

Dixon, Illinois
July 4, 1968

Dear Folks,

Yes, it's that day, and not being able to shoot off the firecrackers as of yore, I'll try at your request, to condense a full life into a few pages, sprinkled with things I have learned (as was oft said in days gone by) from the University of Hard Knocks. As you will recognize, there are many in your family- but are they alike? In many respects, yes; but, but to environment, much different. Teachers of psychology will try and reason the difference, but in the main- who knows why and when, and, lastly, where?

As a matter of fact, my name is Henry Hey, so named on birth certificate, but many other boys had middle names, so I annexed the name Martin, my grandfather's.

Henry M. Hey

I was born March 8, 1884, on a farm one mile south of Penrose, then a post office. Due to what might be termed a lack of harmony, my father gave up the farm when I was about five years old, moved to Sterling and went into the manufacture of road carts, then a fad, which were much like the racing carts of today. My mother chose not to move to Sterling, so the family moved one fourth mile north. Of course, Dad made frequent trips home and in the meantime, Abram, Ira and Verna were born, making a family of nine children in all.

Early in life we know the joys of going to the store in Penrose and to Sunday School there, originally a Quaker Sunday School. We seldom missed, but one Sunday morning Dad rode his bicycle out, and the garden wasn't head (sod ploughing) so we had to hoe the garden. Soon Dad left—too late for S.S. so we went swimming. What a joy to go out and hunt the eggs and in addition to groceries what wonderful candy. At one time I ran out of eggs and went out to the storekeepers chicken house and picked up a few. Mr. Detweiler, the storekeepers wife, asked where I got them. She gave me a lecture as only a Christian lady could, and I think that is the last time I ever took anything that wasn't mine, regardless of the enticement of melon patches (orchards excluded)—it was customary for the kids to sample apples here and there. At one time I got hold of matches, set fire to some rags in the corn crib—Mother spied it and put it out. For a long time I had the name, from Clement and Mary, of "the barn burner".

We went to Stone School 1 1/4 miles away, which was my habitat till I was 12. One boy I disliked and so I tried and tried to wrestle him, but finally had to give up. Got sparked several times by the school teacher, which was customary then. I have three grandsons—good wrestlers—any connection?

Our customary fare was molasses bread (school lunch) and was mediocre as compared with some of the lunches I saw. My first ice cream was at the school picnic—on the grounds. Often without giving notice I would spend the night with grandmother or some pal—no phones then. I wonder what mothers of today would say to that. On winter days the window of the north room where we lived did not shed its frost for days at a time. Don't know what the temperature was, but we were healthy kids. One Christmas Mary, Clement and I got a game of Authors only for a gift from Dad. What enjoyment we had. A few books we had we read over and over- Quotation from Whittier's Snowbound: "We read and reread our little store of books and pamphlets, scarce a score."

Just a thought—Clement was Dad's first son, and doubtless was possessed of the genes necessary to be an arithmetician. Yet Dad spent quite a time with him on questions relative to fractions, etc. I did not there miss his attention, but I think his parental interest spurred Clement on and he finished 8th grad with Mary, two years his senior. By nature he was more the studious type while I took to enjoyment of my surroundings.

When I was twelve, a lady east of Sterling wanted a boy to help in summer. Clement and I went to town April 1st. I was to get the job but after looking us over, she thought I was too mischievous, so Clement go the job. I bawled and so Dad got me a job with John Fry who was 21 and going to school (someone) when I started at 6. The family were Mennonites so I went to Mennonite S.S. (neither Clement or I came home that night. No phones. What did Mother think?) Didn't see Clement until Decoration Day in Sterling. At Mennonite S.S. a talk was made, by a visitor. They were most all farmers. You pick up apples (yes yes). Nicest ones first in bottom of basket. The top not so nice. But the nicest ones left after some taken (yes yes). Just like what you learn in youth, if good, is like apples in bottom of basket, the come out last (yes yes).

As I went to old Stone School we crossed a slough, bridged over- not drained—Such a profusion of flowers, long since gone since drainage put in.

One Sunday morning I hid in the barn at Fry's, had my clothes in a bundle, was going to hit it out for home, but they found me and I went with them to the S.S. School started and I started school at West Science Ridge—one mile north of Sterling. November came and Fry took me home and I went to the old school again. Spring came and again I was wanted, so I lived at Stouffers 2 years and went to West Science Ridge school, from which I graduated when I was 13, which is the extent of my education, except a short session at business college later.

We graduates all went to Morrison, which was my first train ride. As I sat there next to a speckled Miss, my world was complete. She evidently was just recovering from something which I was down with 10 days later. My first trip to a doctor. The customary thing then (I lived in the country)

was to put a sign on the house- measles, chicken pox, etc. I went to country school after graduation determined to excel, which I did.

But again I was wanted. A farmer wanted a boy, so I went there for two years. Learned how to plow and all from duties, also hauled milk to Dixon (2 miles west of Prairievile), associated with the hired men, and become familiar with a life I had not known. The expression "Don't be chicken" was not known then, but in a sense, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" became a way of life. There were no autos then, all horses, and a man with a team could plow 3 acres a day. In harvest the grain was tied in sheaves and put in shocks. Then threshing came—stories by the hired men (not so good) threshers' meals- the whole neighborhood exchanged work, maybe 20 extra people—to thresh the grain and store it in a bin. Now a machine threshers in the field.

In the fall when the corn ripened it was husked by hand—an ear at a time. An expert could husk 100 bushels a day. It was then cribbed and in due course of time the corn sheller—like the threshers—came and shelled the corn and many of the neighbors came with wagons and hauled it to the elevator.

During those days at the farm I had a bicycle and occasionally rode to Sterling where the rest of the family lived. If on Sunday, I had to leave about 3:30 to be home for milking. Sometimes I would ride in Saturday nights and on the way home a dog always took after me. I bought a revolver, but, strange as it way seem, whenever I carried it he never bothered me. On one of those trips to Sterling I happened to be at the folks home, and Mary had a group there from the church. I spied a young lady I liked, who later became Mrs. Hey, who thru life gave me many kind words and much encouragement. It was part of her, while I, more sedate, mother depended on acts not words, while she had a good combination of both.

My last year in the country after 2 years at Stauffers, 2 years at Kreiders, 1 year at Brauers, was spent at Wilsons who ran the Prairievile Store and farmed as well. I still used the bicycle for transportation, even though most of the hired help had a horse and buggy. What characters at the store. One time a wonderful fellow with a German accent was bound to crown me because I (smarty pants) imitated his German accent. In company with some of the Prairievile crowd we made calls on some verboten Sterling establishments. I was only 17, but I wasn't about to be chicken. Only one fellow turned me down on account of my age. One Saturday night I left my bicycle in Dad's barn and rode out with the boys. In the meantime, Dad Hey heard about it. Monday morning he was out to Prairievile at 5 with tear-stained eyes. Wanted me to tell where. I refused to be a stool pigeon, but instead, promised to reform, which I did.

Now, a bit of philosophy. The most Christian woman I ever knew was Margaret's mother. She, like Christ, and like most Germans of her day took

a little wine occasionally. So I am not ready to condemn a person who disagrees with me on matters of propriety, religion or what have you. We have world problems today. A few years ago the colored people wanted to buy the church across from my house. The whole neighborhood rose up in arms except me. They let it rest, but bought it later. More of this later.

My boss (Prairieville) lost his hand in a corn shredder (a common occurrence). Bad weather came on and I quit and went to Sterling to business college. Spring came and the urge to work on farm again. I rebelled—made the rounds of the factories—no job—went to Dad's friends, John Loos, Penrose, asked for a job digging ditches, \$2 daily. He had job and tried to talk me out of the degrading job. I had taken the P.O. examination and had a job also as substitute carrier. Worked at it all summer till ground froze up. One day I was on the mail route, the fellow I worked with was killed in a cave-in.

Man proposes, but God disposes. In spring a postal clerk died and I got a job as postal clerk which I held almost 15 years, on till late 1918. A job I liked but every one else was getting raises (other lines) so I quit and went to Joliet for a brick company.

Before that I became active in the church, became S.S. superintendent. Mrs. Hey and I didn't dance, play cards, drink or go to shows, except occasionally we would go to Dixon on the interurban and see a movie. I worked 8 hours in the P.O. and made almost as many calls as the preacher did. We did not think we were sinning going to a movie, but some of the people did. I became the conference delegate several times. A question they asked most of the ministers was, "Are you willing to travel?" In most cases the answer was, "Yes". Many times it is meant taking less salary. Two songs sung were: 1. "God Will Take Care of You" 2. "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go, Dear Lord."

In contrasting it with now where the minister gets more than most of his parishioners. House rent paid—utilities paid—travel allowances—pension and a good salary—insurance. That's being modern—but I wonder???

Well, after a few months in Joliet, Dixon came up in 1919. Ice cream made with ice and salt, delivered in tubs, sent by express to other cities, no cabinets or refrigerators to keep it. Cones sold at all stores. Trains 3 times each way daily on Illinois Central and a lot of trains on Northwestern. Our move to the old barn in 1920 where we stayed (opening May 30, 1948) for 26 years—what a shock—a changing world. For many years ice cream bought at store—take it home and eat it now.

One thing business has taught, Marshall Field years ago said, "The customer is always right." You know sometimes he isn't, but you don't tell him that. I belong to Elks, have since 1919. They have a saying "The faults of our brothers we write upon the sand; their virtues on tablets of love and

memory." I don't like to judge anyone, but to come to cases, the good book says, "I'll forgive but I won't forget."

In this day I don't go to church as much as I should, but I'll never forget the wisdom of the good book, and I'll never fail to support the church and many other good organizations.

I have had a good life, have often wondered what I would do if I had a hungry, naked, cold family. Would I steal? Raise Cain? Many social changes are in the making, and while I almost belong to the oxcart to airplane age, I think the future will show much progress to the question asked in Genesis:

Am I my brother's keeper?

- A.** Is young America protesting against some of our sham?
- B.** If we follow Christ, do we forget the Negroes, Jews, etc?
- C.** We have embraced many things which were considered rank socialism a few generations ago—medicare, social security, unemployment insurance.
- D.** Is the idealism of communism all bad, or should we embrace some of its best?
- E.** Labor unions are not thinking of the masses. They are for self, and each raise is born by all others. (cost)
- F.** We used to have "Poor Farms". A disgrace it was to go there. Now it is "County Nursing Home" or a similar name.

You will probably see a much better world. When I lived with the Stauffers 2 years, the old folks told of what the old folks of their time wondered—What are we going to do when we burn up all the trees? Later coal, oil, gas, the new power. Later desalinization of water-purer- to make the desert bloom. I've seen a lot, but there's a great future ahead, by government making us our brother's keeper.

I cannot pass this up without an allusion to what used to be termed the gentler or weaker sex. I have always held that woman belongs on a pedestal a little higher than man. In my earlier years it was usual for man, so to speak, to be the head of the house. He controlled the children, the pocketbook, the way of life. Woman has proved and rightly so, her ability to master any vocation she chooses, and the gap between what was paid a man or a woman for the same work is being rapidly closed. When we think of how recently woman has been given the vote, how she is invading every phase of man's world, we wonder.

This does no mean, in any way that I would take away man's world. Instead, it means that by cooperation, this world could be a much better one than we have known it, by man, proud man, allotting her her just dues. When that happens, the divorces could be rarer instead of most of them being asked by women, who are conscious of the new world in which they are living.