

Prairieland Talk—

# 'Dugout' for Hancock's Father

By ROMAIN SAUNDERS, 4110 South 51st St., Lincoln 6, Nebr.

LINCOLN.—The story has appeared in print. A native son and daughter of Holt county for the past quarter century out there in the crowded human haunts of that great city in Southern California, Los Angeles, where Mr. and Mrs. Claude Hancock made their home.

They have traveled the highway of life together for a half century, starting in the village in the charming Inman community where flows the silvery Elkhorn. And I wonder if at times there comes to Claude and Stella out there in those crowded haunts visions and longings for the scenes of their youth on green robed prairies of Holt county?



Romaine Saunders

Go to the north boundary section line of O'Neill, travel that section line six miles east. There more than 70 years ago the father of Claude Hancock holed up in a "dugout" holding down a homestead. A few others in a wide radius did likewise and four kids of these homesteaders were taught from the school books of that remote period, my respected sire wearing a GAR badge being the teacher, and his homestead abode two miles or more northwest of school treasurer's dugout being also the school-house.

It was my assignment at the end of the month, just two comprising the school term, to mount a horse and ride over to Treasurer Hancock's treasure vault and get the two ten-dollar bills and take them home to dad, his month's pay.

Claude hadn't at that time appeared on the prairieland scene. And now may I reach a hand across prairieland, mountains and deserts to grasp the hand of Claude and Stella and express congratulations of ancient Prairieland Talker.

The brief but bright December days have gone upon the wings of time and now we write it 58. As this is typed into words the sun glows with radiant splendor out of the bright blue heavens above. All is calm, not a wind to put the warm sun bathed air in motion and the nude arms of stately oaks reach heavenward as if to express our gratitude for the summer like day as December fades away. Any who had folded their tents and left prairieland for distant winter resorts know not what grand days they left behind. Word from a daughter of mine now in the distant Southland is that temperatures sunk below zero down there. An O'Neill patriot or two who have spent their winters in the south we trust have remained at home to bask in the sunlight of bright December days. But now we step across the border into January. Will there be another 12th of January such as hit us 70 years ago. Let's see, who was it that said everybody talks about the weather but nobody does anything about it. Nice day!

It was in July in the year 1903; O'Neill dug up another thousand dollars to reduce the Short Line bonds by that amount. Mrs. Henry Zimmerman and three children were spending a few days at Spencer. Rev. M. F. Cassidy departed for Buffalo, N. Y., and other eastern points to be gone three weeks. A daughter was born July 15 that year to Mr. and Mrs. John McManus. Mr. and

Mrs. E. J. Mack and little daughter were up from Inman. Henry Mills returned home from Page, where he had served as nurse for John Walker, Mr. Walker being about well again. Charles Wrede north of town found four dead horses in his pasture, hit by lightning. The death of Michael Mullen a pioneer of the community, was reported a day in July of that year. Miss Mary Horksey went to Lyons, to spend a few days with friends. Sam Howard was having a building built near the bank at the corner of 4th and Douglas where he will open a meat market. Dr. J. P. Gilligan installed X-ray equipment in his medical center, the first such in O'Neill. The Boston Bloomers came to town and defeated the hometown team on the baseball field.

The national congress convenes January 7. This is another election year that may bring about the retirement of some members of congress. Senator Hruska of Nebraska has mailed me his first Washington report for this year. The past summer the senator had a first hand look at situations in Europe. I quote his closing words:

"Happily for both of us, Mrs. Hruska accompanied me on this trip (though not at the expense of the U. S. taxpayer). Both of us are children of immigrants (Czechoslovakia) who came here just before and shortly after the Civil War. Upon returning to America, we found ourselves grateful for the allies in Europe, who are making such a sturdy stand against the advance of Communism. "But we also found ourselves supremely grateful that our ancestors, by coming to this country, made it possible for us to have a life and a family in a country possessed of real freedom, liberty and promise."

Wally Mullen, a native of O'Neill and brother of Leo, but now a West coast victim, sent me Christmas greetings from his home in Los Angeles and mentions the thinning ranks of those we had known in the O'Neill community. The onward sweep of time writes the obituaries of those we had known, had loved, had esteemed, had hated; then comes into the picture out of the highways of time others who take over and await the day they too hear the drumbeat of eternity. Yes, Wally, many of those we had known are gone; on earth's last camping ground they now lifeless lay, but memory will ever cherish their thought and the spot that marks the bivouac of our dead.

They went east, they went west, they took off for the north, they headed south—man and his mate to the home of their youth, grandfather, grandmother to see and embrace another year-end-year beginning season. College and university students to their home communities for a brief two weeks. Home! How it is written on these human hearts of ours. Life's sacred ties, memories, where life begins, where it is lived and where it will end—our home. And out of the storms and struggles of this early pilgrimage the immortal life may be yours to dwell throughout the endless ages of eternity in that home that shall never more record a death.

A moment's thought from I Timothy 6:6-8: But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

Editorial—

## 'Odd Balls' Who Talk Peace

Everyone is for peace. During the past few weeks we've been hearing a lot of "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men." Most practical people are caught up in the cold war and are convinced the only way to peace is by being first in hydrogen weapons. Edwin A. Lahey, veteran newsmen of the Chicago Daily News, knocked out a piece the day before Christmas. The effort is a bit late in being reproduced, but the article, written with a flippancy that has a touch of sadness and is poignant, follows:

WASHINGTON—There are people in Washington who talk peace. But they are the odd balls. They picket the white house, hold prayer vigils, write pleading letters to the H-bomb rattlers. But they don't have much of an audience.

Of late they have been making my office a drop joint, for no reason that I can determine. They leave their overcoats here while they go through the National Press Building with their pleas and pamphlets.

They have even taken to using my typewriter to compose letters to President Eisenhower. They all have two things in common.

First, they have a look in the kisser that is possessed only by the clean of heart. Second, they absolutely refuse to be discouraged in Washington, where the "sense of urgency," meaning more missiles, is the only correct posture.

One of these people pushing peace is John McConnell, publisher of the Rural Toe Valley View in the highlands of western North Carolina.

John periodically leaves the paper with relatives and staff to get out and runs to Washington in hope of selling his idea to make the first U. S. satellite "a star of hope and a vigorous good-will crusade."

Another visitor is young and beautiful Patricia Murphy of Philadelphia, Pa. She left a convent during her novitiate to work in the world, then left a wealthy parental home to live in voluntary poverty with the Catholic Worker movement in New York.

There was a wide-eyed young man with Pat Murphy who wanted to sail a boat into the Bikini testing range in the Pacific, and force the U. S. government to blow him up the next time they tested a hydrogen bomb.

Another visitor is named Peter Hill, an earnest young man who has some connection with the Quakers, and who is determined to crack the "shell of cynicism" that envelops the world in its cold war.

Then there is Ammon Hennacy, an oldtime Christian anarchist, who never stops pushing pacifism. Ammon never knows where his next meal is coming from, and can put his socks on from either end.

But he has the poise and self-assurance of a man who owes \$500,000.

They come and go, passing out their pamphlets, writing their appeals on my typewriter, and refusing to see they are living in a brutal world.

A theologian would probably say these peo-

ple are afflicted with invincible innocence.

Their incurable love of their fellow man bothers me. Sometimes I wish they'd go away.

But enough of this mish-mash. I must dash out and buy a toy Sputnik and flame thrower, to help some underprivileged to observe the joyous feast of innocence.

### Looking Ahead with Confidence

O'Neill has closed the books on another year, and the citizenry once again can look back with pride on substantial strides that have been made in several directions.

Sparkling new homes have cropped up in all sections of the city, occasionally supplanting old landmarks. The homes, understandably, vary in hue, dimension and architecture. Some are ambitious, fine homes; all are assets to our city.

Most dramatic, perhaps, has been the domestic construction on the north side, both inside and outside the city limits. This has been an area of continuing development in the post-World War II years. New dwellings now dot the landscape where in yesteryear a few bold coyotes and prairie wolves occasionally would venture.

Within the memory of many townspeople the dwellings north of St. Patrick's Catholic church could be counted on your fingers.

Three church groups have built substantial structures within the past year. Christ Lutheran has a new 70-thousand-dollar Gothic-type edifice now in final stages of construction. First Presbyterian church has a new Sunday-school and Fellowship hall unit, now in abundant use. The Nebraska Methodist conference dedicated a combination office-residence for the district superintendent.

Seeger Oil company during the summer moved into a spacious new headquarters at the east edge; existing buildings have been extensively remodeled and renovated, notably the Lohaus Motor block (formerly Mellor), soon to be the new home of Safeway; the Shriner building, formerly Harry R. Smith Implements, has been remodeled by Lohaus; the cavernous new Hunt building, constructed several years ago, now houses north-Nebraska's finest bowling facility. Other business buildings have had face-liftings.

In spite of tensions in the world, O'Neill can look ahead with confidence and pride.



CARROLL W. STEWART, Editor and Publisher

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