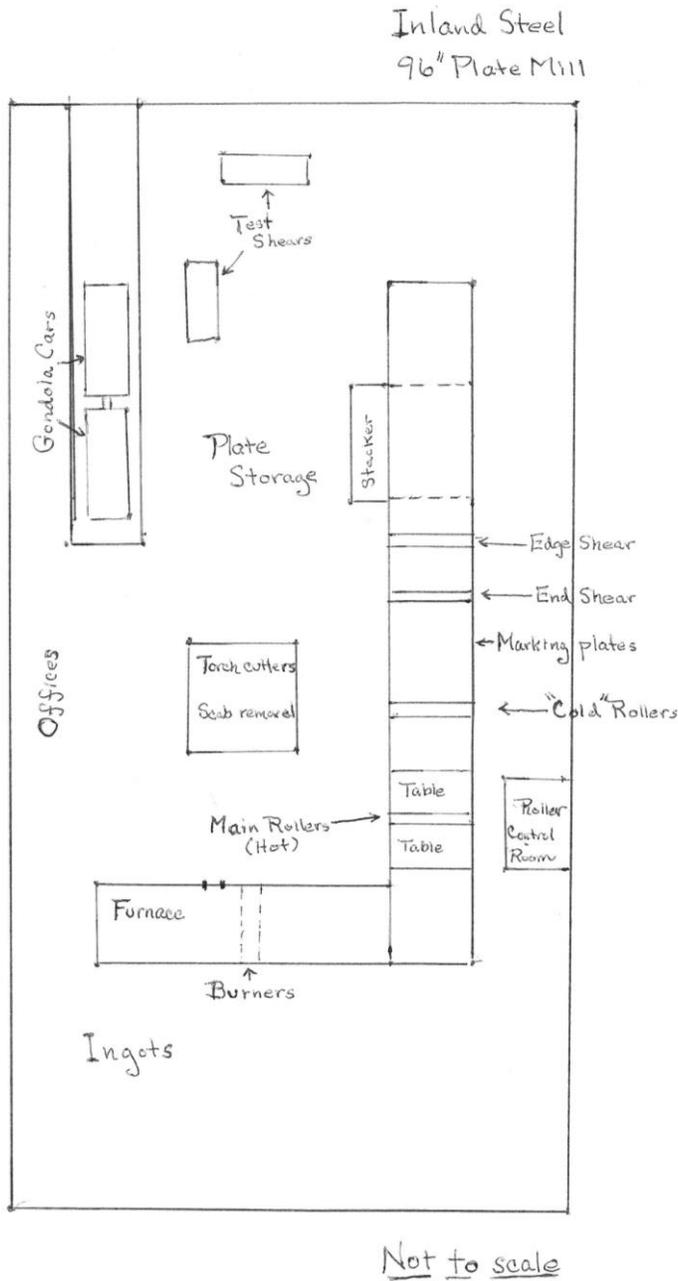
The table moved the plate in and out of the rack of rollers just a little left of center at the top of the photo. The table would also tilt up and down so that the plate could pass through different sets of rollers (-- I think.) The glassed-in operations center where the operators (known as “rollers”) worked is just over the heads of the two men in white. I never got in or near that operations center. Most laborers did their hot work farther along the long processing line.

They never showed the furnace in the video. I have diagrammed the plant mill as I remember it. The diagram is far from being a scale drawing. However, most of the facilities along the production line are sketched in just so one knows their relative positioning. For example the distance between the cold roll and the end shear was much longer than it seems in my sketch. There was room for several plates still cooling on the production line between those two points.

The plate making process begins at the front of the building with the ingots. Actually, the process begins at some point before, because each ingot has been created of a size and metallic composition that would be able to be rolled into a specific plate in a client order. The ingots storage is not just a stockpile of iron blocks marked L, M, and S. In other words, there is no excess inventory in this plant. Every ingot had a destination.

According to some schedule that is distributed through the plant, an ingot A is brought to the left end of the furnace and pushed in. It follows in line the earlier ingots that were pushed in. This push-in results

in the ejecting of an ingot B at the right end of the furnace. Ingot B is now on the production rollers ready for the hot roll process. (FYI: this reheating furnace was called a pusher-type furnace.)



As I recall, there were four tracks allowing for two rows of ingots to be pushed through the furnace. Inside the furnace and near its center was a thick wall maybe 5 feet thick coming up from the floor with a corresponding wall coming down from the ceiling. The upper and lower walls came to within maybe three feet of each other – providing a slit wide enough for the tracks and the ingots to pass. The 6 or 8 furnace burners were housed in this center wall and spewed out their flames through circular orifices directed toward the back and front of the furnace. The furnace reheated the ingots to 1200 degrees centigrade so that the ingots were suitably hot for rolling.

The main rollers or hot roll was the focus of the plant operation. Its operation was controlled by men called rollers who worked in the glassed in control room to the right of the actual rolling mill. That mill looks rather narrow in the diagram, and it was not more than 15 feet wide. The mill was actually a tower that housed the mill's steel rollers. The mill may house multiple horizontal rollers. I am not certain how many or whether they needed to be movable to squeeze a plate down to size.

What I could see was the glowing ingot would approach the mill from the furnaces side. It would approach and pass through the mill. On the other side, the table of rollers upon which the ingot rested would often tilt upward as if to send the ingot back on its second pass through another set of rollers. It would come out smoothly onto the waiting tilted table on the

other side. I don't recall ever having the time to watch a single ingot get completely flattened into a plate. After several passes (I don't know how many.), the ingot would be a plate still glowing, but ready to go onto the next mill, the cold roll.

During the hot roll process, someone by the side of the glowing plate would scoop up some chemical power and throw it out onto the plate in a wide arcing sweep. The plate would move back into the rollers and, because of the chemical, generate a billowy white cloud that rose high enough to hide the mill.

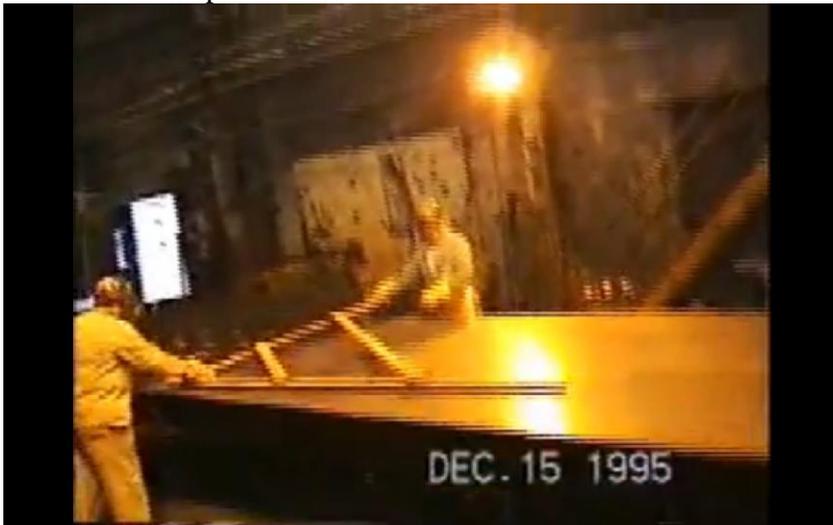
Sometimes the sizzling noise of the hot chemical being pressed into the plate by the rollers would give a noise like a thunder clap.

I have no idea what was done at the cold roll, but that much smaller mill seemed to be there for the pragmatic purpose of letting the plate cool. But Wikipedia has everything. Just look under *Rolling (metalworking)*.

Cold rolling occurs with the metal below its recrystallization temperature (usually at room temperature), which increases the [strength](#) via [strain hardening](#) up to 20%. It also improves the [surface finish](#) and holds tighter [tolerances](#).

I beg to differ about the term “room temperature” because I know that the plates coming out of our cold roll were plenty hot. Maybe that was just an observation about a piece of steel’s temperature relative to its prior state.

I did several jobs during the summer. Several were what I call productive in the sense that they were really necessary jobs on production or shipping. If you were between assignments, you were encouraged to look busy. Get a push broom and sweep. There was always dust and grit covering everything. This was not a clean process.



One of my productive jobs which I had for several weeks was to work at marking plates for shearing just after the cold roll. I was very excited when I got a picture from the video of some men doing exactly what I did.

In the picture at the left, I was the person in the middle of the picture. Alas, the real brains was the other guy! He had the schedule and knew how long to make the plate.

I had the squares on my side of the production line. When a plate got

rolled up to be marked for size, I would select a wooden square and extend it across to my partner on the other side. He would line up the edge of the square with a line along his side of the plate and make a mark that served as the leading edge of the plate. I would do the same on my side. These two marks would be used by the end shear personnel to line up their blade for shearing the leading edge of the plate.

After we made our two marks for the leading edge, I would carry the square to the other end and my partner and I would make two marks for the other end of the plate.

Simple enough? Note that I have been saying that there is plenty of heat left in this sheet of steel. Look at the fellows in the picture. Like us in 1957 they have face shields and heavy gloves. In 1957, we had asbestos gloves. I don’t believe they were asbestos in 1995. Also note that these two fellows have some special white jackets and pants. That was an improvement I suppose. In ’57, we just felt the heat at times through our ordinary work clothes. I could get stinging.

The squares are still wood. Consider a scenario that happened about once a day. The production would be moving along really well. The mill was hopping and we'd be marking and the shears would be shearing at quite a rapid rate. The plates would reach us in a hotter state than we would have liked. I would present the square to my partner. We would make are marks. The square would begin to smoke. On the other end, we would make our marks and the square would start flaming. I would have to pull the square off and bang it on the floor. With the fire out, I would pick it up and return to the starting point to mark the next plate that had moved into position. For a while it was mark, flame, bang, mark, flame, bang, ... Eventually, I would have to grab a new square and hope for cooler plates.

Interestingly, they never improved the process to get away from wooden squares.

The end shear was a huge hydraulic guillotine. Once the plate was lined up, the man in charge would hit a button and the blade would descend. It cut steel up to maybe an inch. Awesome!



Some plates were three inches thick. Too thick for shears. These thicker plates were removed from the line at some point and taken to the torch cutting areas. The picture at the left shows a cutting torch on its little track cutting a plate. Raul Maestro was one of the Puerto Rican torch operators. We will meet him later in one of my stories of Sunday labor.

After ends were sheared off, plates would go to the edge shears which cut off the sides of the plate so that the plate was the exact width that was ordered. These shears were two cutter wheels – one on each side of the plate. They were not a guillotine, but

more like a can opener. Again awesome cutting power.



Beyond the edge shear, there was nothing much left but to get the plate off the line for shipping. Most of the plates went down to a place I show in the diagram called the stacker. By the stacker, a set of rollers raised out from between the regular rollers. These smaller rollers directed the plate off the production line and into a slanted bin. When they came off, they bounced against bumpers at the bottom of the bin. For some period, I was the guy who had a long metal pole with a hook and had to pull the plates back down if they did not settle in a neat pile. Eventually, the cranes would come and empty the stacker.

Two shears were down at that far end of the plant. I operated them also with the help of at least one other person. We would have plates from which test sections had to be cut. I suppose the test sections were returned to a lab somewhere so that there was some record of the composition of a sample from a batch of plates.

In front of the test shears was a floor full of posts about 3 feet tall and each topped with a big swiveling metal caster (wheel). It made it easy to push a plate around using iron forks. One of us would push the plate up to the shear and together we would work to position it under the blade. We would cut out the test section by pressing the button. The blade would descent and cut the metal like butter.

I spent one week on midnight shift working with a Mexican man. He was the only Mexican I found in that plant. He was an older guy whose son was going to the University of Mexico in Mexico City. This friendly fellow was always ready with a bright smile. We hooked crane together for that week. That consisted of putting chains under batches of plate that had to be moved to the gondolas. Once the stack of plates was lowered into the gondola, the crane would move the plates up against the far side of the car. We would climb in on top of the plates carrying a 4x4 beam which was just about a foot taller than the height of the gondola's box. Steadying ourselves with one hand on the chains, we would put the 4x4 against the near side of the car with our hand carefully placed on that foot of wood above the car's side. Signaling the crane man, he would pull the load back to pin the 4x4 and then he would lower the plates to the bottom of the gondola. The load was now positioned away from the sides of the car. (We had to watch our hand placement so that our hand would not be mashed if the 4x4 twisted upon the impact of the load.)

My crane hooking shift netted me \$2.11 per hour. That was the best week. Usually it was \$1.85 or so.

Cranes were overhead cranes that spanned the factory from side to side. One side had a cab for an operator. Cranes moved the length of the plant and each had a carriage that allowed it to carry its load from one side of the building to the other. Occasionally, loads were long and two cranes were required to work in tandem.

You were never to get below a crane's load and that was not much of a problem. The crane men were very good about stopping and not putting one in danger. However, you did have to watch. I remember when I was doing my marking task one day. I heard a lot of noise and zapping sounds coming from down in the shipping area behind me. I turned in time to see a crane carriage shorting out. The plate that was being carried by a magnet (common for transporting a single plate) was in freefall. Wham!! It high the plates stacked below it. Up rose the cloud of dust. Well, there was another job for the electricians and mechanics.

One mishap that I relished on the marking task was a problem with the hot roll tower. If the mill broke, the mechanics would be called into action. Occasionally a new roller for the mill was brought in and installed. That might take a couple hours. At least a couple times, I got a lot of reading down by my

bench at an open door midway through the plant. (Oh, yes. The open door. I remember sticking my head out one day and finding that I could not face into the wind without the discomforting feeling of particles hitting my face. Very, very poor air quality I'd say.)

Another job which I worked for several days was done in the area near where the torch cutters worked. Plates, especially the thick ones, were inspected for flaws. In their creation, some impurity might be pressed in. It was visible but it took a lot of work to remove. I would get a grinder which was powered by air and required both hands to maneuver. I don't remember who taught me, but you had to grind, grind, grind in a sort of flaring fashion. Just don't get too anxious. Whatever you do, don't gouge the plate! Eventually, you would see a crack or a change in color that would indicate where the imperfection was and at what direction to attack it. Then you would go for the pneumatic chisel. It was a gun shaped device run by air into which you placed a chisel bit. I surrounded my area with a metal panel fence so that I didn't accidentally shot someone with the chisel. Then, as I recall, I could neatly peel out the flaw. The hole left was minimal. When I had removed the scab, I would motion to a crane man would come with a magnet and pick up the plate. The plate would be taken to another pile and some welder would fill in the hole with some brazing material. Presumably like carpenter's glue on a broken piece of furniture, the resulting surface was better than the ordinary surface.

Notice that grinding area was right behind the cold roll. That rolling mill had lots of electric boxes marked "Danger 440 Volts" or something like that. I remember that at one time I was having the crane man reposition a plate for my grinding work. He could see me, but not the electric boxes. I had my hand on the plate --- as if my help was needed as the crane lowered the plate. One of the supervisors saw that and I got "Hail Columbia!!" meaning I was chewed out. A mistake by the crane man could have pulled the plate into the electric boxes, they would have disintegrated, and I would have been fried. I would have lit up like a Christmas tree. Lesson learned.

Sunday Morning at Inland

Quite a number of weeks during that summer, I was scheduled to work on Sunday mornings. The production line always stopped at 12 midnight on Saturday. By 8 AM, the labor gang including yours truly was assigned to a couple maintenance tasks. One task was related to cleaning the furnace. The other was to clean the pits below the hot roll tower. I will begin with cleaning the pits. In my college days, my first day in the pits was the topic of several essays. All the essays produced A's. I suppose the topic was quite unique.

Our main equipment was our helmets besides our regular work clothes. Eventually, I developed a set of Sunday work levis that were patched and repatched in the knees. When we got to the location under the hot roll table, we were standing on top of the material we were to remove. It was the collection of grease, metal scale, and water that had accumulated during the week's production. On that first Sunday, there were four of us. The other three were all Puerto Rican. I never heard much English that day and on other Sundays.

Our work area proved to be tight quarters -- probably 10 feet long and 6 feet wide. The back of the area was concrete. To the sides were concrete structures and iron support beams. What I call the front was a crucial area. It contained the steel workings of the hot roll table's pivot. In that area was a hole that needed to be cleaned that was big enough for one man to work. Only one small Puerto Rican man ever did that spot. Every Sunday his time was spent digging himself into the hole. He, call him Pedro, was small and never spoke a word of English. (He and I worked a whole crew "under the table" (no pun

intended) one Sunday such that he and I were the only ones left at 4 PM. It was the only time I started with Pedro, and two other Anglos. Raul had the day off.) Pedro would dig with a short shovel and put the heap on a pile in the center of our space. Raul Maestro was working in the center and he would transfer anything from the center over to an adjacent pit where another Puerto Rican (not on my original count) would fill an iron box for the crane to hoist out. Raul said that I would spell him when he tired. The third man in our pit began digging out the material from along the back wall and putting in the center for Raul. By the end of the day, Pedro would be deep in his hole and the material in the back area was much lower and underwater.

Well!! Here I am with three Puerto Ricans in very confined quarters doing hard labor. I decided that I had better carry my weight. Raul was a nice looking muscular fellow and I had to try to emulate his efforts. What could I do as I just stood there, trying to keep out of the way? I decided to do the counting thing. I started counting to myself each time Raul started a new shovel full. 1001, 1002, 1003... Ultimately he had a shovel filled and transferred to the next pit by the time I reached 1007. I honestly don't remember the number. Whatever it was, it was in my brain by the time Raul tired. Actually, he seemed to work a long long time. I thought he would never stop. Well, now it was my turn to work as Raul stepped down and motioned for me to take over.

On that first shovel full, the best thing I did was pick up the shovel. When I tried to put it into that mass of grease and metal scale, it did not go in. The substance reacted much like clay. I guess I used my foot to force the shovel in although Raul only used his arms. I had started my counting. Once I got it in, I had to get it loose and it resisted as if by a suction caused by the grease and water mix. Ultimately, I believe I pried with the shovel handle over my leg and I had my first shovel full. I believe I was at 1011 by then. OK. Get it to the next pit! I turned around and emptied the shovel. NOT!!! In my dreams!!!! The mess just stuck to the shovel!!!! It went flying into the pit with the grease and scale still on it. I nearly went with the shovel but was saved by colliding with my right arm and helmeted head against the iron table support beams. Luckily, the shovel did not hit the guy in the other pit. He was bigger than Raul. (On another Sunday, the guy in that other pit told me that he worked farming in Puerto Rico and he thought that digging post holes was a harder thing to do. These Puerto Ricans always walked by smiling and saying, "Easy mauney, eh? Easy mauney." Incidentally, the Puerto Ricans all signed up for the Sunday hours to get overtime.)

I don't remember how much commotion I caused because of that first shovel full. But I got the shovel back and went back to work. I eventually mastered a technique that worked for me. I don't believe I had all the bugs worked out on this first tour of duty on the center pile. I remember that Raul gave me the same long tour that he had taken. He did not show pity and I am glad he did not. However, I thought he would never call for that shovel.

I don't recall any other incidents in the pits. My job was either working the center pile or the back wall's hole. Digging on the back wall as I said was often underwater work. The real effort there was breaking the suction on each shovel full. It wore out a lot of pant legs that year.

It is nice to recall this incident as I did in my college essays. Those essays might have been better as they were closer to the event.

Next I will describe the furnace detail on Sunday mornings. The pits required a lot of strenuous labor. We were always drenched to the waist within a couple hours. Yet the pits themselves did not seem to retain much heat after being out of service for eight hours. The furnace was a totally different matter.

To begin, consider our suiting up for furnace work. We were provided helmets and some clothes to put over our heads and tuck into the collars of our shirts. We put on goggles. We were given the asbestos gloves like for my marking work. And finally, we had wooden sandals of a sort to strip onto the bottoms of our normal steel-toed shoes.

The crew was divided into two to three teams. When it was my team's turn to go into the furnace, we would go to the furnace entrance which I have marked with the two small marks on the side of the furnace just behind the interior burner area. The entrance door was a small, but very thick, iron gate. It was about 30 – 36 inches high and about as wide. One had to get down on all fours. Hands served as your front pair of feet. But the wooden soles on your shoes – not your knees – were the other two. You never let your knees touch the ground. As you got inside, you met the enemy that would have blistered your knees. It was slag. If you recall, scale fell off the glowing plates through the rolling process and fell into the wet pit under the table. Here the scale from the reheated ingots was molten and fell to the floor of the furnace forming a smooth rocky surface that held the heat very efficiently. ☺ The heat was intense!! The work period was about 5 minutes per entry. Yes 5 minutes!! Inside were picks, shovels and at least one jack hammer. Someone would operate the jack hammer and use it to break up the slag on the floor. Another couple fellows would shovel whatever was broken up out through the entry door. We depended on the guys outside to clear the entrance fast enough so that when we scurried to get out we did not get stopped by the hot debris we had shoveled out.

Outside you either helped shovel out the doorway for the next crew or soaked your towels with water before putting them back over your head.

Ultimately, in the afternoon, things cooled somewhat. Picks could be used to break up slag after the jack hammer had started breaking up the shiny moonscape. The towels around our heads served to shield us from the small slag chips that flew everywhere as we beat on the rocky floor. Nevertheless, some chips got through that protection and reached our bare skin under our shirts. The rock would trickle down your back and give a nice linear blister.

Other interesting situations occurred when the last crew did not stand up the jack hammer upon departing the furnace. The next crew could not use it but just had to set it upright in the slag of the next crew. The handles were too hot to hold even with asbestos gloves.

Somewhere during the summer, production was halted for one full week. I will never know for certain if this was a sign of business conditions that made maintenance preempt production. The pause allowed a lot of plates that had been piling up to be shipped out. We laborers were in the furnace every day. The week allowed the floor of the furnace to get a real good cleaning. After cleaning, we helped the brick masons who worked over the furnace orifices. They broke out the old brick and replaced it with new.

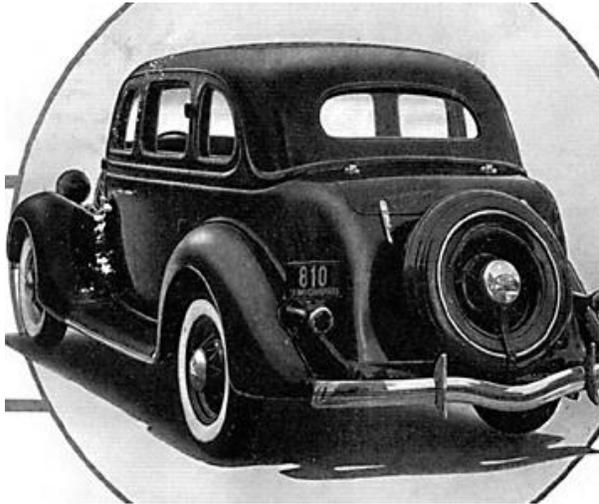
This week and even the Sunday efforts gave one the strange feeling that we know what hell was like having been so close to the place of the inferno.

Interestingly, I remember that on the Sunday duty we would break for lunch, but I had to go back to the furnace to warm up after a short time. I was drenched with sweat and it got cold against my skin.

I have no recollection of my last day's work for Inland. There is no memory of those days of transition from Inland back to my first year in college. My memory of hard labor and the mills stay remain with me. Looking at the 1995 video of the plate mill, I wonder where my Puerto Rican friends went.

Footnotes:

1.



In case, you don't know what a 1935 Ford looks like, here is a shot taken from a 1935 brochure. It had two doors in front.

I chose this view because it showed a "continental kit" attached to the trunk. In later years, more modern cars came with *continental kits* as a feature. It was just a way to transport the spare. The trunk was always a creepy place to get into. For us little guys, we had to stand on the bumper and raise the rather narrow lid. It could fall if not snapped open and crunch our little fingers.

Ma was the only one who drove. She kept this car until about 1953 or 1954 when she acquired the retired Griffith police car – also an early 50's Ford.

She once backed down our driveway on her way to go shopping. Now remember, we seldom had visitors – least of all in the driveway. When she looked up in her mirror as she backed past the house everything was gray and then... **Thud!!** She had backed into the gas truck as it backed up the drive to make a delivery of "bottle gas." How embarrassing!! Well the truck experienced no damage. Our continental kit and trunk was pushed in. Now get this! We did not have a body shop in town. The local garage man just attached a chain or rope to the continental kit, got in the car, and drove forward to pull out the dented trunk. Try to do THAT on a modern vehicle.

2. Christenson's had an effect on our Griffith days almost from the day I was born. Mom often describes the moving day in 1939 when she drove from East Chicago to our new abode at 323 Woodlawn in Griffith. I don't recall hearing where Roy was on the drive, but she always pointed at her wicker clothes basket in the basement and said that I had been in that basket in the back seat of the '35 Ford when she reached the Woodlawn house. When she got there, the former residents – maybe renters – had not left! Pa was working and Mom, alone with us, was beside herself. Mom had just given birth to me three months earlier and was still recovering from that difficult pregnancy and delivery.

We had bought our new house from W. P. Christenson. He had not started building a large number of houses as far as I know, but he had real estate and his hardware and coal business. (Later his ventures included stores that occupied all of the west side of the 100 block of Main Street. Hardware, furniture, Chevrolet agency, used cars, body shop, coal, and oil. He built many homes starting in the late 1940's.) Mom tells about her conversation with him on that moving day.

“What are we going to do?” she cried anxiously.
He came back with, “You are going to come and live with us!”
“With you?!” she cried. “I have two young children.”
W.P. responded, “I ought to know. I have 5 children of my own.”

That is one unique scenario! We moved in with the Christenson’s in his original house on Griffith Blvd. That was a big brick house close to the school. I don’t know how long we stayed. I believe a couple weeks to a month. Mom liked Mrs. Christenson, but she died when I was still young. Preschool, I believe. W.P remarried and had several more children. In later years, he was seldom around having residences in his new Griffith development north of us and in Florida.

I know that when we moved in on Woodlawn all the windows in the garage were broken out by the former residents. W.P. fixed that. When his men built the Ross’s house next door, the trucks broke the top of our septic tank. W.P. fixed that by moving the tank well out of the driveway area. As years went on, W.P was the richest man in town and people worked hard to dislike him. He ran for the School Board and won, but there was a lot of muck raking. However, I know Ma and Pa always stuck up of him as did lots of other “old timers”.

W. P. had five children by his first wife, I believe. Four boys and one girl. If there was a sixth, his name was Irving (Irvie). I am not certain the name of the girl but she had a house in the Christenson’s development in the neighborhood of W. P. (I do remember that she remembered us Bailey’s, maybe from our stay in 1939.) The four boys included Roy and Dale who had nice houses on Woodlawn real close to us. Dale lived on the 300 block of Woodlawn. Roy lived on Woodlawn, just across Lake Street (200 block of Woodlawn). The third boy, Milford lived near W.P and I am not certain where Bill lived.

Roy Christenson started a Chevrolet agency in Hobart, IN that still continues.

Milford was always in the front office adjoining the hardware store. He seemed to run the Griffith facilities. However, he and George Thiel (a carpenter left over from the home building days) were volunteer Griffith fire fighters. When the siren went off, Milford would shed his coat and run the block north up Main Street to the fire station dressed in his white shirt and tie. George would go too, but he was more appropriately attired. (George’s last job that I know of was Griffith Fire Chief.)

Now in 2011, all the Christenson enterprises in downtown Griffith are closed. When I last saw him, Milford seemed to be running the large Chevrolet agency out on Highway 41 just west of Griffith. I expect he has retired or passed on. Still I am glad that we stopped by the agency on Hwy 41 and got to talk with him. It was nice to have a chance to let him know how much I appreciated working for him when I was going to college.

Dale Christenson was never the business person like Roy or Milford. I did see him once at the Hwy 41 agency, but I am uncertain what his role was. (He might have been serving the role of his uncle Frank whom I write about below.) In the old days of housing developments, he was very much involved in the building. It was reported that his long work hours led to the end of his first marriage.

I remember Irvie too as a younger fellow. Possibly the 6th child of the first wife. He started some kind of club --- like a country club – off of Old Hwy 30 in Schererville. It did not survive for very long.

While I worked at the hardware store, one of the second batch of kids, Peter, was given to us to employ. He was in high school. I can't remember what he did specifically. My recollection was that his hours were erratic. (Excuse me if I am wrong on this.) My favorite story of Peter was his woo-is-me observation. One time he mentioned that Milford would have a problem in the front office and get Dick Schmal worked up in hardware. Dick, in turn, would pass it on to Horvat, who would then get on Peter's case. All Peter was able to do was to go home and "kick the dog."

I nearly forgot Frank. Frank was a friendly old man who was W.P. older brother. He worked there at the Christenson's enterprises till the day he died. He must have had other jobs, but I particularly remember that he would fill the oil truck. He was well over 65; and although I never saw it, he slipped off the truck a couple times. Stubbornly, he still tried to do it after being told that the oil truck driver was supposed to do that chore. Unrelated to that issues, on one summer morning, I remember he was complaining of shoulder pain and was shipped to the hospital where he died of a heart attack.

3 Bill Schiesser was such a nice fellow. He was certainly in his middle or late 50s when I worked for *Christenson's*. He was not a fashion plate in his gray work shirt and gray wash pants. He had a kind of a lope rather than a smooth gait. That gait was especially pronounced when he came up from the hardware store basement carrying four gallons of paint. Two gallons in each hand. Although we handled clients throughout the store, he was the paint man.

I hope it is not unkind to say that he looked a little odd. (I wish I had his picture.) He was one of those guys with a sort of sunken chest and high waist-line. He was bald headed. (I should talk!!) Bill had a good sense of humor and we always were on very good terms.

His most surprising aspect was that Bill was President of the Griffith Federal Savings and Loan. He knew more than just paint!!! So on several occasions, he would surprise us with a suit and tie when it was a day for a board meeting. Most of the bank activities were supervised by a woman by the name of Helen Lund – the board secretary. In those days, the bank operated with no more than 5 or 6 employees.

Incidentally, Helen Love, my cousin, worked at the Savings and Loan for a number of years. Also, Bill's daughter (Katie??) worked there after graduating from Indiana State just after me.