

## **Recollections of The John and Susanna Tschetter Children**

**By Will H. Hohm 2020**

### **Anna Tschetter Hofer (1882-1973)**

**Anna, the firstborn and oldest daughter, was married to Jacob Hofer. She was a very gentle and kind person. Her son, Alvin, helped move my parents when I was 3 1/2. I remember being in the front seat of his Model T truck as we drove from the old home to the new home. He later lived on a farm about 4 miles from the grandparents' home where my parents spent their last years farming. Alvin helped my parents move to Huron. Susie, the daughter of Aunt Anna, was close with my parents. Alvin and Susie regularly visited them in their last years in Huron and then in the nursing home**

**Anna had two sons who were doctors: Emil and Amos. Both graduated from Northwestern University College of Medicine. Emil practiced in Howard, South Dakota from 1941 to 1950 when he moved to Huron and practiced independently there. He visited us in St. Charles. It was such a pleasure when he showed up unannounced at my office for a visit. Amos practiced in Seattle, Washington. When I was considering where to intern, I visited the King County Hospital in Seattle and spent a few days with him. He was a most congenial person!**

### **Jacob (1884-1970)**

**My mother said that Jacob was ambitious, devout, an unusually gifted musician and very intelligent; she said he was one of her most intelligent siblings. We did not see Jacob's family often although we had a warm relationship with them. They moved quite a bit. Jacob tried farming in Onida, South Dakota, then Minnesota and back to South Dakota. It seemed that Jacob's timing was bad in that his failures at various locations were more the result of bad luck than anything else. He certainly did not lack ambition or ability.**

### **Susanna Tschetter Hohm (1886-1973)**

**Aunt Susie and my mother, Barbara, were very close as were our entire families. Susie was mother's confidante. Aunt Susie was married to Ludwig Hohm, the older brother of my father, Albert Hohm. The double cousin relationship of all the children certainly was a part of being two close families; but it was more than that. The cousins that were closest in age to each other were closer to each other than to their own siblings. My sister, Violet, and Ella were inseparable. They were in essence**

sisters. Jimmy and I were the same. All our lives, we addressed each other as 'brother.'

I was closer to Uncle Louie than to my own father. My father was a very good man, but he and I did not connect. Uncle Louie and I did. He was a confidante for me. I related in the History of the Tschetter-Hohm Clinic that Dr. Ted was a 'big brother' and advisor to me. It was such a pleasure to practice with cousins Drs. Ted and Paul the year 1964.

It was a special treat for my mother in 1948 when our family purchased and moved to the grandparent's farm which was ½ mile from Uncle Louie and Aunt Susie.

### John (1888-1975)

John was an extremely complex, ambitious, hardworking man with broad interests in medicine, farming, and politics. Depending on the situation, he could be demanding, considerate, generous, stingy, feisty, cantankerous, gentle, gruff, offensive, or charming. He was a human dynamo. He was successful in nearly everything he undertook and had good judgment in business and other endeavors. His timing was superb as indicated by his extensive farm land ownership, land that he acquired during the depression and dust bowl when it was practically given away. He also knew when it was time to sell that land and build a nursing home to the community in memory of his wife Violet. In the words of the Kenny Rogers' country and western song, "He knew when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em."

John attended Freeman Junior College, a school that was founded by the Mennonites in 1903 as it became apparent that the teaching of German within the public schools was withering. The Mennonite community wanted to make sure they did not lose the German language. He taught school in Beadle County for a few years before premedical studies at Valparaiso University in Indiana. He attended the Chicago College of Medicine and Surgery and graduated from there in 1916. He then had an internship in Gary, Indiana. He was a veteran of WW I.

How was John inspired to become a physician? How I wish I had sat down with him and heard that story! My mother said, their uncle, David J. Mendel, Susanna's younger brother, had a strong influence on Susanna and her children. According to his obituary (from the Mennonite Weekly Review), David had a total of 26 months of education. "A few of those months were spent at the University of South Dakota. However, most of his education he received through reading and self-endeavor. At the

age of 18, he began to teach and continued for 10 years.” He served two terms in the state legislature at Pierre. My mother described him as an encourager. John’s cousin, Rev. David J. S. Mendel spent 6 years at Tabor College in preparation for the ministry. He was the son of Susanna’s oldest brother, Jacob. David was 7 years older than John.

Perhaps seeing his cousin David go off to college was an inspiration to him. (The excellent biography of David by his grandson Don Mendel is in this volume.)

John also had a strong relationship with his sister Susanna and her husband, Ludwig Hohm. According to my mother, Ludwig got a mortgage on his farm to help John financially achieve his goals.

John founded the Samaritan Hospital in 1920 in the Campbell House which is now designated historical. In 1943, that building had a fire. I, Will Hohm, was living there on the third floor while attending high school. A nurse who lived down the hall from me died in that fire. The Samaritan Hospital relocated to two other sites—the current Welter Funeral Home Building and an apartment building on the east side of Dakota avenue a few blocks north of the Campbell House. For me personally, the fire and relocating were very traumatic experiences and did not help my adjustment to high school, especially in academics. I was the last nephew to live at the hospital. I lived there with Kenneth Tschetter, a second cousin. The Samaritan Hospital was closed in 1947 when St. John’s Hospital was built. (See Samaritan Hospital Fire for more detail)

The Samaritan Hospital did not have an elevator. Ken and I carried the dinner trays of food from the kitchen in the basement to the first and second floor. I passed by the surgical suite on the second floor on the way to my room. One evening, I remember hearing the sound of a saw cutting through bone as Dr. John was performing the amputation of a leg. Not the usual experience for a freshman in high school! Another time, Ken and I were carrying a patient on a stretcher who had a fracture of the femur. The ends of the fracture rubbed against each other and made a grating sound. The patient groaned and screamed in pain; as we put the stretcher down, Ken fainted!

In the 1930’s, the national economic depression and dust bowl struck. It was a double whammy for the Midwest. Everyone suffered. Dr. John’s nieces and nephews who needed to live in Huron to attend high school and Huron College were greatly helped by him. He provided room and board at his hospital for a host of nephews: Ted

Hohm, Paul Hohm, Ewald Hohm, Jimmy Hohm, Harris Wollman, Elgin Wollman, and Will Hohm. His home was adjacent to the Samaritan Hospital to the east. He had a number of nieces live there at times to give them the same access to high school and college.

During those depression years, my mother butchered and cleaned chickens and sold them to the Samaritan Hospital along with eggs. Anything to make a dollar. Dr. John regularly handed down clothes to his nephews. I remember it as being high quality.

John practiced medicine in Huron from 1916 to 1952. He had a large practice and his patients worshiped him. He was in solo practice until 1946 when he, his brother, Dr. Paul Tschetter, and nephews Dr. Paul Hohm and Dr. Ted Hohm founded the Tschetter-Hohm Clinic. His brother Paul had been practicing in DeSmet. Paul Hohm and Ted Hohm were both in the service during WW II and finished residencies in St. Paul, Minnesota. (Also, see writeup of Tschetter-Hohm Clinic).

In 1960, Dr. John built the Violet Tschetter Nursing Home as a memorial to his deceased wife, Violet. It was an excellent facility. My father, Albert Hohm, was in it until he died seven years after a severe disabling stroke. My mother, Barbara Tschetter Hohm was in it for several years until she died. I attended patients frequently there during the year (1964) that I was with the Tschetter-Hohm Clinic. The mother of Hubert Humphrey, who was then the vice president of the United States, was a resident at the home. Hubert regularly stopped to see his mother whenever he was flying nearby.

**A few other roles and accomplishments of John:**

- 1) Member of the Huron City Commission-7 years.**
- 2) Mayor of Huron-11 years.**
- 3) While he was mayor, the city bought \$852,000 worth of War Bonds and thus was launched the newest sub-destroyer, the USS Huron. (See the picture of Violet christening the ship).**
- 4) Chairman of the Beadle County Democratic Party-15 years.**
- 5) Named Man of the Year by the Huron Chamber of Commerce in 1961.**

6) He owned several farms and managed those with relatives. Nephew Alvin Hofer, the son of Anna Hofer worked as his farm manager for quite a few years.

#### **Mary Tschetter Wollman (1891-1978)**

Mary married John Wollman. They lived in the Bridgewater, South Dakota area their entire lives. Harris was the age of my brothers. He was one of the nephews who lived at the Samaritan Hospital and went to Huron College. Harris spent his life in school administration after obtaining a Ph.D. in education from the University of Wyoming.

Son John was my age; During high school, I would occasionally run into him at the South Dakota high school track meets where we were competing. He was an excellent low hurdler. John also obtained his Ph.D. in education from the University of Wyoming and was a professor of education at Huron College for 45 years. He was a high achiever. (Excellent detailed obituary of him in the Sioux Falls Argus Leader and Daily Plainsman)

#### **David (1895-1974)**

David was a big-time farmer. He owned many, many, acres; his son Willard took over the farm and is an even bigger farmer. His other son, Clifford, a pathologist, worked and lived in Oakland, California his entire career.

#### **Joseph (1900-1976)**

I know surprisingly little about Joseph. These are memories from my mother's comments, incidental events that come to my mind, and his obituary.

Joseph graduated from the University of Illinois Medical School. He then had residency training in eye/ear/nose/and throat. I do not know where that training took place but, I believe, Chicago. In that era, some physicians practiced ophthalmology and otolaryngology as one specialty.

My memory is that he practiced in tiny Woonsocket (that seems strange), South Dakota and then Huron, South Dakota. I do not know if that was his first practice nor when he started to practice in South Dakota. He moved to Whitehall, Wisconsin in 1953 and practiced there until 1975, shortly before he died. I presume that was in the field of general medicine as Whitehall is a small town and not a suburb.

While Dr. Joseph and his wife Leone were living in Whitehall, they visited us in St. Charles. I remember her as a very sweet lady. We had a very pleasant time together. I remember distinctly that it was a Saturday and Joseph said that they needed to leave at a specific hour because they needed to be on the way so they could listen to the Metropolitan Opera on the car radio on the way home! I was surprised as I had never heard a relative of mine mention the opera! Grand Ole' Opry-yes. Metropolitan Opera-no. It made me realize how little I knew about my Uncle Joe and Aunt Leone. And, how little I still know.

#### Elizabeth (1902-1990)

Elizabeth was a bit odd. My mother said that Elizabeth had the Spanish Flu in 1918 and "it affected her", whatever that meant. She did not marry. Her life was spent productively teaching kids in Sunday School and in Vacation Bible School. In that way, she left a rich legacy. Somewhere, early on, she lost about 6 hours of her life because she was on a different schedule the rest of her life. She slept until nearly noon and then continued to work until 1 in the morning. When my parents had moved to the grandparent's home where Elizabeth had grown up, she would occasionally come out for an overnight of two. She felt very at home and comfortable there. If she walked in at 1 in the morning (which was her usual time of arriving), she would sing hymns loudly, especially as she walked up the stairs to her room which was next to mine! She did not comprehend that other people were on a different schedule and it would wake them up and be annoying. My mother never allowed me to correct Elizabeth on this which I found even more annoying.

#### Paul (1905-1997)

My mother was very fond of Uncle Paul. Partly, this may have been because he was the "little brother." But the other part was that my mother and Paul had genuine affection for each other. Paul was a very good golfer. He set up a net in the basement of the Tschetter-Hohm Clinic into which he would hit balls during the winter. He told me this was so that, "I can groove my swing." Dr. Ted Hohm, also an avid and good golfer who did not hit into the net over winter, said, "Uncle Paul is grooving his errors over winter." A difference in perspective!

Paul and his wife, Elizabeth, had three children: Richard, Donald, and Dianne. I have memories of their coming out to the farm and staying for a few days. Such was my mother's affection for her "little brother's children." I know very little about Donald and Dianne's lives, but have kept up with Dick.

Richard was the oldest. Like his father, he went to Huron College. Like his father, Dick went to Johns Hopkins Medical School; then, he did an ophthalmology residency at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, Michigan. He started a practice in Sioux Falls which grew to having 6 physicians and 33 employees. In 2014, he moved to Butte, Montana and started Big Sky Eye Physicians.

Dick, like his father, was an excellent golfer. He passed that on to his daughter, Kris. She was a four-time South Dakota amateur golf champion and went on to play collegiately at Texas Christian University. While there, she became friends with the legendary and reclusive golf icon, Ben Hogan. Her book about their relationship is very interesting. Kris went on to play successfully on the LPGA. I went to see her play when she played in a professional tournament in Naperville, Illinois. Dick was there as her caddy which duty he regularly fulfilled while Kris was on the tour. He came to our home for dinner and a most enjoyable visit.

Also, see History of the Tschetter-Hohm Clinic.