



THE EMPTY NEST NEWSLETTER

News from the Chattering Chain

VOL V NO 6 AUGUST 1987
"Oh to be in Turtle, now that May, June, July and August's there!" -- amended from Browning

(But sent w/Oct. issue.)

IT AIN'T ENGLAND, BUT...

"Sing! Riding's a joy! For me I ride." (also from Browning, unamended, "The Last Ride")

Rock County, S. Wisconsin

"I have travelled much in Concord," wrote Thoreau, & now you ENNEEd can write, with the same meaning, "I have travelled much in Turtle Township--" but let's add all of Rock County.

When JJ stayed in Wisconsin this summer, rather than bicycling in England, and wasn't going to make it to Vermont, either, she decided she could still bicycle, and take advantage of what her home county had to offer. In spite of growing up in Turtle, there was more than one road she hadn't traversed, and many more in the other 19 townships, and sights unseen. ("For still there are so many things that I have never seen-- In every wood, in every spring, there is a different green"-- Tolkien.) The aim was 20:20: 20 miles in each township. So, she'd spend the night w/ Grandma at hospital or, later, nursing home, take in the hearings in the AM (you should see my Daniel Inyovi T-shirt), in the PM sling my bike in the Honda and drive to a new spot on the county map, and start out pedalling-- always with an eye out for Adventure. . . . It wasn't England. There were no skylarks, but I did hear an occasional, now-rare meadowlark, and the thrushes, redwings, Killdeer, were pouring their full hearts, and a band of golden finches would suddenly accompany me for half a mile in their dipping flight. There was no scent of hawthorne, but there was elderberry blossom, wild rose, black locusts in bloom, and a warm wind one day, off a (Cont'd in Vol VI, No1, P.3)

VWD (Grandma) writes Another Winner!

Music Clubs Magazine

Summer 1987

I Remember When. . .

I remember when a telephone call came from the nominating committee of the Wisconsin Federation of Music Clubs, a call that pleased me considerable. My husband Ronald and I were entertaining another couple, the wife of which was active in WFMC. So when I returned to the table, I blurted out the exciting news. "I've been asked to allow my name to be on the slate of new officers for the Wisconsin Federation. They want to nominate me for third vice president!" The visiting pair began congratulating me, saying what an excellent choice, and that I must accept immediately. But Ron, I noticed, was shaking his head. "That'll never do!" he said. I was indignant. "How can you say such a thing? Don't you think I'm qualified? Again he shook his head. "No, you're really not qualified." I was dashed, and questioned earnestly, "Why ever do you think I'm not?" His prompt reply: "You haven't bosom enough!"

Those of you who have known me through the years in the Federation have also known Ron. And Ron says, "I remember when. . ."

He remembers the first national convention he went to with me, in Salt Lake City. I was the chairman, with Edna Johnson the local chairman. Her husband, Frank, realized there would be husbands along, and so he planned some activities for the men, for times when the wives were occupied in the business sessions. "Everything that happened I thought was characteristic of all conventions," Ron says, "so I wasn't surprised when the dozen or so of us men were entertained by the husbands of the local committee. They took us on daily tours of Salt Lake City and surrounding attractions, such as the Geneva Steel Plant, the Anaconda Copper Open Mine, and various Mormon and 'Gentile' museums in Salt Lake, as well as the great Tabernacle. However--the next time I accompanied Vera on a big whoop-to-do, I and the other men were entirely forgotten. We twiddled our thumbs while the closed sessions were going on. I sat in a park and

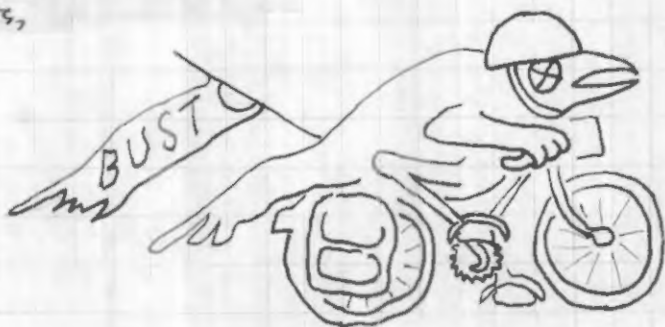
waited for Vera to call on me to hook up her dress, and realized that that Salt Lake Convention was something pretty special for us tagalongs."

From then on at all subsequent conventions and board meetings attended, Ron made himself an unofficial host to any of the men that weren't otherwise occupied. And he thought up some dillies for activities.

At Green Lake, Wisconsin, at my last board meeting while national president, he gathered the free men into several cars and they all drove down to Beloit, where our home is. On the way, they stopped at the American Breeders Service near Madison. This bull stud is one of the largest privately owned artificial insemination organizations in the world, and Ron was one of the founding directors. The men viewed the bulls, heard the theory of proven sires, and saw the techniques of gathering semen (including the "artificial cow," a large sawhorse with a cowhide thrown over it). ABS rolled out the red carpet, and the men enjoyed the grand tour. At the Dougan Farms, the group looked over the immaculate round dairy barn, the cows, milk bottling plant, fields, and hybrid seed corn operations. They drank liberally of Dougan's chocolate milk and orange drink, and, says Ron, "Dutch treated ourselves at Danny's Shack before returning to the convention and to the waiting arms of our spouses. On the way back, a startled pheasant in the wilds of south central Wisconsin broke the window of our new car, along with its own neck. They wouldn't cook it for us at Green Lake, but I carried it home for a later dinner, regretting that my Federation buddies couldn't enjoy it with me."

At Albuquerque, Ron took the men to the restoration of an ancient Pueblo overlooking the Rio Grande. The men climbed down into the kiva, saw the decorations on the walls, and imagined what life must have been like in this settlement long ago.

Cont on next page.



Good article,
huh!



Ron wanted me to see the place, so after the convention we swung past. The caretaker was a Britisher, with a tall, handsome Indian wife. The woman had only one arm, a bandana nonchalantly thrown over the shoulder of the missing arm. Ron had begun an acquaintance with this pair on his first visit, and we continued it. When we left, the wife said, "When you go by Zuni, stop and tell them Annie sends best wishes." We made a point to stop at Zuni, though it was off the road. The usual cluster of little boys and girls greeted us, selling trinkets. Ron said to one little girl, "Is your mother near? Will you take me to her?" She led him to a house, where he delivered the message to a neat and cheerful little barefoot woman. She invited us both in. While Ron returned to the car for me, she hastened inside and put on shoes and a white apron. Now dressed for company, she showed us a picture of her soldier son, a tiny Indian face in a regimental picture of some 500 soldiers, and one of her round faced little daughter holding the ribbon she won on a cherry pie at the 4-H fair in Santa Fe.

At San Diego, the last convention of my presidency, Ron indulged two strong interests—bird watching and dairy farms. Some of the former was done at the San Diego Zoo, where the men returned again and again into the Bird House to hear a mynah say, "Hi, boys!" Ron took them around to many a dairy barn, and to organic truck farms run by the Japanese. "Most of the men probably saw more cows and more birds than they care to remember," Ron says, "and don't forget they also saw fish!"

How could I forget? I didn't even hear of the fishing trip until after our Convention's evening concert, one night, and after we'd entertained guests in our suite. As Ron ushered the last guest out the door I saw him turn, not to his pajamas, but to his old clothes. "Whatever are you doing?" I queried. "Going fishing," said Ron. It was midnight when the men trooped off to spend the night on a local fishing boat. They rose at dawn, had a big breakfast of oatmeal, pancakes, bacon and eggs, fished till mid afternoon, and thus fortified, returned to the convention for more music.

They had more fortification in Tijuana. Crossing the border, they walked around town, had their shoes shined by about five different bootblacks, and ended up at the racetrack. No horses were running that day, but there was a wire service to all other tracks in the U.S. One could place a bet on any horse anywhere. The place was crowded with bettors. Ron decided to spend \$20 on \$2 bets; when he lost that, he was going to quit. Another member of the party knew a great deal about handicapping horses and enjoyed doing it. He place \$50 each on different races. Ron carefully placed his \$2 bets alongside this pro, and came back with considerably more than he started with!

At a board meeting in Green Bay when Merle Montgomery was national president, and I was chairman, Ron again took charge of the men. Their activities included a trip to Lambeau field to see the Green Bay Hall of Fame, and watch the Packers practice. They drove east to the Lake Michigan shore, stopping at roadside creameries and corner grocery stores where Ron cannily allowed the other men to purchase the makings of a picnic lunch.

They enjoyed this lunch at a park on Lake Michigan at Algoma. They visited a winery that had been established in an old brick building only about twelve years before, but decorated with heraldic devices to give it a century-old look. "It smelled good, too," reported Ron. Judge Knox Byrum, who was one of the party, reports that it is his recollection that they sampled more than the smell, at this winery. Another day they went through one of the famous pulp processing plants and came away with quite a different sort of sample—rolls of Charmin tissue.

The climax of that board meeting was the Wolf River trip. The Wolf River is a tumultuous stream that in logging days was used to transport logs, and in modern times rivals the Colorado in raft trips. It is known as 'the Little Colorado' for the excitement people have in riding down the river in rubber two-man life rafts. Ron arranged with a friend who had a restaurant and resort on the river to supply the rafts and a couple of guides. Ron supplied the old clothes: before we left home, he'd filled the trunk with all the old shoes, jackets and trousers he could find around the farm, and as he never throws anything away, some were green with age. He had plenty for plenty of men. He recalls that some of the travelers on this outing were Jess McQuie, Knox Byrum, Bob Dean, Clifford Bond and Charles Wilson. They preceded the four-hour trip with a trout dinner, then clad in life preservers clambered in and shoved off. Though everyone got wet, only one member of the party was actually spilled into the river. This man ran a haberdashery store and was always impeccably clad for every occasion. He had eschewed Ron's old clothes, "and looked like a magazine ad for 'The Raft Trip.'" "So it was only fitting," says Ron, and much more interesting to all of us, that he was the one who got dunked." Clifford Bond recalls this trip with pleasure. In a reminiscing letter for Ron's and my 60th anniversary he wrote, "...the trout dinner, the view of the rapids from the Wild Wolf Inn, where for the first time I saw Indians selling whiskey to white men, the ride down the river in the two-man rubber boats. . ."

At the Detroit convention, held in the fall, the men trooped across into Canada. Out in the country there were roadside stands selling sweet corn and tomatoes. At a store Ron purchased bread and butter, salt, paper plates and drinks. Then the men descended on a sweet corn stand. Those of you who know Ron will attest to his engaging charm and affability. He persuaded the farm wife to boil up buckets of water for his group, into which they dropped their husked purchases, and also used the water to scald their tomatoes for easy peeling. (Ron deplors unpeeled tomatoes.) The men appropriated a picnic table on the lawn, enjoyed their corn boil, and were butter from ear to ear. No doubt they improved sales at that stand—what passersby could resist such a sight? On that trip, Ron picked up a bit of granite from the road and was examining it from all angles, when one of the men asked him about it. "Oh, this is a stone the glacier brought all the way down from Hudson Bay," said Ron, speaking out of total ignorance. "You want it?" The man accepted it with interest, and Ron discovered, several years later, that he was

still carrying around this pedigreed rock ("And who knows?" says Ron, "Maybe the glacier did!")

An event Ron remembers well, was eating smoked chubs at the WFMC State Convention in Kenosha. Thelma Byrum was the honored guest, and she and Knox drove up from Oklahoma. Wisconsin chubs are a special treat, and Ron wanted Knox to experience this favorite taste thrill of his. It was before smoked chubs were sold commonly in supermarkets, and they had to hunt all over Kenosha before finding some. They bought four and took them back to the parking lot behind the convention motel. There, overlooked from second story windows by the convention goers, but out of earshot, they expertly dissected their delicacy, using the trunk of the car as table and fingers as utensils. They daintily lifted the skeletal remains into a newspaper. Ron rolled up the orts, and asked the judge to take the neat package to a garbage can in a nearby private yard. Knox trotted through the gate and lifted the lid, at which moment Ron belted, "Judge, what are you doing in that garbage can?" There was applause from the peanut gallery! Knox and Thelma remember these events, too. In a letter to us on our 60th anniversary, they wrote,

"For so long Knox and Ron have had close association within the Federation as well as the camaraderie that accompanied mutual interests otherwise. A delineation of these pleasantries would occupy pages. . . . Being together in the extra events such as eating boiled corn in Canada, to eating off the hood of a motor vehicle in Kenosha, to the fish boil at Fish Creek, to the dairy farm tours near San Diego, to the men only tours in many other areas and others too numerous to mention. . . ."

Ron treasures the memories of his associations in the Federation, as I do mine, and as we do the ones we share. Through all my years of Federation activity, Ron has been at my right hand. His wit and often outrageous humor have balanced any tendency toward over-solemnity. As I accepted obligations and offices, he was there as my mainstay and help. Now, with my sight failing, he helps me with Federation correspondence, and has been my amanuensis for this series of articles, adding lively phrases and details, some of which I have been forced to censor out.

Ron has asked me to end this reminiscence with a paragraph out of a 1937 letter, which our daughter Jacqueline recently excavated in her researches for a book about the Dougan farms. In the letter, Ron is writing to his deaf father about buying into the milk business: ". . . this is your enterprise and the last thing I would want to do would be to perplex you in handling it. I enjoy my work and association with you. Anything you do about this is O.K. with me. My feeling toward you is much like the one I voiced to Vera last night about wives. She read me about a prize contest in which the contestants were to tell what sort of wives they liked in 200 words. I told her it was too many words. Five would be enough. Vera bristled up and said, 'Couldn't you write 200 words about me?' I said sure, but why use so many when five would do. 'I like what I got.'"

As you can tell by this article, I, too, like what I got!

Vera Wardner Dougan