108 main

THE HISTORY OF THE BEITZ FAMILY: 1863-1977

Name: Robert J. Beitz
Class: History 102R
Professor: Dr. Zucker
Date: May 6, 1977

A NOTE ON SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The search for one's historical roots is a challenging, time-consuming, and often frustrating experience. Endless paging through census manuscripts, vital statistics, and old newspapers often leads to "dead ends". Just as your patience is about to disappear, and the temptation to scrap the futile undertaking becomes irresistible, some new and valuable fact is uncovered. As your curiosity is further piqued, you become taken up in an all-consuming spirit of adventure and discovery. What was at first a meaningless and irrelevant search for the names of people long dead has become a fascinating journey into the past. By better understanding this past, I have come to a fuller awareness of my own identity. Distant ancestors have been somehow drawn closer to me. Their lives and times can be appreciated not only from a strictly historical perspective, but from a personal level as well. In short, history has come alive.

When I first began to trace the origins of the Beitz family, in the early months of 1977, precious little was known about my ancestors. All of my known relatives lived within a radius of twenty miles from Waukesha. Yet, my only primary sources were my father and his two younger brothers. There were no other living relatives or family friends who could further elaborate on the account given by my father. Even he was unable to provide complete and accurate information beyond 1898.

In addition to my two uncles who live in the Milwaukee area, there are two other Beitz families who are listed in the Milwaukee telephone book. Upon telephoning the other Beitz households, it

was found that they were not part of the family geneology, and could provide no help.

At this point, I began to search for any secondary sources which could provide clues to the history of the family before 1898. A thorough search of my grandfather's personal effects produced: 1)an assortment of financial statements and bills dating back to 1958 and, 2)the death certificate of my grandfather's brother, John Anthony Beitz. Unfortunately, I could not find any personal letters, diaries, scrapbooks, family bibles, or other extant resources, nor could any other family member I contacted. Frustration began to set in.

During the first weeks of April, I visited the Waukesha County Register of Deeds and obtained the birth and death certificates of my grandfather and his brothers and sisters, and the death certificates of my great-grandfather and his wife. It was found that my great-great grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-grandmother were all born in Formosa, Canada. No information was provided for my great-great grandmother.

With these dates and places in hand, I went to the Waukesha County Historical Society. After briefly browsing through the exhibits, I asked the curator whether there were any records of the Beitz family on hand. No one had done any research on the family. An obituary notice for my great-grandfather, however, was found in the July 14, 1948 edition of the Waukesha Freeman. While at the Historical Society, I obtained some information about living conditions in late 19th-century and early 20th-century Waukesha. This information has been included in the following pages.

The next step was to make a trip to the State Historical Society

in Madison. In an attempt to determine when my great-grandfather had moved from Canada for Kewaunee, Wisconsin, I paged through the 1870 and 1880 federal census manuscripts for the town of Kewaunee. I didn't find any mention of him or his family, however, he must have moved to Kewaunee sometime after 1890. Census records were burned for 1890 ~~however~~.

While at the Historical Society, I obtained as much information as I could on the living conditions in 19th century Kewaunee. The August 27, 1958 Centennial Edition of the Kewaunee Enterprise was particularly helpful in this regard. I also reviewed the microfilm copy of Philip Wild's Kewaunee County history. The county history was essentially a series of monographs of selected Kewaunee citizens.

While in Madison, I stopped at the State Department of Health, Division of Vital Statistics. In an attempt to determine when my great-grandfather was married, one of the office workers paged through Kewaunee marriage certificates between the years 1880 and 1890. They didn't locate it. She was able to tell me, though, that Formosa was in the province of Ontario.

Suspecting the marriage certificate and the remaining birth certificates to be found in Formosa, I called the Formosa Register of Deeds in the Township of Karrick, Bruce County. Their records only were kept since 1897, however. He recommended I call the Catholic Church in Formosa, where my great-grandfather attended services. After several more calls, I was able to get the following information from Father Denninger: 1)the marriage date for my great-grandfather 2)my great-grandfather's and great-grandmother's parent's names 3)the names of my great-grandfather's sister, and her birthdate

and 4)some of Formosa's history in the 19th century.

After tracing the geneology of the Beitz family back for four generations, I have become increasingly motivated to continue my search. Unfortunately, as time draws to a close, I am forced to present the information I now have. It must be noted, however, that research will be continued in the months ahead.

The history of the Beitz family will be presented in chronological order beginning with my great-grandfather. For reasons of simplicity, the family histories of the wives will be limited to naming their parents, and their birthplaces. Each successive generation will be analyzed in terms of the following emphases: 1)housing 2)food 3)clothing 4)the structure of the family 5)community life 6)economic conditions 7)social conditions 8)education 9)politics 10)religion, and 11)the role of technology in health, communication, transportation, and entertainment. Comparisons will then be made, and conclusions drawn.

The unfolding story of four generations of the Beitz family begins in a small Ontario farmhouse on a cold winter morning in 1863. On February 24th, Anthony and Martina (nee Schrabel) Beitz became the proud parents of a healthy young boy. Ambrose Oswald was their second child. Julianna, now almost 6, was born on July 20, 1857, and was excited about the birth of her new brother. Martina was up and around within two days and once again was doing her farm chores.

The farm itself was located in a tranquil valley twenty miles east of the shores of Lake Huron, in a small farming village called Formosa. The quiet commercial area in the center of town was virtually empty of any people. The heavy February snows prevented most of the patrons from the outlying farms from even making the trip. Formosa contained a general store, livery stable, post office, saloon, one-room elementary and high school, and a small community hall. Anthony's farm was situated on the periphery of this commercial area, as were the other farms.

His two-story wooden farmhouse contained three bedrooms, a large living room, a dining room, and a small but functional kitchen. The softwood floors were bare except for some hand-woven area rugs, and some occasional animal skin coverings. The few furnishings Anthony and Martina had were made of wood, and were crafted in the Chippendale tradition. Several small windows were covered with curtains made of a light, delicate fabric, and allowed the sun to pass through and dimly illuminate the living room. A small lean-to woodshed was attached to the regular farmhouse, and stored the wood for winter.

Most of the modern conveniences of our technological age didn't

exist at that time, or weren't used if they did. Candles and kerosene lamps provided the necessary illumination at night. To save on kerosene, the family usually went to bed shortly after sundown. Heat for the winter was provided by a wood-burning pot-belly stove and a huge stone fireplace. A small outside privy provided adequate but inconvenient sanitation facilities. Water was retrieved by use of a hand-operated pump well. The farm, though lacking in many of today's comforts of home, was a comparatively independent and self-sufficient economic unit. Anthony anxiously awaited the day his new son could help him on the farm.

On their twenty acre farm was a crude barn large enough to store the farm tools of the day (i.e. an iron plow, a rake which was pulled by a team of horses, grinding wheels, scythes, and various other wooden and iron implements). Anthony also owned a team of work horses, some pigs, a few head of cattle, chickens, and some geese. Half of his acreage was reserved for farming. The other half was divided between pasture-lands and timber lands. The house and barn were located on a small stretch of cleared timber land.

The farm, as a relatively self-contained unit, was the major supplier of food. Other necessities, such as clothing, building materials and farm supplies were obtained primarily through bartering with other farmers, who usually lived one or two miles away. Occasionally Anthony would purchase them at the nearby general store. Cash was in short supply, and bartering characterized the bulk of the economic transactions in this small farming community.

In the years following Ambrose's birth, Anthony struggled to provide for his family, and worked hard in the fields from early

morning until dusk, seven days a week. As soon as Ambrose was old enough to help his father in the fields, he spent much of his time doing farm chores. Soon Ambrose joined his sister as they walked together to school. They attended elementary school in a one-room schoolhouse which housed all the grades. There was particular emphasis on learning both the French and English languages because Ontario was heavily populated by the French and the English at the time.

Ambrose usually awoke around sunrise, and got ready for school. He dressed in blue denim jeans, (or flannel britches in the winter) and always had one good pair of leather shoes or boots to walk to school in. Summer clothing was typically made of cotton, whereas winter clothes tended to be made of a heavier fabric such as wool or flannel. Long underwear was commonly worn in the winter.

The family then sat down for breakfast, which was their biggest meal of the day. It usually consisted of bacon, eggs, cooked or dry cereal, buttered bread, and some beverage. After breakfast the children would walk to school, Anthony would go to work in the field, and Martina would wash clothes, and tend to her other domestic chores. After school, Ambrose would change into some overalls and help his father in the field or would milk the cows, gather some fresh eggs, or scrub the floors.

Meanwhile, Martina prepared the food in her kitchen. The family ate vegetables, fruits and meats that were almost entirely produced on their own farm. Food was stored either in an icebox, or in earthen crocks buried in the cold earth. Some necessary baking needs and kitchen aids were bought from the general store. Meals were generally wholesome and contained a balance of meats,

vegetables, and cereals.

After dinner the family sat and talked until bedtime. The family was very close and shared much of their freetime together. During the winter the family had fun sledding and skiing. Ambrose particularly enjoyed these winter activities. When summer came, Ambrose took to the water. Almost every afternoon, after the chores were done, one could see Ambrose swimming in the nearby lake. On occasion the family would go into town for some community gathering or celebration. Local French traditional holidays were celebrated with fervor by all the community folk. Parades, picnics, and ice cream socials usually accompanied these celebrations. Dances were held once a week, but Anthony and his family seldom attended them. Social life mainly centered on visits by friends and relatives. Only on special occasions did the family go into town.

Social life, like community life, was religiously-oriented. Anthony and Martina were devout Roman Catholics, and lived their lives accordingly. They attended services at the nearby Church. Religion played an important role in the shaping of Ambrose's attitudes and values. It also had an influence on the structure of the family.

Anthony was the head of the household, and controlled all financial and domestic matters. Martina would act as disciplinarian in the absence of her husband. Strict rules concerning respect for the elders, the distribution of chores, and the use of freetime were all strictly enforced by verbal and/or physical means. Anthony often used a small leather stick to discipline his children. Needless to say, respect was shown to the parents, and the family was seldom disrupted by any sort of sibling or parent-child rivalry!

At the age of twelve, Ambrose dropped out of school. He took a job with the local village tailor doing various jobs for no pay with the hopes of someday becoming a tailor. After an apprenticeship of four years, his hopes were fulfilled.

In 1879, at the ripe old age of sixteen, Ambrose decided to strike out alone. Parental authority didn't interfere with their children's career choices and life plans. In fact, Anthony and Martina may have secretly hoped for such an event so that Ambrose could do better than they. He pulled up his stakes and moved to nearby Kirtchner, Ontario, working for a larger tailoring concern for better pay. He lived in a house which, though not luxurious by any means, was suitable for his needs. For the next few years he lived a comparatively comfortable life. In 1884, he met Mary Messner and began courting her. She was also born in Canada. Her parents, Pius Messner and Mary Koenig were sturdy German immigrants. After several years of courting, Ambrose married her on October 15, 1888. He was 25 and she was 16 at the time.

After several more years in Kirtchner, he decided to join a group of the local citizenry who were moving to Wisconsin, where economic conditions seemed more promising. He decided to settle in Kewaunee. Upon arrival he set up a small village tailor shop. He bought a small home, in cash, with what little money he had saved from his earlier jobs. After settling at his new house, he lost contact with his parents and sister.

Kewaunee, at the time was relatively unsettled. It was just founded on April 16, 1852, and conditions were rough. The Potawotomi Indians were pillaging the homes. Wild dogs, pigs, and other animals were roaming free in the area. There was a scarcity of cash. Despite

all this, conditions had improved since the 1850's. Kewaunee was becoming famous as a manufacturer of roofing shingles. A copper discovery in nearby Casco brought a new surge of immigrants. Local government under the able leadership of men like Patrick Rooney and Ed Decker had improved living conditions in the area. The decaying Main Street bridge was replaced by a new one in 1860. Fewer animals were running loose as a result of a local ordinance. All in all, Kewaunee provided new opportunities for these immigrant newlyweds.

On December 19, 1890, the couple had their first child. Zita was one of two daughters. Two years later, on November 13, 1892, Erwin Joseph Beitz were born. He was the first of four sons.

The family grew closer as the years went by. Ambrose, by this time, was a successful tailor who was well-known in the area. Through thrift and hard work he was able to accumulate a comfortable nest egg for the future.

The fourth child, Valentine, was born on September 4, 1894. Soon after Val's birth, Zita was old enough to help her mother in the kitchen. Later she, Erwin, and eventually Val, attended the community school. School children were largely of Prussian or Bavarian parents. The Beitz children had no trouble in making new friends. Kewaunee was a small friendly town of predominantly German farming families, and social life was a reflection of this culture.

My grandfather, Alban Oswald Beitz, was born on October 8, 1898. Ambrose was 35 at the time. Two years later (exact date unknown) Ambrose and Mary became the parents of their fifth child, and second daughter, Ethel. As the house became increasingly inadequate for the growing family, Ambrose began to look elsewhere

for a more spacious home and a better paying job. In the winter of 1903, he got his chance.

The Wisconsin State Industrial School for Boys in Waukesha was in need of a tailor, and wanted Ambrose to take the position of Superintendent of the Tailor Department. He accepted. He bought a small house at 108 West Avenue in Waukesha, and moved his family in the Spring of 1904.

The house itself was located in the rapidly growing resort city of Waukesha. This city (formerly Prairieville) was world-famous for its curative and healthful mineral springs. Tourism had become a major Waukesha industry. Many magnificent hotels, resorts, and spas dotted the area. City parks were beautifully landscaped and usually boasted their own spring house. Waukesha was in the process of urbanization as many new businesses were moving in. At this time, a small commercial center was composed of several hardware and grocery stores, one butcher shop, a post office, several churches, some private businesses, and a brick elementary and secondary school.

The new house at West Avenue proved to be a temporary stop, however. Ambrose wanted a larger house that was closer to his place of employment. In 1905, he decided to buy a different house at 204 Franklin Avenue. The two-story wooden home was modern for its time. Yet, it still had outside sanitary facilities, and didn't have electricity or hot and cold running water. There were five rooms in the new house. The large living room was where the family spent most of its free time. Furnishings were inexpensive but functional. Heat was provided in the winter by a pot-belly stove, and an iron cooking stove which had an attached coal-fired

side-arm. Shutters on the several large windows served to insulate the home. Large carpets covered the floors, and drapes and shades covered the windows. Compared to Ambrose's childhood home in Formosa, this home in Waukesha was a considerable improvement.

Moving from Kewaunee to Waukesha, and from West Avenue to Franklin Avenue, hardly changed the normal daily routine for the Beitz family. If anything, the moves drew the family closer together. The children were anxious to meet new friends and go to a different school. Ambrose and Mary were both happy with his new position. Despite all the changes in the environment, no substantial disruption of the family occurred.

Alban woke up every day after sunrise. The rest of the family soon followed. He put on one of his two pairs of pants, a cotton shirt, and a pair of leather shoes. For special occasions, he had one black suit that he could use. He then came down to eat breakfast with the rest of the family. Breakfast in Ambrose's household, like his father's, was the big meal of the day. Cereal, bacon, eggs, and some beverage were usually served. Alban then went out to deliver newspapers between 6:00 and 7:00 A.M. Afterwards, he left for school carrying his lunch. Before school, he served 7:30 Mass. On Sundays, he left in the early morning to serve Mass, for the community. As a pious altarboy, Alban frequently attended church. After the morning services, he joined his brothers and sisters in school, at 8:00.

The Beitz children attended St. Joseph's Catholic School. The building, itself had twelve rooms--one for each graduating class of thirty or forty pupils. The teachers, who were all Catholic nuns, emphasized the role of religion in the student's

lives. Discipline was very rigid with corporal punishment being used frequently. Much learning was done by rote, and little class discussion was encouraged. Some of the cardinal rules which had to be followed while in class were: 1)no speaking out of turn 2)no fighting, and 3)giving the teacher complete respect. In addition to corporal punishment, some students were required to do after-school chores such as cleaning the blackboards or floors, shoveling the walks, or cutting the grass.

After school, Alban worked on another newspaper route. During his teens, he worked as an apprentice for Davie's Brothers Garage. Once he finally got home, he was able to play only after finishing any chores he had. Occasionally he had to split wood, or scrub floors. These chores were usually reserved for Saturdays, however. On summer afternoons, he played baseball, swam in the nearby Fox River, or fished. In the winter, he sledded.

When Ambrose came in from playing about 6:00 P.M., the family sat down to dinner. Most meals consisted of meat, potatoes, some vegetables and a beverage. Good food was accompanied by good talk at the dinner table.

At night the family sat in the living room and relaxed. Occasionally they would receive guests from the neighborhood. There were homes on each city block, but the friendships between the neighbors were close and pervasive. The extent of community contacts was limited to a two or three block radius. The neighborhood was the basic unit of community life.

The family occasionally went to band concerts in a nearby park or to church gatherings on religious holidays.

When the children reached the age of 18, they were allowed to

begin dating. Contrary to common stereotypes, Ambrose and Mary interfered as little as possible in their children's social life. Yet, there was one catch--the children had to be back by 10:00 P.M., which was their bedtime.

Several days were reserved for relaxing. On a lazy summer day the family would just put aside all work and would have a picnic, or attend an ice cream social.

The family was very cohesive and happy. Yet, the family structure was unmistakable. Ambrose was the boss. Occasionally, Mary would control the discipline, verbally or with a leather strap but Ambrose maintained firm economic and domestic control. Chores were assigned on an equalitarian basis, and had to be finished before the children could play.

By 1910, Val had become a telegrapher at the Western Union Company, after a one-year apprenticeship. He was only 17 years old. Erv and Zita helped out at home. Combined family income was above average for the time.

Tragedy struck in 1911. Zita contacted pulmonary tuberculosis in the early months, and was sent to the State Tuberculosis Institute at Delafield. Medical science was not prepared to treat her, though. Tuberculosis was subjective? in its effects. Medical knowledge was limited and ineffective after the disease had progressed beyond a certain stage. No real cures could be provided. She died in September 20, 1911 at the age of 20.

After pulling through these dark moments, life somehow continued. Ambrose was doing well at the school, and Martina was happy in her work at home. Then on June 10, 1912, John Anthony Beitz was born. Ambrose was 44 years old at the time. John was

the last child born to the couple.

Soon afterwards, in 1914, Ambrose decided to pick up stakes and move to a smaller house. The children would soon be moving out, and the present house would be too big for a small family. He moved his family to 227 Randle Street after purchasing the home outright for about $2,500.00 and selling his former home on Franklin Avenue.

Erv had just received a job as a machinist at the Central Machine works, after a one-year apprenticeship. As a result, the family was comparatively comfortable, economically. The major family expenditures were for food and clothing. There were no mortgage payments or major bills for medical services.

Even though Ambrose had several chickens that provided eggs and meat, and a large garden that provided produce year round, the family was far from being economically self-sufficient. Bartering was used to obtain many of the necessities of life; shopping at the markets in the center of town provided the rest. Even though bartering existed, more emphasis was placed on possession of cash.

Savings were very important. Since there were no pensions, people planned for their own future by saving money in banks. Few people owned securities or rental property. Ambrose owned only his house on Franklin Avenue.

Income taxes, at the time, were for only the very rich. Most people payed only a very small amount of tax. Ambrose was one of those in that minimum tax bracket who payed taxes at a rate of 5% of annual income. Property taxes, however, were usually higher.

Upon graduation from high school in 1916, Alban enrolled in the Cadillac School for Mechanics, in Selma, Alabama. He studied

there for one year. Upon returning to Waukesha, he purchased an Oldsmobile agency on St. Paul Avenue at the age of 19. He continued to remain at home.

Tragedy once again ~~visited~~ Ambrose's household in 1917. Erv contracted tuberculosis. Unfortunately, the doctor was unable to diagnose the illness until it was too late. During the last year of Erv's life, it was discovered that he had been ill since 1915. His last months at home were painful and torturous. The course of this dreaded disease finally took its toll. Erv died on October 9, 1917 at 24 years of age.

During the next few years, Alban operated his garage at St. Paul Avenue, doing major auto repairs and selling Oldsmobiles. Until this time, the primary modes of transportation were walking, bicycling and the use of horse-drawn buggies and wagons. As the auto came of age, there was more demand for his merchandise.

Then, in 1919, he began courting Lillian Alm, a girl whom he had known all his life. Her parents, Fred Alm and Lottie Heutz, were German immigrants who settled in Waukesha in the middle of the 19th century. They lived two blocks away in a stately two-story house at 212 Dunbar. Lillian and Alban were neighborhood playmates during their childhoods, and became good friends. Alban converted to the Lutheran religion in 1920, primarily so he could marry Lillian. The two were married at Trinity Lutheran Church on May 22, 1920. Both Lillian and Alban were 22 years old when they married.

Alban built a new home at 216 Dunbar Avenue and moved there with his wife when it was finished. He purchased it for $5,500.00. (The same house recently sold for close to $50,000!) The house had six large rooms and one bath. The two-story frame dwelling was soon

recognized as a "model home". It was one of the first houses in the Waukesha area to have electricity, inside plumbing, a telephone, an automatic gas water heater, a gas stove, and a radio. Heat was provided in the winter by a coal furnace. The furniture that the Beitz's owned or inherited was French provincial, and served both functional and decorative purposes. The wood floors were often covered with wall-to-wall carpets, and the windows were covered with shades and either drapes or curtains. Many of the modern "comforts of home" were just emerging.

Then in January 1921, Alban received more bad news about his family. Val had just unexpectedly contracted tuberculosis. After a brief but painful illness of some eight months, Val died on September 4, 1921, at the age of 26. Alban's only remaining brother, John, had just entered the third grade at St. Joseph's. In one decade, Alban had been to the funerals of two of his brothers, and one of his sisters. He was visibly shaken to his roots. Life went on, though.

The couple's first child was born on May 5, 1921. Today, their son, Robert Warren Beitz, is my father. Two years later on March 14, 1923, my uncle, William Beitz was born. Life in the next few years, for Alban and his young family was quite bearable, but not wholly comfortable. Alban was a better mechanic than a salesman. Even though his Oldsmobile garage wasn't a failure, it didn't, at least in his opinion, provide him with enough income to support a growing family comfortably.

Soon after the birth of Bill, Alban sold his Oldsmobile agency and went to work for the Nichols and Reep Chrysler Garage on the corner of Broadway and Delafield. As an auto mechanic, Alban worked

diligently. He typically put in a 70- or 80-hour work week, and received an above average salary.

Meanwhile, in 1923, Ambrose was offered the chance to supervise the boys of Lyon's Cottage at the State Industrial School. In addition to being the tailor at the School, and the teacher of tailoring for the boys, he and his family were now offered the chance to sleep and eat on the premises for free. After the children moved away, Ambrose thought, the house on Franklin Avenue would be a bit too large for he and Mary to manage alone. Ambrose decided to accept. Up to this time, the whole of his family's living expenses were for food and clothing. Now, not only would these expenses be provided for by the school, but the house on Franklin could be rented out to tenants for income in addition to that which he and his wife would earn. He, Mary, Ethel, and John moved the two blocks to the Cottage and slept for the first time in their new home.

The Cottage was an imposing five-story brick building which housed fifty boys. There were three other similar Cottages at the school. Ambrose and his family slept on the second floor, and ate the three meals of the day in a specially provided corner of the main dining room. The second floor had three bedrooms for the supervisor and his family. The remaining rooms were for the boys.

While living at the Cottage, Ambrose got up around 7:00 A.M., dressed, ate breakfast, and walked to one of the other buildings where he taught the art of tailoring to a class of interested students. During the day, Mary served as the matron for the Cottage. Occasionally she disciplined some of the boys who got out of hand, but usually waited for Ambrose to come home.

While at the Cottage, Ambrose became a member of the Waukesha

unit of the Knights of Columbus. He regularly attended church services at St. Joseph's Catholic Church with his family. He became more politically active in the 1920's and frequently voted a straight Republican ticket.

Ethel moved away from the Cottage several years before the Depression struck, and was never to be heard from again.

On August 24, 1924, Alban and Lillian became the parents of their third and last child, Paul. By this time Alban was a well known auto mechanic in the area, and his services were in much demand. His fame spread south into Illinois. Soon he was regularly working on the Chicago Police Chief's car, as well as other high-speed vehicles kept in the Chicago and Cook County municipal garages. Then, on one summer afternoon in 1925, the famous old-time race driver, Barney Oldfield, approached Alban and offered him the position of head mechanic on his racing team. Alban was more than happy to accept. During the next four years, Alban repaired Barney Oldfield's racers at the Nichols and Reep corner garage and occasionally accompanied Barney to the racetrack in Illinois.

Life was simple and the days were happy and carefree. Alban was comfortable at his job and was earning a comparatively high salary. Lillian was becoming more adept at taking care of the three boys and keeping up the house. The young boys were busily exploring the neighborhood, and having fun, in general.

Waukesha had, by this time, grown into a sizable city of some 8,000 people. Industry was burgeoning. The Waukesha Motor Company was a leading producer of small internal combustion engines. Businesses and people kept moving in. Several woodworking shops and foundries dotted the city. Despite all the changes that were occurring,

Waukesha retained its traditional rural flavor. There were still many farms and dairies on the periphery of the city. Waukesha was still in the process of urbanization.

Local government was also growing. It had just begun to develop many new services for the citizens. The fire and police departments were expanded and provided more protection for the city property owners. A sewerage treatment facility made septic systems unnecessary. A series of wells were dug and operated by the city. Natural gas and electricity were provided to customers by the city-run public utilities. Governments, like its citizens were adapting to a new age of elegance and modern conveniences.

The age of simplicity and comfort was soon to come to an end, though. After the Depression broke out in 1930, Alban was forced to look for a smaller house. He finally decided to rent out his house at 216 Dunbar and move to a smaller one in the nearby town of Pewaukee. The rent he received from his new tenant, Harry Cohn, was sufficient to cover the monthly rental payments on his house on Wisconsin Avenue, with a little left over for food and clothing. After consulting with Lillie, Alban decided not to continue in the employ of Mr. Oldfield. They both agreed that the head of the household shouldn't travel around the national race circuit while his family stayed at home. Instead, he continued to repair automobiles. Old customers from Waukesha and surrounding areas kept him busy. As he began to recover economically from the Crash, he looked for a better house for his family. The home he and his family were presently living in had one large living room and four bedrooms. It was nothing more than a better built summer cottage which was insulated for the winter.

Six months after their first move, the family once again pulled up their roots to reside at a better home on Elm Street, six blocks away. It had a living room, dining room, large kitchen, bathroom, three bedrooms, a full basement, and an attached garage.

While in Pewaukee, Bob attended the fifth grade in a one-room school. The building itself was a shabby wooden barracks which rested on stilts and was heated in the winter by a pot-belly stove. The forty-five pupils of the fifth grade huddled together for warmth in the winter. Bob would split the wood for the stove, and on some mornings would take the ice out of the inkwells. After school, Bob would work at a local market stocking shelves and cleaning the floors. Instead of getting paid at the end of his one or two hours of work, the owner of the store gave him overripe fruits and vegetables to take home at night.

The family sat down to a dinner which was very unsubstantial by our standards. Foods were typically starchy and inexpensive. Potatoes, day-old bread, liver, chicken, cheap cuts of beef, and fruits and vegetables (when in season) were the staples.

After dinner, the family would sit in the living room and listen to the radio. Occasionally they would play some games. Monopoly was a family favorite. Little socializing went on beyond the confines of their home on Elm Street, though.

In August of 1932, Alban decided once again that conditions were right for moving. Henry Cohn had just moved out of the house on Dunbar, and Alban grabbed the opportunity. The family was happy getting back to their old home. The boys were anxious to meet their old friends at school, and were busily preparing for their first day of classes. Many good memories were left behind at this house.

Now, things would go back to normal.

Yet, things never were quite the same. Even though Alban was never out of work, he was making only $12.00 or $15.00 a week. When he returned to Waukesha, he temporarily retired from auto repairing and worked instead for the Glidden Company. Soon he became the production manager in charge of making the brand name drug, "Zymenol".

Costs were steep, though. It was expensive to heat the house. Coal, alone, cost $60.00 a year. During cold winter nights, only the kitchen and bathroom were heated to conserve coal. Just before going to bed at night, Bob and his brothers would silently run along the nearby railroad tracks and pluck up any stray coal that had been dropped when the coal trains passed by. They would usually fill a few buckets. Sometimes, when the train was stopped on the tracks, the boys would climb onto the gondola of one of the huge coal cars and would take a few pieces of coal. Money was in short supply, indeed!

Alban and Lillian seldom splurged on expensive entertainment. As in Pewaukee, the family spent their nights listening to the radio or playing games. During the day, the boys were always to be found outside engaging in some sort of seasonal fun. In the summer, Bob would swim from dawn 'till dusk. His brothers usually were playing sand lot football or baseball on the area playgrounds. In winter the boys enjoyed tobogganing.

The family went to most of the community get-togethers during the year. Independence Day festivities were particularly joyous. Parades, fireworks, band concerts, picnics and ice cream socials were frequent during the summer. All in all, the community was

very close-knit.

Although many inconveniences were endured, the family thrived. What was lacking in the material comforts of life was made up for by love and trust. Alban's family continued to live happily.

In the years following, the Beitz children went to Waukesha High School. Teachers there were extremely rigid in their methods and seldom encouraged class discussion. Discipline was preserved by the use of corporal punishment. Physical coercion was seldom used, however. Instead, the student would stay after class, and write a 500-word theme designed to inculcate a set of "Christian ethics". During his school years, Bob studied music in preparation for a teaching profession. He took other required classes in English, math, history, and geography. He had little discretion in selecting his own course of study, though. After school, Bob would deliver newspapers. He got the two-mile city route while only 12 years old, and continued to deliver papers into his late teens. The twenty dollars he made every month went toward monthly payments on his life insurance policy, new clothes, and some luxuries.

In junior high school, he joined the school band. Before he was to graduate in 1939, he had joined fourteen different musical organizations. He was very active in the Glee Club, Pep Band, Waukesha Park Band, and the Carroll Choral Union. His music teacher, Zelma Monlux, was impressed with his virtuosity. Not only could he sing well, but he could play a clarinet, oboe, and saxophone, as well!

During the summers of 1936-38, Bob let a substitute carry his paper route while he worked four days a week at Waukesha Beach and

Amusement Park as a concessioneer. He lived on the premises in a shabby barracks for the employees. On a hot summer morning, he began work at 10:00 AM and worked diligently until midnight. He ate a small lunch at 1:00 PM and broke off for dinner around 6:00. The pay was $3.00 a day, and free room and board at the Park.

In 1938, Ambrose retired from his job at the Industrial School, and moved back to his old house on 227 Randall Street. He, Mary, and John continued to live a quiet and comfortable life. John had become an elevator operator at the Avalon Hotel, and was now supporting the family.

Following Ambrose's retirement, Bob graduated in June with good grades and a substantial background in music. Economic considerations prevented him from going on to college, though. Alban was still employed at the Glidden Company, but wasn't making enough money to send his son to college. All of the summer earnings had been spent on clothes and other necessities.

Instead of pursuing an education in music, Bob stayed at home and took a job as a bell-hop at the Waukesha Health Spa, a local resort several miles away. Within a few months he was promoted to a desk clerk. His future looked unpromising, however.

Searching for better pay and working conditions, he quit his job and began working for the Borden Company in October. He and six other men worked on alternating shifts making "Borden malted milk balls". Working for eight hours a day, six days a week, Bob was making much more money than ever before. The work was enjoyable and Bob soon established himself at his new job, and made new friends.

The job proved to be only temporary, however. On January 7, 1940, the candy crew was layed off. The harsh reality of unemployment

was difficult to endure. During the next month however, Bob was asked by his grandparents, Fred and Lottie Alm, if he would drive them to some of the Southwestern states for a winter vacation. He agreed. In the following two months, the tour took Fred, Lottie, and Bob through ten states and parts of old Mexico, covering a total of 7,800 miles. They returned to Waukesha in mid-April.

Upon returning, Bob found employment at the Universal Milking Machine Company, two blocks from his home. He started out as a low-paid worker in the shipping department, and by July had been promoted several times. At the end of the summer, he was in charge of the shipping and receiving department.

Then, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese unexpectedly attacked the American naval forces in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and World War II was on. Soon after, the Beitz boys were drafted.

At the age of 21, Bob left Waukesha, on September 26, 1942, for war. After eighteen weeks of basic infantry training in Texas and six weeks of combat engineering training in Oklahoma, he and his fellow soldiers of the 49th Corps of Engineers were deployed to the shores of Morrocco. He landed in Oran on April 15th, 1943.

After the successful African campaign, Bob was transferred to a unit which participated in the D-Day landing at Sicily. Many of his friends were killed in the rough fighting, but he was one of the few who were fortunate enough to survive. Later that year, his unit entered the Italian campaign, and travelled through Naples, Cassino, and Rome. The battles leading to the capture of Rome were even more bloody than the Sicilian campaign. Somehow he managed, though.

The 49th Corps was then pulled out of Italy to prepare for the

Allied invasion of the southern coast of France. Fortunately, at the last minute, Bob was transferred to another operation in France. He didn't participate in the actual D-Day invasion but stayed instead in a small French town until the end of the war. He observed the German surrender in Berchesgarten, and was honorably discharged in September.

Upon arriving back in Waukesha, Bob was greeted by happy and proud parents, as he made his way triumphantly through his old neighborhood. After the homecoming, the family moved to 324 Wisconsin Avenue. That same month he enrolled in the College of Business in nearby Milwaukee. After completing a year of college, Bob found employment in the front office at Waukesha Motor Company.

By this time he had been seeing a lot of Anita LaFratta. The daughter of John and Bernice (nee Saulino) LaFratta, Anita had come from a large family of eight children. She had lived several miles away at 1109 East Main Street. Her parents were Italian immigrants, and continued to live the way they used to in the "Old Country". Within four months, the couple was engaged to be married. Bob converted to Catholicism in order to marry Nita. The wedding on April 26, 1947 was a gala event. Both the bride and the groom were well represented at the ceremony held at St. Joseph's Church.

At the wedding, Ambrose approached the couple and invited them to live at his house for the next few years. Bob and Nita were only too happy to accept. They were happy at the house.

Then suddenly, while Bob and Nita were away on summer vacation, Ambrose died of undetected cancer of the colon. He was 86 at his death on July 13th.

During the next year, Bob and Nita lived with her parents at

1109 Main Street. By this time, Bob was looking for a comfortable home of his own. He was doing well at his job and wanted to find a nice home that he and his wife could afford. In 1949, Fred Alm invited Bob to rent a twenty year-old house that he owned. The home at 208 Dunbar Avenue was two doors away from Bob's childhood home. The rent was cheap and the offer appeared tempting, so Bob agreed. He and Anita were very happy to move back to the old neighborhood. Many of his old friends and neighbors were still living there. Little had changed. Alban, in the meantime, had quit his job at the Glidden Company and had taken a new position as press operator at Alloy Products on Perkins Avenue.

Tragic news the following year spoiled his new found happiness. Lillian had taken ill with a form of paralysis. Within one month she died. At her death on February 17, 1955, she was 55 years old. Bob was extremely shaken by the loss.

Then, on October 18, 1956, Bob and Nita became the parents of a healthy son, Robert John. He was their first and only child. With this new mouth to feed, Bob began to look for other employment. The young family was doing well, though.

In the following year, Alban met Frances Downie of Waukesha. After a brief courtship, Alban and Frances were married on June 9, 1957 at St. Luke's Lutheran Church. Alban and his 59 year-old wife lived at 324 Wisconsin Avenue.

Tragedy once again spoiled Alban's happiness in 1960. After a brief illness, his brother, John, died of a stroke on February 17. Of the six children, Ambrose and Mary had, only Alban and Ethel were now living.

By this time Bob had found a new job as industrial sales clerk

for Crichton Corporation in Milwaukee. Every morning at 6:00 he would commute to the office. He returned at 6:00 at night. After five years of commuting, he decided it was time to get a more fulfilling job in Waukesha. In November, 1965 he located a new job at Steen Welding Company as an office worker. Through hard work and persistence, he was promoted to office manager of the expanding firm in 1968.

Young Robbie was, by then, in the fifth grade at recently built Saratoga Elementary School. Waukesha had become a bustling city of some 20,000 people, and changes were appearing daily.

When Robbie was 7 years old, he started taking organ lessons. He enjoyed music almost as much as his father had. Soon he was playing the organ in public at such events as the Waukesha County Fair and the Wisconsin State Fair.

POSTSCRIPT

In 1972 both of my grandfathers died. On December 17, John LaFratta died of natural causes at the age of 91. That same month, on December 28, Alban Beitz died unexpectedly of a heart attack at the age of 74.

Life for "Robbie" has been quite comfortable. Compared to my ancestors, I am living in unabashed luxury and freedom. After graduation from Waukesha High School in June of 1975, I have pursued degrees in Political Science and Speech Communications at Carroll College.

CONCLUSIONS

Upon careful examination of the history of the Beitz family

since 1863, one is able to discern, certain contiguous themes that run through the four generations.

Most importantly, one notices that the father was the undisputed head of the household in each successive family. The father wielded ultimate authority in all financial and domestic matters. His religious, political, and cultural values were imbued in his children. Yet, this authority was not feared, but rather respected by both the wives and children alike. Authority was legitimate and non-tyrannical. As a result, the father's influence over his family was more a function of respect and admiration, than of pure coercion, physical or otherwise. Children obeyed their father not out of fear of punishment but because they wanted to identify with their idol. The family hierarchy was based on trust, love, and pragmatism. Even though a definite authoritative structure existed, family members shared their lives.

Secondly, one is able to observe that family members were highly interdependent. This was apparent to a greater degree in the earlier generations, however. The family was a cohesive unit which depended upon its members to provide the necessities of life. Anthony's family was a socially and economically self-sufficient unit. Since farms were spread out over long distances, the family wasn't able to regularly interact with other people. Ambrose's family faced similar problems, but to a lesser extent. Alban's family wasn't an economically self-sufficient unit, but it was a highly cohesive social unit which grew even closer during the Depression. Today, in Bob's family, the interdependence of family members is still clearly evident. No longer, however, do members have clearly delineated roles within the family. Instead, the members

share their lives as equals. Even though the father has ultimate authority, family life is based on a pervasive sense of equality and cooperation.

Third, it appears that the children of each generation were born approximately two years apart. More specifically, it appears that children are born in two year cycles near the beginning of marriage, with a drop in frequency in the later years.

Fourth, one is clearly able to demonstrate that the Roman Catholic religion played a significant role in the lives of family members of every generation. Community life, education, and family culture were all religiously oriented. Religion also played a role in marriage. Alban converted to Lutheranism so that he could marry Lillian. Ironically, Paul, Bill, and Bob all converted back to Catholicism so they could marry their wives. It must be noted, however, that the pervasiveness of religion (of any denomination) in one's life has slowly but steadily declined with each passing generation. This can be attributed, perhaps, to the culture that people live in. Anthony and Ambrose may have been more influenced by religion because of the French-English culture of Canada which strongly emphasized the importance of strong Catholic morals and life patterns. Later generations of Americans do not place as much emphasis on the role of religion.

Fifth, men tended to marry in their mid-to late-twenties, whereas women were generally in their late teens or early twenties at marriage. This doesn't reflect, in my opinion, paternal control over the son's marriage choices and life plans.

Finally, the fathers in each generation were highly geographically mobile during their first years of married life. As each

father pursued his niche in life, he moved his young family several times in search of a better standard of living. Early married life was a time of high hopes and ambitions. Once the hard-working upwardly mobile fathers had established themselves at jobs that were personally rewarding, geographic mobility ceased or was reduced. Alban was a notable exception. During the 1920's, he was established at a job which was comfortable for him and his family. The Depression forced him to make several moves before he was able to reestablish his family at some point of economic and social equilibrium.

Several important differences between generations also become evident.

The disparity in ages between the husband and the wife seems to decline over time. Ambrose was 9 years older than his wife when he married. Alban and Lillian were the same age when they married, whereas Bob was 2 years older than Anita. It is my contention that as peer contacts increase, the range of potential mates decreases to include only those within one's own immediate age group.

Secondly, it is interesting to note that some families were blessed with long and healthy lives, while others were not. Ambrose lived for 86 years. Yet, in one decade, three of his children died in their 20's from tuberculosis. What medical science has been able to do is prevent dread diseases like tuberculosis from obliterating whole families.

Third, the role and nature of discipline has changed. Discipline, though playing a large role in every generation, has evolved from what was largely physical coercion in Anthony's time to moral suasion in my time.

Finally, it is obvious that the money incomes and standards

of living for each successive generation rose both in absolute and in relative terms. Urbanization had brought new economic opportunities, and a rising level of affluence, in general. Technological advances dramatically changed the life styles of each successive generation.

There is no observable pattern concerning family size in the Beitz history. Anthony had two children, Ambrose had six, Alban had three, and Bob had one.

In closing, it is hoped that these observations are helpful in understanding the life and times of the Beitz's, in particular, and in appreciating the conditions of life in western Wisconsin in the nineteenth century, generally.