

## **The Dale Marlo Stucky Story 1919 -**

Dale Marlo Stucky was born September 7, 1919, in Judith Basin County, Montana, to Daniel J. and Anna Stucky. His older brother, Milo, was 7 and younger brother, Dean, would join the family three years later, in 1922.

That each son was born in a different state testifies to the fact that Dan and Anna's family, along with a group of Anna's relatives, led a fourteen-year nomadic-like lifestyle. Milo, born at Moundridge, Kansas, was almost three when Dan, with the help of an auctioneer, sold his mercantile store and its contents and joined his in-laws on their trek to Montana and the section of virgin farm land located 9 miles north of Stanford they had purchased for \$45.00 per acre. Dale was born on this Montana homestead. Three years later, Dan and Anna moved to Monroe, Washington, where Dean was born. Eventually, Dan and Anna decided to part company with Anna's relatives and return to Kansas. One contributing factor in their decision, rumor has it, was that they were concerned about the potential undesirable influences of a "worldly" Washington milieu on their growing sons.

By the summer of 1929 Dan and Anna's family had returned to their Mennonite roots in the Moundridge area where Dan and Anna lived for the remainder of their lives.

Because he lived in three locations as a youngster, Dad drew on a variety of childhood memories, from picking and eating blackberries while seated on a tree stump on the Montana farm to accompanying his mother and older brother on berry-picking forays where he, while rounding a berry bush, quite unexpectedly, came face to face with a young bear who was also snacking. Fortunately, the bear was as surprised and frightened as Dad. Each turned-tail and headed for its respective mother.

Dad was also fond of showing us kids a scar on the middle finger of his left hand, the result of an accident which occurred while he steadied pieces of wood for his dad who was chopping kindling.

One of his favorite stories from this period revolved around his family's return journey from Montana to Kansas. That summer of 1929, Dan and Anna loaded up their Graham-Paige auto with their personal belongings and three sons and drove southeast. As they approached the town of Kaycee, Wyoming, a transmission gear failed, forcing the family to spend several days at a sheep-herder's cabin (hardly that day's equivalent to a Best Western or Motel 8) while Dan attempted to find a replacement gear. After three days of fruitless search, Dan ingeniously took apart and re-assembled the transmission minus reverse gear and the family resumed its trip. Dad liked to tell that story mostly because it revealed his dad's determination and ingenuity in overcoming obstacles, a quality that he and his brothers came to possess.

Stories from Elyria days included playing with friends in, on and around grain elevators and before the beginning of the school day trapping skunks whose hides he would sell to Sears and Roebuck for ten cents. Due to the press of time, he would occasionally disobey his mother's standing order to bathe and change clothes before going to school. He related to us that on those

occasions his teachers, quickly sensing his presence, would order him to go home to do what his mother had already instructed him to do.

Dad attended a one-room country school and, although he did not talk much about it, excelled academically. He was typically at the top of his class. Dad's parents, Dan and Anna, instilled in him and his two brothers a love for learning. Dan often remarked that because he had read his sons' textbooks as each progressed through college he felt as if he had attained three baccalaureate degrees.

Dad commuted to high school in McPherson where he began to play organized sports—basketball and football.

After high school graduation, Dad commuted to McPherson College where he continued to play football. As a Mennonite young man interested in furthering his education, Bethel College in North Newton was an obvious option. But Bethel did not recruit Dad and, lacking the funds to live on campus, McPherson won out on the basis of being a shorter commute. It's probably safe to say that the KCAC's football balance of power was not seriously affected by Dad's decision to attend rival McPherson. Dad never claimed to be a great football player. In fact he maintained that the only reason he played fullback for the Bulldogs was that a good buddy of his, who was an accomplished player, was recruited by the McPherson College football coach. His buddy agreed to come to McPherson and play football, but only if his friend, Dale, would play, making Dad an early participant in one of those sports package deals. It was while playing football that he suffered damage to his right hip, the consequences of which would cause him considerable trouble and pain in later years.

Although he enjoyed playing football and continued to have an interest in playing and watching sports the rest of his life, Dad's primary interests at McPherson College were intellectual and, in time, Vena Flory. According to an article in the Class of '41's 50th Class Reunion booklet, Mom and Dad consider it a miracle that they ever met. According to Dad, Mom was “in-crowd, on-campus Brethern [i.e. insider], interested primarily in the performing arts...” while he was “off-campus, living in the country, commuting, sack-lunch Mennonite [i.e. outsider] whose interests were in history, debate, journalism, football, basketball and school politics.”

An early, if not initial intended date with Mom occurred during Dad's run for Student Council President. Don Newkirk, Dad's campaign manager (and later, fellow attorney and partner at Fleeson, Gooing, Coulson & Kitch) devised a strategy whereby Dad would initiate a date with several co-eds, each of whom represented a campus constituency. As fate would have it, one of those selected was Vena Flory. Mom, who, apparently, was not quite the naïve co-ed Dad and Don believed her to be, saw through the ruse and plotted revenge with her twin sister, Vera. At the appointed time, Vera, not Vena, appeared at the dorm front desk. By all accounts Dad, non the wiser, did have that date with Vera although Vera did have to maneuver so that Dad would not spot the callus under the left side of her chin, the result of years of violin playing.

In spite of this inauspicious beginning, Mom and Dad were going steady by the time they graduated from McPherson College in 1941.

Upon graduation, Dad began his studies at the University of Chicago Law School. After 1 ½ years at Chicago, Mom and Dad were married, in June, 1943, in Lone Star, Kansas, a union which would last for 59 years. Three weeks after marrying, Vena, Dad received his notice of induction and, as a conscientious objector, he, accompanied by Mom, reported to a Civilian Public Service camp in Terry, Montana.

Upon completion of his alternative service obligation, Dad returned to Chicago, this time with Mom, and resumed his studies. He thrived in that Socratic community, served as editor of the law review and graduated cum laude in 1945. In March of that year Wilbur Katz, dean of the University of Chicago Law school, wrote a letter to an alumnus on Dad's behalf. It reads as follows:

Mr. Paul R. Kitch  
Brooks & Fleeson  
First National Bank Building, Suite 801  
Wichita, Kansas

Dear Kitch:

This will introduce Dale M. Stucky who will be graduating next June, almost certainly at the top of his class. He has not yet decided whether he wishes to practice in a large city or a smaller community and I have suggested that some of our alumni would be willing to talk with him.

He comes from a Mennonite community in western Kansas and had a very brilliant record at McPherson College. He has led his class consistently while in the Law school and has done excellent work for our Law Review.

I hope you will be willing to help him in his consideration of different types of law practice.

With warm regards,  
Sincerely yours,

Wilbur G. Katz

Paul Kitch did take an interest in this prospective young Mennonite lawyer to-be and, in fact, went to bat for Dad when it became apparent that some attorneys in the McPherson area, upon hearing that Dad intended to take the Kansas bar exam, planned to block him from doing so on the basis that, as a conscientious objector, he was not of good moral character. In a April 27, 1945 letter to Dad, Paul Kitch writes "Since receiving your last letter I have again discussed your case with [Judge] Lilleston, and he advises me that you will not only be permitted to take the Bar examination, but that upon your successful completion thereof there will be no objection to your admission to the Bar." Paul Kitch goes on to advise Dad that "a man of your educational background would be better off in a town the size of Wichita in preference to McPherson or Newton." Paul Kitch then suggested that if he were interested in practicing in a larger town, Brooks & Fleeson could offer him a position. He ends the letter with this offer: "Without

definitely talking to you it is a bit difficult to suggest any starting salary. As you will realize after having been in the practice for several years, your first six months in a law office will not be of any particular value to the firm. Nevertheless, the firm will want to pay you enough to support yourself and wife. I would tentatively suggest \$150.00 a month.” The deal was struck. Mom and Dad moved to Wichita and Dad began his 50-plus year association with what would evolve into Fleeson, Gooing, Coulson & Kitch.

Starting in 1947, Mom and Dad began raising a family which over a period of 6 1/2 years grew to include two boys and two girls. These days it is not uncommon if not expected for the father-to-be to participate in his child’s delivery. In those days, the prospective dad’s place—and only place--was in the waiting room. Dad saw no reason that he should be denied a presence in the delivery room and with each pending birth argued and appealed his case all the way to the top of the hospital administration. He never gained admission to the delivery room but we’re sure it was not for lack of forcefully stating his case.

In spite of his busy professional life, Dad found ways to spend quality time with his family. He spent several summers helping coach his sons’ baseball teams. He also helped form and lead a YMCA-sponsored father-son Indian Guides tribe. Dad also faithfully attended his daughters’ ballet recitals and even good-naturedly agreed to appear on stage with his family in a Stucky family ballet recital special.

We kids have fond memories of visiting Dad’s office. We entered a wire cage elevator on the 1st floor of the 1st National Bank Building, the elevator attendant would turn the lever and we were whisked to the 9th floor. Upon exiting the elevator, one of the first things we noticed was a pair of polished brass spittoons flanking the elevator door. The firm’s offices smelled of smoke, old books and leather. While Dad finished up his work we explored the aisles, lost one another in the nooks and crannies and otherwise discretely amuse ourselves until Dad was ready to go. We would retrace our path to the 1st floor where Dad led us out of the bank, stopping at the concessionaire stand to buy each of us a box of Nibs black licorice.

Dad took his work seriously and spent many long days at the office. But he also made sure that his children were exposed to a grounding in moral values via regular family church attendance, “Socratic” discussions around the dinner table and by the personal examples set by him and Mom. We knew that he knew what was going on in our lives, that he had given us a rather long tether and was not inclined to micro manage us but stood willing and able to intervene in the event that we began to teeter on the edge. Although he believed in teaching by example, Dad did have the good judgment to hire Sgt. Stackley to teach his children to drive rather than to personally perform that chore as anyone who has experienced a stop-on-green-go-on-red car ride with Dad at the wheel can appreciate.

Shortly after their arrival in Wichita, Mom and Dad joined Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, a newly-established congregation comprised mainly of young Mennonite couples who had migrated from rural areas or small towns. One important ritual among this group during the late 1940’s was brick cleaning. The trustees had purchased 50,000 paving bricks to be used as the interior structure of this structure in which we sit. The bricks, covered with tar, required cleaning.

These brick-cleaning “bees” were typically accompanied by covered dish meals and fellowship. Through the years, Dad assumed several church leadership positions and, as his children reached high-school age, began to teach Sunday school—not surprisingly in his Socratic style. His classes were interesting and challenging to young people who at times may have taken for granted or unthinkingly accepted lessons taught them by parents or Sunday school teachers.

As a Mennonite who was keenly engaged in the world around him, Dad always struggled to reconcile political realities with his own religious convictions. Although he rarely expressed religious convictions during Sunday school or other discussions in support of his political positions, there was never any doubt that religious convictions were paramount in his mind and heart.

Family vacation time was important to Dad. One Christmas, in the early ‘50’s, at a time before family camping was in vogue, he presented his family with a canvas umbrella tent with steel poles, a “white-gas” cook stove, cooking utensils, sleeping bags and assorted other gear he had purchased at the Coleman store. From that time forward for ten or so years the Dale Stucky family spent two weeks every summer camping in and exploring, it seemed, every National Park and Forest west of Kansas. He and Mom honed the set-up and take down of camp to a fine science. We each had a job to do. Dad made sure that we finished supper in time to attend any near-by scheduled ranger talks. It seems incredible today that two adults and four kids were able to stuff themselves into sleeping bags in an 8’ by 8’ tent. We braved the elements—rain or shine—although toward the end of one camping trip when, after several hours of hard rain, water began streaming in through the tent flap, we did call it quits a little early, quickly threw our soggy gear into the car trunk and sought the shelter of a motel. With those camping trips, Mom and Dad instilled in us children a love of and reverence for God’s physical creation.

Dad was also willing to share his love of the outdoors with others outside his immediate family. We camped with the Crills, Dannelleys, Hieberts, Newkirks and DeCourseys—couples Mom and Dad knew from McPherson College days—and their families. This group’s numerous gatherings also included Twelfth Night celebrations complete with special prize-stuffed cake and the crowning of a Twelfth Night King and Queen. One summer he and Mom, together with Clarence and Frieda Unrau, accompanied a group of Lorraine Avenue high schoolers on a two-week mission trip to the Lame Deer Cheyenne community living on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Montana and to an Idaho Mennonite church camp.

As they reached college age, Dad encouraged his children to pursue a liberal arts education. Although he did not push any particular school, he gained satisfaction from the fact each of his sons and daughters chose to begin their post high school education at Bethel College, a Mennonite-affiliated liberal arts college located in North New Kansas.

Dad was a serious historian and viewed, as an important parental role, the imparting of history—particularly his own family history—to his children. To that end, nearly every Sunday afternoon he conducted a history lesson by driving us north on US Highway 81 to Moundridge and surrounding communities to visit his parents and other relatives. Each trip was a lesson in ancestry and family relationships. At an early age we began to understand the difference between a second cousin and a first cousin once removed. But to Dad, family history was much more than

family trees or ancestral lines of descent. The essence was people in their infinite manifestations.

Mom and Dad traveled extensively. One of their more memorable trips occurred in 1974 when they lead a group of Mennonites on a tour of western Russia, Switzerland and several other European countries. They re-traced their ancestors' steps in a centennial celebration of Mennonite emigrations beginning in Russia and ending in the plains of central Kansas. Dad took special pride in the fact that one of his ancestors, Elder Jacob Stucky, convinced his congregation to leave their homes in the Ukraine and follow him to new homesteads near Moundridge, Kansas, where yesterday Dad joined Elder Jacob and his descendents, including Dad's parents and brothers.

Through the years Mom and Dad have hosted innumerable celebrations at their house: social gatherings with their friends and their children's friends, extended family get-togethers, holiday celebrations, an occasional political rally, after-symphony and musical theater suppers and post-WSU basketball game huddles where they and other Shocker fans, between bites of apples and cheese, second-guessed the coach's strategy.

Appropriately, their house is filled, again, this week with family gathered to celebrate Dad's life. We thank you for participating in this celebration and for the bountiful blessings you have bestowed upon him which so enriched his life.