

## TEN HEALTHY SONS MADE HEARTS OF PARENTS GLAD

by Alvin L. Goossen

My father Franz M. Goossen was born December 17, 1876. His father Franz H. Goossen was born July 1, 1852. His father Heinrich Goossen was born April 27, 1824. His father Franz Goossen was born in 1775 in Germany.

Mennonites left Holland for Germany many years ago. They went to the Ukraine, South Russia, in the early nineteenth century, during the reign of Catherine the Great. She promised exemption from military service, which was part of the Mennonite faith. The Mennonites prospered in the Ukraine for over a half century. When Catherine the Great died, her successors to the Russian throne were not favorable to the Mennonite faith. Many restrictions were issued which forced them to leave the country and find another home where they could have freedom. This search brought them by the hand of God to America. It was a long, long journey from Russia to Marion County, Kansas. Travel was slow in the years 1877 and 1878. My parents didn't remember the long trip because they were only babies at the time.

My parents were part of the Mennonite immigration from Russia in the 1870's, who settled in central Kansas. We lived nine miles southwest of Hillsboro, Kansas. This is where all of us ten sons were raised. We received our elementary school training in a one teacher, one room schoolhouse just a little over one half mile south of our home. This was the same school where my father had gone to school in the 1880's.

The community language was the dialect commonly known as Low Dutch which originated in Holland. English and High German were taught in our country school. My father often said; "low Dutch – family language, High German – church language and English – Business language". We learned all three quite well.

The Goossen farm consisted of 560 acres of ground with excellent improvements on it. The farm was sometimes called Goosenville. The title resulted from a manufacturing company on the place. My father invented and patented a grain-dumping box with an automatic endgate for a Model T Ford truck. We made and sold about ninety of those dump boxes, which were discontinued in 1926 when Henry Ford converted his factory to build Model A Ford trucks. After this we built our own house moving outfit in our shop. We moved many buildings within a radius of thirty to forty miles each direction from our home. The house moving was continued until about 1940, when the equipment was sold. On March 1 1958, the main structure of the Alexanderwhol Mennonite Church (40 feet by 70 feet) was raised 39 inches. My father was the manager of this undertaking.

In 1926 my father became interested in Thomas County land. He felt that some of us boys needed to go where there would be more room for farming. For that reason in 1927 he bought 480 acres of ground in one tract. On this my brother William settled down after he was married. My father was thoroughly convinced of the richness of the soil, even in 1934 and 1935 when hardly anything was raised, the dust was blowing and the depression hit hard. Father always encouraged us to stick it out, that some day we would make real good and we did. In 1942, all our farm ground produced wheat, thirty bushels per acre. Believe it or not, even the stubble ground which had not been farmed since the harvest of the year before, yielded thirty bushels per acre in volunteer wheat. At one time we were six brothers living in Thomas County, Kansas. My father always seriously considered making an irrigation well, but this did not materialize in his life time.

Going to church was a very important part of our family life. During the most of my life at home, we had two Model T Ford cars, a 1914 and a 1915 model, in which the whole family would go to church on Sunday morning. How well I remember on Sunday afternoon in winter when we came in from playing outside, father sitting in the old rocking chair by the round oak heating stove reading the large German Bible. Sometimes he told us what he had read. Mother also, would quite often tell us a Bible story. Long before I went to grade school, I remember how we stood at her knees and listened to a Bible story.

In May 1937 the entire Franz M. Goossen family got together for the last time. We numbered thirty-nine people and a family picture was taken. Less than a year later our brother William broke the family circle and went home to be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

All of this took place a long time ago. Since then the parents and other brothers have slipped into the presence of their Savior, and now we are waiting for the rapture, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a joy to know that Christians never say a final goodbye. While death breaks all earthly ties, we have the sure hope that those who die in the Lord are in the presence of the Savior and will return with Him in glory. I Thess. 4:14