

## **EARLY DAYS**

by Alvin L. Goossen

Grandfather and Grandmother Franz H. Goossen and my father Franz M. Goossen (only six months old) came from Landskrone, South Russia, to America on the ship *Vaderland*. Arriving in Newton, Kansas, on July 4, 1877, at 10 o'clock in the morning, they settled on the northeast quarter of the Alexanderwhol church Section, No 33. On August 25, 1884 they bought the Northeast quarter of Section 26, Township 20 Range 1 east, in Marion County, Kansas from Moses Banman and moved there. It is located three miles east and two and one half north of Goessel. Here they built their home and raised a large family of one son, Franz M. And nine daughters, Maria, Eva, Jestina, Susanna, Helena, Katherina, Ann, Elizabeth and Sarah. Katherina died December 14, 1904 at the age of eighteen years.

The Goossen home burned to the ground in early December 1912. They had butchered hogs and about midnight they woke up and smelled smoke. They got up and saw that the outside kitchen, just four feet from the house, was in full blaze. My father, living across the road about a quarter of a mile away was awakened by a queer telephone ring which he got up to answer. Then he saw the fire through the west window. He dressed and quickly went over to help carry out the contents. Grandfather barefooted, carried out furniture in a cold December night. The grandparent and Aunt Sarah (who was not married) froomed at our house until they could move into their new house which was built in January and February. Soon after Grandpa became bedfast until he passed away on August 8, 1913. The uncles came very faithfully and helped complete the new house. The aunts came to our place every day to prepare the dinner for the men, and we cousins spent lots of time in the creek to work through the ash pile, looking for forks, knives, spoons and door locks. Someone even found money.

The first time I ever age sugar cane was when my four older brothers took me across the road on the north side of grandfather's driveway where there was a cane field. My brother Franz had a knife and cut down a cane stick for each one of us. He took all the leaves off from my stick and told me to bite between the joints and start twisting, which I did. Say! Was that sap ever good! Just about that time we heard a top-buggy coming form the north. We could not see it because the case was to tall. As the top-buggy came around the corner we saw that it was Grandpa and Grandma driving into their driveway. When they saw us, they both had a big smile and Grandpa said in Dutch, "That's good, just let it taste good". This must have been in the fall of 1911 or 1912.

One day in Spring when I had to take something to Grandma, Aunt Anna was there too. They were sorting seed potatoes in the cellar, when all of a sudden Grandma found a little apple which she gave to me. Aunt Anna said, "Ha, Mam! If you find another one give it to me". Grandma said, "No, if I find another, I would give it to Alvin too". Well, she did not fin another one, so I ate my apple.

I will always remember how we came together once a month at Grandmother's. We were fifty-one cousins and we played lots of games. Six of us boys were born within six months. My mother often told me that when we were small, all six baby boys were laid across one bed. It was a bed full of babies. These were according to their age – Alvin Buller, Henry M. Schmidt, George Flaming, Alvin Goossen, Albert Heibert and Jacob J. Flaming.

In the summer's of 1920 and 1921 we cousin had youth programs once a month under the shade trees – mostly songs and recitations. The mothers always always came and listened in on us.

Since we lived only about a quarter of a mile across the road form Grandmother and had a good tool shop, the majority of the boys and girls came to our house to see the toy houses, wagons and tractors we had made. We also had a platform scale on which everyone wanted to be weighed to find out how much each had gained from last month.

At Christmas when it was cold, Grandmother's house was too small for all the uncles, aunts and us cousins. So the outside kitchen was kept warm where we could stay but it did not take long until a group went to our house. Since we were come of the very first to have a radio in the community, many of the cousins were curious to see and hear a radio.

All of this changed when Grandmother passed away on September 11, 1926. Grandfather and Grandmother both passed away on the farm, in the same house, in the same room and in the same bed; yet thirteen years apart.