A Cold Day in March

By

Theresa Johanik

Back in March of 1958 my parents Joe and Helen Johanik and Dr. Jauquet decided that it was a good time for me to have my tonsils and adenoids removed. Everything was scheduled and thus the adventure began.

I believe it was a Wednesday or Thursday that Mom and Dad took me to St. Joseph's Hospital for the surgery. I was not going to be out of school any longer than need be and the weekend would be sufficient heal time. The surgery went well, and I went home.

Now back in the day you have to remember the family dynamic. Many families had grandparents living in the same house. Families were large, and everyone farmed and many of the head of household held outside jobs. My Dad being one of them. He worked third shift at Splicewood in Ashland. Mom did the morning chores with Grandpa Johanik’s help while Grandma held down the household morning chores. She got me and Larry ready for school and Joe was still at work by 10 PM. All was well till about 1 AM. I got up, I had a bloody nose and went into Ma’s bedroom. She got up, cleaned me up, but it wouldn’t stop. By 3 AM I’m guessing she was going over to the Mike Farkas’ to use the phone to call Dad to come home and take me to the Dr. The clinic opened at 8:00 AM and we were there waiting for Dr. Jauquet. I got taken care of and back home we went. The night came and all was well till 3 in the morning, by then I was hemorrhaging badly. My Mom couldn’t do anything for me and Gramma told her to go to Farkas’ and see if Mike could take me to the hospital.

Mom got dressed, it was cold I remember. She shoveled out the 1954 Ford Jubilee tractor, got it over the snowbank to the house. She took a perina (feather tick), packed it into the drawbars, dressed me and tied me to the support bars and off we went. We got to the neighbors. She tried to get to the house but the dog Sheppy would not let her near. I remember her hollering for someone to come to the door. Finally, Mike got up and answered the door. She told him what was going on and asked if he could take us to the hospital. Mike was a great guy but all in good time. He got dressed, started the truck and

The 1954 Ford Jubilee tractor that carried Theresa to the Farkas farm. Photo courtesy of Theresa Johanik.

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A Message from the President
by Irene (Zurian) Walter

Some things are better now.

We always enjoy receiving stories or accounts about local history from our readers. The variety of topics surprise and enlighten us, giving us a peek into the past that could never be found in any newspaper clipping or book.

In this issue, we published a story submitted by one of our MHS members, a long-time Moquah resident. As I read Theresa’s anecdote, I couldn’t help but compare her surgical experience (although quite different) to my recent left total hip replacement in February. I went into surgery on Monday morning and was home by noon on Tuesday. The incision on my anterior thigh is about three inches long with minimal swelling, no bleeding and NO PAIN!! I was up walking with a walker as soon as the spinal anesthetic wore off with detailed instructions for home activity.

My husband Dave drove us safely home in our AWD SUV through another February snowstorm. A 24-hr follow-up phone call by a hospital nurse and pre-surgical instructions directed my path to a good recovery. Of course, I could always Google the internet or email the doctor with questions. NO late-night tractor rides or repeat surgery were needed!

So, maybe, some things have improved over time.

We hope you enjoy this issue with a couple of articles from our readers and another family history. Happy Easter and Happy Spring!

Irene

Help! Help!

We have a member of MHS who is looking for a group class photograph from the Moquah School, Grades 1—3 for the school year 1955-56.

If you have a copy of this picture and would be willing to share it you can send it to us or bring it to us and we will make a copy and send it on to the person needing it. We will return your copy to you.

Many thanks! The EV Staff

The Ethnic Voice is published quarterly to aid communication and promote the pioneer spirit between members and friends of the Moquah Heritage Society. Your ideas, articles and comments are always welcome. Please submit them or any questions to:

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The Moquah Heritage Society is a private non-profit local historical society that is affiliated with the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Thank You!

Readers Respond

“I liked the way that President Irene Walter’s message tied in with Richard Mihalek’s story about finding his father and all his relatives.” – from an oral conversation with David Hnath, Ashland, WI.

“I think the booklet The History of the Moquah Area which was donated to the Iron River Library, looks really good and has many interesting photos, Thank you!” – Jacqueline Pooler, Librarian, Iron River, WI.
The Andrew Kmetz Family

From notes by Marie A. Kmetz

Andrew Kmetz (Kmec) was born 18 January 1883 in the village of Mernik, Slovakia, which is located just east of the city of Prešov, and came to America in 1901. When Andrew came to America he went to Sharon, Pennsylvania. He had an uncle living there. Mary Punjak (Pundral) Kmetz was born 3 December 1881 in Kis Domasa (Mala Domasa, Slovakia) and came to America in 1900. She also came to Sharon, Pennsylvania. The villages where they were born are about 20 miles apart. They may have known each other in the old country. They were married in Sharon, PA on 15 February 1904 by a Reverend Francis Chaney.

They first appeared in the Minneapolis city directory in 1905. They lived in a neighborhood called “The Bohemian Flats”. It was located by the Mississippi River. From the Flats up to street level there were 79 steps. While they lived in Minneapolis, Grandpa Kmetz worked for the Washburn Crosby Flour Mill. Four of their eight children were born in Minneapolis, Andrew, Jr, 4 June 1905, George, 4 April 1908, Michael, 2 August 1910 and Mary, 25 December 1912.

Grandpa and Grandma left Minneapolis for Moquah in 1913. They followed John and Anna Augustine to Moquah. The Augustines were god parents to their four children born in Moquah, John, 22 September 1915, Steve, 30 May 1918, Joseph, 15 September 1920 and Anna, 4 November 1923. The Augustines, Kmetzs and Mocellos all went from Minneapolis to Moquah.

The first 40 acres Grandpa Kmetz purchased was the farm that Erick and Mary Sande lived on. My uncle Mike told me they bought it from a party named Hayes. There was some type of dwelling on the land when they arrived in 1913, but the house that is there now is the one they built. I remember my Dad would say when you went out the door, you were in the woods. They cleared and farmed that land. Their next land purchase was 80 acres from people named Mrafchak. This property is south of where Andrew Lajcak lived. They acquired the store and tavern from George Misun in the fall of 1938. Their son George took over the tavern. Grandpa

Andrew Kmetz, Sr died on 26 February 1956 and Mary died on 9 March 1969. Both are buried in Ss Peter and Paul Catholic Cemetery in Moquah.


Andrew Kmetz and Mary Punjak wedding, 1904, in Sharon Pennsylvania. Photo shared on Ancestry.com 15 October 2016 by Laura Solarz.
A Remembrance of Rose Treba Lajcak

By Janie (Lajcak) Asbach

Rose Treba Lajcak 1919-2018

For a number of years, we've commented about how our mother Rose was one of the last of the Moquah people to survive from the Greatest Generation, and eventually she became one of the oldest. But Rose wasn’t always one of the “Moquah Ladies” we remember – in reality, of her 99 years, over 60 were lived here in Ashland, and most of them within a block of where she was born on Water Street.

Rose was born right at the end of the Spanish Flu epidemic, just after WWI, during bleak times in America. The Great Depression came when she was a young woman in the 1930s, and when you’re the second oldest of 15 siblings and the eldest girl in the family, you carry a lot on your shoulders.

She loved to talk about the Water Street neighborhood as she remembered it – as hard as it is for us to picture now, back in those days, East End folks and West End folks rarely ventured to the other side of town, and different parts of town were each like their own little community. Polish was still spoken in their neighborhood, and at one time there were over 100 children on the block where she grew up. It was a whole different world of lakefront shanties, gritty docks, mills, railroads, boathouses, and ships coming and going constantly all summer. The lake was the centerpiece of life. Fish was a main food source, and everyone had a huge garden, and maybe even a cow or two in the backyard. The kids grew up free to run and roam, exploring as they chose, as long as they were sure to show up for supper. What a different world from what we know today.

Rose shared memories of teaching herself to sew on an old treadle sewing machine, probably from her grandmother. As a teenager, she learned to cut patterns for herself by tearing apart old wool coats and pants left in the attic by our uncles on the farm, making us snow pants and jackets to wear. She made countless dresses, including all of her daughters' wedding and bridesmaid dresses, and lots of things for the grandkids in later years. She loved to sew, and she was really good at it.

Rose taught herself to prepare food from their world, and as she started having children, her life revolved around babies, farming, church and school activities. Rose did it so well – canning hundreds of jars of food for the winters, making us clothes, cutting up rags to make rugs for the cold bare floors sewing quilts to keep us warm in the cold attic, and tending the huge gardens. She taught herself how to drive a less-than-dependable car up and down those Fish Creek hills, and she learned to drive a

this opened a whole new world for her, where she learned about “fancy cooking,” spent time at their summer place on Madeline Island, and saw how “the other half lived.”

Rose married Andy Lajcak and moved to his family’s farm in Moquah. Despite being only ten miles away from Ashland, she found herself in a place where she didn’t know hardly anyone, a lot of people still spoke Slovak, and she was living in a four-room house with no furnace or indoor plumbing with her mother-in-law who didn’t speak English (and who maybe wasn’t the most welcoming in-law you could imagine).
Remembrance of Rose

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tractor, too. And she put up with Andy and his cronies from down at Neps, too... all that dodging-the-game-warden activity that went on in those days. Rose never complained about that, but would sigh a lot and shake her head. In those days, men ruled the world, and she knew her place.

She loved to garden and cook, especially cookies and fancy desserts. When we were kids on the farm, she would manage to make banana cream pies in the old wood stove, with meringue on top! She made cookies by the hundreds, well into her 90s. She was always trying to grow some peonies or pretty flowers around the farm, usually failing at this venture whenever some cattle got loose and chewed them all down. There seemed to be so few things Rose wasn’t up to the challenge to do... but she did say the one thing she did regret learning was “how to milk those cows!”

Rose was a smart and voracious reader, and even when there was little cash to be had on the farm, she managed to find enough to join a book club. She bought interesting and timely novels – “Silent Spring” by Rachel Carson, “Unsafe at Any Speed” by Ralph Nader. She and Ann Girga loved discussing these kinds of books, and were part of the group credited with bringing the Book Mobile to Moquah in the 1950s.

She had to really miss seeing more of her widowed mother and family back on Water Street – at the time we were growing up, her own mother still had a house full of young children, and even though it was only 10 miles away, in those days people seldom went to town, so visits were few and far between. Rose seemed drawn to build friendships with the other women in Moquah who didn’t grow up there – they shared a bond of being related to very few others and coming from other ethnic backgrounds.

When her kids got involved with the ABC Raceway as it got started in the mid-1960s, Rose and her friends Verna Brevak and Martha Koleski were the moms who guided us in those early days. She took it upon herself to set up the first concession stand by bringing a milk can of water and a beat-up grill, along with some homemade barbeques and hot dogs for the young folks to eat. For many years she made all the food for the annual ABC Raceway picnics. She loved to be involved whenever there were lots of people to feed – weddings, funerals, bake sales, church events... she even invited Betsy and Tracy’s whole class to Prentice Park every June for a birthday/end-of-the-school-year picnic.

Rose was widowed at just 53 years old... she was strong and went about having a furnace installed in the farmhouse, bought a more reliable car, and got a job cooking at Ondossagon. She loved her years there, and the ones that followed cooking at the Treatment Center – she relished making special treats and enjoyed the company of new friends and co-workers.

At age 60 she made a major move – she had our good friend Jerry Servinsky build her a very nice little house down on Water Street, only a block away from the old Treba house where she grew up. She was once again close to family, friends and old neighbors, and what a good move that was for her. She reconnected with so many people, joined so many clubs, and saw much more of her family again – and once again, she could see the lake from her front windows. She was “home again”. Plus, now she could show off her lovely flowerbeds along the house without the fear of any livestock devouring everything.

When VCRs came out in the 1980s, her kids and grandkids were amazed at how quickly she took to recording her favorite shows – she loved figure skating (especially Torvill and Dean) and could watch their performances over and over again. Rose’s other great televised love was NASCAR racing... ESPECIALLY her beloved Dale Earnhardt (#3). For years, she had her “Dale Shrine” where she set up all her Dale memorabilia, and she loved to talk about the time he won at Talladega Speedway and she happened to record it. She was also a big music fan and even after she’d moved from her house into her apartment in the Ashland Arms it was unusual to walk in without hearing some Kris Kristofferson, Rita Coolidge, Ricky Van Shelton, or Daniel O’Donnell playing on her stereo. Thank you for remembering Rose.

A Cold Day

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off we went. I recall Mom saying “can’t you drive faster.” We got to the hospital where Dr. Jauquet was on night shift.

They tried to get me stabilized but to no avail. A call went out for anyone with my type blood. By 10-11 o’clock my Uncle Albert (Pudy) was brought in by the Bayfield County road crew to donate blood.

Mom and Dad were told to call Father Florian to administer last rites as I wasn’t going to make it. I remember Fr. Florian praying over me and sprinkling holy water. I remember the six candles lining my bedside and the nurse Theresa Sandor holding my hand. She never left my side. Mom and Dad were crying.

Well, I made it!

Later in the week my teacher Mrs. Faye Raspotnik came to visit. She brought me two gifts, a puzzle with the Gunsmoke characters on it and a make your own jewelry kit and cards and letters from my classmates. I still have the letters from the classmates.

So goes the story of my near death experience. How ironic it should come to mind 61 years later on the coldest day of 2019.
In Memoriam ...

Agnes M. (Friedman) Mihalak, 98, of Poplar, WI, passed January 6, 2019 at Essentia-St. Mary’s Hospital in Superior, WI.

Agnes was born in Moquah, the daughter of Stephen and Anna (Turcosky) Friedman. She was married to the late Louis Mihalak.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Louis; daughter, Delores Hepburn; son-in-law, Thomas Kubarek; sisters, Veronica Friedman, Ann Sandor, Mary Guernsey, Margaret Gerbozy, and Verna Opatik.

Agnes is survived by her children, Jean Mihalak of Bloomington, MN, Donald (JoAnn) Mihalak of Poplar, and Joan Kubarek of Poplar.

Funeral service was held at Central Assembly of God in Superior, WI. Burial will be in Poplar Cemetery.

Edward J Sandor Sr., 94, of Ashland, WI, passed away January 6, 2019 at St. Mary’s Medical Center, in Duluth, MN. He was born in the Town of Kelly, the son of Christopher and Katherine (Furajter) Sandor.

He was married to the former Jane Leren, in Ashland. Edward worked on his family dairy farm his entire life. Since 1961, he was the owner and operator of Ranch Park picnic and camping area. Edward was a folk artist and a wonderful woodcarver. He was a member of St. Peter Catholic Church, in Dauby, lifelong member of JEDNOTA, and a 20 year board member of the Town of Kelly.

He is survived by his five children, Edward (Diane) Sandor Jr., Ashland, Sherrie (Tom) Weston, Menasha, WI, Barbara (David) Stock, Superior, WI, Adam Weston; five brothers, Steve, Carl, Chris, John, and Tony Sandor; and a sister, Mary Sandor.

A funeral service was held at St. Peter Catholic Church, in Dauby, WI. Spring interment will take place in the St. Peter Cemetery, in Dauby.

Agnes (Meliska) Pristash, 94, passed away on January 30, 2019 at Heritage Court in Eau Claire, WI. She was born in Milwaukee, WI, the daughter of John and Matilda (Kvasnica) Meliska.

The family moved to Moquah in 1929. She was married to the late John Pristash. They had two sons, James (Patricia) of Eau Claire, WI and Robert (Sharon) of Cave Creek, AZ. Agnes was a member of St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Moquah and later Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church in Ashland. Agnes worked for the Ondossaigon School District for over 20 years as the food service coordinator. Students remember her creating wholesome meals from the donations received at the school. Agnes was a charter member of the Moquah Heritage Society, teaching members songs and dances for performances held in the area. She served as the Treasurer of MHS for many years and taught Slovak language classes at her home.

She is survived by her two sons; two daughters, Michelle (Jeff) Koval of Mason, WI, and Becky (Jeff) Misun, Two Harbors, MN; three brothers, Steve, Carl, Chris, John, and Tony Sandor; and a sister, Mary Sandor.

A Mass of Christian Burial for Agnes was held at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church in Ashland, WI. Spring burial will take place in the Saint Agnes Cemetery in Ashland.

Michael D. Misun, 62, of Moquah, passed away February 1, 2019, at his residence. He was born in Ashland, WI, the son of Rudy and Janice (Parker) Misun.

He was married to the former Sue Johnson, in Ashland. For 42 years, he was a member of the Laborer’s Local 1091 and was a present member of the Moquah Men’s Club. For 38 years, he served on the Board of the Town of Pilsen, 16 years as a Supervisor, and 22 years as Chairman.

He is survived by his wife, Sue, Moquah; two daughters, Michelle (Jeff) Koval of Mason, WI, and Becky (Bryan) Myers of Bloomer, WI; a brother, Mark (Suzi) Misun, Moquah; two sisters, Sherri (Jim) Schultz, Marengo, WI and Sheila (Mark Udenberg) Misun, Two Harbors, MN.

He was preceded in death by his parents. A funeral service was held at Frost Home for Funerals, in Ashland.

Fred E Brown, 93, of Ashland, WI, passed away February 20, 2019 at Northern Lights Health Care Center, in Washburn, WI. He was born in Ashland, the son of Fred L. and Clytie (Johnson) Brown.

He was in the US Navy and served during WWII. Fred was married to the former Bettie A Peters. He was the owner and operator of Brown and Young Motors, in Ashland. Fred was the animal control warden in Ashland and Bayfield Counties for over 20 years and the President of the Animal League for many years.

He is survived by his son, Scott (Pam) Brown, Ashland. He was preceded in death by his parents; wife, Bettie; a son, David; a brother, Lawrence; and two sisters, Lorraine and Carrol. Services will be held at a later date.
Moquah Heritage Society Items for Sale

Slovak-American Cook Book — $12.00
Published by the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association on the 60th Anniversary of their founding in 1952, this is the 19th edition. The cookbook includes the favorite Slovak and American recipes collected through the years by the members. Includes recipes for paprikas, halusky, klobasky, studenina and pastries like roshky, fanky and kolacky. (hard cover 439 p.)

The History of the Moquah Area — $10.00
This is a reprint of the original book compiled by Jerry Novak in 1966. We have recreated, to the best of our ability, the original format and content. We did, however, make a few corrections and added some names to photos from the original book in an addendum. The price includes shipping and handling. (42 pages)

The Volumes of the Ethnic Voice — $15.00 each

Getting Ahead, From Love of Reading to Love of Healing—$17.00 (plus $2.00 shipping)
An autobiography by Dr. August Jurishica, this book traces his early life from growing up in Slovakia, his immigration to the U.S. and all the obstacles he encountered on his way to a medical degree from the University of Wisconsin. An inspiring story of struggle and success.

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This old photograph is of Frank Kramolis, Sr. holding the reins, John Kramolis holding a shovel and Frank Jr. on an old wooden sleigh pulled by “one” horsepower. This is an example of snow removal from the farmyard in 1934. This photo is courtesy of Donna (Bodin) Kramolis.