

Collier's Magazine and WW II



That dramatic cover was printed when I was 9 months old. It demonstrates how the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was commemorated in the media 12 months after the event. Pretty evil image, isn't it. Pearl Harbor is the reddish-brown streak located at the bottom of that image, diagonal air strips and ships lying at anchor in the harbor, unaware of the terrible bombing about to be inflicted on them by the Japanese. This was part of the context of the internment of American Japanese that is regarded so often today as an inexcusable error or evil of the federal government. I've wrestled with the topic and have several opinions about it. In the final analysis, I don't think it was an inexcusable error and I explain that attitude below.

At the time this cover was published, we were living in Salt Lake City, I was less than a year old, mom was pregnant with Dick, and as far as I can tell, dad had completed his 3-6 month welding/machinist training program. He was working at the Remington Arms Plant out on Redwood Road when this image was published. It reveals the national concern and preoccupation with the war that I think was understandable. This cover illuminates at the national perception of the Japanese, which included both domestic as well as foreign persons. The Remington Arms Plant was about to shut down for ever a few weeks after this cover was published.

The internment of the Japanese was appropriate, in my estimation. I am not a wise man, but I think it was a reasonable thing, perhaps not the only choice, but nonetheless as reasonable an option to exercise as not interning them. I advise you to not use the trusty ol' retrospectoscope in your current year, whatever it is, to form an opinion about the internment. You weren't there and the information you have is probably incomplete and biased. It isn't just or fair for you to criticize the men and women of the time who lived in reality in a swirling miasma of forces and influences and knowledge and news of the time that you don't know. There are those knobby headed do-gooders today that shed tears over the sparrow that falls - but overlook what was going on. Let's be real and be fair here.

Look first at what had been done to the US by Japan in its sneak attack. Look at the amount of direct damage inflicted on the US. Look at the [short-term] effect on the ability of the US to wage war to defend itself. We basically had no Pacific navy after that disastrous bombing. That is not a trivial thing and that was in fact the object of the attack. The Japanese struck an absolutely masterful stroke in destroying so many of our ships at anchor in their own harbor so far from its homeland. It is embarrassing to acknowledge that from a tactical -or strategic, I never remember which- point of view, they did an extraordinary thing

in that complex act. Not minor things.

The obvious but understandable mistake on the part of the Japanese was to believe that after destroying the US Navy in Pearl Harbor, the US would simply buckle. Silly them. Perhaps most nations would have reacted to comparable destruction as if it were a permanently crippling blow, and would have been unable to mount a defense in time to prevent the Japanese from accomplishing their objective. Americans are different. Silly Japanese. They did not know the equally extraordinary capacity of this nation of irritable argumentative mavericks to come together brilliantly and kick the collective Japanese butt all over the Pacific. Poor them.

With World War II in progress around the world, and attempts to harm the US, the state of mind of the US was anything but benevolent but Roosevelt was trying to remain neutral. But even before the Pearl Harbor Fiasco, the US was beginning to understand it would have to fight for its survival both in the east and in the west. We were in a survival mode in various respects. In 1939 Roosevelt had even commissioned, after hearing Dr. Einstein's fervent plea, research into the A-Bomb. Things were already afoot. Even in Alaska things were shifting. For example, Fort Raymond, large enough to accommodate 3,000 men, was started in June, 1941, 6 months BEFORE the Pearl Harbor Fiasco. These things were the result of forces in the nation that were fomenting the population to go to war, to not sit it out. Their influence was heightened by the destruction of US shipping by Hitler's U-Boats. We had not declared war but Hitler disliked, for obvious reasons, the fact that we were assisting the British so put us in his gun sights.

The extraordinary destruction of our Pearl Harbor fleet by the Japanese bombing inflicted such a crippling blow on the US that it appeared to the Japanese that we would not be able to counter-attack while the Japanese conquered the entire Pacific. The objective was to take us out of the equation. That was the last straw for many people. Politicians and citizens reacted with fear and anger. With those perspectives -as shallow as I know they appear today- the internment of Japanese -while the Germans were not interned- becomes reasonable in my estimation. I understand that there was some reason to intern Germans etc. but there were substantial differences in my estimation. Let me explain my view.

First, the bellicose Germans had declared their intention to do what they were doing, i.e. to sink anyone's shipping that ventured to transport stuff to Europe, so when we chose to send our ships into harm's way, we were informedly stupid. Further, while the Germans were inflicting heavy damage on civilian

shipping, they had not eviscerated our entire blue-water navy in the Atlantic. Consequently, their preying on our shipping -that we knowingly sent into harm's way- did not have the dastardly quality of the unexpected sneak attack of the Japanese that demonstrated enormous planning, execution and determination to cripple us. Yes, "Us". I am an American and I feel today what the Japanese did to my nation. And yes, I would intern them in an instant today if I had to in the conditions that prevailed at the time.

### The Rape of Nanking by Japan 1937-1938

I am compelled to educate you about a critical part of the background to the internment of domestic Japanese by the US Federal Government. It was not done on a whim and I suspect that this type of information is totally new to you, but you need to know it in order to understand why the Japanese were interned. I will sound like I am biased against Japanese. I am not. Indeed, I admire their culture and arts -above all others and view them in general as the most highly developed bunch I've encountered during my exploration of this particular world and sometimes wish I were one of them. I formed a deep friendship with my neighbor Nissei, George Taniguchi, the only friendship outside of Nancy that I maintain in Boise. I fear that your generations will not be given the facts by the liberal forces that control the media of this country, which wish to besmirch the government as much as it can for the simple pleasure of destroying anything of value that it can, in spite of any protestations to the contrary. They wish simply to besmirch and tear down and destroy it, offering nothing of redeeming value in its place. But not here. Not here, my children. I want you to have the rest of the story so you can form your own opinion and see what was going on back then. The bombing of Honolulu and the subsequent internment were not simple a tit for a tat series. No, they were part of a broad picture that you have never told about so I am going to explain the "rest of the story to you" with one example that could be multiplied many times over.

First, let me disabuse yourself of the idea that Japan is a kind nation. As Lisa's model woman says, "Get over it." I am going to present some pretty horrible information here to make my point. To give you a dramatic view of what the Japanese had done a mere ~3 years before they bombed the heck out of our navy, let's look at the "Rape of Nanking" committed by the Japanese army as it marched, uninvited as the avenging conqueror, into Manchuria, a difficult-to-reach for the

Japanese country, that nonetheless didn't prevent them from embarking on their extraordinary attack. Let's not look at what they did previously to Shanghai, or what they had done over the centuries to both Korea and China. Let's look at just one episode of horrific evilness committed by the Japanese that our nation would never commit, My Lai notwithstanding. The dimensions of the evilness of My Lai stem from the evilness of the liberal media rather than from the realities of obscene war.

This information about the Rape of Nanking by the Japanese in 1938 was vividly current and real to this nation before the Pearl Harbor Fiasco. To get your own perspective on time frames, just think back in your own life about three years to what happened, and experience the freshness, the immediacy of those events. They are not ancient prehistorical events. They are, indeed, part of your life. That's how it was for our politicians when the Japanese simply obliterated our navy in 1941. They had fresh memories of these events:

Here is a capsule of the whole thing: :

**"For six weeks, from mid December 1937 to late January 1938, the rapes continued. The murder of Chinese males [ed. By the Japanese] was conducted under the sanction of Japan's high command. Hundreds of thousands of civilians and disarmed ex-soldiers were arrayed in formation, their hands bound behind their backs, and marched outside the city wall. There, they were beheaded or buried alive, bayoneted with machine-gun fire, or doused with gasoline and burned. "**

<http://www.tribo.org/nanking/pressrelease.html>

Ultimately over 350,000 men -THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND!- women and children were massacred and mutilated and dishonored by the Japanese in Nanking between 1937 and 1938. **Three hundred and fifty thousand defenseless** people in **less** than two years.

Use this as background when you try to decide whether the feds acted reasonably a mere 3 years after the Rape of Nanking, after the astonishing, unprecedented destruction of our entire Pacific navy to protect the US. Note, please, that this was not an enemy that observed the Rules of Queensberry. They would-and will today in 2002 and later- use every diabolical method in their power to annihilate you, to overrun you, to simply destroy you, and in the end take distinct

pleasure in mutilating and debasing you. No qualms. Indeed, Japanese soldiers carried pictures in their wallets of the atrocities they committed on women. [Read that book.] George Taniguchi explained to me several times that the Japanese are the most xenophobic nation in the world, feeling superior to all others. I believe he was correct. The Japanese despise all of us -all of us- who are not Japanese, and take distinct pleasure in debasing and destroying us all. Don't believe different.

Here are several images that reveal the cold-blooded ruthlessness of the Japanese massacre of hundreds of thousands [350,000] innocent defenseless Chinese citizens. In this image, a Chinese man is tied from behind by a wire which is held by another soldier. This wire incapacitated him and made him a stationary target for sword practice. He is unable to run, unable to defend himself. Decency dictated that for this reason he should simply be treated as a prisoner and allowed to live out the remainder of his life as a prisoner. But the



Figure 2 <http://www.sjwar.org/Pows-g.htm>

Japanese soldier with the sword has a different view of what is just. He has just severed the man's head which is just falling off his shoulders. While other soldiers watch with enjoyment. Sword practice is what this was called.

Is this an enemy you should have trusted? Were Americans acting irrationally when they interned the domestic Japanese after the Pearl Harbor Fiasco when they had seen this sort of information? I'll answer for you. No, they were not irrational. They in fact did understand that the Japanese would occupy our own country itself if it could except that we were too far away and too large for them to manage the task, but do not misunderstand them: they would have done these same thing to us if they had the chance, and would take the same pleasure at our destruction and defamation.

So guess what. In spite of our public New Testament avowals to the contrary, when threatened with our own destruction -our own destruction- we revert to the Old Testament, Jewish dog-eat-dog response where the Golden Rule was re-written as "Do unto others before they do unto you." No kidding. We decided that these polite, quiet, apparently -but perhaps only "apparently"- cooperative Japanese could not be trusted and that in fact they should be locked up. This was not a baseless conclusion, in spite of the evil propaganda of the liberal media to the contrary. So we decided that for the good of the "body politic" we would lock them up as a body. Don't be confused about the reality of the US political state of mind in those days because you didn't live then, so you don't know what it was really like back then.

Kent and Lisa themselves have visited the enormous museum in Tillamook that reveals a great deal about the war footing that existed back then on the west coast, where fears of Japanese attacks were based on actual events which minor in retrospect, could not be distinguished from precursors to major assaults. There was scarcely any radar then, and there were no surveillance satellites. This is the largest wooden hanger in the world, and is the site of daily launches of helium-balloons to patrol the west coast to watch for Japanese incursions into our country during WW II. That's the reality. We did not know whether or not the Japanese had in fact planned direct attacks on continental US. But only morons would have discounted the possibility after the astonishing destruction they inflicted on Pearl Harbor that the Japanese would not attack our continental body. Look at the bombing in Dutch Harbor, in Adak in the Aleutians, the Japanese submarine approaches to our west coast, and you will begin to understand that we suspected, with a legitimate basis, that the Japanese were intent on actually attacking and occupying our country. Who would have guessed any nation could have accomplished the massive destruction they accomplished on Dec. 7, 1941. No one. No one. As a result, we became convinced that any Japanese person could become the agent of destruction of this nation. Sad, but true. That's one of the evil consequence of war. In this case, one that we did not prosecute ourselves, which was inflicted on us by this audacious act of evilness on Dec. 7, 1941.

Here's a longer description of the Rape of Nanking taken from the history that is located at <http://www.skycitygallery.com/japan/japan.html> :

**"Many soldiers went beyond rape to disembowel women, slice off their breasts, nail them to walls. Fathers were forced to rape their daughters, and**

sons their mothers, as other family members watched."

Japanese invented games of rape and torture, turned murder into sport.

Soldiers competed in "Bushido" -KILLING CONTEST- and sent the number of murders back to Nichi-Nichi Shimbun national newspaper in Japan to publish.

"I have never been to hell, but if there is a hell, it was in this city," reporter for the Tokyo Times told the killing in Nanjing."

"At one time, after Nanking was captured, more than 30,000 Chinese were driven to the foot of the city wall."

"Machine guns then swept the crowd and grenades were thrown from atop the wall. The 30,000 people were all killed, most of them were women, children, and elderly." reported Tokyo Asahi Shimbun correspondent Yoshio Moriyama on December 14, 1937.

"Those in the second row were forced to dump the severed bodies into the river before they themselves were beheaded," The Japanese military correspondent, Yukio Omata, wrote, "The killing went on non-stop from morning until night ....."

This is not an enemy we had compassion for, nor could we trust them, particularly after they had just slaughtered our sitting navy in Honolulu. Their values were antithetical to ours, and in a dog-eat-dog war, guess what we were going to do to be sure that you didn't grow up speaking Japanese.



This photo show women who were thrown on public stairs after being gang raped and their children bayoneted in front of their eyes. Three Hundred and Fifty Thousand Chinese citizens were massacred.

The US federal government knew about these things that had happened a mere ~3 years previously. I think it was appropriate for the US to intern the Japanese in America after they blew the hell out of Honolulu. They were a group which did not blend well with the populace like, for example, the Irish or Italians. True, both of those groups also retained their identity in Little Italys, etc. but Japanese were aloof and



Figure 3 <http://www.fatherryan.org/holocaust/holocaust:77/pic4.htm>

inscrutable. They are the most xenophobic nation in the world, according to my friend George Taniguchi who understands those things better than I. He told me that the Japanese are the most biased, prejudiced people in the world. As I've said variously to some of you, I personally believe that the modern "peaceful" era in Japan is an anachronism. The spirit of the Samurai is in my estimation the underlying spirit of the Japanese culture. The man who coldly slices another in half with one swipe of a sword, calling it honor, feeling pride in his action. Mark my words. Japan will rise again. MacArthur *et al*/simply forestalled it, blanketed it

deeply enough under the civil rules of Europe that this spirit has not shown through since the end of WW II. But it is there and will erupt at some point, as virulent as it was before. What we call "peace" today is simply enforced quiescence and forbearance, not peace.

Do you think that Bush wouldn't like to take equally drastic measures today with Al Queida? I expect he would but for two factors: first the liberal eastern seaboard powers -that are generally antithetical to my agrarian view of the universe, i.e. common decency and simple courage and bravery and a sense of right and wrong- counter him at each turn and bleed over the poor people he would harm, and second, there is no single ethnic entity that he can yank into camps. He's done the best he can to hamstring the terrorists. Look at how he's gone after Al Queida interests in other nations, after their banking and assets in this country and so on. Oh, he'd do it to today if he could. And guess what: a fair number of us Americans would salute him for doing it. Now that 9/11 is 8 months past and we see that terrorism continues and spreads to other nations, we would support him in locking up Al Queida. Indeed, a few months later, we have now seen the bombing in Bali, the hostage taking in the Moscow Ballet, the bombing in the Philippines, the bombing of the French ship in the gulf and so on. The evil ones are on the move.

Having said what I have in support of the internment, I now want to tell you that I do have a major problem with the internment. The internment was prudent from the point of view I have just mentioned, in spite of the inconvenience. The problem for me was the way Japanese property was handled. That was flat wrong. The government took possession of their holdings without compensating them. That was wrong.

I know how wrong the taking was because George Taniguchi told me. One late afternoon in a hot August sun around 1993, we sat on his roof. We talked while he lackadaisically re-pointed his chimney. Enjoying the summer zephyrs and the setting sun, lazy in the heat of the radiating roof. I will tell you about George in more detail in the Boise Volume. But up there on the roof that afternoon, he revealed deep feelings about the internment. George told me how he and his parents had to give up their large farm in Gilroy, California when they were interned and what he experienced as a 14 year old boy.

Years later, George drove his ancient father back to Gilroy just to take a look at the old homestead that had been confiscated by the Federal Government when the family was sent into internment camp. Mr. Taniguchi senior had built the farm from nothing in the 1920's and '30's and sent for his picture bride after he

was well established. George showed me a beautiful family portrait of his parents, himself and his one brother. He was excited to take his dad back to the farm because his own memory of the place was shaped by his experiences on it before the war. As they drove up from southern California they anticipated seeing the farm, expecting it would be in the condition it was in when it was confiscated. What happened was terrible. When they arrived at the farm, they saw the opposite of what they had anticipated. Instead of neatly manicured grounds, well painted houses and clean lands, they saw dirty, disheveled, unkempt grounds and trashed buildings.

The property had been taken over by a group of Hispanics who let it fall into disrepair. Perhaps they had no money? George seemed to believe that this experience hastened his dad's death. I obviously don't know what the truth is about the appearance of the land at the time he went there with his dad, nor do I know what the Hispanics had done, nor what they could be blamed for, but I do know that George was deeply troubled by that experience. [Now don't get the idea that I am prejudiced. I am reporting the facts that you can verify with George - though you might have to dig him up for the conversation.]

The point then: the loss of the family farm was unfair because it was a government "taking without compensation". The failure to compensate the Japanese was wrong. Each property taken should have been paid for at fair market value by the government.

When the US paid each interned Japanese person the sum of \$20,000 40 years later I was ambivalent. If I viewed the money as simply a way for bleeding heart liberals to buy their own peace of mind for having locked the poor Japanese up, then it was a cheap action and I don't support it. The Japanese themselves should have been insulted at the act in the context of uncompensated taking - but being the consummate businessmen they are, they would never look a gift horse in the mouth. Bank it and then make fun of it in the kitchen over a cup of sake. But if I see the money as compensation for the uncompensated taking of property, then I think it was appropriate - but am bothered because it is too little in that case. Even that perspective rankles because the compensation is indiscriminate, i.e. it spread the compensation over all people, including those who lost no property. It seems to me that the appropriate thing to have done would have been to set up a board to review all takings, to assess them, and then compensate them according to their actual damages.

The Collier's Magazine that published the preceding cover was a large

format magazine like **Look**, **Life** and **Saturday Evening Post**. They were the source of much of the news we received about international events. News was also available in the news reels that preceded all movies in those days. When the lights went down, the first "movie" was a 5 minute summary of things happening in the nation or world, narrated by a snappy newscaster. Propaganda was freely, liberally incorporated into the media and swayed public opinion. Just as it does today. If you don't think that the new reports you read and hear today -even in 2050- are designed to sway you in some manner, then you haven't really paid attention to them. Every story you hear has a slant built into it, they preach at you, bombard you, overwhelm you. The point I'm making is that the propaganda of the time, that is criticized today as government interference at the time, is no different that the propaganda promulgated today by the **New York Times**, the **Republic**, etc. The difference is who is writing the text and incorporating the spin. I don't like it in any event but it seems to be the nature of politics and public life and media.

Retrospect shows that the federal government knew more about Japanese actions and intentions than it revealed at the time, just as the Federal government knew more about "9/11" than we were told immediately after. But I am not particularly bothered by that -at my age- for the simple reason that I understand how slow and dim-witted government is, how cumbersome it is. I also do not believe that publication of the suspected actions of the Al Queida would have helped anything. There would have been a severe public reaction, howls of outrage and claims that the feds are being stupid and so on, without proof, etc..

In case you doubt that, just look at what happens today after 9-11 each time the attorney general announces another threat of terrorism. The basic reaction is criticism of him for scaring people without providing specific information, etc. But be realistic and get over it - you can't have it both ways, but the liberal media nonetheless cynically tries to have it both ways. What in the world would and could George Bush have done in 9/01 to "protect" against what was done? Nothing. Simply nothing. All the coordinated intelligence in the world would not have been useful to him because there would have been shrieks of all sorts if he had really attempted to impose bans on travel, and other restrictions. He couldn't construct safety nets over the twin towers and the pentagon. He couldn't stop air travel. He couldn't even introduce increased surveillance. That is how it would have been for Roosevelt.

## Root Cellar

**B**ut civilian life went on. We had a root cellar that was located a short distance to the north of the back porch, directly outside of the kitchen window. From a distance it just looked like a longish pile of dirt that ran east-west, perhaps 3 feet higher than ground around it. The door of the cellar was about 8 feet from the house and lay nearly horizontal. The cellar door looked like the door of the storm cellars in "The Wizard of Oz", wide flat wooden doors that were heavy. There were strict orders to stay off the "roof" because playing on it would cause it to collapse. In fact, the mound of dirt covered a structure of timbers built around a hole in the ground that was six feet deep. And you dang well knew that you would get hided if you dared walk on that roof. It was so inviting.

This root cellar was a source of vivid memories and emotions. I remember the labels of the cans of tomato paste that mom purchases. Contadina, the same today as they were back then, a painting of long rows of tomatoes in California, aligned on a vanishing point in the distance.

The root cellar consisted of two rooms. When you descended the stairs, you entered the

frontroom that was lined with shelves. The back room was devoted to dirt bins for storing root crops like carrots. It was a hole in the ground that had a framework of timbers with a roof that was covered with several feet of dirt. Each time I stepped into the cellar I walked into a palpably moist, cool, smell. If it were presented to a blind-folded me today, I could identify it. It is a compound of the odor of plain ol' dirt mixed with the scents of fresh and moldy apples, potatoes, carrots and cabbages, with a whiff of mice droppings and urine. Not an unpleasant or pleasant smell. Just distinctive. It was sort of like the smell of areas where I found toads that peed in my hand.

When mom sent me down to get a jar of beans or venison, I knew exactly where they were located. If she asked me to get something I didn't know the location of, she'd gesture with her hands and indicate the right or left and how high. The shelves, constructed of vertical 2 x 4's and 1 x 12's, were assigned to

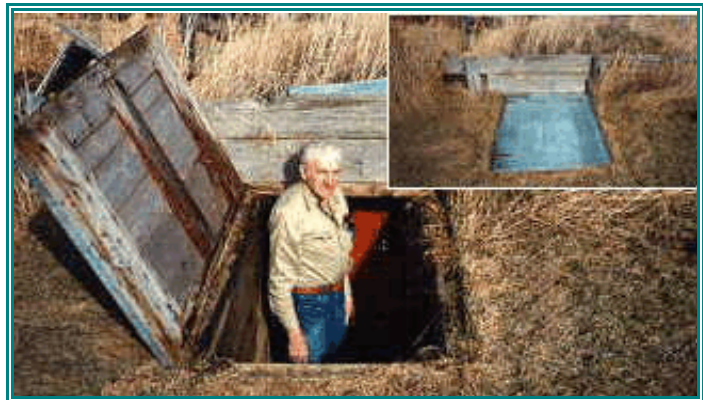


Figure 4 DugOut Root Cellar  
<http://waltonfeed.com/old/cellar1.html>

specific foods. The assignment to go get something out of the cellar was not one I appreciated. But in the gestapo environment, I knew better than to object. Just brace myself, rush into the cellar, grab a bottle, and flee.

The act of opening the heavy cellar door that lay at an angle on the ground was difficult. I could do it, but it strained me. There was an unlighted set of steps going down, steps of dirt shored up at each level with a timber. While descending those steps, I would feel moist cobwebs across my face and arms. When I entered the palpable smell, I felt more cobwebs across the doorway. I timidly reached out to find the huge ceramic light switch in the darkness, and would twist the large black knob to turn on the bare dangling bulb. It was dirt-covered, cobweb-covered, 25 watts to save money. A layer of fine dirt that constantly fell from between the boards in the ceiling covered everything. Strings of old cobwebs hung randomly in the small dirt room, dirt floor and dirt wall.

As I was on my way down into the cellar, I sometimes felt brave and 'in charge'. But this feeling of resolve dissolved quickly. By the time I walked through the primitive timber doorway into the first room, I was nervous about the whole thing. This was not a good idea. It was like walking into a tomb. The alternative was to go back and tell mom I was afraid to go into the cellar after all. But I understood, through experience, that that was not a really good idea. So I braved the darkness and creatures of the cellar.

The spider webs were one of the nastiest things about the cellar. I never wondered, but today I do: what was it that caused spiders to hang webs in dark spaces that never saw light, hence never saw insects? Odd, really, because the effort expended in creating webs was wasted. Sort of a death wish. But whatever the situation, I hated the feel of the wettish cobwebs that hung fresh over the doorway and over each of the shelves where I went to retrieve whatever the assigned food was for the day. It was always the same, regardless of how recently one was down there. Those wet, unexpected and unwelcome dusty cobwebs on the face that made entering the cellar a trial.

But that was a mild problem compared to leaving the cellar. At the instant I held the beans or corn in my hand, the entire cellar was instantly populated with six-headed creatures with drooling bloody fangs waiting to pounce on me the instant I turned my back. Like those under Calvin's bed. Every time. As soon as I was stocked with the assigned goods, I was filled with unspeakable fear and terror. Those are the correct terms. If you have never done this deed alone at age 6

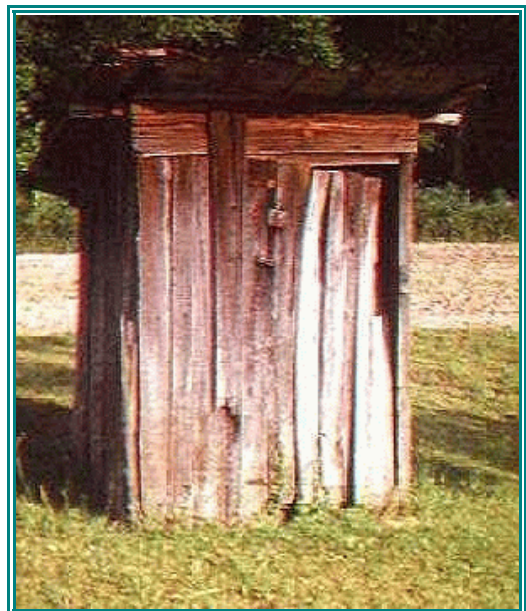
years in a cellar, then you don't know what it's like.

It was a fearful experience to know that misshapen horrible dwarfs and monsters waited in the back room of the cellar, for you to turn the light out and turn your back, so they could pounce on you and tear you into bleeding shreds to die on the dirt floor in the dark, where no one would hear your scream, where no one would discover you until your irritated, disgusted mom finally came to retrieve her bottle of beans, knowing that you were just being lazy. I would bolt for the doorway, hoping fervently that I could clear the door jamb before my legs and arms were ripped from my body. I knew that as long as I could get my body over the threshold of the small dirty door sill, I would be safe. Without fail, I accomplished that thing. I was never disemboweled, but I always understood that I was miraculously favored. I could almost hear the heavy breathing of the creatures that would then slink back into their room to wait for me next time. It was a gift of god that she allowed me to escape. I didn't exactly thank Her because that is pretty hard to do when you are sweating and afraid.

### Privy

A privy isn't a very elegant place but it's superior to the alternative, an open trench in the ground. Both in terms of privacy, and in terms of protection from the elements, especially in the winter. What one does there isn't too elegant either. Us boys only used the privy for "Number two". To pee, we'd stand outside of the coal shed or grainery. So did dad. I remember how grown-up I felt when I stood by him after he came home from work, peeing on the side of the grainery, blasting straight out as only a little kid's bladder can do. Amazing. I was a big boy then.

Ours was a two-seater, an odd thing really since people didn't go in together. At least adults didn't in my experience, though if Dick and I both urgently needed to, we would go in. Today, I don't understand why privies were made with more than one seat. I suppose they were helpful with large families, the norm for



**Figure 5 Privy with rough door**  
<http://dponder.home.mindspring.com/pix01.htm>

agrarian families? There were even three-seaters which must have been something to behold when all sites were in operation. Think about it. Sitting there in the smell, chatting about things in general, swatting blue bottle flies. Please pass the catalog.

The construction of a privy is simple. A framework of 2 x 4's is erected over the hole in the ground, and covered with boards. There was a door over the entrance for privacy though that was only visual. Chuckle. A space between the roof and the top of the walls provided some ventilation but didn't make a bit of difference in the smell. There were always cracks between the boards, or holes where knots had fallen out so 100% privacy wasn't possible. You could always hear rustling in the tall grass around the privy if a kid was trying to sneak up so you'd holler, "Jimmy! I hear you!" And he'd leave. Usually. Peeking through knot holes was an educational enterprise. About as revealing as when kids too far away to be bothered by going to a privy, pulled their pants and underwear down to their ankles and hung their bums over the top pole of a pole fence, out there in the sunlight, letting loose. What a sight. The comments were not polite.

Our privy was down beyond the grainery, just past the clotheslines on the path that ran between the large garden and the berry patch. It was far enough away that the well under the house wasn't contaminated. Privies always have a strong smell which some families attempted to control by using lime. They would put a 50 pound sack of lime behind the door. When you finished your business, you threw a good handful of lime into the hole you just used. That did help somewhat I suppose but I couldn't tell any difference. Toilet paper was expensive so wasn't used much. Instead, a Sears or Montgomery Wards catalog was left to the side of the seat - or some old newspapers. Seems sort of ineffective? It was better than corn cobs like you used in the corral.

Flies were always a problem in the summer. While you mediated, they buzzed around. Spiders in the corners of the privy



Figure 6 "Fly Gun"

<http://cgi.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=1319647029>



up by the opening between the top of the wall and the roof, spun webs that filled with desiccated fly carcasses, iridescent with sun rays reflecting off them. You hated the flies to land on you because you knew where they had been. This is one of the reasons that mothers disliked having flies in the house.

To control them, families used a spray gun to dispense "Flit, a widely-used insecticide. The reservoir held about a quart of insecticide and was fastened to a 2inch thick tube that worked like bicycle pump. It was fun to hold the tube in one hand and work the plunger up and down with the other hand. This created a mist of the chemical that killed flies, or whatever insects that happened to get in the way.

There is an interesting story about "Flit". The creator of the Dr. Seuss books started his career in art in the advertising agency by designing ads to promote "Flit".

Mom and dad used DDT bombs a few times to fumigate the house, though I don't know why they did that. It was a losing battle out on a farm with a dairy herd a quarter mile away. Perhaps they were exasperated with the quantity of flies that they couldn't get rid of with Flit. These devices did look like small gray bombs. The project was a large one. All of interior doors were opened to allow the gas to circulate in all rooms, and all of the windows were tightly closed. Then us kids were chased out one door while dad set the bomb on the floor opened it. We got to see the smoke start coming out but were chased away before we could breathe it. Several hours elapsed to allow the DDT to do its job and dissipate before we were allowed back in.

In those days, DDT was viewed as a safe product and was miraculously effective against a wide range of pests. This photo illustrates that belie. Today the stuff is

banned but at the time it was introduced, the world was a different place, filled with otherwise insurmountable pests. It was a panacea that time has shown to be a nasty product to use. But it is irrational



Figure 7 DDT demonstration

today to criticize people for using it back then. We had little comprehension of the risks of the time, of the marginal understanding of the basic science, of the huge economic and health losses associated with the pests that were miraculously controlled by DDT. This is what that led to its widespread use.

Privies, not unexpectedly, lent themselves to nasty pranks that tended to happen around Halloween. This prank worked because the structure was not secured into the ground with concrete. They were more or less set with stakes into the ground over the hole that received the offerings. On Halloween during trick-or-treat time, some smart aleck would sneak up on a privy, push it over on its side, and go away laughing about it. Now and then some farmer got a step ahead of the kids. He'd go out and move the privy so that it was sitting upright, but to the side of the hole, leaving the hole uncovered on the side of the most likely

approach. Obviously, the kid who snuck up on this privy in the dark to push it over might find himself in a funny spot.

Sitting in a privy on a hot summer day, with sun poring through cracks, illuminating the spider webs is not a bad thing. Peaceful, quiet, drowsy sort of thing. Time stands still. You wait. You think. Buzzing of flies in the background, a few bird chirps fill the suspended time. The quiet whir of a horse-drawn sickle bar, a cat meowing. The Sear catalog warm, the wooden walls radiating comforting heat. So much nicer than in the cold winter when you freeze your bum.

### Montgomery Wards and Sears

That era was the heyday of these catalog companies. They grew by leaps and bounds across the US, offering an astonishing array of products to families out in the middle of no-where. Which is where we were, a mile outside of a tiny town that had few selections in few stores. These enormous catalogs were shipped once or twice a year and provided an large amount of pleasure. Reading and looking and longing we did regularly. Kept us out of trouble.

When mom was ready to order something from Sears, she would pore over the catalog for hours, consulting with us about what we wanted, what she could afford. Then one day she'd make up her mind and laboriously fill out the order form, verifying that she was listing the right item number, the right page, the right size and color. Then she put it in the mailbox and raised the red flag to tell the postman we had mail for him to pickup. The products returned via the US Mail. There was no such thing as FedEx or UPS. The only delivery service we had was that provided by the US Post office, which in my estimation, was an honorable agency at the time. It is a joke today that should be privatized to get rid of the graft and laziness and inefficiencies that aren't tolerated in private industry. Anyway, the post man eventually delivered the long-awaited boxes of things which were opened anxiously and tried on. Ordering out of a catalog is difficult because sizes vary by manufacturer, colors vary and so on. So some products had to be sent back, but this process was still superior to buying things in town out of the little stores with their limited inventories of products, colors and sizes.

While the companies were known and respected, their names were the fun to play with. Sears and Roebucks was the full name of the company at the time. This was transposed into Rears and Sawbucks, a hilarious thing. Similarly, Montgomery Wards was modified into Monkey Wards, producing as much humor. Today the jokes seem a bit thin, but that is a reflection of the general increase in education

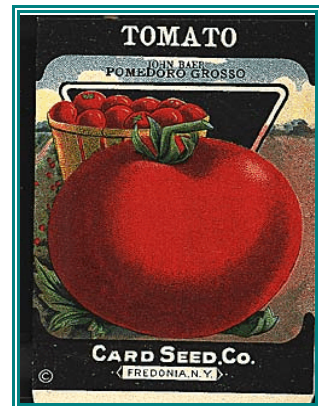
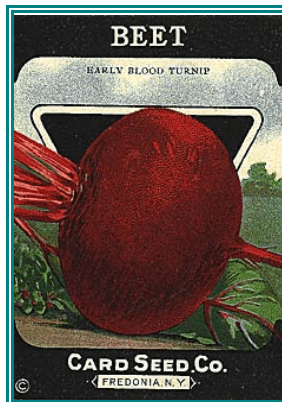
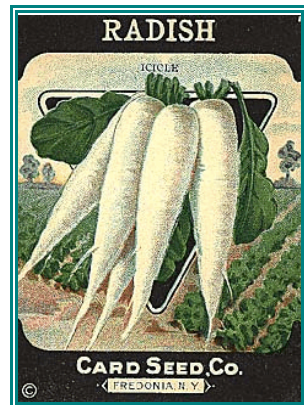
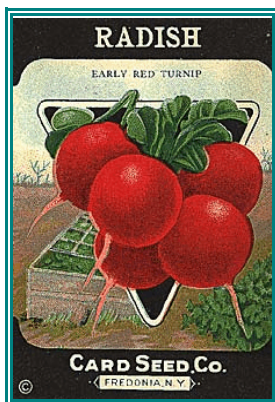
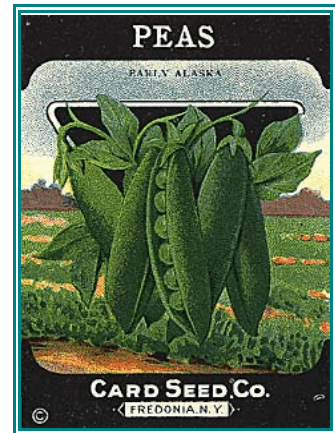
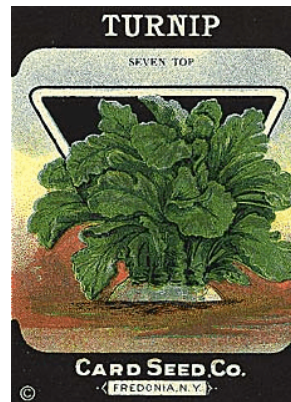
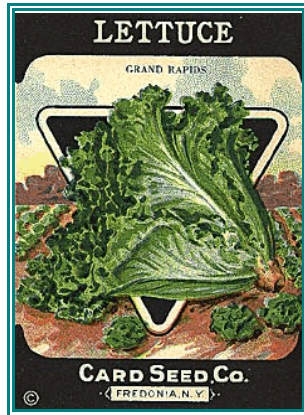
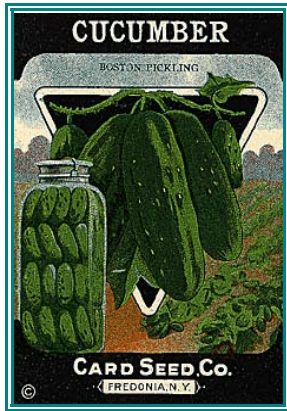
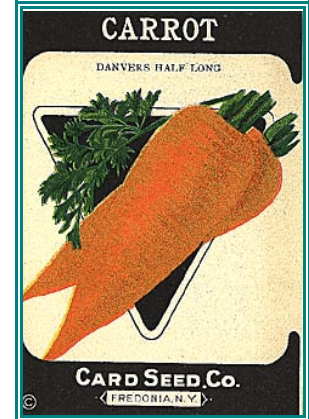
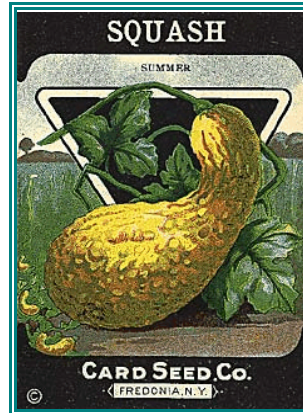
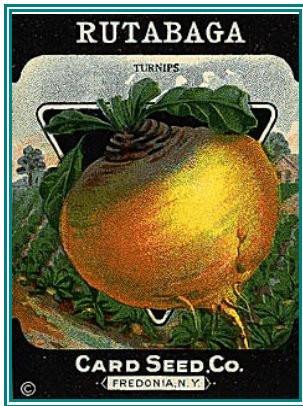
and sophistication. At the time, these jokes were indeed funny.

### Choosing seeds for the garden

The process of picking seeds for our vegetable garden started in the spring. Another mail order enterprise although local stores like Ashton's Hardware stocked some seeds. The Burpee Catalogs came in the mail and the urge to get out and garden after a long cold winter caused the adults to start thinking about what they wanted to do this year. They wondered which seeds did best last year, which vegetables were not appreciated and so on. Dad didn't spend much time in this project but mom did. She'd look in the catalogs to find the vegetables that interested her, paying attention to the cost of each packet. She'd dog ear the pages, and on a piece of paper would tally the cost of her order, updating it each time she changed her mind. She discussed her choices of seeds with her folks and her siblings in the region, all of whom grew vegetable gardens for food.

In those days farmers allowed some vegetables mature and "go to seed" so that they could have seed for the next year, a practical, economical way to do it. Not too many years earlier, it was probably the most common way to get seed because catalog companies hadn't come into their own yet. But there was a problem with harvesting one's own seeds: over generations some vegetables deteriorated in quality and didn't thrive. What was preferred was seeds that resulted from new crosses. They possessed qualities that were lost through repeated self-pollination.

The images on the next page show seed packets from the Card Seed Company in that era. I don't remember that we used Card Seed seeds, so these probably aren't the exact ones



that we used, but the style of art is identical to that of the seed packets we used. There is an aura that goes with this style that calls to mind that era. The art style was repeated in all forms of advertising for shoes, canned vegetables labels, and so on. I remember standing as a small kid in front of the tall racks of seed packets in the Ashton's. Wondering what a celeriac plant tasted like.

## Preparing the Garden

Our garden was a source of life, so it received enormous attention to ensure, insofar as it is possible, a substantial source of calories for the next year. This may seem to be an overly detailed description of the process. I'm going to give you a detailed description of the process because it reveals much about what it was like to live on a rural farm in that era when we produced a large percentage of our own food. Your experience with the little gardens I raised in Boise suggests that gardens were small, irrelevant projects that didn't contribute much to the food on the table. A source of as much irritation as benefit. Things talked about, but which didn't require much effort and which were ignored in the end when cheap vegetables were purchased in the stores. In Vernal things were different. The garden was critical to our food supply and received appropriate attention.

The first step in preparing the garden plot was to plow the field. Then it is disced, harrowed, fertilized, smoothed, furrowed, planted, watered, growed, harvested and eaten. Gardening was a substantial undertaking that all the neighbors and relatives did in those days. Vernal was an agrarian society and even the town folk maintained kitchen gardens. Every kid knew how it was done.

When the ground was ready and the night temperature was high enough, Dad would stake out the garden plot for plowing. He arranged with a neighbor to bring a tractor and plow. The point of plowing is to break up the soil and turn it upside down so that the next steps would produce a deep bed of loose soil that would produce a good crop. A man drove a tractor down the long driveway along the irrigation ditch and between the garage and grainery out onto the garden plot. The plot was less than a quarter acre but it was nonetheless a substantial undertaking.

Tractors have ultra-low gears that allow them to crawl at a slow walk. This gives the driver excellent control. As the tractor nears the end of a row, the driver pulls a lever and the plow blades magically raise up out of the soil. The shiny satiny beautifully shaped blades glisten in the sun, as they bounce and jounce over newly-cut furrows. The driver makes a hard cut of the steering wheel to turn the

tractor around, never stopping. He watches over his shoulder and when the tractor is lined up for the next furrow, he pushes the lever and the silvery plow blades descend back into the soil. At the edges of the field a strip of several feet was taken up in the turns, wasted space but that was necessary as the tractor is turned around and lined up for the next row. Tractors are designed with a short turning radius to minimize the amount of space wasted by turning around.

Plow blades were fascinating. As they cut the soil, they left a clean vertical wall on one side about a foot deep, and rolled a strip of sod and soil in the opposite direction, twisting it upside down. Earthworms appeared, sometimes cut in half, other times whole. Attracting birds interested in the free meals. They stayed away from us but hovered near until we were far enough away to risk sitting down to forage.

I am fuzzy about when dad managed to buy a small two-wheeled motor-driven tractor that he worked the garden with after the heavy duty plowing and harrowing had been completed. This little tractor had a Briggs and Stratton motor, and large black wheels. He had a variety of implements that he bolted to the back end of the unit and walked behind it carefully tilling the garden rows. I don't think he ever used it to do the entire process. Whatever the case, he used it to cut furrows and weed.

The next step after plowing was completed was to harrow the strips of sod and dirt with a disc harrow.

This process chops the stuff into smaller clods, and breaks down the roots holding the dirt together. The disc in this image is designed to be hitched to a pair of horses. The farmer would sit on the small metal seat and put his feet on the bar built for that purpose. There is a single row of discs that is divided into two halves that are angled



Figure 20 Horse-drawn Disc Harrow - note seat for driver.

rather than in a straight line. The angle ensured the discs cut and turned the sod. If the discs were in a straight row, they would cut into the sod but would not turn it. The handle by the left side of the seat was used by the farmer to raise and lower the disc. Each time he came to the edge of the garden, he'd raise the discs, turn the horse, line up on the next row, lower the discs and go again.

After discing was completed, a tooth harrow was pulled across the plot in both directions and diagonally.

This was the stage where I wanted to participate. A tooth harrow looks sort of like a large sled with a hefty wooden frame on the top that was capable of holding anybody. However, when I asked to be allowed to sit on it as it was slowly pulled across the field by the tractor, I was enthusiastically informed that it was not to be allowed, that it was not safe to do that. I didn't really understand it at the time because the harrow moved so slowly. But I understood that the adults didn't want me to do it, so being a natural coward, I dropped the subject - verbally. I never understood in my heart how dangerous it was to do the innocent things I proposed. I see now that it was indeed a stupid thing to do. Getting a foot caught under the frame, even when it was moving slowly would have resulted in the leg and then the body being pulled under the teeth before the tractor could have been stopped, a pretty grisly way to die. The teeth worked the sod that had been disced, making smaller and smaller chunks, turning and tossing it. The next step was to drag a flat frame across the field to flatten the dirt into a bed.

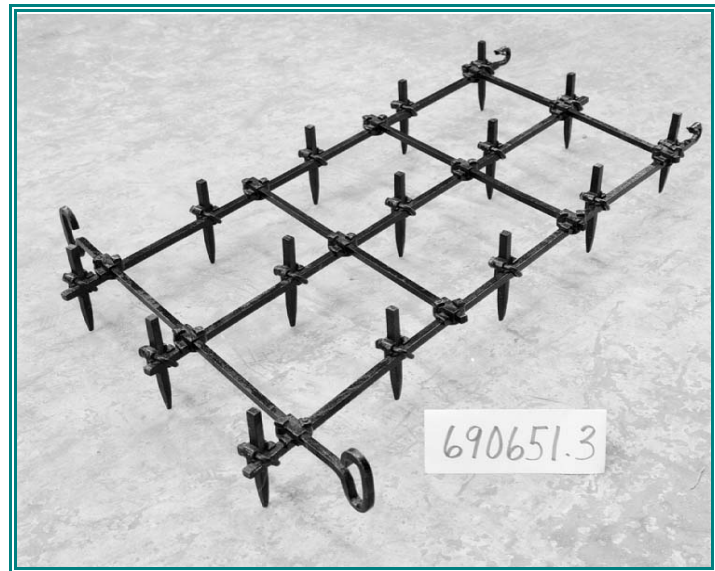


Figure 21 Tooth Harrow



The last stage was the only foul part of what otherwise was a sweet loamy smelling process.

Spreading manure, real honest to goodness fresh from the back end of a cow manure. Dad hired a tractor that went over to the Coopers' dairy and loaded the manure spreader with the smelliferous stuff, wet green dripping and chunky. Cows drop their plop anywhere which is a problem inside the milking shed - actually it was a



**Figure 22 Horse-drawn manure spreader**

<http://www.n-connect.net/benetton/horses/horse-2000-02.JPG>

barn with a cement floor. To help handle and control the stuff Mr. Cooper spread straw on the floor which meant that the stuff was chunky what with the straw being mixed through it.

The back end of the spreader has shafts with teeth that turn fairly quickly and catch the manure. It is flipped it into the air, out the back end of the machine, sort of randomly. A contraption in the bottom of the manure spreader moved the manure from the front of the bed to the back end. Then the stuff lay in the sun smelling mightily but was essential to producing a good garden. Chemical fertilizers were available but cost money, which we didn't have. Remember this was just a cut above subsistence living. Besides, why spend money for chemicals, when this stuff was a quarter mile away and free. Mr. Cooper had to get rid of the stuff so he was glad to have someone come over and do some of his work for him.

I don't remember what implement was used to mix the manure into the soil, but it was a critical process actually because the manure had to be thoroughly mixed and broken up. It would burn plants otherwise. After the manure had been worked in, and the plot had been smoothed, dad would walk through the field a last time, picking out any rocks, large roots, or pieces of wood, throwing them to the edge of the garden, along the irrigation ditch on the south.

Then mom and dad staked out the rows with the twine. After the rows were staked out and approved, dad used a hand-powered tiller that he could change

implements on. The tiller with the two wheels was too large to cur the furrows. The one he used was like the one I had in Boise that was ruined by one or two boys and their friends. They obviously ran with it, enjoying how the large wheel bounced up and down. Oh, that was probably pretty fun to watch and I suspect that a scrawny thoughtless kid named Scott had more than a little to do with it. In the end, it was ruined, beyond repair so I could not use it and I couldn't afford to repair or replace it. Dad had bought it for me to tend the garden, just as he did when I was a little kid.

Anyway, after the rows were staked out, dad would cut the furrows with the proper plow blade. He carefully walked the tiller along the strings, cutting to just the right depth so that the garden could be irrigated through these furrows. The critical parts of cutting the furrows were making them of uniform depth, and making them slope down away from the irrigation ditch because gravity was the only way water would get to the end of the row. If there were defects in the uniformity and depth of the furrows, they were repaired when water was first let into them when it became obvious what needed attention. This is where the saying about "getting water to the end of the row" came from.

The stakes and strings were removed after the furrows were cut. The string was carefully rolled and stored for other uses. Families kept balls of twine in the house to store string of any kind that came into the house. That way there was always string to tie up things that needed tying up. The fact that it saved money was equally important.

After the furrows were in, mon and dad would plant seeds by hand. Different seeds required different planting techniques. They knew them all. Some seeds were soaked over night, others planted straight from the packet. Some needed to be planted deeply and others almost lay on the surface of the ground. Seeds varied greatly in size. Radish seeds were small but peas and corn were large. The east end of the garden was where potatoes were planted. Dad always did that. He'd quarter potatoes to stretch them, making sure that there was at least one "eye" in each piece because that is where the potato plants originated.

After the garden was planted it was time to let in the water for the first time, an exciting thing. Obviously, the entire process of preparing and planting the garden was planned around the date and time we would have the right to the irrigation water in the spring. When water runs down a furrow the first time, it obviously soaks into the soil, condensing it, and forms well-defined tracks for

future waterings. This is the time that high spots in the furrows are repaired with a shovel if necessary.

There actually is a great deal of skill involved in irrigating. The water has to be let onto the garden long enough that it is watered but not so long that it is flooded. Flooding does two things. First, it kills some vegetables, and second, the furrows blow out at the far end and no longer contain water. These defects could be repaired but that was unnecessary work. During the irrigation process, water flow from the ditch actually has to be stopped before the sheet of water reaches the end of the rows. To fail to time the stopping of the water properly, was to invite various problems. If water is stopped too soon, the bottom of the garden isn't watered, and if stopped too late, the furrows blow out. There was always a tension in deciding when to stop the water. Irrigation water on the garden is like a sheet of slowly moving water and the irrigator has to watch the progress of this sheet and the rate of flow out of the ditch to know when to stop letting water in. That allows this sheet to finish its trip to the bottom and to stop right at the end of the rows.

## Garden

This picture shows what our Vernal gardens really looked like. Note the weeds and the unkempt appearance of the thing. Not like the neatly manicured gardens out behind Boise homes tended by men who spent their days in offices with time -and energy- to be fussy. As long as the land produced the vegetables required for the winter, it wasn't important how it looked. We worried



**Figure 23 Family Garden**

<http://www.usda.gov/oc/photo/01d1411.jpg>

about weeds when they interfered in the growth of vegetables. Otherwise, they provided a benefit in that they reduced the amount of evaporation of water because they protected the soil from the sun.

On our farm, the house would have been on the right side of this picture, and the irrigation ditch would have been behind these people flowing from right to the left, i.e. to the east. This mother and daughters are harvesting a crop that

grows on low vines. Look at the woman's hands to see how she's lifting a branch of a plant. Can you tell what they are picking? I can't. What do you think of their attire? Two of them wear long pants, but two of them wear dresses. To work in the garden, to harvest vegetables. I bet if you polled 100 city women working today in their gardens that you would not find a single woman who wore dresses. Levi's, shorts and halters would abound. The only time my mom wore slacks was when we were going out into the woods or boating. Otherwise, she wore dresses. Dresses, not skirts and blouses, plain old fashioned dresses with full skirts. None of these form-fitting numbers either. These were modest full skirted-versions. It is interesting isn't it. Why was there this compulsion for women who were physically active, bending over and so on, to wear a piece of clothing that complicated their work?

Note also the children. The kids are out there in the garden with mom doing work that isn't entirely fun, particularly if the ground is muddy, or if the sun is hot, or if the weeds are shedding prickly seeds, or they are harvesting cucumbers and squash that have nasty little spines. But there they are. Learning how to work. And equally important, they are getting a sense of contributing to the welfare of the household. Mom is not preaching to the girls. She's just trying to get vegetables for dinner, or for canning. But in the process of herding the girls out there and making them help her do her work, she is including them in her life and making them central to the welfare of the home. They are learning something about each crop, when to pick it, how to tell it's ripe, how to pick it. That's the kind of opportunity that I wish I had been able to provide you kids. I regretted that you did not have the chance to feel like you were contributing to the household. Most of the time you were simply consumers, not being able to contribute to the welfare of the house. City life does that and it is a great loss.

### Harvesting vegetables

Mom planted a wide variety of vegetables: peas, beans, turnips, several kinds of lettuce, corn, tomatoes, squash, pumpkin, cucumbers, potatoes, carrots, turnips, beets, radishes, bell peppers, and dill. Vegetables were harvested during the summer as each variety "came on". The first vegetable was the radishes, a cold-weather crop that was planted early and appeared along with certain early lettuce that also likes cold, followed by peas. Mom planted the standard red radishes as well as the icicle radishes. The latter grew into long narrow pure white things several inches long. I didn't like them because they were so hot. Radishes ripened

in about 60 days so would be ready in early May since we planted cold-tolerant vegetables in March before the danger of a killing frost had fully passed.

Radish seeds are roundish plump spots that we placed in shallow rows under mom's instruction. She carefully pulled a thin layer of dirt over the seeds and gently water them, advising us to be careful and not step on them. We'd check them frequently and could scarcely believe when those tiny seeds produced shiny, bright green leaves, two at a time. Dad told us that they were "dicotyledons". We took his word for it. He said the other group of plants were the "monocotyledon", or "monocots". That was fine too. Made him happy to teach us. Small wonder that precision in names and word choices became a passion. Precise words and names were magic. So radishes were dicotyledons. The body of the radish swelled and expanded, lifting the tuft of leaves higher, exposing the red globe to the sunshine. When they were large enough, mom let us pull them. We'd clean the dirt off by rubbing them on our jeans, bite off the tap root, and eat them. Tangy bite that was more than I appreciated, but the joy of harvesting something I planted made it worth the effort.

Peas were next. They took longer and had to be staked up. When they were ripening, we watched the pods that were short flat things that lengthened and fattened. Finally they were ready to harvest. Mom said to hold the vine when we pulled the pods, lest we pull the vines out of the ground. We generally followed the rule. The pods were lovely, crunchy things that we learned to pop open by squeezing on the stem end, then splitting them lengthwise with a thumb nail to expose the row of shiny, evenly-spaced green peas. Shelling them out with a thumb into our mouth was ecstasy.

Turnips came on later and I loved to go out into the garden with mom when she pulled turnips for dinner. She would sit on the ground when dad was home from work, in the shade of the grainery on the west end of the garden, with a paring knife. While she held the turnip by the top, she'd cut off the root tip, peel back the skin that protected the flesh and then cut chunks for herself and us kids. I think I liked it as much because she was there with us as much as because I liked turnips. Today I love turnips and think they have this same association in my subconscious.

Corn was a curious thing because it would get "smut", an ugly word. None of our other vegetables developed such ugly growths that ruined the whole item. Aphids and wilt and caterpillars took their toll but they didn't infiltrate the vegetable and twist it into such nasty growths.

Dad's alarm at the presence of the stuff created anxiety in me. I worried excessively no doubt about the stuff. Later in life I learned that there are people around the world who actually cook and eat the



Figure 24

[http://www.ppd.l.purdue.edu/ppdl/images/smut\\_ear.jpg](http://www.ppd.l.purdue.edu/ppdl/images/smut_ear.jpg)

stuff, savoring its flavor, because it is simply a form of fungus. I didn't appreciate it. When dad encountered it, he anxiously pulled the affected ears off the stalks and destroyed them, believing that if he left them, the smut would mature and infect neighboring plants.

Potatoes were the grandest vegetable to harvest. Late one evening in the fall after we'd about given up, he'd come home from work and announce that he figured it was about time to "dig the potatoes." Hallelujah. We were allowed to stay up late that evening, more for our personal pleasure than for any help we could provide. I didn't get that at the time. We were too small to lift much, plus we didn't really get what was supposed to be done. A potato is a potato and we would want to save all of them, but he didn't. He'd take his potato fork and us out to the east end of the garden where he had planted a bed of spuds. We'd watched these plants all summer, noting how dark the dirt turned under them when they were irrigated each week, watching them erupt and then grow from short sprouts into bushy two-foot high mounds, wondering when we would be able to harvest them. Their dark leaves were

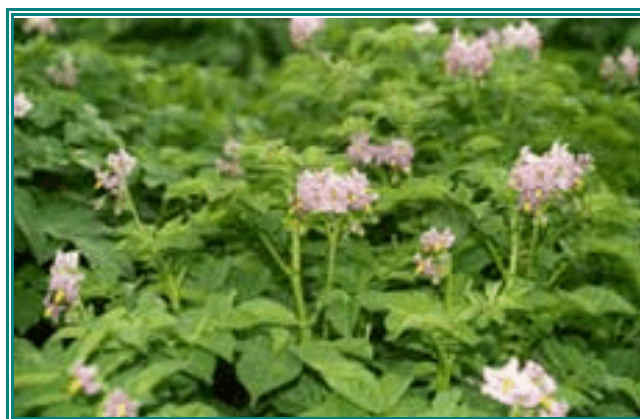


Figure 25

[http://www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/Images/LBUN-58BUZV/\\$File/faf\\_potatoflowers.jpg](http://www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/Images/LBUN-58BUZV/$File/faf_potatoflowers.jpg)

dense and tipped with a small violet-colored flower.

Dad was systematic. He started at the end of one of the outside rows, slowly and carefully placing the fork just right. Next to, but not in the middle of, the mound created by one plant. He'd step hard on the fork, driving it straight down into the soft soil that had been dry for most of a week. When the top of the fork was ground level, he reef back on the short stubby handle with both hands, pulling the tines squarely into the potato mound. As he did this, the bush would rise slowly straight into the air, then tilt slowly back and fall away from him. We stood as close as we dared, watching intently to see what the tines would bring to light as the fork handle was laid almost flat on the ground. A mass of different sized tubers still hanging on the potato bush appeared and we were overcome at their beauty and profusion. All summer we had watched and waited and hoped and now here they were. Clumps and piles of potatoes, glistening in the low light, thin skins translucent on the white flesh, eyes looking back.

He would lean forward holding the fork to the side, and would pull out the large potatoes. Digging his steel hand quickly down into the loosened dirt, hunting for others that had refused to surface. Satisfied he had found most of them, lying them in the furrow to be sacked by mom who followed, he moved to the next potato mound and repeated the exercise. Meantime us kids were allowed to rummage around in the exploded mound, hunting and collecting potatoes of any size. It didn't matter that they were the size of a marble. They were potatoes and needed to be collected we thought. The odd sensation that I had about the mass of tiny potatoes that hung from the potato bush that we held up in the air, was that they looked like the premature eggs that hung from the ovaries of chickens that we slaughtered. Small roundish things, joined in a mass by strands. Mom came along with gunny sacks and carefully picked up all of the potatoes that dad had laid in the furrows, watching for others that he'd left behind in the upside-down beds. These sacks were thrown into a wheelbarrow and pushed back to the house to the root cellar. He'd cart them one at a time down into the cellar and into the back room, throwing a bit of dirt over them to make them think they were still in the ground.

Mom made creamed new potatoes out of the small ones that us kids collected. If she was lucky, she'd have some fresh peas that she'd add to the mixture, creating a delectable dish that stood out for its fresh taste and beauty. Green peas and larger white potatoes in a white thick cream.



## Steam Tractor

The era of steam power was ending when I became a young person. Before the development of the internal combustion motors, steam was used for about any mechanical purpose you could imagine. Mr. Watts hit a home run in England with his steam engine. Tractors were built with steam powered drive systems. I saw them at the Henry Ford museum in Dearborn, Michigan with dad one day when he was in Ann Arbor. He was enraptured, a whole day looking at machines of all sizes and varieties. A remarkable variety and style of steam powered tractors. I don't remember much about them when I was a kid but they were around.

They're still around today if you look for them. This is a modern example on the old engine that has been

refurbished and is involved in a tractor pull competition. Wide metal wheels with steel chevrons for traction. The smoke from the stack is from a wood fire in the boiler. The thing is powered by fire. The heat simply converts water into steam that is directed



Figure 26 Steam powered tractor

<http://www.steamshow.org/images/2000Show/TomRunttyPulling.jpg>

into a cylinder where it moves a piston that is attached to a series of gears that could do "work." The largest steam tractor I saw in Dearborn had wheels taller than dad, three feet wide to keep it from sinking. There was 10 foot ladder to climb up into the cab. The steering mechanism was constructed of a heavy, and I mean heavy, chain that twisted the front axle on a fixed point in the center of the axle. Amazing machines. Most of them were bought up during the hunt during WW II for metals to use in the war effort. Farm equipment was cut down on the spot and hauled off to smelters so most of these machines are gone. But they were the

technology that bridged the gap between horses and internal combustion motors.

Two other vegetables that mom used occasionally grew around the privy, a fact that never bothered me. Horseradish and parsnips. I didn't care for the horseradish but found the long, narrow, tough leaves interesting to look at.

Parsnips weren't really a favorite either, but I'd eat them if mom put them on the table. She peeled and boiled the roots. When they were soft, she mashed them with a fork and mixed in an egg, salt and pepper. Then she'd take a small mass of this stuff and roll it in a dish of cracker crumbs she made by lightly rolling a

rolling pin over saltines. These soft patties were fried in a skillet until golden brown and served. It is odd that they were planted in that location and I don't understand why.



Figure 27

<http://www.waynescomputerworld.com/Dotti/vegetables.html>

### Orchard and Berry Patch

**O**n the north side of the place behind the privy there was a small orchard and a berry patch with a few strawberries and raspberries. They didn't seem to thrive and I suspect that was because the patch was too far away from the irrigation ditch to get sufficient water.

The raspberry canes had long spines that hurt, especially the ones from last year's canes because the spines had hardened into sharp thorns. There weren't enough of either kind of berry for mom to make much jam so she got additional fruit for that purpose from relatives. What I liked about the berry patch was the clumps of small yellow flowers, a weed, that looked like buttercups. I had heard -in Raggedy Anne- that if you rub a butter cup under you chin -it had to be under your chin for some reason- it would leave a yellow streak. A lot of flowers probably would, but I didn't know that so I practiced with these small round flowers, trying to get them to make a yellow streak. They were also marshmallowy and sweet in the story but in reality they were sort of nasty. I thought that the fact that they didn't make a streak was because I didn't rub the right way. I crushed them under my chin and smelled like a plant. It never occurred to me that the story might be fiction, nor did it ever occur to me that these were not buttercups anyway. But

what's a kid to do.

The orchard which was just east of the berry patch had several apple trees, an apricot tree, and a peach tree. We'd try to climb these trees but being short made it difficult because the first branches were too high off the ground. When the apples were ripening, we were limited to sampling windfalls on the ground. Dad sprayed the apples so there were not many worms but we still checked our apples carefully for defects that revealed worms boarding inside. We'd eat the apple anyway if we liked it and were careful to spit out the worm if we happened to get it.

I did not like one of the apple at all, but it turned out to be grandma's favorite. It was called a "banana apple", and was a largish apple that was yellow in color. Those traits were fine. It was the texture that I didn't like, dry and mealy, instead of juicy and crunchy. But grandma loved them. It was like chewing moist saw dust.

The orchard was far enough away from the house, out there beyond the privy, the edge of my universe, that going into it was an adventure. It definitely was not like going out to pull a turnip or a carrot, nor was it like going across the street to see Norie. It was a foreign, exotic, shadowed, distant place where we were concealed. Populated with feral cats. That made the orchard an interesting place. Cats. I always loved cats.

### Horse-Drawn Sickle Bar and Hay Rake

Old man Johnson had a field on the south side of our place. It was in alfalfa and produced a wonderful smell when he cut it with his horse-drawn sickle bar and raked it with a horse-drawn rake. The old guy here is dressed pretty warm for the task with a vest so he must have lived somewhere that was colder than Vernal. But the steel wheels with teeth, sickle bar and dog are about right.

The sickle bar is the long diagonal bar



Figure 28 Horse-drawn hay mower  
<http://cgi.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=1058728568>

that looks sort of like a comb, lying diagonally above the dog. This is the resting position. When the farmer wants to cut a swath, he moves the lever on his right which causes the bar to lift up in an arc toward the left of the picture, and finally lie down flat a few inches above and parallel with the ground. As the mower moves forward, the wheels turned and caused a series of gears attached to a small gear box in the axle to operate the sickle bar. As the hay was cut off at ground-level, it fell slowly in an arc like a wave moving across the field as the horse pulled the mower. Small animals or pheasant would bolt out of the field as the bar moved toward them.

If you look closely, you see that there is an angled blade on the left side of each of those longish teeth. That is the left half of a triangular shaped blade. When the sickle bar operates, those diamond shaped teeth move back and forth across the spaces between the long "teeth", and mow anything in their path, including birds, rabbits and snakes.

Hay doesn't just happen. It has to be made. The first step is to leave the alfalfa where it fell for a few days. If freshly-cut alfalfa is baled, it decays and molds because the

moisture content is too high and animals won't eat it. Hay can even mildew after it has been baled if it has not dried sufficiently. After a few days of drying in field, the farmer goes over the field with a hay rake. The rake turns the alfalfa upside down to expose the underside to the sun, and organizes it in rows across the field.

Another period of time passes to allow it to dry more after which it will be re-raked if it needs to be turned over. Once the alfalfa is dry enough it is called "hay" and can now be hauled to a barn for storage or baled.

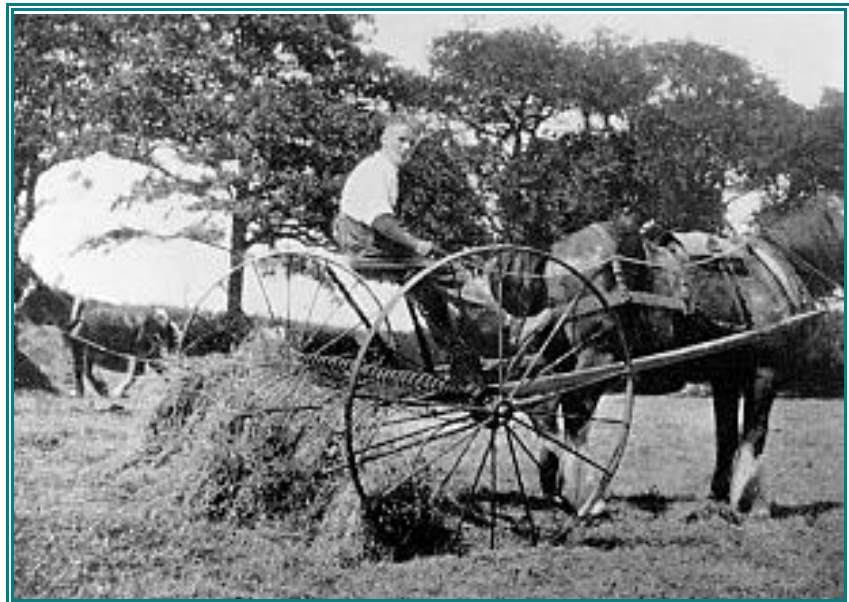


Figure 29 Horse-drawn Hay Rake

In this photo, the hay obviously wasn't baled. It is being loaded onto a hay



**Figure 30 Hay wagon**

<http://www.usda.gov/oc/photo/01di1458.jpg>

wagon. The wagon is pulled to a barn where it is pulled to a hay loft or stored in a haystack on the ground. The farm hand uses a pitchfork to pitch the dried hay from the field up onto the wagon. That's hot heavy heavy work. Pitching 30 pounds on the end of a long handle up over your head for 8-10 hours a day builds muscles and wears you out. Notice the size of this load.

The man on the top wasn't getting out of work. He had a critical job. He had to be sure that the hay was packed evenly across the wagon bed. He would direct the placement of the next pitchfork of hay to make sure that it was well distributed. If he stacked up too much on one side, it might slip off the wagon as it bounced over the inevitable ridges and ruts that were everywhere on the way to

the barn or stackyard.

When the loaded wagon was back in the barn yard, one of several kinds of hay forks was used to put the hay into the barn for storage to protect it from the rain. One type was a frame that sat on the ground outside the barn with a long lever and pulley to lift portions of a load of hay from the wagon up into a barn into a hay loft. Another arrangement was to suspend this type of hay fork from a rafter inside the barn and lower it to the wagon to lift loads up into the loft. In Volume 2 Dad tells about hauling hay on his place.

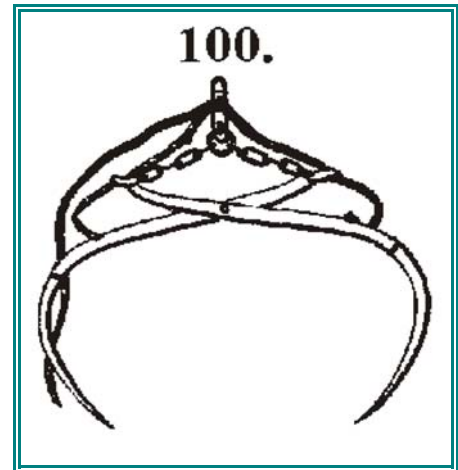


Figure 31

<http://www.history.rochester.edu/Applet/on/a/HHAYFORK.htm>

## Washing machines and Clotheslines

**M**om did the washing once a week, every Saturday. It was another major project that took most of the day because most of the work wasn't mechanized. We were fortunate however in that we had an electric washing machine. It was constructed of a big round metal tub on long legs with casters that allowed it to be moved easily. Under the tub was a motor that turned the gear box that turned the agitator inside the tub. There was a lever to turn the agitator on and off. The motor in our washing machine was electrical but some of them were gasoline engines. In Alaska the Schafermeyers who lived 5 miles outside of town used a gas powered one. Either version was an advancement over the old washboard and tub of water that women previously used to do the washing, a tiring time-consuming process.

There were no clothes dryers because there was no natural gas, and electricity was just too expensive to justify using it to dry clothes when clotheslines or wooden laundry racks didn't cost anything to use. We had 5 clotheslines which were probably 30 feet long. They were spaced about 2 1/2 feet apart with one end fastened to the north side of the grainery. The other end was secured to a horizontal bar that was nailed across the tops of a pair of rough hairy-looking juniper logs that had been set into the ground and stiffened with guy

wires on the ends and sides. The lines were set about 5 and a half feet off the ground which meant they were too high for us little kids to reach. Too bad. In Seward that wasn't a problem. Because the snow pack would build up under the lines, putting them at chin level, in which case we got to go out and hang up the wet wash and take down the dry clothes.

The order in which clothes were washed wasn't random. The controlling factor was the rinse water. The idea was to do the whites and delicates first when the rinse water was fresh. The mixed colors were done next and finally darks were done last because the dirty rinse water didn't make much difference. The purpose of the rinse water was to remove soap, although blueing was used for the whites to make them appear whiter than they otherwise would be. The water in the washing machine was easily drained out a spigot into a bucket. It was carried to the kitchen sink where ran out on the ground. The tubs were harder to empty because the water had to be lifted out one dripping bucket at a time, heavy wet work. So only the washing machine water was changed frequently.

The freshly-washed clothes were taken out of the house in a basket or big dish pan which was set on the ground beneath the clothes lines. They were lifted a piece at a time out of the basket and shaken out. A small amount of fabric was folded over the line and clipped into place with a clothes pin. These pins came in two styles. One style was the long round kind with a slot cut into it, the kind that is used to make puppets, and the other kind was the newer spring-loaded pin that had two flat wooden pieces held together by a steel spring. Mom preferred the latter, probably because they could be opened wider than the round kind, and would not break like the round kind if it was forced over a piece of cloth too tight for the slot. We liked the latter because they could be taken apart and reassembled to make little guns that would shoot peas or small rocks. When hanging the wash out to dry, you worked from the end of one line systematically down it and across the lines. By the time you filled up the five lines, the clothes on the first line were dry if there was any breeze so you could start taking them down if you needed the space. Since washing was only done once a week, there were always lots of clothes to be washed. Taking in the clothes, as the process was called, was easier than hanging because the clothes were fluffy and dry. Unless you were in a hurry to go play, it was even sort of fun to do it. The two rules were: don't let them drop on the ground and don't lose the clothes pins.

Fabric softeners today come in various scents which are pleasant, but they do not compare to the smell of freshly washed clothes that have dried in the sun

and breeze. It is an undescrivable smell that is comforting and refreshing. The loveliest moment of the week was to finish my Saturday night bath, put on clean underwear, a pair of freshly washed pajamas and climb into a bed just made up with freshly washed sheets.

## Kellog's Corn Flakes

**W**e ate a lot of oatmeal for breakfast, and lots of Cream of Wheat, but mom also bought some prepared cereals. Kellogg's Corn Flakes were one of my favorites, especially the first few bites, with milk and lots of sugar and fresh cream. The Corn Flakes box always had alluring ads on the sides, pleading for you to spend some money on a new thing that every kid just had to have. I don't recall that I ever managed to gather the necessary quarter to mail a box top in to get the premium but I longed for them. I'd sit quietly at the table, alone in my world, reading the back of the box, again and again, imagining having the toy. While Dick did the same thing with a box of Wheaties or Cheerios.

The toy in this image are obviously related to WW II. That was not uncommon as I've explained before. WW II permeated our lives in every imaginable way. The Kellogg company not-too subtly played on kid's fascination



Figure 32 <http://theimaginaryworld.com/disp45.jpg>

with military things to get them to spend a few cents on a product. So that Kellogs can make more money. Note the hook:

**"You can actually talk through this and give commands like they do in the Army!"**

Astonishing, isn't it. But it was just fine with me at the time. The smiling kids are wearing helmets to further heighten our sense of involvement with things military.



The other commercial breakfast cereal mom purchased was Nabisco Shredded Wheat. We usually ate it by crushing the bale and pouring milk and sugar over it. But grandpa Merrell preferred to eat it with hot milk, a pat of butter and salt and pepper.

### Carrying Coal and Honey Pots

**H**oney pot. Bet you've never used one. Know what it is? A chamber pot, the thing that was used in the house to pee or poop in - so you didn't have to go out to the privy and freeze you heinie off at night. In the winter. In the absolute dark or snow. Some farm homes had nice enameled pots with handles that you used to carry them. We didn't. We just used a large old tin can, the large kind. Just as effective. Smell wasn't any worse. Imagine how those things smell when they sit in your bedroom. Especially if you don't take them out every day.

Well, we had the privilege to carry them out. Part of 'learning to work.' It was messy at best and when the pot was spilled, there was hell to pay. Since all of friends and family lived the same way, there was no sense of inferiority -around them. We knew we had nothing and that city people had lots of things, but we were healthy and clean and what more does a person really need.

Our privy was a two-seater out in the backyard far enough away from the well to not contaminate it. In the summer that was OK though the smell was not a pleasant one -though not an unpleasant one to a nose used to it. Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Wards catalogs provided the toilet paper -and reading material when we closed the door. The catalogs were left on the seat to the side of the hole. While you sat, you could read to pass the time. The paper was slippery and didn't wipe too well, but to a kid who used corn husks out in a corral when an unexpected event happened, any paper was pretty good. At night when we had to relieve ourselves we used a number 10 can that sat in the corner of the bedroom. We'd empty it every day because it began to smell foul quickly.



**Figure 33 Chamber Pot**

### Sunday School without Shoes

There is an event that sheds some light on this business of town vs. country, on this painful sense of inferiority that we had out there on the farms. In the country during the summer we didn't wear shoes all the time. I don't know whether city kids did either but that wasn't important. As far as I was concerned, they did. One day I lost one of my shoes somewhere out there in the yard or across the road. We often our shoes off to wade in the purple clay marsh to investigate the pools of blackish-purple water that the dairy cows walked through, creating small tubes of black water that might hold something interesting. We'd wade and reach down into the black water, feeling for frogs or tad poles or anything. We also waded in the irrigation canal or pond, chasing frogs or water snakes. Shoes were in the way so were set aside. And forgotten.

On this particular day, we lost our sense of time and location and when we went home, I didn't both of my shoes. That was it. Mom had had it. She reminded me that she had told us a dozen times to watch where we put our shoes and to be sure to bring them home because we didn't have money to buy new shoes just because a kid was lazy. I was told that I had to go back and look again, harder, and that if I didn't find it there would be severe punishment. I would have to go to Sunday School the next day without shoes. I went outside and I hunted earnestly everywhere. Walking again and again where I thought I'd walked, looking intently for the missing shoe. Tears came, hot and burning, so I could see well. Because I knew. I knew what was going to happen. Her punishments were sure and when the spell was cast, the deed was done as sure as the sun setting in the west each day.

I finally went home without my shoe, knowing that I would also get into trouble if I was out too long, even if I did find the shoe. You couldn't win. So I had my dinner, my Saturday night bath, and went to bed in agony, dreading getting up in the morning. In the morning I got up and had my breakfast, wishing there were some way to get really sick really fast, some way to get out of going to church in town without shoes. I was mortified. But there was no sickness or way to skip. Particularly since mom was going to teach me a lesson by humiliating me. She enjoyed it.

We went to church. I was embarrassed beyond words. Everyone else had shoes on, but I had to walk into the foyer and into the chapel with bare feet. I felt like everyone staring at me. Because I didn't have any shoes. There were a few pointed comments and observations, but it was more the unspoken sneer that bothered me. Little kids are mean to each other and this situation played on the

idea of the "haves" and the "have-nots", the gap between town and farm.

## Rural Electrification

You get the flavor of that life style. Simple, unadorned farm life. Under the tail end of the Great Depression. One of the technological changes that was overtaking rural America was "electrification". The process went on in some regions for decades after I left. While I was a kid in elementary school in Utah, i.e. about 1950, I vividly remember learning about something called the "TVA". I'd never encountered acronyms before so part of my response to "TVA" was fascination with the fact that an abbreviation made of letters could stand for something else, a complete name, in this case, the "Tennessee Valley Authority".

We were told -this is the really important thing- that the TVA was an example of "rural electrification" of America. I understood what "America" was and I understood "electricity" because we had it in our house, though the grainery didn't. I was surprised that anybody, i.e. "The government", cared about extending this miracle to "All" of America.

The concept of "government" was a new one. I could not really comprehend the notion of any kind of government, let alone the federal government. But I was impressed that it would actually care enough about me and my relatives to do this sort of thing. That was a powerful introduction to the concept of "government." I really didn't understand how it was able to do wonderful things for "people" but accepted what I was told. That was a far cry from the cynical view of politics I have today - justified it turns out.

I suppose it is because of this sort of introduction to the best of the federal government at an early age, that I still have faith in the system - against evidence to the contrary. I can't tell whether I'm a democrat or a republican.



Figure 34 TVA Dam  
[http://www.americaslibrary.gov/pages/es\\_tn\\_tva\\_1\\_e.html](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/pages/es_tn_tva_1_e.html)

That's why I declare myself an independent. Groups of any kind make me nervous. Exclusionary and superior to outsiders.

## Erosion and Brainwashing

**I**t was in 1951 that Mrs. Schofield gave me this particular book. I was reading everything in sight and was bored and hungry for a reading challenge. I was such a good reader that she'd assign me to take a kid out in the hallway with chairs and a book so I could coach him. It embarrassed me that he needed help, not that I felt superior. I just felt bad for him and wished he'd just pay a little attention remembering the shapes of the letters and their sounds. During reading period while the other kids were struggling to read aloud for her, I was sneaking peeks inside my desk at anything else to look at, art, anything. Because it was so tiring to hear the kids made the same silly mistakes that Mrs. Schofield patiently corrected. The woman was a saint.

Mrs. Schofield saw my boredom and as she cast about for something for me to do, she decided to give me what I now understand to be a "desk copy" of a new book she must have been dropped off by a salesman in the hopes she would like it and buy it for the school. At the time I just knew it was the only copy she had so to be careful with it. Ms. Schofield had shown us how to open a new book so that we didn't break the spine. I did that. Laying it on the desk on the spine, holding all of the pages vertically, carefully laying the front and back covers on the desk, running a finger down the spine to loosen the joint on each cover, repeating that action with bunches of 5 or 6 pages alternating the back and the front until all pages had been creased.

Then I started to read. The concept of government involvement in farm life came through somehow. This time it came across as both beneficial as well as intrusive. It was a depressing book and I don't know exactly why. One thing that was depressing was the new concept of erosion. I'd never heard the word before. Sort of an ugly sound. It made me worry about how my relatives plowed their furrows on the hills in their fields. Erosion. A new word accompanied by drawings of the destruction of whole fields where water had eaten away the dirt, making gullies too wide for tractors to cross, a young sad boy looking at the devastation.

The book gave an accurate representation of how furrows ought to circle hills in horizontal lines to prevent water from flooding down and carrying the soil away. I looked at my relatives' fields and could see that they weren't really doing it "right". So I was troubled. I loved my family and was defensive of them. Yet

the scientific presentation of facts was equally compelling. I was bothered and depressed about the prospect of my uncles' fields being ruined and their families losing their livelihood. The consolation was that most of their fields were generally flat.

That was my first contact with crusading text books wherein do-gooders proselyte the young to a new vision of the world. Not necessarily accurately or fairly. But effectively. That brain-washing bugs me. Educators in particular bug the heck out of me because they have taken to themselves the role that belongs solely to parents: the inculcation of values and they reject parental involvement. Of course, they can get away with it because most parents have abdicated the responsibility. But it still bugs me.

### **"Everyone has a job."**

**A**nother example of the influence of the depression on our view of the universe is Grandma Merrill's view of employment. She had 12 children, 11 of whom made it to adulthood, a miracle of sorts in those days. I remember her talking to one or another family member after not having spoken with them for some period of time. After the initial civilities were passed, she said with great satisfaction "Everyone has a job." It didn't matter what the job was, cleaning out stables was as important to her view of life as being a bank president. Everyone had jobs, what a thrill, so everyone had income so no one was reliant of government or church welfare for help. Isn't that an interesting point of view? Can you feel how she felt? We all have jobs today and can change them at will. Just look in the Employment Classifieds each Sunday. Thousands of jobs begging for bodies to fill them.

I thought her excitement was sort of extreme. Of course everyone had jobs. I didn't grasp at the time that her statement was a reflection of the difficult times they went through in the late 20's and 30's. I understand today with tears in my eyes. Those were terrible years to raise a family I guess. My heart clutches today when I replay the memory her poignant, excited statement, "Everyone has a job!" Wow. What did I do to deserve the extravagance I have enjoyed.

## View Master

**M**an alive, this thing was magic. The pictures were three dimensional though I didn't know the term. The images looked like "real", standing there in front of your eyes in this little plastic things. I felt like I could walk out into them. Wheels of cardboard with tiny colored pictures placed evenly around the outside. I must have been 7 when I got one for Christmas with some reels. They were simply the newest version of the devices that had been produced years before to create that 3-D image.

Of the dozen or so reels I collected before moving to Seward, the one I remember best is the one about Alaska. That was where dad was, that was where mom and dad got married. The images were beautiful. A view from the stern of a steamer on the ocean was dramatic. Wide white wake against a stormy gray storm sky. And a thunderbird totem.. Severe and threatening it was, staring back at me, in its bright colors and precisely carved geometry.

## Range Ryder

**I**n our tiny universe of two acres, there was a host of cowboys watching over us. They influenced our world, how we played, what we wanted to buy, what we dreamed of doing. One of these



Figure 35 <http://theimaginaryworld.com/pre224.jpg>



Figure 36 Range Ryder  
<http://www.fiftiesweb.com/western.htm>

cowboys is unfamiliar to you, Range Ryder, but he was a live and kicking out there on the Ashton Place when I was a kid. He doesn't look too tough here, tending to a pair of irresistible kittens. I don't know if his name is associated with the Red Ryder BB guns but it may have been.

Note the familiar things in this image that reflect farm life. The hay. The milk bucket. The leather gloves. The hat. The kittens. Familiar like he was out in Grandpa Merrell's place.

### John and Nora Watkins

John and Nora lived in a white house across the road from us. They were more like grandparents than neighbors. I trusted them and liked them and felt welcomed when I visited. Our dusty driveways were straight across from each other so it was a quick trip to go visit them. The rule was "Stop, stand still, and look carefully both ways before crossing." If mom saw us just run across without stopping and looking, there would be hell to pay later. No slack was granted for excitement or kid-ness. The irrigation canal also ran straight along our properties, on the south side of the drives, crossing under the road through a culvert. The water flowed east from a large canal past the end of John's property, one with a concrete and steel headgate. We'd go visit them when we were bored. Nora would offer us a cookie sometimes but she knew that mom didn't want us "to spoil our appetites" so didn't do that without permission. John usually wasn't in the house because he was out taking care of his hay and cattle.

It was a nice country house, narrow and tall, the first place I remember the nice smell of tobacco and coffee. Wonderful comfortable smells really. In retrospect it is interesting to note that in spite of its smallness and ruralness, the house stoutly maintained a formality and deference to social etiquette that you would not expect to find. In those days all houses had a front porch with an overhanging roof line so that guests at the door would be spared rain or snow while they waited for the door to be answered. This house was no different. But the front door was never used by us. We used the door on the south side of the house out by the kitchen in the back yard. That's where friends and relatives went when they visited. Important visitors like a pastor or politician would stand at the front door and rap sharply and wait for it to be answered by Nora, who stood there nervously drying her freshly washed hands on a dish towel while she dabbed at her hair-netted hair to be more presentable to the formal visitor - who probably didn't care about how she looked but his point of view was of no interest to her.

The reason the front door wasn't used was because it opened into the parlor, a real old-fashioned parlor -"parler" is the french word for "to talk"- where adults would sit around and be formal and chew the fat. It was not a comfortable room, a room where you'd make yourself to home. Nope, it was a place for formality. Along the wall opposite the front door sat a black horsehair couch covered with real horse hair because it was covered by a real horse hide. The hair felt strange, sort of slippery. Like you needed a saddle. Over the front door hung a stuffed buffalo head, the first one I ever saw. Its eyes were the most interesting part because they looked real. I'd never seen glass eyes before and was impressed at their verisimilitude. Sort of scary really. When I heard about men wearing glass eyes, I thought about the buffalo eyes. We could see into the parlor from the kitchen but were not allowed to go into it. Just looked through the kitchen door and wondered at what we saw. The idea of not being allowed to go in wasn't bothersome. Our own living and dining rooms were off-limits, too, though we would venture into them for specific purposes, i.e. assignments from mom. Mom's reason for keeping us out of the rooms was doubtless cleanliness. If we were in there, there would be a mess to clean up and she didn't want to have to do any more work than necessary so she kept us out of those two rooms. We spent our time in the house in two rooms, our own bedroom and the kitchen. Looking back I see that I had no sense of being denied space, of being confined, yet I was. Two small rooms isn't much space to play in so we spent a great deal of time outside in the yard.

### Hand-Rolled Bull Durham Cigarettes

I've got to tell you about homemade cigarettes, a specialty of Ol' John Watkins, my first

encounter with sin and iniquity. Pretty fascinating after all. We were allowed to call John and Nora by their first names, an odd bit of egalitarianism that didn't quite match mom's stern formality in other settings, but that was OK with me.

Above all else, John was a cowboy, a dyed in the wool, homegrown, bowlegged, crusty, kind, old cowboy. Always in Levi shirt and pants, bowlegged like he could just slide over a horse. With cowboy boots, sometimes covered with you know what from the corral. A cowboy hat on his head, and a smile on his face. A nice man. Smelling pungently of horses, hay and tobacco.



His left shirt pocket bulged. Hanging out from under the buttoned flap was a short yellow string with a white medallion on the end the size of a quarter. Always. That was as much a part of John as his levis, boots and hat. The bulge was caused by one of the packages you see here, a Bull Durham cloth sack filled with chopped tobacco, marketed in precisely this configuration. The red paper strap around each sack was a tax seal and the orange package that was slipped under the tax seal held white cigarette papers.

When John figured it was time to light up, he'd find himself a place to sit or a fence to lean up against. This was a major production, requiring undivided attention, lest a wind or shake undo his handiwork. He'd unbutton his left shirt pocket with his left hand and pull out the pouch. From the orange pad he'd separate one cigarette paper and return the orange pad to its place under the red seal. Then he'd work the mouth of the pouch open a bit, not all the way open. While he held the paper carefully between his middle finger and thumb, wrapped around his index finger to make an open trough, he'd carefully sprinkle tobacco from the pouch with his right hand from one end to the other. Once he was satisfied with the quantity of tobacco in the paper, he'd hold the pouch up to his mouth. He'd take one of the yellow strings in his yellow teeth and pull the pouch away from his mouth to tighten it, and repeat the process with the other string. After the mouth of the pouch was tightly sealed, he'd reach over his chest and put the pouch back in his shirt pocket.

All this time he was carefully holding the cupped paper in his left hand, not spilling a fleck of tobacco. Now he'd take the paper on both ends and arrange the tobacco smoothly from end to end by tapping it with his right index finger to evenly distribute it. When he was satisfied, he'd run his tongue along the full length of one side of the paper and fold it over the tobacco and press the other dry side down on the wet edge. They glued together. Then he'd sort of tap one end of the thing against his thumb to compact the tobacco flakes so they didn't fall out. Now was the time to light it. He'd fumble in his pocket shirt for a safety match, lift his right leg and with a vigorous flourish quickly rub the match head on



Figure 37 Bull Durham pouch and cigarette papers under tax seal

his levis from his hip to his knee at which point it would ignite. I marveled at that technique wondering if he'd ever burn himself but he never did. Then he's put it to the cigarette, light it, start breathing smoke and be contented. Breathing smoke from a leaf fire seemed uninviting but I was intrigued by the ritual. To this day, I have still not tried to smoke a cigarette. Mom was effective.

There may have been other brands of tobacco marketed for the do-it-yourselfers but the only one I was aware of was Bull Durham. These ad were all over the place, the ends of barns, sign posts and so on.



Figure 38 Bull Durham Ad

<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/80/aaa/printlit/Q0039/Q0039-25-72dpi.jpeg>

### Nora and the Coffee Brown Eggs

Nora had a flock of chickens that she tended for fun and profit, the profit coming mostly from the eggs, though she'd also sell a fryer if asked. She had a large enough flock that there were several dozen surplus eggs a week. Ladies from town would come out to her place to get them. Some women insisted on the brown ones. There were people -as there apparently are today- who believed that there was a tangible difference between white eggs and brown eggs. I never understood what this difference was, but being a mere kid who didn't understand many things anyway, I assumed that the problem in not understanding was simply a defect in my own understanding. Nor did I know which kind of chicken lays which color of egg but she had both kinds, i.e. Rhode Island Reds, or whatever was out there. Norie even had guinea fowl, the darndest things. They mixed well with real chickens but they were so funny looking, with their dark mottled plumage that I never quite got used to them.

Before Nora would put together her dozens of eggs, she would carefully "candle" them. This is simply a process of shining a light through the eggs in a dark room to illuminate the shape of things inside the egg. The shape of the yolk was diagnostic and if there was something wrong with the egg, i.e. it was spoiled, she could tell it and would discard the egg rather than sell it and lose a customer.

There was always more demand for her brown eggs than there were brown eggs. It wouldn't do to have the city lady appear for a dozen brown eggs and find only 10. These ladies would not accept white eggs in lieu because their cake recipes called for BROWN eggs. So Nora, being a practical shrewd operator would give nature a hand. She had figured out through taste tests that a white egg tasted just like a brown egg. They mixed in recipes just like brown eggs, and so on. So when she was short a few brown eggs, she would do a sort of Easter Egg Dye job on enough whites to fill up her dozens. She'd sit them in a pot of coffee for 4 or 5 minutes until they had a nice tannish color. Then humming to herself, she'd rinse them in clear water to remove the smell of coffee, dry them carefully and finish out her dozens. I don't know that she ever got complaints from the city ladies about being given counterfeit browns.



Figure 39 Candling an egg

### Cream separator

The funnest time to visit the Watkins was in the morning or evening just after John had milked his cows. By hand. After he had finished milking, he's carry the milk pails back to the kitchen which was on the back of the house. He'd strain the milk through cheese cloth if he wanted to help Norie that morning. This process did nothing except strain out the large pieces of dirt and straw that had fallen into the bucket in spite of the milker's careful handling of the milk and the cow.

In this photo the lady looks like Nora. The milk in the bucket has already been strained through a cloth and now is being poured through a metal funnel to get it into the bottle. After the straining was done, the milk was not processed further. It was ready to drink as it was. Period. Even refrigeration was not common and pasteurization was not practiced on farms. We liked drinking the milk straight from the cow. We'd hand the milker a clean cup and he'd fill it with milk and hand it back.



Figure 40 Straining milk into a bottle  
<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query>

John and Nora had enough milk to make it worthwhile to buy a cream separator. It was not electrically powered so if we arrived at the right time, Nora would let us turn the crank that processed the milk. The process always fascinated me. A bucket of milk was poured into the wide reservoir on top. As the crank was turned, the milk flowed down into the works where the cream was separated from the plain milk, apparently in a centrifuge. To my mind milk and cream were both pretty much the same thing so the fact that this machine could separate them was sort of a miracle. I was a simple kid, always being impressed at the bits of magic around me.

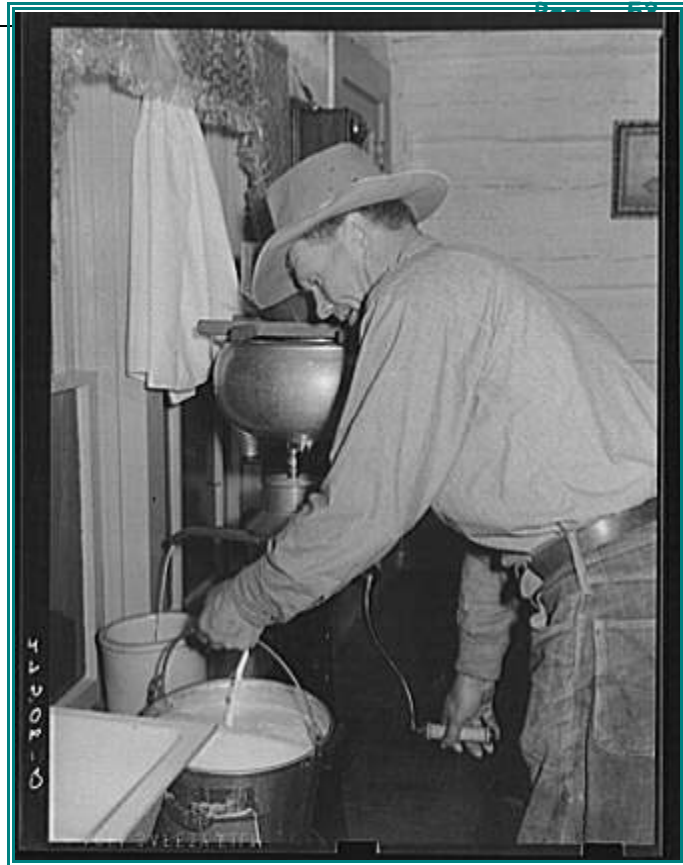


Figure 41 Cowhand operating cream separator  
<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query>

Turning the crank required minimal strength if you didn't push too hard, and produced a wonderful whirring grinding sound. As the milk was separated, the cream flowed in a tiny trickle out one tube and the milk flowed out another. In this photo the large bucket in the front of the machine collected the separated milk. The white crock on the left catches the cream.

## Burma Shave

One of the funnest things that has disappeared from the side of the road is the Burma Shave signs. We watched for them during the long boring trips we took. Mom would point out the first sign when she saw it from the front seat, after which we'd read them out loud as we reached each one.

The company came up with the idea of creating jingles about their products and then placing them along side the roads of the country. The verses were 6 lines long so six different signs were created, with a single line on each. These signs

were stuck into the ground like political signs about a quarter mile apart. So when you drove along the road, you'd see the first sign and know you were in for five more signs. We loved to read them. Here are a few of the verses from <http://www.fiftiesweb.com/burma1.htm> . Imagine you have been riding for an hour in the car and are reading them one line at a time as you drive down the road:

<p>The ladies Take one whiff And purr-- It's no wonder Men prefer Burma-Shave Lotion</p>	<p>Use Burma-Shave In tube Or jar Then follow up With our new star Burma-Shave Lotion</p>	<p>He tried To cross As fast train neared Death didn't draft him He volunteered Burma-Shave</p>
<p>The whale Put Jonah Down the hatch But coughed him up Because he scratched Burma-Shave</p>	<p>To kiss A mug That's like a cactus Takes more nerve Than it does practice Burma-Shave</p>	<p>If your peach Keeps out Of reach Better practice What we preach Burma-Shave</p>

## Cockleburs and Burdock Burrs

Cockleburs grew freely in the untended part of pastures and yards, along fence lines and along ditches. Mid-summer the 3 foot tall plants were green and soft, with two kinds of flowers on each, male and female. The hot dry days of July and August and September cured these plants. They died and their fruits became nasty inch-long, porcupine seeds that fell to the ground. Barefootedness became hazardous because the spines were like short nails. The worst spines were the two that stuck out of the narrow flower-end. Spikes that would dig into anything soft.

This kind of burr clung to anything that had hair, like dogs, cats or cattle. Chickens and snakes were immune. An occasional burr wasn't a problem to a creature unless it became lodged in the shoulder area between the front leg and chest. Those had to be cut out with scissors because they caused ulcers in the poor animals.

Burdock burrs were as pesky because they grew equally well in the hot dry climate. The difference between them was profound however because the burdock never developed the iron-hard, spiny seed pod. The short hairs fringing these burrs remained like soft hair, each having a hook that grasped hair or fabric. They pulled easily off the plant and buried themselves in a cat's fur, making a ball that was impossible to remove except with scissors.

Burdock burrs were a ready-made erector set. They could be hung together like velcro fasteners to form long strings or balls. Their size was too large to make fine details but they were fun to play



Figure 42

<http://www.desertusa.com/mag00/dec/papr/bur.html>



Figure 43

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/teacherlink/content/science/microscope/UVa%20QX3%20Files/biology/Still%20shots%20%20powerpoint/Seeds/burdock%20bur.jp>

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with, sitting in the hot sun, listless, whiling away the time, wondering why these plants produced burrs.

### Scotch Thistle

Fence lines were like experimental gardens, sources for a wide variety of plants that didn't survive out in the pastures, gardens and alfalfa fields, including the Scotch Thistle. The name intrigued me. Why was it called "Scotch"? My mom was part Scotch. Was that the same "Scotch"? I never heard an answer to my question. But I loved the plant. Mom and dad didn't because it was noxious weed to them, a source of work and irritation. It was a hazard to livestock as well because it had hasty thorns.



Figure 44 <http://www.ovma.on.ca/Weeds/scotch.htm>

To me, it was a lovely flower. The swollen buds were lined with geometrically perfect rows of short spines. The bud erupted and produced a dense purplish tuft of fine hairlike strands that crowned the bulb. Its loveliness wasn't matched by its nature. Touch the thing and you'd discover that the entire plant was armed with hard sharp spines, waiting to stab.

The oddest thing about these deceptive plants was that horses loved to eat the flowers. How they could manage that without injuring their mouths was a mystery. I couldn't even pick the flower without hurting my fingers.