

# Memories

By: Virginia Pierson Scherer

(These stories) will enlighten you on the good old times. Unless you have actually lived through that trying period, it's hard to realize how many changes that have taken place. Some of them are good, others are bad.

Let's start with my life. I was born in Edwardsville, Illinois. I had two wonderful parents, my father, George Henry Pierson, and my mother, Gertrude Ann Pierson. They were happily married in Marine, Illinois.

I arrived on January 2, 1909 at their home (at 820) Troy Road in Edwardsville, Illinois. At that time most women did not go to the hospital to have their children. Instead of hospitals, midwives delivered the babies at home. The best delivery table was the dining room table. I guess that is why I was so happy around that table, considering that is where I was delivered to two very proud parents. I weighed nine pounds when I came into this world.

The mother of a new born child was kept in bed for ten days after the delivery of her child. The midwife stayed with the new mother and cared for not only her but the new baby. The usual charge (for) these services was \$25.00 for delivering the baby and \$2.00 for the care of the child per day.

We lived in our home on Troy Road until my grandfather Thomas Carroll passed away (in 1912). He and my Grandmother Caroline moved from their 370 acre farm called Carrolton in Marine to Edwardsville, Illinois when he retired. He built a nine room house at 949 Hale Avenue. He lived only six months and then he passed away.

I can remember grandpa laid out in the front parlor as most were from the home. There was a funeral piece with a black ribbon hung on the door, sometimes only black ribbon was displayed to signify a death. Grandpa was 6 foot 3 inches. That may be why so many of my grandsons are so tall. Grandpa had a long white beard. I remember being held up so I could kiss him for the last and final time. He was so lifeless and cold. His face was as cold as an ice cube. That was my first experience with death. Grandpa was buried in the Catholic Cemetery in Marine, IL.

It was then decided that we should move in with my grandmother and rent our house. (I) lived with my grandmother until I met and married your grandfather, John H. Scherer in 1929.

After my grandmother's death (in 1935), my parents and sister, Laurine, moved back to their first house on Troy Road. (*Note: they actually stayed at 949 Hale until 1946*) My father worked for the N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company all of his life as a price consultant for the Brass Department. He retired at the age of sixty-five. At this same time, my mother passed away on May 21, 1950 at the age of seventy-one. The silent executioner of cancer claimed her once joyful life. After my mother's death my father stayed in their home for four more years. After these four years he then sold the home and spent the remainder of his life living with my sister and her husband, John Reiske, (or) at our home at 3704 Franklin in Granite City. Dad passed away on November 7, 1984. His life was abruptly taken due to heart failure. Mother and father are both buried at Calvary Cemetery located outside of Edwardsville.

N. O. Nelson Company had a private kindergarten class which I attended until I was six years old. I would generally get out of school and walk home with dad on his lunch hour. Home was half a mile walking distance. I attended only a half day class. I always looked forward (to) and enjoyed my walk with dad. He was always so interested in what I had done that day in class. I would often walk to meet him when he came home at 5:00 p.m. It was a wonderful time when it was safe for a child to go alone. During this peaceful time there was little crime and you seldom, if ever, heard of any occurrence of rape. Nowadays there isn't a day that goes by when there aren't articles in the paper of some sort of abuse.

The hobos had our house marked. Every day some hobo was asking for some sort of handout. Never expecting charity for nothing, they always offered to do a chore for the value of the food they were asking for. Mother often invited them in when the weather was bad. They would gratefully sit on the inside steps. I often sat with them and they often would say to me, "I have a little girl like you, but I had to leave her and look for work."

The doors were always unlocked. Now most homes go to the extent of having dead bolts on the doors and bars on the windows! Things are so different today. You lock your doors and you certainly (don't) invite a stranger into the walls of your personal secure home.

When I was four years old the "stork" (or so they told me) delivered a baby sister to my family, Laurine Marie, (now Reiske). The Leclair kindergarten was now teaching first grade. I'll never forget the time when I invited the entire class and two teachers over to my house for a birthday party except for one thing went wrong, my mother didn't know anything about it. Mother coped beautifully. Everyone seemed to have a good time. The good times were quickly over when everyone left. Needless to say, that was my absolutely last surprise birthday party on my mother.

The children then were not fortunate enough to have a lot of toys. We usually got a few toys at Christmas and on our birthdays. We appreciated them and took very good care of them. I still had all of my old furniture when we broke up our home in 1970. At Christmas our stockings had nuts and oranges in them. These two great stocking stuffers were very rare at this time of the year because there were no refrigerated trucks to ship them. Our Christmas tree was real and had candles instead of electric lights. There was always a fear of the destructive fire. There were no artificial trees and we decorated with paper chains and popcorn along with ornaments.

We always went to Mass at 8:00 a.m. The first thing we would do was get up and rush to see what Santa brought. We would then put on our new gloves, shoes and scarves. After getting all of those things on, we walked nearly two miles to Mass on an empty stomach. At this time the church required us to fast from food and water starting at midnight the previous day. After Mass we would come home and enjoy a deliciously prepared breakfast consisting of home butchered country sausage. We usually had a house full of company. Grandma Carroll had four grown children: Tom, Edwin, Leo and Maude who were frequent visitors.

We made a lot of our own amusements. Dad used to bring us white silicon sand from work and I would color it with coffee, tea and colored crepe paper. We would have a sand store and sell it to other children in the neighborhood for a pin a package. We would put layers of different colors in a bottle and turn it to get rainbow effects.

We would make Poppy Shows with a shoe box. Make rooms in it and cut out pictures of furniture from the Sears Roebuck Catalog. After gathering together all of these things we would decorate our play house. We would put a candle in the box and pull it along the sidewalk calling out to many curious, young listeners, "See my Poppy Box...give me a pin and I will let you look in." This line always trapped the curiosity of almost everyone and they just had to see what was inside the box. Needless to say, there was never a shortage of pins at our house. We didn't have any pennies but we did have a lot of pins.

Our group games were" Run Sheep Run, Hi Spy, Jacks, Jumping Rope, and Walking on Stilts.

Our yard was the playground for the entire neighborhood. We had tents made out of blankets hung over our clothes line. We would all get together and have tea parties; mother always did bake the best cookies for us.

The (Madison) coal mine was about a mile from our home and there were a lot of mules that were used in the mines to pull the many cars of coal. They were in the mines so much that they gradually went blind. Occasionally they were brought up out of the mines. One day after they were brought up they broke loose from the lines that temporarily restrained them. They ran wild through the surrounding yards. One of my friends was still under the tent when they broke loose. Mother ran outside and quickly grabbed us up so the mules wouldn't trample us. The mules tore up the garden that dad had worked so hard in. They trampled my tent and ruined our tea party! Eventually the mules were rounded back up and we put our tent back up and continued on with our tea party. I felt sorry for those mules that had to go back to work in the dungeons of those treacherous coal mines.

When I was eight years old I had a little red wagon and today I would be called your Avon lady but then it was Larken products (i.e. extracts, household items and cosmetics). I would call on the neighbors and take their orders. Larken did not pay any commission but they offered points. After these points added up they had a book that you could look through and pick out what you wanted. With the points that I had earned I received a hand cranked phonograph that only played "Adeste Fideles" and I drove the folks crazy. I didn't only play this at Christmas but I played it all year long. The funniest gift was a red fox choker that looked like an alley dog. I was surprised that all the dogs in the neighborhood didn't follow me around. I felt so grown up and it's a wonder that my parents didn't make me walk a block behind them when we walked two miles to St. Mary's Church for Mass. We went home and came back for vespers and Catechisms. The people were more devoted in those days to God and never missed Mass unless they were ill.

Today many people are too busy to give God just one day out of their lives. They unjustly claim that they are too busy for God. I feel God is trying to tell us something. He is being left out of our schools and homes and I feel that is why the moral standards of this country are so bad. The Ten Commandments are forgotten and spoken about as if they were a mere myth. Sex is taught in the fifth grade, no mention of morals. One in every five teenage girls are pregnant, some of these are as young as fourteen and fifteen. These are just babies themselves having babies. When I graduated from high school there was only one pregnancy in the entire school.

Divorce is now rampant. If you have an argument, you should talk it over and compromise, marriage is never smooth. I feel sorry for the children as there are so many re-marriages, brother will often marry sister. John and I have been married for 59 years. Don't let me fool you, we have had our spats, but never once did we forget the vows that we made to each other on our sacred wedding day. I was

once asked, "Have you ever considered divorce?" My honest reply was, "Murder maybe, but divorce never."

We didn't have a car until I was twelve years old. It was an Essex touring car with isinglass curtains, (like a stiff heavy plastic), we hooked these up whenever a single cloud would enter into the beautiful cloudless sky. This was started by a key like they are today but we had to crank it.

Our highlight of the day was waiting for the ice man to arrive in his wagon pulled by his horse. We had a sign that we would put in our window to let him know how much ice we needed. The weight ranged from 10, 25 to 50 pounds. When he would deliver we would anxiously jump on the wagon and get chips of the ice. There were no electric refrigerators invented yet. The ice was in a wooden insulated box that had a pan underneath it that had to be emptied each day. Dad built a pipe into the floor so the melted ice would run down and drain into our basement. Later we were fortunate enough to get a General Electric refrigerator with a motor on top of it. It was the first and best that had been made.

We were fortunate to have electricity. Most homes had coal oil lamps and outdoor plumbing. At this time electric stoves had not been invented. We did have a coal stove for cooking; we also heated our bath water on this stove. Many if not all families took their baths in the kitchen where it was warm. Every Saturday night whether we needed it or not we all huddled into the kitchen to bathe in the wash tub. Every one of the opposite sex (was) locked out and all the shades were pulled until everyone was done bathing.

There were no furnaces and several coal stoves were the only providers of heat. If you had a two story home you cut holes in the ceiling so the heat would travel to the upstairs so that it too would be warm. We had a furnace in the big house and Grandpa Pierson later put a furnace in the small house.

For washing you had a scrub board. This method was used until the man powered machine was invented. You boiled water in a big copper boiler and filled the machine up. You didn't have the convenience of laundry detergent but we had to use the lye soap we made. After filling the machine up with water we then put the clothes in the machine. They were churned around in the water by someone stirring with a handle on the side of the tub. All of the white clothes were dried in the kitchen. We were lucky to have a basement. Flat irons were heated on the stove for pressing the wrinkles out of our clothes. We also had to heat our curling irons on the stove. You often smelled the aroma of singed curls before leaving for a date or special occasion. At this time there also weren't any electric powered sewing machines. All sewing machines were powered by foot. Most clothes were either made at home or ordered out of the Sears Roebuck catalog.

The telephone was answered by an operator and she then connected you with the desired party. There were several parties on one line so you had no secrets. The best way to pass on something that you wanted kept a secret was to personally deliver it. The operators were the smartest girls in town. They knew all of the gossip and they didn't waste any time spreading it.

There was a lot of work for the housewife to do; she had more time to complete the tasks that needed done because few housewives worked outside of the home. Since there were no soap operas to devour their useful time they kept themselves busy. They spent their free time at various church functions, preparing their garden for a bountiful harvest, canning for winter months and making quilts to comfort them when the bitter cold came. I was raised under a quilt as my grandmother and mother always had a quilt in the frame. The neighbors often came over and helped. On these occasions it was called a Quilting Bee. All of us children played house under the quilt top. When John and I were married we received 21 quilts as Grandma Scherer was also a wonderful quilter. I still have many of these left. The value of these beautiful quilts (has) drastically increased. They are collector's items and some value at \$500. They hang them on the walls for decoration.

Our grocery store was the Leclair Market which the N. O. Nelson Company owned. The folks had a charge account with them and each week dad would pay the bill. When he paid the bill he would always get a treat, either cookies or candy. That was the one day in particular that I would always meet him and walk home with him. They delivered each day and would come in and put the groceries in the ice box even if there wasn't anybody home. The milk man also delivered and I'd love the frozen cream that would push up the cap on the glass bottle if we didn't bring it in before it froze.

The coal man would bring coal in September and we always felt lucky to have our bin full. We had a furnace in Grandmother Carroll's house. Later dad put one in the bungalow. When John and I had our first home in 1929 we had a stoker that fed the coal into the furnace. The clinkers had to be taken out by hand.

In spring and fall all of the rugs were taken outdoors and beat with a carpet beater. The mattresses and bed clothes were also taken out and aired.

When I entered the second grade I had to walk one and a half miles to and from school. (Columbus School on Kansas Street) There were no school buses like children have today. When the weather was bad I could ride a street car into the city square for only ten cents. Even after riding in the car I would still have to walk a half of a mile to reach my destination of school. Each morning when I got up I

bundled up and boldly braved the cold weather. The long underwear that I wore helped a lot; but they were always a chore to get wrapped around my ankles so that they wouldn't show under my lisle stockings and high top shoes. Finally, after wearing the button shoes for years, the lace style shoes came in style.

On one occasion I came home with some crawly companions. I really wouldn't call them my friends, but they insisted on being my friends. I had head lice. I can remember my mother dousing my head with coal oil to get rid of these persistent friends. They were quite common as at this time there were no bug killers to destroy them. They just didn't seem to be able to accept rejection.

We lived across from Leclair Lake and I did a lot of craw fishing. I caught them by the bucket full. Mother refused to cook them so I fed them to dad's chickens. Once I started doing that we were unable to eat the eggs because they tasted like crawfish. I also did a lot of fishing in that lake.

I used to roller skate to and from school and even after I graduated I skated to and from my job. I didn't do too well on ice skates because I have weak ankles. When I was small mother made me wear knee pads to save my stockings. Joe Blackmore and I were the only kids who wore them. I was so embarrassed to wear them and I was glad when I didn't fall anymore. I never had a bicycle so I have never been able to ride anything with the exception of a stationary bike.

During World War I, I saw a single engine job (airplane). Laurine and a bunch of kids were playing in the yard. When we saw it, we all took off running to see it land. We were so excited that we didn't even tell mother where we were going. We ran consistently for three miles, across tracks and trestles. Our folks were frantic; they didn't know what happened to us. There were often gypsies passing through and our folks feared that we might have followed them. I literally drug Laurine along; at the time she was only four. She was sick for days after our little adventure. After we returned home, the hairbrush once again left its memorable mark on our backsides.

During World War II we had ration books for meat, gasoline and silk stockings. (There is a copy of these ration books on the following pages.) If you were a friend of the butcher you received good meat, if not, you often wondered if you got horse meat. There was a lot of Black Marketing, especially for gasoline.

I can recall the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment (Prohibition). The liquor was still around and the speakeasies were in operation. The trick was not to get caught in the middle of a raid. You would be arrested and put

in jail. There also was a lot of brew and wine made secretly in many homes and also there was a lot of cork blowing. My folks did not indulge in alcohol except on holidays so we were not affected.

This was the era of the first radio. Uncle Clay Cowan had the first crystal set with earphones. Only one at a time could listen to these. They were nice to listen to but they also were very noisy.

The first television I saw was in the 1940s at my sister's home. It was black and white. I felt privileged to see television just in black and white. Today we have 40 inch color televisions. We can take pictures and show them on T. V. with the aid of a VCR. We now have taped movies, computers, telephones in cars, microwave ovens, man on the moon, spaceships, (and) satellites in orbit. I have seen a lot in my lifetime; from the first single engine plane to the Concord.

There were few horses and buggies in my childhood. My Uncle Leo used to come to visit in his horse and buggy and it was a great treat for us to get to ride in it with him. I used to go to Marine to his farm at harvest time and it was a thrill for me to see all their neighbors helping at threshing time. They would go from one farm to another until all the wheat was threshed. I had never seen such hungry men. They ate at 10:00 a.m. when we girls would take their food out to them. They would come in at noon for a hot meal; afterwards, they worked for another four hours before we brought them more food. Then again at sundown we prepared them a hot meal. All food was prepared on a coal cook stove. Baking was done days ahead of time. There were always stacks of dishes to wash. We didn't have the convenience of a dish washer or the convenience of paper dishes.

In those days the farmers had a good living. They enjoyed fried chicken, home cured hams and sausage, milk (and) butter. They always enjoyed a warm meal without the hassle of having to go into town. Nowadays most farmers purchase their food in stores. So many farmers are going broke due to the outrageous costs of farm equipment.

I was in the first class to graduate from the new Edwardsville High School (West Street) in 1926. I always liked art and started painting greeting cards. I ordered them in black and white so I could paint on them with water colors. Delicate Drug in Edwardsville and Smucker Drug in Collinsville sold them for me. I also painted signs for several stores.

After graduating I took a correspondence course from the North American School of Art in Chicago, Illinois.



My first steady job was in the office of the Illinois Power Company and Light Company and in Delicate Drug. I finally ended up bookkeeper for the Essex Motor Company.

When I worked in the drug store, things were different then. If men wanted a personal item they mostly waited for a male clerk. Occasionally they would have me wait on them and I would go blushing to the boss and ask him to take over. Now everything is displayed on the counters and there is nothing personal withheld from the viewers through the television. They are even giving condoms to students in some schools attempting to stop diseases and unwanted pregnancies. I am always embarrassed by watching some advertisements on television while among mixed company.

I had lots of boyfriends and was considered to be quite a flirt. I had two steady boyfriends in high school so I always had lots of dates to accompany me to school dances. I can remember meeting two real cute boys from out of town while working in the drug store. I had planned to double date with one of my girlfriends. She ended up standing us up so I was left with both of the guys. We didn't allow that to spoil the evening that we had planned. I went to the show in Alton with them. They were both gentlemen so I didn't have anything to worry about. I sure wouldn't even think about going to a movie with two strange guys with the conditions in this world the way they are. Well, they wouldn't ask me out now and they would be so old there still wouldn't be anything to worry about.

During high school I worked part time at the Palace Store for my boyfriend's mother selling ladies apparel. I was one of the stores models for their shows at the Wildey Show. I always loved clothes and even to this day I try to keep up with the latest styles.

I was out of high school when I met the man of my dreams, your grandfather. His parents had rented a farm from my grandparents, the Carrolls in Marine, before he was born. My mother used to babysit for his older brothers and sisters as they just lived on the next farm. His parents moved to Madison, Illinois where your Grandfather was born. When the Mississippi flooded their home, they loaded up and moved to 2104 Iowa in Granite City.

Your grandfather (John Scherer) attended St. Joseph School, served Mass and graduated from the eighth grade. His folks couldn't afford to send him to high school. At the age of fourteen his lunch bucket almost dragged on the ground, as he was small for his age. He worked at the Stamping Works (in Granite City) putting handles on enamel baskets, until he decided he wanted to be a pattern maker.

He realized there was no future (at the Stamping Works) so he went to the Commonwealth Steel Casting where he finished his high school education and then received his apprenticeship. He would work

eight hours a day, then go to class until 9:00 p.m. He did this for four years. He was then certified as a wood pattern-maker of under frames for steam locomotives and during the Second World War he designed the under frames. He was exempt from the draft because his skill was considered essential to the war.

He turned his paycheck over to his mother each week and when he was twenty-one she had saved it all for him. Even though there were many times that she could have spent it, as his dad didn't make a lot of money, she refrained from doing so. His parents had five children at St. Joseph's School and it was hard to pay tuition for them. Nevertheless, they all received a good Catholic education. John's mother bought him a new Chevy Coupe for \$600.00 and she then asked him to take her to Edwardsville to visit Grandma Carroll. We then met her. I stopped my flirting and dated John for two years. That coupe had made a rut in the highway from Granite City to Edwardsville. These two years were only the beginning of the happiness that John and I shared together.

By the time John passed his apprenticeship he was making \$1.25 per hour. In 1929 the hourly wage (for that job) was \$22.50 per hour. We bought a (building) lot for \$600.00 in Maryland Place, Nameoki, Illinois. Maryland Place was a town on the outskirts of Granite City. We had a two story brick home built there. The company that John was then working for sent him to Dayton, Ohio to oversee a job. He came home for our wedding, which was on September 10, 1929. We happily joined ourselves in wedlock in St. Mary's Church located (on Park Street) in Edwardsville. We had a large wedding and my mother had prepared for a large reception at my home. All of our neighbors did all of the cooking. After the reception we caught the 12:30 train to Dayton, Ohio and John was supervising a pattern shop there. We stayed in Dayton for only a month. Even though the company that John was working for was paying our expenses as well as our rent, I still thought it was expensive. We moved into the Maude Mueller apartments only to discover that there had been call girls living there before us. The first night we were there we had people knocking at our door all night. If that wasn't distracting enough the telephone continually rang at all hours. The following day we complained and the disturbances finally stopped.

Exactly ten months to the day (after our wedding) I started labor. My doctor was from Edwardsville and we were unable to locate him. Mother and dad brought a midwife who was to stay with me for ten days. It was July 30, 1930, in the evening when our son arrived. Unfortunately Jack entered this world in a breech position (backwards). The doctor then arrived in time to assist, and naturally Dr. John was also present, he was somewhat weak in the knees. It was a hundred and seven degrees in our upstairs apartment and we didn't have any air conditioning or window fans.

We had a son, John George; after his birth I went blind for six months. Those six months seemed to be an eternity for me. My temporary blindness was caused by a bladder infection. During my pregnancy I had gone from 118 pounds to 190. Back then doctors didn't monitor your weight gain. They just told you to eat for two. I had gone on a popcorn and ice cream binge and due to that it caused my bladder infection that temporarily robbed me of my sight. At this time we had \$200.00 in the bank and we had no furniture payments to make. I had already bought most of our furniture, thank heavens! Our \$200.00 went in a hurry to the doctors trying to find the cause of my blindness. I finally went to the Barnes Clinic to correct it.

The Depression started and the Commonwealth closed in 1930 for two years. My folks paid our interest on our home so we wouldn't lose it. It was \$20.00 on the principal and with interest it made it \$24.00. After John could not find a job we rented it for \$25.00 per month. We spent time between our families. We sure hated to leave our dream home, but we were very fortunate that our folks could help us out. Many families during this time lost their homes.

Our Dairy and Grocery Store continued to allow us to have an account with them even though we wanted to quit their services. They said that our credit was good with them. We really did appreciate their trust with our good credit. So many people couldn't get credit like we were able to.

Grandpa Pierson worked every day for \$35.00 per week. That is what he cleared each week, at this time there were no taxes withheld. They also kept up a good garden, raised chickens, which provided them with fabulous eggs. We also lived with Grandma and Grandpa Scherer in their upstairs rooms. They could have easily used the roomer's rent as Dad Scherer was only making \$2.00 per hour as a laborer.

John and I even tried selling items door to door, but no one had any money to buy anything. Some of our friends who were fairly well off were now having potato soup as their main meals so they weren't able to help us out any.

I finally got a job in St. Louis doing smocking and making flower embroidery on the children's dresses as piece work. On weekends I would bring home suitcases of the work and take it up to my mother's and she would help me and make a few extra dollars. There were several ladies in the neighborhood who took the McKinley Car (with me) and we had to walk eight blocks to the Patricia Moody Factory. Finally I got another job as a saleslady in a dress shop in Granite City. I worked from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. six days per week. I was fortunate enough to make \$8 per week. I was then made bookkeeper but unfortunately that job didn't last too long. My boss had other ideas so I quit. I turned him

in to the NRA for paying less than the government NRA wages. He had to pay all of us girls our back pay and, needless to say, he wasn't very happy about that.

John and I felt we were able to make it on our own now, so we rented a bedroom over Gancheff Drug Store on 19<sup>th</sup> Street for only \$9.00 a week. We had a gas plate in a closet and a bath at the end of the hall; we shared this with another couple. We had to carry water to do the dishes from the bathroom to the kitchen.

My parents kept Jackie and we would go up every weekend for a good meal and a food basket to bring home. John still was unable to find a job even though he desperately tried.

I came home for lunch one day and he said that he couldn't go out anywhere because the seat of his pants wore out. I then went out to Fleishmans and bought him a pair of pants for \$1.50, however when he put them on they looked like they were made for a man six foot tall. The crotch came down to John's knees. It was comical to see him with those pants on.

At this time we survived on wieners and beans during the week. If we were fortunate to get the old Chevy started we would always go to my mother's for a bountiful Sunday dinner. It was hard for us having a little boy growing up and not being able to be with him except on Sunday but we knew he was getting a lot of love from his grandparents. At this time gas was only fifteen cents per gallon.

I sincerely hope that you never have to go through a depression. What was it like?

There was one job on a garbage heap, hundreds of people would apply. They all desperately wanted a job that they were fighting, clawing and crying. Men sold apples on the streets while women sold their bodies on the street corners just to be able to provide cereal for their crying babies. There were so many things that no one could afford, the most expensive – PRIDE.

Families slept on their furniture that was out on the sidewalks, they were evicted from the place that they once were able to call home. Prices and salaries went down...down...down...There was no food stamps or welfare. If you did not have any savings in the bank you were more or less destined to suffer, sometimes severely. Twenty thousand persons, mostly family heads, struggled to hang onto their heartbreak until 1931. At this time a great many of them unfortunately committed suicide. At that time President Hoover continually claimed, "Prosperity is just around the corner." "But which one?" was the question that the American people were forced to ask themselves frequently.

At this time waitresses earned \$10.00 per week, typists earned \$12.00 per week. The pay was there but the hard part wasn't learning a trade, but finding a job. Homes were now sold for taxes. We were so lucky to have my folks to keep our payments. Banks failed and closed their doors in the face of trusting depositors. They waited hours in line to be able to attempt to salvage anything that they could. In Chicago, the police had to repeatedly break up riots of 50 or more men fighting in the back of restaurants; they were fighting over a barrel of garbage!! Steel mills closed. Homeless men were forced to nail boards together in empty lots and build shacks just to survive. This town soon adopted the name of Hooverville. It was located where the St. Louis Arch and Popular Street Bridge are in St. Louis, Missouri. They managed to make it off of the scraps they found and the food they managed to steal.

Not everyone was bums. Many were once professional and well educated men who just simply could not find any employment. The box cars were loaded with men traveling over the country with the mere hopes of finding a job somewhere. Soup kitchens were set up in missions to help. Nothing was done without prayer.

The Hooverville in Washington was intolerable to the government. General Douglas McArthur and his aide Major Dwight D. Eisenhower led a United States Army force of tanks, cavalry and machine guns to evict the ones living on the scraps of others and the hope they hung onto within their hearts. Most of them being evicted were World War I veterans standing in tatters. President Hoover stated, "A challenge to the authority of the United States Government has been met."

The stock market index hung at 59. A Chrysler sedan could be bought for \$900.00. A cloth coat for \$6.95, a man's coat for forty-seven cents, an eight-piece dining set for \$46.00. Sirloin steak could be bought for only 29 cents a pound, leg of lamb for 22 cents. In Detroit a six room home, with a two-car garage would sell for \$2,800. Milk was only ten cents a gallon, bread was five cents a loaf. What was it like? What was it really like? Permit me to give you a bit of gratuitous advice.

"Work hard for your government to succeed. No matter what your politics are, do not spend all your money that you make. Always put some away as life is not all sunshine. There will also be rainy days."

I think it was times like these that showed what you are really made of. If you stuck together through these times you had it made. It takes a lot of hard knocks to show your love for each other that your love is true love. The couples that have the world handed to them usually don't make it. It takes teamwork to make anything successful. Grandpa and I always worked as a team, he would help with the

house chores when we both worked, and he even washed the diapers when I was busy or ill. I mean on a scrub board and boiled them in a copper pan to prevent infection – we had no Pampers.

After the war we became numbers instead of people. Anyone employed had to have a Social Security number and it along with your name was all that was required on all business transactions. A total of 6% was deducted from your paycheck and the employer also paid into the fund for retirement at the age of sixty-two. This was to supplement your savings at retirement.

John finally got a job on the WPA, a government project building streets and parkways, it didn't pay much, but at least it was a job. We desperately wanted to get our son home with us so we rented a three room apartment above a barber shop on Edison in Granite City. We once again shared the bathroom with another couple (the Cunningham's). We still presently keep in touch with them. The roaches were a constant battle for us. John and I were both working so we had an old school chum (Margie Daech Cline), who was not working, come and stay with our son Jack while we both worked.

Later we discovered two scorpions in the apartment. We then sent Jack over to my mother's, we didn't want to take a chance of him getting stung by one of them, and they are extremely poisonous. When we complained to our landlord he raised our rent. A few months later Commonwealth re-opened. Fortunately for us, John was called back; he was called back first because he had seniority.

After a while we were able to move back into our first home on Waterman in Nameoki, Illinois. When Jack started school I got a job as a manager of a dress shop and John took a job teaching in the evening at the high school, teaching pattern making to the veterans and any others who wanted to learn the trade. These extra jobs helped us to pay our debts back. We now had a babysitter to watch Jack for us.

We were living in our first home (when we) were blessed with a darling, little girl that we named Carolyn Marie. She was born to us on May 15, 1939 at the Granite City Hospital. She was born nine years after Jack. Jack continually told us to give him a little sister and now that he had one he truly adored her. If it hadn't been for the Depression we would have had more children. John would say, "Jack came in a year. I figured we'd have a baby every 10 months." But after seeing the devastating effects that the Depression had on so many other families we both knew that we wouldn't be able to watch our family suffer so. We had a son and a daughter so we were completely happy. We proudly raised two lovely children.

When Carolyn was four and Jack thirteen, we decided to sell (our home) and build a house on one floor. Jack had been sick a lot and the stairs were often a very large chore. We built our house in

Maryland Heights on the corner of Franklin and Richmond. We were the third house in the center of a wheat field. We bought two lots behind us on Richmond, Jack was now working part time and he invested in one of the lots, so we kept them for three years. We decided to have it all in garden, with grapes, berries, and much, much more delicious produce! I froze a lot of the produce for future use. Carolyn and Jack would pick gallons of beautiful strawberries and the neighbors were glad to buy from them with their spending money. We sold the lots and all the goodies were bulldozed under.

I always enjoyed working in the dirt and even now at 80 years young we have beautiful flowers in our yard. The soil is red clay and rocks. Your dad (Jack) brought me a load of manure for Mother's Day and I had beautiful flowers that year. I always had a small garden in the lot next door but between the rabbits and muskrats it was a constant losing battle. Now the lot is sold so that ends my gardening. Lucky I have a son-in-law with a green thumb who brings us our food basket.

It was during the Korean War that many mothers had defense jobs. I didn't want to leave Carolyn, as I felt both she and I would miss out on the most important time of her life, her childhood. Once those precious childhood years are gone they can never be recaptured. I decided to start a private nursery school so she would have playmates and to also give other mothers time to donate to the Red Cross. I started off with only ten children. Each year there were more students. Finally there was a limit that the state would permit (50 children) so I had to hire Retta Cotter. I bought a Ford station wagon and John built a seat around the sides of the car. I could successfully haul fifteen children in the back of the car then I would pick up Retta Cotter. Mrs. Cotter taught a car load of children while I gathered a second and third group. We had them three hours a day at a cost of \$2.00 for four days or fifty cents each day, which included transportation. I drove 78 miles a day and the good Lord always watched over us as I never had a single accident.

I really enjoyed the children. When they entered the public school for kindergarten and first grade the schools commented that they could always pick out my children because I had already taught them everything that they now would learn in school. Each Christmas we put on a program at the Y.M.C.A. and the children's parents couldn't believe the discipline that the children displayed.

There are so many funny incidents that I will never forget. I had twin brothers in my class. I had the class at their tables and one time I allowed one of the two to go to the bathroom upstairs. One morning in particular when I came into the class room the twins and four other children had what I thought were balloons. I told them that they could not blow up their balloons in the class room. One of the twins stood up and responded, "These aren't balloons. They are condoms!" I nearly went through the ceiling. I had

then collected all of the condoms. At the same time that I had all of them in my hands the electrician who was to check the furnace that morning, knocks on my door. Without thinking I let him in. I was standing there talking to him with a handful of condoms! Later on that afternoon I returned them to the parents of the twins. Their parents responded, "The boys were told that those were condoms and NOT play things!"

Another time I had Johnny, who was a day dreamer. He never finished a project and all of the other children had completely lovely scrapbooks at the completion of the school year. I told Johnny's mother that he never finished his work and she said that she would get after him. One day I told him that if he didn't finish his picture he would have to stay after school until he did.

The bathroom was upstairs and I only let one child go up at a time. That way I could keep track of everyone. Johnny very seldom asked to go up. At 2:00 o'clock as usual I loaded up all of the children in the car to deliver them to their homes. Once I arrived at Johnny's house I called out, "Johnny, we're home!" I turned around and there was no Johnny. I panicked, thinking only the worst has happened. I raced back to my school. My mind was racing in all directions. I rushed in and turned on the school room light, there was Johnny finishing coloring his picture. I had imagined him frantically crying and frightened. When I saw him he didn't have a single tear in his innocent little eyes. His mother, as well as myself, thought that he had definitely learned a good lesson.

I continued the school until Grandpa Pierson had his heart attack and I know that I couldn't care for him when he would come home from the hospital and teach classes. He died in the hospital. Nonetheless, I still closed the school and didn't re-open it; after fourteen years of teaching I decided that I would get into the field of art. I was so lucky that after driving 78 miles a day I never had one accident. My little prayer that I said each trip seemed to have taken care of us. I would love to see all of those little darlings to see how they have turned out.

Jack graduated from Granite City High and went to work at Laclede Steel. He also worked at Union Starch and the Post Office during vacation. He was always ambitious. While in school he worked at a popcorn stand, at a drug store, as well as cut grass for the neighbors. After working at the steel mill he decided to go to the University of Illinois so he could get a better job. He graduated with high honors and went to work at Dow Chemical in Madison County, Illinois. He married Patricia Strole on September 2, 1953. He served two terms in the Army and they lived in Rolla, Missouri. He was then trained as a medic at Fort Leonard Wood. After serving his country he returned to Dow and bought a home on Lynch near us. Kathy Ann was born June 11, 1956. When Kathy was three they went to Tulsa, Oklahoma and he was a supervisor at Wheeler Aluminum where he built the first plant. While there he had his first heart attack.



He then went to Kaiser where he had a wonderful position but along with his position came a lot of stress and he was doing a lot of travelling. We were in shock when Pat called us on April 11, 1978 to say that she found Jack dead at only 47 years old. I don't know of any pain that is as severe as losing one of your own children.

Carolyn worked in the Commonwealth office as a secretary. She later married Richard Dawson from St. Louis. They had a beautiful wedding at St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church located in Mitchell, Illinois on August 31, 1959, and we have a wonderful son-in-law. We made an apartment on our second floor and they lived with us for three years until Ricky was born. They bought a nice home in Godfrey, Illinois and had three more sons, Michael, Johnny and David. They moved to a larger home in East Alton and since Carolyn and Rich are both workers they have a place that they can truly be proud of; a nine room home with a beautiful yard with a garden and flowers.

After Dad (George Pierson) passed away (in 1954) I closed my school and enrolled in oil painting at the Granite City High School. I attended there for three years for evening classes as well as classes during the day with high school students.

I became interested in ceramics after taking lessons from the best teachers in the field; I opened a studio in our home. I won dozens of awards and became a distributor for many supply companies. They sent me to big ceramics shows to represent for them. I also taught seminars at some of the shows. I wrote articles for Popular Ceramics and Art and Craft magazines. I had the studio for thirteen years until I got pneumonia. The doctor told me that the fumes from the kilns were dangerous so I gave Carolyn the shop and she continued teaching ceramics for several years in East Alton.

I didn't get a chance to oil paint while I was teaching ceramics as it was a 12 hours a day, pouring, firing and teaching.

After some 48 years in one job John was more than ready to retire. Some friends of ours, John and Virginia Severs, talked about the property they had purchased in Terre du Lac at Bonne Terre, Missouri.

On Labor Day the four of us took a trip to Cherokee Village in Arkansas. They had sent each of us a check for \$50.00 to visit the area and hopefully sell us some property. On the way home I wanted to see TDL so I saw a beautiful lot right on the Terre du Lac Carmel so I gave the salesman my \$50.00 check for a deposit. The following June we moved into our home. We sold our big home in Granite City to Dr. Pineda for \$31,000 and the last time we saw the value it was \$125,000.

Grandpa Scherer got money for a fourteen foot boat from his fellow pattern maker for retirement. We went to Tulsa, bought a hitch and picked up a boat in Lebanon, Missouri. He had that boat in our back yard in Granite City. He was sitting in the boat trying to see if the oars were long enough. Some of our neighbors saw him and they were ready to call the men with the white coats. On that trip to Lebanon we also bought two big whiskey barrels for flower pots for our new home. John told the neighbors that he was going to make whiskey when he wasn't fishing. We could have gotten by with it as we had 5,000 acres here and there were only 75 houses when we originally moved here, so we were very secluded. There were sixteen man-made lakes and since we had them, there was no longer a need to go to Table Rock and Bull Shoals just to fish. Now all we had to do was step out into our back yard.

After we moved to Terre du Lac I began oil painting once again and entered my paintings into many shows and received many prizes. I painted seventeen pictures in 1995 and sold some of them and used some of them as presents. Each year I donated one to the TDL Art and Craft Show, which I helped start in 1975. The property owners purchased one for their office. They also displayed one at the Bonne Terre Federal Savings and Loan; many were displayed in various Country Clubs and Restaurants. Carolyn and I have entered many shows and enjoyed meeting the artists, but now I only paint for pleasure. Carolyn must have inherited some of my artistic talents as she does beautiful tole paintings and various ceramics.

The grandsons, Johnny, David, Mike and Ricky, used to enjoy visiting us as we had a boat and the fishing was usually good. As time went by the grandsons grew up and developed new interests. They were all good swimmers.

When Johnny was about five years old he was visiting us. He went home and told his mother that he was not coming back because grandma and grandpa sang dirty songs. The old favorite and popular song when I was going with grandpa was "Oh Johnny, Oh Johnny, how can you love?" He ran out and was sitting on the patio pulling all of the blooms off the petunias out of the big flower barrel.

Someone put seven ducks out on the lake. One morning we went fishing and it started to mist. While coming up to the house I stepped in some duck droppings, I slipped and broke an ankle in two different places. I had to spend the entire summer in a cast; therefore, I despised those ducks! They would come on the porch and were a mess so I got the boys to catch them. By this time there were thirty-seven of them. Remember Mike when you put them in the garage until the farmer could come and pick them up? They did us dirty!

In 1988 we sold our house and moved to a retirement community just three miles from Carolyn. We really hated to give up our house, as we dearly loved it, John did have a heart attack and we wanted and needed to be close to the family. This is a wonderful time for us now. No responsibilities....Good living!

We built three houses in our life by working hard and saving our money. We had a happy home life, enjoyed really nice vacations in the U.S.A. and the Caribbean. John had thirteen weeks for his last vacation before he retired.

John and I have enjoyed 59 years of a full and wonderful marriage!! We had our disagreements but no matter what we always settled them We were blessed with two wonderful children who made good marriages for themselves and presented us with very nice grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

This is what life is all about. GOD, LOVE and FAMILY. If you leave any of these three out you are headed for BIG TROUBLE!

When we leave this world, we will leave knowing that we enjoyed a full and wonderful life. We sincerely hope that our children and grandchildren will follow in our footsteps. Continue to do as we did, keep trying to make the world a better and more loving place to be in.

Peace and love until we all meet again! GOD LOVE AND KEEP YOU

John Scherer born June 10, 1905  
Virginia Pierson Scherer born January 2, 1909