# So Much to be Thankful For

## The Bill and Meta Goering Juhnke Story, 1912-1996

**By James C. Juhnke**

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http://www.juhnke.com/family/thankful.htm

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## Preface

"Life and letters are made up of small things, mostly," wrote Bill Juhnke to his family. In his letters Bill celebrated the small things, the ordinariness of life. He recorded what he saw in the room around him, what family members had said in the last five minutes, or what Meta had prepared for lunch.

Bill also had visions about the big things. In another letter, reflecting on his reading of *Here I Stand* by historian Roland Bainton, Bill wondered whether current (1959) world political reform movements "could be made decent and strong with modern-intellectual-mennonite-anabaptism, neomuntzerism without the sword."

This account of the shared life of Bill and Meta Goering Juhnke includes many things both small and large. As a family historian, I pray that the small details that I have plucked out of the confusion of family documents and memories may somehow stand with integrity for the larger themes that defined lives well lived. The choice of what details to include involves an art of creative reconstruction as well as the science of truthful recording what actually happened.

Bill and Meta lived in a twentieth century of rapid social change. But their life in family and community was more notable for its stability and continuity than for its disruptions or upheavals. They were rural Mennonites in south-central Kansas who never moved far from home, either geographically or spiritually. The Mennonite church was the center of their social life as well as the source of their most basic beliefs and ideals. Contrary to popular images of Amish or Mennonite isolation and social conservatism before the 1960s, Bill and Meta were politically engaged, socially progressive, anti-war activists. Their local church congregation, the Eden Mennonite

Church, had (and to this day still has) a strong peace tradition and a vibrant corps of progressive Christian pacifists.

Bill and Meta's basic commitments continued into the next generation. They passed on their religious and social values to their six children. All six (Jim, Janet, Bill Jr., Sharon, Ruth, and Candace) with their spouses became church-going, anti-war, socially progressive citizens who usually voted Democrat. Although none of them were family farmers on the pattern of their parents, they all stayed married to, and reared children with, their same partners. They all lived long term in single-family houses. And they all stayed at their same jobs (three college teachers, one legal analyst, one law librarian/receptionist, and one nurse) for decades. In an American world of high geographical and vocational mobility, as well as a divorce rate that would have astonished our ancestors, such family stability is quite remarkable.

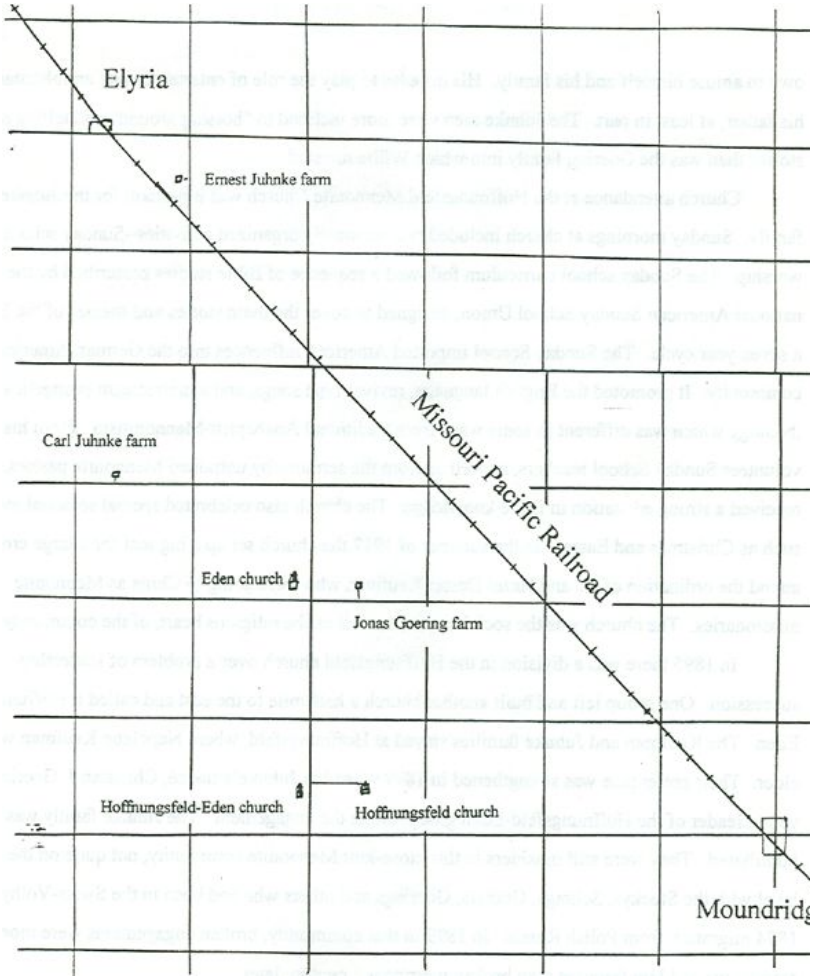
My siblings helped me to write this book. I thank them for their shared memories and for their critical reading of the text. I apologize for all the important small and large things that I left out, for irrelevancies or embarrassments that I included, as well as for matters of interpretation or emphasis that may seem off the mark. I especially thank my daughter, Joanne Juhnke, for her work in formatting this manuscript for publication both on the Web at juhnke.com and in print form. Joanne helped with editing in ways that improved the manuscript. Thanks are also due to my wife, Anna (who died in 2005), for organizing Juhnke family photographs and documents. Anna conducted an excellent series of tape-recorded life-history interviews with Meta while Bill and I were attending Bethel College football games.

The front cover shows Meta and Bill in their golden years standing in the poppyseed garden behind the house east of Elyria, Kansas.

## *So Much to be Thankful For*

The title of this book comes from Bill Juhnke's quotation of a funeral sermon by Gordon Kaufman, a Mennonite theologian. Gordon, along with his father, Edmund G. Kaufman, influenced the thinking and inspired the commitments of Bill, Meta, and their oldest son. Those of us in this story indeed have much to be thankful for.

James C. Juhnke
August, 2009




*This map of the community shows Elyria, Moundridge, the Eden church, and the locations of the farms where Bill and Meta were born.*

## Chapter 1. Willie Juhnke and his Family

William Ernest Juhnke was born on January 24, 1912, a grandson of Mennonite immigrants in McPherson county, south-central Kansas. His parents were Ernest and Alvina Kaufman Juhnke. His first name, William, was an English form of the German name, Wilhelm. William's immigrant grandfather was Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Juhnke, born in 1841. Grandpa Carl had been named after a long Prussian royal line of Friedrich Wilhelms. Ernest and Alvina, in their German-American home three-fourths of a century later, called their son by the more familiar "Willie."

Willie was Ernest and Alvina's fourth child. Their third child, a son named Joseph, had died at age two. They had seven children after Willie, all born at more or less regular two and half year intervals. The names and birth dates of the Juhnke children were as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Emma | Oct. 23, 1905 | |
| Joseph | Aug. 2, 1907 | d. Dec. 31, 1909 |
| Anna | Nov. 2, 1909 | d. Oct. 21, 1929 |
| William Ernest | Jan. 24, 1912 | |
| Alvina | Feb. 2, 1914 | |
| Elsie | Aug. 9, 1916 | |
| Carl Oscar | Nov. 24, 1918 | |
| Walter | Feb. 9, 1921 | |
| John Elmer | Apr. 17, 1923 | |
| Marie Ella | Mar. 19, 1926 | |
| Martha | Sept. 22, 1928 | |

Ernest and Alvina Kaufman Juhnke had been born of immigrant parents, all German-speaking but from different parts of Europe. The Juhnkes had come from Farther Pomerania, a

province which became a part of Prussia and of northern Germany. They belonged to the German evangelical church. The Kaufmans had originally come from Switzerland, but they had moved to the east European province of Volhynia by the time of migration to Kansas in 1874. They had been part of a cohesive Amish community which joined the Mennonite denomination in Kansas. The Juhnkes and Kaufmans both spoke German, but in quite different dialects. The Swiss-Volhynian dialect, which tended to dominate in the predominantly Mennonite community, had much in common with the dialect in the Palatinate, a south German province. It had a more rhythmic musical bounce than did the north German dialects.

Alvina Kaufman was the oldest child of Napoleon and Freni Stucky Kaufman. She first got to know Ernest when she came to help with housekeeping for the Juhnke family. The Juhnkes needed help because Ernest's mother had died in 1899, when Ernest was twenty years old. Ernest had been baptized as an infant in 1879 in Knox County, Nebraska. In 1904, before marrying Alvina, he had to be rebaptized as an adult. Alvina's father, Napoleon Kaufman, who bore an interesting given name for a Mennonite pacifist, was the elder of the Hoffnungsfeld Mennonite congregation. He would not have approved his daughter's marriage to a man who had not received believer's baptism.

Ernest not only joined Alvina's church, but he accepted her leadership in other ways. In those patriarchal times women often exercised influence informally. There is evidence that Alvina was a strong force in the Juhnke family in many ways. She had special interest and concern for the education of her children. When Willie enrolled at Bethel College in 1935, he wrote on the application form that his grades should be sent to his mother.

Willie's father was a tough and hard-working man, but also fun-loving. He had lived as a bachelor several years before getting married. He and his good friend Daniel Waltner performed a song and jig routine to entertain "Literary" meetings at a local public school. Willie eventually learned a homely jig of his own to amuse himself and his family. His impulse to play the role of entertainer was an inheritance from his father, at least in part. The Juhnke men were more inclined to "horsing around" and telling off-color stories than was the Goering family into which Willie married.

Church attendance at the Hoffnungsfeld Mennonite Church was important for the Juhnke family. Sunday mornings at church included two separately organized activities—Sunday school and worship. The Sunday school curriculum followed a sequence of Bible studies prescribed by the national American Sunday School Union and designed to cover the main stories and themes of the Bible in a seven year cycle. The Sunday School imported American influences into the German-American community. It promoted the English language, revival-type songs, and a mainstream evangelical theology which was different in some ways from traditional Anabaptist-Mennonitism. From his volunteer Sunday School teachers, as well as from the sermons by untrained Mennonite pastors, Willie received a strong education in Bible knowledge. The church also celebrated special seasonal events such as Christmas and Easter. In the summer of 1917 the church set up a big tent for a large crowd to attend the ordination of Ed and Hazel Dester Kaufman who were going to China as Mennonite missionaries. The church was the social center, as well as the religious heart, of the community.

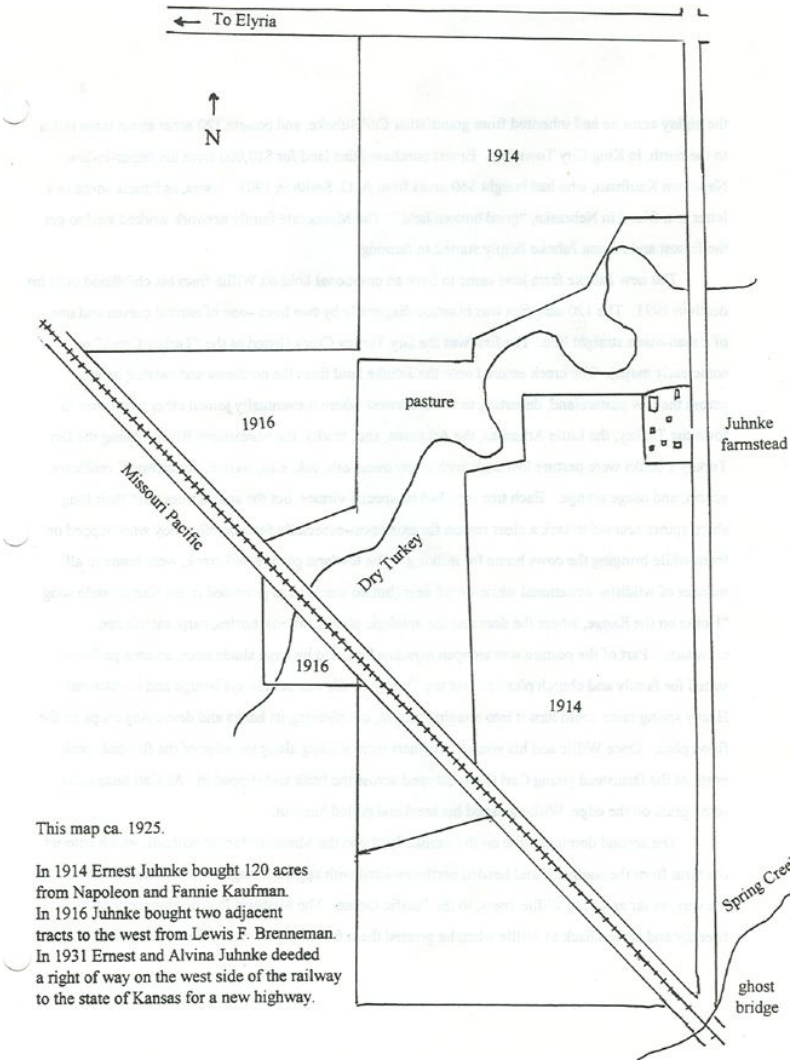
In 1895 there was a division in the Hoffnungsfeld church over a problem of leadership succession. One group left and built another church a half-mile to the east and called it Hoffnungsfeld-Eden. The Kaufman and Juhnke families stayed at Hoffnungsfeld, where Napoleon Kaufman was elder. Their pre-

ference was strengthened in 1899 when Ida Juhnke's fiancé, Christian J. Goering, a young leader of the Hoffnungsfeld-Eden group, broke the engagement. The Juhnke family was humiliated. They were still outsiders in this close-knit Mennonite community, not quite on the same level with the Stuckys, Schrags, Grabers, Goerings and others who had been in the Swiss-Volhynian 1874 migration from Polish Russia. In 1899 in that community, broken engagements were more scandalous and less frequent than broken *marriages* a century later.

Willie was born in the Juhnke home shared with Grandfather Carl Juhnke on section two of Turkey Creek township, just two and a half miles northwest of the place where Meta Goering, his future wife, was born four years later. When Willie was two years old, his father sold the eighty acres he had inherited from grandfather Carl Juhnke, and bought 120 acres about three miles to the north, in King City Township. Ernest purchased this land for $10,000 from his father-in-law, Napoleon Kaufman, who had bought 360 acres from A. G. Smith in 1901. It was, as Ernest wrote in a letter to a friend in Nebraska, "good bottom land." The Mennonite family network worked well to get the Ernest and Alvina Juhnke family started in farming.

The new Juhnke farm land came to have an emotional hold on Willie from his childhood until his death in 1991. The 120 acre plot was bisected diagonally by two lines—one of natural curves and one of a man-made straight line. The first was the Dry Turkey Creek (listed as the "Turkey Creek" on some early maps). The creek entered onto the Juhnke land from the northeast and twisted its way across the low pastureland, departing to the southwest where it eventually joined other tributaries to form the Turkey, the Little Arkansas, the Arkansas, and, finally, the Mississippi River. Along the Dry Turkey's banks were pasture lowlands with many trees—ash, oak, elm,

walnut, cottonwood, mulberry, acacia, and Osage orange. Each tree type had its special virtues, but the acacia trees with their long sharp spines seemed to lack a clear reason for existence—especially for a barefoot boy who stepped on them while bringing the cows home for milking. The lowland pasture and creek



were home to all manner of wildlife—occasional white-tailed deer (but no antelope as promised in the Kansas state song "Home on the Range, where the deer and the antelope play"), rabbits, turtles, carp, catfish and crawdads. Part of the pasture was an open meadow bounded by large shade trees, an area perfectly suited for family and church picnics. But the Turkey Creek was not always benign and invitational. Heavy spring rains could turn it into a raging torrent, overflowing its banks and destroying crops on the flood plain. Once Willie and his younger brothers were wading along the edge of the flooded creek and young Carl Oscar stepped across the bank and slipped in. As Carl hung onto some grass on the edge, Willie grasped his hand and pulled him out.

The second dominant line on the Juhnke land was the Missouri Pacific railroad, which entered the farm from the southeast and headed northwestward with apparent single-minded purposefulness all the way, as far as young Willie knew, to the Pacific Ocean. The Missouri Pacific engineers were friendly and waved back to Willie when he greeted them from the prairie hay field south of the tracks or field "south of the house," which was most often planted to hard winter wheat. Sometimes the noisy train could inspire great fear, as on one day when Willie was getting the cows from across the creek and dared to walk (and then run) his way ahead of the oncoming train across the railroad bridge over the Dry Turkey. He had misjudged how fast it was coming and the shrill whistle of the onrushing train gave him the scare of his life. Almost as frightening were the stories about the spirits at "Ghost Bridge," where the Missouri Pacific crossed the Running Turkey Creek (sometimes called Spring Creek) a half mile straight south of the farm. The dirt mile road for cars curved under the railroad and then doubled back like an "S" to cross the creek. It was a perilous task to maneuver horses pulling racks loaded with prairie hay from the "field behind the tracks." On at least one time the workers stacked the hay too high and had to restack it when it didn't pass under the bridge.

In the spring of 1915, when Willie was three years old, a census-taker from the Kansas Agricultural Survey came to do an inventory of the Ernest and Alvina Juhnke farm operation. The census record showed that the Juhnkes were farming 160 acres. Most of it was planted to winter wheat—115 acres. There were fifteen acres of corn, ten of oats, twenty of pasture, and a quarter acre of Irish potatoes. Eight horses and one mule provided the power for field work. There were three milk cows and the family estimated it had made fifty pounds of butter in the previous year. It was not a large farming operation, but it provided year-round full-time work for Ernest and Alvina. The parents assigned farm work for the children as soon as they were able. The land was productive and the prices for farm products reasonably good. In 1914 a war broke out in Europe (later known as World War I, 1914-18). The war raised the price of wheat just after Ernest had made his investment in good wheat-producing land.

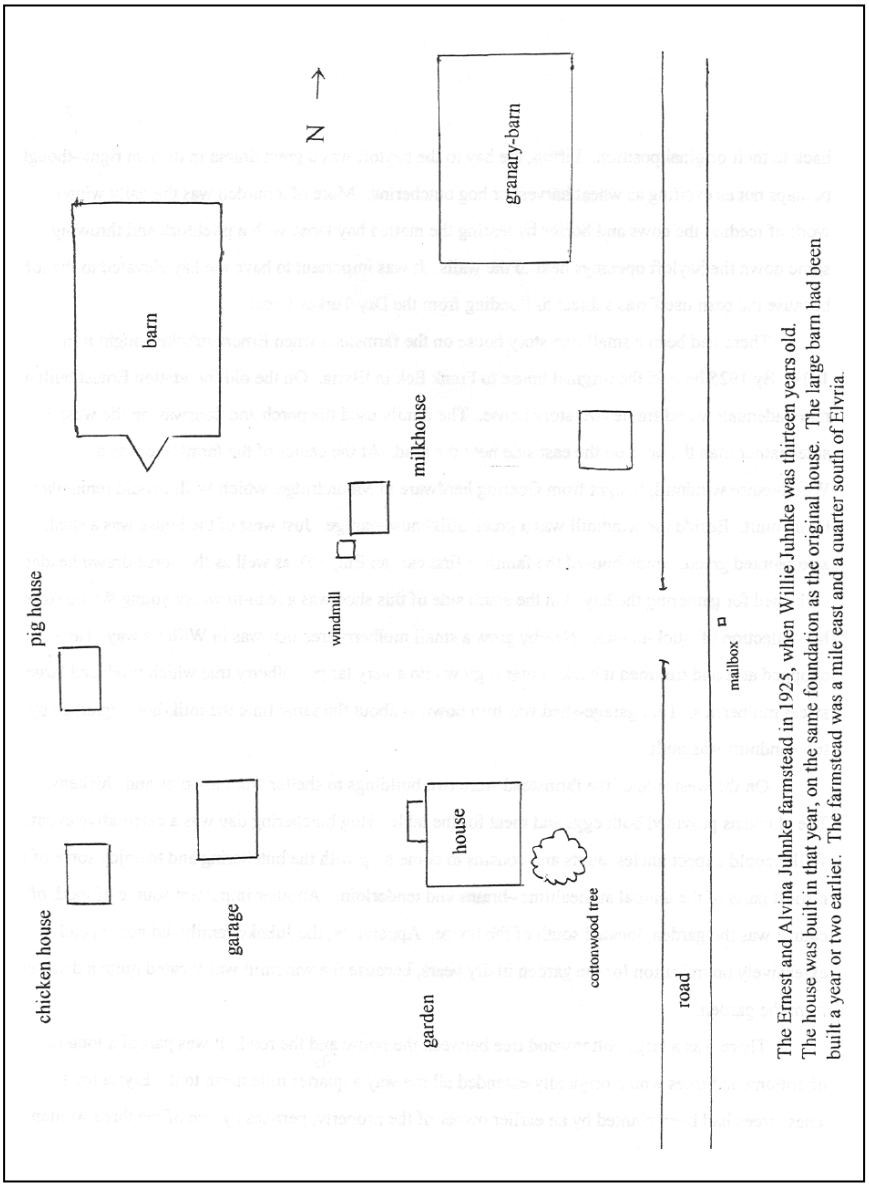
*Anna, Willie, and Emma Juhnke in 1914.*

As Willie grew up, his father put him to work on outdoor tasks as soon as he was capable. As the oldest son, he always knew he was highly valued. For women's work in the kitchen and indoors, the Juhnke men depended on Alvina, Emma, Anna and the girls who came along later. Willie learned little about cooking and housekeeping. It was a hard-working family. Except for Sundays, a day for attending church worship, for resting, and for visiting extended family, the Juhnkes worked from dawn to dusk. To some extent

the work load was seasonal. Winter brought shorter work days and longer nights for sleeping.

The Juhnke farm fronted directly onto the township section road a mile east and a quarter south of Elyria. The homestead land sloped downward to the northwest, where the creek ran just a stone's throw from the far end of the big barn. Ernest originally had moved in an older barn to a location near and parallel to the road. This granary-barn served to shelter animals as well as to store wheat and oats. In about 1923 Ernest built the bigger barn with a hayloft and a triangular front overhang to raise up the hay with slings. The horses pulled up the hay with a very long rope that ran along a pulley at the back floor of the barn, up to near the top roof ridge, across the full length to the front of the triangular overhang, and then down to the slings with the hay. As the horses pulled, the hay-loaded slings went straight up to the hayloft level, then into the barn along a track near the top of the roof. Finally a worker tripped the slings loose and the hay fell into place on the loft. Human power pulled the slings back to their original position. Lifting the hay to the hayloft was a great drama in its own right—though perhaps not as exciting as wheat harvest or hog butchering. More of a burden was the daily winter work of feeding the cows and horses by tearing the matted hay loose with a pitchfork and throwing some down the hayloft openings next to the walls. It was important to have the hay elevated to the loft, because the barn itself was subject to flooding from the Dry Turkey Creek.

There had been a small one-story house on the farmstead when Ernest Juhnke bought it in 1914. By 1925 he sold the original house to Frank Eck in Elyria. On the old foundation Ernest built a more adequate wood frame two-story house. The family used the porch and doorway on the west side—rather than the door on the east side near the road. At the center of the farm-




The Ernest and Alvina Juhnke farmstead in 1925, when Willie Juhnke was thirteen years old. The house was built in that year, on the same foundation as the original house. The large barn had been built a year or two earlier. The farmstead was a mile east and a quarter south of Elvria.

stead was a Woodmanse windmill, bought from Goering hardware in Moundridge, which Willie could remember being built. Beside the windmill was a green milkhouse-garage. Just west of the house was a shed, also painted green, which housed the family's first car (an Empire), as well as the horse-drawn header-rack used for gathering the hay. On the south side of this shed was a lean-to where young Willie stored his collection of stick-horses. Nearby grew a small mulberry tree that was in Willie's way. He chopped at it and trimmed it back. Later it grew into a very large mulberry tree which produced large sweet mulberries. That garage-shed was torn down at about the same time the milk-house/garage by the windmill was built.

On the west side of the farmstead were two buildings to shelter animals—pigs and chickens. The chickens provided both eggs and meat for the table. Hog butchering day was a celebrative event. Willie could expect uncles, aunts and cousins to come help with the butchering and to enjoy some of the tastiest parts of the animal at mealtime—brains and tenderloin. Another important source of food, of course, was the garden, located south of the house. Apparently, the Juhnke family did not depend extensively on irrigation for the garden in dry years, because the windmill was located quite a distance from the garden.

There was a large cottonwood tree between the house and the road. It was part of a long row of cottonwood trees that originally extended all the way a quarter mile north to the Elyria road. These trees had been planted by an earlier owner of the property, perhaps by one of the three women listed as earlier owners (Josephine Henry, Mary E. A. Smith, Elizabeth Gamble.) Most of the cottonwood trees died or were destroyed, but the one by the house thrived for a century and became one of Willie's favorites. Later in life, after he had retired from teaching, he wrote a romantic imaginary story of the life of this tree across the human generations it had seen come and go—

"The Tree Speaks" (1981). The tree of Bill Juhnke's imagination spoke, among other things, about Napoleon Kaufman and his sons in 1900 arriving on a quest for land to buy. Upon seeing the rich land and "level black soil" of the Dry Turkey flood plain for the first time, one of the sons, Joe, a deaf-mute, spelled out in sign language, "THIS IS IT!"

Willie in his childhood had many aunts, uncles and cousins to visit. His mother was the oldest of eight Kaufman children, all of whom married and had children. The Kaufman family living closest to the Juhnkes, on the Elyria road about a mile east, was the family of Leonard and Marie Schrag Kaufman. They had a son, Willard, two years older than Willie, and a daughter, Pearl, the same age as Willie. Leonard Kaufman, known as "Uncle Lee," had also been helped to get started in farming in King City township by his father Napoleon. In 1915 Uncle Lee's farm was twice as large as Ernest Juhnke's.

There were nearby cousins on the Juhnke side of the family as well. Ernest was the second of five living children (two siblings had died), all of whom married and lived on farms in the Mennonite settlement. Ernest's sister Ida had married Simon Stucky, and they lived on a 320-acre farm about two miles south and west of the Juhnkes. Simon had been a school teacher and had an impressive library of fifty books. Ernest's brother Wesley had married Amelia Graber, and they lived about the same distance in the opposite direction, north and east. Their oldest son, Raymond, was two years younger than Willie. Uncle Otto and Aunt Anna lived two miles west of Elyria. The families kept in close touch with each other.

As a child Willie attended funerals of family members, reminding him that life on earth was precarious. When he was nearly seven years old (1918) his grandfather, Carl Juhnke, died at age seventy-seven. When Willie was eleven (1923), his cousin, Frieda Juhnke, daughter of Uncle Otto and Aunt Anna, died at age fourteen. When he was thirteen (1925), his cousin,

Milford Stucky, son of Uncle Simon and Aunt Ida, died at age nine. When Willie was seventeen, his sister, Anna, died at age twenty. Willie learned well that death was no respecter of age.

Willie's grandfather, Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Juhnke, had a difficult life in his final years. His second marriage, to Elisabeth Flickinger Zerger, had failed. He became involved in a dispute with his son, Otto, over an issue of tying land inheritance to old age support. (They took the dispute to the church for resolution.) Then his mind began to fail and he would wander away from the farm house where he lived alone. When Willie was five or six, he went along with his father who built a fence or wall around Grandpa's place to keep him from escaping. But Grandpa defeated the attempt and managed to escape his imprisonment. Finally, his children took the burden of taking turns to keep the increasingly senile and sometimes irascible old man in their own homes. Grandpa taught Willie some German-dialect sayings, no doubt learned in his childhood in Farther Pomerania. One of these, as Willie later wrote it down, was: "*In's Bet, in's Bet; Wer eny het. Wer Keni het mus ok ins Bet!*" ("To bed, to bed, who has one yet; who has none yet, must also go to bed.") Once when Grandpa was staying at the Ernest and Alvina Juhnke place, Grandpa and little Willie got into an altercation. Willie threw a stick at Grandpa, who chased after him. Willie's mother came out of the milkhouse and angrily scolded her father-in-law. Willie knew it was his fault and felt guilty about it.

Grandpa Juhnke died on November 2, 1918, nine days before the end of World War I. As Grandpa was on his deathbed, Willie's other grandfather, Elder Napoleon Kaufman, came for a pastoral visit. Willie peeked through the door to the northwest room of the house and saw both of his grandfathers at a moment of life's passage. Napoleon was kneeling at Carl's bedside, holding the dying man's hand and bowing in prayer. After Carl died, Ernest Juhnke put silver dollars over his eyes to keep them closed.

The most hair-raising event of Willie's childhood was a horse runaway in 1923, when he was eleven years old. Ernest was responsible for maintaining township roads. He hitched up three horses (named Fanny, Frank and Lincoln) to an old four-wheel buggy which had belonged to Grandpa Carl. Behind the buggy dragged a two section iron harrow to break up the clods and fill in the ruts on the road. On this day Ernest and Willie drove southward from the Juhnke farmstead, under the Missouri Pacific tracks and across Ghost Bridge over the Running Turkey Creek, to the section corner where they turned right. When they came to the Dry Turkey Creek bridge, Ernest got off the buggy to lift up the harrow so its teeth would not catch a plank and tear it loose. Willie took the reins. Suddenly a frightened rabbit jumped out from some brush in the ditch, and the three horses bolted—tearing the harrow loose from the buggy and leaving Ernest behind.

Willie pulled on the reins as hard as he could and hollered for the horses to stop, but they were running wild. They kept running west toward where the Valentine Krehbiel farm was on the south side of the road. Willie saw that Krehbiel was out in the barnyard. As his horses galloped past, Willie called out, "*Schtop mei Geil!*"—a mixture of German and English. ("Stop my animals.") The horses kept running, finally getting tired and slowing down to a trot. When they came to the next farmstead, the place of Uncle Simon Stucky, Willie was able to turn them into the yard and direct them toward the barn. There the horses finally stopped.

After composing himself, Willie decided to take the horses back to find his father. He backed the horses away from the barn and tried to get them out toward the road. Instead, the animals bolted out of control again, this time heading out toward the open field. Out in the field was Uncle Simon working with his team of horses. Simon stepped in front of Willie's runaways and got them under control. As they started back to the

Uncle Simon's farmyard, Willie saw Val Krehbiel's car with his worried father inside.

When they finally got home that noon, somewhat later than expected, Willie was delighted to discover that his mother had fixed a meal of "*mak plotzky*," a Swiss-Volhynian dish of poppyseed sauce with dumplings and milk. The next Sunday Uncle Ed and Aunt Kate Kaufman Goering came to visit. (Kate was Alvina's sister.) The big runaway was the topic of conversation. Aunt Kate was impressed that Willie stayed with horses rather than jumping off and possibly getting hurt. She said that her boys (Marvin Goering was Willie's age) would have jumped off. That made Willie proud.

*John, Marie, and Martha Juhnke on the threshing machine, ca. 1934. The horses' names are Bird and Tom.*

Willie had more than one close call with horses and farm machinery. Once was when he was helping his father dredge some dirt with a scraper pulled by horses up a steep incline. Willie was up ahead leading the horses. He slipped and fell to the ground, but the horses kept pulling and walked right over him, careful not to step directly on the young lad. On another occasion Willie was operating the horse-drawn mechanical rake for raking alfalfa. His father was walking behind with a

hedgepost contrived to enable the rake to drag larger loads. Willie got his left foot trapped in the rake lift mechanism and fell off the machine, severely hurting his foot and leaving a permanent scar on his heel. As Willie later reported in his "A Tree Speaks" account: "If his heel had been pulled off his ball playing days would have ended then and there."

Willie was five years old in April 1917 when the United States went to war against Germany. Filled with the war spirit, anti-German patriots across the country attacked and humiliated German-Americans, especially if they were pacifists. One target in McPherson County were the parochial German schools, which were held for a month or more in the spring after the public schools closed. Willie attended the Prairie View German School, two and a half miles east of Elyria. One day, as he later recounted, "a strange car stopped on the road near the school. Two men got out and looked toward the window where I was seated at a double desk. The teacher, Emma Goering, told us to put the German books away and take out the Bibles." The men did not come in to challenge the teacher, but Willie heard that at a nearby German school some men came and told the teacher and students to "go home and not come back."

Willie also heard about wartime rules and rationing. He knew that his family had a large supply of wheat flour in the closet. He worried that "they" might find out about it and punish his father. In 1918 a patriotic mob from McPherson visited Willie's uncle, Otto Juhnke, four miles west of Elyria. The mob left without doing any damage, apparently because Otto's neighbor intervened. Willie learned at an early age that his people were not popular in wartime.

In the fall of 1918, Willie began primary school (and played ball) at the King City district 13 one-room school in the small village of Elyria. To get to school he and his older sisters, Anna and Emma, walked a quarter mile north and one mile

west. When the weather was bad and the roads were muddy, their father, Ernest, took them to school with horse and buggy. Willie was one of twelve pupils in the first grade. Almost fifty pupils in eight grades were crowded into the one room. A wood and coal-burning stove located toward the back heated the room in winter time. The toilets were outside (as at the Juhnke farmstead). In 1922, after Willie had been in school four years, the district razed the one-room school and built a larger two-room school with a full basement. With two teachers, class size was more reasonable.

Willie's first grade teacher was Addie E. Hackenberg, who had graduated from Moundridge high school in 1906. When he started school, Willie did not know the English language as well as he knew the German dialect spoken at home. But his sisters had taught him some of the stories from the school reading books. One time when a pupil in another class was reading

*Willie's siblings playing marbles on the Juhnke farmstead, 1933: Carl, Walt, John, Marie, and Martha.*

one of these story books and stumbled over a difficult word, Willie embarrassed himself and surprised the teacher by blurting out the word from his seat. He still did not know how to read, but he knew that story by memory. Willie's third grade teacher was G. G. Dixon, who later taught at pioneer grade school when Meta Goering attended there. Willie's two surviving report cards, from his third and eighth grades, suggest that he was a good student, but not brilliant. Most grades were about "90". Arnold Stucky, his eighth grade teacher (1925-26) gave him top marks, "Very Satisfactory," in the category of "Recitations." However, Willie's rating in "Conduct" was at the third level, "About Average."

Many years later, Lorene Stucky, one of Willie's classmates in the upper grades, remembered him as "that scrawny little guy" who "always talked so much. Sometimes he would argue about such dumb things. I never knew when he was serious. He would talk pro and con." Willie was a sociable kid. "It didn't take long to learn to know him." Already in grade school he showed the promise of being a good debater.

*Willie Juhnke, age 14.*

Addie Hackenberg was one of the last teachers at King City who was not a Mennonite. The Mennonite settlement was spreading northward and the Mennonites were getting more and more involved in public affairs. By the early 1920s they were a majority on the King City school board, and were able to hire teachers from their own group. Two of Willie's favorite teachers were Helen Hiebert and Arnold Stucky. In 1934, as a junior class student at Bethel

College, Willie wrote a brief "Life Story" in which he paid tribute to "my eighth grade teacher, Arnold Stucky, whose life made a great imprint on me."

Willie Juhnke grew up in an expanding German-American Mennonite subculture which was growing in numbers, economic prosperity, and self confidence. He was also a child of the land. The two very different lines which crossed the Juhnke land—Turkey Creek and Missouri Pacific—formed a parable of intertwined trajectories in Willie Juhnke's life. The Dry Turkey Creek represented the meandering course of nature, calling him to stay at home and tend God's creation. The Missouri Pacific Railroad represented the driving force of human progress, pointing in a straight line toward high purpose and achievement in the world beyond. Each trajectory had its own promises and perils. Together they made for a satisfying and productive life.

## Chapter 2. Meta Goering and her Family

Meta Goering was born on January 16, 1916, in a farm house in southern McPherson county, Kansas. She was the first child of Jonathan (Jonas) J. and Katherine (Katie) Zerger Goering. (See community map, page 8, for location of the Jonas Goering farm.) Katie kept a record book with a large page for Meta and each of her eleven brothers and sisters—from birth to marriage. From this record we know vital information: Meta held her head up at three months; crawled at eight months; walked at a week less than eleven months; spoke words at sixteen months; learned the capital letters of the alphabet from her toy blocks by four years; had the whooping cough at age five and chicken pox at age six; and stayed at home at seven years and five months while her parents went to church to hear Jacob Quiring, a Mennonite evangelist. Age eight was a special time of achievement: Meta began milking cows, taking music lessons, and, on August 18, 1925, had her tonsils removed at Halstead by the famous "horse and buggy doctor," Dr. Arthur E. Hertzler.

*Meta Goering, 1916.*

Meta grew up in a thriving Mennonite community of large families. Her father was one of seven children of Jacob J. and Anna Schrag Goering. Her mother was one of eleven children

of Joshua and Freni Stucky Zerger. The Goerings and Zergers were prolific. By the time she entered Pioneer Grade School in 1922, Meta had sixty-nine first cousins. Eventually she had a total of 105 first cousins, seven of whom were double-cousins. Her Uncle Jake and Aunt Lydia were siblings of Meta's father and mother.

*Anna Schrag Goering Family Reunion, August 24, 1938*
*In 1938, the family of Meta's grandmother, Anna, numbered 174 persons. All but 16 were present at this reunion. Anna is in the center of the seated row. Bill and Meta (holding Jimmy) are right of center in the middle standing row.*

Meta's grandfather, Jacob J. Goering, had died in 1911, three years before Jonas was married. In 1914 Jonas and Katie moved into the Goering home place. Jonas' mother, Anna, for a time stayed with her other sons, but eventually returned to live with Jonas and Katie—for the next thirty-six years. The farm was located in Mound township, a mile and half north and a half mile east of the Hoffnunsfeld-Eden church which was the center of the Mennonite settlement. Three of Jonas's brothers—Christian, Henry, and Jacob—also started farm families nearby. The Goering brothers had farm equipment in common—wheat threshing rig, manure spreader, and others. They also shared farm labor, Sunday visits, and larger family celebrations. It was a somewhat more closely knit extended family than that of Ernest Juhnke and his siblings.

The Jonas Goering farmstead hosted more of the celebrations because that was where Grandma Anna lived. Every year on Grandma's birthday, January 28, all her children and grandchildren arrived to celebrate. The menu was the same every time—bologna, cheese, crackers, and ice cream from town. Aunt Freni was acclaimed for her angel food cake. But Jonas and Katie also made a point of staying in touch with their other brothers and sisters as well, which in most cases meant Sunday visits at least once a year. Meta especially enjoyed going to Uncle Chris and Aunt Adina's place, because their daughter Anna was just Meta's age. "I always had companions wherever I went," remembered Meta. On one occasion when Meta was still quite small, she was visiting at her Uncle Jake and Aunt Lydia's place a half mile to the west when a visiting farmer was badly hurt in an machinery accident. Meta watched wide-eyed as people scurried about until the doctor came and applied the anaesthetic and treatment. At one point the worried little Meta said, "If only the Good Samaritan would come by now!" She had learned in Sunday School that the Good Samaritan knew how to help people who were in trouble.

Meta's grandparents were Swiss-background Mennonites who emigrated from Polish Russia (Volhynia) to Kansas in 1874. The immigrant consciousness of the community was strong. When Meta was a senior at Moundridge High School, she wrote a short autobiography ("Copyright 1931. All rights reserved.") . Her first chapter was "How My Forefathers Came to America." The migration was triggered, Meta reported, by loss of religious freedom. The Mennonites opposed military service and decided to go to America rather than compromise their religious beliefs. In Kansas they "worked hard and saved money so that they were soon comfortably well-to-do and respected people."

Meta had daily contact with the immigrant generation through her grand-mother, Anna Schrag Goering. Anna had

*Grandma Anna Schrag Goering in bedroom (undated)*

been a young married woman, age nineteen, at the time of migration. She could not speak English, so the Jonas and Katie Goering family spoke German at home—actually a "Swiss Volhynian" German dialect. Grandma Anna was a rich source of folk wisdom—sayings and proverbs, medical remedies, and knowledge about plants. She was a midwife, present at the birth of some of Meta's cousins. Once when Meta had a wart on the palm of her hand, Grandma tied a string around it and said a *Sprich-wort* (a saying, probably in Russian, which Meta couldn't understand), and then buried the string in the yard in front of the barn. The wart was gone in a couple of weeks. Grandma and Meta went out to see if they could dig up the string but they couldn't find it. "See," said Grandma, "it has rotted." When skin sores got infected, Grandma applied a paste of crushed and cooked flaxseed. When Meta stepped on a nail, Grandma burned sulphur and sugar to smoke the injury.

Meta learned German sayings from Grandma, seemingly a proverb for every situation of the day. When Grandma swept the room and someone was in the way, she said, "*Was mehr ist wie Dreck, geht von selber weg,"* ("What is more than dirt will go away by itself."). When she was dishing out pieces of pie, and someone in the large family complained that the portions were too small, she would say, "*Was das Klena nicht ehrt, ist das Grosse nicht wert,*" ("Who does not honor the little is not

worthy of a big piece."). If someone didn't get work done until the evening, she said, "*Am Abend ist der Faule fleissig,*" ("In the evening the lazy person gets diligent.") Meta and her siblings all learned habits of hard work from Grandma. Once in Sunday School when the teacher admonished the children, "Obey your mothers and fathers," one of the Goering children spoke up: "And our grandmothers too."

Grandma's knowledge and skills reminded the family of earlier days. She knew how to weave baskets from the switches of the willow tree—and continued to exercise her craftsmanship even after cheaper containers were available to carry garden products or laundry. Meta watched the weaving process carefully:

> She gathered the long branches and put them in the rafters to 'cure.' When the time came to begin she selected certain strong ones for the base and attached long branches to the center extending them upward about three inches apart. After weaving thinner reeds came the time to make the top border and cut it in a sturdy finish.

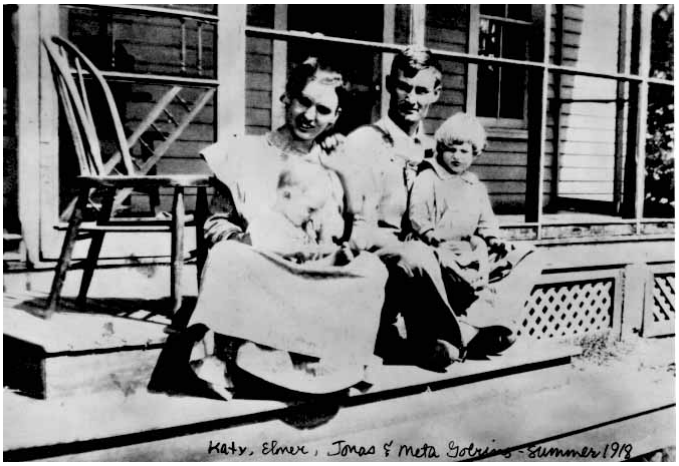
Grandma also remembered old religious customs—such as the "holy kiss." Meta was startled when an old acquaintance of Grandma, a man named Braun from Minnesota, came to the Goering farm and greeted Grandma with a ritual holy kiss.

Grandma Anna expressed a fatalism about life that Meta found strange. When an infant would die, Grandma would thank God. Perhaps her attitude reflected the Anabaptist view that unbaptised innocent children are accepted unconditionally by God. Perhaps Grandma Anna's fatalism also reflected the sufferings of her own life. She had been the victim of an abusive father; at age sixteen her parents had forced her into an unwanted marriage; soon after arriving in America she had lost her two-year-old daughter in a measles epidemic; and she had lost to death two sons (Jacob, age 17; Peter, infant), one daugh-

*Grandma Anna Schrag Goering, in old age*

ter (Freni, age 27) and two husbands (Christian Schrag, 1878; and Jacob J. Goering, 1911). For decades, she expected to die soon. She wouldn't want a new dress because "*es lohnt nicht*" (it doesn't pay). She would bring Meta into her room and show her the petunia and four o'clock flower seeds she had carefully preserved on the dresser, and give instructions on how to plant the seeds next spring after she was gone. But Grandma lived until 1947, when she was ninety-two and Meta had been married ten years.

Meta's mother, Katie Zerger, had quit school after finishing the seventh grade. She was the ninth of twelve children in the Joshua and Freni Stucky Zerger family. (One had died in infancy.) Her father died in 1910 at age fifty-two, when Katie was fifteen years old. The Zerger family was musically gifted. Katie played the organ accompaniment for special programs in the church. Katie married Jonas Goering in 1914, sixteen days before her twentieth birthday. They did not come together for several days after the wedding. The custom in the Mennonite community was for newlyweds to delay consummating the marriage, and some people gossiped when the delay would be just a few days. But the far greater self-denial of Katie's married life was to share living space and parental authority with her mother-in-law, who had lived in that same house before Katie moved in. The arrangement worked reasonably well, at least as Meta remembered it.




*Katie, Elmer, Jonas, and Meta Goering on the steps in front of the screen porch on their farm home, 1918*

Meta had a happy childhood. Her brother Elmer was just one year younger and they got along well in common play and mischief. There was a wood-burning stove in the middle of the living room. On one occasion Meta and Elmer got into the cold ashes and had fun throwing ashes at each other. At another time they got so thoroughly dirty in the mud after a rain that their mother said, "Now I know why people don't have more children." But there were more to come:

| | |
|---|---|
| Meta, 1916 | Reuben, 1926 |
| Elmer, 1917 | Emil, 1927 |
| Mary Ann, 1918 | Marjorie, 1929 |
| Laura, 1920 | Donald, 1931 |
| Harvey, 1922 | Marlo, 1933 |
| Philip, 1924 | Clyde, 1937 |

For a very large part of her life, Katie Goering was pregnant and caring for infants. Once Meta overheard Grandma

Anna complain to her son Jonas about too many children. "Well," said Jonas, "which one do you think we shouldn't have had?" Meta was eleven years old by the time Emil was born. She remembered that Emil was first one for whom she had major child-care responsibilities.

A large family meant a lot of sharing. Once in grade school Meta won a candy bar for memorizing an entire poem, "Out of the rain to shelter himself . . . ." Rather than eating the candy bar herself, she took it home to share with the family, because they always divided special treats so everyone could have some. But this time the candy bar was melted by the time she got home; her generosity produced a mess rather than something sweet for everyone.

*Meta Goering, milking girl, with unidentified friend*

With so much work to be done in the house and garden, Meta never became involved in farm work with horses and machinery in the fields. It seemed there always were enough men and boys around to do the men's work. But the women's sphere in the 1920s and 1930s did include work with animals around the farmstead—feeding chickens and gathering eggs; milking cows, separating the cream, and feeding the calves; slopping the pigs; doing all the special tasks assigned to women on butchering day; and all the work in the garden. Meta learned to milk cows in the milk barn before Jonas had built stanchions that held the cows in place all in a row. Normally there were between five to ten cows to milk. Meta, like all her siblings, at first learned to

milk the mildest cow whose milk came easiest. But it could be a challenge sitting on a T-stool in the manure covered ground floor beside a nervous cow whose wet and dirty tail flapped the milker's face. The Goering family thrived on milk, cream, and cheese that could not pass modern inspection standards.

Each day had its own routine. Monday was always wash day. In Meta's earliest years they used a hand-operated washer and, of course, hung the clothes to dry out of doors. Tuesday was the day for ironing and patching. Katie was a good seamstress who made not only pants and dresses but also underwear for her children. When she was in high school, Meta made cotton dresses and exchanged patterns with her friends. Every day was bread-baking day except Saturdays, when they baked pies and cinnamon rolls. The family consumed huge amounts of home-made bread. On Saturday they always ate "Borscht," a Swiss-Volhynian special soup with red beets, pinto beans, potatoes, onions, and sour cream. Saturday also was the day for boiling small potatoes in their jackets, to be served as hash browns with sauerkraut for the company that was sure to come for the noon meal after church.

Some activities were seasonal, such as the preserving of huge amounts of garden produce. There were twenty to thirty bushels of potatoes stored in a corner of the basement. They canned dozens of quarts of string beans, and preserved some string beans by drying them. When Meta was very young they got apricots from the Grandma Zerger's orchard and made jam by the gallon. Once she ate so many apricots that they said, "Be careful or you'll get stomach ache." Meta said, "I am being careful." Then she ate some more.

One summer when Meta was about nine or ten years old her mother taught her to use the treadle sewing machine. It took some skill to get it to start and stop at the right time. Meta's first project was to sew together the patches for a quilt. Her mother handed her the pieces one by one, and it was hard

to get them straight. Meta did not help with the actual quilting until high school. Her mother had five sisters. Working together they could almost finish a quilt in one day, even when annoyed by the little ones who like to play under the quilts when the aunts were quilting. After the adults returned home for evening chores, Meta and her older sisters sometimes put the finishing touches on the quilts.

Everyone went to church on Sunday morning, where the people sat in sections arranged by age and gender. Only the younger and more innovative families dared to sit together in family groups. Meta sat with her father when her mother had infants to care for. One wintry Sunday morning when the service lasted long Meta (about age two) got thirsty and so restless that her father, Jonas, took her outside and gave her a scolding. The church pump was frozen, and she should not demand water when she couldn't have it. When they came back into the church, Meta managed to say between sobs, "*Das Pump iss gefrorr*," ("The pump is frozen.")

The preachers in church delivered their sermons in high German—not the Swiss-Volhynian dialect. Church sermons and teaching at Hoffnungsfeld-Eden were oriented to telling the stories and the doctrines of the Bible. The teachings reflected the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, which wrestled with the differences between the Old Testament and New Testament. In her earliest Sunday school class the children received small three by five pictures illustrating the Bible stories. At Christmas time there was a special program and a tree with real candles on it. Two men stood by with water buckets in case of a fire. In 1924 the congregation built a new meetinghouse with gothic-arched windows just a half mile west of the Jonas Goering home. Meta, almost age nine, was an angel in the Christmas pageant that year. Ed Stucky ("Krussel") was King Herod—a role which must have fit well, because Meta always mentioned it when reminiscing about the early days.

In 1922, at age six, Meta began attending Pioneer public school, a half-mile east and one mile north of her home. It was a foreign world, because she did not know how to speak English. Her first-grade classmates all had older brothers and sisters in school and had learned some English. But Meta learned fast. Soon she celebrated her emerging mastery of the language—as instructed by her friend in the seat behind her. She raised her hand and got the attention of Mr. Dixon, the teacher, and carefully pronounced, "May - I - Speak?" Mr. Dixon said yes. Then Meta went to her friend's seat and talked with her quietly for a while. Meta did so well that first year that she was promoted to third grade the second year.

Pioneer grade school, like schools across the country, was a place for children of immigrant communities to be Americanized. At the start of every school day, and often after lunch, the students—nearly fifty of them in a one-room school—lined up outside and marched inside in military-style, saying "left, right, left, right . . ." Once inside they said the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag and affirmed that it was "one nation indivisible . . . ." They sang American songs, including patriotic songs from the recent World War, such as "Keep the Home Fires Burning." They learned the names of all the American presidents, as well as other information deemed important for young citizens in a free and democratic society. The very name of their teacher bespoke Americanization. He had grown up a "Duerksen" but had changed his name to make it sound more acceptable in a country that had been so anti-German in the war against Germany in 1917-18. No doubt his pupils were less interested in Mr. Dixon's name change than in his habit of taking a nap on the recitation bench after lunch. Everyone tried to be as quiet as possible so he would sleep a long time.

Meta loved grade school. There were so many happy memories. By the time she was in the upper grades, there were two teachers in separate classrooms. Edith Goering, Meta's

first cousin, taught the lower grades. Once Edith brought her boyfriend, John Miller to school. At the combined morning exercises when the pupils could choose the song to sing, they asked for "Oh, No John"—in which a suitor named John was rejected. Edith and John were married that summer.

On Friday afternoons after second recess they would have

*Pioneer School 8th Grade, 1929.*
*Back: Alvin Schrag (teacher), Edna Krehbiel, Nola Schrag, Adella Goering, Joe Goering. Front: Meta Goering, Esther Stucky, Della Wedel, Frieda Stucky.*

special events such as spelling contests or softball games, sometimes with other schools. Meta wasn't especially good at athletics, so she often was assigned to play in right field where few balls would be hit. One time a fly ball came to her in right field, and she caught it! But it was an embarrassment rather than a triumph, because the other students kept remarking with astonishment, "Meta caught a fly ball!" In spelling, on the other hand, Meta was at the top of the class. In the sixth grade she won the McPherson County spelling bee. Her prize was a trip to the state capital in Topeka—her first train ride. She won the

contest again in the eighth grade. In May all the eighth-graders in the county went to the McPherson City Hall Auditorium for graduation ceremonies. Meta wore a new pretty dress as she marched to the front to get her three dollar spelling bee prize. The Pioneer school eighth graders all marched in the May Day parade in McPherson.

*Meta Goering, age 13.*

One of Meta's fondest school memories was the "literaries"— programs planned and performed by a "Literary Organization" of students in the upper grades. The "Literary" gave students practice in group organization, parliamentary procedure, and public performance. In 1928-9 when Meta was in the eighth grade, the Pioneer "Literary" elected officers three times. A surviving sample of one of the monthly public programs shows that Meta was on the program committee and sang in a girl's quartet. The program listed sixteen events, including a "recitation" by Meta's brother, Harvey Goering; a speech by the upper grade teacher, Alvin Schrag; and closing comments by a "critic," Nola Schrag. Meta also served as vice-president of her eighth grade class. The class "prophecy" predicted that in 1939, ten years later, Meta would be a bookkeeper in Colorado.

On the evening of July 13, 1924 (when Meta was eight years old), a Kansas tornado hit the farms of Jonas, Jacob, and Henry Goering. It was a Sunday, and Jonas' family had hosted

for lunch Dr. Abraham Warkentin of Bethel College. In the afternoon Jonas' older sisters, Anna (Mrs. Peter S. Krehbiel) and Maria (Mrs. Peter P.Kaufman) and their families had come to visit, but had left by seven o'clock when the tornado hit. The family had noticed an oppressive "greenish" atmosphere outside before they went in to eat. When the storm hit they left the table and rushed to the basement. As Meta was going down, she looked out the window as saw a farm shed collapse, "breaking jagged in the middle . . . completely wrecked." Meta sat on the basement bottom steps, while the adults held the little ones tight. Soon it was over and the family went outside. The house was relatively unscathed, except for some lost shingles and some bricks from the chimney. But the windmill was bent over, and some windmill parts were in the pasture. The big barn was off its foundation, the milkhouse roof was lodged against the house porch, and debris was scattered all about. The new Model T Ford had been parked in a shed and, in the strange way of tornadoes, the shed was gone but the car was standing there—battered but still drivable. Meta and Grandma gathered up pieces of wood to make into kindling to start fires in the wood-burning range in the kitchen and the wood-burning heating stove in the living-dining room.

Twelve years later, February 1936, the Goering farm house again narrowly averted disaster. By then the wood stove was gone, but Grandma had a kerosene heater in her room. She had difficulty lighting the heater. Fire broke out in the room and black smoke quickly filled the house. Fortunately, Jonas was on the school board and had a fire extinguisher available that he had bought but not yet taken to the school. Meta remembered standing with her mother outdoors. Katie hysterically called to Jonas to come out and save his life rather than the house. Mary Ann took the car to Uncle Jake Goerings to call the Moundridge fire department. The fire still did some damage, but perhaps not as much as did the firemen who came and chopped through a wall to make sure the fire had not spread. After the fire Jonas remodeled the house, excavating

the basement and adding a north room onto the kitchen, and installing the first toilet upstairs. Meta had bought a new gray coat with gray fluffy "fur." She took the coat to the cleaners to fix the smoke damage.

Meta Goering and her family were integrated into a thriving Mennonite community of "well-to-do and respected people," as she wrote in her 1931 "Autobiography." But the family did not take pride in special achievement. Everything they had was a gift of God, as father Jonas acknowledged every morning in family devotions, after chores and before breakfast. The whole family knelt, facing the backs of their chairs. Jonas' prayer invariably included the quotation from the New Testament, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." It was a family secure in its Mennonite religious identity, and adapting at a manageable pace to the ways of life in American democracy. The family was large and some of the children slept three in a bed, but there was ample nutritious food and educational opportunity for everyone. Improved technologies seemed to make life easier year after year—new automobiles, electric appliances, improved farm machinery, etc. By the time she graduated from Pioneer Grade School and was ready for the bigger world of Moundridge High School, Meta had every reason for confidence. This world was her oyster.

## Chapter 3. Willie and Meta in School, College, Church, Courtship

Meta Goering was in the eighth grade in Pioneer school (1928-29) the first time she became aware that Willie Juhnke was something special. One of her friends had attended a party, maybe it was at the "Dicke" ("Fat") Pete Stucky place, and reported that Willie had entertained the crowd with crazy stories. Meta thought Willie would be an interesting person to meet. The next year (1929-30) Meta was a freshman student at Moundridge High School where Willie was a senior. They did not have their first date until Meta was a junior. By then Willie had completed two years at McPherson College and was teaching at King City grade school, where he had attended as a child.

Both Willie and Meta were baptized at age fifteen in the Eden Mennonite Church—June 12, 1927 and June 14, 1931. Willie's parents were members at Hoffnungsfeld, but troubles in that congregation led them to take their family to worship with the Eden congregation for about ten years (ca. 1924-33). Their children, however, joined the Eden congregation: Anna and Emma (1925), Willie (1927), Alvina (1929), and Elsie (1931). Anna died October 21, 1929, and was buried in the Eden cemetery. When their troubles with Hoffnungsfeld were resolved, Ernest and Alvina Juhnke returned to that congregation and took their younger children along. But Willie remained a member at Eden.

Willie's baptism class included twenty-two members. They had all grown up in the church and were about the same age. The catechism class—in the German language—was held every two years. The instruction was traditional, mostly memorization of questions and answers from the old "Elbing catechism" first published in Prussia in 1778. To be baptized at Eden was not a testimony to crisis conversion, but rather

marked an event of Christian growth and church membership. Elder C. J. Goering (Meta's great uncle) baptized them by pouring a small amount of water on their heads as they knelt, after asking them a number of questions (in German) about their confession of sin and belief in salvation through Christ. It was a moment of commitment which Willie took seriously. Meta was baptized four years later, June 14, 1931, in the same way with a class of twenty-four candidates. That class included Willie's sister, Elsie.

Both Willie and Meta had good high school experiences at Moundridge. Bill got mostly B's and C's in high school. His favorite courses were history, geometry, Latin and civics. Meta excelled academically in all classes, including Latin and Bible. She participated in debate, dramatics and choir ("glee club"). Her transcript of yearly grades, a total of twenty-four grades, had straight A's, except for a B and B+ in physical education, one B in glee club, and an A- in typewriting. She was valedictorian of her senior class—and had a date with Willie for the graduation exercises.

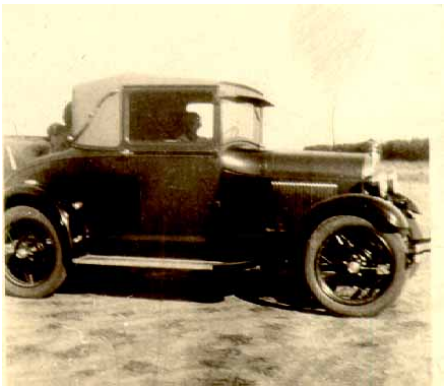
Moundridge was a thriving town of about 750 people in the 1920s when Willie and Meta attended high school there. In 1927 the school built four additional classrooms and a gymnasium-auditorium. The high school principal was I. T. Dirks, a Mennonite who had been a conscientious objector in World War I. For the Goering and Juhnke families, transportation to high school was something of a challenge. From farm to school for the Juhnkes was ten and a half miles and for the Goerings five and a half miles. (They drove along section lines. Highway #81 along the Missouri-Pacific tracks between Moundridge and McPherson had not yet been constructed.) For two years, Willie boarded during the week with his uncle and aunt, Chris S. and Mary Kaufman Goering, who lived just west of Moundridge. Aunt Mary was a sister to Willie's mother Alvina. Willie appreciated the extended family hospitality, but found Uncle Chris somewhat austere. At mealtime there was a honeypot in

front of Uncle Chris's plate, and no one else ever seemed to dare to ask for honey.

In November of 1926, during Willie's freshman year and while he was staying at the Chris Goering home, Willie's sister Emma sent him a short letter—one of the few scraps of primary historical documentation surviving from those years. Emma, age twenty-one, had married Joe Stucky five months earlier and was visiting her parents and helping with child care while the men gathered fuel "in the woods" for the winter. Their younger brother, John, was three and a half years old. Emma wrote, "Yesterday he talked English nearly all day." That was evidence that the younger siblings were learning English much earlier than Emma, Anna and Willie had. Emma also wrote that John had learned a little poem—an apparently proud achievement in 1926 but also evidence of grass roots racism that is embarrassing for later generations:

> Teacher, teacher, don't whip me.
> Whip that nigger behind the tree.
> He stole money and I stole honey.
> Teacher, teacher, isn't that funny?

Emma ended her letter with an admonition for Willie. "Better be a good student. . . . Have a good time at the Lyceum course."



*Model A Ford with Rumble Seat, parked at church, 1930*

For his senior year in Moundridge, Willie's father helped him to purchase a Model A Ford with a rumble

seat—from Roth Ford Motor Company. He took turns driving to school with his cousin, Willard Kaufman, who also lived near Elyria. The Model A gave Willie social status and experience with engine and machine repair. It also provided transportation to high school and college and was good for double dating.

Willie and Meta's first date was to the party that followed one of the combined youth Christian Endeavor (CE) meetings of Eden and Hoffnungsfeld-Eden congregations. Meta was on the program for a duet with Erna Schrag. Meta had gone to CE with her cousins, Erwin and Anna Goering. The family commented about her not going home with her cousins, as her mother said, "on account of a Juhnke!" The Juhnkes were still outsiders at Eden, probably in part because the Juhnkes had not been in the Swiss-Volhynian immigration of 1874. Perhaps the tensions between the Hoffnungfeld and Eden congregations had something to do with Katie Goering's comment about the Juhnkes.

It wasn't Meta's first date. The Sunday evening parties, held at a different farm home each week, were a way for young people to get acquainted in an informal group context. In winter time the parties were indoors and the young people gathered around the piano to sing songs or sit around the room and play games such as "Wink 'em" and "Opinion." The Jonas Goerings were not able to host indoor parties because the young people were too noisy for Grandma Anna. In summertime the party activities included outdoor folk games and dances such as "Jimmie Crack Corn," and "Turn the Whisky Bottle Over." The informal dating pattern allowed young people to go with many different partners. Meta had dates with twenty-one different fellows at these after-CE parties. She kept a record of her dates in a notebook diary. Some typical entries:

- Jan. 8, 1932: I had a date with Ed Krussel. Melven & Leona G, Bill J. & Erlene were along. After church we upset! No one got hurt except the car. Party at Tillies.
- Sept. 11, 1932: Went from church & CE to the party at Gus Krehbiels with Bill Juhnke in company with Ray J. & Anna Krehbiel. Had a keen time.
- Feb. 14, 1933: I saw the show "Hello Everybody" with Kate Smith with Bill Junhke. (sic) Mose & Ella were along. Swell time!
- March 31, 1933: I went for a ride with Bill Junhke. (sic) Jess & Leona were along. I have a future date with Bill in 10 years, March 31, 1943. Ha. Ha.
- May 17, 1933: After our Senior picnic I was going to go to the May Day with Bill. On the way there it rained & hailed so we stopped at "Scotts". Ruth & Carl were along. Quite a thrilling & exciting experience.
- August 1, 1933: Mose took me to the show "Peg 'O My Heart." Joe & Ella and Jess & Verna Howdy were along. Keen show.

Some conservative church members thought the parties were too raucous or worldly. Especially the talk of folk dancing was questionable. Meta's parents did not oppose the parties, but they did not allow her to skip Christian Endeavor meeting. On April 2, 1933 she had a Sunday evening date with Ed Krehbiel who took her to see a movie. They didn't go to church at all. When Meta got home her father gave her a very stern scolding. "I got bawled out terribly," she wrote in her diary.

At times Meta found a way to take the initiative with Bill. In 1932 she attended a "literary" meeting in Peaceful school where Bill was one of three featured speakers on the Kansas gubernatorial campaign. The three candidates for governor that year were Alfred M. Landon, Republican; Harry Woodring, Democrat; and John R. Brinkley, Independent. Bill was assigned to speak for Brinkley , the famous "Goat Gland Doctor" who had become a millionaire with his operation to restore

male virility by transplanting goat gonads into the scrotum of impotent males. When the state revoked his license to practice medicine, Brinkley decided to run for governor—in both 1930 and 1932. His campaigns were helped by the great economic depression which discredited the two main parties. Bill called Brinkley a "great patriot" who opposed the "corrupt machines" of the Republican and Democrat parties. Brinkley stood for "equality and justice to the common man through government clean-out and the rule of the people." After the program Meta went up to Bill and asked him, "You don't <u>really</u> think that Brinkley has a chance, do you?" "Sure," said Bill. "I'll make you a bet," said Meta. "If Brinkley wins, I'll take you to a movie. If he loses, <u>you</u> pay." The bet was on. Brinkley lost to Alf Landon, who got into position for the Republican presidential candidacy in 1936. Bill and Meta had a great time at a movie starring Shirley Temple, a double date in Newton. Willie picked up the tab.

Willie's enrollment in McPherson College in the fall of 1930 was something of a culture shock. He commuted to college from home, and stuck close to his neighbor buddies who were also at McPherson, Milo Stucky and John W. Goering. His enrollment advisor startled him by suggesting that "Willie" was not a respectable name, and should be replaced by "William"—if in fact that was his real name. Willie had never been called by any other name. He asked his parents and learned that his official name was indeed William Ernest Juhnke. For many years his choice of name was not consistent, although it eventually came down to William for official purposes; Bill among his friends; and Willie at home. As late at 1937, however, the Eden Mennonite Church record book recorded his name as "Willie E. Juhnke" for Bill and Meta's marriage.

McPherson College was sponsored by the Church of the Brethren, a pacifist denomination of German Pietist-Anabaptist background. Bill's grades at McPherson College were those of an average student. All were B's and C's, except for an A in

psychology and a D in English literature. Bill's most influential teacher at McPherson was Maurice Hess, the speech and debate teacher. Hess was a member of the conservative Old Order River Brethren. During World War I he had been an absolute conscientious objector and had been court-martialed and imprisoned for his convictions. Hess wore a beard and was considered eccentric by some people, but he was one of the great teachers at McPherson College. Later when Bill applied for admission to Bethel College, he listed Hess as one of his references.

*Bill Juhnke, King City schoolteacher, on farm by windmill*

After his two years at McPherson College, Bill taught the first four grades for two years at King City primary school (1932-34). His father, Ernest, and his uncle, Simon Stucky, were on the school board that hired him. Bill had a good time with his teaching colleague (and second cousin), Milo Stucky. Bill's starting salary was sixty dollars a month. This was a good income during the national economic depression, especially as Bill lived with his parents at the Juhnke farmstead, a mile east and a quarter south of Elyria. He could trade work on the farm for room and board, and was able to save money to continue his college education.

Bill was active in "Literary" and drama events at King City and neighboring schools. He had a lead role in the rural comedy "Yimmie Yonson's Yob," produced by the King City Literary Society. His gift of gab and improvisation helped at

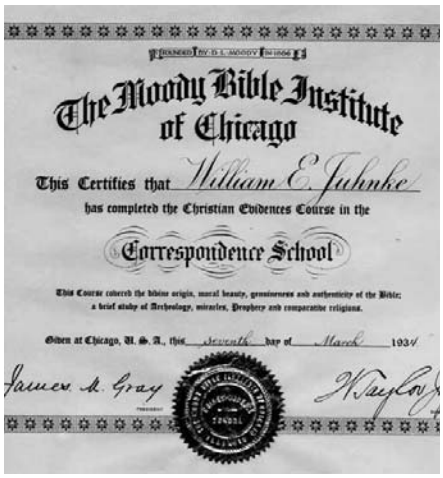
one point in the public performance when cast members forgot their lines. He ad libbed for a while and then, needing to get off the stage, looked out the window, said, "Oh, the hogs are getting out," and made his exit! The drama, written by Lillian Mortimer and published in 1923, included racist lines that were acceptable in that era. To refer to an unexplained problem one spoke of "a nigger in the woodpile."

In the summer of 1933 Bill got a ride on the Moundridge butter truck with his cousin, Marvin Goering, to the World's Fair in Chicago. There he bought a purple banner to remember the occasion, and a special gift to Meta later. He reported on the World's Fair at a meeting of the Pioneer Literary Society, Meta's home school.

Bill typed out outlines for his speeches at school literary programs. For a program at Elyria on November 29, 1933, on the topic of human progress, he prepared a graph showing the "steady upward trend" in the progress of man. He saw "wars, pestilences, etc." as "temporary setbacks and positive neutralizers." He examined President Roosevelt's New Deal National Recovery Administration and evaluated capitalist and corporatist economic systems. His conclusion: "We need an intelligent interest in public affairs."

At a McPherson County Christian Endeavor rally in Moundridge, December 1934, Bill spoke on "Youth and Citizenship in a New Age." He said, "The challenge to youth is a new citizenship, a world citizenship. For the youth of the world no longer believes that a negro is inferior to the white, than an Italian is a 'wop' and a Jap has no chance to get to heaven. While politically the world remains many, industrially and culturally the peoples of the world are rapidly becoming one."

While teaching at King City, Bill completed a correspondence course on "Christian Evidences" from the Moody Bible


The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago

This Certifies that William E. Juhnke

has completed the Christian Evidences Course in the

Correspondence School

This Course covers the divine origin, moral beauty, genuineness and authenticity of the Bible; a brief study of Archeology, miracles, Prophecy and comparative religions.

Given at Chicago, U. S. A., this Seventh day of March 1934

James M. Gray

*Course certificate, Moody Bible Institute, 1934*

Institute of Chicago. The course certificate, dated March 7, 1934, claimed that the course covered "the divine origin, moral beauty, genuineness and authenticity of the Bible; a brief study of Archeology, miracles, Prophecy and comparative religions." Bill put the Moody certificate in a glass-covered frame, suggesting his interest in educational certification. Moody Bible Institute represented a nondenominational, conservative, and fundamentalist religious influence. At the same time, Bill was being pulled in a progressive Mennonite denominational direction.

*Just before departure of Bill, Ernest and Alvina for General Conference in Upland. Bill shaking hands with Walt; Marie and Martha in front of parents.*

August 1935 was the diamond jubilee meeting of the General Conference Mennonite Church denomination in Upland, California. The Hoffnungsfeld congregation chose Ernest and Alvina Juhnke as delegates to that meeting, perhaps as a gesture of reconciliation. Bill agreed to drive the family car (an

Essex) to Upland. It was Ernest and Alvina's only major trip out of state, an exciting event recorded in photographs for the family album.

At the Upland conference Bill received a vision for the wider history and ministries of the Mennonite denomination. He was inspired by the preaching of Ed G. Kaufman, Bethel College president, especially on the peace issue. Viewing the conference exhibits, Bill wrote into his notebook extensive information on the history of the General Conference Mennonite Church. He went to the conference bookstore and said he was interested in a "liberal Bible commentary." The bookstore manager, retired missionary Peter J. Wiens, said "I've got just the thing for you," and brought out *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture* by Charles Gore, Henry Leighton Goudge, and Alfred Guillaume (Macmillan 1929). Bill paid $3.25 for the dense 743-page book. The three authors, who were British Anglicans, used modern historical and literary methods to understand scripture in a wide context. Bill returned to Kansas armed both with new inspiration for church work and with a modern tool which would enrich his understanding and teaching of Sunday School classes for the coming decades. He did not follow up his contact with Moody Bible Institute.

Meta's first year as a student at Bethel College was Bill's second year of teaching at King City. She lived in "Irish Castle," in the ladies' dormitory built with funds from the famous Irish-American industrialist and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie Hall was ahead of its time in its format of separate modules (rather than long hallways) which encouraged small group friendships. Many of Meta's Irish Castle mod mates became friends for life. The modules all had separate access to the outside, which made it easy for students to violate the rules about closing time. After one occasion when Meta and Bill had stayed out too late, she later wrote to him, "I sneaked into the Dorm Sunday nite at about 12:30 after a hilarious time

with the boy friend. The next morn I checked Ella & me in for Monday morn."

One of Meta's most interesting classes at Bethel was psychology under Dr. Schellenberg. In one letter she wrote to Bill, "In our today's Psychology lecture, Dr. Schellenberg talked of daydreams, free association, etc. He said that all our dreams are wish fulfillments either of the conquering hero or suffering hero type. All of our daydreams, though they generally have a different start culminate upon one main image and recross it time and again." Meta went on to imply that Bill was her main image.

Meta was still dating other fellows that year, but Bill was beginning to get possessive. Early in the school year Meta and her friend Gustie Plett went over to the boys dormitory and played cards with Vernard Yost and Harold Schmidt. Later she heard by the grapevine that Bill was upset and had disgustedly told someone that if he wanted Meta he could have her. Meta's grades in college were good—mostly A's—but not as consistent as in high school. She did best in the strictly academic subjects, but not quite as well in physical training, dramatics, costume design, public school art, and methods and principles of teaching. She did her practice teaching in the Newton school system.

In the summer of 1934, Ed. G. Kaufman, Bethel College president, personally visited Bill to convince him to attend Bethel rather than return to McPherson College. "McPherson has a better football team," Bill told Kaufman. "For the future," Kaufman replied, "McPherson can have the brawn. Bethel will have the brains!" Bill was impressed. Although he enjoyed sports, he had never excelled in competitive athletics. He was more interested in ideas, especially religion, politics and history. Kaufman also personally recruited Raymond Juhnke, Bill's cousin. Bill and Ray were roommates at the Leisy Home

dormitory on twenty-fourth street, the south edge of the Bethel campus.

Bill and Meta saw each other a lot more as students at Bethel in 1934-5. In later years they could not remember just when they had gotten engaged. There was no engagement ring. Bill gave Meta a wrist watch during her sophomore year at Bethel, which he apparently considered something of an engagement present. But Bill didn't want to commit to a marriage date until his vocational plans were more clear.

*Bill Juhnke at Bethel*

Bill's two years at Bethel were rich in intellectual discovery. Here he found a sense of direction for his life. His favorite teachers were excellent scholars who had PhD degrees from top universities: Peter S.Goertz in philosophy (Yale University); Ed. G. Kaufman in comparative religion (University of Chicago), and E. L. Harshbarger (Ohio State University). These men, and others at Bethel, were deeply committed to the Mennonite church as well as to the ideal of liberal arts education. Bill found it exciting to learn from former missionaries (Goertz and Kaufman) that there were truths to be found in non-Christian religions. As a history major, Bill took the most courses from Harshbarger, a

*Bill Juhnke at Bethel*

master teacher who, as Bill said, "had everything worked out." Harshbarger was well informed on current political affairs, and had a grand civic vision for the relevance of the Mennonite teachings of peace on the national and world scene.

Bill's grades at Bethel still were not as high as Meta's, but significantly improved over his past record. On weekends in the fall and spring he returned home to help with the farm work. On campus he threw himself into extracurricular activities. He was chosen to be president of the student council and editor of the school paper, the *Collegian*. For a time he was both student council president and *Collegian* editor. In the fall of 1935 he applied for exemption from the physical training requirement because, as he argued, he got plenty of exercise on weekends at the Juhnke farm, plus having to walk to downtown Newton twice a week (at least) "carrying the Collegian Material to the Kansan office." The school paper in those years was produced as a page in the town newspaper. This experience in journalism gave Bill the skills and knowledge when he founded a newspaper for Mennonite youth, the *Western District Tidings.*

Graduation requirements at Bethel in 1936 included written and oral comprehensive examinations in the major field and in the general liberal arts. The written evaluations by Bethel professors in Bill's file show his strengths and limitations: Dr. J. E. Linscheid, English professor, wrote: "Has a tendency to attempt soaring phrases and involved sentences. This sometimes hinders clarity of thought. . . . I believe his religion is rational rather than sentimental. . .

*Bill Juhnke at Bethel*

This man is a scholar and has an intense interest essential to scholarly work." Dr. E. L. Harshbarger, history professor, wrote: "Introduced much irrelevant matter. The facts in the main were accurate in his chosen field. . . . Has some trouble in organizing and assimilating pertinent materials, but is a good worker and has learned something about research." But the overall committee evaluation was quite positive: "Recommended for teaching and graduate work with high distinction on basis of this examination." Bill was also nominated for Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities.

During Bill's senior year at Bethel (1935-6), Meta was teaching at Greenfield, a rural one-room primary school in Marion County. Greenfield was about twelve miles north of Bethel College. Meta's salary was $56 per month, $15 of which went to the Frey family for room and board. Her father said she could spend what she needed for her expenses, but that she should give the rest to the family until she was age twenty-one. Her "expenses" included a new coat, a suitcase, and a two-year subscription for *American Magazine*. Meta's "debt" for college expenses was about $400. Jonas Goering wanted all his children to be able to study at least two years at Bethel College. Meta's brother and sister, Elmer and Mary Ann, were at Bethel that year.

Meta was responsible for everything at Greenfield—teaching all subjects to all students (including sewing, woodworking, and "German school"), starting the fire in the stove on cold mornings, organizing literary programs, directing a girls' choir, and playing basketball with the pupils at recess time. She felt a sense of failure when the school-community play she had planned did not materialize because the cast members did not show up for practice. She planned a cake walk or pie social to substitute for the play. She borrowed some ideas from Bill's classroom "plan book" from his teaching at King City. "When I look at your plan book I can tell that you were a good teacher," she wrote to him.

Meta's letters to Bill during her year of teaching at Greenfield suggest that she was not altogether happy with her situation. By late October she was pleased to attend an education conference in Wichita in order to "get away from here for a little bit anyway." She had some discipline problems with the children. In one letter she wrote to Bill that "the community as a whole has not grasped my aim to make the school 'child centered.'" Nevertheless she seemed to get along reasonably well. She joked about her role as a "Swiss" among the "Low Dutch": "Instead of changing their low dutch pronunciation or improving it, it seems I'm acquiring their dialect." Meta hoped to be hired back for a second year of teaching at Greenfield, but the school board decided to hire someone else. From Meta's viewpoint, the position was something of a political football, with a primary prize being the privilege of providing room and board for the teacher. Fifteen dollars per month meant a lot for a farm family in the midst of the Great Depression.

The letters that Meta and Bill wrote to each other show that she was the better writer. She expressed her ideas more clearly and her emotions more easily. In one letter, apparently after they had quarreled, she wrote, "I'm sorry I was provoked and sorry I told you so. Will you forgive me? Please do. Knowing you, I probably shouldn't send this but that's the way I feel. I'm still in love with you and want you to come see me again." (March 16, 1936) For his part, Bill seemed incapable of expressing affection without turning it into a riddle or joke. His typical tactic was to approach the subject of love obliquely and then suddenly back away and turn a somersault. For example, on August 27, 1934, he wrote about Meta's picture on his desk—ending with a quotation from Patrick Henry's famous line in the Virginia House of Burgesses:

> It's really the cheery smile and the general gladdening appearance that this girl before me presents that makes me scribble to her now. . . . Another thing that I might mention is the sweet time that I had with her just a few

> moments ago. . . . Please don't consider this a new love proposal, I don't want that. I want a continuation of our old joint serenity of souls. If this is treason make the most of it. Affectionately yours, William E. Juhnke.

For another example, on November 8, 1935, writing from Bethel College, Bill wrote,

> You may have heard things about me, which if not properly related may lead to rather erroneous conclusions. I am not particularly in love with anybody else, even if I take them to a show. At least you must agree that is quite possible, do you not? Neither am I particularly in love with somebody, if the other party (or plural) keeps chasing after me all the time. This is quite possible too, is it not? You see I took Andy Douglass to a 10 cent show last night and Dr. Doell [biology professor] has a pet dog that keeps following me every-place I want to go.

When Bill followed Meta's lead in signing his letters with "love," he wrote a P.S., "I'm stealing your stuff." Occasionally Meta's letters included comments about current political events and religious ideas—such as the Supreme Court declaring the Agricultural Adjustment Act unconstitutional, and the doctrinal orthodoxy of Kagawa, a Japanese Christian leader.

In Bill's senior year at Bethel President Kaufman urged him to go on to seminary and graduate school. Kaufman arranged for Bill to get a scholarship at Colgate Seminary in New York state. A three-year program for a Bachelor of Divinity Degree, possibly to be followed by four or five more years in a Ph.D. program was a daunting prospect. Meta was more than a little worried. In a revealing letter of February 17, 1936, she wrote to Bill,

> I surely don't want to send you to New York in these troublous times for 8 years—just think of it, by that time I

> will have lost my charm and you your attraction for me. I hate to think of giving up all hope. However three years is 5 years less than 8 years and I would say that you should go if you think or feel that it is God's will that you should. Preparation for real service is worth a lot of sacrifice and I'm willing to share, if that is possible. I do want you to rise to the heights you are capable of reaching. Perhaps I could've told you this sometime? You may want to save it for reference or to read to your mother. It expresses my attitude at the present moment to something I don't even know so very much about.

Bill decided to turn down the seminary scholarship. He felt a greater call to public school teaching than to the pastoral ministry. When he was offered a teaching position as history and social studies teacher at Moundridge High School, he decided to accept. It was a fateful decision. Bill and Meta would spend the rest of their lives, except for trips and summer school, within a twenty mile radius of home in south central Kansas. They decided to get married the following June (1937). Each of them lived with their parents in the year before the wedding. It was a time of joyful expectation.

The wedding was on Friday afternoon, June 4, 1937. Bill had a new white suit and Meta had a beautiful new wedding dress. Elder C. J. Goering, Meta's great uncle presided over the exchange of vows in the German language. Three additional pastors also participated in the ceremony. Reverend John C. Kaufman gave a sermon in German, and Dr. Ed G. Kaufman presented one in English. Before the wedding, as the bridal couple was consulting with the pastors, Elder Goering saw out of the window that another Mennonite pastor, H. T. Neufeld had arrived. Goering said he wanted to invite Neufeld to be part of the ceremony. Meta said she didn't want that. Neufeld had come only because his son Abe was engaged to marry Bill's sister, Alvina. But nothing could stop Goering from go-

ing ahead with the ritual of pastoral hospitality. Neufeld read an opening scripture passage.

*Bill and Meta Juhnke*
*June 4, 1937*

Attention to scripture at the wedding showed how important the Bible was in this community. Meta's father, Jonas, noted in his diary the scripture texts of three of the pastors: H. T. Neufeld's text was Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd . . . ; John C. Kaufman's text was Proverbs 10:23, "The blessing of the Lord gives wealth . . . ; Edmund G. Kaufman's text was Joshua 24: 14-15, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." However, the Bible quotation from the ceremony which Meta remembered and quoted most often was one that E. G. Kaufman included in his meditation—Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" There may have been a hint of patriarchy in Kaufman's remarks. But Meta knew the counsel could cut both ways. Not only was she supposed to agree with Bill, but she could sometimes remind Bill that he was to agree with her.

Bill and Meta walked down the aisle together. No one gave the bride away. There was no wedding cake. The refreshments were bread and meat for sandwiches, canned peaches and cookies. Afterwards Bill's mother said, "*Es war alles ziemlich gut, aber der Bill hat e bissle laut 'Ja' gesagt.*"

("It was all quite good, except that Bill said 'Ja' a little loudly.") Bill explained that he had a frog in his throat and he had to push out the sound forcefully. His friends teased him that he seemed too eager! The wedding gifts included ninety-eight water glasses and a surplus of casserole dishes. The bride and groom's parents split the wedding costs, and the relatives provided the food. Bill and Meta spent their first night at the Goering home, but then they moved to the Juhnke farmstead which was to become their own.

Meta's dowry from her home included a cedar chest made by her brother Elmer, some livestock (a cow and calf; two dozen chickens; two small pigs), an old oil stove, bedding and linens, and some food (jars of canned fruit and half a butchered hog). Ernest and Alvina Juhnke in 1936 had bought the William P. Pack farm located a mile north and three fourths mile west of Moundridge. They built a new house there for their family, so their oldest son could start his own farming operation on the home place. It wasn't their last such move. Ernest Juhnke provided a farm with farm buildings for each of his four sons.

Thus it was that Bill and Meta Juhnke began their married life on familiar ground, surrounded by supportive family and community.

## Chapter 4. Bill and Meta's Early Married Life, 1937-1944

During the first seven years of their married life, 1937 to 1944, Bill and Meta Juhnke labored on the family farm and at school. Bill taught social studies at Moundridge High School until 1942, and at Buhler High School until 1944. Meta was a homemaker, giving birth to James Carlton (May 14, 1938) and Janet Ann (November 26, 1942). She also cultivated the farm garden, milked cows, raised and butchered chickens, and did other farm work. Meta and Bill attended the Eden Mennonite Church and were both active in church activities. They followed closely the great public event of their time—World War II. The war began in Europe in September 1939, and the United States entered in December 1941, after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. The war eventually dictated Bill's move in 1944 away from high school teaching to full time farming.

Bill and Meta did not begin married life in privacy. After the evening wedding dinner and celebration at the Juhnke farm near Elyria, they spent their first night together in the home of Meta's parents, Jonas and Katie Goering. Then they moved to Juhnke farm home. Bill's parents, Ernest and Alvina, planned to move their family to a new farm home near Moundridge, but that house (the basement portion) was not ready for another three months—August, 1937. So Bill and Meta moved into one room—the northwest upstairs room—in a house fully occupied by Bill's parents and six younger siblings: Elsie, Carl, Walter, John, Marie and Martha. Bill had lived in this house since he was born (except for his last two years in college), so this was no great change for him. His mother didn't even have to put another plate at the table. Meta replaced Bill's sister Alvina, who had married Abe Neufeld and moved with him to Enid, Oklahoma.

Not long after the larger Juhnke family moved out in August, Abe and Alvina moved in. Their living arrangements in Oklahoma had not been adequate, so they moved to the Juhnke farm home near Elyria. For about a year, the two young couples lived together—dividing the house space and sharing facilities. If there were any tensions in these close living arrangements, Bill and Meta did not report them in oral interviews years later. It was a happy time. Meta's choice was to live on the south half of the house, because that side had the running water and toilet. Abe and Alvina had an icebox on their side, where Meta kept some milk for her first baby in May 1938. After both couples had their first children (Gerald Neufeld and James Juhnke were born just a week apart on May 7 and 14), the Neufelds moved out to a small house in Elyria that Ernest Juhnke had bought for them to use.

*Jimmy Juhnke pulling wagon with Gerald Neufeld in front of the Juhnke farm house*

Bill and Meta did not run anything like an independent farm operation until 1944 or 1945. Bill did not have his own farm tractor or other machinery. He depended upon equipment from his father and father-in-law for plowing, cultivating, and harvesting. Bill and Meta's wheat field, south of the house, was harvested after the other fields were finished. Ernest

Juhnke remained the official owner of the land until 1940, according to the abstract of title. Then Bill "bought" the Juhnke land on section 26 for $3,500. (See the map in Chapter 1, page 8.) Ernest planned to give each son eighty acres, and in some cases, to sell them additional land when possible. Bill eventually bought two forty acre plots from his father. Some of his siblings thought that Bill, the favored oldest son, got special advantages.

Bill and Meta did have a relatively small number of farm animals—cows, chickens, and pigs—for a regular supply of milk, cream, eggs, and pork for eating. Because they moved to Lawrence, Kansas, in the summers of 1938, 1939, and 1940, they had someone else (apparently Abe and Alvina Neufeld came from Elyria some of the time) to look after the livestock while Bill worked on the master's degree at Kansas University. "We lived very prudently at first," Meta remembered. "We bought nine dollars of groceries in a month." In those days the Moundridge grocery stores advertised the following prices: beef roast for $.17/lb.; hamburger for $.15/lb; 48 lb. flour for $1.69; 10 lb. sugar for $.49; 10 lb. salt for $.19; bananas for $.06/lb; and watermelon for $.02 ½ lb.

*Meta with a hoe in the garden*

The twice-daily chores generally kept Bill and Meta close to home. Meta milked the cows and fed the livestock when Bill was away at high school debate tournaments and church conferences or retreats. Meta's domestic sphere also included a substantial vegetable garden. In early spring they planted potatoes, lettuce,

beans, peas, and other vegetables. The garden also included poppy for the Swiss-Volhynian delicacies of poppy seed rolls, poppy seed cake, and *mak plotzky*. Spring rains helped produce a good crop of vegetables before the weather turned hot in June and July. Meta and her mother canned a lot of green beans. In the summer of 1940 when Meta and Bill were in Lawrence, Katie Goering reported that she had picked some beans in the Juhnke garden. She canned over a hundred quarts of beans that summer, including some for Meta and Bill.

There was much social visiting in those early years. Meta spent many days at her parents' home. The Goering farmstead was just off of Bill's route to Moundridge High School, so it was convenient for him to drop off Meta (and Jimmy, after he came along) in the morning and pick her up in the afternoon. Sunday afternoons were times for visiting. An "Elyria News" section in the *Moundridge Journal* chronicled some of the visits. For example, from the September 16, 1937 issue: "Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Juhnke and family were Sunday dinner guests at the Wm. Juhnke home." (If the whole family came, Meta served ten people at this dinner.) "Mrs. Wm. Juhnke spent Monday at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jonas J. Goering." In the November 17, 1938 issue: "Mr. and Mrs. Herman Schrag and family, and Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Juhnke and son were Sunday supper guests at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Abe Neufeld." And May 2, 1940: "The Elyria Dramatics Club was entertained at a dinner at the Dave T. Stucky home Wednesday evening. Guests included Mr. and Mrs. Bill Juhnke and son, . . . ." Occasionally Meta also served meals related to Bill's school activities. The *Moundridge Journal* for May 8, 1941 reported (without mentioning Meta or giving her any credit): "The Hi-Y cabinet and sponsor, Mr. Balzer, enjoyed a big supper at the home of Mr. Juhnke last Friday evening."

Meta's church activities included participation in the ladies aid society at the Eden Church—the Dorcas Society. She

was a member of the "Moundridge Study Club," a ladies literary society. In November 1938 the topic of the club's program was, "There is a woman at the bottom of all good things." Meta was one of six women who spoke on "housekeeping" in different countries. The newspaper report said, "Mrs. Wm. Juhnke spoke on 'England.'"

Meta gave birth to James Carlton Juhnke in the Bethel Deaconness Hospital in Newton on May 14, 1938. Bill took Meta to Newton in Abe and Alvina Neufeld's car, because the Juhnke car had broken down and was being repaired. According to the Moundridge High School section ("Wildcat's Claw") of the *Moundridge Journal*, Bill was buoyed by the birth of a son: "Young 'Jimmy' Juhnke is the reason for proud papa Bill Juhnke's general good feeling for everyone. He struts around and is the traditionally proud young father all over again." One of Bill's freshman classes, "after a long and verbally artistic oration," gave Bill a set of different sized safety pins. Meta did not have a refrigerator in her kitchen to preserve milk for her baby. But that was no problem, she reported, because "I turned out to be a Hereford." (That is, she produced a lot of milk.)

Jimmy was a quite placid baby. Meta later said that when the other babies were more fussy in the nursery room at the Eden church, she thought it was because she just was naturally a better mother. Later she learned differently. One unpleasant event at church was the time that she took her baby along with her to the outside toilet—and accidentally dropped her purse through the hole and into the sewage. She got her father, Jonas, to retrieve the purse. In later years, Jimmy said he was glad that it was the purse and not the baby that fell through the hole!

Bill enjoyed teaching social studies at Moundridge High School. There were about 200 to 240 students in the school, including Bill's and Meta's younger brothers and sisters, as well as other relatives. Curt Siemens, the superintendent,

claimed in a recruiting letter of August 1936 (the time that Bill began teaching there) that the school "ranks with the best in the state. Vocational Agriculture, Home Economics, Business Courses, and Bible are among its leading courses in a building that is now in the best of condition." Although it was a public school, religious and biblical language came naturally. "Be wise and do not bury your talents as did the wicked and slothful servant," wrote Siemens in an effort to convince John Juhnke, an eighth grade graduate, to attend high school. The school not only offered Bible classes, but held chapel services each Wednesday.

The weekly *Moundridge Journal* carried a section with news and gossip about high school activities, written by students and titled "Wildcat's Claw" or "Wildcat Scratch Pad." Bill Juhnke's name appeared in this section more often than any other teacher, which suggests that he was one of the more popular teachers. Some of these references are humorous notes about embarrassing moments, as the time in school assembly when Bill announced that the students would "pass out" while the music was playing (Nov. 19, 1936). One item had Bill flirting with profanity. He said that John L. Lewis was a "son of a . . . coal miner." (Feb. 11, 1937). In the Feb. 15, 1939 gossip column titled "Here and There," three of the nine items had to do with Mr. Juhnke. One mentioned "those eyes he made when he was mocking a girl who comes in at 12 . . . ." Bill was a popular speaker at Friday afternoon "pep assembly:" According to the "Wildcat's Claw" account:

> He made sentences out of the name Pretty Prairie, with whom we were to play that evening. Each sentence started with a letter in the name. After he finished reading telegrams from Franklin Roosevelt, Will Rodgers (sic), and others, the crowd gave the victory yell and sent the boys off to the game in the proper frame of mind. (Nov. 10, 1938)

In later years Bill recalled an incident of hilarity and embarrassment that illustrated his penchant for the outrageous. At one school assembly he was called forward to give an impromptu unannounced speech about the title of a popular song, "A Pretty Girl is like a Melody." But Bill didn't know the songs on the hit parade and he had misunderstood the title for his speech. He got up and gave a speech on the topic, "A Pretty Girl is like a Melon." One of his points was that "she has lots of seeds." The speech "brought the house down." Sometimes the student reporters gave Bill credit for making serious points. A school news report of February 20, 1941, said, "We think that Mr. Juhnke 'said a mouthful' when he stated in assembly the other morning, 'Don't put your mouth in high gear unless you are sure that your brain is turning over.' Many students might take a lesson from this."

Bill taught history and social studies. He did not leave a record of his teaching schedule and classes taught. Superintendent Siemens reported that most teachers taught five classes and sponsored one or two extra-curricular activities. There was an average of twenty-five students per class. Bill wrote to Dr. Carlton J. H. Hayes at Columbia University, the author of a favorite history text, to ask for a teaching guide—and got a personal note in response. He took Dr. Hayes' first name for the middle name of his son, James Carlton. Bill brought his interest in debate and drama into his classroom, and organized student reports and simulations to represent different viewpoints. Student interest in current affairs was heightened by the war in Europe and by the prospect that the United States might initiate military conscription and enter the war. Bill had students write letters to national and international leaders—such as the head of the Catholic Church in Austria after Hitler's invasion of Austria in 1938. On Apr. 22, 1937, Bill's Kansas History class began a "Sunflower Club" that adopted a constitution and attempted "to get a better appreciation of our own state by studying local history." On Feb. 8, 1940, Bill's Economic Geography Class undertook "something entirely new"—

a unit on vocations in which each student researched and reported on a particular vocation. The class subscribed to the magazine, "Your Future."

Bill's activity at Moundridge High School that got the most publicity was debate. In the 1937-38 school year the debate squad had fourteen members. For practice they debated at public events at local primary schools on the topic, "Resolved, that the several states adopt unicameral legislatures." Meta served supper to four debaters on January 21, 1938, before their public "practice debate" at King City school in Elyria. That school year Bill took the debate squad to four tournaments. The debate topic for 1938-39 was "Resolved, that the United States should establish an alliance with Great Britain." That year they tied for second place in the Mid-Kansas League tournament and came within three speaker points of winning first place at the district tournament. In 1939-40 the debate topic was "Resolved, that the government of the United States own and operate all railroads." A noteworthy event of that season was the Hutchinson debate tournament, when seven Moundridge debaters stayed in one room at Hotel Stamey.

*1941 Debate Team. Left to right: Floyd Krehbiel, Kathryn Krehbiel, Bill Juhnke, Paul Goering, Helen Tapken*

Bill's debate teams had increasing success over the years. In 1940-41 they won first place at the district tournament, winning nine of ten debates on the topic, "Resolved, that the power

*1942 Debate Team with championship trophy. Left to right: Carl Stucky, Tom Goering, Bill Juhnke, Gilbert Goering, Ellen Waltner.*

of the federal government should be increased." Floyd Krehbiel, who participated four years, was the premier debater on that squad. The team won only half their debates at the state tournament, and the top debaters were angry at the end of the season when Bill gave everyone the same award pins regardless of their number of wins. In 1941-42, Bill's last year of teaching at Moundridge, his debate teaching career climaxed when the Moundridge debate squad won the Kansas state tournament championship (Class C). The debaters that year were Carl Stucky, Leroy Goering, Gilbert Goering, and Ellen Waltner. Their topic was one of special interest to Bill as a religious pacifist: "Resolved, that every able-bodied male citizen in the United States should be required to have one year of full-time military training before attaining the present draft age." Bill took special pleasure in helping students research the various topics and build their cases on both sides of the question. At debate tournaments he worked diligently to learn about the arguments and evidence of opposing teams, and to help his debaters craft opposing responses. The debate program at Moundridge depended very much upon his initiative. In the year after he left to teach at Buhler High School, 1942-43, Moundridge High School did not field a debate squad.

Bill Juhnke also put a lot of time and energy into the Hi-Y club, a boys' student Christian organization. The Hi-Y "motto" was "to create, maintain, and extend high standards of Chris-

tian character throughout the school and community." The club met once or twice a month for special programs, Bible study, musical events, and topics of current interest. At a meeting on November 3, 1938, Bill divided the members into Democrat and Republican teams and assigned roles for national, state and county candidates. The student newspaper account reported, "the rivalry ran hot, and a slight trace of mudslinging was also noticed. . . . the boys enjoyed many good laughs throughout the program." The Hi-Y club organized special projects such as a bookstore for resale of used books and school supplies, and a food stand at the Moundridge community fair. They contributed funds to sponsor an underprivileged boy at the Kansas Boys Industrial School in Topeka. In May 1939 at a Hi-Y picnic "nearly eighty-five fathers and sons enjoyed an afternoon of jolly recreation . . . at Ed Krehbiel's farm on the Turkey Creek." They played ball games, horseshoes, and went fishing, swimming and motorboat riding. That same month the Hi-Y sponsored a performance of a three-act "farce comedy" titled "Here Comes Charlie." The play was produced by the Elyria drama society, and Bill played a lead role as "Aleck Twiggs, an Ozarkian who was turned into a butler." On a number of occasions Bill invited the Hi-Y cabinet to his home to eat Meta's cooking and to plan programs.

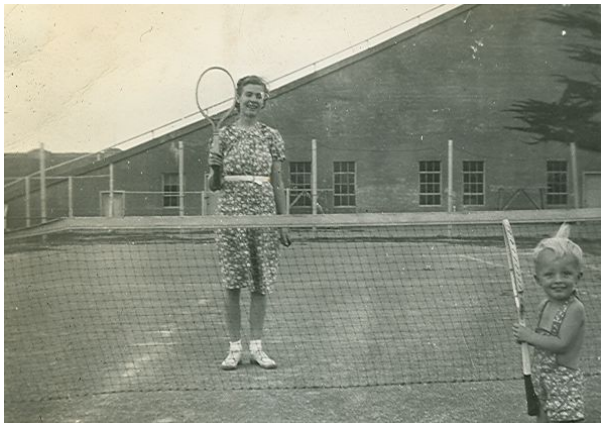
The Hi-Y clubs in Kansas high schools were connected through district conference meetings and summer camp at Camp Wood near Elmdale. Fund-raising projects helped pay expenses for members who attended summer camp. Bill took delegations of students to district conferences. In September 1939 he and seven Moundridge boys attended summer camp at Camp Wood. That fall Bill was elected a Hi-Y district councilman, and the next year he helped host the district Hi-Y conference in Moundridge, attended by 100 boys from twelve Hi-Y clubs. The speaker at that event, Danny Lay, reported that the national Hi-Y conference in Ohio in 1940 passed a provision "that the 1,100 boys would refuse to fight in Europe, but only help defend the western hemisphere." In the fall of

1941, Bill passed the role of Hi-Y sponsor to his teacher colleague, Art Baltzer. The next year, at Buhler High School, Bill again served as faculty Hi-Y sponsor, although the club in Buhler apparently was not as large and as active as the one in Moundridge.

On October 31, 1937, Bill had an opportunity to show how his theological ideas informed his view of history. The West Zion Mennonite Church invited him to speak on the topic, "How Does History Show the Hand of God?" Bill offered five examples: (1) "The conquest of disease, famine and old age." The New Deal Social Security program was part of God's work in history. (2) "The liberation of Greek Culture in the fourth century before Christ." Bill referred to Aristotle and Alexander the Great who spread a culture "that tempered a Christianity soon to be born." (3) "The birth of Christ." Bill quoted Bruce Barton, author of *The Book Nobody Knows*, "Through those fishermen and their successors, He started more philanthropies than all men who have ever lived." (4) "The Battle of Tours." In 732 Charles Martel, Christian leader of France, stopped the Muslims from taking over western Europe. (5) The growth of democracy, especially "individual freedom of criticism and individual freedom of action."

Bill, accompanied by Meta, went to Kansas University in Lawrence for the summer sessions of 1939, 1940 and 1941 to work on a master's degree in educational administration. Moundridge High School helped with expenses by offering a seventy-five dollar scholarship per session. For the first two summers Bill and Meta were in the same second-story apartment on Ohio Street. Every day Meta went on a walk to the park where Jimmy could play on the swings and she could read the Civil War novel, *Gone With the Wind.* Perhaps it was while she was reading the novel that Jimmy took the family silverware and deposited it under the house through a hole in the foundation. Meta also attended bridge-playing parties with other student wives, and played tennis with Bill and Jimmy on

the KU tennis courts. She tried to help Bill with his statistics course—his most difficult course—and listened to his enthusiastic reports about his educational philosophy course with Professor E. E. Bailes. Each summer they drove home for the extended Independence Day vacation. Sometimes that enabled Bill to help at least a bit with the wheat harvest.



*Meta & Jimmy on the K.U. tennis courts in Lawrence, Kansas. Meta made Jimmy's jump suit out of the same material as her own dress.*

Bill's most time-consuming volunteer activity in the late 1930s and early 1940s was in leadership roles with the Western District Christian Endeavor (WDCE) of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Not everyone appreciated this passion. He later reported, "Curt Siemens couldn't understand my interest in the church." The Western District had sixty-one congregations, mostly in Kansas but also some in Oklahoma and one in Nebraska, and the WDCE attempted to energize youth groups in the congregations. In 1937 Bill was appointed to his first district WDCE position—Peace Secretary. One of his successful projects was an oratory contest with two divisions—peace orations and missions orations. Seventeen youth entered the contest. The top three winning orators (Paul Goer-

ing, Harley Stucky, and Edwin Stucky) were all students at Moundridge High School, where Bill was debate coach. In 1938 Bill took the three winners to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, to perform at the binational General Conference Mennonite gathering. At that meeting he was elected to a three year term as secretary-treasurer of the bi-national (U.S. and Canada) General Conference Young People's Union.

At the August 1938 WDCE annual meeting Bill was elected president of the organization. He brought a cheerful

*Returning from the 1938 General Conference meeting in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Left to right: Paul Goering, Edwin R. Stucky, Elmer Goering, Bob Stucky, Bill Juhnke*

and enthusiastic style to the task of organizing the executive committee. One of his letters to Florene Krehbiel, the secretary treasurer, began breezily, "'The time has come,' the Walrus said, 'to talk of many things! Of ships, and sails, and sealing wax; of cabbages and kings.' The time has also come for us to talk about C. E. things. So here goes." Then in a long type-written letter he clarified in order the tasks ahead: organizing the committee: strengthening WDCE publications, planning a peace rally, "stimulating our Christian endeavorers to mission

activity," promoting church-wide official papers, instituting a "look-out" system to keep in touch with scattered CE members, planning the annual youth retreat, and raising funds for a struggling Mennonite school in Saskatchewan. Bill concluded the letter with a vigorous mixed-metaphor call to action: "With all this to discuss it seems necessary for us to put our shoulders to the wheel. . . . So let's shake hands toward achieving a better and more worthwhile Mennonite Christian Endeavor in our district."

Bill's greatest initiative in his first year as WDCE president was to inaugurate a new publication, *The Western District Tidings.* The first two issues were not very impressive—rather unattractive mimeographed newsletters dated January and May, 1939. The third issue was more sophisticated, with the 1,500 copies printed at the Bethel College printing press. Bill took charge of the subscribers list, the articles published, the relationship with the printer, and the mailing to individual and group subscribers. He paid personally the bill for printing ($19.90) and mailing ($4.80) the third issue. He acknowledged that "our paper has been in its infancy and suffering from experimentitis . . . " But he had plans for improvement and expansion.

Bill had learned something about publishing a periodical when he was a student at Bethel College and editor of the Bethel student newspaper, the *Collegian.* His models for the *Tidings* were both the *Collegian* and the official General Conference periodical, *The Mennonite*. Because the Western District Conference did not have its own periodical (nor did it have a conference headquarters), the *Tidings* was a notable source of information for the conference in general. Bill eventually hoped for the *Tidings* to expand its constituency and become the official youth paper for the entire General Conference Mennonite Church. Discussions of the role of the *Tidings* had an undercurrent of concern that the youth pages of *The Mennonite* might be an adequate source of information for and

about young people. Some people thought the *Tidings* was too liberal or too aggressive.

The two dominant themes of *Tidings* articles, apart from news about CE events and people, were international missions and world peace. Bill was enthusiastically committed to both causes. His primary mentor at Bethel College had been president Ed. G. Kaufman, a former missionary in China and a strong advocate of Mennonite pacifism. Kaufman taught that overseas missionary programs were means for promoting higher civilized ideals of justice and peace. Bill put into the first issue of the *Tidings* a complete list of all home and foreign missionaries of the General Conference Mennonite Church– a total of 128 persons–with the admonition, "Pray for them, and help support them. Is Your society doing its share?" The lead article in that issue was an account of an experience with an International Voluntary Service for Peace work camp in England, written by Bethel College student Robert Kreider.

War broke out in Europe (Germany invaded Poland Sept 1, 1939) the month before the third issue of the *Tidings* was published. Bill's editorial in that issue, titled "Propaganda," warned against the "war hysteria" fostered by American press and radio. He had two recommendations: Learn about both sides of controversial issues to get all the facts. And remember that "our best guide in our quest for truth is the Bible. . . . The method of the Bible is the method of truth." A boxed insert at the head of the first page of that issue quoted President Franklin Roosevelt, "If and when war unhappily comes, the government and the nation must exert every possible effort to avoid being drawn into the war." Although the *Tidings* did not provide a running political commentary, its opposition to national policies such as military conscription and involvement in the war was clear.

Bill stayed on as *Tidings* editor after his first two-year term as WDCE president ended in August 1940. His liberal

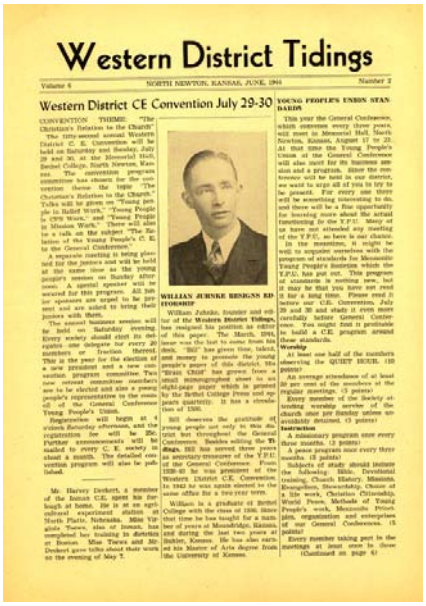
pacifism earned the mistrust of some of the more conservative leaders of the Western District Conference. One of his critics was Rev. Walter Dyck, a pastor and Western District Representative to the General Conference Young People's Union. The two clashed over the Kansas Institute of International Relations (KIIR), an adult peace education course taught at Bethel College. Conservatives thought the KIIR was too secular and insufficiently biblical in its peace teaching. At the 1942 WDCE convention, when Bill was nominated for new two-year term as president, Dyck told the gathering that Bill was not eligible for the office, because he was also serving on the executive committee of the General Conference YPU. Bill was elected nevertheless. Dyck sent Bill some letters claiming that people were raising doubts about his religious orthodoxy, and asking that Bill send him a statement of his belief on main doctrines. At one WDCE summer retreat at Camp Wood, Bill was offended by Dyck's response to his personal testimony. As Bill later wrote of it: "We went under the pagoda for a brief meditation and worship period. When my turn came I told, as quite consciously planned to make more or less sure it was my true feeling, about the importance my Church to me, and of the deep meaning in baptism." Dyck's response was to "snort," and to say "That's all right. IF it's the real thing!" Some tension between liberals and conservatives was an ongoing part of Bill's church work, but it was not so divisive or acrimonious to undermine the work of the organization.

As an officer in the General Conference Mennonite Young Peoples Union, Bill planned to attend the triennial conference at Souderton, Pennsylvania, in August 1941. After returning from Lawrence that summer, he and Meta made a "honeymoon trip" east—more than four years after their wedding. They traveled together with their good friends, Dave T. and Marge Stucky, who lived on a farm just a mile north of the Juhnke homestead. They stopped at tourist sites along the way, culminating with a visit to Niagara Falls. The General Conference at Souderton adopted a resolution on the approaching war

and a conservative doctrinal statement for the General Conference Mennonite seminary. Bill promoted his plan there, without success, to expand the *Western District Tidings* into an official General Conference-wide youth paper. While Bill and Meta were traveling, three-year-old Jimmy stayed with the Juhnke grandparents, in the care of Bill's younger sisters, Marie and Martha. Marie wrote to Bill and Meta: "After breakfast on the real table, Jim went to the playhouse and started to make a play meal. He baked a cherry pie, cooked beans, made cookies, tapioca, and set the table for Mart, me and the doll and himself. . . . Jim said, 'Now wash the dishes.'" Bill took a lot of photos on the trip and put them into an album with sprightly captions that entertained the family for many years. "Question: How many quarts per gallon of water flows over the Niagara Falls in an hour? Answer: Four."

*Flooded Juhnke barnyard, September 6, 1941.*

Two weeks after returning from the trip, on the morning of September 6, 1941, the "worst and most sudden flood rampaged down the Dry Turkey Creek." Bill had planned to go to Wichita that day for a state Hi-Y Council meeting. The road north of the farmstead was flooded, but he was able to get out via the south road at 7:50 a.m. When he returned that afternoon, there was about a foot of water in the barn and the well near the milkhouse was threatened. Bill and Meta rescued several chickens that were marooned on a high spot north of the barn. Periodic flooding was a recurring event on Juhnke farmstead.



Western District Tidings

Volume 6 — NORTH NEWTON, KANSAS, JUNE, 1944 — Number 2

**Western District CE Convention July 29-30**

CONVENTION THEME: "The Christian's Relation to the Church"

The forty-second annual Western District C. E. Convention will be held on Saturday and Sunday, July 29 and 30, at the Memorial Hall, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. The convention program committee has chosen for the convention theme the topic "The Christian's Relation to the Church." Talks will be given on "Young people in Relief Work," "Young People in CPS Work," and "Young People in Mission Work." There will also be a talk on the subject "The Relation of the Young People's C. E. to the General Conference."

A separate meeting is being planned for the pastors and will be held at the same time as the young people's session on Sunday afternoon. A special speaker will be secured for this program. All pastors' spouses are urged to be present and are asked to bring their pastors with them.

The annual business session will be held on Saturday evening. Every society should elect its delegates one delegate for every 20 members or fraction thereof. This is the year for the election of a new president and a new convention program committee. Two new retreat committee members are to be elected and also a young people's representative to the council of the General Conference Young People's Union.

Registration will begin at 4 o'clock Saturday afternoon, and the registration fee will be 25c. Further announcements will be mailed to every C. E. society in about a month. The detailed convention program will also be published.

Mr. Harvey Deckert, a member of the Inman C.E. spent his furlough at home. He is at an agricultural experiment station at North Platte, Nebraska. Miss Virginia Toews, also of Inman, has completed her training in dietetics at Boston. Miss Toews and Mr. Deckert gave talks about their work on the evening of May 7.



**WILLIAM JUHNKE RESIGNS EDITORSHIP**

William Juhnke, founder and editor of the **Western District Tidings**, has resigned his position as editor of this paper. The March, 1944, issue was the last to come from his desk. "Bill" has given time, talent, and money to promote the young people's paper of this district. His "Brain Child" has grown from a small mimeographed sheet to an eight-page paper which is printed by the Bethel College Press and appears quarterly. It has a circulation of 1500.

Bill deserves the gratitude of young people not only in this district but throughout the General Conference. Besides editing the **Tidings**, Bill has served three years as secretary-treasurer of the Y.P.U. of the General Conference. From 1939-41 he was president of the Western District C.E. Convention. In 1942 he was again elected to the same office for a two-year term.

William is a graduate of Bethel College with the class of 1936. Since that time he has taught for a number of years at Moundridge, Kansas, and during the last two years at Bluffton, Kansas. He has also earned his Master of Arts degree from the University of Kansas.

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S UNION STANDARDS**

This year the General Conference, which convenes every three years, will meet in Memorial Hall, North Newton, Kansas, August 17 to 22. At that time the Young People's Union of the General Conference will also meet for its business session and a program. Since the conference will be held in our district, we want to urge all of you to try to be present. For every one there will be something interesting to do, and there will be a fine opportunity for learning more about the actual functioning in the Y.P.U. Many of us have not attended any meeting of the Y.P.U. so here is our chance.

In the meantime, it might be well to acquaint ourselves with the program of standards for Mennonite Young People's Societies which the Y.P.U. has put out. This program of standards is nothing new, but it may be that you have not read it for a long time. Please read it before our C.E. Conventions, July 29 and 30 and study it even more carefully before General Conference. You might find it profitable to build a C.E. program around these standards.

**Worship**

At least one half of the members observing the QUIET HOUR. (10 points)

An average attendance of at least 30 per cent of the members of the regular meetings. (5 points)

Every member of the Society attending worship service of the church once per Sunday unless unavoidably detained. (5 points)

**Instruction**

A missionary program once every three months. (5 points)

A peace program once every three months. (5 points)

Subjects of study should include the following: Bible, Devotional training, Church History, Missions, Evangelism, Stewardship, Choice of a life work, Christian Citizenship, World Peace, Methods of Young People's work, Mennonite Principles, organization and enterprises of our General Conferences. (5 points)

Every member taking part in the meetings at least once in three

(Continued on page 4)

*Western District Tidings*, *June 1944*

In his final issue as editor of the *Tidings*, March 1944, Bill restated his strong wartime commitment to Mennonite pacifism. "Mennonite Christians," he wrote, "can hardly agree that any Caesar's voice deserves first obedience. That first loyalty, we humbly submit, is and must forever remain a loyalty to

God—to the voice from the hillside of Galilee." The editorial concluded with a statement of five "essentials of the Mennonite belief and practice." These included "(1) belief in God the Creator; (2) belief in the divinity of Jesus; (3) belief in the guidance of the Holy Spirit; (4) belief in the Church's Stewardship of a Saving Gospel, and (5) practice of Christian Brotherhood to all mankind." This formulation would not satisfy the strict conservative evangelical or fundamentalist critics, but they surely represented Bill's own heartfelt convictions—even as his personal letters showed him wrestling with issues of moral relativism that he encountered in graduate school at the University of Kansas.

Bill's front-page article in that final issue of the *Tidings* was a spirited call for young people to become better informed and more active Christian Endeavor members. He lamented the fact that thirteen of the sixty churches in the Western District had no active CE groups. He took personal responsibility for the apparent lethargy. He had "not written materials interestingly enough, . . . not gotten individual young people in the churches of the district to respond, . . . (and) not inspired the work and officers of the Convention so that information on the projects is more general." Bill's self-criticism was more a measure of his high goals than of his success as WDCE president and *Tidings* editor. It could be that the war brought on changes among Mennonite youth that Bill interpreted as decline. The *Tidings* did cease publication after 1946, and the Western District Youth never again sponsored so ambitious and impressive a publication.

The relationship of Bill and Meta to their parents and siblings is not well documented, although some information is in a few letters that survived from their three summers in Lawrence. Alvina Juhnke's letters showed her pride in her son ("I know you will prove yourself as to be worthy of your honor.") but also concern that all his worldly contacts not divert him from the church. "I know we cannot join a greater society then (sic)

to be a Christian." On one occasion Bill's younger brother, Carl, reported to their mother about a conversation Carl had in Moundridge with Peter W. "Sheik" Goering, who had returned from a year at Hartford Biblical Seminary in Connecticut. Pete reported that some of the seminary teachers disbelieved and mocked the Bible. When Carl protested, "Pete also said Bill Juhnke does not believe everything in the Bible." Alvina was alarmed and wrote to Bill, "I cannot tell you, how much it does hurt a Mother when she hear's (sic) things like that about her son—I know the only happy man on earth, is the one that believes in the Bible—as God's word . . . ."

The Juhnke family was also challenged when some members were drawn to the ministry of Orlo Dirks, an evangelical preacher in Moundridge who started a "Calvary Tabernacle" congregation. Dirks, of Mennonite background himself, was anti-denominational. He suggested that many Mennonites had adopted a "works righteousness" theology and were not saved. The Calvary Tabernacle had connections with Nye J. Langmade, a radio preacher in Salina who started a fundamentalist Bible school. Some Mennonites attended Langmade's school. Bill's sister Emma and her husband, Joseph Stucky joined the Calvary Tabernacle group. Abe and Alvina Neufeld also were attracted to Dirks. In one letter to Bill and Meta, Bill's sister Marie reported a rumor that "we had joined the 'Tabernacle hook-up,' and . . . that all we kids were re-baptized by Orlo." The rumor was false, but the family no longer had its total Mennonite solidarity. Emma and Joseph were also unhappy because, in their view, Ernest Juhnke had withheld their fair share of land inheritance.

Bill wrote a defensive letter that complained about Emma and Joe, who seemed to think that Ernest Juhnke "was running a gold mine and would give him half interest." Emma and Joe had said, Bill wrote, "that they were sorry for Meta since she married me." Bill defended his religious orthodoxy:

> Maybe my theology is a little different than Emma's on some points. I would like to know just why she thinks she has a monopoly on all truth. She has never heard me say there is no God, or Jesus never lived, or prayer is all a fake. . . . I believe there is a God, that Christ lived and died on the cross to save anybody that believes on Him and lives like he believes it and doesn't go around condemning people to Hell. . . .

Bill wrote that everyone should "work together for the good of the whole family—and be willing to sacrifice to that end." He was aware that "my family is helping me out a whole lot, especially when I leave home and go away like this." He hoped to "do my share to help back when I will be able to." When Meta spoke about the charges against the evangelical orthodoxy of Eden Church Mennonites, she defended her people by quoting a verse her grandmother had taught her: "*Christi Blut and Gerechtigkeit, dass ist mein Schmuck und Ehrlichkeit. Damit werd' ich vor Gott besteh'n, wann ich zum Himmel werd eingehen."* ("The blood and righteousness of Christ are my treasure and cloak. With them I will stand before God when I enter Heaven.") That is what Meta believed.

In the spring and summer of 1942, Bill was preoccupied with research and writing of his master's thesis, "The Administrative and Teaching Problem Relating to Controversial Issues in a Select Group of Central Kansas High Schools." He gathered information via questionnaires and interviews from administrators and social studies teachers in seven Kansas schools (Moundridge, Inman, Buhler, Nickerson, Halstead, Burrton, Haven, and Pretty Prairie) about the teaching of controversial issues. He did not uncover any major controversies, and his conclusions seem, in retrospect, quite bland. For example: "The task of the administrator as it relates to controversial issues is to assist the school board in working out the school policy, to secure the cooperation of a well-selected faculty, to insist that major complaints be put in writing, and to purchase

and secure the use of supplementary library reference materials."

Bill's research into central Kansas high schools, all of whom had some Mennonite students, may have had a hidden agenda. He was looking for another job. He told his friends that he hoped to move into a school superintendency after getting his masters degree in school administration. When no administrative position opened up, he decided to move to Buhler High School. Buhler was a larger school and the change involved a nice salary increase. It also involved substantial inconvenience. Buhler was nineteen miles southwest of the Juhnke farm, so Bill and Meta had to rent a house in Buhler and find renters for the farm home during the school year. They rented a wood frame house not far from the high school. The back yard on the lot was large enough and had a little shed so they could bring a small flock of chickens. The house owner agreed to pay for paint for Bill to improve the house, and then sold the house after they had been there for a year.

In his first year at Buhler, Bill wrote to Harley Stucky, a former Moundridge student who had gone on to graduate school, "I like it here at Buhler. Of course, it is not much different than teaching at Moundridge or anywhere else." He taught the same courses, served as the Hi-Y sponsor, and directed the debate program as he had at Moundridge. The debate topic that year appealed to his liberal instincts: "Resolved, that a federal world government should be established." His continuing progressive religious enthusiasm and his urge to inspire the younger generation were manifest in his letter to Stucky: "With the help of dynamic young people like Harley Stucky we can now lay plans to set the world on 'fire' for Christ and his Kingdom, and we can then begin as soon as the 'cease fire' order for the war makers is given." The transition to Buhler was not entirely smooth, however. Years later Meta remembered that Bill was disappointed because the Buhler students did not laugh at his jokes the way the Moundridge students did.

The Buhler school district extended to the city of Hutchinson, and included a higher percentage of non-Mennonites than did Moundridge.

As an officer in the Western District Mennonite Christian Endeavor, Bill received invitations to speak at local congregational CE meetings, was well as to wider meetings and "rallies." At a peace rally hosted by the Emmaus Mennonite Church Christian Endeavor, Bill spoke on "The Conscientious Basis of Our Peace Belief." He quoted Bible texts from Matthew ("Love your enemies") and Romans ("Overcome evil with good"), and referred to the 400-year Mennonite peace heritage. But he went on to argue that peace, unlike war, "really works." Among his examples were William Penn's relationship with the Indians and the Rush-Bagot Treaty of 1817 that secured a peaceable border between the United States and Canada.

Bill and Meta enjoyed good social relationships with main school administrators in Buhler and their families-Mennonites in both cases. Edward and Edna Schrag Kaufman (high school) and Pete and Mabel Shellenberger (grade school) lived near the second house that Bill and Meta rented. At Christmas time in 1943 Bill and Meta were invited to the Kaufman home for a gathering in which the entertainment was a debate on the topic, "Resolved: That there ain't no Santa Claus." Bill spoke for the affirmative side.

The big family event in Buhler was the birth of Janet Ann Juhnke on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1942. On that day Meta's brother, Harvey, married Viola Goering, so Meta and Bill missed that wedding. Janet was born in the Hertzler hospital at Halstead, a facility built by Kansas' famous "Horse and Buggy Doctor," Arthur E. Hertzler. Jimmy was four and a half years old and remembers when Janet was brought home from the hospital, and how he was scolded for want to lift up a cover to take peek at his little sister. The Buhler High School news-

paper, *Crusader* (December 15, 1941), reported Bill's comment: "'She'll be two weeks tomorrow,' Mr. Juhnke said proudly. . . . 'And she's good looking like her daddy.'" One incident that survived in family lore was when Bill took Jimmy to school one evening to play with the latest technology—a wire audio recorder. With the recorder running, Bill attempted to create a little drama. He had some cellophane he used to simulate the sound of burning: "Oh, Oh! What is that we hear? The house is on fire! What shall we do? I'll get Mama out. You take care of Janet." And Jimmy responded, "Janet won't burn!" For her part, Janet wasn't interested in being rescued by the would-be heroic males in her life. She was remembered as something of a "mama's baby," not eager to be handed off to other people.

*Spring 1942, west porch of the house in Buhler. Left to right: Mary Ellen Stucky, Janet and Jimmy, Martha Juhnke*

For their second year in Buhler, Bill and Meta rented another place somewhat farther from the school, but nearer to the First Mennonite Church. They could walk to Sunday services. During that school year Bill's youngest sister, Martha, and her friend, Mary Ellen Stucky, came to live in an upstairs room and to attend Buhler high school. Mary Ellen got sick, went home, and then died of a ruptured appendix—a great shock to the family.

The two years in Buhler were a rich experience for Bill and Meta. Bill later said that one benefit was that it "got me in touch with a lot of Mennonites—from Hoffnungsau, from First Mennonite in Buhler, some Mennonite Brethren." But by 1944

the long-lasting World War dictated another change. Bill feared that he would be called in the military draft, and knew that he would have a better chance for exemption if he were a full-time farmer. So after that school year, in May 1944, Bill and Meta moved back to the farm by Elyria and put their roots down more firmly than ever. Just about everything in those years, it seemed, was deeply influenced by the war.

## Chapter 5. Total War

Bill and Meta Juhnke lived their lives in a century of total war. They were born (1912 and 1916) shortly before the United States entered World War I. They were a young married couple when the world, hardly made "safe for democracy" by one great war, drifted into an even more devastating World War II (1938-45). And they died (1991 and 1996) at the end of a Cold War era that armed the nations with thousands of nuclear weapons that could destroy human civilization several times over. Although Bill was not caught in the military draft, warfare and its consequences affected him and his family at every stage of life. In the 1930s and 1940s he underwent a passage, typical of American peace advocates generally, from optimistic liberal hope for world peace to discouragement in the face of a world gone mad with war. For Bill it was part of a sobering transition from youth to middle age.

In their childhood years, Bill and Meta learned the Christian gospel of peace at the Eden Mennonite Church. In college, Bill's favorite teachers were strong spokesmen for peace in the "historic peace church" tradition: Maurice Hess at McPherson College, and Emmet Harshbarger and Ed. G. Kaufman at Bethel College. These men believed that the Christian peace witness applied to personal relations as well as international relations. In his history classes, Harshbarger assigned readings from "revisionist" historians Charles Beard and Harry Elmer Barnes. The "revisionists" argued that Germany was not solely responsible for the outbreak of World War I, that the punitive Versailles Treaty was a mistake, and that the United States had been drawn into the war by misleading propaganda and by the machinations of profit-seeking corporations. At Bethel College Bill was taught what he called "the position of Christian peace," a position shaped not only by Mennonite interpretations of the Bible and theology, but also by "revisionist" understandings of recent history and international relations.

Bill graduated from Bethel College in May 1936. The next month, Bethel College hosted the first of five yearly summer adult education Peace Institutes, sponsored the American Friends Service Committee. Officially called the "Institute of International Relations," these were adult education courses lasting a week to ten days, and attended by peace-movement people from a variety of backgrounds. An Institute report for 1938 claimed that people had attended from forty-eight towns and seventeen different denominations, although the full-day tuition-paying number was much smaller. The institute teachers were prominent peace-minded ministers and scholars, such as Dr. Frederick W. Norwood, Minister of the City Temple in London; Rev. Charles M. Sheldon, author of the best seller, *In His Steps*; Dr. Sidney B. Fay, revisionist historian from Harvard University; and Clarence Streit, prominent advocate of a North Atlantic political union. The high point of Institute public exposure was in 1939 when Dr. Eduard Benes, an international celebrity who had been ousted as president of Czechoslovakia for opposing Nazi expansion, was a speaker. The Institute sessions were scheduled in June, a busy time for farmers, so Bill did not attend the day sessions as a tuition-paying participant. But he did attend some of the evening public events.

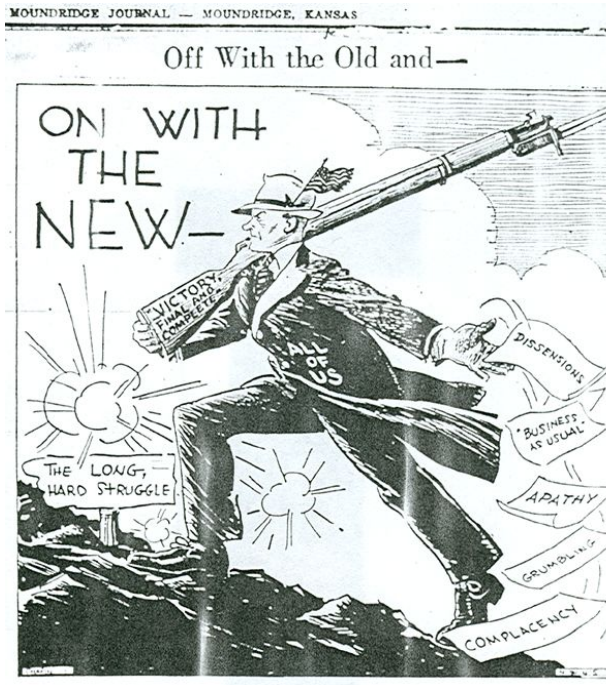
In February 1939 Donovan Smucker, Institute director for that year, invited Bill to serve on the Peace Institute steering committee. Bill was able to use his positions as president of the Western District Christian Endeavor and editor of *Western District Tidings* to support Peace Institute events. In May 1939 he sent to congregational WDCE officers an enthusiastic promotional statement, "Why Mennonite C. E. Societies Should Support the Kansas Institute of International Relations." He wrote that the Institute "gives the Mennonites the very best way to carry their message directly to non-Mennonites–those that are church, community and educational leaders who would not otherwise come into contact with this Mennonite principle." Here was an opportunity for Mennonites, often accused

of "doing nothing except refusing to participate in war, . . . to do something constructive for peace and goodwill." Bill encouraged Christian Endeavor societies to support the Institute financially and to attend the annual meetings, to learn "information as to the causes of wars, ways to peaceful settlement of international disputes, and methods of propaganda."

In the 1930s peace advocates made their witness at the center, not at the margins, of public life. Political leaders in Kansas, at both state and local levels, were remarkably peace-minded in the 1930s, even as aggressor states in Europe and Asia made their drives for expansion. (Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931; Hitler rearmed Germany after Nazis came to power in 1933; Italy took Ethiopia in 1935.) Arthur Capper, Republican senator of Quaker background, promoted non-interventionist policies until Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, December 1941. John M. Houston, Democrat congressman from Newton (1934-42) spoke out strongly against "sending American soldiers to foreign battlefields."

In Moundridge, Kansas, where Bill Juhnke started teaching in 1936, the editor of the *Moundridge Journal*, Vernard Vogt, maintained an anti-war editorial stance until the spring of 1941. Vogt was of German Evangelical background, a member of the Methodist Church in Moundridge. On September 2, 1937, he warned readers not to believe that "Same Old Bunk" propagandistic atrocity stories coming out of Europe. On January 13, 1938, the editor recalled the official lies about the sinking of the Maine (1898) and the Lusitania (1915) that misled the United States into the Spanish American War and World War I. "Every sane man abhors war," he wrote. Every good American abhors it." Even after Germany had invaded Poland, and England and France had declared war on Germany, Vogt wrote that, despite sympathies for the allies, "we are not going to do any killing if we can help it." On November 14, 1940, Vogt wrote an Armistice Day editorial critical of how the winners of World War I had botched their opportunity. "The

conqueror stresses his victory by acting first and thinking afterwards. The sore festers, healing only on the surface. . . . Too late we learn that the 'cease firing' of 1918 was only prolonged to pass to another generation." But by Memorial Day, May 29, 1941, Vogt had flip-flopped to patriotic militarism: "Wars are blights on the pages of history, yet history points out that the




*Editorial cartoon, "On with the New,"*
*Moundridge Journal, January 28, 1942*

daring 'have not died in vain' for there comes from the smoke of battlefield a cleansing of purpose and a new spirit that strives to bring about peace with honor, peace with justice, and armistice for the world." On December 18, 1941, he wrote, "One of the strangest things about our search for peace is the fact that the path to it is often a warpath."

In his first five years of teaching at Moundridge High School (1936-1941), Bill could press peace issues in his classes and extracurricular activities without necessarily offending prevailing public opinion. It was a strongly anti-war community, with a substantial Mennonite presence. On November 11, 1936, Bill's constitution class led the student assembly in a celebration of Armistice Day. He urged his students to keep abreast of current events, and had them give reports and assemble newspaper clippings on national issues such as "Lend-Lease" legislation for the U.S. to provide aid to the allies. On October 13, 1939, Bill wrote to Kansas Senator Clyde M. Reed, using Moundridge Public School letterhead and signing as "Head of the Social Science Department." He expressed concern over Reed's apparent willingness to approve some credit to war belligerents. As sponsor of the high school young men's Christian organization, the Hi-Y, Bill helped organize peace programs. At a Hi-Y program of March 16, 1940, "Marvin Stucky reminded us of the Christian's attitude on war, speaking on the topic, 'Will a Christian Fight?'" and Arnold Goertz spoke on the prospect of American intervention with the title, "Keep America Out of War." The national Hi-Y organization took a strong non-interventionist position. Youth delegates at their summer 1940 convention pledged that they would "refuse to fight in Europe, but only help defend the western hemisphere."

No issue was of greater personal interest to Bill than the prospect of military conscription. In July, 1940, he began his own extensive file of newspaper clippings about draft-related questions. He pasted the clippings from the Wichita newspapers, and other unidentified newspapers, onto 8½ by 11 inch sheets. When the U.S. Senate voted in favor of peacetime conscription, August 28, 1940, Kansas senators Capper and Reed voted against the measure. The stated penalty for violating the Selective Service Act was five years in prison. The first draft registration, October 16, 1940, was for men ages 21-35. Bill Juhnke was 28 years old. A draft lottery followed on October

29, to randomly draw numbers that would determine in what order the young men would be called to camp for military training. Draft officials estimated that the first twenty-five numbers would cover the first call for the training camps. Bill's registration number (#2148) was drawn way down the line–8686. He was classified III-A, a "dependency deferment" granted to fathers with children under age eighteen.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the American declaration of war (December 7-8, 1941), peace advocates at Moundridge High School were put on the defensive. "Everyone is talking about patriotism these days," wrote student Ellen Waltner, a member of Bill's winning debate squad, in the student section of the *Moundridge Journal.* Waltner reflected the ideals of her teacher: "We should show loyalty not only for our own country. . . . The time has come for world patriotism." But local people began to exhibit the spirit of vengeance that was sweeping the country. They organized a war rally at which people gave patriotic speeches and built a big bonfire to burn an effigy of Hirohito, the emperor of Japan.

Selma Rich Platt, teacher of English and psychology, and an outspoken pacifist, refused to attend the pro-war rally. A few of her students began challenging her in class. One day in English class when the high school band was practicing the "Star Spangled Banner" across the street and the sound came through the window, some boys stood up at attention. Platt told them to sit down or to leave. They left and went downtown and reported the incident to some patriotic adults, who protested to Curt Siemens, the school superintendent. Someone put up a sign in the downtown drugstore window identifying Platt with Hirohito. Several times vandals disconnected wires in her car so she could not drive. The school board of directors called her in and asked why she had not applauded at a school assembly for a speaker who had given a patriotic recruitment speech. They warned that she would not be re-hired if she did not keep quiet about the war. One of the board members was Vernard

Vogt, the newspaper editor. Platt thought that several of the board members of German ancestry had special reason to prove their patriotism. Although she was a widow with three young children, and had no prospects for alternative employment, Platt resigned at the end of that semester.

Bill Juhnke came under the same kind of pressures. In one conversation with some patriotic students, Bill argued that conscientious objection to war was a respectable position. Even the highly respected former superintendent of the Moundridge schools, I.T. Dirks, had refused military service at Camp Funston in World War I. As in the case of Selma Platt, these students reported the conversation to leaders downtown. One businessman, Dave Roth, owner of the Ford agency, went to Curt Siemens to complain about Bill's statements and (according to at least one account) to suggest that he be fired. When Siemens told Bill about Roth's complaint, Bill immediately took things in hand. After school that day he went to the Ford agency and asked Roth, "Dave, do you have anything against me?" Roth was more subdued when confronted in person. He denied that he suggested that Bill be fired, but said that he should be careful what he said to students, because young people often hold their teachers in high regard.

Bill then went to Jonas Goering, his father-in-law, who had recently bought a car from Roth. He asked Jonas to have a talk with Roth about the war and about his concerns regarding Bill Juhnke. The unspoken agenda, of course, had to do with whether Roth expected pacifist Mennonites to continue to buy Ford cars in Moundridge. (Roth, himself, was of Swiss Mennonite background.) Bill's vigorous self-defense in the face of patriotic criticism was a contrast to the Selma Platt's capitulation. Bill was a man, a popular teacher, and could call on the support of family and friends. Platt, although she was of Mennonite background and had relatives in Newton, was an outsider and isolated in Moundridge. Bill did resign his teaching position at the end of that 1941-42 school year, but he

never said that his resignation was due to patriotic pressures in the community. The issue was clearly relevant, however, to his topic for a master's thesis—the teaching of controversial issues in Kansas high schools. He did not refer to the Moundridge case in his thesis.

Before the United States entered the war, Bill was an energetic activist on issues relating to war and peace. He wrote many letters to public officials, organized peace meetings for Christian Endeavor and Hi-Y, and spoke out energetically for the Mennonite heritage of conscientious objection to war. It was important for Mennonites to be steadfast, especially at a time when, as he wrote to CE leaders in May 1939, that other "peace organizations are going militarist or losing their convictions." Harley Stucky, one of his high school students, years later spoke with great appreciation of Bill's forthrightness for peace in the face of looming war. Bill's predictions were not necessarily on target. In a letter of June 20, 1940, written at Kansas University in Lawrence, Bill wrote, "My guess is that we will not get into the war. Maybe I'll be wrong. I suspect it will be over before it would pay for us to join." In that same letter Bill said he had written to President Roosevelt, Senators Capper and Reed, and several others. In the July 30 issue of *The Mennonite*, the official Mennonite church publication, he recommended a peace proposal by Dr. Daniel A. Poling of Boston, and urged readers to write to their Congressmen.

Bill's optimism and energetic activism were damaged when Congress passed the Selective Service Law (Aug. 1940) and declared war (Dec. 1941). Teaching at Buhler High School in 1943, Bill looked back and wrote, in a letter to a fellow Christian Endeavor leader, that the adoption of military conscription "sort of broke my enthusiasm for democratic government. I am absolutely sure that most people didn't want conscription . . . ." He was disillusioned with President Roosevelt, and did not see anyone on the national political scene that

he could wholeheartedly support. When America mobilized for total war, pacifists were marginalized and largely silenced.

Bill's summer studies at Kansas University in Lawrence offered opportunities for him to talk with other people about issues of war and conscription. He reported about an extended conversation with Mr. Cameron, the head of the draft board in Lawrence. Bill needed to have his conscientious objector papers notarized, but Cameron refused to do so. Cameron advised Bill that a III-A "dependency deferred" classification would keep him out of military service without having to sign up as a conscientious objector. Cameron then "told me a long story about Kenneth Weaver who resigned from Lawrence High School." Weaver was a McPherson College graduate, a conscientious objector who was pressured out of his job at Lawrence. Weaver's fate was presumably supposed to be a warning about what happens to conscientious objectors in wartime. Bill wrote to Weaver in Washington, D.C., where he had taken a job with the "Civic Education Service" that published *Civic Leader* and *Weekly News Review*.

Another person in Lawrence who tried to argue Bill out of his pacifism was Prof. Ernest E. Bayles, professor of education. Bayles was a pragmatist who invoked Einstein's theory of relativity to argue that truth was relative, and that relativism in philosophy implied democracy in politics. One can arrive at "reasonable right" with the scientific method, taught Bayles, but "absolutism" is highhanded and dictatorial. Bayles associated "absolutism" with Aristotle and with the "classisists" at the University of Chicago. Relativism is democratic, said Bayles, and absolutism is dictatorial. Bill apparently found Bayles' case for liberal thought and liberal democracy quite attractive. He also was impressed that Bayles had defended Kenneth Weaver and his right to keep his teaching job at Lawrence High School.

Bill struggled with Bayles' definitions that categorized

pacifism as anti-liberal and absolutist. As Bill put it in a letter to Edwin Stucky, in CPS camp: "Relativism is liberalism in thought; pacifism is absolutism because the pacifist opposes all war and the religious pacifist says his belief is founded on the authority of the Bible or of Christ." Bill saw this as a problem, and did not know how to resolve it: "Do I as a pacifist believe in Dictatorship? 'No!' Do I as a pacifist believe in Democracy? 'Yes!' Does the mainspring of my belief in pacifism come from any one single authority? An authority infallible? Perfect? Final? Ultimately true? There is a question for a thoughtful pacifist." Part of the resolution, as Bill saw it, was "that you can hardly separate the social from the religious. Jesus was the great humanitarian, going so far as to offer his life for his cause." Bayles surely forced Bill to think some new thoughts, but not to abandon his commitment to Christ.

Bill greatly enjoyed discussing ethics and theology in personal conversations, Sunday School classes, and correspondence with friends. He did not attempt to share his theological thoughts in church publications, perhaps because he had not arrived at a coherent synthesis and perhaps because he sensed that he was on a liberal fringe. He liked to apply what he called "a left wing intellectual approach," but he feared that liberals in Mennonite circles would be misunderstood and misinterpreted. A liberal, Bill wrote in one letter, would be "stamped 'cock-eyed' by some; he will be accused of 'losing his mind' by others (But the enemies of Christ accused him of this too.)" Bill wanted to identify with Christ's persecution but also to find acceptance in his own social circles. A Christian liberal might find, he hoped, "a few who will appreciate him in his own time and give him intellectual fellowship and social approval." In fact, Bill did find that acceptance in his home congregation and in the Mennonite denomination.

As an outspoken Mennonite pacifist teaching in a public high school in wartime, Bill had to walk a fine line. His dilemma is revealed in his notes for a speech on the topic of war

bonds at a Buhler High School assembly on April 1, 1943. Did he dare to say what he really thought about the war and about war bond drives? Part of his speech strategy was to give statistics about the federal wartime budget and the government's need to borrow money. Rather than supporting the war bond campaign, Bill's first impulse was to blame President Roosevelt for taking the country into war. He wrote satirically in his notes that Japan had attacked the United States because "we were planning to attack her so we would have the privilege of buying bonds." Then he crossed out the inflammatory statement. He apparently did include in his speech the quotation, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."

The Selective Service System made room for religious conscientious objectors to work in Civilian Public Service Camps in projects deemed to be of national importance. The government organized the labor projects, and the Mennonite, Church of the Brethren, and Quaker churches organized the camps and paid a minimal allowance to the drafted men. The churches needed experienced leaders for the CPS camps. While he was teaching at Buhler, he was invited to volunteer for CPS leadership, but he declined. Such a change would have probably involved at least some time of separation from his growing family. A second child, Janet Ann, was born November 26, 1942. A CPS position, even if it were directorship of one of the camps, would have involved a financial sacrifice. There were other young married men with children who did accept CPS camp directorships, and who took their families along with them. If Bill had accepted that invitation, he would have experienced a different environment and new challenges. It would have expanded his world in many ways.

Bill carried on some correspondence with friends and former students who had been drafted and were in CPS camps. His younger brother Walt was his most important correspondent. Walt was a radical pacifist who came to believe that his decision to work in the CPS system was a compromise with an

evil war-making order. If his CPS work was really of "national importance," its effect was to release someone else to go and fight. In September 1944, Walt wrote to Bill that he had set a date in October when he would walk out of camp, unless he was convinced otherwise. Walt knew Carl Stucky, a member of the Hopefield Mennonite Church, who had taken the absolutist position and had been put in prison. Walt said his greatest concern was how such an action would affect his parents and younger sisters, Marie and Martha. Bill encouraged Walt to stay in CPS. The program might involve compromise, but no one could be entirely morally pure. Bill quoted some writings by Guy F. Hershberger, a teacher at Goshen College who supported the CPS option. Walt finally decided to stay in CPS. He said that his older brother Bill was kind of a father-figure for him, as he was not able to discuss such matters with their father, Ernest.

Sixty-eight young men from Eden had been drafted in World War II. Forty-four had served in Civilian Public Service, the option officially supported by the Mennonite denomination. Thirteen had had gone into military service, and eleven into noncombatant military service. The church's constitution called for the exclusion of members who engaged in military service, but the enforcement of that policy was highly debated. After prolonged discussion and debate, the congregation eventually loosened the earlier policy of rejecting veterans. In this discussion, Bill took the position that "the church should discipline professing Mennonites who have been in the army." In a written statement, he attempted to clearly and fairly state the arguments for a more tolerant policy: Why discipline for this sin and not others? Why be so coercive? But finally, Bill wrote, the church's message to returning veterans should be:

> You are no longer a Mennonite. We are sorry. We want you to again become a Mennonite. You will have to leave your army medals, your army uniform, and all that; we want you to take communion with us. With your medals

> and your uniform and the blood of other human beings on your hands, we can not let you in. We could not be happy with you in the group. Maybe you could be happy with some other church. . . . You are always welcome to come back. Won't you even now come with us to worship Him Whom we now and our Fathers before us believed to be the Real Jesus. . . . but you will have to repent.

Two of Bill's cousins, Marvin and Roland Juhnke, who grew up a mile and a half north of the Ernest Juhnke farm and who were members of the Eden Mennonite Church, had gone into the army and air force. Bill might have had his wayward cousins in mind. But Bill's recommended policy did not prevail at Eden, and his cousin Marvin remained a member there without formally confessing his sin. Roland and nearly all the others in regular military service did leave. Bill did not dwell on this issue in coming years. He had good relations with former Eden members who were veterans and who had left the church. He bought Chevrolet cars from Joe W. Goering, the Chevy dealer in Moundridge who had left Eden over military service issue.

Another point that showed the depth of Bill's conviction about war and peace, and his disillusionment with America's involvement in the war, was a discussion about the possibility of Mennonite migration to another country. While they lived in Buhler, an FBI agent had visited Bill and Meta's home and asked questions about two young Mennonite men who had applied for conscientious objector status. Bill, an outspoken anti-war activist, began to suspect that the government had bugged his house and was listening for incriminating conversations. Even though the pressures on German-American pacifists were not as severe as in World War I, Bill worried that conditions could get much worse, if casualty lists mounted and patriotic vigilantes began to attack pacifists. In a speech at the Eden Mennonite Church on November 14, 1943, titled "Intolerance and One Solution," Bill suggested that it was time for a Men-

nonite denominational committee to look into prospects for migration to another country. He identified countries that might welcome immigrants—Canada, Australia, Brazil, or central Africa. He noted that "to immigrate is to run away from the problem, but our fathers did it." Some might consider such a suggestion madness, he said, but "to be sane in a world of madmen is in itself a sort of madness." As it turned out, American hostility toward German-background pacifists did not become more intense than in World War I, and the war ended without excessive Mennonite suffering. Bill dropped the issue of emigration. But three decades later, in 1974, when his son, Jim, wrote in a book that Mennonites "had found a permanent home in America," Bill asked him, "Are you sure of that?"

As a peace activist in the pre-war period, Bill Juhnke was an enthusiastic participant in the American political process. He had been Americanized in ways far beyond those of his German-speaking parents. He freely used the personal pronoun in speaking and writing of United States foreign policies as "our policies." In correspondence he quoted John Dewey, progressive philosopher. He shared Dewey's belief that public school teaching was an opportunity to promote higher ideals of democratic civilization.

Then the war forced Bill into a more defensive and withdrawn position. He lamented the isolation of the wider peace movement. He feared that his outspoken activism had gotten the attention of the government, and that the Juhnke home in Buhler had been bugged by the FBI. As the war dragged on, he worried that he might be drafted after all. In the summer of 1943 Paul McNutt, the War Manpower Commission chief, told the Selective Service System to reclassify all those deferred because of dependency. In December of that year, Congress passed the Wheeler bill (Public Law 197) that mandated partial protection for fathers. Even so, Bill feared that manpower shortages might lead to his being drafted. So in the spring of 1944, after two years at Buhler high school, Bill left teaching

and began full time farming. As a farmer he hoped to claim an occupational deferment. The move home to the farm near Elyria was a defensive inward shift. Three years earlier he had imagined that a master's degree would open up new opportunities, perhaps in high school administration: "No stone will be unturned, in looking for a better job." Now he was back on the farm, soon to be teaching in a rural one-room primary school. Bill remained a liberal Christian pacifist throughout his life, but never with the same optimism and energy as in those years before the war, 1936 to 1941, when he was a crusading young pacifist high school teacher.

## Chapter 6. Establishing the Farm, 1944-1950

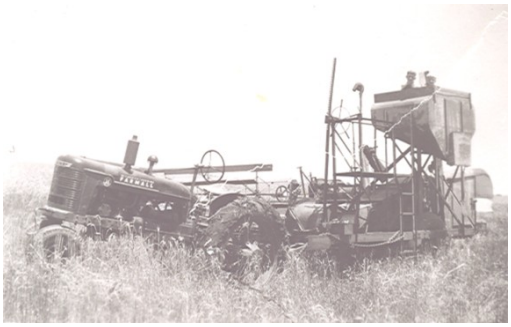
In the spring of 1944, when Bill and Meta Juhnke moved eighteen miles from the town of Buhler in Reno County to their farm near Elyria in McPherson county, they became full time family farmers. The farm had been their base ever since their marriage in June 1937. But they had not had either enough land or requisite farm machinery for a full-time farming operation. They had depended upon their parents and others for farm machinery and farm labor. Each June and into July their ripened wheat stood unharvested in the field south of the farm home until the Jonas Goerings (Meta's family) or the Ernest Juhnkes (Bill's family) had completed their wheat harvest and could bring their combines to harvest Bill and Meta's wheat.

Because they had been absent from the farm at key points, Bill and Meta had not accumulated the full complement of livestock—cows, pigs, and chickens—that were standard for family farming in those years. In the summers of 1938, 1939 and 1940 they had moved to Lawrence where Bill took classes for a master's degree. Then in the fall of 1942 they had moved to Buhler and lived in rented houses for two years while Bill taught history and social studies in Buhler high school. For at least part of that time, they rented the farm home near Elyria to a young family. That rental arrangement was not satisfactory. The renters were not highly motivated to keep the house in good condition. They raised small chickens in an upstairs room. When they left, the renters unscrewed and took along the light bulbs.

Bill and Meta moved as fast as they could in the spring of 1944 to expand their farm operation—both land and livestock. With Bill no longer receiving a teacher's paycheck, they needed to produce farm products for income. But there was an additional motive for expanding the farm operation. World War II was still raging in Europe and the Pacific. Bill wanted to

avoid being called in the military draft. Farmers were less likely to be called than teachers, and larger farm operations increased the chances of exemption. Ernest Juhnke, Bill's father, allowed Bill to rent land in the Elyria area. Bill also went to his uncle, Simon Stucky (married to Ernest's sister, Ida) and begged him for the opportunity to rent some land. Uncle Simon responded to Bill's situation and allowed him to rent a field in the section to the north of Bill and Meta's farmstead. With what he owned and was able to rent, Bill farmed a little over two hundred acres of land.

As it turned out, Bill was not drafted. He never knew, of course, whether his decision to leave teaching and undertake full time farming helped him avoid the draft. He did know that the war resulted in good prices for farm products.



*The Farmall "H" stuck in the wet wheat field.*

The most important implement for the small farm was a tractor. Early in the war, probably sometime in 1942, Bill had bought a new Farmall "H," made by International Harvester. The "H" had steel lugs rather than rubber tires because of wartime rubber rationing. The tractor lugs made deep indentations in the asphalt pavement of highway #81 that Bill had to cross to get to the south field across the Missouri Pacific railroad tracks. The "H" had a four-cylinder engine with five forward gears. It pulled a two-share plow—a great leap forward for anyone accustomed to plowing with horses. It had a pulley mechanism with belt that Bill hooked to a large saw for cutting tree limbs and wood to heat the house in the winter. Bill had

Milford Waltner, a mechanic in Elyria who was married to Meta's cousin, build a hydraulic front-loader lift for the "H." The lift had one front scoop attachment for moving dirt and manure, and another larger and unwieldy attachment for carrying loads of prairie hay and alfalfa from the fields to the barn. In subsequent years the "H" was replaced for heavy pulling by larger and stronger tractors—Allis Chalmers ("C" and "WD") and John Deere (3010 diesel). But the "H" survived the years, with the help of Bill's numerous overhauls. It finally got a good price as an antique at the Juhnke farm auction half a century after it had been purchased.

For other farm equipment, Bill saved money by buying used implements, some of which had been built for horsepower. He acquired a mower for cutting hay and grass, and a two-section drill for sowing wheat. Both the mower and the drill originally had had long tongues for pulling by horses. Bill cut the tongues of these implements short and fixed them to be attached to the pull bar of the "H." He also bought a used plow, a used harrow, and a used "springtooth" cultivator. In about 1948, when he bought a used wheat combine from Daniel "Bubber" Goering, he was able to harvest his wheat crop as soon as it was ripe, rather than being dependent on his wider family.

Wheat was by far the most profitable crop in Kansas, although Bill experimented with smaller plantings of oats, corn, milo, and other green forage crops. One small ten-acre field ("behind the tracks") was still unbroken prairie grass, which, in a good year, produced two crops of hay for feeding the cattle over the winter. In the 1940s the crop of alfalfa became popular, both because it was more nutritious for animals and because it could produce three or four crops per year—depending on adequate rainfall. So Bill plowed up the remaining prairie and planted it to alfalfa. Unlike many farmers in the area, Bill did not build a silo to store chopped green crops ("ensilage") for feeding livestock. He preferred hay and alfalfa.

*The flooded pasture, looking east.*

The grass on the pasture land that bordered the Dry Turkey Creek on the Juhnke farm was generally sufficient for about twenty cows, and one or two horses, to graze through the summer. There were a few beef cattle, but mostly non-purebred milk cows. Bill gradually increased his herd of milk-producing cows to a peak of about twelve. The labor of milking by hand was the major constraint. Bill and Meta did the milking in the mornings; Jim helped in the evenings from the time that he started, aged eight or nine. In about 1947 or 1948 Bill and Meta bought a DeLaval milking machine from the Elyria Lumber and Mercantile Store. The machine traumatized the cows for the first several weeks of use. The milk went into buckets (not a bulk tank), and the milkers carried it to a separate milk house for separating the cream. The skim milk was fed to the calves and pigs. The cream went into five-gallon cans for weekly pickup by the Moundridge Creamery. Meta made a lot of cottage cheese and cream-rich pastries for the family.

Bill and Meta raised chickens for meat and for eggs. In the early years they used some laying hens to incubate and

hatch the eggs, a method that was both inexpensive and inefficient. Soon they began purchasing small flocks (fifty or so) of day-old chicks and feeding them in a small "chicken house" on the southwest side of the farmstead. After a certain age, the chickens were given the run of the farmyard—except for the garden and the small lawn in front of the house. The prospective laying hens had a chance for a decent existence. The family ate a lot of eggs, and took the extras to Jonas Stucky's store (another cousin) in McPherson for sale on the weekly trip to the city. But the roosters were doomed. Meta supervised the butchering. She taught her children how to hold the young mature birds over a wood stump, chop off their heads with a corn knife, hold them down while the blood spurted out, plunge them into a bucket of very hot water, pull off their feathers, and remove their innards—saving the heart, liver, and gizzard. Chicken meat was a delicacy often served to family and guests for the Sunday noon meal.

Bill and Meta also raised hogs, with three or four porkers usually in the pen being fattened for butchering. The hogs grew up on skim milk, kitchen slops, and "mash" made up of ground oats or corn. Hog butchering day, often in late fall, was great social occasion. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and families came for the event. Everyone seemed to have assigned roles. Bill supervised the killing and scalding of the hogs, and cut them open. Meta prepared the meat cutting table, and fixed the noon meal, including delicious tenderloin and a famous dish of liver, onions and brains. Grandma Alvina Juhnke scraped and cleaned the small intestines to be used for sausage casings. One of the uncles, such as Carl Juhnke or Reuben Krehbiel, cut up the pigs' heads. The children kept the fire hot for the cauldron that boiled the meat for liver sausage, pork sausage, and, finally, boiled down the fat into lard.

When they began farming, Bill and Meta had a mechanical cream separator that needed to be turned by hand. Jim remembers one time when he, probably too young for the job,

was assigned to turn the separator handle and managed to tip over the mechanism and spill the milk onto the floor. It was a major advance when Bill and Meta bought an electricity powered cream separator, but it was still a lot of work both morning and evening to assemble and disassemble the separator parts and to wash them in hot water.

Meta's initial equipment for washing clothes was primitive by modern standards. She had a washtub for washing the clothes, with a double-roller mechanism fixed to one corner for squeezing out the soapy water. Then the clothes were rinsed in another tub of clear water, and once again squeezed through the rollers. One had to be careful to insert the clothes into the rollers at a manageable pace, and not to get one's hand into the rollers. That was a two-person job. Jim remembers getting his hands in the wringer more than once, and having his mother free him with the release mechanism. Eventually Meta got a more modern washing machine, but she always hung the clothes out to dry on the clothesline south and east of the house. It was an important day when the rickety old wooden clothesline frames and loose lines were replaced by metal pipe frames with cement foundations.

The Juhnke house was old (built about 1925) and drafty. It was heated with a whole house wood stove in the basement. In winter time Bill and Meta closed the stove vents so that the large kitchen was the only room heated in the house—except for the bathroom for Saturday evening baths. Perhaps the most important home improvement project was a set of built-in cabinets and new sink on the south wall of the kitchen. Henry J. Goering, Meta's uncle who lived in Elyria, was a carpenter who put in the new cabinets. Other important additions included an electric refrigerator and a new piano.

Living on the farm full time, Bill and Meta were able to expand the size of their garden south of the house. (See the outline of the farmstead in Chapter 1, page 17.) Potatoes were

the garden crop that produced the most food for the table, but the garden also included radish, carrots, lettuce, green beans, beets and poppy. There were also cucumbers and cabbage—for making pickles and sauerkraut. Later in life, Meta reminisced with some amazement about her diligence: "And the garden. . . I canned beans. Forty quarts. Horrors!!" When they tore down the shed just north of the entrance to the farmstead, Bill and Meta planted potatoes on that site as well. The soil there was especially fertile because the shed had been used many years as a pig lot. They planted corn—both sweet corn and popcorn—at "the other place"—a mile east and a mile and a quarter north of the farmstead, where Uncle Wesley Juhnke had lived before selling that place to his brother, Ernest Juhnke. Eventually Bill and Meta expanded their home garden southward and added fruit trees—sour cherry, peach, apricot, apple and pear. The cherry trees seemed to be most successful. The planting, cultivating, harvesting and preserving of garden products were labor intensive. The weather in Kansas was not reliable. A spring drought and early summer heat could drastically reduce garden production.

*Bill Jr., Janet, Bill Sr., and Jim, returned from an expedition to collect wild grapes, walnuts, and sand-hill plums. Summer 1947.*

Meta's household was a model of frugality. She reused and recycled everything, including wax paper from cereal boxes and plastic wrap from bought bread. She used fat drippings to make lye soap. She mended and patched clothes, and then made them over for younger children. Threadbare clothes eventually wound up as rags for cleaning or for fashioning into rag rugs. Flour sacks became tea towels. Leftover material from sewing dresses found its way into quilts.

Meta and Bill had two more children on the farm and one more was on the way when they moved to Lehigh in the fall of 1950. William Ernest, Jr. was born January 26, 1945. That was a difficult breech birth. Meta said she could feel her uterus tear: "It felt like a hot knife slicing." She approached her subsequent pregnancies with trepidation, but they all went quite well. Sharon Kay was born July 13, 1948—the same birthday as her Grandma Alvina Juhnke. Ruth Elinor Juhnke was born in the McPherson hospital on Christmas Eve, December 24, in 1950.

These births were part of a wider family population explosion. In the six years between Buhler and Lehigh—1944 to 1950—Bill and Meta and their siblings produced twenty-one children. The population explosion continued apace in subsequent years. Over the decades, however, the size of families decreased markedly on a clear generational pattern. The grandparents (Ernest and Alvina Juhnke, Jonas and Katie Goering) had had eleven and twelve children. The parents (Bill and Meta's generation) generally had five or six children. These children in turn generally produced only two or three children. This pattern corresponded the wider world's declining birth rates in the transition from rural to urban, traditional to modern, and agricultural to industrial ways of life.

Meta loved her role as mother, gardener, and homemaker. She said she did not find her situation confining. She never was tempted to look for a wage-earning job outside of the home. Delbert Preheim, her brother-in-law, wrote in one letter

with apparent amused disbelief that Meta "speaks of staying home with the kids as if it were the acme of contentment—a sort of nirvana one attains to." Delbert, no doubt, was thinking about all those dirty cloth diapers, snotty-nosed and illness-prone kids, and unending chores of house-cleaning, meal preparation, farmyard work, and gardening.

Bill loved farming in those years, but he also missed the classroom. After two years of full-time farming, 1944 to 1946, he took advantage of an opening to teach the upper four grades in the two-room King City grade school. King City was where Bill had started school himself beginning in 1918, and where he had taught for two years (1930-32) after attending McPherson College. Bill had been elected to the King City school board, and worried about a potential conflict of interest in the hiring decision, but that did not turn out to be a problem. With his master's degree in education, he was the most over-qualified elementary school teacher in McPherson County. But he was delighted with the teaching job and threw himself into it wholeheartedly. In later years, when Meta was asked if Bill was concerned that he was "wasting his history degree," she said, "Oh, no! He said, 'this is the arena! You are preparing young kids for life. This is more important than high school!'"

Bill taught grades five to eight at King City for two years (1946-1948). Then he took another elementary school position for two years (1948-50) and taught all grades at the Pleasant Ridge one-room elementary school, located seven miles of unimproved dirt road south of the farm. His salary at Pleasant Ridge was $250 per month, a significant addition to income from the farm. The school year was seven months, September to April.

At King City Bill had thirteen students in his classroom, a much more manageable number than the forty students with one teacher when he had started in the first grade in 1918.


*King City grade school. Jimmy in second grade, front row, fourth from left. 1945-46.*

Teaching the lower grades in 1944-46—including Jimmy Juhnke in the third and fourth grades—was Bill's brother-in-law, Reuben Krehbiel, husband of Meta's sister, Lora. Although it was a public school, *all* of the students were from Mennonite homes. King City was not much different from a parochial Christian school. Opening school exercises included the singing of Christian songs. At Thanksgiving the seventh and eighth grade assembly performed "The Story of the Pilgrims." On December 23, 1948 they produced a public Christmas pageant, "Following the Star," which ended with a crèche scene including the holy family, shepherds, and wise men. In front of the school was a flagpole where Bill or Reuben raised the American flag every morning. Behind the school were boys' and girls' outdoor toilets. There was, of course, no gymnasium, although the basement was large enough for a ping-pong table. A major improvement of athletic facilities was the installation of an outdoor basketball goal.


*King City Grade School float in the McPherson May Day parade, 1948. Won first prize of $50.*

King City students had the opportunity to take instrumental music lessons from Mr. Fritjoff Mark, who drove out every Thursday from McPherson. The young musicians performed at the county music festival and got ratings from "good" to "highly superior."

Bill's students remembered him as an inspiring teacher. Galen Stucky, who went on to a distinguished career as a chemist at the University of California, Santa Barbara, said that Bill was "the best teacher I ever had." To foster interest in national public policy and peace issues, Bill had his students write "air mail letters on military training" to representative Ed Rees in Washington D.C. For "manual training" Bill had the students make two picnic tables for the "Juhnke grove." The entire school made a field trip to Hutchinson to visit the salt mine, paper mill, fire station, and reformatory. The big sports activities were softball and basketball. The 1947-48 illustrated school annual, for which Bill took pictures with his old box camera, reported that King City won six and lost four softball games against other schools. One page in the school annual

reported detailed statistics, including the batting average of each player. Jimmy Juhnke's (4th grade) average was .385.

*King City Grade School softball players. Jim in middle holding the bat. Teacher, Reuben Krehbiel. Spring 1948.*

An informal rule held that elementary school teachers should not stay more than two years at the same school. So in 1946 after two years at King City in nearby Elyria, Bill took a job at the one-room Pleasant Ridge school, seven miles directly south of the Juhnke farmstead and even more close to the center of the Swiss Volhynian Mennonite settlement. By that time Janet was ready to start the first grade. Bill took Janet and Jimmy along with him to Pleasant Ridge, thereby increasing to fifteen the number of students in that one-room school. Three of the grades had no students. Few people in the community realized that one-room schools would soon disappear. There were fifty-nine one-teacher schools in McPherson County in 1948-49, plus one one-teacher Lutheran parochial school. Pleasant Ridge disbanded two years after Bill left in 1950. (The King City school kept going until 1974, when it, too, was consolidated out of existence.)

In the 1949-50 school year Bill published an irregular monthly newsletter that he called "Pleasant Ridge Echoes." No

mimeograph machines or spirit duplicators were available. Bill used the hectograph or gelatin duplicator technique, which involved transferring the original text and design to a pan of gelatin, and making copies by pressing individual sheets of paper against the gelatin. It was a painstaking process, but he could produce print runs of twenty or more copies for distribution to his students and their families. From faded blue-print copies of the "Pleasant Ridge Echoes" we learn that Janet had the top score in spelling for the first semester, that Jimmy got a "superior" rating with a cornet solo at the McPherson music festival, and that Bill had been reading the story of Moses for school opening exercises. For an assembly program on January 20, 1950, Janet played the role of Pharaoh's daughter who discovered the baby Moses in a basket in the bullrushes.

*Pleasant Ridge one-room grade school. Janet barefoot front right; Jimmy second from the left in the second row. 1948-49.*

For the school Christmas program in 1949, the seventy-fifth year since the Swiss-Volhynian had migrated to Kansas, Bill wrote and produced a ten-scene drama about the migration of 1874, "From Katazufka (sic) to Kansas." He assigned students to play the roles of their own ancestors from seventy-five

years earlier. The drama climaxed with a Christmas crèche scene in the original immigrant house that the Santa Fe Railroad Company had built for the immigrants. Fritjoff Mark, who taught music lessons at Pleasant Ridge as well as King City, led the school "orchestra" in a rendition of the favorite German-Mennonite Christmas hymn, "Nun ist sie Erschienen." At Pleasant Ridge there was no separation of church and state. Bill had his students recite the Pledge of Allegiance, and added the phrase "under God," before it became officially mandated. Mennonites were using the public school system for education into the ways of their ethnic-religious community. The families of all but one of the students were members of the Eden Mennonite Church. The other family attended the Hopefield Mennonite Church.

Bill's science teaching, as surely as his original dramas, was creative and relevant to the lives of his students. At the Pleasant Ridge Parent-Teacher Association meeting of October 17, 1949, the students reported on their wheat germination project. Students had brought samples of grain from their farms. They tested germination by laying out a hundred seeds between two pieces of moist paper—ten rows of seed each. They tested five varieties of wheat in eleven sample plots: Pawnee, Blue Jacket, Red Chief, Hungarian, and Early Triumph. Pawnee and Early Triumph had the highest germination—97%. One of the Red Chief plots was lowest—66%. The student reports to the PTA program included diagrams of wheat seed, and explanation of the research design. Committees of three family groups took turns in planning the monthly PTA meetings.

During their two years in Buhler, Meta and Bill had kept their church membership back at their home church, Eden, located one mile east and four and three-fourths miles south of their farm. Eden was thriving in the 1940s, with a membership of about 800 and average attendance of about 700. One pastor, Walter Gering, was responsible for pastoral leadership. In 1947 the church adopted a new constitution, and continued to ex-

clude women from voting—contrary to Bill and Meta's wishes. That same year the church decided on a building expansion that allowed for a total seating of 1,030 people. The remodeled church also included indoor toilets, a controversial modern addition that Meta strongly supported.

Bill was disappointed that the Eden church pastor, Walter Gering, did not share his vision for ecumenical youth work. Bill helped to organize a McPherson County Christian Endeavor organization and was elected to the administrative committee. But Gering opposed Bill's ecumenical involvement. Gering, along with many of the Mennonite denominational leaders, had apparently learned from the wartime experience, when mainstream Protestant churches had become so militaristic, that Mennonites should focus on themselves. Bill was bitter: "I never did forgive him (Gering)," he said. "I always thought that was bad judgment on his part. He thought Eden was more conservative than it really was."

In 1944 Bill withdrew from his official leadership roles with the Mennonite Western District Christian Endeavor. He had served as president of the organization since 1938, and had edited the *Western District Tidings* (a periodical he had both founded and largely funded) since 1939. As district president, Bill had been a popular speaker at local Christian Endeavor meetings and banquets. The invitations from churches and schools kept coming after he left office in 1944. His notes for these speeches, often briefly sketched on three-by-five cards but sometimes written out more completely, revealed his social and religious vision. Among the topics were, "The Christian's Post-War Responsibility," "The Everlasting Father," "Who is the Ideal Mother?" "Easter Means a Living Christ," "The Hand of God in History," and "The Value of Reading Biography." For a speech in 1947 on "The Needs of Mennonite Young People in General" he quoted at length from a book by his Bethel College mentor Edmund G. Kaufman, *The Growth of the Missionary Interest among the Mennonites of North America*,

especially Chapter Two on the "Sect Cycle and the non-Missionary Mennonite Mind." Bill asked, "Are we to survive as a sect? . . . We do not want isolation since it goes with the non-missionary mind."

In a public school speech shortly before the national election of November 1944, Bill reviewed the positions and achievements of the major candidates. He was critical of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, running for an unprecedented third time, for his "broken promise not to send boys to fight in foreign wars." Thomas Dewey, Governor of New York and the Republican nominee, was "identified with big business." Bill clearly favored Norman Thomas, the Socialist candidate, who was for the "little man," for little countries, and for cooperatives. Bill outlined the four positive aims of socialism, including to "abolish poverty by wise use of resources." Bill, and perhaps Meta as well, voted Socialist in 1944.

Four years later, in 1948, the national political candidates were the embattled Democratic President Harry S. Truman; the Republican Thomas Dewey, strongly favored to win on his second try; and the Progressive Party candidate, Henry Wallace. Wallace had served as Roosevelt's Secretary of Agriculture for eight years, and as vice-president 1941-45. Bill appreciated Wallace's internationalism and desire for post-war accommodation with the Soviet Union. Wallace's opponents accused him of associating with Communists. Bill's votes for Norman Thomas in 1944 and for Henry Wallace in 1948 demonstrated his alienation from main-stream American politics and his belief that Mennonite principles dictated a more peace-minded, internationalist, and egalitarian course. Meta most likely voted the same way as Bill, although she did not talk about this in later years.

Bill enjoyed participating in local baseball and softball teams. For several years he played second base on a local baseball team that competed in Sunday afternoon day games

against other teams in the region. The team wore green uniforms. In the spring of 1948 Bill helped to organize an "Elyria Softball League" of eight teams that played on Tuesday and Thursday summer evenings on a lighted field just east of the town. With his eight-millimeter movie camera, an instrument that recorded important family events for posterity, Bill briefly photographed Marlin Wedel and Victor Goering as they constructed the outdoor lights on an alfalfa field donated by Herman Schrag. For two years Bill served as one of the team managers. Many of the players had served in Civilian Public Service during World War II. For five years (1948 through 1952) the Elyria Softball League was a vibrant center of community social activity as well as of exciting athletic competition.

In 1950, not long before they moved to Lehigh, Bill and Meta took advantage of an opportunity to buy eighty acres of land north of Elyria. At the time it seemed a momentous step to go so far into debt. Meta complained, good-naturedly to be sure, that Bill was more willing to invest in land than in a new and more modern house. Jim, between sixth and seventh grade, was impressed with the family talk of foregoing normal luxuries to pay off the debt. He worried that this would mean sacrificing Coke and Pepsi and ice cream cones. As it turned out, the land purchase was a wise investment, and the family continued to drink sodas and eat ice cream.

Bill and Meta's life at the farm near Elyria was thoroughly immersed in the activities of Mennonite community and family. They did their business with Mennonite businessmen in Elyria, Moundridge, and McPherson. They got medical services from their brother-in-law, Dr. Delbert Preheim, in Moundridge. They provided mutual aid in times of family need and transition—as when Bill's parents, Ernest and Alvina Juhnke—retired to a town home in Moundridge. In December 1946, at Ernest and Alvina's forty-second wedding anniversary, Bill wrote a fifteen-verse poem in the Swiss-Volhynian

dialect that was their mother tongue. The opening verse and the closing lines were as follows:

> Es var mol a bachelor—hat a fra notvendig,
> Hat gefun a Alvina—dann bissle elendig
> Sie var schon, er ach, un beino immer gesund.
> Mit predigers maeda hat er sich verbund.
> Bis heit varen dazu sibe un zwanzig seele.
> Eppas vun der geschict ver me uns verzahle. . . .
> . . . . .
> . . . Der Liebe Gott hat uns geliebt und gefuert bis hie her!
> Ihm preis, lob, un ehr fur Euch un fur all immerdar.

(Rough translation: There once was a bachelor who needed a wife. He found an Alvina, who was then somewhat in need. She was beautiful, as was he, and in addition always healthy. He bound himself to a preacher's daughter. By today twenty-seven were added unto them. I will tell you something of their story. . . . The loving God has loved and led us thus far. Praise, honor and glory to Him for you and forever.)

In the summer of 1947, Bill got some help with farm labor from Hubert Moore, a former CPS worker who stayed on for several weeks with the family after attending a CPS reunion in the Juhnke grove. Moore built a wooden flat-bed trailer for hauling hay, and did other farm work. He visited King City school, and was convinced that that two- or three-room rural schools were superior to larger urban or consolidated schools. In an appreciative letter from his home in Ann Arbor, Michigan that fall, Moore offered his blessing to the family and noted his memories—a window to Juhnke family life in the farm years between Buhler and Lehigh:

> I hope you each are growing in every respect. I would love to taste some of your good cooking, Meta; and help you build a trailer, Bill; and let Jim teach me another

Psalm; and listen to Janet pray at meals; and see Junior on the tractor. . . . With warm appreciation. –Hubert Moore

## Chapter 7. Lehigh: The Juhnke Family Between Small Town and Farm in the 1950s

On Friday, August 25, 1950, Bill and Meta Juhnke with their four children (Jim, Janet, Bill Jr., and Sharon), age twelve to two, loaded their belongings into a pickup truck, trailer and car, and moved from their farm in McPherson County to the small town of Lehigh in western Marion County. They drove seven miles north and sixteen miles east, past the small towns of Galva and Canton, on the way to Lehigh. Bill Juhnke had taken a job as principal of Lehigh Rural High School. But he did not let go of the farm near Elyria. He had a nine-month contract at $3,500. For the next eleven years, until May of 1961, the Juhnke family lived in Lehigh during the school year and on the farm during the three summer months.

The next day, Saturday August 26, the family drove back from Lehigh to the farm "to take baths." Lehigh did not have a city water system, and it would take some time for the Juhnkes to get accustomed to cistern water. At first they brought water from the farm in a ten gallon can.

*Grandma Alvina Juhnke with flooded yard and pasture, ca. 1951.*

Bill's parents, Ernest and Alvina Juhnke, and Bill's youngest sister, Martha, had moved into the Juhnke farm house some ten days before Bill and Meta's family left. This was a return to the farmstead that Ernest and Alvina had left in 1937 when Bill and Meta were married. Ernest and Alvina eventually moved to a new house that Ernest built in nearby Elyria. In the 1950s the Juhnke farm house occasionally had short term renters. Most years the house was vacant during the school year.

For Meta the transition to Lehigh was stressful. She was in the fifth month of pregnancy with Ruth Elinor, who would be born on December 24, the day before Christmas, 1950. The Lehigh house was much smaller than the farm house. It needed new wallpaper (stripes in the living room and matching flowers in the dining room) and other furnishings. Pipe lines had been laid to the house for Lehigh's new natural gas system , but, as Meta wrote, "We are not connected because they ran out of meters when they got to us." Neighborhood children—something one didn't need to cope with on the farm—came into the house and got in the way. The big Jantz family down the street, whose father was "in prison for stealing chickens," seemed to be a problem. Meta wrote to her sister Mary Ann Preheim, "We made a rule that Junior and Janet couldn't go into their house and they couldn't come into ours from now on." Mary Ann had recently moved from the small town of Moundridge to the big city of Denver. "How did you do it?" Meta asked. "It will probably take until Xmas until we're settled," she wrote, "or longer."

New friends in Lehigh helped in the transition. Henry and Marie Guhr invited the family for a wiener roast on moving day. Henry was director of the Lehigh school board, a Bethel College grad and former Civilian Public Service camp director, and operator of "Hank's Auto-Electric" store downtown. He was one of the most supportive kindred spirits in town. Peter W. ("Shiek") and Mary Goering lived two houses down and

also gave a warm welcome. Peter, originally from the Eden Mennonite Church and Meta's second cousin, was pastor of the Lehigh Mennonite Church and part time teacher of math, science and journalism at the high school. Mary was, in Meta's judgment, "a very fine minister's wife." She had met Peter at Hartford seminary and was, in the view of some family members, a better preacher than her husband. The Goerings had a small pasture and a milk cow, and sold milk and cream to the Juhnkes at good prices. Their twin children, Peggy and Peter, were the same age as Sharon.

*Lehigh Mennonite Church baptism class, Jim Juhnke second from the left. Rev. Peter W. Goering, pastor. Spring 1954.*

The population of Lehigh in 1950 was 240 persons, less than half the number who had lived there four and five decades earlier. The first settlers had been nearly all German-speaking folk, mostly immigrants from Russia. The town had grown along a branch of the Santa Fe Railroad built in 1879 westward from Marion to McPherson. Near the McPherson County line, the railroad took a short diagonal route. The streets of Lehigh were laid out on the bias, as the locals boasted, "so the sun can shine in from all sides of the house." As in all Kansas railroad

towns, the Lehigh skyline was dominated by tall grain elevators that received, stored and shipped wheat grown in the fertile surrounding farmland. In its thriving heyday, Lehigh had had more than forty business and commercial establishments, two banks, a city jail, a broom factory, and a printer that published three German-language periodicals. The depression of the early 1930s had devastated the town. Some thirty houses were abandoned or removed when owners could not pay their mortgages. The town never recovered.

Lehigh in 1950 had three church congregations, all originally German speaking. Two were Mennonite—Mennonite Brethren and General Conference Mennonite. One was German Lutheran. A Seventh Day Adventist church in Lehigh, also with members who had immigrated from Russia, had closed its doors in 1943. By 1950 the Mennonite Brethren and Lutheran churches were declining rapidly. They closed in 1953 and 1956 respectively. Lehigh's population continued to decline during the years the Juhnkes were there, from 240 in 1950 to 178 in 1960. The signs of decline—abandoned houses and lots—were all over the town. Meanwhile, Lehigh's economy survived as a grain center and farmers market. A "Lehigh Booster Edition" of the *Hillsboro Journal Weekly* (November 19, 1953) acclaimed Lehigh as the "Wheat Storage Center of Marion County," with storage facilities for 331,000 bushels of grain. The newspaper editorial stated, unconvincingly, that "Lehigh's star has not faded."

Bill Juhnke was not concerned about evidence of Lehigh's decline. His new job as high school principal fulfilled a long-held ambition and offered an attractive opportunity to exercise his leadership skills. It had been eight years (1942) since he had completed his master's degree in educational administration at the University of Kansas. He had enjoyed his four years as a primary school teacher at King City and Pleasant Ridge (1946-50). But he was overqualified for that work. Now he

enthusiastically engaged the challenges of being the central leader of a larger institution. The Lehigh school district had recently gained new status as a rural district with a wider agricultural tax base of 32,700 acres. Bill was the first principal of "Lehigh *Rural* High School"—and the target of hostility from some anti-school taxpayers. Even though there would be only about fifty students, and the small teaching staff would have to teach classes outside of their fields, Bill took on the job with vigor.

*Principal Juhnke gives a diploma to Louise Winter, 1951.*

*Bill Juhnke, Principal of Lehigh Rural High School, 1954.*

He eagerly recruited new teachers for the high school, attempting above all to hire Bethel College graduates: especially Gerhard Buhr followed by John R. Dyck and Francis Funk, industrial arts and athletic coaches; John Gaeddert followed by Robert Unruh, and Anna Fern Lakin, vocal and instrumental music teachers). Prior to the beginning of classes the first year, he invited students to his office to get their suggestions for the running of the school—establishing a rapport that was new and exciting for them. He enjoyed teaching classes in history and psychology,

coaching the debate squad, advising the student council, organizing district sports competitions, and accompanying students on their senior "sneak" trip. He never stopped being an entertainer. At the school opening in September 1953 he announced, "There will only be a half day of school this morning." The students applauded. Then he said, "The other half day of school will be this afternoon!" Bill was somewhat less enthusiastic about some extra administrative duties such as supervising the hot lunch program, and filling in as director of class dramas when no one else was available for the job.

John Gaeddert, who taught at Lehigh 1950-53, later noted that Bill's "effective administration" was rooted in his own experience and understanding as a teacher. Bill's "style of leadership was his own," said Gaeddert:

> —not heavy-handed, yet firm
> —intensive and extensive planning, yet flexible
> —student-centered, yet adult supervised
> —with limited resources he made the most of what was available . . .
> —-a high student morale was maintained . . .
> —supportive of the teacher and fair to the student in discipline matters . . ."

Gaeddert also thanked Bill for continuing his personal interest and friendship in subsequent years as he moved away from Lehigh and into a career as a Mennonite pastor.

The Juhnke house in Lehigh was on the northeast side of town, two blocks from downtown and a block and a half from the school building. The old school housed the first eight grades in four rooms on the first floor, and the high school and principal's office in four rooms on the second floor. Diagonally across the street south from the Juhnke house was the Mennonite Church. Everything was in close walking distance.

Each room in the Juhnke Lehigh home came to have special memories for Jim, Janet, Bill Jr., Sharon and Ruth as they spent their growing up years there. From the sidewalk and front porch, with its porch swing, one entered the living room, the "focal point of home memories" as Bill Jr. remembered. Visiting guests sat in the sofa on the northwest wall. In the living room the family played many games on the floor and on a folding card table. The piano was in the living room. Each child in turn had to take piano lessons and (reluctantly) practice piano and other musical instruments. (Jim, Bill Jr., and Ruth played the trumpet. Janet played violin and flute. Sharon played the alto saxophone.)

Also in the living room was the new Zenith television set, first purchased in about 1952. It was one of the very first TV sets in Lehigh. Television probably taught the family more about modern American life and culture than they learned otherwise at school and church. Grandparents Ernest and Alvina had earlier gotten a TV on approval from the Elyria hardware store, and watched the Liberace piano performance show and news about the shifting military fronts in the Korean War. But Ernest decided that TV wasn't for him. He returned the set to the store. Meta, who had long listened to radio "soaps" such as "Helen Trent" and "Ma Perkins," now watched some of the TV soaps with her daughters during the summer. Meta liked the Arthur Godfrey and Ed Sullivan vari-

*Ruth and Sharon in Lehigh house, December 1955. Zenith TV and Christmas tree in background.*

ety shows. Jim remembers seeing the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan show—not realizing it was the very beginning of a popular culture revolution in the country. On Wednesday evening after church choir practice a flock of Mennonite young people filled up the dining room to watch the weekly boxing matches. The family was pleased that their house was a social center, but Meta was not pleased when youthful TV viewers leaned their heads, greased with Bryl Crème, back on the wall and left permanent stains.

The living room opened through a wide arch to the dining room. The family always ate their meals together around the dining table, beginning every meal with table grace. "Come Lord Jesus, be our guest. Let this food to us be blest." Meta prepared delicious and nutritious meals—strong on milk, cottage cheese (often fried to make *verenike)*, meat, potatoes and vegetables. Dessert was fruit or sweet pastries. Rice was not a main dish, but a dessert served with sugar, cream and cinnamon. Every Sunday morning without fail there were cinnamon rolls and cocoa. The evening meal was called "supper," though the kids became vaguely aware that sophisticated urban people called the evening meal "dinner." Supper was an important time for sharing family news and working on relationships, and learning discipline. Sharon remembers, "I got reprimanded for singing at the dinner table once. Dad told me to be quiet, but I didn't believe he was really serious, until I kept it up and he scolded me more severely. . . . I was pretty sensitive and sharp words were enough for me to back away, lips quivering and tears forming."

Supper times, as well as Sunday dinner, were occasions for discussion of religion and politics. Bill loved to raise skeptical questions, sometimes to Meta's dismay. Meta had a more unquestioning devotion and unwavering faith. When Jim went to Bethel College in the fall of 1956, he brought home guests, and Bill always tried to draw out their ideas and experiences. One of the guests, Jim's roommate from Taiwan, was an athe-

ist. Ruth observed that his ideas did not fit with what the teacher said in the Lehigh Mennonite Church Sunday School class. She was impressed with her father's suggestion, quoting theologian Paul Tillich, that God might be understood as the "ground of being" rather than as a bearded grandfather in the sky.

On the northwest wall of the living room was the crank-style telephone. On the southeast side was the gas heater. Bill Jr. remembered "scrambling, perhaps even fighting for a space to warm up on cold mornings throughout winter. Once, in the struggle, I got too close and burned myself seriously—blistering a big scar on my left calf."

The kitchen, on the northeast end of the house was a small space, with a window above the sink looking out to the garden in the back. It was the domain for women. Meta prepared all the meals. The girls did the dishes. Not too long after the move to Lehigh, Bill and Meta bought an upright freezer from Bill's brother, Carl. The freezer came with a year's supply of frozen food. It also held packages of frozen pork and (less frequently) butchered beef from the farm. One abortive butchering episode came when Grandpa Juhnke in Elyria, with his son Bill's consent, decided to butcher a pig—a boar that had not been castrated properly. In Bill Jr's memory: "We had the meat packaged—there was a lot of it. It smelled like pig urine. We must have thrown most of it out in the end."

One of Meta's favorite jokes, a story about the four bears, suggested her view of family members who complained too much about food: "Papa Bear said, 'This porridge is too hot.' Sister Bear said, 'This porridge is too cold.' Baby Bear said, 'My porridge doesn't have enough sugar on it.' Mama Bear said, 'Gripe, gripe, gripe. I haven't even poured the porridge yet!'"

Off the kitchen in the southeast corner of the house was a small bathroom, with no sink. It had just enough room for a clawfoot bathtub, a toilet (after a few years of depending on outside toilets), and a trap door to the basement. In the absence of a water heater, the family heated water for baths in a tea kettle. As they took turns bathing, they used the same water—warmed up with more water from the tea kettle.

*Bill Juhnke in front of the house in Lehigh, December 1958.*

Upstairs were two bedrooms, plus a smaller room at the head of the stairs. Jim and Bill Jr. had the northwest room. For a time, all three girls (Janet, Sharon, and Ruth) slept in the same bed in the southeast room. Then Janet got her own separate bed in the crowded room. The bedroom closets were cramped spaces beneath the angled roof. The upstairs rooms were not adequately heated. Bill bought a small gas heater and placed it in the room at the head of the stairs, but Bill Jr. claimed the heater barely kept itself warm. On the coldest night of the decade (twenty-one degrees below zero according to the McPherson radio report), a glass of water beside the heater was frozen.

During better weather, Sharon and Ruth turned the room at the head of the stairs into a playhouse where they played endlessly with dolls. As Ruth remembered, "When we got the Tiny Tears dolls that you could feed and then they would cry and also pee into their diapers—wow, I thought that was cool.

I was devastated when my favorite walking doll with blond pigtails and the moving blue eyes broke and she would no longer open her eyes."

The nighttime ritual for all the Juhnke children included the recitation of prayers and the singing of songs. The prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray thee Lord my soul to take." One of the songs:

Jesus tender shepherd hear me,
bless thy little lamb tonight.
Through the darkness be thou near me.
Keep me safe till morning light.
Through this day thy hand hath led me
and I thank thee for thy care.
Thou hast clothed me, warmed me, fed me.
Listen to my evening prayer.
Let my sins be all forgiven;
bless the friends I love so well;
Take me when I die to heaven,
happy there with thee to dwell.

More than one of the Juhnke children hoped that, if they had to die, it would be at night after they had asked for forgiveness for their sins, rather than during the day when their most recent sins had not yet been taken care of.

The Juhnke yard around the house had good spaces for playing. The sidewalk in front of the house was uneven, but nevertheless was better than anything available at the farm for roller-skating with metal skates. Ruth was especially excited about learning to roller-skate. She spent all her recess time at school roller-skating. And she skated all the way from home to school.

A spirea hedge separated the house from the driveway, and a weeping willow tree grew near the west edge of the property in front of the garage. The willow tree provided wonderful whips for Bill Jr.'s wooden horse on his cowboy adventures. Bill Sr. put up a basketball goal on the front of the garage—a place for many vigorous neighborhood competitions.

The northwest side of the back yard was a chicken pen and house. The northeast side was the garden. Between garden and chicken pen was a pathway to the old outdoor privy at the back of the lot. The chickens provided both meat and eggs for the family, as well as chores for the kids to feed the chickens and gather the eggs. Beside the garage, nearer the house, was a small shed for doing laundry and for storage. In that shed Bill placed a metal commode that was more convenient (and less smelly?) than the old privy. The installation of an indoor toilet and the digging of a large hole for a septic tank in the back yard in 1955 was a major event.

Next door northeast lived Mr. Winter, an elderly widower with (as Ruth remembered) "gigantic earlobes." Once when Bill Jr. was small, Mr. Winter invited him into his house and offered him some dark liquid to drink. It tasted awful and Bill Jr. thought he had been poisoned. He ran home to his mother, hoping she would be able to save his life. Meta, who probably smelled alcohol on her son's breath, gave him a hug and said he would be all right. Mr. Winter was a self styled "water witch" who claimed the gift of divining sources of underground water and oil. Jim noted his excuse when the oil or water drillers did not find the oil or water where he said it was. The drillers, he said, had stopped drilling just above the place where the good stuff was. Mr. Winter died in 1959. Ruth, age eight, wrote about that in a letter to Jim in Germany and asked if anyone had died in Germany. In a letter to her teacher, Ruth said that Mr. Winter used to tell her stories about Jesus. It was sad

that the house now would be empty. Mr. Winter's wife had died, too, several years before.

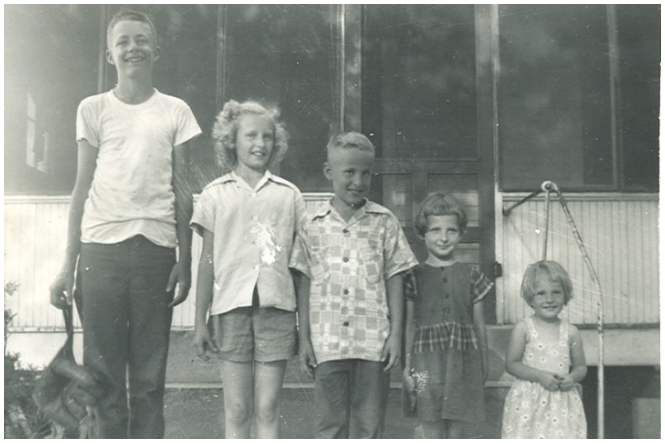
Bill Jr., perhaps more adventuresome than the other Juhnke children, treated the whole town of Lehigh as his back yard. The lot directly north of the Juhnke lot was undeveloped, or perhaps abandoned, and was sometimes put into crops. Bill Jr. and his friends played duck-duck-goose there in the winter-time. As Bill Jr. remembered,

> But the lot to the northwest with its partial foundations, overgrown bushes and trees was a paradise of trails, hiding places, and ready-made forts. A latter-day Davy Crockett fought and won the Alamo many times in that abandoned lot in those years. Abandoned buildings all over town were a lure, especially one limestone brick structure between the post office and the grocery store on Main Street. I spent many hours playing there with my best friends Robert Hine and Paul Thiessen.

For an adequate milk supply Bill arranged with the William Reddig family on the west edge of town to keep a cow in their pasture and barn. The Reddigs got the milk every morning and the Juhnkes got the milk every evening. The cow—for most of these years a productive Holstein named "Blossom,"—travelled back and forth each year from the farm to Lehigh on the trailer with high sideboards. Milking "Blossom" was a regular afternoon chore for Jim, and then for Bill Jr. Meta strained the milk to remove impurities and skimmed off cream as needed. This system would not have met modern dairy inspection standards, but the nutritious milk surely helped the family health more than it hurt it.

Most of the field work for growing and harvesting wheat could be done during the three summer months. But the wheat needed to be planted in September, after school had begun. Much depended on the weather. The summer and fall of 1950,

the first year in Lehigh, was exceptionally cool and rainy. Bill wasn't even able to complete plowing all the bottom land before school, much less get it properly prepared for seeding. During the summers as well as during the school years, the family kept the road between Elyria and Lehigh well-travelled. In summertime Bill drove back to Lehigh once a week to pick up mail, check the house, and take care of school business.



*Stair-step children in front of the farm house, summer 1953: Jim, Janet, Bill Jr., Sharon, Ruth.*

The family enjoyed brief summer trips—to the Ozarks in Missouri, or to see the Cardinals play baseball in St. Louis. The most ambitious journey was in the summer of 1955 to California. The family of seven packed themselves in the family car and traveled west on the famous Route 66, stopped at the Mennonite Hopi Indian mission station in Oraibi, Arizona, saw the Grand Canyon in the early morning, and were shown the sights of Los Angeles by Meta's brother and sister-in-law, Phil and Dolores Goering. From Los Angeles they went north into the rich fruit-growing valley and the town of Reedley where Mennonite friends lived. On the way back home they stopped at Logan, Utah, where they visited Meta's cousin, Melva, and her husband Herman Wiebe. Bill was especially

fascinated with the Mormon system of irrigation. The kids gorged themselves on Bing cherries.

In the fall of 1956 Jim enrolled at Bethel College in North Newton—twenty miles north on state highway #15. All the Juhnke children followed him at Bethel, in the footsteps of nearly all of their aunts and uncles. Jim took with him the old Royal typewriter that his father had used when *he* had attended Bethel College. With Jim at college, the family made more trips to North Newton for sports events, for Memorial Hall Series music performances, and to deliver Jim's laundry. (His resolve to do his own laundry at college lasted about two months.)

After two years at Bethel College, Jim joined the Mennonite Central Committee "Pax" program in Germany. As "Paxmen," working with refugee resettlement and postwar reconstruction, young Mennonite volunteers fulfilled their required Selective Service military obligation for two years of alternative work. Bill and Meta sent a monthly check to Mennonite Central Committee to help pay for the costs of the program. Nearly every week they also sent a letter to Jim in Frankfurt, Germany, where he worked as a secretary in the MCC Pax Europe office. Those letters, usually written on Sunday afternoons, provided more complete documentation of Juhnke family life than is available for any other two-year period. In those two years, 1958 to 1960, Janet was a high school junior and senior, Bill Jr. was an eighth grader and high school freshman, Sharon was a fifth and sixth grader, and Ruth was in the third and fourth grades. Candace Sue was born on July 20, 1959. It was the ninth and tenth years for the Juhnke family to live in Lehigh.

The letters to Jim reveal that in the spring of 1959, Bill Juhnke's ninth year at Lehigh, he considered leaving for another job. The future of Lehigh High School had been put in jeopardy the previous summer when an anti-school faction

packed an official meeting and voted not to open the school that year. That decision had been overturned in a new vote mandated by the Kansas state board of education, but the future of the school was not secure. Bill applied for a position as principal at Inman High school in western McPherson County. General Conference Mennonite Church officials at the binational conference headquarters in Newton recruited him for the denominational office. That job would have required him to move the family to Newton. When Lehigh offered him a $700 raise for the 1959-60 school year, he decided to stay there and to withdraw his application from Inman.

The family did well financially in the late 1950s. For four years after 1956, the wheat yield was around thirty bushels per acre, and the wheat price was reasonably good. Bill bought a new John Deere tractor and wrote to Jim in Germany (September 7, 1959), "You should see the way the new tractor runs from field to field and the lifted springtooth on three point hook-up works. No more loading it on the implement trailer. Jr. turns corner real sharp with the power-steering and lift mechanism and drops down again." After the 1959 wheat harvest Bill bought a new Chevrolet Fleetside half-ton red and white pickup that kept going for twenty-five years until his granddaughter Joanne used it to drive to and from Newton High School in 1984-85. For the house Bill and Meta bought a new Baldwin Acrosonic piano for $706, and kept the old upright piano at the farm. They also bought a ninety-three piece service-for-twelve imported Sango Japanese china set. Meta wrote, "The girls and their mother are thrilled over it and think it is very beautiful." The family talked about building a new house, but postponed a decision in view of their uncertain future in Lehigh.

Church activities were important for the family. Bill was president of the Western District Mennonite Men's organization. Janet was an officer in the Lehigh Mennonite Church youth group. In his sophomore year Bill Jr., like his siblings at that age, took the catechism class. He was ambivalent about

joining the church, but eventually chose to be baptized that year. In Meta's judgment the Lehigh congregation was well behind the Eden congregation in sophistication. She reported to Jim, "On the Sunday when the lesson was 'Perils of Pride,' our Sunday School teacher understood it as 'Pearls of Pride' and wondered at the title. Such is the level of intelligence around here." Nevertheless, Meta and the entire family contributed generously to the life of the Lehigh Mennonite Church—choirs, youth group (Christian Endeavor), Sunday School classes, and Women's Sewing Society.

Bill's father, Ernest Juhnke, died in the Moundridge hospital on April 30, 1957, after a short illness. He was seventy-eight years old. Bill, the oldest son, was the executor of the estate and the person responsible for the welfare of his mother, Alvina, who had already been in declining health. With no public retirement or nursing home facilities available, Bill found nursing care for his mother with a private family in Moundridge. He faithfully visited her once a week, and collected money for her expenses from the rental of farm land and from collections from Bill's siblings. That was a major task. Bill wrote to Jim: "Believe me that estate problems are very difficult as personal feelings give expression to 'favoritism' shown various children. Christian ethics are severely tested. I understand that Jesus had no land to give or to receive. He left no clear guidance on the settlement of estates. Or have I missed some essentials down the line somewhere?" Bill's mother, Alvina, died August 20, 1962, the year after the Juhnke family had moved permanently from Lehigh to the farm.

On June 3, 1958, Meta's father, Jonas Goering, died suddenly of a heart attack. The estate sale of farm equipment and property was that fall and Meta wrote, "It even has an emotional impact for me." Meta's mother, Katie, was unable to take care of the farm and, for some months, lived with one after another of her children. She eventually bought a house on Rosewood Street in North Newton. She baked bread for local

folks, including her grandson and granddaughter-in-law, Jim and Anna Juhnke, after they moved to North Newton in 1966.

As she reported in her letters to Jim, Janet eagerly looked forward to her sixteenth birthday on November 26, 1958. That was when she would be able legally to drive the car. The next month she wrote, "I get the car every once in a while and with a load of girls drag down to Hillsboro. We have a wild time, within the limits of straight thinking people." Janet, of course, already had learned how to drive a farm tractor. In July, 1958 her father wrote: "Well, it was quite a sight how Janet drove the Allis and I stood on the plow with a stick poking straw thru, on the south field. She stopped short once and I flew against the outside wheel but got no bruises." Janet was elected cheerleader at the high school that year, served as secretary of the 4-H club, and began directing the junior choir at the Lehigh church. She was kept busy as a member of the debate squad, a role in the junior class play, and the Y-teen organization (including a conference in Cottonwood falls). For Christmas break in 1958, she made a list of things to do, including "write a book, compose a song, make a dress, and read a good book besides my studies." She enjoyed her Lehigh friends more than her age-mates at the farm, who were "snobby." Her best friend near Elyria was Joanne Zerger, who attended McPherson high school, and whose family, like the Juhnkes, lived on their farm for just the three summer months.

Bill Jr. in the fall of 1958 was an eighth grade star on the Lehigh softball team. He reported to Jim that in one game he hit a triple with the bases loaded, and in the next game a home run with bases loaded. He summarized his attributes: "I am at the height of 5 ft. 6 ½ in. and weigh 115 lbs. Making poor grades, really not too bad, and have not a one girlfriend. I am not lying. . . . Your Pal & Buddy, Junior Juhnke." Actually, Bill Jr. was the valedictorian of his class that year. The following year, as a high school freshman, he played center field on a softball team that was undefeated in league play. By his

sophomore year, he was one of the top players on a very successful Lehigh basketball team.

Sharon, ten years old in 1958, wrote to Jim: "The population of Lehigh is 186 not counting Stowells they have 16 in there family they had another girl lately that makes a dozen girls and 4 boys. There isn't a single Stowell in my grade at school. . . . I like horse stories better than dog stories." In April 1959 Sharon sent a letter to Jim painstakingly written in German script. She provided a German-English alphabet so the words could be deciphered, but all the letters in the text were written in the old fashioned German script. It began, "Dear Jim, How are you feeling?" In another letter she experimented with a code signature with numbers for letters.

Ruth, eight years old, also experimented with her writing. She reported that in school she was learning about paragraphs, so she wrote a half-page letter with six paragraphs. In another letter she wrote, "Dear Jim. Did you have a nice time in Austria? Have they been haveing any wars? I hope you haven't. I do wish you would come home. Have you been shaving? I hope so. Do you drink beer? You better not have." Later Ruth wrote about a shopping trip, "Sharon got a very pretty purse. I got a hat. I guess you'd call it that." Then in another letter: "I need a billfold fierce bad but I don't have any money so I can't buy one."

Candace Sue Juhnke, "a healthy blond," was born on August 20, 1959. Soon after coming home from the hospital Meta wrote, "About Candy Sue—she is a sweet, cute baby. People say she looks like she belongs in our family. Junior voluntarily held her quite a number of times & Sharon doesn't want me to let her cry at all. Walt Juhnkes, Elmer Goerings, Dan H. Schrags, & Preheims visited us yesterday." On Candy's first time in church, her father reported that Meta had taken her for the sermon, but "like a little pagan she slept thru it all." Bill also wrote that "the way she smiles to her old man convinces

me very definitely that she in all her youth has an intrinsic understanding of greatness."

*In the Lehigh house, November 22, 1959. Back: Ruth, Bill Jr., Janet, Sharon. Front: Meta (holding Candace), Bill Sr.*

As Bill Juhnke matured into middle-aged family and professional responsibilities, his earlier crusading pacifist progressivism lost some of its edge. Perhaps the more politically placid years under the presidential leadership of Dwight Eisenhower had something to do with this change. Bill did complain when he, along with other school administrators, was required to sign a loyalty oath certifying that he had never been a member of the Communist Party or other subversive organization. But he signed. He remained a progressive internationalist, critical of narrow nationalism. At a Sunday School meeting in the Johannestal Mennonite Church in Marion County, Bill spoke on "Christian World Citizenship." He said that Mennonite international missions and relief programs were fostering an "awakening" of world citizenship. The alternative direction of nationalism would be "fatal,"—that is, "to make the Sunday School as well as the secular school subservient to the state." In 1959 Bill joined others in protesting government plans to build a Nike missile base in Marion County "near John Winter's farm." That popular protest actually succeeded. The military officials decided instead to build the base in Saline County. There is no record or memory of how Bill and Meta voted in

the presidential elections of 1952 and 1956. But when Jim went to college in the fall of 1956 and had to declare a preference in his government class, he assumed he and his family were Republicans who would favor Eisenhower. In 1960 Bill and Meta voted for the Democrat, John F. Kennedy rather than the Republican, Richard M. Nixon.

Although the student enrollments remained low at Lehigh, the rural school district was wealthy enough to do a major remodeling of the school building in 1952, and to build a new facility in 1957. One of the school opponents sent to Bill and at least one school board member an anonymous letter comparing him to Hitler and Mussolini, along with a picture of a tombstone that could well be interpreted as a death threat. In the fall of 1960, in the face of state action to consolidate small

*Bill Juhnke, principal, in office of the new high school building in Lehigh, 1958.*

schools out of existence, Bill wrote letters and sent literature to government officials making the case for small high schools. In his government class, he had students write letters about the issue to John Anderson, the Republican attorney general who

was running for governor. Most of the students agreed with their teacher, but it was clear that Bill also gave them freedom to disagree. Dennis Bartel, a member of the senior class, wrote, "I am attending a small high school with an enrollment of only 41 students this year. . . .While there are some advantages in going to a small school, I feel there are many more disadvantages."

Janet Juhnke, who had had opportunity to compare her high school experience with that of her friend Joanne Janzen at McPherson High School, clearly agreed with Dennis Bartel. Janet knew that Joanne was learning much more in science, foreign languages, English, and violin. In a letter to Jim in Germany, Janet wrote, "Joanne was in an accelerated (English) class and they just ate the stuff up. Me—I spend 12 weeks my junior year on capitalization and punctuation and Miss Rempel didn't make us write anything except three book reports. We didn't get ½ through our literature book. . . . That's the way it was in all classes except Daddy's. Especially disgusting was the music program but I'd rather not talk about Miss Johnson."

An opportunity for government assistance to improve farm operations came with a federal program for conservation in the 1950s. Bill Jr., who had learned about conservation practices in 4-H, encouraged his father. In 1958 Bill signed up to join the McPherson Soil Conservation program, and in 1961 he signed an agreement for improvement of his farming practices. The Soil Conservation agency surveyed the land and provided maps indicating soil types and prescribed locations for terraces and waterways. Over the next seven years, with some federal subsidies, Bill completed the plan for terracing, contour farming, and waterway development on his farm land.

In the fall of 1961 Bill Juhnke decided to leave Lehigh and to take a new job as admissions counselor and debate coach at Bethel College. The new job included responsibilities for "general public relations." The college agreed that he could

live at the farm by Elyria and commute to the job in North Newton. The Juhnke family's transition back to full-time life on the farm was not difficult. Meta wrote to her siblings, "We're back on our wonderful farm. We know it's grand because every year we eagerly waited for summer so we could come here." She admitted that the daily schedule at the farm was in some ways more strenuous: "We get up about an hour

*Aerial photo of Juhnke farm, 1950s,*
*looking southwest to the "Juhnke Grove."*

earlier than we did in Lehigh. Then we dress in everyday clothes and go out to chore. Luckily the cows are here and the usual aroma greets us in the barn. We put out feed and milk our three cows—not by hand but with a milking unit carried out there from the milk house with water to wash it. Then we separate [the milk into cream and skim milk] and feed calves. Junior or Daddy checks the pigs' self feeder and replenishes same. Someone carries water and oats to our 48 pullets and Mom hurries in to get breakfast ready. . . ."

The Juhnke family had many fond memories of the Lehigh community and the eleven school years they spent there. The high school was closed in 1966. In May of 1968, Bill Juhnke was invited back to Lehigh to be the speaker at an alumni banquet. His conclusion suggested his emotional identification with the place and people where he had invested the best years of his professional career: "In the spring of 1961 when I left, you made me an honorary alumnus of Lehigh High School. I want to continue to identify with you as long as there is within me breath as a . . . a Lehigh soul brother."

But from 1961 forward the Juhnke family was back at their rural home base in southern McPherson County. The farm a mile east and a quarter south of Elyria would always be their first home.

## Chapter 8. The Juhnkes at Bethel, 1961-67


*Bill Juhnke, admissions counselor, getting into Bethel College car on trip to recruit students.*

Bill Juhnke's 1961 contract with Bethel College was for a full time job as admissions counselor and sponsor of the debate team beginning in August 1961. His primary responsibility was "to recruit and counsel prospective students, also as time allows to assist the Director of Development in the general area of public relations." His salary was $5,200. Fringe benefits included a one-half tuition discount for members of the immediate family. With both Jim (senior) and Janet (sophomore) attending Bethel in 1961-62, that benefit amounted to about $600. He was allowed one month of vacation, a substantial reduction from the three-month vacations he had available for farm work when he was principal at Lehigh Rural High School.

For Bill the job at Bethel was a coming home to his alma mater where he had graduated twenty-five years earlier. His church work in the Mennonite denomination first with youth activities and later with the Mennonite Men's organization had prepared him for public relations in Bethel's Mennonite constituency. He knew most of these people personally, and he was able quickly to make family or ethnic connections with those he had not yet met. He greatly enjoyed opportunities to meet and talk with Mennonite pastors and parents, to answer

their questions about Bethel College, and to encourage them to send their children to Bethel College.

*Western District Mennonite Men officers, December 1961, when Bill Juhnke was president. Edwin J. Schmidt, Albert Ediger, Juhnke, Louis Regier.*

It was a new experience, however, for Bill not to be the top administrator and fully in charge of operations, as he had been on the farm by Elyria and as principal at Lehigh Rural High School. At Bethel Bill's immediate supervisor, the Director of Development, was Edmund G. Miller, a pastor and administrator who shared Bill's values and preferences as a Kansas General Conference Mennonite. Ed Miller and Bill Juhnke got along well together. In 1965 Erwin Goering joined the team as Director of Public Relations. Erwin was Meta's cousin, a Swiss-Volhynian Mennonite with whom Bill was especially comfortable.

In 1965, Bill's fifth year at Bethel, Merle Bender replaced Ed Miller as Director of Development. Bender was an "Old" Mennonite with a newer more modern and rational administrative approach. He brought what one employee called "a larger view to the department," seeking to cultivate non-Mennonite constituencies, especially the business community in the town of Newton.


*Bethel College postcard with administration building and science hall.*

Bethel College in the fall of 1961 enrolled 510 students, including those attending part time. Bill Juhnke, coming onto his fiftieth birthday, was the only admissions counselor. Within a few years this would seem to be a very small and unusually elderly admissions staff. In the early 1960s, in Bethel College's mostly rural Mennonite constituency, it was quite acceptable for an admissions counselor to be more than three decades older than the students he was recruiting. But as the 1960s and 1970s unfolded, a great cultural revolution transformed the landscape of American society and the relationships of young people to the older generation. In his public relations contacts, Bill probably spent more time talking with the parents and pastors of prospective students, than with the students themselves. By the 1970s and 1980s, the family and community solidarity implied by such an arrangement seem quaint and distant. A great "generation gap" required admissions counselors closer in age to their recruits. Students, rather than parents, would make their own choices about where to attend college. And increasing competition for students would require colleges to greatly increase their youthful admissions staffs.

Bethel College joined the trend. In 1965, Ted Drier, a 1961 graduate who had worked as a volunteer teacher in Africa

and aspired to a career in public relations, joined Bill as an admissions counselor. And in 1966, Bill's final year at Bethel, Randall Krehbiel, who had graduated that spring, was hired. As Ted Drier remembered nearly a half-century later, Bethel had a congenial admissions team: "Your Dad, Merle and I got along great. Your Dad was supportive and encouraging. He never talked down to me. I have such great memories of him—and the fun we would have driving out to a school. He was just fun to be with." Drier acknowledged that someone in his fifties "may have seemed old then," but said that Bill Juhnke "was comfortable with any age. He was so easy to relate to. He was just good old Bill." Bill recognized that Ted might relate more easily with younger people, so he encouraged Ted to follow up with some high school students whom Bill had contacted initially.

*Bill Juhnke, admissions counselor, in his office at Bethel College.*

Bill was thoroughly traditional in his attitudes toward the role of Bethel College in relation to its Mennonite community base of support. The student newspaper, *The Collegian* (October 5, 1962), asked for his response in an opinion section to the question, "Should the Admissions Standards of Bethel be raised?" Bill opposed raising the standards, unless the mission

of the college had changed. He quoted the college catalogs of 1893-1894 and of 1912 and called for continuity in the present. In 1962 the college asked for three letters of reference, one of which was to come from the pastor of the student applicant. So it should remain. Bill did not even address the issue of academic standards—high school class level or grades. In his view, personal relationships and reputation in the church community seemed most important.

During Bill's first four years as admissions counselor, Bethel's enrollment remained fairly stable at around 445 students (full time equivalent). The percentage of Mennonites in the student body in those years went up from 75% (1961-2) to 86% (1964-65)—a trend that may have resulted in part from Bill's recruiting in Mennonite communities. Bill's influence in recruiting students for Bethel College cannot be measured, but some Mennonite families greatly appreciated his efforts in their behalf. In 1987, at the time of Bill and Meta's fiftieth anniversary, Dan and Erma Goering wrote that they were "very appreciative" of Bill's efforts to get some scholarship money so their daughter Elvera could attend Bethel College.

*Aerial photo of Bethel College campus.*

The addition of Ted Drier to the admissions staff, and more aggressive recruiting in Kansas high schools, resulted in increasing student numbers and a declining percentage of Mennonites in 1965-6 and following. The exciting campus building project in those years was a modern round-domed blond brick new Fine Arts Center, a radical architectural departure from the Elizabe-

than style that marked Bethel's major classroom and library buildings since the Science Hall was built in the 1920s.

In the fall of 1961, when Bill started working at Bethel, Jim and Janet were in their fourth and second years at Bethel, respectively. Jim was student council president. Janet was in the concert choir and involved in many activities, including playing violin in the orchestra and working on the school year-book. Bill Jr., in Moundridge High School, spent more time with the girls than Jim had at that age. He was involved in football (where he suffered a serious ACL knee injury), madri-gal singers, boys quartet, and in youth activities at Eden Mennonite Church. Sharon, in eighth grade at the King City (Elyria) grade school was elected to the cheerleader squad. Ruth, too, was happy in her new school where she was in the same grade with her Elyria cousin, Marvetta Stucky. Candy at home was "quite a talker" and a rapid learner of the ABC book. And, Meta wrote, "She also does helpful things like bringing a can of sand and dumping it on the living room floor."

For Meta the shift to year-round life on the farm near Elyria did not involve as many new challenges as did Bill's work at Bethel. Her work in the garden, the barnyard and the fields did increase somewhat. The number of milking cows also increased, and Meta had to take full responsibility for farm chores when Bill was on the road for Bethel. Jim, the oldest son, was not available for as much farm work as in past years. He had graduated from Bethel College in 1962, went off to graduate school 1962-3, and married Anna Kreider in August 1963. But Bill Jr., until he graduated from Bethel College and married Carita Preheim in July 1967, helped Bill Sr. with heavy farm labor. And Bill Sr. got the women of his family to help with field work as possible. After Bill Jr. was absent, Bill Sr. often hired Morris Stucky, son of Marjorie (Meta's sister) and Marvin Stucky, for farm work.

In 1963 Bill's brother-in-law, Robert Kaufman, husband of Bill's youngest sister, Martha, asked Bill if he would be interested in purchasing eighty acres of "Juhnke" land two miles northeast of Bill and Meta's farm. Kaufman needed cash to become a partner in the John Deere agency in McPherson. Bill, who at times in earlier years had rented this land from his father and then from Kaufman, was delighted to make the purchase. His job at Bethel College helped subsidize this expansion of the farm to just over 300 acres. The eighty acre field was adjacent to a forty acre field just to the north that Bill had bought from his father. The new eighty acres had earlier been the site of the homestead of Wesley Juhnke, Bill's uncle. Remnants of the old farmstead—decrepit sheds, broken down fences, limestone foundations of the house and farm, and an old windmill—remained to be removed. Bill also had rows of Osage orange trees on the south edge and in the interior bulldozed out so that all of the available land could get into production. The environmental movement had not yet sensitized the Juhnkes to the loss of habitat for birds and small animals that came with destruction of trees. Soil conservation doctrine in those years was focused less on the benefits of trees and more on the control of soil erosion through new tillage practices and through the development of terraces, waterways and cultivation on the contour.

Ever since his own high school and college years, Bill had delighted in the practice of debate and forensics. Now, as Bethel's debate coach, Bill worked at reviving the college's debate tradition. He enjoyed helping students gather information on the different public policy issues that changed each year. In the fall of 1961, the issue was "Resolved, to put labor unions under anti-trust legislation." The Bethel debate team that year had some notable success. Roger Neufeld and Gene Schmidt reached the quarterfinals in a tournament at Pittsburg State University with a 5-1 record, and won first place in a tournament at Rockhurst College in Kansas City, Missouri. In the spring of his first year at Bethel, Bill organized a debate

tournament that attracted ten schools and twenty teams. Bill invited Dr. Al Meyer, Bethel's academic dean, to welcome and address the visiting debaters "It is hoped," reported the *Collegian*, "that the local tournament is to become an annual event." And so it did.

*Bill Juhnke, Bethel debate coach,*
*with debate and forensics students.*

Bill's greatest success as Bethel College debate coach came in the two school years 1963-64 and 1964-65 when his son and namesake, Willam Juhnke Jr., was a freshman and sophomore at Bethel and a star on the debate squad. Bill Jr.'s classmate, Clayton Koppes, was also an exceptionally intelligent and articulate public speaker. Bill and Clayton had an excellent year as freshmen, doing especially well at a tournament in Ames, Iowa, where they won six rounds and lost none. At the Rockhurst College tournament, Bill Jr. received a trophy for the highest individual ratings. The two debaters ended that season with thirty-four wins and ten losses. The following year they broke all records. They ranked high in seven tournaments, won first at the Kansas Intercollegiate tournament in Emporia, and ended the season winning twenty-three out of twenty-six debates in their last four tournaments. The *Collegian* acclaimed it as "the most successful debate season in Bethel College history" (April 2, 1965). Bethel in 1964-65 also hosted a college debate tournament as well as a high school tournament, for

which Clayton and Bill, Jr. served as director and assistant director.

*Bethel debaters. Clayton Koppes on left, Bill Juhnke Jr. on right.*

As he had when he was a high school debate coach, Bill wrote public officials asking for materials on the debate topic of the year. In August 1965, he wrote on Bethel College letterhead to Representative Garner Shriver, Senator James Pearson, and Senator Frank Carlson to thank them for sending research materials. On each letter, after his statement of thanks, Bill went on to urge these men to resist the escalation of the war in Vietnam. In a follow up letter to Pearson, (February 4, 1966), Bill wrote, "Do you, Senator Pearson, actually see how little sense it makes to call North Viet Nam aggressors when we occupy the present position in South Vietnam . . .? Mennonite relief representatives have been in Vietnam for over ten years. We know how unwelcome we . . . are there at the present moment. If you do not know this, I beg you Senator Pearson that you make it a point to discover this without delay."

"The sixties are the activist years," wrote President Orville Voth in his annual report for 1967. "Bethel students have gone to Washington to express concern about nuclear fall-out

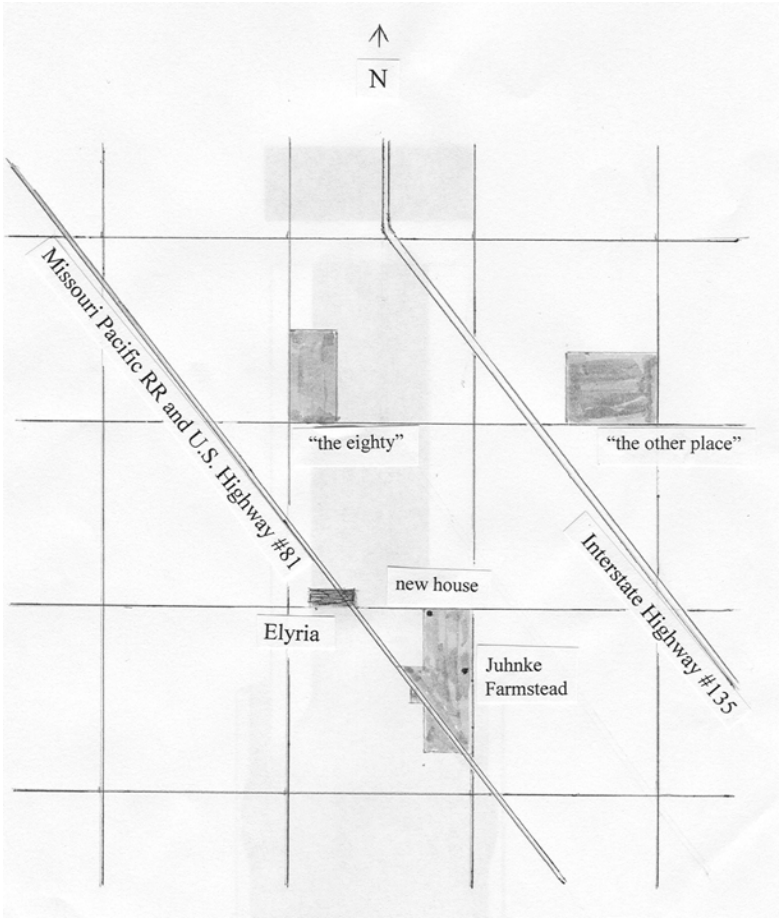
and about civil rights. They have gone to Montomery, Alabama, joining thousands of others in that march. They have had their own peace walk. They have questioned college action and policy on a host of issues. They continue to do so." Bill and Meta Juhnke supported the social and political activism of their children at Bethel. They were somewhat less pleased when their children were involved in efforts to challenge college rules—such as closing hours in the women's dormitory, or the prohibition of beer at college events. Perhaps Meta remembered her own college experience of sneaking in to the dormitory after hours.

In August 1963 Bill and Meta and their family, as well as some relatives, travelled to Wadsworth, Ohio, for the marriage of their son, Jim, to Anna Kreider. Anna was a graduate student in the English department at Indiana University. That fall Jim, who had taken one year at Vanderbilt Divinity School in Nashville, Tennessee, began graduate study in the history department at Indiana University.

Bill was disappointed when his contract at Bethel was not renewed in 1967. Orville Voth, Bethel's president, did not explain exactly the reason for the decision. Bill sensed that one issue was the surplus of Juhnke family members at Bethel and he wrote a letter to Voth (February 3, 1967) in which he addressed the family issue. There were indeed a lot of Juhnkes at Bethel in 1966-7. Bill Jr. was in the senior class; Sharon was a freshman; and Janet, having returned to teach at Bethel after earning a Master of Arts in Teaching degree at Northwestern University, taught in the English department. Janet planned to move on to graduate study at the University of Kansas in the fall of 1967. But Bethel had also hired Anna Kreider Juhnke to teach English and Jim Juhnke to teach history, and those looked to be long term appointments. In his letter to President Voth, Bill argued that Jim and Anna were members "of their own immediate family. Their earning and income from Bethel College is completely separate from mine."

It is likely that there were other issues in Bethel's decision to change admissions department personnel in 1967. It is possible that the Director of Development, Merle Bender, wanted his own team of younger admissions counselors. Bethel's administrators may have sensed that they were being short changed by Bill's divided attention between the college in North Newton and the farm near Elyria where he lived and worked. In any case, the job of admissions counselor was not typically a long term position at colleges like Bethel. Six years may have been longer than the average length of term.

So Bill and Meta in 1967 returned to the role of full time family farmers. Bill did not consider looking for a position as high school administrator such as he had held in Lehigh for eleven years. At age fifty-five he considered himself too far out of touch with school administration. He was gratified in the spring of 1968 when Howard Raid, President of Freeman Junior College, a Mennonite school in South Dakota, invited him to take a position there in public relations and admissions counseling. But Bill decided to decline the offer and to stay at home one mile east and a quarter south of Elyria. The loss of outside employment was a financial sacrifice, but the Juhnke farm land was paid for and the family was not financially stressed. Bill and Meta enjoyed farming, and there were ways to increase the farm income when they could give it their full attention. There were plenty of volunteer activities to make life meaningful in the networks of extended family, church, and local community.




*Map dated 1980, with Bill and Meta's land shaded gray. They purchased the "eighty" north of Elyria in 1950 and the south eighty acres of "the other place" from Robert Kaufman in 1963. They moved to their new house on the Elyria road in 1980.*

## Chapter 9. The Golden Years, 1967-84

When Bill and Meta Juhnke became full-time small family farmers in 1967, they were 55 and 51 years old. Their move to full-time farming was against the grain of American social and economic history. For most rural folk, this was an era of flight from the farm, rather than return to the farm. New agricultural technologies, specialization, and economies of scale on large corporate operations drove millions of small farmers to towns and cities. In the forty-six plus years that Bill and Meta operated their farm (1938 to 1984+) the number of US farm residents declined from 30.5 million to 6.1 million. In those same years, the average size of farms in Kansas more than doubled in size, from 300 to 650 acres. Bill and Meta's farm was 330 acres of non-irrigated land.

The price of wheat, which had been over two dollars per bushel for seven years in the early fifties, fell to unprofitable levels between 1964 and 1971. Shortly before wheat harvest in May 1967, Clarence Schrag, Bill's friend from the Eden Church, recruited him to join the McPherson County branch of the National Farmers Organization (NFO). With the price of wheat down to $1.19 in Elyria, the situation required more than, as Bill wrote, "to simply have faith in better days for the farmer." The NFO was a populist agrarian movement that gained a radical reputation from its "holding actions" to withhold food products, such as milk, from the market until prices went up or the food spoiled. Bill joined with other NFO members who negotiated collective contracts for the sale of wheat outside of the conventional market system that left individual farmers totally vulnerable. In 1973 the price of wheat spiked upward after the Soviet Union made an unprecedented purchase of grain. For several years farm incomes escalated and the NFO declined, even though rampant inflation increased farm expenses. Bill served as secretary of the Kansas Fourth District (five counties) NFO Convention in August, 1973, in

Newton, Kansas. That apparently was the district's last NFO meeting.

Bill and Meta were fortunate that their farm land was substantially paid for. In July 1968 they purchased a small house in North Newton that Meta's mother had lived in as a widow—perhaps anticipating that Meta might face similar widowhood in the future. Then she might have a place to live just a block from Jim and Anna's house in North Newton. Bill and Meta did not carry the large load of debt that drove so many over-capitalized farmers into bankruptcy when the grain price bubble burst in 1976 and 1977. Bill was able to purchase needed farm machinery at a manageable pace. In 1972 he bought a new Allis Chalmers 180 diesel tractor to supplement the older 1961 John Deere 3010 diesel tractor. The old Farmall H was still usable for small jobs, for loading manure, etc. In 1975 Bill bought a new Gleaner combine with an eighteen foot header—perhaps the most underused machine on the farm. Bill


*Bill Juhnke with Gleaner combine unloading wheat.*

did some custom combining for neighbors, but not enough to make a big difference in his bank balance. Their biggest in-

vestment in these years was a modern new house. In 1980 Bill contracted with his nephew, Keith Juhnke, to build a house that Meta had for decades yearned and agitated for. The new house was located near Elyria on the northwest corner of Juhnke farm land. In November 1980 they moved from the old farm house to the new house at Elyria.

With the help of the government Soil Conservation Service (CSC), Bill in the 1960s implemented a program to contain soil erosion and improve soil quality. Over a seven-year period he constructed terraces, developed waterways, began cultivating on the contour, and systematically planted legumes to improve soil fertility. In 1967 the McPherson County Conservation Service brought a bus tour group to the Juhnke farm. In his presentation to the group, Bill said that his own father, Ernest Juhnke, with all due respect, had been "mining the soil." Bill now wanted to turn over the land to the next generation in better condition than he had received it. He showed the group the booklets of soil maps and plans that the Conservation Service had provided for his farm. He said, "The idea is that each acre has certain needs for conserving practices and uses. The purpose is not only to hold water as it is now falling on the land and to hold the soil on the land, but actually to even improve the land through use of legumes, fertilizers, etc." On one field (the "120" a mile and a quarter north and a mile east of the home place), Bill had removed a half mile of Osage orange hedge and replaced part of it with a waterway of brome, bluestem and switchgrass. Bill preferred better tillage practices to control erosion rather than to maintain trees that took up space and sapped moisture. Bill also showed the tour group his new tool bar with different kinds of shovels, including chisels that could be used for deep tillage. As he wrote in a letter to his children, when the tour group departed, "The boss man said, 'Thanks Bill, you did an exceptionally fine job.'"

In 1969 Bill was one of five McPherson County farmers to receive a Bankers Award for Outstanding Soil Conservation

Work. The headline in the February 13 McPherson *Sentinel* said, "Former Teacher Puts His Soil Conservation Plans to Work." He had put in 6.7 acres of grassy waterways, built 1,293 feet of diversion terraces, and put in one grade stabilization structure. The article also reported that "Mrs. Juhnke helps with the farm work, such as driving the tractor while picking up bales of hay."

*Bill hauled alfalfa bales to sell in Hesston and McPherson. 1981-2.*

A detailed agriculture census that Bill and Meta filled out in January 1970, recording farm operations for the previous year, gave a snapshot of the extent and diversity of their farm operation. The farm included 330 acres, valued at $250 per acre. They had harvested four crops in 1969: wheat, sorghum (milo), soybeans and alfalfa. Wheat was dominant, with 162 fertilized acres and a yield of 4,050 bushels. Fifty acres were in sorghum, with 2,000 bushels harvested. Ten acres were in soybeans, with 260 bushels harvested. And thirty acres were in alfalfa, with 100 tons of hay harvested plus three acres harvested for seventy-five pounds of alfalfa seed.

Livestock on the Juhnke farm included twenty-nine cattle, including two milk cows. Thirty cattle had been sold in 1969. There were eight chickens and two hogs. Four hogs had been sold that year. Bill and Meta had paid only thirty-two dollars for commercial feed for the livestock. They were raising their own feed. They were eating eggs, meat, milk products and garden produce that they had grown on the farm. Another measure of their self-sufficiency was that they had paid only $270 for

farm labor in 1969. It is possible that some of that money went to their own children.

Juhnke farm income in 1969, in addition to sale of grains and alfalfa, included $2,515 from government farm subsidies, and $500 for custom combining. Total farm income was $6,820 more than total expenses. This was clearly a viable farm operation, even if it was not going to make Bill and Meta wealthy. There surely were fluctuations from year to year in the 1970s and 1980s, depending upon the weather and volatile grain prices. But this remained, as long as Bill's health allowed, a diversified family farm, focused mainly on wheat production. It represented a level of independence and self-sufficiency that were becoming increasingly rare on the American agriculture scene.

If Bill and Meta Juhnke were distressed or depressed about the bleak prospect of the small family farm in general, they did not talk or write about it. To be sure, they complained about low wheat prices and expensive equipment. But they loved their life on the farm and they held onto it as long as their health allowed. When they reached their sixty-fifth birthday they were eligible for Social Security payments and, for Bill, teacher retirement payments. Not only did Bill have a kind of mystical attachment to the land, he was also an incurable progressive who looked forward with optimism to the future. For him the cup was always half full, not half empty. Moreover, he was always convinced that progress toward realizing the kingdom of God on earth depended upon committed Christians who worked at the local level—in primary family, church and community contexts. In 1973, when challenged to write some lyrics for the centennial celebration of the Swiss-Volhynian migration to America, Bill offered some lines to counter the otherworldly emphasis of a proposed centennial hymn, "To God be the Glory." Bill's lyrics pointed forward to a greater future here "on earth." Jesus was to be seen "among us," rather

than just far away in heaven. Bill suggested the following verse.

> "Our Fathers have left us some things to be done,
> on Earth in our hearts are some victories not won.
> Ah, purer and higher and greater will be,
> the future among us as Jesus we see."

In May 1967 Bill Jr. graduated from Bethel College. In his class was Carita Preheim, from Freeman, South Dakota. Carita had completed the nursing program at Bethel Deaconness Hospital and had returned to Bethel for a liberal arts degree. She was a gifted musician and had been elected Bethel's homecoming queen. Bill and Carita were married June 1 at Carita's home church, Salem Mennonite, near Freeman. In the fall of 1968 they moved to Lawrence, Kansas, where Bill entered an American history graduate program to prepare for a college teaching career. To celebrate Bill and Carita's marriage, Jim and Anna composed some verses:

> "Football queen and opera star, Carita's quite a catch.
> She can bake a coffee cake and she can sew a patch.
> Dakota seems so far away, but though it's many a mile,
> Bill's married to a Schweizer—that's puttin' on the style."

Daughters Sharon and Ruth graduated from Moundridge High School in 1966 and 1968. Like their siblings, they made good grades, played musical instruments (alto saxophone and trombone respectively), participated in forensics and debate, and were active in church youth group activities. Sharon was Y-Teen president her senior year at Moundridge, as Janet had been at Lehigh. Sharon and Ruth both went on to Bethel College, where a spirit of student reform activism was flourishing, especially protests against the American war in Viet Nam. The failures of American foreign and domestic policies discredited the government and helped foster a counter-cultural youth

movement that was alienated from traditional authorities and values in general.

In 1969, her sophomore year at Bethel College, Ruth dropped out of school and moved away from home, as did tens of thousands of young people across the country in those years. After a time of traveling, Ruth found a new spiritual home in communal life with the Divine Light Mission, a rapidly growing religious movement led by a youthful guru from India, the Guru Maharaji. In 1979 she wrote to Jim and Anna, "It is a positive, beautiful, practically constructive path for me—I like it, I love it; it feels good; it feels right; it feels healing . . . I know I must follow my heart—follow that pull to what I deeply and conscientiously know is true and is the source of love for me." Ruth lived in an ashram in Denver, and made a three week pilgrimage to India. She did not cut herself off from the Juhnke family, however. She kept in touch with her parents through letters and frequent visits back to the farm by Elyria. She saw the teachings of peace in that group as consistent with, even a fulfillment of, the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition.

Bill and Meta struggled to understand Ruth's new life. Meta worried that the Divine Light Mission was a "cult." She wrote to Ruth that she knew of parents who had kidnapped their children from the Divine Light Mission and had them "deprogrammed." But she said, "We have never seriously considered anything like that so don't worry." In January 1970 Bill Sr. wrote a long, and at times anguished ("Oh! To be WHOLE again!"), letter to his son, Bill Jr., about Ruth. Bill Sr. had long seen himself as a reform-minded liberal who supported positive change—even revolutionary change. Now, in the face of the new youth movement, "I get caught being a Redcoat. A paternalistic, Mennonite, establishment Redcoat." Bill Sr. got some help in reading a book that Janet had given him for Christmas in 1968, *Growing Up Absurd*, by Paul Goodman. In early 1971 Bill read the popular book by Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America.* Reich acclaimed the rise, and alleged forthcoming

triumph, of a new cultural consciousness that was transforming the country nonviolently and nonpolitically. He scorned an outdated liberal consciousness that sought change through "a massive effort at organizing: an effort directed at politics and law." Here Bill wrote in the margin, "N. F. O.," referring to his own role in the kind of interest group politics that Reich disparaged.

As time passed, Bill and Meta's fears about Ruth were moderated. In October 1974 Bill wrote to the family that Ruth had reported there were fourteen Divine Light Mission ashrams in Denver. He was pleased that Ruth benefited from a supportive community. He wondered if the group was undergoing a typical American process, akin to that outlined in a book he had read long ago, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* by Richard Niebuhr. In the early 1980s Maharaji dissolved the Divine Light Mission organization and ashram system in America. Ruth moved to Kansas City and found employment as a law librarian and receptionist. She later reflected, "It was an adjustment for me going out into the 'world,' basically making my way on my own, after twelve years of group support. In one way, I had gone from a Mennonite cocoon to a group cocoon that was practicing an Eastern influenced way of life." In Kansas City Ruth pursued her own interests—singing, taking drama classes, and theater. She eventually with her husband, Chester White, attended a Religious Science Church that was open to spiritual diversity, including her own Eastern-oriented beliefs. Ruth maintained high regard for her Christian Mennonite heritage as well as for Maharaji and his ongoing ministries.

Sharon graduated from Bethel College in the spring of 1970. She was engaged to marry Richard Harris, a Bethel student who had grown up in New Jersey. Sharon changed plans for a trip to Europe that summer to work in the political campaign of her brother, Jim, to be elected to the United States Congress. (Jim won the Democratic primary in August but lost

*Quilting the quilt Sharon made for Celeste out of scraps from her dresses. L to R: Sharon Harris, Candace Unrau, Anna Juhnke, Carita Juhnke. June 1982.*

to the incumbent congressman, Garner Shriver, in the November general election.) On October 24, ten days before the election, Sharon and Richard were married at a ceremony in the "Juhnke grove." Esko Loewen, dean of students at Bethel College, performed the ceremony. The outdoor setting was spectacularly beautiful, with fall colors in the pasture at their peak and with the black and white Holstein cows looking on. Sharon and Richard began their married life in Topeka, Kansas, where they attended a hatha yoga class and were introduced to the Ananda Marga movement, with its disciplines of meditation, yoga and self-development. The middle name of their first child, Celeste Jinanam Harris, born October 17, 1973, means "divine wisdom" in Sanskrit.

Candy (short for Candace Sue) was nine years younger than Ruth, so Ruth was already attending Moundridge High School when Candy started attending King City primary school in 1965. Bill and Meta were somewhat self-conscious that they were older than the parents of Candy's classmates at King City Grade School and Moundridge. In fact, Candy helped keep them feeling young and in touch with a younger generation. As Candy later remembered, "My days growing up on the Elyria farm include rich memories of a stay-at-home mother, who was

steady and reliable, always available to meet whatever need arose. It was no problem for her to design a Rumpelstiltskin costume for me without a pattern. I could always volunteer my mother to bring treats or cookies for a school event." The King City school in Elyria closed in 1972, after Candy's sixth grade there. That was a sad event for Bill, who had attended primary school (1916-24), taught the lower grades (1933-35) and the upper grades (1946-48), and served several times on the King City school board.

Bill and Meta's hospitality and vigorous engagement of their children's friends who visited the farm, invariably made an impression on such visitors. One of them, Dennis Doyle, a friend of Richard Harris from New Jersey, later wrote to Sharon, "Your dad was the first avowed pacifist I knew. I remember sitting in the living room of the farmhouse in Kansas . . . I was struck by (Bill's) conviction. I had never had a talk like that with an adult." Doyle was also impressed by the "conservation" on the farm. "Everything was jarred and home grown. Even the windmill power generator (that captured natural energy and left no pollution) inspired me to be more environmentally conscious."

*Meta has Bill test the casserole for the rehearsal dinner before the wedding of Janet Juhnke and Ted Hale. 1975.*

*Bill Juhnke Sr. acting in a charades game. 1975.*

While studying in the English department at the University of Kansas, Janet met Ted Hale from upper New York state, who was also studying English. Janet and Ted were married in the Eden Mennonite Church on December 27, 1975. It was, as Jim wrote the next day, "a beautiful wedding, with string quartet music, dark velvet gowns, and excellent candid photography." (Jim was the candid photographer.) A special feature of the wedding ceremony was a conversation between Janet and Ted in which they talked about their relationship, how they were alike and different from each other, and how they related to family and friends. Jim found it "natural and spontaneous—really nice." The wedding brought the entire Juhnke family together for the first time in several years. For three evenings in a row the family played charades—a favorite game that indulged the Juhnke family's penchant for word play, brisk competition, creative gesture, and raucous laughter.

In the 1970s Bill turned his creative energies to the writing of local histories and family dramas. Between 1972 and 1976 he researched and wrote a series of articles about local villages, townships and school districts. The articles, richly illustrated with historical photographs, were published in the Moundridge *Journal.* Bill's research involved investigation of published and unpublished sources, in addition to personal visits with old-timers to get their stories of the early days of settlement. The articles carried titles such as "Criss-crossing

the Turkey Creek in Fact and Fancy," "The Real Story Behind King City," and "Looking into Lone Tree Township." The writing was personal, folksy and impressionistic. Along with the historical information and anecdotes, Bill invoked a broader significance for his stories by quoting from famous philosophers such as Bertrand Russell and historians such as Arnold Toynbee. In his Turkey Creek article, for example, Bill wrote, "There were times when freedom and community were hard to keep in right balance. There were the unregenerate and the self-centered. There were those struck by the malady which Toynbee would call 'Ego-centric.' (Toynbee) sees this as a remaining, central problem for Western man." In another article, Bill tossed in an imagined conversation with Henry Ford, taking issue with Ford's statement that "history is bunk."

Bill received many laudatory comments on his writing. One person wrote to the *Journal* editor about one article, "Mr. Juhnke did a marvelous job in his research. It must have taken much time and patience on his part." In a letter to his children, Bill wrote, "We have gotten no end of comments practically all of enthusiastic interest in the story." One of Bill's friends, Herb Stucky, told him that he subscribed to the Moundridge *Journal* just to read Bill's stories. The entire set of articles might have been edited and made available as a separate publication. But Bill did not pursue that option. The articles were very dependent upon the photographs, which he had returned to their owners. He probably suspected that his writing was too eccentric and disjointed to be published in pamphlet or book form.

In the spring of 1973 Bill fulfilled a life-long dream by joining an Anabaptist-Mennonite historical tour group to the homeland of his ancestors in Western Europe and the Ukraine. Harley Stucky, Bill's former student in Moundridge High School, was the leader of this "Agro-cultural" tour. Bill's report of the tour reflected upon the differences between the migrants of 1874 and the tourists a century later. The tour was a good warm-up for the Swiss Volhynian celebrations in 1974

of the centennial of their immigration to America. Bill compiled an extensive Mennonite history study guide for the event. The Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association (SMCHA) organized a series of public events for the celebration. At the site of the original immigrant house near the Hopefield Church, they created an impressive historical monument—a large globe topped by a cross and surrounded by bronze plaques that told the story of the life and faith of the Swiss Volhynian immigrants. In subsequent years Bill was active as a member and officer of SMCHA, as well as of the McPherson County Historical Society.

In 1976 Bill turned to writing historical dramas for the local stage. The first one, titled "Our Town-Our Country" was sponsored by the Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association (SMCHA) and produced two evenings in September at the Moundridge High School Auditorium. The drama was a remarkable ethnic celebration of the national bicentennial that brought together Anabaptist/Mennonite symbols and American national icons in unprecedented ways. A prologue about the Anabaptist suffering and steadfastness in sixteenth century Switzerland was followed by an opening act that featured the voices and views of Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin and Abe Lincoln. Act II included scenes of frontier life in Moundridge, Kansas, and climaxed with an antiphonal reading of "I am the nation" and the audience singing "The Light of the World is Jesus." Elaine Sommers Rich, writer for *Mennonite Weekly Review*, saw "Our Town-Our Country" and commented favorably in her column: "The antiphonal reading at the end pointed away from narrow nationalism toward a universal loyalty to mankind everywhere."

Also in 1976 Bill wrote a play that he titled, "Bi-Centennial Glimpses of King City." That play was not produced on stage. But the following year Bill wrote a more ambitious family history drama for the Napoleon R. Kaufman family reunion (his mother's relatives), produced November

26, 1977, at the Moundridge High School auditorium. This one was titled, "Fannie and Napoleon, They Brought Us To Be." Bill involved wider family members in gathering stories, sending out a questionnaire, interviewing family elders, as well as recruiting family members to take small roles in the drama. Bill wrote, "A family drama is something of a new idea among us. A mixture of both lore and reality, it is hoped the play will inspire all . . . ." The play included sober moments such as the congregation's use of the lot to choose a new leader, as well as humorous moments such as an argument over which breed of horses was better—Percheron or Belgian.

In 1980 Bill revised and expanded his "Fannie and Napoleon" play for a wider Kaufman family reunion at Bethel College. He called his more expansive version "From Steffisberg Into All the World." It ended with an antiphonal reading, "Heroes of 1874-1980," with ten four-line verses. The verses were notable for internal rhyme. For example: "On the hills in peaceful slumber, Rest our loved ones pure and true. Many of their silent number, Having toiled for me and you." And finally, "Awake, Come to, Arise! Go Forth! All of you who know and can; Heaven's grace may yet be open, Now lead forth ye Kaufman Clan." The following year, 1981, Bill wrote and directed another family reunion "multi-media dramatization," this one for a Stucky reunion and titled "Sojourns of a Family." The program listed sixty-four cast members, most of whom had brief roles in short scenes representing their ancestors.

Meta Juhnke was not a world traveler. In 1973 she declined to go along with Bill on the Agrocultural Mennonite history tour to Europe. But in July of 1976, the American centennial year, she seized an opportunity to exhibit her foodmaking skills at the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife on the National Mall in Washington D.C. Her companion at the event was Esther (Mrs. Lester) Schmidt, from the Alexanderwohl community. Esther made "New Years

Cookies," a favorite Low German ethnic food—deep fat fried yeast dough balls with raisins. Also representing the Kansas Mennonites at the Folklife festival was a four-member "Schweitzer ensemble" of banjos and mandolins. During the evenings in Washington D.C., Meta and Esther attended special events such as a concert in the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Meta had won the honor of going to Washington D.C. when a Smithsonian representative from the Division of Performing Arts had visited Moundridge, Kansas, and tasted her homemade cheese. On the Juhnke farm Meta made cheese from surplus milk for her family and for neighbors. It took two gallons of milk to produce two pounds of cheese. At the Folklife Festival she had to use pasteurized milk, which required the addition of buttermilk and an extra two hours of processing. "It will taste a little different," she told a news reporter, "but they'll never know the difference." Meta seemed surprised by all the fuss made over simple ways of cooking that she had learned from her grandmother. She did not consider herself an exceptionally great cook. "My cooking improves the further from home my children get," she said. Her photo and story appeared in the local newspapers from Moundridge, McPherson and Hutchinson. Meta had never been such a celebrity.

Candy and Bill wrote letters to Meta in Washington, D.C., reassuring her that things were in good hands at home during her absence. They were picking green beans and sweet corn from the garden, and Candy was helping Bill in the field ("the 120") with the disc and plow. "I'd just as soon be in the field as in the garden," Candy wrote. She also went for piano practice with her good friend, Dorothy Stucky. By the time Meta returned, Candy had left with members of the Eden church youth group for a three-week youth camp in Meridian, Mississippi. Back home after her adventure, Meta wrote in her diary, "Everything ship shape at home without me."

In May of 1979, Meta and Bill attended a concert by the Bethel College concert choir, with Candy singing in the soprano section. In a round robin letter to her siblings, Meta noted that this marked the end of an era. "This may be the last concert including one of our children. It's been a wonderful thirty years more or less beginning with Janet's violin recitals and including band, piano, choirs, drama, etc." In good years and lean, Meta and Bill had sacrificed time and money to provide for music lessons for their children—not to mention nagging time for Meta to get them to practice. That effort had been rewarded.

During the 1970s and 1980s Bill gave repeated attention to Juhnke family history. He and Meta made a trip to Knox County, Nebraska, to visit the site of his grandparents' original homestead. He undertook a correspondence with Barbara Beitzel, a distant cousin who had written a family history of descendants of August and Alwina Yuhnke. August (1866-1936) was the son of Bill's great aunt Fredricka. In 1978 Beitzel came to Kansas for a Suenram family reunion and visited at length with Bill and Meta. They later reciprocated with a visit to California to see where the Yuhnke branch of the family had located.

In 1981 Bill wrote a nine-page history of the Juhnke homestead from 1886 forward in the voice of the large cottonwood tree that stood just east of the farm house. He titled the story "A Tree Speaks." Two years later, In 1983, Bill compiled his most extensive history of his own Juhnke family—a 37-page mimeographed and spiral-bound document of family stories and photographs. On the front cover was the title "Juhnke" and an image of his grandfather Carl Juhnke. The narrative took shape as a response to a request for family information from Kevin Neufeld, the grandson of Bill's sister, Alvina Juhnke Neufeld. Alvina had died early in 1983. Bill's family history was both a tribute to his sister and an attempt to pass on the family heritage to future generations.

*Bill Sr. holding grandchildren Joanne and Kevin. Ca. 1969.*

Bill and Meta were delighted with the birth of each of their grandchildren. (See Appendix A, page 199, for names and dates.) For example, Bill celebrated the birth of Carrie Juhnke, who was born January 16, 1978 with a twelve verse poem that had the marks of Bill's writing—traditional sentiment, social and political challenge, and a call to new hope and awakening. The first and the final verses were as follows:

> Little drops of water, Little grains of sand,
> Make the mighty ocean, and the pleasant land.
> . . . .
> Should you then be happy, with Watergate and such,
> Polluted air and water that trouble us so much?
>
> Tainted drops of water, tarnished grains of sand
> Make a mighty ocean and a pleasant land?
>
> Not so, "A child shall lead them!"
> Awake ye Sons of earth!
> New Hope has come to us, Rejoice in Carrie's birth.

On June 1, 1979, Candy Juhnke married Vance Unrau in the presence of nearly four hundred guests at the Eden Mennonite Church. Meta wrote in her diary that day, "Everything went well—beautiful vows—Candy was happy." Vance was from the Alexanderwohl Mennonite community. More than

one guest commented that this was another crossing of the cultural divide between the Swiss-Volhynian and the Dutch-Russian Low German Mennonite traditions. The young couple had both completed their sophomore years at Bethel College, with Candy looking forward to a nursing career and Vance preparing for a career in high school teaching and coaching. Their first home was the house in North Newton where Grandma Katie Goering had lived. Eventually they moved to Moundridge, geographically closer to Bill and Meta than Candy's siblings. That close proximity enabled Candy's family to spend more time with her parents in their later years.

*The family at Bill and Meta's 45th wedding anniversary, June 7, 1982. (Last names are Juhnke unless indicated otherwise) Back: Kevin, Bill Jr., Carita, Anna, Joanne, Jim, Janet, Ted Hale; Middle: Vance and Candace Unrau, Bill Sr., Meta, Sharon Harris, Ruth; Front: Carrie, Eric, Carl, Celeste Harris and Abram Harris. Absent: Richard Harris.*

"Father time and older years are catching up with Meta and me too," wrote Bill in a 1983 Christmas letter to his uncle,

Menno Kaufman, weeks before Bill's 72nd and Meta's 68th birthdays in January 1984. There had been hospitalizations that were reminders of mortality. In 1969 Meta had had her gall bladder removed, and later a pre-cancerous skin growth removed from her face. In 1977 Bill had spent time in the hospital for what he thought was a heart problem, but turned out to be an ulcer on his duodenum. The following year, 1978, he had undergone back surgery at St. Francis Hospital in Newton. That surgery had moderated the back pains that had been bothering him for decades, but he had reacted adversely to some medications in ways that foreshadowed problems for future surgeries.

*Bill and Meta in poppyseed garden behind the house by the Elyria road, Spring 1982.*

As the years passed, Bill and Meta had gradually simplified and reduced their farming and gardening operations. They planted less milo and more wheat. They stopped milking cows—which meant that Meta did not have fresh whole milk for making cheese. They used the garden more for pleasure than for the production of staples. They increasingly took advantage of commercial canned and frozen produce. They were

more inclined to eat meals at restaurants, especially at Bill's favorite Kentucky Fried Chicken in McPherson. Bill was noticing chest pains that would need more radical attention than the medications he was already taking. Father Time was indeed catching up.

## Chapter 10. Celebrating Life and Facing Death, 1984-96

"If I lived 930 years as Methusela . . ." mused Bill Juhnke on April 25, 1984, 3:15 p.m. in his room at St. Francis hospital in Wichita. But Bill was not Methusela. His heart was giving out. He wrote, "I would rather transmit my thoughts at age 72 even facing heart surgery than from the grave or from a future 800+ years hence." The result was ten pages of diary-style observations and reporting, written in Bill's strong hand with a ball point pen pressed hard onto the paper. Two days later he underwent heart surgery, followed by complications that slowed his mental and physical functioning for the remaining seven years of his life. Meta, as promised in their wedding vows, remained at his side throughout, "in sickness and in health."

Bill's hospital diary, as his earlier writing at emotionally charged moments, revealed again that it was not easy for him to express affection or to engage in serious reflection about the meaning of life and death. He was more inclined to humor. When a nurse leaving his room asked if he needed anything, he said, "I was ready for . . . maybe a shot of whiskey which I don't usually drink." The nurse left with a smile, saying "If you find some, let me know and I'll join you." He had brought along three books to the hospital: One was a book of quotations from his daughter, Janet. One was *Come to the Party*, by Karl Olsson, a gift from his daughter-in-law, Anna. The third was *Anatomy of An Illness* by Norman Cousins. Bill chose to read the book about life, *Come to the Party*, which he described as "an invitation to a freer life style. He is Evangelical Covenant. The first 25 p. appeal."

From his hospital bed, Bill wrote a four-page letter to a member of his Sunday School class at the Eden Church summarizing the class's discussion of questions from the Western

District Conference Ministerial Committee. He visited with a goodly number of family and friends who came to his room or called by telephone, including his pastor, Walter Neufeld. He read the daily newspaper, approving a "terrific column" by journalist Tom Wicker about President Ronald Reagan's "overkill in Central America." Meta, who was reading *Newsweek* magazine, cut out a story on the scientist peace advocate, Linus Pauling. Bill commented, "There is so much good sense but people want nonsense."

Bill's surgery on April 27 was a quadruple bypass. After the surgery he was exceptionally restless. The pain medication seemed to make him agitated. A brain scan revealed, as Meta recorded, "that he had indeed had a light stroke, perhaps even a previous one." His sternum did not heal properly, and, on May 10, he underwent a second surgery. Recovery was slow, but Bill was able to go home from the hospital on May 23. In the succeeding weeks and months, despite gradual improvement, it became clear that Bill had sustained permanent damage. Those closest to Bill saw his personality changed. He refused to admit that he had had a stroke, or to allow anyone else to talk about it. He was more prone to angry outbursts and to paranoid accusations about other people. Worried about what Bill might do on an irrational impulse, Jim took the rifle from the farm to his home in North Newton.

Jim was free in the summer of 1984 from his teaching job at Bethel College to take more responsibility for his father and for the upcoming wheat harvest. Realizing that Bill would not be a safe driver, Jim, with Meta's approval, took away the keys to Bill and Meta's car. Bill threatened to see an attorney to get the keys back. In mid-June as the wheat harvest approached and the wheat combine was in the yard, Jim unfortunately left the keys in the combine. Bill managed to get into the combine cab, start the machine, drive into the wheat field near the house, and thresh some twenty bushels of unripe wheat so green that the augur could not turn it out of the bin. The wheat

had to be thrown away. Meta and Jim reprimanded Bill. But Bill could not restrain his grinning delight that he had proved that he had recovered sufficiently from his surgery to be the first farmer in the neighborhood to thresh some wheat that year. Jim confiscated the combine keys. Eventually a good crop of wheat was harvested.

On July 9 Meta took Bill to Wichita for a physical check-up. The doctor reported that "Bill has done well for as rough a time as he had but he shouldn't try to do as much as he did when he was young." As he gradually became stronger, Bill ignored the doctor's advice. In late July he was out on the field with tractor and plow turning under the wheat stubble. On August 12, he agreed, to Meta's alarm, to preside at an Eden church congregation meeting. In her diary Meta recorded with evident relief that he had done "ok." Moreover, two Eden Sunday School classes elected Bill to be their teacher. He started teaching on August 26. When Jim later thanked one of the Sunday School class members for their patience with a teacher who had impaired speaking and thinking abilities, the class member said, "Bill is still a better teacher than the alternatives we have." Apparently Bill was regaining his old trademark ability to ask interesting and provocative questions.

The car was a major symbol of autonomy. Jim wanted Bill to take and pass a driver's test with Kansas Department of Transportation, but that agency said they had no way to withdraw a license from someone who still had a valid driver's license. Finally, after a couple of driving "lessons" with his father, Jim returned the car keys, though he remained unconvinced that Bill was a safe driver. As it turned out, Bill did not have any major car accidents. He did manage repeatedly to scrape the side of car on the garage entryway, both at the house by Elyria and later, after they moved to Moundridge, the garage door sides at their Memorial Home apartment. Bill also struggled to regain mastery of his typewriter. Within two years he was typing letters to his children reasonably well.

Although Bill was reluctant to give up farming entirely, he did reduce his farm operations. Bill and Meta arranged for Floyd Gehring, auctioneer and fellow member at Eden, to take thirteen of their cattle to Hutchinson for sale. Meta recorded that the cattle were sold for a little over five thousand dollars. In the fall of 1984, the "Unraus," a family corporation led by Vance (Candy's husband) Unrau's brothers, harvested the milo. Bill continued to farm the land adjacent to the original homestead, but the Unrau corporation rented the other two hundred acres. Bill continued to enjoy his reduced farm operation. In 1986 he reported in a letter to Sharon that the wheat had yielded from forty to fifty bushels per acre, "and I got it all plowed in June for the first time in my life."

In August 1984 Bill and Meta "recorded the deeds" for their children to receive an inheritance of forty acres each. Ruth's part in the inheritance remained in limbo, however, as Bill and Meta were worried that it would end up as property of the Divine Light Mission, where Ruth had taken a vow of poverty, chastity and obedience. Also, Bill hesitated because the forty acres available for Ruth, south of the old house, was bisected by highway #81 and therefore not an equal share. Eventually, after Bill died, Ruth received a full cash equivalent of forty acres from the estate. She had left the Divine Light Mission and was living in Kansas City. She invested the inheritance money in a house for herself there. Bill would have been proud of his daughter's investment.

Despite advancing age and health problems, Meta and Bill were able to host guests in their home by Elyria. On January 20, 1985, for example, Jim brought eighteen members of his history class for Sunday dinner—after they had attended early Catholic mass in Newton and a morning Holdeman Mennonite worship service. Meta and Bill eagerly got information from their guests, especially delighting in foreign students and in grandchildren of their friends. After dinner on such occasions,

Meta would get out her quilts to show the group. Bill turned the conversation to politics and the state of the world.

*Meta prepares the Thanksgiving feast, 1984.*

One point of minor contention in the Juhnke family had to do with the eroding moral code that forbade, among other special farm activities, the harvesting of wheat on Sunday. To the dismay of Meta and other family members, Bill was powerfully tempted to trespass a rule that he had observed all of his life. Perhaps his moral controls had been affected by his stroke. On July 16, 1985, Jim wrote in a family letter, "It is hard on Dad that so many others (esp. the Unraus) are cutting wheat on Sunday. He threatened to go out with the combine this afternoon—but all the rest of us protested. The forecast is for good weather, the wheat is still a little green, and they don't need the money desperately, besides which the Lord set aside the Sabbath for rest." But Jim also had to admit that on Sunday afternoon he had unloaded a pickup full of manure from the farm on his compost pile in North Newton, and asked Joanne to harvest beans from the garden.

On Sunday June 7, 1987, Bill and Meta's six children hosted a 50th wedding anniversary celebration for their parents at the Eden Mennonite Church. They served about a hundred

people for lunch, mostly Bill and Meta's brothers and sisters ("*geschwister,*" wrote Meta in her diary, showing her preference for German words that were more efficient than their English equivalents) and their families. Relatives came from California, Colorado, Arizona and Florida. For the two o'clock afternoon program the six children gave a readers theater presentation of family memories and tributes. Meta's sisters Mary Ann and Marjorie had "engineered" the making of a surprise quilt. Bill and Meta shook the hands of some three hundred people who attended the afternoon reception. Afterwards the primary family went to the Elyria home for more conversation, games and leftovers. It was, Meta said, a "Great day!"

*Meta and Bill Juhnke at their 50th wedding anniversary, June 7, 1987.*

Before the celebration, Bill Jr. had written to Bill and Meta's relatives and friends inviting them to send letters of greeting and reminiscence to be assembled in a plastic binder. Eighty-five persons or couples responded with messages, some including photographs. Bill and Meta greatly enjoyed reading and re-reading these documents of review and appreciation of their lives. Some quotations (not including those by Bill and Meta's children):

Richard Schrag: "I always considered Bill as being quite daring. . . . (In one speech he said) 'The weather is so dry and times are so tough that the farmers can't even raise a corn cob to wipe the (pause) sweat off their brow.'"

Elizabeth Goering: "Visiting with you has always been comfortable, interesting, and most certainly delightful—no matter what the subject matter: us local Democrats, national politics, theology, Anabaptist history. . . ."

Herbert C. Stucky: "We were especially interested in William Juhnke's writings in the Moundridge Journal about the School Districts and Teachers and surrounding Communities."

Elda Waltner: "It used to be only old people celebrated a golden anniversary. Now it happens to young couples as well."

Edna Goering Kaufman: "You (Bill) were a super actor but not always the easiest to follow with the script. You did a lot of ad-libbing and the clue line wasn't always the same. I believe it was in our first play, Yimmie Yohnson's Yob where one time you weren't sure of your lines and for an excuse to get off the stage you looked out the window and said, 'Oh, the pigs are out. I must get them back.' And out you went."

Verna Flickinger: "When Meta and I were teenagers we walked upstairs to Sunday School class and she was several steps in front of me and more girls, and one of my girlfriends whispered to me, 'Meta's face is so pretty it reminds me of an angel.'"

Emma Stucky: "Meta it was always a pleasure working besides you in Ladies Aid. . . You taught me such a valu-

able hint—marking quilt blocks with a sliver of soap and I've been doing it ever since."

Alvin and Marie Schrag: "You are a great Sunday School teacher and I enjoyed being in your class. Both of us enjoyed you the year you taught Mennonite History at Eden."

Ed R. Stucky: "I recall that Model A car Bill had with a rumble seat. This was very useful in courting one of the brightest students in Moundridge High School."

George Buhr: "Our family enjoyed many hours in your comfortable (Lehigh) home, and we remember that most visits included a treat of hot, delicious popcorn which Jim popped up."

Mrs. Lester Goering: "Bill has been a history buff from way back. As I remember in grade school Willie, as Bill was called then, spent a whole recess with the teacher on their history lesson that they had that day. If I remember right the teacher was Arnold Stucky and Bill was in the 7th grade."

Jean Hassman: "When you, Bill and Meta, became Democrats, you might have gone against some family traditions! But after considering the issues, especially those related to peace and justice, you folks became loyal party members who practiced effective teamwork in leading the struggle for those less fortunate than the majority."

Walt Neufeld: "You were well read, and continued to work at intellectual and spiritual growth all the time. TV somehow never burned up your minds. You were inquisitive, open, always in search of truth, no matter where it would lead. . . . You were good teachers, good theologi-

ans, and supporters of higher Christian education. Above all, you were first and foremost, supporters of the church."

Peter Dyck: "Mention the name Juhnke and my mental retrieval system instantly flashes on the screen the Juhnke farm with its Juhnke grove used by Eden for church and Sunday School picnics."

Lavina Ediger Goering: "Thank you for all the talents your children shared with us—piano, violin and all the wit from your talented family speakers."

Bill and Meta had contributed generously to the founding and development of the Memorial Home just south of Moundridge, which had served as a retirement home beginning in 1958. By the 1980s, the complex had expanded to include facilities for independent living, dependent living, and nursing care. Bill remembered the difficult final years and months of his grandfather Carl Juhnke's life, noting that the family could have used such a facility then. But Bill believed that people who were still able to take care of themselves should not move to a retirement center. He adamantly refused suggestions that it would be best for him and Meta to make the move while they were in reasonably good health.

Then on January 9, 1990, still at the house by Elyria, Bill's declining health collapsed definitively. He became "delirious" and that morning fell into the bathtub when Meta was trying to help him get dressed for the day. Meta called neighbors to get him out of the tub and transport him to the Bethel Deaconess Hospital in Newton. It soon became clear that the time to move to Moundridge had come, and that Meta and Jim should get legal authority to do so. With her family's help, Meta on January 22 made a down payment on an apartment at Pine Village, adjacent to the Moundridge Memorial Home. The next day they moved furniture, kitchen items, and other things from the Elyria house to the Pine Village apartment. On Janu-

ary 23, Bill was moved from Bethel Deaconess Hospital in Newton to a "respite care" room at Mercy Hospital in Moundridge. A therapist who came to his room asked some questions. "How many fingers am I holding up? (6)" "Four," replied Bill. "What are your goals in life?" Said Bill, revealing primal priorities, "I want to drive my car again. And I want to attend the dedication of the new Eden Church." After a month, he had recovered sufficiently in mind and body to accept a move to the Pine Village apartment. Meta wrote in her diary that night, "Candy, Tara and I got Bill home from Mercy Hospital at 1 p.m. So far, so good." "Home" was now at Pine Village.

*New Eden Mennonite Church, built 1989-90.*

The apartment for independent living that Meta so quickly learned to call "home" was where they lived together until Bill died just over a year later (February 14, 1991). Then Meta lived there alone until she fell and broke her hip not quite five years later (October 2, 1994). Meta's role in her final year with Bill was akin to that of a full-time caregiver, especially in the later months. He always yearned to return to the farm where he could check out the farmstead or chop weeds and trim trees in the pasture. On March 16, 1990, Meta recorded in her diary that Bill had "walked to the Home and asked if he could put up a request for a ride to Elyria. Lois (Memorial home adminis-

trator) asked him if his wife knew he was there. He said yes he told her." Lois called Meta to learn the truth.

With the passing of time Bill recovered enough to be able to drive the car and get himself to the farm by himself, but Meta always wondered if he would find his way back. On one occasion he filled the car with gas at a self-help pump at the Moundridge Co-op station and forgot to go in and pay for the gas. Someone at the Co-op fortunately saw him drive off and telephoned the Juhnke apartment. Bill immediately returned to pay the bill. Fortunately they lived in a small town community where everyone knew everyone and realized what was going on.

*The last photo taken of Bill and Meta and their children, Candace, Janet, Sharon, Bill Jr., Ruth, and Jim. September 1990.*

On Christmas Day 1990, Meta wrote "Bill hasn't improved. He still seems to be in the denial stage." Meta could not share the most private details in her letter, but one reality Bill had trouble accepting was that sexual relations were no longer possible for him. Dr. Kaufman had been quite forthright on the point. Bill's condition and the medications he was taking ruled out sex. Nevertheless, Bill would blame Meta when he

couldn't perform. Meta wrote, "I'm trying but find myself getting impatient too often. It would be worse if he had to take care of me."

Meta's caring for Bill was complicated by her own physical infirmities. For years she had to deal with pains in her feet that the doctors identified vaguely as "peripheral neuritis" and for which the prescribed circulation medicine did not work. She had no more luck with acupuncture or reflexology. In addition she was afflicted by macular degeneration, an eye disease that prevented her, after about 1988, from continuing her beloved work of quilting. She continued reading with magnifying glasses as long as she could.

Bill's final decline moved quite rapidly. On January 26, 1991, he was admitted to Mercy Hospital in Moundridge. On February 6 he was removed to nursing care at the Memorial Home where he soon lost his ability to take adequate nourishment to stay alive. Meta, with the support of her children, made the difficult decision not to arrange for intravenous feeding. He died on February 11. The community network of support swung into action with donated food, gifts of flowers and expressions of condolence. The funeral at the Eden Church was well attended and included the customary elements: burial service in the cemetery just west of the church; separate family sharing prior to the main service; singing by the Eden men's chorus (twenty-three voices singing "In the Rifted Rock I'm Resting" and "O Mein Jesu Du Bist Wert"); tribute by the oldest child; sermon by Ed Stucky, Bill's former high school student; meal of sandwiches, chips and pie; and a time for wider sharing of memories with Bill Jr. presiding at the microphone.

Though her grief was profound, Meta soon learned to take advantage of her freedom from full-time caregiving. One major task was preparation for the sale on June 1, 1991, of the farm homestead, the farm tools and machinery, and accumulated

goods of a lifetime. It was an occasion for more family sharing and bonding as they made decisions about what items to distribute to the children and what to let go. Two nights before the sale, a windstorm blew down the large old mulberry tree west of the house that had grown up with Bill in his early years and for decades had provided large sweet mulberries for the Juhnke family. The family speculated that the tree had decided it didn't care to continue living if Bill Juhnke was not going to be there. The sale was well attended and the bidding for major items was brisk. The family was pleased with the financial results.

In Bill's absence Meta was able to take advantage of social, cultural and educational events at Pine Village, the Eden Church, and Bethel College. She had become comfortable living her retirement community where she knew so many people who had been part of her church. Her sister Marjorie, and brother in law Marvin Stucky, lived at Pine Village. Meta loved to reminisce about her early years, as well as to keep in touch with the progress of her grandchildren. A year after losing Bill, Meta dictated (and Candy wrote, as writing had become difficult for Meta) a contribution to the Goering round robin letter that indicated the texture of her life at that point:

> I continue to take part in the activities available to me here at Pine Village. Last night, we had a pot-luck dinner. Today, I was invited out to lunch at Pizza Hut with two neighbors. Tomorrow I will go to Bible Study and then to Life Enrichment at Bethel College. Friday I will eat lunch at the Senior Center.
>
> As I look forward to spring, I think of planting garden, of Easter celebrations (including the Messiah with Clyde, Marjorie, Jessica & Candy singing), and graduations (of grandchildren)—Eric from Graceland College, Karl from Reed College, Celeste from El Camino High School, and Carrie from 8th grade.

One measure of Meta's new independence was in the realm of personal finance. In April 1991, less than three months after Bill died, she decided to purchase long term care insurance. Her son Jim, impressed with the high annual premium of $900 per year, advised against buying the insurance. As it turned out, Meta paid the premiums for just under four years, and then, after surgery and a stroke, lived in the nursing section of Memorial Home for two years. The insurance payments of forty dollars a day for Meta's nursing care saved the family more than $25,000.

On May 1, 1993, Ruth Juhnke married Chester White in a ceremony at the Eden Mennonite Church. Chester was employed as a set designer and builder for the Repertory Theater at the University of Missouri in Kansas City. Meta, with her traditional views of gender roles, took great satisfaction in knowing that Ruth now had someone "to take care of her." Meta was also delighted with the birth of Ruth and Chester's daughter, Angelica Shanti White, on May 5, 1994. Angelica was Meta and Bill's thirteenth grandchild.

Meta died at age 80 on October 31, 1996, five days after a severe stroke. She was the oldest of twelve Goering siblings, and the first of her family to die. Her name was already beside that of her husband, Bill, on a memorial stone just west of the Eden Church. The memorial service was a great extended family, church and community event. The gatherings included a Friday evening reception at the funeral home in Moundridge, the Saturday funeral at the Eden Church (burial ceremony, pre-funeral meeting of family members for instructions and for memory sharing, the funeral ceremony itself including sermon and special music, the post-ceremony meal and open-mike sharing of memories of Meta), and a Sunday afternoon meeting of Meta's siblings and their families at the Moundridge Memorial Home. Candy, Meta's youngest daughter, functioned as head of the family in making local arrangements and hosting

the family gatherings. She and Vance served twenty-seven people at the meal before the funeral on Saturday.

Janet, the oldest daughter, presented the tribute to Meta at the funeral service. How can we, she asked, "summarize briefly a life of eighty full and busy years. Do we say daughter, sister, wife, mother? Do we say scholar, teacher, homemaker, farmer? Or how about cook, seamstress, gardener, launderer, manager of accounts, nurse, arranger of schedules, chauffeur, wiper of runny noses, comforter of hurts, hearty laugher at jokes, taskmaster and disciplinarian, applauder of performances, encourager of best efforts, counselor to broken hearts, believer in potentials? We must say committed Christian, church volunteer, pray-er, giver, carer, potluck contributor, baker of pies for funerals, Bible-reader, hymn-lover. . . ."


*William and Meta Juhnke gravestone in Eden Mennonite Church cemetery.*

For the grieving children and grandchildren of Bill and Meta Goering Juhnke, Meta's death in 1996 marked a passage of generations, freighted with meaning. One way to deal with that passage was found in one of Bill's letters, written nearly two decades earlier to a friend who was grieving the death of her own father. Bill had recently attended the funeral of Linda Kaufman (Mrs. Paul D. Kaufman) where Linda's nephew, Dr.

Gordon Kaufman, Professor of Theology at Harvard University and the son of Bill's mentor, Edmund G. Kaufman, had given the meditation. On May 25, 1967, Bill wrote to his friend two paragraphs that he called a "paraphrase" of Gordon Kaufman's message:

> In the event of death we are brought to the deepest mystery—especially when the life has been useful. Sometimes we wonder if Life is not a cruel mockery when in death all is gone. It is when death strikes that we wonder what has true meaning. There is so much to be thankful for: a life companion; children who have come to bless the home and whose nurture has been shared in; a vocational service has been shared in the community; a faithfulness to Christ has been promoted; support of the Church and its mission have been championed. This memorial remains even as a reminder of what has been lost.
>
> Our final destiny is hidden from our lives. It is not really in our hands. As we face death we face the ultimate powerlessness. Then we can see what Faith in God really is. Then it is that we can put our trust in the hands of a loving God without reservation. Perhaps it is painful but it can lead us into an understanding of the real meaning of Life. It enables us to turn in faith and trust and love to the God of our Creation."

*Juhnke family reunion in Lamoni, Iowa, May 26, 2003. (Last names are Juhnke unless indicated otherwise.) Back row: Karl, Jim, Kevin, Ben Edwards, Bill Jr., Abram Harris, Richard Harris, Chester White; Middle row: Mike Oakleaf, Katie Hoody, Janet, Liza (holding Ryan), Carrie Edwards, Jodi, Sharon Harris, Celeste Harris, Candace Unrau, Ruth White;Front row: Joanne (with Lydia Oakleaf), Elizabeth Bushman (with Riley Bushman), Miranda Henry, Ted Hale,Carita (with Emma), Eric (with Megan), Tara Unrau, Vance Unrau (with Trey Unrau), Ty Unrau, Angelica White. Absent: Anna Juhnke, Jon Bushman.*

## Appendix A. The William and Meta Juhnke Family, as of August 2009.

**JUHNKE, William Ernest, Sr**. b: Jan 24, 1912. d: Feb 11, 1991.

**+GOERING, Meta**. b: Jan 16, 1916. d. Oct 31, 1996.

**1. JUHNKE, James Carlton**. b: May 14, 1938.

+KREIDER, Anna. b: May 11, 1940. d: June 17, 2005.

JUHNKE, Joanne Ruth. b: Jan 31, 1968.

+OAKLEAF, Michael Patrick. b: Sept 17, 1961.

OAKLEAF, Lydia Rose. b: Feb 11, 2002.

OAKLEAF, Miriam Joy. b: May 27, 2004.

JUHNKE, Carl James. b: July 19, 1970.

+HOODY, Katherine. b. Mar 7, 1976.

+NOFSINGER, Miriam. b: July 6, 1940.

**2. JUHNKE, Janet Ann**. b: Nov 26, 1942.

+HALE, Ted, Jr. b: July 22, 1943.

HALE, Elizabeth Ann-Marie. b: Nov 18, 1970.

+HENRY, David. Divorced, Jan 1995.

HENRY, Miranda Marie Hale. b: Nov 19, 1992.

+BUSHMAN, Jon. b: Apr 13, 1970.

BUSHMAN, Riley Alan. b: Dec 7, 1998.

BUSHMAN, Evan Carpenter. b: Aug 24, 2002

BUSHMAN, Will Arthur. b: Feb 3, 2004.

HALE, Eugene Donald. b: December 8, 1978.

**3. JUHNKE, Willlliam Ernest, Jr**. b: Jan 26, 1945.

+PREHEIM, Carita. b: Aug 6, 1944.

JUHNKE, Kevin William. b: Dec 12, 1967.

+DYNES, Liza. b: July 14, 1968.

JUHNKE, Emma Katherine. b: Oct 14, 1997.

JUHNKE, Ryan. b: Jan 24, 2003.

JUHNKE, Eric Scott. b: July 31, 1970.

+GLENNIE, Jodi. b: Nov 8, 1969.

JUHNKE, Megan Meili. b: June 11, 2001.

JUHNKE, Lily Ailian. b: May 20, 2004.

JUHNKE, Carrie Suzanne. b: Jan 16, 1978.

+EDWARDS, Benjamin. b: Sept 1, 1977.

EDWARDS, Kaden Elliott. b: June 21, 2006.

EDWARDS, Lexi Elle. b: Apr 16, 2009.

**4. JUHNKE, Sharon Kay.** b: July 13, 1948.

+HARRIS, Richard S. b: June 30, 1949.

HARRIS, Celeste Jinanam. b: Oct 17, 1973.

+BREESE, Josh. b: May 25, 1977.

HARRIS, Abram. b: July 19, 1976.

**5. JUHNKE, Ruth Elinor.** b: Dec 24, 1950.

+WHITE, Chester E. b: Nov 24, 1946.

WHITE, Angelica Shanti. b: May 5, 1994.

**6. JUHNKE,** Candace Sue. b: Aug 20, 1959.

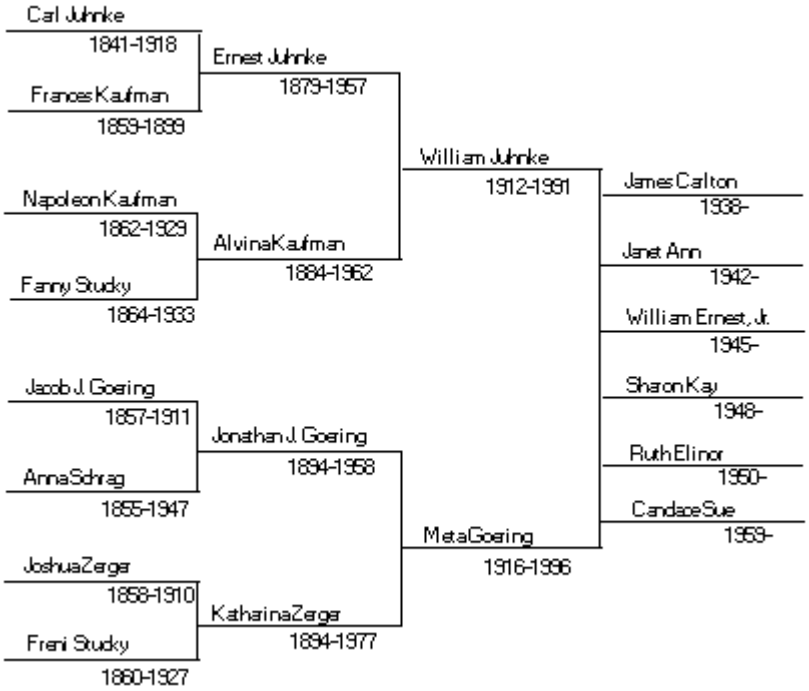
+UNRAU, Vance K. b: Feb 27, 1959.

UNRAU, Ty Kelly. b: Mar 15, 1983.

UNRAU, Tara Shae. b: June 2, 1986.

UNRAU, Trey William. b: Nov 15, 1993.

## Appendix B. William Juhnke and Meta Goering's Grandparents, Parents, and Children.



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