

# THE FAIR ADVENTURE

## A Tribute To My Parents

(Text version)

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“The day shall not be up so soon as I,  
To try the fair adventure of tomorrow.”

—“King” John,” William Shakespeare

My parents, James P. and Margaret Brennan, were products of the western movement. Their grandparents had emigrated from Ireland and Scotland, settling in Ontario and Nova Scotia, Canada. Their parents had come to the United States in search of free land and work opportunities.

My parents spent most of their married life in small farming communities in North Dakota and eastern Montana. They were active in business, politics, church, and school. Their home and hearts were open to all ages and all who needed help. We three children thrived on their example of hard work, charity, and good humor.

I thought of my father’s energy, enthusiasm, and optimism when I first read the quotation from Shakespeare. To me, Mother exemplified the Perfect Wife in Proverbs:

...“She reaches out her hand to the poor,

and extends her arms to the needy...

Her children rise up and praise her;

Her husband, too, extols her . . . “

James Patrick Brennan was born July 25, 1879 in Merrickville, Ontario, Canada,

the son of Edward and Joanna Brannick Brennan. He was one of 11 children and one of three who survived their parents.

I know nothing of my father's birthplace except that it is a small town in eastern Ontario, south of Ottawa and on the Rideau River. My father finally returned there in 1949 and brought back pictures of the Brennan home, a narrow two-story brick house. Two unmarried cousins lived there at the time.

Grandfather Brennan immigrated to Pembina County, North Dakota, in the fall of 1879 with a large group of Irish Catholics, including relatives. The family followed the next spring, coming to Bathgate where he had acquired land. The children then included Amelia, Florence, George, Stephen, Victor, Edward and Jim. Two daughters, Anastasia and Marietta, had died in the old home.

I was 15 before I learned that my father had not walked across Canada. He claimed to have crossed the prairie “without shoes,” and my vivid imagination had my hero on snowshoes, his feet wrapped in fur, his rifle slung over the Hudson Bay jacket, his beaver cap frosted. (There must have been a picture of a French Canadian trapper in an old book from home!) In truth, Jim was the family baby in his mother's arms and they traveled on the railroad.

Two more sons were born in North Dakota, but I have no record of births and deaths. The Brennan children were all good students and Florence, George, and Victor attended the University of North Dakota.

My father was about 12 years of age when George came home ill from the University, where he had made a brilliant record. It must have been “galloping consumption,” as it spread through the house like wildfire. The younger children became ill and Stephen was sent to cousins in California.

The parish priest took my father home with him and sternly ordered him to stay out of George’s room and he later was sent to the farm under the care of Bill Caton, the hired hand. How sad those days must have been for the frightened boy, sneaking home to do the chores and wave at George through a window! Was he altar boy at the funeral Masses? We do know that “tuberculosis” was a dread word to Jim forever after.

The family re-grouped. Florence was married to Allen Baldwin of Bathgate and their daughter, Elaine, was born in 1894. Mr. Baldwin died young and I never knew him. Amelia married handsome, vital, Irish Archie M. O’Connor. They lived in St. Thomas, North Dakota and had eight children.

Jim graduated from Bathgate High School at the age of 15, in 1895, one of two boys in the class. His graduation picture shows a slender, solemn blond young man in knee-pants, proudly clutching a rolled diploma. Graceful young ladies recline in the front row and the photographer’s studio was a bower of flowers.

The solemnity belies one memory our cousin, Brennan Briggs Davis, has of Jim. Jim told Brennan that he wrote a school paper about the Boers and claimed they had been able to survive during battle by eating from the large rings of salami they had draped around their horses' necks!

Jim left home at 17 to work in Dan O'Connor's hardware store in Langdon, North Dakota. My sister claims it was Dan who taught our father his neat and graceful penmanship. Jim then sold White sewing machines on the road, traveling at least as far east as Wisconsin.

He kept Bathgate in his heart. Jim never turned away anyone from Pembina County. He kept track of the Bathgate "boys and girls," who remained young to him, and took personal satisfaction in their accomplishments. One I remember was Norval Baptie, the French-Canadian speed and figure skater, who Jim claimed had perfected tubular shoe skates, which he tested on the Tongue River.

One adventure Jim never forgot was when he met Amelia and Archie in St. Louis for the World's Fair. He was selling threshing machines at the time and he and his boss were making a swing through the Midwest. Years later, Jim told my husband, Fred H. Taylor of Kansas, that after St. Louis they had set up their tent at the annual Wheat Show in Wichita, Kansas, brought in a keg of whiskey (to a dry state), and had done "pretty well." He had visited Winfield, my husband's hometown, and had ridden a short-lived interurban train south to Arkansas City.

Jim was once interviewed by his granddaughter, Kathie, for a high school assignment. He told her of his homestead days in Bottineau County in north central North Dakota. It was 1901, he recalled, and he had ambitiously filed three claims—near Antler, one and one-half miles south of the Canadian border, one on the Manitoba side, and a third in Sheridan County in eastern

Montana. He could make the Manitoba claim because of dual citizenship, the son of a Canadian native who had become a naturalized American citizen. (Periodically Jim attempted to gain an American passport as a “derivative citizen” and finally accomplished that with his sister Florence’s help in 1946.

Jim told his granddaughter, Kathie, that he was not much of a farmer so he sold hail insurance on the side, walking among homestead shacks and sod houses before he could afford a horse and buggy. They also were necessary to the all-night dances in the country. He later gave his shack to another Pembina County boy, Tom Hennessy, who had courted and won the only single girl in the area.

Jim may well have ridden the stagecoach from Botteneau, the county seat, to Antler as the Great Northern Railroad’s branch did not reach there until 1905.

The original settlers had “squatted” on Antler Creek in 1883, a year before the county was organized. They found high, rolling prairies from which the buffalo were diminishing but there was ample small game in the coulees. They planted small fields, using oxen, and traded freely on both sides of the border. They used the “Canadian Trail” south to Minot, a railroad center, or the trail east to Botteneau.

Towns were formed as each segment of the railroad was completed and land developers brought in groups of immigrants from Europe and eastern states. Wheat was king and credit was easy. One of Jim’s stories from the Antler days concerned two young Irish homesteaders.

They were driving home, each with a new grain binder. A neighbor stopped them and asked what the binders had cost. Paddy said, "Sure, they cost us nothin'. I soined Dick's note and Dick soined my note. Divvil the cint we give him and we druv the boinders home."

Jim had a story suited to any occasion, often told in dialect. He was master of many.

Jim threw in his lot with the new town of Antler and was its first mayor when it incorporated in 1905. He wrangled a farm implement dealership and in later years was a land developer, grain broker, banker and self-taught auctioneer when he and a partner bought and sold bankrupt store inventories.

What this busy bachelor needed was a wife with whom to share the good times. Margaret Belle Henderson had come to Antler from Pine City, Minnesota in 1905 at the invitation of her sister, Mary, who was married to Dr. E.A. Jesmer, a veterinarian. (Aunt Mamie was a talented milliner and cook and the Jesmers had two sons.)

Mother was employed as a telephone operator for the local corporation and soon caught Jim's eye. A picture from that time shows a round faced young woman with soft dark eyes and a mass of curly dark hair. It was chestnut, Jim said, with red lights. She was "light on her feet". She was gentle, with a ready wit and a winning smile.

Jim offered a stunning diamond in a high gold Tiffany setting when he proposed. They were engaged when the stone made a satisfactory scratch on a windowpane.

They were married January 15, 1908 on the stage of the Antler Opera House by Father Turcotte. The nuptial Mass was early in the morning because they were to catch the train to

Minneapolis for a honeymoon. Lib Brandes, Mother's girlhood friend from Minnesota, and Leo Hennessy, a Bathgate friend, were the attendants. Music was furnished by Jessie and Tom Hennessy and the girls decorated the hall under Aunt Mamie's supervision.

Mother told me a country crony of Jim's marched down the sheet-covered aisle in his muddy boots to a front seat. She picked up her skirts and followed him. (I have never seen her wedding dress, nor a picture of my parents taken that day.)

On the occasion of their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, Leo Hennesey, Jim's friend, wrote the Brennan grandchildren his version of the event. Jim set the alarm for 5 a.m. in their room at the Savory hotel and ordered a hot bath for the morning. He kept Leo awake most of the night checking the clock, which hung from the headboard. When the tub arrived, Jim jumped in and scalded both feet. They then fired up the Opera House stove to "at least 100 degrees."

The entire wedding party accompanied the couple to the depot after a breakfast at the hotel. (Mother must have cut a pretty figure in her floor-length black Persina lamb coat, a gift from the bridegroom.) Jim stepped up to the ticket window and grandly ordered "one round trip to Minneapolis." The agent looked at Mother. She dug into her purse and ordered the same.

My sister, Mary Elaine, was born October 30, 1908. Some time or other the family lived in a sod house on the homestead across from the Canadian line from Dooley, so she qualified as a member of the Sodbusters Society. Edward Thomas (Bud) was born April 26, 1910. Mother spoke often in later years of Bud's difficult birth. He was a large baby and the labor was long and difficult; the attending doctor a "drunken brute." Besides, Jim was out of town that day.

I was born May 12, 1917. The house I remember in Antler was a two-story farm structure across the road from open pasture. There was a barn for Bud's pony, "Darkie." Jim ordered a two-wheeled "jaunting cart" which Bud kept filled with town children.

Mother was a fresh-air fiend and Bud's asthmatic condition called for drastic measures. We camped on Antler Creek in the summer. Once, returning to town with the cart loaded with camping gear, the pony ran away and left Mary high and dry on a mattress on the road.

My father's stories of the years in Antler were filled with the high color of exciting "deals" as only he could describe them. He used a man's accent or mannerisms when he mentioned his name. He was a natural born spellbinder, unafraid to tell a joke on himself. How I wish I could recall how Jim fooled those grain rustlers!

Jim did things with energy and flair. Pictures dated 1916 show him with two trainloads of farmers from Minnesota. The banner on one car reads, "Buy Land in Bountiful, Beautiful Bottineau County." Jim is the smooth-shaven young man in the center, wearing a tweed cap and holding his son.

Jim was exempt from the World War I draft but he was a good war bond salesman. Those were "boom and bust" days on the prairie. North Dakota farmers found a small market after World War I was declared; America's entry brought great demand for their grain. Later, there was another "bust." Farmers were over-extended and many lost their land. The townspeople rode the roller coaster with them. Jim was often, to quote him, "one buck ahead of the sheriff." Mother claimed, when he said that, never to have known that times were that tough and she

certainly had enjoyed spending that dollar. All of northern North Dakota was Jim Brennan's territory in those days.

I have found in my father's papers a note he co-signed in 1918. On the back, in his flowing hand, was entered, "Note: Don't endorse any more notes."

He forgot that as time went on and the emergency of the moment demanded an endorsement.

Jim's cousin, George Laney, became his brother after the Brennan boys died. The Laney's had come to Pembina County from Merrickville on the same train with the Brennans. Uncle George was seven years older than Jim but they were much alike in temperament.

George filed his own claim in Pembina County and was a deputy sheriff before moving to Logan County in central North Dakota. He was a homesteader, sheriff, and postmaster, operated a livery barn and traded horses, was a collection agent for private banks and receiver for the Bank of North Dakota. He became president of the Stockgrowers Bank of Napoleon, dealt in real estate and held farming properties. When he died in March 1944, the Napoleon Homestead carried his obituary on the front page, along with a three-column picture of this community leader.

It showed Uncle George as I remember him—Stetson hat far back on his round head, shrewd eyes behind steel-rim glasses and a dead cigar in his mouth.

An Editorial in the same edition said in part: "Old and young sought and received his sound advice on business dealings, property values, business ventures, political move, civic improvements....In a business deal, Mr. Laney seldom sought the man, they sought him....He

had a faculty of remembering names, faces and dates....He was keen at conversations, sparkled with some Irish wit, and always had eager listeners....He claimed never to have lost a penny on a personal loan to young people who desired further education, to go into business or to build a home....”

No wonder George Laney and Jim Breenan were so close! I have a hunch Uncle George found Jim a job when we moved to Minneapolis in 1921. (Collection agent for Northwestern Bank of Minneapolis?) Jim traveled a great deal and Mother was left alone to cope with the city. We rented a row house. Bud was dreadfully ill with scarlet fever and I recall sitting on the outside steps with him as he peeled the skin from his hands. I broke my arm and a neighbor drove us to the doctor in his Maxwell car. Mary took ballet lessons and Mother said later that sentimental Jim had wept at her recital when she appeared as the butterfly with the broken wing.

We moved to New England in 1922 where Jim was collection agent for the Slope District of the Bank of North Dakota. Again, I feel George had something to do with this as he had worked there in 1920 for the Northwestern Bank; then was appointed receiver for five closed state banks and was a district manager for the receiver until 1926. He moved from New England to Bismarck when named state receiver.

At my age I was unaware of the depressed economy of those years, but I knew Jim was away from home much of the time. Mary was a high school sophomore and won a first place medal in the state oratorical contest, reciting “The Revenge” by Alfred Lord Tennyson. That was a proud day for Jim who had never forgotten his own elocution training. The new girl in town, petite and red-haired, acquired two tough champions in the school, Tootie and Peepee, who accompanied

her to and from school. Bud had his own cronies. Mother taught me to write with my right hand and we had a canary for company. Jim trundled a doll buddy home on the train for Christmas.

I was beginning to become aware of the world outside our home by the time Jim became Manager and later President of the Farmers & Merchants State Bank in Savage, Montana, in 1923.

The Ulland, Mealey, Carley Company, a Minneapolis banking firm controlling several banks in Minnesota, North Dakota, and eastern Montana, offered Jim \$200 a month, a sliding commission on paper he collected, a house and authorization to buy a new Ford automobile, to be paid for out of commissions. He was to liquidate the bank.

It was summer and we were staying at the town's only hotel until Jim's predecessor could move his family out of the bank's house. We arrived on a Saturday and the cowboys came into town that evening. They shot up the main street in their enthusiasm and Mary and I watched from the hotel room window.

Like the early homesteaders, we found a broad, level valley on the west side of the Yellowstone River and an endless expanse of benchland above the open Indian and buffalo prairie reaching far to the horizon. Across the river were the badlands, rough with deep coulees, dotted with eroded and barren sandstone, which changed color with the changing light. The river's shallow shoreline was green with native trees and undergrowth. It was subject to flooding and constantly cut new channels.

The Lower Yellowstone Irrigation Project had begun in 1907 and the first water was turned into the ditches in 1909. The canals ran for nearly 70 miles between McKenzie County, North Dakota and the Intake dam southeast of Savage.

Construction of the project had caused a mild boom in the valley and land prices skyrocketed. Banks and other loan agencies had over-extended credit. Production on the land, settled by inexperienced farmers, was not enough to carry the debt load of project construction; there was a post-war depression and drought on the benchlands. Jim found that nearly half of the original settlers had lost their farms.

One of the first things he did was recruit North Dakota wheat farmers to rent the bank's 12 farms on a crop-share basis. He knows as much about irrigation farming as they did. He had a Russian tenant on one of the farms. Jim would urge the fellow to open the ditches. "Chim, I dink better I wait. Might tomorrow, it vill rain," was the usual response.

Next, through a cooperative effort, the valley residents obtained a new contract with the Reclamation Service whereby the annual payments on construction charges were based on percentage of the value of crop production, averaged out over the years.

Two schemes did not work out when Jim tried to lure east side ranchers to Savage. He brought one of the up-river ferries the Marietta, to Savage and attempted to make it operable with used parts. He started a pontoon bridge, which some other visionary had tried in 1915. The river took them both and the ranchers continued to cross on the ice in the winter or take their trade elsewhere when the ice went out.

There were dryland bank farms above the ditch and Jim thought he could bring them under water with a used steam engine and rotary pump. He scrounged the countryside for engines, parts and pumps. He supervised construction of the ditches. It was not, according to Jim, much of a success.

Undaunted, Jim turned to electricity but that operation was not economically feasible either because of the cost of power at that time.

In 1949 he represented Montana's Governor John Bonner at the dedication of the Savage Pumping Project, first of 26 planned for the Yellowstone. He officially broke the ground and gave one of his finest speeches. He traced the history of the valley and held a grand reunion with old friends.

He closed the speech with a poem he had composed, probably in 1928, which Jim said had been written for "a little girl to read in school." Well, as I remember, it was written as a foreword for the Savage High School annual the year our friend, Alice Lauer Hart, was editor. Jim had worked on it at Grandmother Henderson's desk on the Sheridan County farm while the "little girl" carried glasses of "home brew" from the kitchen to quench the Muse.

"Oh, bountiful Valley of Plenty,

Snuggled down between forest and hill,

Your charms will attract me forever,

Though my path may lead where it will.”

“I love each bend of the river,

As it surges on down to the sea,

The echoes ringing o'er the water,

Are calling and calling to me.”

“The fields that lie along the wayside,

Are enriched with the gifts of the soil.

The labor's that made it an Eden,

Has reaped the reward of its toil.”

“Now leaving the Yellowstone Valley,

I'll see no more the pathways I trod,

Loved by the light-hearted children,

Lit up by the smile of a God.”

We had gone on to Dooley to visit my grandmother following dedication of the Missouri River bridge (completed in 1934) near Culbertson. Jim made the introductions and Senator Burton K. Wheeler (D-Montana) was one of the speakers. (That must have been a fine, loud oratorical competition!)

All I remember of the ceremony was that we showed credentials at a locked gate, crossed the bridge on a scary one-way route with loose planks and the Fort Peck Indians were in full regalia. We ate our picnic lunch in the shade of cottonwood trees on the river bank; I had too much warm cherry pop and was car sick; sticky raspberry candies on the car seat stained a fancy new suit Mother had made for Mary’s return to the university.

Jim had a powerful and dramatic voice, which he played like a musical instrument. He was a popular speaker in the valley and was for many years announcer at the Richmond County Fair in Sidney. He could be heard clearly in the last rows of the grandstand even before the public address system was installed. He delighted in introducing politicians and special guests, never failing to find just the most flattering, humorous, personal reference.

His formal speeches were well-written, occasionally a bit flowery and old-fashioned in presentation, always tempered with his quicksilver Irish wit. His political campaign style was more relaxed and he was a master at warming up an audience for the main speaker.

I can still hear his strong rich voice rolling through the Holly Sugar Co. factory warehouse in Sidney when he spoke at the dedication in 1925. I can also hear that one sharp word that carried a child out of her chair and to the kitchen at dishwashing time!

Jim did not like conducting foreclosure sales during the Savage years, but he did them well. (The Sidney Herald observed in a 1956 interview that Jim could “hang out his auctioneering shingle anywhere and make a go of it.”) He was not trained in the current rapid-fire style. He joked and visited with the audience and greeted his friends as they arrived. He needed space in which to pace. He had a retentive mind and a quick eye. He wheedled. He instinctively knew when to stop the bidding.

In fact, Jim was so good at selling that he often sold himself. He came home one bitterly cold day with a full-length buffalo coat and matching gauntlets. We knew it was buffalo because it had been improperly “cured” and the dark hump hair was intact. He brought Mother a broken cream separator with repair parts but she had no cow. Jim then bought a cow. Bud named her “Azuba” for a classmate and he and Mother were in the dairy business.

Jim usually succumbed to some sad little household item in an attempt to ease the farm wife’s anguish. He bought Mason jars—how he dragged home Mason Jars!

Of course, Mother needed them to preserve the produce country friends brought in to “Chim.” (What do you do with two grain sacks of cantaloupe, all ripening at once?)

It might have been on the 1928 trip to Dooley when Jim found a litter of freshly weaned pigs for one of the bank farms. My uncles built a cage for the top of the Essex trunk and we started home. Rain stopped us in Sidney and everyone but Bud and the pigs stayed at Ball’s hotel. Bud

slept in the car at the Burleigh-Kinkaid Motor Co. garage to keep the babies company and they cried all night. He sulked home.

My sister remembers with much distaste the arrival of 17 live domestic ducks for which there was no pen in our yard. Tender-hearted Jim Brennan could never wring a little duck's neck, nor yet use a hatchet. Delegated to kill and clean were Grandmother Brennan, Mother, Bud, and Mary.

Grandmother announced that hot paraffin was to be applied for the plucking and she set up an assembly line in the basement. Duck down sticks and spreads. What I can't recall is how we disposed of the carcasses. Perhaps Jim brought company home for dinner because he knew there would be plenty to eat?

Years later I complained to Mother about the "nifties" with which my husband was cluttering the house following forays to antique shops and garage sales. She advised me, in her wisdom: "Don't fuss, dear. It could be women."

We recalled the auctioneering days in Savage and wondered who was now enjoying the records, all in Swedish, which she had found in the Victrola cabinet from one sale. She fondly remembered that Jim then had started collecting Hanny Lauder and John McCormack recordings for his musical Scotch-Irish wife.

My legacy from those early years in Savage was the companionship I shared with my father as we toured the valley, first in the bank Ford and then in the heavy low-slung Essex. We bounced down gravel roads, in and out of farm yards and out to fields, through small towns to

call on merchants or proprietors of “blind pigs” (Jim knew them all), across wild pasture to count a herd of grazing horses.

I learned geography, geology, history, mathematics, and literature. Jim knew the words of countless Irish ballads (it was Mother who knew the right key). I learned human nature, I hope. Everything Jim saw reminded him of something he had learned before. Everyone he met was a friend. Each experience was to be relished and remembered.

One reason I spent so much time with my father was because Mother was so active in the community. St. Michael’s Catholic Church across the street from our house was a mission of Sacred Heart parish in Glendive, and it was Mother who fed the Pastor and his ferocious dogs. It was Mary and Patricia who helped her clean the church. It was Bud one November 1, who was instructed to remove an antique car from the church roof. (“Some smart bozos figured out how to get it up there last night. You and your friends can get it down, Bucko!”)

Mother taught catechism class. She was clerk of the school board and champion of apprehensive young teachers. She was president of the Home Demonstration Club and helped to organize 4-H clubs and a Girl Scout troop. Jim deeded a piece of land to her along the river near Burns and “Camp Margaret” was born. She helped establish a swimming pool with muddy water diverted from the main irrigation canal. She was secretary of the Savage Community booth at the county fair.

Mary was a member of the first graduating class of Savage High School and then went off to the University of Montana at Missoula. She pledged Tri Delta and her freshman roommate

recalls she eventually became president of nearly every campus organization. She graduated with honors.

Bud was the budding entrepreneur. He paid me cash (a quarter a month) for helping to deliver Azuba's milk from the Ford truck he drove with such abandon. The cow earned a Hershey bar if she would walk up the boardwalk steps to Emil Nietschke's beer parlor-barber shop. Bud hauled grain one season and nearly died from asthma. He sold popcorn at the movie house while Minnie Anderson pounded out stirring accompaniments to the silent films. Jim finally acquired an interpreter for the Mexican beet workers when Bud studied Spanish in high school. He was known as "Skeeter" and he pole-vaulted in a sweat suit and a black derby hat.

The farmers and townspeople hung on in those years, helping each other. Jim negotiated a contract with Gedney Pickling Co. of Minneapolis in an attempt to add more cash crops. Savage housewives worked at the cucumber sorting tables; Mary was bookkeeper. We swam in the washing vats. Jim brought in a carload of lambs to be fattened for market. It was 1927, the year of the May 12 snowstorm when drifts reached our garage eaves. One sick "bum" lamb was brought home to our ice house; then moved to the kitchen for bootleg whisky and hot packs; finally to the basement, where it died in the coal room.

The Sidney Chamber of Commerce approached the Holly Sugar Co. in 1924 about building a processing plant, as the few sugar beets grown in the valley were being shipped to Hardin or Billings. The company agreed to build if 10,000 acres could be committed to beets. They gave Sidney and the surrounding communities four days in which to contract acreage.

Teams worked day and night up and down the valley and came to a banquet at the Albert Hotel in Fairview on Saturday night with more than the required acres contracted. The Company representative congratulated them, but warned there might be no factory if the Democrats won the next election.

Jim said in his 1949 Savage speech that those present were amused by the warning, as there was only one team, “Bud Meisenbach and one other who could positively be identified as Democratic.”

It was the visionary Jim Brennan who predicted at the factory dedication at the Yellowstone Valley would become a center for livestock feeding. (Jim preferred the term “long-headed” to “visionary.”)

The sugar company soon needed more beets to keep the plant running efficiently, and the valley needed more and better irrigation farmers.

Jim gave credit to John W. Haw, director of agricultural development for the Northern Pacific Railway, for fostering the concept of the Lower Yellowstone Development Association. It was organized in 1927 with the avowed purpose of bringing into production those farms that had been abandoned, to commit more land to irrigation, and to improve the farming practices of the project.

H.E. (Bud) Meisenbach, Sidney realtor and insurance agent, was secretary. F.L. Cooper, later a sugar company field man, was the first outside representative. Cooperating in the Association were the Northern Pacific and Great Northern Railways, the Holly Sugar Co., the Reclamation Bureau and enthusiastic valley businessmen. The sugar company pointed out that

the beet industry was well established in Colorado; that experienced farmers could be found there; that Montana's low land prices would be attractive.

Jim replaced Mr. Cooper in 1928, traded the Essex for a four-door Buick and began the most satisfactory—and productive—time of his life. The Association paid him \$200 a month and expenses.

Between 1928 and 1931 Jim drove nearly 50,000 miles a year, sometimes making weekly trips. He colonized nearly 100 families in those years, settling them all along the project. Only two did not make it.

“They all got rich, but I didn't,” Jim said in a 1960 interview.

The “Brennan” flair was evident when the buyers brought their families to Montana in caravans, 56 persons on one trip and 52 on another, flags flying from their cars. Jim was interviewed in Hardin on one of those trips and he pointed out that both the little and Big Horn valleys could enjoy the same colonization and he would like to do the job “if some other agent doesn't beat me to it.”

Jim revealed in his Savage speech that he was not popular with the merchants and bankers of the Brush, Colorado area. He “scouted” before he approached a farmer, avoiding those whose place had a slipshod appearance. Those who came to Montana soon taught good irrigation practices to the early settlers; livestock feeding became an important adjunct to the beet crop, and the valley was a center for championship seed corn and purebred livestock.

In time to come, the Yellowstone truly was Jim's “Bountiful Valley of Plenty.”

Jim went back to Sidney for the Golden Jubilee of the Lower Yellowstone Project (about 1951), gathered his ex-Colorado friends for a banquet and organized a section in the parade.

I accompanied my father on one of his Colorado trips in June, 1929 while Mother was in Missoula for Mary's graduation from the University. Ira Hagler, one of Jim's prospects, was returning to Brush with us. It was the rainy season.

Near KayCee, Wyoming we were stopped by a flash flood in a dry wash. Cars were lining up on both sides. Jim recalled the Buick salesman had demonstrated that the running engine would not stall when water was poured over it. He boldly drove into the water and we sat there until someone came along with a cable long enough to pull us out. We spent that night in crowded KayCee, drawing a room in a house with a chemical toilet on the porch. I disappeared after breakfast and returned with a sack of groceries. Ira never forgot that I was not about to miss another meal.

Jim's expense account shows, in my writing, that the Buick's tires were wearing thin and it was eating oil. The final notation is in his handwriting. We arrived in Savage June 13 and the next day he reported to Mr. Meisenbach in Sidney. Supper that night was 50 cents in Savage "Wife away from home." He started out again on June 15 and the speedometer read 34,538 miles.

Mother's part in the colonization venture was to stay home and care for the house and family and to feed the farmers when Jim brought them to Savage. He had this superstition of long standing that no deal would succeed unless she fed the customer a good dinner. Once she

planned for six and 26 appeared. Some stayed with us, including a wife and children who spoke no English.

Grandmother Brennan died in Bismarck in April 1929, and Jim was in Colorado. He met Mother in Bismarck and Grandma was buried in St. Thomas on April 17.

Joanna Brannick Brennan was born in Ontario in 1840, I believe, to Canis and Bridget DeWier Brannick (lovely old Irish names!). Their farm was named Karnock-on-the-Rideau, according to her obituary. Her name is spelled "Johanna Brannick" on the certificate of her marriage; Jim's baptismal certificate shows "Branick," and a typed copy of her will is signed "Joanna."

She and Grandfather were married January 21, 1864 at Holy Cross church in Kemptville, a town very near Merrickville.

Edward was the son of Patrick and Margret Mally Brennan, and also born in Ontario. Like the Brannicks, his parents were natives of Ireland. He died in St. Thomas in 1907 at the age of 68. I know nothing about him and I have often wondered which facets of Jim's personality came from his father.

After his death, Grandmother made her home in St. Thomas with Amelia or in Bismarck with Florence and made long visits to us at different seasons of the year. She comments in a letter to Amelia about a George Washington birthday celebration when I chided the teacher for omitting the pledge to the flag. There is a picture of her holding a bouquet of Mother's flowers. Another, in which Florence posed her a la "Whistler's Mother" without cap, showed off her best black silk dress. I was in awe of her.

Joanna stood slender and tall and was fastidious in her dress. She wore mourning for her family as long as I knew her. Her knee-length drawers and full-length petticoats were fashioned of fine white fabric and trimmed with hand-made lace. She had heavy long brown hair, slow to gray.

Grandma never used nicknames, except for Jim. Children were to be seen and not heard, especially at the table. She was fiercely religious and prayer was constant. She had stoically accepted God's will in the decimation of her family. Mother remarked she always arrived at our house with a funeral shroud, which she had made. Hers was the first scapular medal I ever saw.

Indomitable seems a good word for Joanna. Cousin Elaine Baldwin Derby recalls walking to Mass with her, prayer books in hand, looking neither left nor right. A fastener on Grandma's drawers failed and without missing a step she shuffled to a secluded area between two buildings, stepped out of the offending drawers, stuffed them into her muff, circled back to the sidewalk. They proceeded to church without comment.

She undertook to teach the household arts to the family tomboy and presented me with a tatting shuttle. She chose a white layer cake as my introduction to baking. She, Mother, and Mary all added the baking powder. I started again.

I know now the steel in Joanna had been forged by tragedy and I regret I had not been closer to her.

Mother's grandparents had also fled the old country during the "bad" times. Her parents could never afford higher education for their children but they gave them a warm family life and the will to survive. There was music and laughter in their home.

Margaret Belle Henderson was born April 8, 1883 at Pine City, Minnesota, the daughter of Thomas A. and Sarah Bergan Henderson. She was one of eleven children and one of the seven who survived their parents.

Her father was born December 15, 1840 near Glasgow, Scotland, the son of John and Mary Anne Henderson. He was one of six children. The family moved to Charlo Station, New Brunswick, Canada when Grandpa was about two years of age.

He sailed “around the Horn” to California as a young man of 20, then worked his way across the country to Stillwater, Minnesota, where there were friends and relations from the province. There he met Sarah Bergan, a young Irish girl with sharp dark eyes and curly black hair. They were married in Duluth, Minnesota in 1872.

My grandmother was born February 14, 1853 at Dalhausie, New Brunswick, the daughter of Mathew and Mary Ann Burke Bergan who were natives of Ireland. (Mother’s memory placed Dalhausie near Fredericton, the provincial capital, but the map shows it is far to the north on Chaleur Bay. Unfortunately, all of the Henderson records were lost on the Montana homestead.)

The Bergans immigrated to the United States when Grandma was seven years old. The story of that migration follows in Mother’s own words:

“Before they left Canada, her father had sold all the property he owned. He placed the proceeds, all in gold, in a money belt around his waist.”

“A man who had worked for them in Canada showed up on the boat after they were on their way. They had no knowledge of his having decided to travel with them.”

“After they arrived by boat in New York, the father and this man went out to arrange transportation to their destination in Minnesota. The family remained on the wharf where they had landed. Neither the father nor the other man, were heard from after.”

“The mother and all the children were stranded there. They think the father met with foul play. The boat companies (sic) and the railroad arranged for transportation of the mother and the 8 small children to Stillwater, Minnesota. My grandfather’s two nephews met them at Stillwater and assisted them in getting started housekeeping. Some way they grew up and each went to work as soon as he was old enough to help out. They never heard of their father again.”

One of those nephews was Will Bergan, who kept in close touch with Sarah and her family. A letter he wrote to Mother from California in 1935 closed with, “I know it will please you that I don’t forget your Mother in my prayers, and at Easter I prayed for all of you.”

Grandmother’s sister, Mary, was Sister Mary Bernadine, a member of the “Brown Franciscan” order who became a noted builder of hospitals, convents, and girls’ academies in Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, and Arkansas. Mother said Sister had knocked on the convent door at 16 years of age and told the Mother Superior she would work hard to stay there.

Aunt Mamie and another daughter were born in Duluth and then the family moved to Pine City, where they lived for 35 years. (I have no recollection of ever visiting Pine City, north of Minneapolis and close to the Wisconsin border.) Grandpa was a surveyor for lumber companies and Grandma a practical nurse and mid-wife. They, too, had their tragedies.

Sophia drowned at the age of three; Sarah died at three of a brain tumor. John and Alexander (Sandy) would have been in their early teens when Grandpa took them on business to Hinckley,

a few miles north. They were trapped in the woods during the great fire of 1894 and the boys suffocated.

Aunt Mamie was married to “Doc” Jesmer (a veterinarian) in 1893 and later moved to Antler. Mother followed her in 1906. Tom stayed in Pine City; Bill was in Duluth, and the three bachelor sons who accompanied their parents to Montana in 1908 or 1909 were Orin, Leonard and Allen. Grandpa was in his 60s and crippled from a timber accident.

They filed on a claim in the neither far nor eastern corner of Sheridan County about 25 miles from Plentywood, the county seat. Their land ran to the Canadian border. Jim said Grandpa bought a mean old white horse to help move their equipment and the language used to control the animal was “beautiful”. Uncle Orin drove a team of oxen from the railhead at Crosby, North Dakota, with lumber for their shack, which they built high on a hill. They dug a well at the bottom of the hill. They saw the founding of Dooley, their supply town, when the Soo Railroad built a branch west to Whitetail.

My grandfather was an old man when I knew him, fun to be with. He was entertaining and spirited. They had an old Victrola and he pounded his cane to the tempo of the music. He taught me the Highland fling, using his dress canes as swords crossed on the floor. My feet had to be as light as “heather on the hill.”

Orin had left the farm for World War I action and stayed in the service. Len and Al were running the farm the summer I was sent there for an extended stay. Grandma had her chickens and turkeys; Grandpa supervised everyone. That was a long season of losing at Casino beside the Coleman lamp, which hissed like Grandpa as he counted the score.

I contracted to herd turkeys for the price of a pair of red sandals I had seen in Hans Stenseth's store in Dooley.

Breakfast was oatmeal porridge with heavy cream and brown sugar and toasted homemade bread. Grandpa and I would then let the turkeys out and head for the wheat field west of the house. Our rest stop was a small pond (buffalo wallow) where there was a family of ducks. The wheat was turning yellow, the sky was clear of clouds, and we could see for many miles, both sides of the border planted to grain and only three houses in sight.

Tilling that high prairie was hard work. The plow turned up heavy rocks, which my uncles cleared from the fields and piled in each corner. They used a crude horse drawn sled to carry the rocks and I was allowed to ride on it.

Len was the slender one with dark hair, sensitive, and kind-hearted. He was musical and self-educated. Al was the brawny one, the baby of the family, and slightly spoiled. He had a young man's loud impatience and a raucous sense of humor when I knew him.

They worked hard through "boom and bust" and "bust" again under isolated, primitive conditions.

They were in a hail belt and if the drought did not take the wheat, the grasshoppers or hail would. I walked with Len one day after hail had flattened an entire field of his spry step was slow that day. Harvest, if they had one, was a community affair.

Church services were few and far between in that sparsely populated area where gophers outnumbered people by the thousands. Father Wilhelm rode in one day on his shaggy pony,

“Barney”, and said Mass at a homestead across the line. I was alone in the yard and when he strode up in his purple habit and sandals, his long white beard flowing, I thought he was at least an Apostle, if not God. He celebrated Mass at a sewing machine covered with a white cloth. Another time, Grandma took me into Dooley for Mass. It was in the schoolhouse and the ladies laid paper on the oiled floor for kneeling. The teacher’s desk was the altar.

My grandfather died at the farm on July 20, 1925 and we went to the funeral. The services were in the farmhouse and he was buried in the Dooley cemetery. He had joined the Catholic Church on his deathbed.

My fiercely independent, free-thinking grandfather who had taught his children their catechism and finally succumbed to his wife’s daily prayers.

Len and Al married and began their families, but the drought and depression finally defeated them and they left the home place, Len to the timber country of Oregon and Al to the shipyards in Seattle.

Grandmother died at out home in Sidney on July 20, 1933 and we took her back to Dooley and that barren cemetery on the edge of town.

My memories of Aunt Mamie are from around the dining room table in Savage. She would appear after homework, dishpan of popcorn in hand, and primed for a game of Whist. She was “feisty” like her father, and preferred to win. There would be much banter and slapping down of cards. She hummed old tunes as she planned strategy.

She was rheumatic, diabetic, and heavy. She wore elaborate hats of her own creation perched on a mound of crisp, pure white hair. She used Mrs. Stewart's bluing to prevent it from yellowing.

She worked as a cook at the Savory Hotel in Antler after her husband's death. Her son, Frank, had enlisted in World War I and stayed in the service. Another son, Fritz, had been dragged to death by a horse in his early teens.

The hotel work was difficult and took its toll of her health. She came to us when she was disabled. She was a great storyteller when she was well.

Aunt Mamie married Gus Schiller in 1930, a widower and United States Custom officer, in Antler. He was a good German Catholic and good to Mamie. He died in 1935.

Aunt Mamie moved to Helena in 1942 after my parents had sold their home and Jim was working with the Montana Employment Service. He soon set her up in her own apartment as he found her constant "big sister" attitude oppressive. She never lost her love for a good fight and I often indulged her when Mother resisted. It kept the circulation going.

She died December 8, 1954 at the age of 80 and Mother did not fail to note it was the Blessed Mother's feast day. She is buried in Westhope, North Dakota.

"Maggie" certainly was Sarah's daughter, sensitive yet practical, loving and charitable, a good housewife. Their humor was "pithy" and displayed at surprising moments. Each was a match for her volatile, charming man.

Mother learned from Grandma that food, clothing, and money were to be shared. Jim always said our house was marked by the legendary gypsy “X” as the best place in town for a handout.

One drifter, a good worker and raconteur, showed up in the fall at our Sidney house and spent the winter in the basement. Mother outfitted him as best she could when he decided to hit the road in the spring. He stopped by the Earl Varco house on his way out of town and asked for a suit jacket. When Mrs. Varco brought one of Earl’s to the door, he remarked it didn’t match Jim Brennan’s trousers very well, but he would take it. He was “Mrs. Brennan’s bum” from then on.

(If Jim Brennan was the kind to give a stranger the “shirt off his back”, then Maggie would have it freshly starched and ironed.)

Mother liked flowers and her artistry was displayed in the Savage and Sidney gardens where there was ample water. Grandmother struggled with a garden on the homestead. Mother liked to set a pretty table and the Big Four and One More, my Savage social club, learned to decorate with a theme. Grandmother always kept a neatly ironed white cloth in the closet for the priest’s visit.

Christmas was special in our home, as it had been in Sarah’s. For weeks our kitchen and dining room would be smothered in preparations. Mary and I agree that Mother made the best fondant ever. Every neighbor received a plate of cookies and candy. (There was always extra for the bachelors and children. Jim would remember at the last minute.) There would be a candle in the window to “light the Christ Child’s way”.

Mother immediately became involved in the community when we moved to Sidney in 1932. She was president of the Woman's Club and helped to start the school hot lunch program. She was president of the District Council of Catholic Women. She volunteered to conduct a study program for young converts when Bishop Edwin V. O'Hara started the Lay Apostolate program in the Great Falls Diocese. She served up her faith with luscious desserts and gained lifelong friends.

Bud returned from driving Mother to a Council meeting at a rural parish and immediately rewrote his Baltimore catechism: "Who made the World? Bishop O'Hara." Mother reprovved him gently.

The Henderson's all loved music. Mother and Mamie recalled every song from their childhood and the boys knew uproarious ballads. Mother sang hymns to the Blessed Mother as she worked around the house and she carried her rosary in an apron pocket.

The Henderson girls were good seamstresses and Mamie's millinery creations were often spectacular. Mother fashioned delightful ensembles for Mary during her college years. The dress form stood in a corner of the dining room and Bud practiced new dance steps with it. Needy Savage babies were given full layettes; cunning outfits were designed for her granddaughters.

Mother was not above her small "irreverencies," as Jim would have said. I attended an extended ordination ceremony in Iowa with her and when the celebrant intoned "Ite, Missa est," Mother turned to me with a wink and responded heartily, "Deo gratias!"

Jim obtained a job with the Chicago Joint Bank Stock Corporation in 1931 when his work was finished with the Lower Yellowstone Development Association. We moved to Atlantic, Iowa, his headquarters for collecting outstanding notes. It was the loneliest year of my life—so lonely I received excellent grades and a letter of commendation from the principal.

It was the depth of the Depression and even Jim's charm and wile could not pry much money from the Iowa farmers, whom he found to be in better circumstances than many of his Valley friends. It was disheartening. He gave up in less than a year.

Mary had accepted a teaching position with Sidney High School; Bud was with the Montana Highway Department in Glendive. We moved to Sidney and rented a house large enough for roomers.

Jim finally found a job selling cars for Kreis Motors. He set up an auction yard in a vacant lot and I was his clerk. I hated it. Defeated farmers brought in sad machinery and stood stolidly while Jim tried to squeeze a dollar out of someone. We would drag home, dusty and depressed, and even Jim's spirits were noticeably dampened.

Somehow the family found enough money to send me to the University of Montana, where I kept a scholarship for a year. I could even join my sister's sorority. I wanted to study journalism and it was one of the few times that I dared to defy my father. Journalism was hardly a "lady's occupation," as his experience had been limited to hard-drinking, tobacco-chewing publishers of small town weeklies (well, not Charlie Hurley of the Sidney Herald who gave me my first job!)

My parents were ardent life-long Democrats, usually registered in a Republican county. They were activists. Jim campaigned; Mother canvassed the block. She formed Democratic Women's Clubs; Jim charmed the ladies. Campaigns were heady times.

Jim had been a popular mayor in Antler, so his defeat in a run for sheriff of Bottineau County was a bitter disappointment. His Icelandic farm friends in eastern Bottineau County had been convinced they should not vote for a Roman Catholic. Jim was so frustrated he banked the whole house for winter by himself. I can imagine the angry recitation of each traitor's name as each furious shovel of dirt hit the foundation!

My first awareness of Jim's interest in politics was when a large colored photograph of Alfred E. Smith appeared in the Savage bank lobby. I knew nothing of the Happy Warrior, except that he was Catholic, and looked just like my Papa. I admired the generous nose and ears, the light intelligent eyes, the high brow.

Bud always said it was "God, the Pope, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt" in Mother's book. My parents hailed President Roosevelt's New Deal with cheers and defended him to the bitter end. They knew from first-hand experience that drastic measures were needed to change the economy.

Jim had found that he alone could not find a job for every down-and-outer he met on the street. There was a limit to the mortgage paper he could slip into his hip pocket as he paid the interest out of his own billfold. The staples in Mother's cupboard could not possibly cover the needs of every hungry family they knew.

They campaigned faithfully for FDR in every election and Mother kept the letters of appreciation they both received from the National Democratic Committee and Roosevelt campaign headquarters. Jim was a “Minute Man” in the last campaign and Mother grieved as if for kin when President Roosevelt died.

Jim ran for the Montana House of Representatives from Richland County in 1934, the same year Mary’s beau, Kenneth H. Harstad, filed on the Republican ticket for Superintendent of Schools in Dawson County. Mary and Jim crossed county lines to campaign. Ken was defeated.

Jim won over David J. Lewis of Sioux Pass, a three-term Republican. Democratic Alfred Anderson of Sioux Pass, my summer boss at the Soil Conservation Service, defeated the venerable W.A. Kemmis of Sidney for the Senate.

The Democrats had a strong majority in the house that Twenty-Fourth Assembly and Jim was soon aligned with a progressive farm-labor coalition. Among the familiar faces in the chambers was that of Senator William B. Hennessy (D-Pondera), one of the Pembina County boys and a brother of Leo and Tom.

Committee assignments reflected Jim’s interest: Counties and townships; irrigation and water rights (handling projects like the one at Savage); highways (Jim was interested in building a road to Circle by way of Lambert and Richey); banks and banking (“Because I was such an outstanding success as a banker, I guess”); fairs and expositions; public morals and reform (vice chairman).

He wrote Mother that he had not as yet obtained a job for a friend, but the chairman of the employment committee assured him he would place him. (Snyder Olson got the job.)

Jim introduced a bill in February that would have created the Bank of Montana, similar to the institution created by the Nonpartisan League in North Dakota. It did not find whole-hearted favor by any means.

Helena's earthquake struck in 1935 and I was concerned about my father when the tremors were felt in Missoula where I was attending the university. He called late that night from Great Falls to assure me that "urgent business" there had spirited him to safety by bus. ("Agile" describes Jim Brennan.)

He enjoyed the camaraderie on the House floor. When Carl A. Ahlgreen of Lake County presented a resolution that the Polson Dam be completed, Jim remarked that Lake County hoped to get a "dam by a power site, but still hasn't any power by a dam site."

Jerry J. O'Connell of Butte, a Democrat, had represented Silver Bow county in the House in 1931 and 1933, won a spirited campaign for the two-year term on the Montana Railroad Commission in 1934. At issue were utility and carrier rates. Mr. O'Connell recommended Jim as an auditor for the Commission after the 1935 session, stating, "Eastern Montana deserves recognition and Brennan has a fine record of fighting for the common welfare of the state." Jim was back on the road—for a time.

Governor Frank A. Cooney died in December 1935 and the President Pro Tem of the Senate, W. Elmer Holt (D-Custer), succeeded him. Lieutenant-Governor Cooney had become Governor when John E. Erickson resigned in 1933 to take the United States Senate seat of the late Thomas J. Walsh.

Running against Governor Holt in the 1936 Democratic primary, were Roy E. Ayers, H.L. Maury, and Miles Romney. Mr. O'Connell was running for the United States Congress in the First District. Mr. Ayers and Jerry won both the primary and general elections.

The state board of examiners (composed of Governor Holt, Secretary of State Sam C. Mitchell, and Attorney General Raymond Nagle, all Democrats) passed a resolution in August 1936 stating they would no longer approve salary claims of "legislators or candidates for seats in the legislature who are holding state jobs." They also would refuse to approve employment of legislators or candidates for seats by any "state department, board, commission, or institution." Jim was out of a job!

Jim served a second term in the legislature and his committee assignments in 1937 were an interesting mixture: banks and banking; House employment (chairman); equal suffrage; fairs and expositions (vice chairman); insurance; and public safety.

It was as a member of the latter that Jim introduced the bill creating the Montana Highway Patrol and licensing of drivers. Montana residents past a specific age with a clean driving record were exempt from taking the test.

Young men whom Jim knew soon wore Highway Patrol uniforms.

Jim was in his 70s when he was involved in a minor traffic accident in downtown Helena. The investigating officer discovered Jim had never taken a driver's test. He flunked.

He sheepishly admitted later that in the temper tantrum that followed, he had roared, "You Pontius Pilate, you! I created your job!"

He hired a driver to take him to Great Falls, where he passed the test. (One of the eastern Montana “boys” happened to be regional officer there.)

Jim gave a stirring tribute to the “mother of my children” while addressing equal suffrage. He knew mother was in the balcony, conducting her usual poll of “yeas and noes” before they were registered. He supported the Greater University appropriations bill in 1937 when the University of Montana students flooded the capital corridors in a lobbying effort. Jim pointed out that each Montana family would pay no more than 25 cents in additional taxes to support the system. Mary and I were mentioned as two reasons that he would.

Jim joined two former Republican legislators, Senators Ray L. Carroll of Roundup and Representative B. J. Garrison of Reichle, after the 1937 session in the State Insurance League to lobby for new laws regulating insurance companies in Montana.

Jim served as Chief Clerk of the House in 1939 when the Helena Independent-Record recognized the former legislator as being “prominently identified with legislation on topics of interest to farmers.” (He was Chief Clerk again in 1941 and Sergeant-at-Arms in 1959 or 1961.)

It was not by chance that my parents became dedicated Democrats.

Tom Henderson gave his daughter his political philosophy: “The greatest good for the greatest number.” Politics in Minnesota were often fragmented, with business interests, farm-labor groups, Populists, Socialists, Democrats, and Republicans competing for power as the population increased. Minneapolis and St. Paul had long been powerful financial centers for western expansion, controlling credit on the prairies. The immigrants who poured into the state,

eager for the rich farmland, were unaccustomed to American business practices and politics. They took their voting privileges seriously and were courted by all groups.

Grandpa was an avid reader and preferred the more liberal tracts and newspapers, such as Plentywood's "Producers News." Arthur Townley's Nonpartisan League ran hot and heavy in Sheridan County as it did in North Dakota and Minnesota. Grandpa quoted political jabs with great glee. Rebel though he might have been, he was disciplined by hard work and hard times. He felt free to criticize and vote as he wished. His pleasures were simple—a rousing political discussion, an occasional glass of homebrew or a sip of good whiskey, a game of cards, and music.

Jim gave him plenty of political discussions and often a sip of bootleg whiskey. He matched Grandpa's stories.

It was not just the Brennans' search for freedom and a better life that shaped Jim's political thinking. They moved into a section of North Dakota that was rich with territorial history and dotted with tight settlements of French Catholics (including the Metis), Irish Catholics, Irish and Scotch Protestants, Canadians, Americans, and Scandinavians.

Pembina, to the north of Bathgate on the Canadian border, was the first settlement in the great northwest. It was a training center for Indians and trappers and lay in the heart of the best buffalo hunting grounds. The Red River had long been a road to the north. There was traffic through Pembina from the east as there was no established overland route in Canadian territory between Ottawa and the prairie. There was political intrigue there during westward expansion. Pembina was the capital in 1870 for Louis Riel, the half-breed visionary who attempted to carve a nation for his people, the Metis.

The territorial capital was moved from Yankton to Bismarck in 1883 (with some shenanigans) and the territory was divided into North and South Dakota in 1889. A western

North Dakota was settled, there was growing dissatisfaction among farmers with the credit system.

Bathgate was a small town and people were well known to each other. There were those around who had participated in early event. Reverend J. B. M. Genin, the Oblate priest for whom Jim served Mass, had been missionary to all the Indian tribes of the northwest; he was on the scene during the Metis uprising and knew much of the church's past in settlement of the vast prairie. It was he who had married my mother's parents in Duluth in 1872.

The Brennans, including the "Winniepeg" cousins who visited often, were great readers, observers, and talkers. Jim, the eager schoolboy with a mind like a sponge, would have missed little. He applied much of what he learned and remembered.

During the years Jim was in Antler, the Socialists were gaining strength in western North Dakota. Democrats were few and far between. The biggest impact on North Dakota politics was the Nonpartisan League, organized in 1915, which attempted to find candidates from any party who would support their agrarian reforms.

I do not know how many times Jim might have voted with the League. I asked his sister, Amelia, why North Dakota would send to the United States Senate the perennial candidate, William Langer, who had been in and out of the League and once was recalled as governor.

"He's out of the state, now," she replied.

My father kept in touch with the “refinements” of North Dakota politics after we moved to Montana through contacts with Amelia and Florence, old friends passing through, and reports in the national press, of which there were many.

Amelia, busy with her large family and community affairs, wrote sparkling letters filled with home county news. She was a sharp observer of scene and character.

I did not know her well, except through letters and a few visits to the big O’Connor house on the edge of St. Thomas. Hers was a family of handsome, vital, talented, proud people. Uncle Archie led with a loud voice and a firm hand. Aunt Amelia was a good manager and led with love. Archie was the United States Custom officer and knew everyone in the country and across the line. He had many Canadian cousins who often visited in St. Thomas, and Aunt Amelia’s dining room table could always be extended to serve us all. The conversations were rich.

Mother saved a letter from Amelia that commented on the fine letter I had written as a five-year-old, adding that I would be the one to write a novel someday. It may well have colored my fond memories of her.

I know little of Aunt Florence’s life after Mr. Baldwin’s death until she became librarian for the North Dakota Historical Society. She was married briefly to Albert Davis and their son, Brennan Briggs, was born in 1912. Elaine was married in 1922 to handsome, lanky Alvin L. (Turk) Derby in Bismark. I thought Elaine was the most beautiful bride in the world when their picture arrived. Aunt Florence had pinned graceful fern fronds to the skirt of her heavy satin gown.

Aunt Florence was a handsome woman with strong features and her mother's heavy hair, which she coiled around a proud head. She had an unerring sense of her own style and wore a few good clothes for many years. She bought books instead of food.

Jim helped her while she was studying librarianship at the University of Wisconsin. He once said he sent her a check and in her next letter she reported the purchase of a lovely evening wrap, trimmed in monkey fur, which had belonged to a well-known actress.

She was a natural as state librarian. She was indefatigable in research and used the Brennan charm to acquire valuable historical items. Jim's library held books about North Dakota, which gave credit to Florence's research assistance. She was a leader in the North Dakota Federation of Women's Clubs for years. He was immensely proud of her achievements. Florence knew all the state leaders—and their foibles—and reported on them to Jim, concisely and to the jugular.

She took me to the site of Fort Abraham Lincoln near Bismarck when it was being restored and told me, dramatically, the story of Custer's Last Stand. She pointed out the route the United States troops had taken west and I "saw" the cavalry pennants whipping in the breeze. She gave me a brick from one of the buildings.

Aunt Florence sent Brennan to us during school vacations, either with Grandma or without. He and Bud were a naughty pair, with Bud encouraging his younger cousin. They teased unmercifully. Jim tried to keep them busy. He hired them, as well as Norma Hood and me, to pull mustard seed from a flax field near town. The boys went skinny-dipping after directing us to pull weeds close to the road and far from the canal. Not even Grandma succeeded in keeping them in line at the table.

Florence was a Brennan romantic but not one to just sit and dream. She came to my sister's wedding in August 1935 and certainly added "panache" to the simple home wedding Mary and Mother planned.

Mary was finishing her master's degree in English at the University of North Dakota that summer (and Aunt Florence was proud of that). Ken called from Richey to ask if Mother had heard if the date had been set. Mother hoped he had. Mary sent material for the gowns and mother and Mrs. Hendrickson created the bride's cream-colored, full-length lace sheath and my turquoise chiffon shirtwaist with white taffeta trim. Mother planned baskets of gladiola for the "parlors." Ken's sister Eleanor would come from Mayville, North Dakota to sing and Betty Jo Horsley, my friend, would accompany her on the piano previous tenants had left in the house.

The wedding gifts streamed in. Mary came home in time for the trousseau tea and all was in order.

Aunt Florence arrived in Glendive on the late train two nights before the ceremony and plans were changed before we reached Sidney. Furniture was rearranged. The bride would descend the staircase formally even though few could see her from the "parlors." She would wear a strand of pearls (gift from Cousin Elaine) in her "titian" hair. The ceremony would take place in the dining room and Father Curtin would stand "there." That meant the bridegroom entered from the kitchen.

I must admit Aunt Florence's arrangement of one white gladiola lying on the sideboard between crystal candlesticks was the final perfect touch.

Walt Stewart had arrived early in the morning of the wedding with chilled champagne (Jim's bold surprise, not Aunt Florence's). Jim spilled his glass in the emotional moment of his toast to the bride, reached over, and took mine before my first taste.

The bride cried nearly all the way to Regina and her honeymoon because she did not say goodbye to "Papa."

Aunt Florence spent the rest of the day seated in her white silk suit with black velvet ascot, pecking away at Mother's old Underwood. It was more elaborate than any wedding story I ever edited in the newspaper business and the Sidney Herald printed it as written. Mother and Mary were embarrassed.

Florence was the family historian. She wrote to Eamon DeValera, the famed president of Ireland, when she found they had a mutual ancestor. Jim laughed and said Florence had traced the family back to "a king of the horse thieves." But, he had tears in his eyes when he showed me pictures of the peasants being evicted from their cottages in a big old Irish history book from their childhood home.

Aunt Florence was seemingly undaunted by adversity and Jim proudly said she "put up a good front."

That is why he grieved so deeply when she died in 1952 while she was with Elaine and Turk in Virginia. Arteriosclerosis had tragically accentuated her earlier eccentricities and it was impossible for Jim to accept the fact that a strong woman had been defeated that way.

My sister is the intellectual one in our generation having inherited the Brennan's avid thirst for knowledge. She also is mentally disciplined, a practice she attempted to teach her students, including me. I claim she has our father's "photographic mind."

She resigned from teaching when she married and two daughters, Pat and Margot, were born. They lived in Richey where Ken was superintendent of schools and coach, and Mary became a devoted housewife and mother. She was an artist in her kitchen even before there was money for fancy ingredients. They moved to Glendive in 1945 and Kathie was born in 1946.

Mary was active in her church, the American Association of University Women, Montana Institute of the Arts, and many other organizations. Ken, chairman of the school board, was an active Elk, and supported activities for the youth. They built strong friendships Mary was awarded an AAUW summer institute scholarship to Vassar College when Kathie was five. Pat and Margot stayed with us in Denver and that was an enlightening experience.

Mary returned to teaching and then began a long search for a librarianship degree, fitting summer courses into the household schedule. My husband Fred was disgusted that a grown woman would "bone" so hard for A's when she came to Denver University. She was librarian-teacher at Washington School for 17 years.

Mary's interest and mine did not jibe for many years because of our age difference and we saw each other seldom. She was my big sister, whom I could love and admire, attempt to emulate but not really know as a friend. That changed when I married, and Ken and Mary enlarged their family to include mine.

Like Jim—and my husband—Mary read widely of “far away places.” She knows world history and English literature as well as she knows the streets of Glendive.

A trip to Europe with Mary and Kathie in the summer of 1963 greatly enhanced my admiration for this product of the small-town west.

Margot and her French father-in-law, Albert Portal, met us in Paris when we divided our time between Notre Dame Cathedral, the West Bank, and the Louvre. Mary was ecstatic when we stood on the Seine River bank for a “lumière et son.” She sat spellbound later in Rome while Orson Welles recounted Roman history in the Forum during a similar event.

We stayed in Dijon with Margot’s new family and Mary understood more French at the table than her daughter realized. Madame Portal plied us with delicacies. Daniel, Margot’s husband, returned from Paris and a series of tests, and we embarked on a tour through Southern France to Rome and north through the Alps and Switzerland to Wiesbaden, Germany where Bud was stationed with the Air Force. We were cozy in the Pueqot we had borrowed from Mr. Portal. We missed few cathedrals, museums, historic town squares, or regional food.

Bud accompanied us to Bonn and Cologne on a Rhine River boat. Mary saw with her own eyes the Lorelei rock and the “mouse” castle. We ventured alone to London.

There she was determined to see every stone of British history. We visited Stratford-on-Avon and Ann Hathaway’s garden was in full bloom for her benefit. She recited verses of “Lady on the Lake” as we motor-coached through the Highlands. She turned to me in the Glasgow cab en route to the mail boat and Ireland, and asked, “Could our grandfather have walked this street?” (This was at two-years of age!)

Ireland was like going to heaven. The sun broke through a long rainy season and the countryside was green and gold. Fred had selected a small Dublin hotel for us that was near Trinity College and the post office where the 1916 uprising had begun. Mary marveled at the stately Georgian homes and the perfect English of the bus driver. She wept when a tattered pensioner defied downtown traffic.

The Irish place names rolled off Mary's tongue, as they had at Jim's home, while we journeyed west to Shannon airport. It poured at Killarney, but Mary sat under a tree in the wet jaunting cart, peering long at the lake through the mist and storing my memories for Papa.

My sister-in-law was at our home in Casper, Wyoming when we returned. She listened to Mary's glowing report for three days and then asked what I had seen for my husband's money.

It was Mary's shining eyes when she found the Magna Charta in the British National Museum and the Book of Kells at Trinity College.

My father spent a lifetime challenging the exigencies of the agrarian world in which he moved. He never forgot an experience or what it had taught him. He formed definite ideas of what the government should and could do for farmers.

When he spoke at the dedication of the Savage Pumping Project in 1949 he declared, "It is the proper function of the Federal government to cooperate with the States in surveying the possibilities of conserving our water resources." He said the cooperation should extend to working with existing utilities so that the public would receive all possible benefits of both public and private development and distribution of electric power.

"In the 700 miles of this giant river (the Yellowstone), there are now no storage reservoirs," he pointed out. "Someday storage dams will be constructed that will hold up the surplus flow of this mighty river and (it) will be utilized to develop and irrigate more thirsty acres."

Jim greeted with much satisfaction construction of Fort Peck Dam on the Missouri River, cheaper electric power and the advent of the Rural Electrification Administration.

He began work with the Montana Employment Service (under the Unemployment Compensation Commission) in 1941 as farm placement supervisor. That was a happy merger, as Jim brought a wealth of knowledge about agricultural industry, a horde of acquaintances throughout the state and an eagerness that age never dimmed.

The Commission was working under the War Manpower Commission during World War II and later the United States Employment Service. Jim was non-political in those days—well, enough to keep his Civil Service rating intact—but he could still “individually” send a good word about an applicant, find a job for a friend, and make his annual contribution to the Democratic Party.

The nation’s labor situation became crucial in 1942 and western states were extremely short of seasonal agricultural workers. Jim and his boss, O. C. Lamport, convinced Governor Sam C. Ford, a Republican, to apply for Japanese-American internees, a controversial and emotional program at the time. They could also ask for Italian and German war prisoners.

Fifteen hundred Japanese-Americans were assigned to Montana, mostly in the sugar beet areas. The governor cooperated fully in the fall when communities closed schools and businesses so volunteer workers could assist in the harvest. Montana State College in Bozeman sent its students to eastern Montana irrigation projects. The crops were excellent.

In June, and again in August, Senator James E. Murray (D-Montana), expressed displeasure in the state press with the manner in which the Employment Service was assisting agriculture. Jim had interviewed him in July and trusted the Senator was satisfied.

Jim responded firmly and fully to the Senator's office after the August attack. Mr. Lamport answered in the press.

In January 1943, Senator Murray wrote to Arthur S. Flemming, Director of the United States War Manpower Commission, expressing his concern about the "political nature" of Jim's annual report on 1942 farm placement. (It had commended Governor Ford.) He questioned the veracity of statements concerning the ability to furnish labor in 1943; he called for a reorganization of the Helena office. The letter was released to the Montana press.

Well! Jim wrote a seven-page letter to his Denver regional office refuting the Senator's release, paragraph by paragraph. He was especially concerned with the Senator's assertion that the Service had taken credit for work done by the communities. Jim enclosed statements of commendation from Chambers of Commerce, sugar beet factory managers, individual community leaders, college deans, and even members of the legislature.

The Senator's letter stated that the report "appears to be more of a campaign document for the Governor of Montana and the Republican Administration of the State than a factual review of activities of the Employment Service."

Jim pointed out the Governor was not running for office at the time and "Political matters are a delicate subject to bring up between Governor Ford and myself." He said, "Senator Murray and his secretarial staff know my political record up to the time I became employed by the

Unemployment Compensation Commission. Since that time I have taken absolutely no part in politics.”

Jim closed his letter by reporting that the value of Montana’s main crops in 1942 was \$134,177,000. “No wonder the Montana farmers are jubilant. Everyone is happy except Senator Murray.” Copies were sent to the entire Montana Congressional delegation, along with his 1942 report.

That same month he was corresponding with the Senator regarding a friend who hoped to be named United States Marshal. Jim held few grudges—but he never forgot an incident, either.

There was no meanness in Jim Brennan. In the heat of one campaign he reminded Mother, “There’s a little bit of good in each of us, including a Republican.” My son, Jim’s namesake, was a freshman at Colorado College when he mounted quotations on his dormitory room door from “the great thinkers.” He included his grandfather’s, bravely credited.

Jim was director of the Montana Employment Service when he retired in 1949. He immediately joined Marie Erdahl’s real estate office in Helena. It was slim pickings. He did acquire a little property, including a strip of narrow lots high up on the Last Chance Gulch, which was sold long after his death.

He also acquired some interesting trade-ins, including a man’s diamond ring set with three matched stones. He wore it ever after and willed it to his three “jewels,” his granddaughters. He had part interest in an abandoned gold mine south of Helena.

My husband sent me home to explore vacation cabin sites when he heard Jim's claim was near the town of Clancey. The mine was high on the mountainside, the thin little creek far below. Once again, Jim had run into a water shortage. He salvaged enough ore for an assay and my Jim still has his share of the flakes.

Jim Taylor caught a cutthroat trout in the creek that day, and Jim Brennan danced a jig for joy. He called Mother long distance to warn her to have the skillet ready for "Jamie's" fish.

The time my father spent with his grandfather was precious, and he made the most of it. He treated them as very important people, delighted in their progress, probed their minds, and taught them. He showered them with attention. A Christmas gift list for Pat and Margot was found on the back of notes for a speech.

Mother doted on them and never forgot a holiday. Birthday and Christmas gifts were inspired. Candy Easter eggs once miraculously appeared under a state capital tree for Kathie when older children shoved her out of the hunt. Mother saved every greeting card from her "darlings."

"Jamie" was a little special because as he carried the Brennan name. He had received emergency baptism in the hospital when born prematurely on January 10, 1954. We decided to have another christening when his grandparents came to Denver in April. Jim Brennan beamed each time the young priest pronounced "James Patrick Brennan Taylor." The priest remarked later than it was a very long name for a very small baby, but his grandfather predicted he would grow into it.

I met Fred Taylor when he came to Great Falls as district landman for Phillips Petroleum Company. He accepted the job in Denver with Murphy Corporation in the fall of 1950 and we decided, long distance, to be married. He came to Montana for Christmas and walked Jim around a long, snowy block to present his credentials. We chose to be married February 10, 1951 in Great Falls.

My father thought a girl should be married from her own home in her own parish church, but he went along with our plans. The “simple rectory ceremony” grew a little each time I reported to my parents. Jim remarked I was beginning to sound like Governor John Bonner—“Hold that budget, but let’s do this!” However, it was Jim who found the extravagant white trousseau negligee as an engagement gift.

My parents and a reluctant Aunt Mamie drove over from Helena for the ceremony and barely escaped a massive rockslide in Wolf Creek Canyon. Their car was damaged, but nobody told the bride.

I thought Mary was weepy all weekend because it was a wedding; their hotel room was too expensive; Ken had been stuck with the rehearsal dinner because Bud did not arrive; and she had a fight with Aunt Mamie, as she did not like the hat she had finally selected for her wisteria faille suit.

Personally, I thought it was a rather nice day, even though I sympathized with Ken because John Goff’s trousers were too wide in the waist and too short in the ankles when he substituted for Bud as best man. I knew nothing about the music the Lithuanian refugee priest played, and the temperature dropped 20 degrees between the church and the reception.

(It was only later that I learned the bridegroom did not like purple, he thought the cream-colored faille suit was “sort of dumpy” and he was allergic to the Scotch heather decorating the reception hall.)

Jim wept at the airport because “Baby” (at long last!) was leaving home. We spent our honeymoon (overnight en route to Denver) at the Northern Hotel in Billings. Fred ordered a midnight supper and one of the waiters who brought it to the table said, “Pat, what the hell are you doing here?” He was the former chef at Charlie Bovey’s Café in Virginia City. I often ran into Montana people who knew the Brennan name—mostly friends of Jim, Bud, or Mary.

Jim always said the greatest insult was to forget a person’s name and he drilled that into his children. He tried word association with me until I greeted Mr. Fisher as “Mr. Cod” in his presence.

I finally figured out that Jim associated a name with the face, the date, the place, and the incident. He once stunned an out-of-state speaker in Butte (I’ve forgotten his name!) by introducing himself as “Jim Brennan of Bathgate, North Dakota.” By any chance would the speaker be the son of so-and-so who had attended the University of North Dakota and has been such-and-such in a particular town? It was the supreme compliment.

My reputed talent as a reporter could have come from my father, as I seemed to capture the color of the scene, the first sharp impressions and the immediate impact of an event on participants. I wrote a fairly good sidebar. I was no hard news reporter with important civic assignments; I covered the “gentler” beats. I developed a feature writer’s “turn of phrase”—no doubt another Brennan trait.

I always wanted to be in newspaper work and Aunt Amelia's letter about my five-year-old talents may have had more influence than I thought. I had no illusions about writing the Great American novel, although a fifth grade friend and I had collaborated on a romantic serial; its style borrowed from the Denver Post pink sheet.

I worked on high school and college newspapers and yearbooks and became a fast typist. I did everything except prepare myself with Mary's discipline in grammar, spelling, and the English language. I took a journalism professor's word that it was more important to know where to find information than to know everything.

Jim told me he had asked my college advisor how I was doing and Ed Dugan replied, "Fine, except that she seems to be majoring in extra-curricular activities and men."

Jim found a summer job for me at the Sidney Herald after graduation from college (across the state from a beau of whom he did not approve). I chased ads as I slid along the grasshopper-infested streets, was allowed to write a few locals and collated the Richland County Fair bulletin. Jim helped me cover the election for the United Press, for which the publisher was paid.

Next, I was the world's worst legal secretary for Tad Sanders and broke most of the office machinery, including the safe. Alex Nelson hired me as secretary for the Richland National Bank and he and Glenn Hall taught me discipline on a job.

Friends got me my first job on the Great Falls Tribune in December 1939 as clerk-receptionist in the newsroom. I was paid \$18 a week and saved \$200 that first year. Mr. Hall told Mother when I closed my account at the Richland National, "We've lost Patricia to the big city!"

Jim wrote Aunt Florence in April 1942 that he and Mother were in Great Falls the weekend I “landed” my first picture on the front page. “She can do everything that a newspaper reporter can do except chew tobacco,” he said modestly.

World War II and the manpower shortage gave me a chance as editor of the Montana Parade—the Tribune’s Sunday feature section. I covered picture stories statewide and thought I was “hot stuff.”

My most spectacular assignment was in October 1944 when I flew on an Air Force public relations tour to Nome, Alaska. Fighter planes were being ferried to the Russians under the Lend-Lease program and the Tribune had honored the censorship requirements for months. The Minneapolis papers broke the story and we were given a consolation prize. We would visit each of the American bases through eastern Canada and Alaska.

When I told Jim of the assignment, he said, “Look into the real estate situation up there, Baby. There might be an opening for me.” He was 65 years of age!

I retired when I married, but I served a short stint on the Casper Star-Tribune after we moved there in 1960. It was good to be back in a shop.

My family and my employees always seemed to smooth the way for me and I allowed it too often. I married a man of decision and let him lead the way.

It was a surprise to me in his last illness in 1981 to discover that I had inherited some of the Brennan and Henderson durability. I coped when there was nobody else around to do it for me.

Bud was assigned to Davis-Monthan Air Force base in Tucson, Arizona in 1955 and Jim decided to spend the winter in the Southwest. Jim took the Arizona realtor's examination the week after he arrived and joined a Tucson firm. He sold a \$150,000 horse ranch and immediately became embroiled in a collection suit that kept him occupied even after his return to Montana.

My parents stopped in Denver en route home and Mother was tired. There was sort of a "shadow" on their spirits. I was told about five years later than Bud had obtained a divorce in Tucson that year from Mary Jane Allen, whom he had married early in the war and had been separated from ever since. They had a daughter, Molly Gene, whom he had supported.

I was in Helena when Mother told me. She brought out my baby pictures of Molly from the old Irish history book in the bottom shelf of the bookcase. She showed me letters from Mary Jane. She and Jim had been supplementing Bud's support money for years.

Jim, the proud one, had covered this anxiety with hard work and determined cheerfulness. Mother, her health deteriorating, stayed home and brooded, wishing she could know this grandchild and grieving for Bud. Divorce was incomprehensible to her.

I understood, then, why my brother had stayed in the service. He had a good career with Air Force Finance and was a talented non-commissioned training officer. He had traveled much, in the States and abroad.

But Bud, like my father, was mercurial. He had inherited intelligence, wit, charisma, and talent from both sides of the family. Like Jim, every person he met was a friend. He never

forgot a name, a place, a date, or an incident. His nickname, "Skeeter," suited him. He resembled the Hendersons, slight and dark, graceful and spry.

Like them, he was musical. His young voice was a choirboy's soprano. Clyde Kyser, the blind pianist and bartender in Savage, often called for Bud because of his perfect pitch when there was a request for a tune Clyde didn't know.

He was a prankster, an imaginative one. He was always in and out of scrapes, long after Jim should have relinquished responsibility.

Bud was devoted to Mother but unable to acquire her self-discipline. Once, while home on leave, he causally remarked he wished he had stayed in college and studied law. Mother chased him out of the kitchen with a butcher knife.

He adored Jim but competed with him and chafed at the rules. He missed too much of a man's presence in our home while our father traveled. He loved and admired Mary but never outgrew their sibling rivalry. He spoiled me.

"Skeeter" made his mark in the days before weight and height became so important in sports. He was a fast basketball forward and shot "under" the defense. His pole vaulting took him to a state meet. He was dashing in his golf "plus fours." He was catcher for Glendive's Varsity Stars, a semipro baseball team.

Bud hit his first and only home run at the Sydney diamond across an empty lot from our house. He reached home plate standing and continued to run toward our house, shouting,

“Maggie! Maggie! I hit a home run!” Mother, on the front steps, replied, “That’s nice, dear. Run back and hit another one.”

I do not know when Bud learned that Mary and I knew of his marriage and divorce. Nor do I remember when he learned that Molly had married a service man from Helena and they had come there to live. Jim helped set them up in an apartment and when their son, David, was born my parents showered him with gifts.

I do know that Bud’s deep grief at the death of our father was much intensified by Molly’s presence because his marriage—and Molly—were unknown to friends and relatives. It was a sad, low day for our boy-man brother.

Jim returned to the real estate business with Marie Erdahl, and on her death, joined Michael Sado. He retired. He joined Jack Cooper and Jack Russell in the Helena Real Estate Agency. He was president of the Helena Board of Realtors the year before he died.

With Brennan verve he designed a full-page advertisement in the Helena Independent-Record, displaying all of the members’ pictures and their specialties.

My parents had moved from the little rented house on Warren Street to a larger one at 801 North Ewing. Jim enjoyed redecorating the first home they had owned since Sidney. He brought home a complete dining room suite of black mahogany from the Governor Erickson estate sale. Mother remarked when they moved that the rental houses they had lived in reminded her of the “Cobbler’s children who had no shoes.”

Mother was diabetic and subject to infections. Jim supervised the footbaths, changed the dressings, and fretted. She was hospitalized in the winter of 1964 and came home in a wheelchair. They had only sporadic help.

Jim had long suffered from what he described as a “touchy stomach” and that winter it was getting worse. He called in February and asked me to “come home and take charge.” His strength was failing.

Bud came home on extended leave in preparation for retirement and Mary teaching in Glendive, came when she could.

Jim and his partners settled their affairs in the hospital with papers spread on the bed. My father dictated one long last contract to me. Still in charge, he called one morning and ordered a small bottle of brandy from the kitchen cupboard. When I refused to break hospital rules, the doctor called and ordered the bottle. A sip of brandy was warming and nutritious.

Jim said, “Let me go,” when the doctors indicated surgery and his young neighbor cried when he told us they would have to.

He died March 17, 1964 with Bud and a loyal Irish friend, Horace Casey, with him. When Mary told Mother, she said, “Dear Jim is at peace”—and reached for her rosary.

Mr. Casey had dyed his white beard green that St. Patrick’s Day morning to amuse Jim and it was a struggle to bleach it before the Knights of Columbus ritual at the funeral. Bud remembered that Jim had told the tailor during one fitting of his Knights of Columbus uniform, “Make it fit well, Andy; it is me funeral shroud.”

He had told me during the long hospital stay that there was enough money to care for Mother but he was leaving “friends” to his children.

Indeed! They streamed to the house and the funeral. It was a long intimate wake with much laughter over remembered stories, just Jim’s kind of party! Loving cousins gathered to escort Uncle Jim to Resurrection Cemetery. A middle-aged woman introduced herself to Mother. Mother began to sing, “Lazy Mary, Will You Get Up?”—a song the woman had sung in a home talent show in the Yellowstone Valley years before. She had come to Jim’s funeral in memory of her father who had told his family that Jim had saved their farm during the depression.

I later told an Irish priest about Mr. Carey’s green beard and he said, “What a way to go.” That it was.

We closed the house and Mother said, “Goodbye, house,” when Bud helped her to the car for the trip to Glendive. There she waited, patiently and quietly, until a stroke defeated her and she died January 27, 1967. We buried her in Helena.

And the next year, again in a Montana winter, the Harstads and I took Bud back to Helena to be buried beside them. He had been in Glendive for a gala Christmas and had suffered a heart attack on the plane en route to Tucson. He died January 7, 1968 in a friend’s car that was on its way to the base hospital.

I started this account with the hope it would sparkle like the atmosphere around my father. I may well have descended to what my pragmatic husband often called “professional Irish” as memories of other family members rolled in. For that, I apologize.

I make no claim that my parents contributed more than others of their generation, except I will always believe it was Jim's canny colonization of only "good" farmers that helped to dramatically reverse the Lower Yellowstone Project economy after those dark days of the 1920s and 1930s.

Jim and Margaret Brennan had faith, fortitude, and each other. That combination radiated warmth few could resist. It is for that they will be remembered.