



VAN DEVENTER FAMILY



This is Dad's (Gale Van Deventer's) boyhood home. Both Dad & Carroll were born in this house. The stories dad used to tell us, as kids, about the Gypsies visiting, was when he lived in this house. The farmhouse is located on a back road about 8 miles south of Leroy, Illinois.

These are my notes to locate the House.

House - 00N & 2500 E (South of McClean County)

Rukker Chapel - 1775 E & 1450 N (this is a cemetery where many relatives are buried nearby)



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Diana has transcribed a tape Dad recorded in 1989 where he reminisces about his early childhood days. [Read Dad's story below.](#)

Here's an excerpt of one of the cassette tapes of dad telling about his past. Some of the tapes are easier to understand than others, but this one had a little history to it as well.

"Today is August the 17th, 1989 and this is Gale. I'm going to reminisce on the past a little bit. The person you just heard singing 'Sweet Sixteen'--I can't recall his name at the moment, but he's the big tall fellow that used to play the ghost on that ghost show on TV and he also was in a TV show, but he is a very good singer and nobody ever knew it until he made a movie awhile back. In the background you can hear some piano music. I, Gale Van Deventer, was born on a farm near Solomen, Illinois, in the year 1918, 70 years ago. It was on my grandmother's farm, I believe it was, I lived there 3 years. Lloyd Van Deventer, my father, and Nora Van Deventer my mother had a large family--they had 5 boys and 3 girls. Which in turn, Jean and I had the same size family--6 boys and 2 girls. Reminiscing back to the old days and trying to recall some of the things of the past, I recall the gypsies on the road near our house--coming down the road near our house, and there was a steep hill just about 300 yards from home. I looked around and I saw the gypsy train caravan coming and I was just about 2 to 3 years old, I suppose, because I was 3 when we moved away from this farm. I turned around and went screaming up the hill toward home because my folks told me to beware of gypsies because they were known to kidnap children and steal anything they could get their hands on. They were a roving band of people that roamed over the country in those days of the early 1900s. As I came up over the hill screaming at the top of my breath, my brother Prentiss came running out and grabbed me by the hand, pulled me into our yard and slammed the gate as I recall, and ran up to the house. The gypsies coming over the hill were laughing and said, 'he seems to be afraid of us, isn't he?' Prentiss said, 'yep, he sure is,' and we ran all the way into the house. I guess this farm had a lot of memories for my older brothers and sisters, but that's about the only incident I can remember there, except Carroll and I both caught diphtheria on that farm and I guess I almost died from it, but at any rate that's what we remembered there. In fact, when I was 3, then we moved over to what we called Wayne Waldon's farm. I think it was called that because he eventually lived in the same house a few years after we moved out and that was about a few miles west of grandma's place and we lived there a couple years at least, but at any rate, we moved on over to another house which was south and west of there, about 3 miles and where I started school at 6.



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While we were living at Wayne Waldon's house, I remember one incident that happened where Paul had cut his finger and the folks had sent me up to Wayne's house to get some turpentine I think it was, but I couldn't say--I was too little to say turpentine, but I finally got the message across that I wanted turpentine and I came back home with it. That was the time that Paul lost the end of his ring finger in a shelling accident that afternoon. I suppose I was too little to know what the particulars were, but I suppose they took him into the doctor right away.

I always liked horses when I lived on the farm and I would try to ride horses and even hitch up the teams for dad and my brothers, Paul and Prentiss, to use in the field and I wasn't big enough to put the harness over their backs, but I'd climb up on the fence and put their collars on and do up the hames--I could do it all by myself when I was 3 or 4 years old, at least I was told that. I was a great lover of horses and we had an old horse named Dandy and I think I was the only one that was able to ride him as fast as he could run without him falling down. At least I rode him every place and I rode him through snow drifts and every place else and he was always right there. He was up in years--I suppose 15 to 20 years old and he was in his late twenties when we had him put to sleep after we left the farm.

I was too young to do the chores in those days. At least I had enough older brothers that could pick up the slack. I was a great mimic of dad and anything that dad would do I would try to do the same thing and learn what he was doing. One day dad had sent me over to Wayne Waldons, out in the field I should say, which was about a mile out there, to get some chewing tobacco or Prince Albert tobacco in a can for his pipe. Wayne, he chewed it, and dad smoked it in his pipe. As I recall now, as it turned out, Wayne had sent me over to get dad's can of tobacco and when I saw him put a chaw in his mouth and then he gave me the can back to take back to dad. On the way back I was riding horseback and I took a chaw of that tobacco (dad was a pipe smoker himself) and put it in my mouth. I was riding the horse along there and pretty soon boy I got sick. By the time I got the tobacco over to dad, he said, 'What's the matter with you?' He started laughing and said, 'I bet you got a hold of some of that tobacco.' I said yep and I learned a good lesson about chewing tobacco. But at any rate, I also remember another incident.....

On Saturday afternoons we'd sometimes go to town and we had an old touring car and I think most of the family would crawl into it and head to town. The ladies would head one way and the men another at least there were so many boys that I always went with dad. I recall going into a pool hall one time with dad, but I don't think I ever played any pool because I was too



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little. But at any rate what I remembered about the incident is that the men did their thing in the afternoon and we usually ended up with an ice cream cone and also we bought our groceries. We stopped at the grocery store and back in those days you had to get one item at a time by either giving the grocer your list or reading it off to the grocer and he'd pick them off the shelf one at a time. It usually would be rather late at night we'd be socializing with friends, there might be a concert going on in the early evening in the city park--us kids were always playing around with other kids that we got acquainted with that day or previously. We always had a big time in town. But I do recall coming home one time and it started to rain. That old touring car we had to put the top up and it had isinglass windows, but the isinglass was about gone. We tried to put the curtains on, isinglass in the curtains I meant to say, but it didn't work out that way so we're all getting extremely wet since it was raining so hard. So dad pulled in to a farm and drove up next to the barn. We didn't know the people that lived there but we knew that they wouldn't mind. We didn't go up to the house since it was raining so hard, we sat there for awhile until the rain slacked up and then we drove on home. I remember we were all quite wet even though we had the shelter of this barn--it rained in sideways and we got wet. But that was a very interesting experience going into town. Also, dad and uncle Burt made a bobsled one time and we used that many winters in the snow and the family would go to church sometimes when the snow was too bad. Instead of the buggy, we'd hitch up this sleigh which the runners had a wagon bed on it, but it was quite well-done as I recall--very similar to a wagon except it had runners on it.

I've always enjoyed music. You hear this music in the background now—it's always been one of my favorites (The Old Rugged Cross). Mother and Dad are gone now, but they used to sing and play. Mom would sit down at the piano and dad would sing one of the religious songs or humorous. They liked to entertain and also liked to sing whether for the kids or for company. And I remember many times, someone would coax them to sing at a party and I guess that's where it rubbed off, because when I grew up I liked to sing and entertain. That's probably the reason why Jean and I were involved in church entertainment programs over the years and we've been blessed with a large family and a sense of humor that seems to me that goes beyond comprehension sometimes. The kids, we've taken them to church ever since they were born, you might say. They grew up in the Sunday school and Jean taught for years in the Sunday school program and so did I. Sometime or another we've served our stint in the church and we've always enjoyed the social life as well as the religious life. These songs bring back memories. (Dad chimes in at this point singing the Old Rugged Cross). Can't sing very good any more it seems like.



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But let's see, I'll tell you another good story about dad. Dad was a pipe smoker. He'd always go outside in the evenings to have his smoke and I would usually follow him along. One night he went out to the privy, the outhouse, and I followed right along beside him. There was lightening off in the west, and I remember saying, 'dad, how far is that lightening away from us?' Dad said, 'oh I spect it's probably around Atlanta.' Atlanta was over west of us about 75 miles. I don't know whether or not dad knew, but I believed every word that dad said. It was always the gospel.

Just the other day, Jean's dad was here for his 91st birthday. Jean, Arlene, and Bob all reminisced over the times when they were young. Of course Jean's dad and mother would interject on some points every once in awhile. But they put all this stuff on tape which was very interesting. I wish I was as fluent a speaker as some of these other people. I have the thoughts, but sometimes they don't come out. I remember a little story I told one time or rather one time in Sunday school when I was about 2 years old I suspect. They gave me a little poem to say up in front of the group. And it was, 'If I was a man I'd be a man no bigger than my thumb,' well, it came out (me at 2 years old) 'no bigger than my fumb' and of course the crowd laughed. I'll never forget that incident even though I was just two or two and a half, something like that. You'll hear me cough once in awhile but I feel so much better than I did a year ago, there's no comparison."