

F I S H E R H E R I T A G E B O O K

The Life and Family of Russell Kenneth Fisher (1922-1991) and Edith Lucille Meeker (1929-) in Ross County Ohio. Includes biographical and geneological information, memories, and stories. Also some geographical information and background on Harrison Township.

By Kenny Fisher
First draft 2001

minimal corrections and additions 2008

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Edith Lucille Fisher. One could not desire a better Mother. She has so many good qualities, I could write a book just about her. For at least ten or fifteen years she has had a unique aura of peace about her. You can just sense that she knows she is where she belongs, and doing what she needs to be doing. I love you Mom, you continue to teach us so many things just by being the person you are.

Introduction to First Draft

This is an incomplete first draft of a book that will include much more material such as pictures and documents in it's final form. It is my hope that family members and friends will add much to this book.

This kind of book cannot just be the remembrances of one person. To be truly useful and helpful to future generations, it must include memories from several different sources. We all remember different things about the past, and from different perspectives.

Your help and contribution to this project is not only appreciated, it is desperately needed in order to eventually create an accurate and informative picture of our family. You may have memories or stories that are not even in the book yet. Or there may be items that you feel need to be corrected.

You can submit information to me either in person, by mail, or by email. Following are my addresses. I include my phone number, but I really would prefer all submissions in written form. Please feel free to submit information no matter how unimportant it may seem. It is my hope that this book will be a springboard for conversation, and remembering the past. As this happens, memory will be stimulated and many important stories and facts will surface. We all owe it to future generations of our family to preserve our history and heritage, and to allow them to rediscover what is great about our family.

Unfortunately I was rushed in getting this first draft together, and the plates I refer to may not make any sense, but I should have two or three maps, but no floor plans.

Kenny Fisher
437 ½ Lillie St.
Chillicothe, OH 43601
(740) 775-4682
fisherzardoz@wmconnect.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Number	Title	Page
ONE	INTRODUCTION	5
TWO	FAMILY ORIGINS	6
THREE	THE LAND	9
FOUR	HOMES AND FARMS	11
FIVE	CHARACTER AND VALUES	14
SIX	WORK AND OCCUPATION	20
SEVEN	ANIMALS AND PETS	28
EIGHT	MUSIC	30
NINE	CHURCH AND FAITH	32
TEN	CONCLUSION	33

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

This document was created to put down on paper some of the background, facts, and stories that give our family it's identity and heritage. As time marches on and our family grows older, larger, and more diverse; there is a danger that each new generation will lose something of their family history.

Oral tradition and photo albums can only go so far to preserve a family's unique identity. So much of that identity is tied together with the family's roots, location, and stories that preserve much of what is really unique and special about a person and a family.

As the youngest members of the family grow up, mature, and continue the life long process of discovering who they are, they will at some point in that journey want to find out what they have received from their common family heritage. It is my fondest wish that this book will prove to be a great resource in that journey of discovery.

Russell Fisher passed away more than ten years ago, and as time marches on, and first hand memories fade and disappear, it will be more and more difficult for his descendants to understand who and what he was. This book will hopefully give them a glimpse into the character and identity of Russell and other family members that made them truly unique.

Chapter Two

FAMILY ORIGINS

From my childhood I had always heard that we were a combination of Dutch and Scotch-Irish ancestry. Through genealogy research we have found that Fishers did come from Germany, but almost all other lines lead to England.

Following are the surnames of our (children of Russell and Edith) eight Great Grandparents: Fisher, Garnes, Rogers, Frazier, Meeker, Hess, Oldaker, and Watson. These families represent a lot of different kinds of people, and their lives intertwined and came together in time and space to create our family of today. Most of them came from West Virginia, and none were famous or rich. All seemed to share a common sense hard work approach to life, but each were distinct in their own way, and brought their own uniqueness into our family to make it what it is today.

The family of Russell and Edith grew up on Spud Run Road, Harrison township, Ross county, Ohio. The Fishers have been on Spud Run since 1920, and came here from West Virginia. The Meekers have been in Ross County since before 1840, and lived mostly near Londonderry and Richmond Dale.

Our family descends from William Fisher (Wilhelm Fischer), a Hessian soldier from Germany who fought in the revolutionary war, and who probably stayed here after the war. We don't know exactly where he settled, although there is a record of a William Fisher in Lancaster Pennsylvania.

William's great-great grandson Samuel was born 1838 in Jackson county West Virginia. His wife was Mary Magdalene Dawson, and according to family legend, she was at least half native American. Another legend says that she would sometimes cook breakfast for the famous outlaw Jesse James.

Among Samuel's ten children were Eli Custer (Sr.) and Leatha Ann. Eli and Leatha married Ann Laurie Garnes and James Garnes, respectively, sister and brother. Eli and Ann's son Eli Custer (Jr.) was thus a double first cousin to Clarence Garnes (son of James and Leatha). More about Clarence Garnes later.

Eli Custer (Sr.) and Anna both died in their twenties from TB. The story is that Eli was recovering from illness and fell trying to cross a fence, and then died. Their son Eli Custer (Jr.) was raised by his aunts (daughters of Samuel Fisher). Being spoiled rotten by at least three aunts probably had a lot to do with Eli's rather unique character.

One of those aunts was Phoebe Caroline. I remember Aunt Phoebe visiting a couple of times in my childhood. She lived to the ripe old age of 93. She was born in

1879 so her lifetime saw many changes.

Eli Custer Fisher Jr. was born 16 Mar 1895 in Ripley West Virginia. He married Amy Esther Rogers who was born 13 May 1896 in Red House, Putnam county, West Virginia. They were married 20 May 1917 at Wade's Chapel Church in Red House. Before moving to Ohio, their first child Edward Clayton was born in West Virginia. Following is some information on the Rogers family.

John Nathan Rogers (son of Nathan) born 1820 probably in North or South Carolina and wife Martha settled in Pearisburg, Virginia building a cabin there around 1850. I still have in my possession a chimney stone from the remains of that cabin. Their son Isaac Edward Rogers was born 30 Apr 1856 in Pearisburg, married Sarah Olive Frazier (b. 20 May 1860 Pearisburg) and they moved to West Virginia. Among their ten children were Amy (wife of Eli), John, and Stella. Like Aunt Phoebe; Uncle John and Aunt Stella were distant relatives I knew in my childhood, but certainly didn't know a lot about them.

The Fisher and Rogers families were very unique people, mostly farmers and some teachers and preachers among them. They were very intelligent, and also very much individualists, some would even say contrary. They add quite a lot to our family heritage.

Before going on to how our family came to Spud Run, I will try to record some information about my Mother's family - The Meekers and Oldakers.

Robert Meeker came to America, probably along with his brother. He was born in Warwickshire England in 1620. Robert came to the historic New Haven Colony in Connecticut. The family later moved to Fairfield Connecticut, and then to Delaware County, near Stamford New York.

Sometime after Hezekiah Meeker died in New York around 1798/9, his widow Anna Odell and her children Wheeler, John, Aaron, and Hester moved to Ross County sometime between 1810 and 1840. It is confusing about who came when, because strangely Rolandus Meeker seems to be the first Meeker in our line who was born here (1881).

The Meekers were a large and mostly prosperous family. Most seemed to be either farmers or boot and shoe makers (like Rolandus). At one time there were a lot of Meekers living in Southeastern Ross County, and parts of Vinton County. There is a very old cemetery called RichmonDale Hill Cemetery that is full of Meekers. Anna Odell is buried there.

Rolandus and wife Sarah Ault (Ault family is from Germany) had three daughters and two sons. One son was Frank, and has a lot of descendants still around Londondery. Joe Fisher's wife Marty is his grand daughter. The other son was George, my mother's grandfather. I have one memory of George, and his large house cat. It was almost as large as a bobcat.

George and wife Ivy Hess (another German family) had a daughter Ada, and sons Kenneth, Charles, and Raymond. All three sons worked at the Mead. Charles is my grandfather and married Edith Oldaker. Ivy had some mental problems and I think died in the old asylum on Pohlman Road.

One of the most fascinating parts of discovering our family heritage for me was the exciting story of the Oldaker family, and through them, the Borden family. In the early 1980's The Lewis family and I got involved in doing genealogical research, and with that some wonderful trips. The Oldaker and Borden lines were some of our earliest and most exciting finds. There are several cousins who had done extensive work over several years to come up with this information.

Oldakers came from England and settled in Virginia, then moved on to West Virginia. Henry Boffman (Blaum?) Oldaker and Ella Edith Watson came to Ohio, and built the house on Sugar Run Road about 100 years ago. Their daughter Edith Marie (b 10 Mar 1907) married Charles Hess Meeker (b 24 Jul 1904, son of George), and for about ten years lived in Chillicothe near Seventh St. close to Mead Paper, before moving out to the Sugar Run house. I have a lot of fond memories of that large old house. My mother Edith Lucille Meeker was born 04 Jul 1929 while they were still in town.

Eli Custer (Jr.) and Clarence Garnes and their families moved to Ohio in 1918. They went to work in a tire factory near Akron. While in Akron Carl Rexford was born to Eli and Amy. After a few months things didn't work out, both families came to Spud Run and rented some farm land from Harold Stanhope. Amy and her two children came in September 1919 from Akron.

They lived in a hollow at the head of the left fork of Spud Run Road. Eli lived back in the hollow, and Clarence lived at the front of the hollow. Life was difficult, but they were able to make a living farming. Eventually they bought the Stanhope property.

A few years later there was a house fire, and the Fisher family moved and built another house down the road (on what would later be Uncle Ralph's property). Farming was pretty successful. They took a lot of fruit and other products and sold them in town (Chillicothe).

I remember that later house in my childhood. Sometime, probably in the late 1950's; the front half of it was torn down, and the remaining portion of the house became Uncle Ralph's garage or mechanic shop. A small block house was built for my Grandmother on the right side of the driveway.

Eli and Amy had ten children, one of them my father Russell Kenneth Fisher born 06 Nov 1922. Sometime after Russell returned from service in the Army, he met Edith one day while she was riding a horse bareback (so the story goes!), and the rest is history.

I hope this short condensation of many families and many lives will give you a little peek into the character and nature of who we are. I think it is just fascinating to see how lives come together, and are forever changed, and families are built. It makes you think about all the little choices each of us make, and how far reaching the effects of those choices are.

Chapter Three

THE LAND

Our family grew up in rural Ross County, Ohio. The area around Spud Run Road in Harrison Township is an area of gently rolling hills, the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains.

When the ice age came to an end, the glacial ice sheet had carved out most of the upper Scioto valley, creating the Pickaway Plains. Ross County is on the border between an area of very flat elevation, to areas of extremely rugged hills. Most of the County and lands both to the East and the South were undisturbed by the glaciers. While there are higher elevations at Mount Logan, and in the Southwest parts of the County, the pattern of ridges and valleys around home are rather unique in their appearance.

The majority of these fantastic ridges lie within Tar Hollow State Forest. In fact the land Eli Fisher and Clarence Garnes purchased borders the state forest. Tar Hollow is an amazing place. Originally it was owned by the federal government, and was part of FDR's WPA program. In fact Eli and Clarence both worked on most of the park's buildings. They were both good carpenters, but Clarence had an exceptional ability in the finer aspects of woodworking. Tar Hollow was so named because it was once a great source of pine pitch (called tar). The state forest covers over 16000 acres, and is the largest state forest in Ohio.

There is something about a land and its elevations, and how the ridges and valleys are located that reaches me on a very deep level. I have always had a special ability to look at a map, and sense the lay of the land. This is especially true of topographic maps. These maps show elevations by contour lines. Because of my gift, and my surveying experiences, I have spent hours looking at those special USGS topographic maps. Once you get tuned to the nature of elevations, ridges, and valleys; you can see how civilization follows the lower elevations. The exploration and settling of America is a story of its rivers and streams.

The higher elevations of Spud Run and Tar Hollow were home to a unique kind of people. These were people who could not afford to live down in the valleys, and were forced to make a life in near wilderness surroundings. Many people migrated to this area after the first world war from West Virginia and Kentucky. They seemed to find the rustic lifestyle very familiar to them.

Before roads became common, people were forced to travel along the creek beds, many of which were dry much of the time. I think the land of Spud Run had a great effect on the people who live there. The family of Eli and Amy were raised in that unique environment, and no doubt had an effect on them. I think this was especially true of Russell Fisher. I think he identified with Spud Run much more strongly than anyone I have known. He was at home there, and couldn't imagine living elsewhere.

The first color Plate is a map of the Ross County area. The different colors represent different elevations. On it is outlined Ross County, and Harrison Township. This type of map may be difficult to understand at first. The easiest feature to see is the Scioto River as it winds along.

The second Plate is a more detailed look at the area including Spud Run, and Sugar Run Roads. Along with the color interpretation of elevation, it includes roads and streams, and some specific locations of family residences.

You may not be fascinated by geography and topography as I am, but you cannot help but notice how the lay of the land has a tremendous influence on it's people. I think the people of Spud Run and surrounding areas were strongly impacted by the land they lived in. The pattern of ridges and hollows (hollers!!) to a great extent dictated the ebb and flow of civilization. The indian tribes even called Harrison Township "The Badlands", because of it's strangely rugged nature.

Sadly that property is no longer in family possession. After Dad died, Mom finally agreed to sell Arly and Barb Johnson all but the land around and behind the house. Later we were forced to sell the remainder to them, after my strange medical crisis. We didn't know if I would ever be able to be in a position to take care of the place.

I had long dreamed of creating a home somewhere near my beloved hills, but I had to give up on those dreams. It hurt a lot to see the place pass out of family hands, but definitely saw the reasons it was necessary, and it may be a good thing to cut the ties to the past, so as to see the future clearer.

It is important for future generations to understand what an important role our life on "The Place" had on all of us. Driving out of town on Charleston Pike about five miles, near Ginger Hill Road, you top a rise, and before you is a wonderful view of a very strange land. Hill after hill, ridges and valleys, present their powerful view to your eyes. It is a very different place, home to a different people.

Tar Hollow State Park and Forest, in conjunction with Hocking Hills, are there to protect this strange kind of land, and keep it as unspoiled as possible. When I can, I love to drive out to Tar Hollow, do some hiking, maybe even camp; and take the time to enjoy the special still spirit that is there. It is a magical land, and I feel at home there like nowhere else. If you drive south out of the central park region on South Ridge Road, you come to a vista (an area especially cleared for a view) that overlooks part of the Spud Run valley. Down the hill and somewhat to the right about one quarter of a mile is the hollow that was the Fisher home place. Joe Fisher still owns 40 acres there.

I hope my words of this chapter does justice to the majesty and mystery of this special place we called home. I am just as proud of being born in that strange place, as I am of being born to Russell and Edith Fisher. I hope this chapter has given you

even a small glimpse into an important part of your family heritage.

Chapter Four

HOMES AND FARMS

Much of our perspective on our family identity and heritage comes from our places of residence. When we think of our past, and the many memories and events, we naturally place those memories in the context of where we lived.

Russell and Edith's first home was a small house on a hill off what is now called Ward Road (a small road off the left fork of Spud Run). This is the road where both Lloyd and Floyd Ward had homes. That little house was very near where Harley Elder would build a house a few years later. I don't have any memories of that house, I just remember Mom talking about having to carry kids, groceries, laundry, and water up that cursed hill!

Around 1955 Dad got a job in Columbus, and we moved there on Hudson near where I-71 crosses now. We were there I think only a few months. I do have some memories of Christmas there.

When we came back from Columbus, we bought a small piece of property from Uncle Ralph Fisher, bordering his farm on the left fork of Spud Run. We built a small house (that seemed to be continuously added to from time to time), and moved in. Plate #xxx shows the floor plan of that house. It was fun to live close to Grandma (Amy Fisher), and see all the many relatives that visited there on Sundays. Uncle Ralph's farm was a very interesting place, and I remember many times of berry picking, snow sledding, and playing army with cousins.

Dad had gotten a job with Phil (James P.) Rice a land surveyor, and by that experience got hired by the Highway Department of Ohio. Now that he was making more money, he wanted to find us a real farm. He heard about a 13 acre tract for sale on Spud Run, just below the forks. We went and looked around, and it was very exciting. The whole family voted on whether or not to buy the farm. If I remember correctly, Mom was the only negative vote. She has always been a voice for reason, moderation, and conservative views. Despite her concerns, we plunged in and bought it in 1961.

For those first few years our exciting new farm was given a very interesting name or title. It was always referred to as simply "The Place". We planted corn right away in the large bottom section (at least five acres), and then we started a double drive through corn crib (the first of many, many buildings that would eventually be built). The first couple of years were consumed by many hot days of hoeing weeds out of the huge (to us anyway) corn field, and other long days of pulling nails out of used lumber we obtained for planned buildings.

Us boys would get off the school bus there at "The Place"; do our chores, then walk the rest of the way to our home still on the left fork (about a mile). During the summer, we would establish a pattern of work. Dad (who got up early to go to work) more often than not, would have some work outlined for us to accomplish during that day. Much of the confidence he had in us was due primarily to John Robert. He being the oldest, was already doing a man's work at the age of 11 or 12. John had a lot of special gifts and abilities (like the rare ability to dig a very straight line of post holes) that allowed us to do almost anything Dad would plan out for us to accomplish.

We finally started building a house around 1962. It was planned to be a ranch style house twenty feet by forty feet. Mom wanted a basement, and we tried several times to start a basement, but we finally gave up due to the wet marshy nature of the ground. Instead of a basement, a few years later we built a well house we used for miscellaneous storage. Sometime during the first year or two, we built a small outhouse (toilet).

As well as the bottom where we built our house and farmed, we also had a couple of hills and some trees. The hill on the right was mostly bare, but was a little higher than the other hill which was mostly covered with trees (and brush). The main hill was the site of much camping by my brothers and I. You could see quite a lot from up there, and I was always impressed by the different perspective from the top of the hill. There was a drainage ditch running the length of the property that was fed by several springs. At one time it had been tiled, but by the time we bought the place, it had eroded away, and the spring water had gotten down into the rest of the land. Once we re-tiled most of it, we no longer had the marshy conditions.

We built two separate ponds on the place. The first one was in the hollow on the right of the big hill. I remember Eddie Kellough helping us dig it with a tractor and a slip scoop. The other pond was much bigger, and still exists in pretty good shape. It was at the foot of the smaller hill, and was on the West border of the land. It became quite a good fishing hole, and the site of many campouts. Later my brother Charles built a small cabin there.

That big bare hill was the site of many snow sledding parties. It was the best sledding hill around. People would come and build a bonfire out of old tires, and sled most of the night.

We finally got our house finished enough to move into in the summer of 1964. Plate #xxx shows the floor plan. Also plate #xxx is a diagram of how the place looked at one time with fences and many buildings.

As well as being a great place to raise a growing family, our new land gave Dad unlimited opportunity to express himself, through different occupations, or simply space to build. He was a man of many passions and interests. One of these was his drive to build things. He was just supremely happy and content when he was hammering away at some new project. He was famous for starting something, then never finishing it. Our new house was one such project. Although it was very livable, there were quite a few finishing touches that he never got around to do.

I could never say for sure how many different buildings he constructed on our land, but I would guess it would be over twenty, possibly thirty or more. Most of them had a limited lifespan. They were soon either tore down, or rebuilt. In the following paragraphs I will try to put down on paper as many of these buildings as I can remember.

First I will try to record the smaller buildings. These would include two outdoor toilets, a small corn crib (with an ingenious facility for ventilation), at least one small lumber shed, and a cabin (on what would become Aunt Winkle's property). The medium sized buildings are many. Of course that first double corn crib, a medium size barn that had a very interesting system of feeders and gates (and of course an upper area called a hay mow), a grocery store and pool hall, a large garage that stood for several years, and was a kind of shop, and a later barn for when we had ponies. The larger buildings include two long horse barns, a number of mill enclosures (including one large L shaped one, and of course our house which included the well house, carport, patio, and the family room extension.

I want to make special mention here of the building projects Dad built in the last few years. He had started a riding club called "Morning Sunshine Riding Club", and built a small stage for entertaining, a small wooden dance floor, and a four stall horse feeder area. Also he started a large club house / barn that was never finished. He also rebuilt the fences along the road, and near the old store building. They were pretty fancy, and he was of course very proud of them.

There are of course several more that I simply cannot remember clearly, but you can see we had a wide variety of buildings.

Along with the buildings were many many fences in many different time periods. These included barbed wire and fancy board fences. When you have farm animals, especially horses and ponies, you never get done building and repairing fences.

Along with the new opportunity to build to his heart's content, Dad also made use of the new land for a great many different occupational projects. These will be covered more in a later chapter, and included crop farming (mostly corn and hay); all kinds of animal ventures including cattle, hogs, horses, and ponies; custom hay baling; paperwood, firewood, timber and sawmill operations; and many more.

Many times in my childhood and teen years, I'm sure I didn't see it this way, but now I am very glad we had a chance to grow up in a family and environment, where hard work was a constant. We not only had the opportunity to experience work in a very responsible way, but also had a great chance to learn almost any skill we wanted.

Dad was extremely proud of his ready made work force, and gave us every opportunity to see what we could do. The Place played a key role in those experiences, and shaped us as individuals and as a family.

Chapter Five

CHARACTER AND VALUES

I believe that the family of Russell and Edith have a rather unique quality that is becoming more and more rare as time goes on. That is our nature, character, or values. It is a combination of a lot of things that might include common sense, intelligence, humor, and most importantly respect. I think respect is vitally important in a family. We not only respect our parents (who have time and time again earned that respect), but also we respect each other. Most families today simply do not have any respect for each other. They are caught up in an eternal battle at worst, and guarded toleration at best.

This is not to say we have no differences, far from it. We are each individuals with differing views on many things. But because of a very deep respect, we can come together as a family, leaving our differences and disagreements behind, and enjoy a gathering or a holiday and celebrate our family identity without fighting.

This chapter will attempt to describe the basic character and personality of Russell, Edith, and each of seven children.

What can I say about Russell Kenneth Fisher? He is by far the most unique, fascinating, and infuriating person I have ever met! He is individuality personified. To Dad there was only one opinion of value, his! This is not to say he never respected anyone else's opinions, or never listened. He just had a kind of confident strength and purpose or drive that defined who he was (to himself). At the time many of us would think he was selfish, or unbending; and I'm sure many times that was the case. In common with most human beings, he had some amazing traits both positive and negative. On the positive side he was extremely intelligent, with some remarkable abilities (not the least of which was the ability to jump headlong into a venture, without knowing how it would end up), He had a gift of gab that allowed him to instantly become someone's best friend, no matter their background. He was especially loved by professional people, businessmen, politicians, etc., who felt they could let their hair down (so to speak). They could leave their stuffy offices and spend a few minutes with Dad, and feel like a human being again. On the negative side, he was kind of close minded. He was slow to understand what others thought was important. He could be

contrary, hard headed, and selfish. His was a very complex character, and I'm not sure any of us ever truly understood what it meant to be in the skin of Russell Fisher. It wasn't until the last three years of his life, when I began to appreciate and understand what he was about. I had just began to mature myself, and began to see a lot of things about life and people in a new light. He died 08 Jun 1991 at the age of 68. He might not have been the easiest person to love, but I thank heaven I had such a unique individual as a father.

As a complement to Dad's impulsive fiery nature, I could imagine none better than Edith Lucille Fisher. She is ever the voice of reason and moderation, the steady solid supporter of Dad's many endeavors (of course not without disagreements). Mom has the best business head on her shoulders of anyone in the family. I don't think she planned to live the severe life (at times) she had with Dad, with all it's challenges and problems. But she not only endured, but became a rock of strength for all of us. I'm sure that without her ability to take care of money and her many other abilities, we would have gone hungry. Yes there were hard times, and difficult challenges, but through it all there was this resourceful, strong, but self effacing woman. She doesn't have Dad's flair for the dramatic, nor his driven nature, but she is every bit as intelligent, skillful, and determined as Dad was; in her own unique way. Of course being the wife of Russell, she was limited in how she could accomplish some things. The few times she got her own way, was usually after a very ugly argument. That was how Dad operated. Sometimes the only way to get through to him, was to get him mad. It may be a long bitter battle, but a very few times he would concede he was wrong. I will never forget when we got our well drilled. Mom got a guy to drill us a well, knowing full well Dad was vehemently opposed to it. I'm not sure if any of us ever understood his motivation, but he was dead set against it. They had a titanic struggle, be we got our well! That's the essence of who and what Edith Fisher is. She get's the job done, whatever the obstacle.

Mom and Dad went to Greenup Kentucky to get married like a lot of people did back then. They were married 24 Jun 1949. It was very interesting to see both Mom and Dad go through a change of perspective after their separation. Mom left Dad in the early eighties, and it was a very rough time for both of them, and for us. That terribly emotional time, though on the surface, very negative, had some positives as well. For the first time in his life, Dad began to look at himself and others in a new light; and he began to recognize that maybe he had been wrong about some things. I'm sure Mom went through a similar adjustment. After a bitter couple of years, they were finally able to be civil to each other, and began to interact in a positive way. It is interesting to note that the day Dad died, he was lying down on the yard outside of Mom's house, waiting for her to come home from work.

Being the oldest child, John Robert Fisher (b 24 May 1949) was a very special part of our family. Dad and Grampa (Eli died in 1950) spoiled him rotten. While it seems strange today, he learned to cuss like a trooper, and Dad encouraged John to call him Russ. Dad took him everywhere with him (he was delivering soft drinks at the time), and John grew up with an unique personality. He always seemed to have a dog

and a wagon of some kind, and was often out in the woods alone with his dog. One of my earliest Christmas memories is of the time John Robert and I got toy pop trucks. For some reason all the tiny pop cases were in his truck, and he was not about to give them up until Mom made him. I will never forget John swiping his truck back and forth through a mud puddle. He loved trucks all his life. When looking at John's life, you have to see it is composed of two parts. He was very much different in his adult years, than the supremely confident, brash, exuberant, fun loving, practical joker of a kid. When we would get up to get ready for school in the morning, he was always full of energy, joking, and just plain full of himself. He would make a sound like a crow, and just act silly. He would put milk in my oatmeal, knowing I wouldn't eat it after that. John had polio when he was very young, and had weak legs ever since. He didn't let that stop him. He was probably the hardest worker I have ever seen. We might have built our farm on the foundation of Dad's drive and dreams, but it was built with John's stout back and shoulders. He was a well oiled working machine, and did the equal of a grown man's work at the age of 12. While working with his uncles and cousins in the hay baling business he picked up the habit of smoking. He liked to smoke King Edward Swisher Sweet Tips. Even with his confidence and airs of importance, he was still generous. I remember when he was the only one of us to have a car, it was never very difficult to get to go somewhere with him. He would simply say "Well if you're going, let's go!". He always had money, and was usually willing to share it. Even though life hardened him somewhat as he got older, he still had a unique sense of humor. I could laugh at things with him that I could never do with anyone else. He had a heart of gold, and probably the most decent, honest, and generous spirit I have ever known. Sadly John died in 1991 as many Fisher men do, in their forties or fifties by high cholesterol. One of John's greatest abilities is that of being a sawyer (the man pulling the stick on a sawmill). For several years he and Dad did all the sawing. A few years ago Danny started sawing. There was no one better at sharpening a saw blade, or keeping a sawmill in neat working order than John Robert.

Russell and Edith's second child was James Ronald born Aug 8 1950. He didn't survive. Kenneth Eli Fisher was the next child to be born in 1951. I was born with a defective pituitary gland, but we didn't find out until I was in the hospital for hepatitis in about 1961/2. I was thus very short for my age. I have been blessed (or cursed?) with a rather unique nature. For whatever reason, I see things in a very abstract way. It is a difficult concept, but this different perspective is what led me to be good at math, science, and computers. I have always been a loner, and if I ever get married it will be a great surprise to me. I am also analytical in nature, seeing the world and people through that rather abstract lens. These character traits make me a little different, but I have never questioned my identity. I have always believed that in order for a person to be truly happy, and live a fulfilled life, you must walk in your true identity, being as honest with yourself as is humanly possible about your strengths and weaknesses. I was only 4 ft. 7 in. when I graduated from school, but through a free government program, I eventually reached a height of 5 ft. 2 in. My career through most of the last 16 years has been at McDonald's Restaurant. Up until recently it has been a very

enjoyable job. My favorite fringe benefit, is having the unique opportunity to meet and get to know people of many different ages and backgrounds because of the many people that come and go in restaurant work. For some reason in 1975 I stopped taking my medication (for thyroid), and eventually eight years ago I had a very severe medical emergency. Now I am fine, and healthier than at any time of my life, but that whole experience eight years ago changed me in some subtle ways.

Enna Jean Fisher was the first daughter in our family, born 16 Nov 1952. The story goes that she is named after a girl Dad knew in Germany in WWII, but whatever the source, her name has given her problems all her life. I'm sure she's immune now to people calling her Emma, but we have always called her Jean. Jean was kind of like our second mother growing up. She was always in charge, and I think she enjoyed it. After high school she went to beauty school. She later found out she didn't like being a beautician as much as she had hoped. She married Bob Barnhart 27 Mar 1977 after about a four or five year relationship. After a miscarriage, she gave birth to twin boys, Nathan Robert, and Nicholas Kenneth (Nick and Nate). She and Bob later divorced, and while she has struggled, she has done a fine job raising her boys.

Amy Marie Fisher was born premature 20 Nov 1953. She was very tiny, but beat the odds and actually lived. Since we had trouble saying Marie, she came to be known as Ree. She has red hair, and like Jean's name, it has caused her some embarrassment. I remember an incident when she was very young, somehow she fell out of a hole in the floor of our car while we were on Sugar Run Road. I remember leaning forward and telling Dad "I think we lost Ree!". She was covered in bruises and scratches, but she was alright. Jean and Ree, being the only girls in a house with five brothers, were both close and at each other's throats. They used to fight at night, one opening the bedroom door, the other slamming it shut, until Dad's voice was heard to say simply "Girls!". Ree went to college in Zanesville in childhood development. She later got a job in Mansfield at a day care facility. When Jean and Bob were married, Bill Lewis was best man. He and Amy started dating, and were married 18 Mar 1978. They lived in town for a while before buying their beautiful 40 acre farm on Musgrove Road. Bill had a daughter Christina Ellen from an earlier marriage. They were able to later both adopt her. After that they had three red headed boys Russell Paul, Richard Lee, and Jeffrey Alan. Bill works for PPG in Circleville, and has been there since 1977. Ree, like me, had a somewhat intellectual approach to life. She is very smart, and we learned to play chess when kids, and used to get into some pretty deep conversations. When Bill joined our family, it took a while for some of the family to get to know him well. He was a little different from us, but very intelligent and interesting. I got to know him a little better I think, because we shared some interests like science fiction. They are now grandparents twice over, and still live out on their farm, and actually are planning to finally realize their dream of having a horse farm.

Daniel Merle Fisher was born 25 Jun 1955, and came to be known as "Doodle", or just Dood, from a joking remark about him being a Danny Doodle Bug. After high school, Danny went to lumber grading school in Memphis. Although he never did go to work grading lumber on his own, his talent paid off for the family business. His son

Damian went to the same school just a few years ago. Danny was the biggest and tallest member of the family. Along with his size though was a sensitive side, and a fun loving life of the party at times. He also could get very claustrophobic in a car, and when driving had to have the window down, even in cold weather. He married Brenda Wolfenbarker 27 Nov 1976. Brenda is from South Shore Kentucky, just over the river from Portsmouth. She has been kidded to death for being a Kentuckian, but she gives as good as she gets. They had two boys, Damian Daniel and Jacob Merle. Damian was Dad and Mom's first grandchild, and was of course spoiled. Dad used to take him to work with him, the same with Jacob later. After John died, Danny and Charles continued the sawmill business (they had been doing construction before that). They made an excellent team together, and soon with Mom's ever guiding hand, they had the sawmill business more profitable than it has ever been. They made quite a few improvements and advancements on equipment and machinery, and were doing fantastically well when Danny died of a heart attack in 2000. Danny's death at the age of 45 was a shocker that our family is still struggling with. Shortly before Danny died, he got to see Damian and Lani get married. Lani is now expecting their first child (Danny and Brenda's first grandchild). For some strange reason, his death has been extremely hard on all of us. I'm not sure why, except that maybe we didn't realize how important he was to each of us. He had a special way of interacting, and was so full of joy and an inner peace (a very rare thing) that it is now physically painful to think of life without him. Doodle, we sure miss you and are lost without you in our lives.

Custer Alan Fisher was born 19 Apr 1959, four years after Danny. After Danny's birth, doctors told Mom she probably would not be able to have any more children. She went on to have Custer and Charles, two of her healthiest babies. Custer's nickname was "Tut", but mostly only Dad called him that. Custer and Charles were called "the little boys", because there was such a large gap between Danny and Custer. As an early child we knew Custer would be a bright boy. He was extremely intelligent, and by the age of nine, he was a crack mechanic. He showed an aptitude for the work, and Dad gave him free reign to pursue it. I remember one engine Custer was learning on, some guy told Dad, "Do you realize that boy is tearing that engine apart". Dad set him straight that Custer full well knew what he was doing. Custer got quite good, and even worked on things people would bring for Dad to look at. I remember one neighbor getting too involved in Custer's work, checking up on him, criticizing him, etc. Custer just quietly put his tools up, walked in the house, got him a banana and sat down in front of the TV! Custer was determined to join the Air Force, and of course Dad was just as determined against it. Again it took Mom's intervening to make it possible for Custer to go. Dad was extremely upset. I'm not sure what upset him so much, but you would have thought Custer had died. Custer did go to the Air Force and moved around quite a lot, Florida, Las Vegas, Iceland, and other places. In Las Vegas he married Sharon, who was also in the Air Force. They have two children, Heather Diane and Jason Alexander. Heather is soon to graduate from high school. Custer and his family have been living now in Ogden Utah for several years. Custer retired from service a couple of years ago, and is now selling used cars (especially Corvettes).

Every family has it's baby, and Charles Alvin Fisher born 02 Apr 1961 is ours. He has the unique distinction of being born on Easter Sunday. Little Custer was determined that we should take him back! As a boy Charles was short and somewhat chubby. As he got older he thinned out and stretched out. Charles' talent or speciality was carpentry. He and Custer both went to vocational school. After working in the sawmill business for quite a while, he and Danny started their own contracting business, building houses and pole barns. One of the fine examples of their work can be seen at Bud Seymour's property just off the Main Street bridge. Charles' ability with hammer and saw are very unusual. He can just simply do some magical things. Once he and Danny were building the Oldaker shelter house with Glenn Kempton. At the time he didn't know Charles and Danny all that well yet. He said Charles was setting on a load of lumber writing and smoking, then fired up the saw and in a short while the lumber was all cut up and laying spread out. Glenn said he wasn't sure what was going on, but would soon learn how talented Charles and Danny both were. He and Danny resumed sawmilling after John's death, and as I have said, they were doing just great when Danny died all of a sudden. Somehow Charles had the strength within him to attempt to continue. Rusty (Russell Lewis) was trained to saw, and seems to be doing alright. Damian also is working at the mill, and everything seems to be going pretty good. Charles recently got his CDL license, bought a truck, and is now doing all the hauling. Charles like Dad, has that rare ability to tap into some unknown strength to carry on with a new venture. I hope things continue to go well with the family sawmill business. Charles like me seems to be a confirmed bachelor. Maybe there's hope for us yet.

Last fall (late October, early November 2007) Charles began having some physical ailments in his back, pelvis, and most of the muscles in his body. He felt so bad the first week of November that he didn't come down to our annual breakfast to honor Dad's birthday.

He was diagnosed with cancer I think later that month. After some confusion about what kind of cancer he had, and where exactly it was, he started on radiation treatments. He did make it to the family Thanksgiving gathering.

His condition got a little worse by Christmas (actually it was a lot worse than any of us were prepared to admit). Custer came home for a visit at Christmas, and his fresh perspective allowed him to really see how bad Charles was. With his assistance Charles was admitted to the hospital the day after Christmas, and in a few days he seemed to have regained his strength, and was released.

Custer went back to Japan, and we were all filled with hope that a disaster had been averted, but it was just not to be. In just a few days, about a week, it was clear that he was not getting better. It was a terrible reality to face, but our great hope was dashed. He continued his radiation, and was back in the hospital two or three more times. He just couldn't seem to achieve more than a few hours of peace at a time. I'm sure none of us will ever know the level and depth of his pain. They finally figured out that it was bone cancer, one of the most painful kinds to endure.

Finally he had to be moved to Heartland rest home, and he seemed to have

short periods of peace and rest. I think he knew far more than anyone that his fight was over. He expressed a wish to see just one more beautiful spring and summer, but he lost his battle, and died Sunday afternoon, Feb 3 2008.

Like Danny, his death is impossible to understand, and even more impossible to accept, or deal with. Their passing leaves a deep scar that refuses to heal.

Chapter Six

WORK AND OCCUPATIONS

Along with respect, the word “work” is a key word that describes our family character. We all are familiar with hard work, and with the concept of how important work can be to our lives. In this chapter I will try to describe as many of the jobs and occupations my Dad had (to the best of my memory), as well as some of Mom’s jobs and work outside the home.

Some of Dad’s early jobs include working at a service station (SunFlash), a foreman of a crew that cleared power line hills, driving a pop truck, and cutting paperwood. He was offered the job of managing the Big Bev restaurant, but turned it down. Soon after buying the small piece of land from Ralph, he built the first of several grocery stores he would build. He wasn’t as interested in a grocery business I think, than simply being a gathering place for neighbors. In that first store, they would often have poker games at night.

When he got a job doing surveying work for Phil Rice, that marked the beginning of what would be a large part of his occupational history. Phil noticed that Russell had a keen mind, and encouraged him to learn more. Dad went on to take a home study course in Surveying. I would take that same course about 25 years later. The mathematics and other concepts behind surveying are an extremely difficult concept for most people to comprehend, but Dad took to it like water. He of course went on to work for the State Highway Dept. There he was an exceptional man of ability. He often could solve problems that Engineers with college degrees couldn’t solve. They would say, “Just take it to Russ Fisher”. Once he found out he did have an exceptional talent for surveying, he began making money on the side doing private land surveys, taking them to licensed surveyors for signing. One of these was an extremely tall preacher named Andy Mathias. Andy made it possible for Dad to do surveys all over South Central Ohio. In fact Dad used Andy’s transit (an optical instrument used in surveying). Later I had the opportunity to buy Andy’s transit, and I still have it in my possession.

Dad’s ability in surveying field work (not counting the math work) was like nothing I have ever seen. I am as good or better than him in the paper work, but I couldn’t hold a candle to him in the field. He always wanted to take the test and become a licensed surveyor, but by the time both he and I were about to start the process, they changed the rules, and experience and knowledge were no longer enough.

At the Highway Dept. Dad worked in a survey crew. He was always supervised by men who might have been more qualified on paper, but had none of Dad's expertise. He liked the fact he was making more money at the Highway Dept., he often did not like having to work in cold and rainy weather.

As I have mentioned earlier, Uncle Ralph had a custom hay baling business in the summers. Sometime after Ralph died in 1963, Dad saw an opportunity, and continued the hay baling business. It was extremely hard work at times, and then there was rain and equipment breakdowns to deal with. We were pretty successful, and had bought some pretty good equipment (including a couple of Oliver tractors that were just fantastic), but it was getting old pretty fast. At about this time, we got some horses. In one deal with a friend of Joe Fisher in Pataskala, we bought a truckload of seven (or nine?) horses in one fell swoop. Soon we were surrounded with horses. At one time, we had up to twenty horses. Dad kind of off handedly got into the tack business. We knew a guy named Dave Dubois that did a legendary business in horses and tack. I think a lot of our early tack came from Dave. It was an interesting time for us when we had lots of horses. We would sometimes go for trail rides to Tar Hollow on the weekend, sometimes over twenty miles, or an all day ride.

The horse and tack trade occupied Dad's off work attentions for some time, then sometime around 1971 an incident happened that seemed minor at the time, but would turn out to have a major impact on our family's future. Junior Butterbaugh had bought an old sawmill, and needed help in setting it up.

Sturgill Keaton had a sawmill on Spud Run for several years, and we were familiar to waking up to that sound (of the sawdust blower) in the morning, but other than that, sawmilling was completely new to all of us, except Dad. We helped Junie get his mill going (he never actually did much sawing), and Dad got the bug!

After looking all over the place, he finally found a small sawmill (I think it was a Frick). In no time it seemed we were in the sawmill business. What follows is a somewhat lengthy description of our history in the sawmill business, and some of the many operations. It is pretty long, because it is a very important part of our family's history.

The sawmill business has been and continues to be a big part of our family. It is a very different and unique type of business and work. It can be very hard work, but has a great potential for profit.

Our GrandFather Eli Fisher had a sawmill back around the 1940's. I think it was located across the road from Uncle Ralph's place on Spud Run Road, although it may have been moved from place to place before that. I don't know the history of how he got into the sawmill business, or if anyone else in his family did. The Fisher family now has had four generations in the sawmill business, and has become quite a heritage for us. If lumber prices keep holding up, our family will continue to have an opportunity to keep going and build quite a future in the business.

In the following paragraphs I will try to describe the basics of a sawmill, and how it operates. Of course most of that operation is now quite outdated by newer methods

and equipment.

The main parts of any sawmill are: the power source either a gas/diesel engine, or an electric motor; The sawbox which channels, distributes, and controls the transmission of power to the saw and the carriage; The track which allows the carriage to move past the saw; the carriage which holds the log and controls the cutting depth; and of course the saw itself which cuts the logs. Also most sawmills had a sawdust blower or a drag system that got rid of the sawdust.

A pulley off from the sawbox has a cable wrapped around it and connects to the carriage through two pulleys in either end of the track. This cable and pulley system is controlled by the operation of the sawbox and allows the carriage to move forward and backward. In the past this was done by "the stick" controlled by the sawyer. The sawbox has an interesting system of belts and pulleys that transfer power in either direction. This power comes from the mandrel or axle that turns the saw. With the stick the sawyer can apply this power to make the carriage move back and forth.

The carriage has blocks which the log is laid on. There can be 2,3, or more blocks on a carriage. The log is rolled onto these blocks and positioned so as to give the best possible cuts, then anchored down by the dogs, sliding adjustable pointed devices that secure the log onto the block. The setworks on the carriage allow the sawyer to adjust where the plane of the saw blade cuts the log. The sawyer has his left hand on the stick and adjusts the setworks with his right hand.

In order to get down to sawing in the heart of the log, you must cut off slabs, and other boards with bark on the edges. These slabs and edge pieces require a lot of labor and take up a lot of time and energy. The resulting strips and slabs have to be disposed of, or otherwise hauled away.

The logs are rolled and positioned by a tool called a "cant hook". This wooden handled tool has metal jaws that grasp the log and lets you roll it up to the carriage and position it on the carriage. When we were kids we thought it was called that because you can't move a log without it, but really it refers to the tool's ability to angle or "cant" an object.

Most saws have an inserted tooth system, so that as the tooth wears down it can be replaced by new teeth or "bits". During the life of the tooth it can be sharpened and swaged. Sharpening is done by a file, and swaging (sounds like swedging) is done by a hammer and a swage tool. Swaging makes the tooth wider at the tip so that the saw can move smoothly through a log. Saws also may periodically need to be "hammered" to keep the saw in condition. Hammering was needed to put a slight cup in the saw. Everyone took their saws to Johnny Allbright for hammering. If a saw isn't hammered correctly it can flop around and can be very dangerous. There are very few people who have the skill to correctly hammer a saw. It is a very precise skill and art.

During the years many advances have altered the sawmill forever.

Computerized networks, air powered dogs, power receders, log turners, debarkers, chippers, hydraulic devices, pneumatic devices, and many more changes have come to the sawmill industry.

I remember some stories of Grandpa Fisher having a sawmill on Spud Run. Dad used to tell stories about that time. About the time we moved down the road to our new farm, Sturgill Keaton (or Keating?) had a sawmill below Kellough's. We would go there and get slabs, sawdust, and sometimes to buy lumber. One of the constant memories of my childhood was waking up in the morning to the sound of that sawmill. Actually the sound came from the blower more than from the engine, or from the saw, and had a very distinctive repetitive sound as the log moved through the saw.

So here was Junie Butterbaugh allowing Dad to re-visit the memories of his youth, working at his Dad's mill. That began a time that ended up with us getting a mill about a year later. Dad really got the sawmill fever and ended up quitting his job at the highway department. Originally it was called Fisher and Son with Dad and John, but would later be called Fisco Lumber (Custer came up with the name). When Danny got older he went to a lumber grading school in Memphis (his son Damian also would go to that same school).

In those early days we did every phase of cutting the timber, the logging, and the hauling. For quite a while we did our logging with horses. We had two horses Bill, and Lucky, from the time Dad was in the horse and tack business. They were a little temperamental, but once they got down to business, they could pull almost anything. We later had several different John Deere crawlers. These were really old fashioned (model #420 I think), but they did the trick. We had plenty of parts for them, and were constantly repairing them. Eventually we bought a brand new JD 350 dozer. Even though it was small, it was quite an improvement in our operations.

Our first sawmill engine was a gasoline engine. Later we bought a new Caterpillar diesel engine. One of our loaders was a Hough. That old loader was used for many years. We had quite a thriving business on Spud Run. Other sawmill operators we had dealings with included Don Barbee and Steve Gary, Johnny Bobb, and later Poke Davis..

Some of the lumber companies we dealt with included Willis Lumber in Washington C.H., and Adelman & Clark in McArthur. We also sold railroad ties, mainly to the railroad yard in Hamden.

Eventually (late 70's, early 80's?) They moved the sawmill down on 23 South below Massieville. While at that location they teamed up with another sawmill family (the Blantons) for a time. They were there for a few years, then moved again to Renick Lane behind the Stardust Lounge around 1985/6 I think.

Sometime shortly before leaving 23 South, Dad began building picnic tables and other items out of sawmill lumber, and even Danny and Charles got into building barns

and houses, when lumber prices went sour. Dad built quite a reputation with his tables, lawn furniture, gazebos, wishing wells, utility sheds, etc. Sometime around 1983/4, I began helping him on a day to day basis. It was the first time I ever learned to use a circular saw. I was never as good at carpentry as Dad, but I was able to help him out quite a bit.

After John died Danny and Charles stopped building houses and pole barns, and got back into sawmill business and even continued after Danny's death with Damian and Rusty helping out (and Jacob in the summers). It was called Fisher Bros. Sawmill, now just Fisher Sawmill (I think). Before John's death, they had never been very successful, and they had problems keeping up with bills, and other problems in the day to day business. But when they got back into it again, they began to be very successful and profitable. I think a lot of it was they were more mature, but also Danny and Charles began working together very efficiently for the first time. They had a very good working relationship (rare for two brothers), and built quite a business reputation.

In the last few years they are more successful than they have ever probably been at any time in the past. It's great to see Damian, Rusty, and Jacob (the fourth generation of sawmilling Fishers) carrying on the tradition. Through the years they have modernized the equipment to a large degree, but it is still the same basic business it has always been, subject to lumber prices, and changing economies.

Dad had an unusual quantity of skills and talents. One of these was the talent as a sawyer. The sawyer not only pulls the stick, but more importantly makes decisions on how to position and slice up a log to produce the desired lumber. Another of his skills was estimating the value of standing timber. Of course now they usually buy logs directly, and don't get into the business of timber or logging operations. I think this change is one of the ways Danny and Charles have streamlined the business to make it more efficient. Less trucks and logging equipment, means less breakdowns, and they can focus on what is most important, that of turning logs into lumber. Dad also had an unusual ability to design, build, and put together sawmills. He even built a few of his own sawboxes.

John also did his share of sawing. He did a lot of other things as well. I will always remember him swaging and filing the saw. He was quite an artist at it. He also was very good at maintaining the equipment, cleaning out the sawdust pit, etc. Once in a while, he would get into a cleaning and organizing mood. In just a few short hours he would have the whole place shining, and every piece of equipment in it's place. He was also a dynamo when it came time to cut slabs up for firewood and haul them home. He had polio when he was very young that left his legs somewhat limited, but developed his arms and upper body into a perfectly oiled and tuned working machine.

After John's death, Danny took up the job of sawyer. He also was a genius at three phase electrical wiring. All through the family's history in the sawmill business,

we have had to do all our own repair work, and even designing, building, and altering equipment. As we moved into the era of electrical power, Danny found he had a talent for hooking up electrical systems. Three phase power revolutionized the sawmill operation, along with other modern changes like pneumatic devices and computerized networks. Their sawmills of today are a far cry from the small mills of the past driven by combustion engines, and operated by belts and cables.

Charles never got into being a sawyer as long as Danny was around. Danny was teaching Rusty to become a sawyer, so now Charles will continue trying to make a sawyer out of Rusty. Charles in the past was very good at driving log loaders and fork lifts. He had a very precise hand when it came to operating the loader / lift hydraulic controls. Now Damian and Jacob are getting pretty good at loaders and lifts as well, allowing Charles to focus his time on other things.

Before he left for a career in the Air Force, Custer was also a big part of the business, especially when he was younger. He was an expert mechanic at a very young age. It was interesting to see him tear into a repair job, and in no time have the equipment operating again.

When I think of the history of our family (sawmills as well as other activities), the one thing that comes to mind is how we seem to have a gift for accomplishing whatever we set our minds to accomplishing. This gift was legendary in Russell Fisher, but is pretty much evident in the rest of the family. Dad made an astonishing number of career changes in his life. No one knows why or how he made these changes, but he was never afraid to try something new. He sometimes would fail, but more often than not, he would do alright. We were all skeptical when he got into the sawmill business (just out of the custom hay baling), but he was able to do whatever it took to keep going. He was able to do just about anything he wanted to do. When you look at us boys, and our differing talents, skills, and approaches; Dad had quite a diverse talent pool to draw from.

As I said, Dad retired from his State Highway job, as the sawmill business got more and more profitable. All through this time he had kept his hand in the surveying business as well. In 1975 I returned from a job in Portsmouth, and we began working together, with me learning more and more of the paper work. I like Dad took the ICS home study course in Surveying and Mapping. For the next couple of years we did a lot of private land surveys together, still taking them to Andy Mathias for signing. I will now try to communicate some background of surveying methods and operations to give you a little glimpse into this unique skill Dad and I shared.

Surveying is based on the science of trigonometry, or the study of triangles. A circle has 360 degrees of angular measurement. You can look these angles up in a table to determine three special ratios, called sine, cosine, and tangent. It is with the

help of these tables (or now with a calculator or computer) that you can determine the unknown parts of a triangle, once a certain number of parts are known.

A survey traverse (the border lines of a tract) is composed of a number of courses, each course having a bearing and a distance. The bearing is a specific angle or direction in which the course is directed, and the distance measures how long that course is. Each course can be calculated to give two numbers, one represents distance to the North or South, the other number represents the distance to the East or West. Also these two numbers can be positive or negative, indicating the two possible directions. Once these numbers (called latitudes and departures) are calculated, you can do several things with them, like calculate the area of the tract, and the size of error of closure if any.

The entire process of doing a survey can compose of many of the following elements. First comes the research of Deed records at the court house, to determine what already exists, and it is this process which usually dictates how the rest of the survey will proceed. Next using the Deed records as a guide, you must find as many boundary markers (iron pins, nails in road, etc.) as possible. Many times the land owners and neighbors can help somewhat. Then the transit and chain is used to map out any new boundaries, or old boundaries if they are in doubt. Next comes the hair pulling part, bringing all the notes and records together in a long detailed process of trying to come up with a completed balanced traverse, ready to be written up in a Deed Description. The Description is typed up, and signed by a licensed surveyor, then the lawyers try to get it recorded. It is a lot of hard, sometimes frustrating work, but it can be very lucrative work at times.

Dad did all his calculations by longhand on paper. Most of these calculations were multiplication of two numbers each having about 7/8 digits each. When we were young, he would enlist us kids to help him, usually having at least two people doing the same problem, to minimize errors. He would always check our work, though.

In school I had learned about something called logarithms, a table of numbers you could look up, add together, then look up the solution, instead of multiplying them by hand. Some of these tables were published to 7, 8 or 9 digits or more, but Dad never trusted them. He always carried a small brown binder (I still have it), he called his brain. It held all the trig tables he needed. Eventually he conceded to the usefulness of the scientific calculator, but I'm still not sure how far he really trusted it.

Surveying is thus a very unique and rare skill. In the pioneering days of America, early surveyors (like George Washington) became political leaders, and wealthy landowners, because their rare ability was so prized and appreciated. Our distant cousin (eighth cousin I think) Gail Borden, who founded the Borden company, was one of these early surveyors, and he personally surveyed most of Texas.

One of the last ventures Dad got into was a riding club. It was called "Morning Sun Riding Club", and at one time had about 15 or 20 members. He had been playing music with Stan Freeman at the time, and sometimes he would have a special party we

called a jamboree, when most of the members came, and Stan and his band would sometimes perform. He built a fancy stage and small wooden dance floor for the festivities. He also started a large building that would be either a barn or clubhouse. We finished the shell, but it never really got used.

While not so prolific or flamboyant in her activities, Mom had quite a few chances to work outside of the home. She worked at Penny's for several years, then at Sears, two different times, finally retiring a couple of years ago. At Sears, she was their best salesperson of maintenance agreements, and won a lot of awards for her work. In addition to those jobs, she of course had many others at different times. She had a really bad wreck once at the bridge near Carmi Jones. She was coming home from working late at Sunburger's I think. It was a tough recovery, but she made it through like she always has.

Many years ago, she became a notary public, making a little money on the side notarizing titles. Out home, people were buying, selling, and trading vehicles constantly, and she was kept quite busy. Also she began working elections, and continues to do so today.

Of course she was in effect the Chief Financial Officer of any of our many family businesses. She kept the books, did all the paperwork required by the government, and as much as possible kept the businesses on an even keel. Sometimes this was difficult to do, as impulsive as Dad was, but she did her best.

While writing about occupations, I thought it might be good to mention John's experiences working for Uncle Ralph. At the age of about 11 or 12 he began helping Ralph and Roger in the many tasks of a large farm. Ralph had several horses (including the stallion Champ), and at times had some cattle as well. One of John's motivations for working was to earn a colt of his own. It seemed like it took forever, but he finally got a colt he named Fury.

He also worked a lot in the hayfields with Ralph, Roger, and Uncle Joe. Being around them a lot, and being a growing impressionable young man contributed a lot to his character and personality.

Well as you can see by this chapter, work played an important part of our lives. It's just amazing the number of different areas Dad would get involved in. Of course it helped that he knew everyone in the county, and more.

One interesting side note about how Dad interacted with business men. He never thought of a place of business in the way most of us do. He didn't deal with the place of business, he had a unique personal relationship with the owners and managers. For instance, when he was going to a certain place of business, it wasn't the business name, it was with Dave so and so, or Phil so and so. I always thought it was remarkable the way he interacted with other people, and they adored him for it, and thought there was no one like Russ Fisher. They certainly were correct.

Post note: Upon Charles passing, the family heritage of sawmilling might be over. Amy's son Rusty has decided to continue construction, remodeling, and possibly some of the other work Charles did from time to time. He seems to be doing just fine. I have no doubt he will succeed. It took Danny and Charles several years to make a success in their occupations. Rusty has their example, but he will have to learn his own lessons, just like we all do.

Chapter Seven

ANIMALS AND PETS

Animals, both pets and farm animals played a big part in our life. In this chapter I will try to describe some of the more memorable animals we had. Along with the animals I'll describe, we also had milk cows at different times, calves (sick and dying most of the time), pigs, horses (getting out most of the time), and those blasted ponies.

One of Dad's many passions was coon hunting. He loved to coon hunt, I think possibly more than any one I have ever known. This involved taking one or more dogs out into the woods on a dark night, in the hopes the dogs might tree (force an animal to climb a tree) a coon (raccoon) or possum (opossum), and shoot them out with a rifle.

In his life Dad probably had altogether more than 25 or 30 coon hounds. He preferred Walker and Black / Tan, but he had an occasional red tick, red bone, blue tick, and many other breeds of dog. His best by far was a mixed Walker and Black / Tan named Hawk. Old Hawk was a wonder.

Dad never looked at his coon dogs as pets. He was about the best coon dog trainer around, and he took good care of his hounds.

Of the many horses and ponies we have had, two stand out. Bill was a short stocky horse probably with some work horse breeding, as well as a little shetland. He was Danny's horse. Lucky was a large paint type of horse, and belonged to Ree. Both Bill and Lucky were used in our early logging operations, and became quite good at it. Danny even later hitched Bill up to a buggy, and he pulled it in style.

"Briss" as he came to be known, entered our family in either 1973 or 1974. Ike Parks saw a couple of interesting looking dogs down at the bridge where Spud Run crosses Little Walnut Creek. He kept one of them, and we got Bristle.

He wasn't very old, maybe just a few months. He was mostly Schnauzer, but had a lot of Terrier and Poodle in him. He had a very wiry looking face and whiskers, so the name. I named him after the dog in the Walt Disney film "Bristle Face".

Bristle was so incredibly smart, and was a lot of fun to be around. He soon was a very big part of our family, and was the first dog we ever had that was allowed in the house. He learned to scratch on the door when he wanted in or out. We used to give him a thorough bath, which he hated.

He understood quite a few words and could almost talk. One of the most incredible things he did was get up on the pool table over at the store, and knock the cue ball into a corner pocket, then jump down and wait for it to come back out.

He loved to go down to the pond with me to go fishing or camping. All I had to do was grab a coat and head for the well house (for my fishing pole), and he would get so excited.

He had such a unique personality, and interacted differently with different people. My brother John used to tease him into such a frenzy, he would actually leap from the ground for his throat, usually tearing or ripping John's T-shirt in the process. John would then change his face or expression, and Bristle would instantly be his best buddy.

We tried several times to get some of Bristle's many pups, but we never had much luck with them. One of the best was one named Barney. He had such a funny looking square mouth that made him look very mean sometimes. He was a nice little dog, and we included him in the bathing ritual with Bristle. One of Bristle's grandsons was down at Kelloughs for a long time.

We always had coon dogs, but very few family pets. Next to Bristle and Barney, probably the one I remember was Happy, the border collie Bill and Margie gave us.

Our best all time coon dog was old Hawk, a part Walker, part Black and Tan. Bristle used to tease our coon dog Hawk from a position he knew was just out of reach of Hawk's chain. He would stand there all tough and mean and strut his stuff while Hawk was tied. On the few times Hawk would get loose from his chain, Bristle would come running for the house whimpering to get in and get away from Hawk.

Danny and Brenda got a collie named Josh from her Dad. He and Bristle were great friends as he was growing up, but for some strange reason after a certain point, they became bitter enemies and got into some serious fights. Josh eventually died I think from wounds in one of these fights.

As he got older, Bristle lost some of his vitality, and even at times was confused and disoriented. I remember one time we walked down in the field he got turned around and became so anxious, I had to bring him back home.

On August 28, 1989; I heard a funny sound and figured out it was Bristle weakly trying to bark. I found him down in the creek across from Danny's house. He was very weak, and I brought him home. He died before the next morning. I buried him up in the corner of our property bordering Hutton and Deihl.

Before Bristle Face we had several dogs that could have been considered pets. Probably the most memorable was a female Border Collie named Happy. Bill and Margie Hill gave her to us, I think in the late sixties. She was pretty smart, and being a border collie, had a lot of sense around stock animals (at the time we had horses, and some cattle).

Chapter Eight

MUSIC

Dad was an old time fiddle player. He of course played all the other main string instruments, but he was a genius on the fiddle (violin). About the time I was born, he was playing for square dances several nights a week. The story goes that John Robert would hold onto Dad's legs, and fall asleep there.

He played the fiddle in a very unique style, very basic and very good. I have many memories of classic square dance tunes like Soldier's Joy, Red Wing, I Overlooked An Orchid, Down Yonder, Mountain Dew, Little Brown Jug, Boll Weevil, Irish Washerwoman, and many, many others.

When Uncle Ralph died, John Robert and Danny began learning to play his guitar and banjo respectively. Not long after the rest of us chose instruments and began to play together. Charlie and Custer played guitars, Amy (Ree) played the fiddle, and I chose the mandolin. Jean just helped Ree sing sometimes. Mom learned to play the piano some when she was younger, but never kept up with it.

I especially remember when and how Charlie picked up the guitar. He was five, and would sit on Dad's lap while they played "Jesse James" together. Dad would finger the chords while Charlie strummed the strings in perfect time.

I fondly remember the many evenings spent playing music with our family, as well as get-togethers with others like Ike Neighborline, Noah Sparks, Herb Bush, Clarence Games, and others. That sound of talk, laughter, and the thumping of instruments put me to sleep many nights.

Dad began getting us to play for people like CB and RV clubs, and churches, and once even at a jamboree at Bainbridge. At the time John was the only one playing any lead, and Ree and Jean would sing a couple of songs.

As Charlie got older, he began to be very good on the guitar, and later even started singing. On one of our trips to Nashville, he got a chance to sing a couple of songs in a bar in one of the bars there. He even dabbled at a career in music, playing with a couple of local groups, but later gave it up.

John Robert was very good, and probably practiced more than any of us. He would spend hours in the bedroom playing. One of the songs he did best was "Buckeroo". He never thought he was very good, and Dad would get so mad at him for thinking that, and for refusing to play some songs sometimes. He had a very unique style of strumming, kind of like Luther Perkins, who played guitar with Johnny Cash. It was a kind of cross strumming where he made sounds in both directions. He didn't always play in that style, just on some songs.

I tried to learn to pick the mandolin, but was never very good at it. I did learn to play "Red River Valley" pretty good, but with bad timing and rhythm. In the last few years of his life I began watching Dad play the mandolin, and tried to figure out how he was able to pick it so easily. I noticed that he seemed not to even put any effort into it, He just seemed to let it happen. I began trying again, and to my great surprise I did learn to pick several songs, and was able to play lead many times.

Danny also had a unique talent with the banjo. For some reason he never learned to pick the banjo, but his strumming style was very unique. He was usually the dominant source of rhythm in our band.

When Ree married Bill, we found out that he was very talented musically as well. He added a lot of variety to our playing, and even sang quite a lot. Bob didn't play, but he acted as our sound and stage man. Later when Ree's kids got older they each learned to play the guitar. Along with the guitar, Rich was very talented on the piano and keyboard. He even composed some music all on his own.

When the girls got married was about the time our family act was declining. We didn't play many times in public after their marriages. We still got together many times as a family and played together, especially with Mike and Jane, when Kent began learning to play. We don't really play much together as a family anymore, especially since Dad, John, and then Danny each passed on. No one else in the family has expressed an interest in music, and sad to say, the tradition is kind of dying out. Maybe one day it will revive once again, and we will get back that fantastic family music feeling that will find expression again in that wonderful thumping sound that I will never forget. I hope we can some day rebuild that tradition again, so future generations can carry it on, and retell the stories of how much a part "ole timey hillbilly music" played in Dad's life, and in our family.

Music has always been a very special interest of mine (listening, not necessarily playing). I think one of the reasons I have always loved music so much, is that it taps into a higher reality, in some spiritual way that opens our mind to new ways of thinking and being.

Post note: I was a little premature about the music dying out. Three or four years ago, Amy's son Rich formed a band called "Schooley Station". They were very good, and even recorded a CD called "Bleed", and played at the Feast of the Flowering Moon a couple of years ago. Jeff also joined a bluegrass band "Big Scioto", and Jacob also has performed with some local bands. Rusty has helped out his brothers from time to time, and has developed a fantastic singing voice he showed off at Mom's birthday

party this year, when Rusty, Rich, Jeff, and Jacob put on a show that just knocked our socks off. Mom has loaned John Robert's Telecaster to them, and have restored it.

Chapter Nine

CHURCH AND FAITH

Even though both of my grandmothers seemed to have a strong faith, church never played a big role in our family life. Family legend says that some Fishers and Rogers were preachers, but we have never been able to confirm this.

Russell and Edith may have attended church some in their youth, but neither attended regularly when our family was growing up. Neither was very comfortable talking about faith. Dad would sometimes speak of “The Good Lord”, or of God being good to him from time to time.

Mom later attended church a lot when her and Dad were separated. She tried to make a go of it in two or three different churches, and found the double standard and hypocrisy to be too much to take.

Some people would describe Russell Fisher as a wicked sinner. He had smoked ever since he was a very young child. He drank from time to time, and cussed like no one I have ever met. With that said though, Dad was a man of integrity. He never claimed to be anything other than he was.

Jean, Ree, and I went to church probably more than any of the other kids. We first went to the little church at the forks of Spud Run, where grandmother Amy Fisher once taught Sunday School. Later as we got older, we would go to Dunkard hill Church near Tucson. Ree was even baptized a member there. It is interesting to note that both girls were married in that church by Andy Mathias.

Amy and Bill have been active members of the LDS church (Mormon) since 1979. I was a member also up until my little medical emergency a few years ago gave me a new understanding of many things, one of them faith and religion.

I loved being a part of a large well organized and structured church like LDS. I don't regret that experience at all. I learned a lot from it. Soon after my recovery from my illness (a breakdown of sorts caused by lack of thyroid medicine), I began to question my beliefs, and soon felt I had to make a choice between church and God.

I wouldn't recommend anyone go through what I went through, but through the process I gained a whole new perspective on who God is, who I am, and how we can be one.

Religion means a lot of different things to different people. I'm thankful that our parents didn't foster any particular brand of faith on us, but allowed us complete freedom to choose for ourselves.

Faith, like politics, is a very personal matter. I'm glad our family let it be so.

Chapter Ten

CONCLUSION

Well, there you have it, a short concise story of who we are, and what makes us special. It is my hope that this initial draft will be just the beginning of a process of communication and sharing stories, and recording information. As I said in the introduction, this first draft is just my perspectives and memories. In order for this book to eventually become a source of truth about our family identity, it needs the help of each of us, to insure many perspectives are represented.

Before I end this book I need to mention our extended family. Before her sister Judy died several years ago, she and Mom were very close. Dan Strausbaugh later remarried to Marilyn Hurler. Dan, Marilyn, Dana, Mark, and families have remained close over the years. Mom's brother Mike has always been close to our family. He always seemed like a brother more than an uncle. He and family (Jane, Kent and Shannon, and Hank) are very close to us.

On the Fisher side there haven't been any close relationships since Clayton died, although we see Joe from time to time, and of course we see them all at the reunion. Extended families are interesting. I remember as a boy seeing all the relatives come to visit Grandma Fisher on Sundays, and wondered what it would be like to be a part of a large family like that. Well, here we are with our own very large, very interesting extended family all our own. Time is a funny thing!

This book will need your personal perspectives on our family history. There are events and stories that maybe only a very few will remember accurately. Feel free to contribute any memory or story, or remembrance that you feel is important.

I started an interesting habit a few years ago that really helped me to prepare for the task of writing this book. Ever since I got my latest computer, I started writing short little articles about any subject that would strike me. Memory is a very funny thing. You cannot dredge up memories on command, certainly not accurately. From time to time, I would think of an interesting part of the past, and I would immediately go to the computer and type it up into a short article. By now I have several of these little articles, and believe me it was helpful to draw from them in writing this book.

Whatever the method, any stories or facts you can remember would be helpful. More important than the actual accuracy of such stories, is your perspective of them as it happened. How each of us individually perceives events is very different from person

to person, because as much as each of us are a lot alike, we are still individuals, and we see everything through our own lens of perception.

In the future volume I want to include a lot more material, and go into much more detail of life on Spud Run. I also want to add more material about the unique geography and history of Harrison Township. Another goal, that will be the most difficult of all, is to include accurate information on all family members, such as exact dates and places, maybe even including certificates of birth, marriage, and death. Also I want to make a full listing of where different family members are buried. It should be an exciting project.

I sincerely hope you will enjoy reading this little book, half as much as I have enjoyed creating it. With your support and help, maybe in four or five years, we can have a family history book to be proud to pass on to future generations, and one that will accurately portray us to them.