Down in "Texas"

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by

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Down in the area known as "Texas", the sun gleams through the still, leafy trees and dances on the rippling waters of the sleepy Ohio River as William F. Lischkge, a quiet, dignified man, prepares to leave for his job at the Wooden Shoe. He is a cabinet maker for the Shoe which also manufactures beautiful bedroom furniture. His wife, Alma Schuyler Lischkge, prepares for another busy day in Aurora, caring for their four children; Clayton (b. May 15, 1903, d. 1982), Selma Viola (b. January 5, 1905), Garnet Alice (b. February 16, 1912), and Jewel LaFaye (b. September 1, 1925). It was a close knit family, as most families were then and remains close today.

Aurora, nestled in the gently rolling hills, was beginning to flourish. The town was laid out by Jesse L. Holman, a trustee for the Aurora Association for Internal Improvements, after the land's purchase from Charles Vattier of Cincinnati of January 14, 1819. Being situated on the right bank of the Ohio River, twenty-six miles below Cincinnati, the town enjoyed a reputation for its beauty and its fine harbor. The History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, proclaims that "the natural beauty of the site of the city is rarely surpassed, the river at this point making a graceful curve or bend, and thereby is [sic] given the city one of the finest harbors on the river from Pittsburgh to its mouth."[1] (See Appendix 1)
This was the town where Tude, Selma, Garnet, and Jewel made their living and left their mark in the world. Life in Aurora was simple then and reflected the simple values of the people that were its lifeblood. Clayton, also known as Tude, was William and Alma's firstborn. He, like Selma and Garnet, was delivered at the home his parents rented from Doc Goode in the part of Aurora known as "Texas." Later, in 1913, the family picked up, including the new arrivals Selma and Garnet, and moved four doors down from their original home to 289 Decatur Street, in a home they could truly call their own. It was there that the last member of the family arrived, born on September 1, 1925 and named by her sister Selma who, when she was born, thought her a "jewel." Here, in their own world, there was peace, but the rest of the world was in turmoil.

One historian has called the quarter century preceding the outbreak of the first world war the age of empires. Not only was it an age of empires, but it was also an age of unrest and mistrust. The primary problem was not mistrust itself, but growing technology which added speed to the slow moving wave of social change that was breaking over the nations. This growth of technology and social change brought the biggest change of all—industrialization, and with
industrialization, urbanization, and with urbanization, problems.

In Aurora, industrialization was slow and virtually unheard of in the town's early years, but slowly, the town's industry developed. There were furniture manufacturers, iron works, a distillery, a foundry, a coffin factory, a chair company, a wicker manufacturer, and shoe, glove, and pant factories. Still, with all this industry, life remained simple. Work around the house was not done by dishwasher, sewing machine or washing machine, but manually. Alma washed on an old grooved wash board and warmed the iron in the hot coals of the stove. Food was kept cool by the ice delivered by the iceman and heat was supplied by the stove. The standard of living was meager as most families, including the Lischkges, raised their own food. Excess coal was often unloaded by bargemen in the river's shallow areas, supplying William and his family warmth for the winter's fires. The family was self-sufficient and its values remained ingrained through the wave of industrialization that swept through the nation. It was this industrialization, however, that continued to haunt many of the world's nations.

In some countries, the industrial age brought social unrest and therefore, gave birth to the
socialist movement which "proclaimed the international solidarity of working men, the unity of their common interests vis-a-vis one another and against their common enemy, the industrial and financial bourgeoisie." 3

Other countries, like Britain, saw immediate problems as the nations of the world struggled under the new yoke of industrialization. Lord Salisbury, British Prime Minister, saw the world situation under industrialization and said, "you many roughly divide the nations of the world as the living and the dying. On the one side you have great countries of enormous power...growing in perfection of their organization...by the side of these splendid organizations, of which nothing seems to diminish their force and which present rival claims the future may only be able by a bloody arbitrament to adjust... 4

Germany was on the rise as a more unified state as the impulsive and erratic Kaiser Wilhelm II took over. Industrialization presented new problems for Germany as it felt itself a late-comer to the industrial age in comparison with many other nations. 5

Such a mixture of industrialization and social unrest could only add to the smoldering fire of mistrust and therefore, began to pit nation against nation in a race for supremacy. Nations rallied to
form blocks to lessen the threat of revolution. The Triple Entente made up of France, Russia, and Great Britain (after 1907) positioned itself against the annoying newcomer to the industrial age, Germany. Germany responded by aligning herself with Austria-Hungary and Italy to form the Triple Alliance.

The United States appeared separated from the rest of the world as the more intelligent use of natural resources and rapid industrialization created a people of plenty which was on the way to being the richest society the world had ever seen. Instead of social unrest, the increased use of natural resources and industrialization brought urbanization to the States. Urbanization was due, not only to technology, but to the flood of foreign immigrants seeking a better life in America. Not only did immigration occur on an international level, it occurred nationally as young adults left the farms to seek a better life in the city.

The Lischkge family had no desire to leave their community, and was living a peaceful existence in Aurora. Although new technology was rapidly introduced to the family, they continued to hold many of their deeply ingrained values which emphasized hard work and family. As the brothers and sister grew, they remained close. Jewel was not as close to her sisters and
brother as she was to her nephew. Since she was the youngest, her older siblings were already moving out and starting families of their own. Garnet does not remember much about her childhood with her brother Tude because he was so much older and gone most of the time. Being in the middle of the siblings, she describes herself as a loner. Selma considered herself a mother to her younger sister Jewel. Alma did not go out much, so Selma would take her along on errands and shopping trips (See Appendix 2). While the brother and sisters concerned themselves with the task of everyday living, the world moved quickly around them.

Even in the United States many new social ideas were developing that the brother and sisters had never heard of. The progressive movement which originated in the early 1900's was a movement that went unknown by the family, but the movement still had a ripple effect which even reached Aurora.

"Progressivism was perhaps most clearly visible in the dramatic political battles of the period, which produced far-reaching changes in the nature of government at every level and elevated the federal government to a position of new importance," according to the authors of American History: A Survey. The new idea meant many things to different people, but mainly the progressives put emphasis on scientific
knowledge and expertise. They also hoped to achieve a certain standard of morality through their new scientific analysis of the world. They did achieve a certain measure of success at first, but only in their own world of science.

Some progressives, although still concerned with science and its improvement, turned their attention to humanitarian social reform. Many reforms were concerned with the poor—especially with the immigrant ghettos. Settlement houses developed and offered an education, staged community events, started libraries, and other types of work. It was here that the profession of social work began.

Although the people of Aurora would not call aiding a fellow neighbor when his is in need progressive, Aurora was not without its poor. Garnet believes that there were no really destitute people in Aurora. She remembers a family that lived on a shanty boat (a houseboat), but after thinking about it, decided that they could not really be called poor because it may have been their choice of living.

"They may have been smarter since they would not owe any property taxes!" she recollects. Selma and Garnet both can recall the "poor-house" or the County Farm where a person could go and receive help (food and shelter) if they were destitute, but both remember the disgrace that was associated with the
place. Since the community was a self-sufficient community, and families worked the land to support themselves, there were negative feelings associated with the "poor-house." It was definitely not viewed as a humanitarian outreach by most of the people of Aurora.

In Indiana, industrialization was moving slowly through farming communities, like Aurora, as 91 percent of Indiana was still in farm production. During this time, agriculture was the population's primary way of earning a living. Still, industrialization slowly became important in agriculture as farmers began to learn about new tools and techniques through the county fairs and agricultural societies, such as the Grange which was formed in Indiana in 1869. Purdue University, founded in 1874, became an important source for sophisticated agricultural knowledge in Indiana. Purdue accomplished this through conveying information to local farming societies and through a full-time county agent who advised local farmers. Industrialization was making a foothold as nearly 46 percent of Indiana farm families owned an automobile, and 66 percent had installed telephones by 1920.

With the improvements in communication and transportation, the women's position in Indiana was improved. Many products they once made by hand became
available at the local store or from mail order stores (Sears, Roebuck, etc.). Transportation made women's clubs and church groups more accessible and provided women with new social and cultural opportunities. Industrialization was here to stay with the rise of manufacturing in Indiana which developed from Indiana's improved transportation. At first, manufacturers produced pioneer goods, were small operations, and were individually owned. As manufacturing progressed, most operations were concentrated in the southern part of the state in river towns like Aurora, but most were still tied to agriculture and many were seasonal. Indiana's manufactured products included pork packing, liquor distilling, lumber, carriages, wagons, furniture and agricultural implements. Also, according to historian James Madison, "manufacturing replaced agriculture as the dominant economic activity with the value added by manufacturing in 1919 nearly equal to the total value of all agricultural products and with 34 percent of workers employed in manufacturing compared to 26 percent in agriculture by 1920." 11

As industrialization progressed, however, many manufacturers in southern Indiana declined in importance. Not only was this the result of booming northern towns, but it was also the result of the birth of rail transportation. Although the railroad was the
most instrumental change in pioneer life, there was another form of rail transportation—interurban service—which connected nearby towns. At the start of the 1900s, Charles L. Henry, an attorney, described his idea of an electric city train at the Chicago's World Fair. Slowly accepted at first, the idea grew rapidly after that and by 1920 there were 2,000 miles of track in Indiana alone—10 percent of the U.S. total! 12

The interurban was important enough to reach many small farming towns, including Aurora. By May 1900, in Aurora, the track was completed for the street car system called the Cincinnati, Lawrenceburg, & Aurora Traction Company. The traction company was a welcomed addition to the community, as it opened the door to greater employment opportunities in Cincinnati. The CL&A did not last long, however, as the automobile came into its day. "In 1895 there had been only four automobiles on the American highways. By 1917, there were nearly five million." 13 The automobile caused the interurban's downfall with the last car of the CL&A operating until November 23, 1930. 14 (See Appendix 3)

Automobiles in Aurora were originally for the wealthy. The first car in Aurora was owned by J.P. Colter, an Aurora business man. The car was unusual because it was not a gasoline engine, but electric. The first car that the Lischkge family owned was not
one of Henry Ford's Model T's which he marketed in 1908, but a Dodge. The car the sisters remember the most was a square styled car known as a Willey's Knight. (See Appendix 4)

With all the wonderful inventions that were rapidly being developed around them, the sisters did not consider the changes that were occurring spectacular. Garnet related the rapidly changing technology of her childhood to the new innovations of today.

"We didn't think much of all the new inventions, we were just progressing," she said.

Selma believes that they took everything as it came. "Just like today," she said, "look at computers--kids don't think nothing about it."

"I remember the radio," says Garnet, "the first time we heard static we were elated! Tude hooked up the first radio to an old car battery, a dry cell, they called them. I remember the first station we ever heard was KDKA out of Pittsburgh because Cincinnati didn't have any stations yet."

"Yeah," said Selma, "we stayed up until two and three in the morning listening to that 'ol thing! Tude would say 'I got something, I got something!' and we'd all come runnin'!"

Jewel believes that the radio was so well received because it provided the area with a new source of information and entertainment, but she remembers television better.

"Tude and Jesalena had the first one (T.V.) in our family, and we would go to their house on Judiciary Street on a Saturday night and watch wrestling" she
recalls, "She had the chairs set up in straight rows like a theater!"

Technology had arrived and was welcomed by the Lischkge family, but as they enjoyed life's simple pleasures, the world moved rapidly on around them.

In the midst of all the prosperity the United States, Indiana, and Aurora were experiencing, Europe was still in a state of turmoil. The Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente had drawn the tension to breaking point, yet both sides tried to cover all world events in a blanket of optimism. Even when Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated by Gavrilo Princip at Sarajevo the thought of war was distant to most people. The underlying current of world events was responsible for the tension that was mounting. Conflict had seemed inevitable with the formation of the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, but there were other reasons for the approaching war. These included the struggle for new markets, the rivalry between Britain and Germany, the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, and the tension between France and Germany along the Rhine. Most people never expected war, and when it broke out between June 30 and August 4, 1914 most thought it would be a short, decisive conflict.
For the most part, the United States tried to remain neutral, but her involvement seemed inevitable. Woodrow Wilson attempted to keep the United States neutral, seeing himself as the world’s peacemaker. He barely won the 1916 election on his neutrality policy, but as the war continued in Europe, things seemed destined to change. At first, the sympathies of the American people were divided between England and Germany. As the war progressed, however, America turned itself toward England due, not only to Germany’s submarine warfare, but to expert British propaganda directed against Germany.

The United States was on the brink of war when the Lusitania was sunk by German U-Boats in May, 1915, costing 128 innocent American lives. Relations with Germany worsened as they violated the Sussex Pledge, an agreement that no unarmed merchant ships would be destroyed by German U-boats. The breaking point came when the British intercepted the Zimmermann note to Mexico which promised to return the "stolen" territories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona to Mexico if she would declare war on America. War was declared on April 2, 1917 after the Russian revolution took Russia out of the war and dangerously strengthen Germany’s position. Wilson intended it to be a "holy war, a war of service to mankind." He intended,
through the declaration of war, to make the world safe for democracy.

The people of the United States rallied to protect their interests in the world around them. In Aurora, citizens banded together to help the war effort. Garnet remembers the families that sent their sons into battle planted a tree in their front yard.

The sisters also recalled the Aurora Girl Volunteers (AGV) who organized to aid the war effort.

"The women [AGVs] sold war bonds, knitted scarves, sweaters, rolled bandages, and anything else that was needed" recalled Garnet.

Still, in the midst of war, they remained optimistic about themselves, their town, and their world.

Their optimism finally paid off after many bitter days of battle as Germany surrendered to the Allies on November 11, 1918. Wilson, seeing the surrender as a way to promote democracy, suggested the Fourteen Points which contained requests for adjustment of boundaries, the establishment of new nations, the establishment of general principles to govern international conduct, and finally a proposal for a League of Nations. Unfortunately, most of Wilson's points were rejected, leaving Germany with a huge debt owed to the victors.

Meanwhile, America turned from the war to be confronted with problems at home. America had
prospered during the war, but now with production of war materials at a standstill there were increasing economic problems, widespread social unrest, violence, and a growing fear of revolution. America, tired of fighting and tired of idealism, elected Warren G. Harding to succeed Wilson. A small town man with not much of a reputation for effective leadership, he delegated much of his responsibility to a circle of political cronies. His Presidency, instead of being strong, was filled with corrupt individuals. A tired Harding died in San Francisco on August 2, 1923 and a somber Calvin Coolidge was sworn in as the next President by his father, a justice of the peace, over the light of a kerosene lamp.

Life during the Coolidge administration was very different from the days people experienced under Harding. One of Coolidge's first tasks was to end the corrupt Harding administration. With this task finished, Coolidge stood ready for reelection in 1924 looking like the social savior of the people. The economy began to prosper again as Coolidge kept his faith in America's businesses. This faith was aided by Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew Mellon, who slashed taxes for business and cut government spending. This accomplishment pushed the United States into an era of
prosperity unrivaled in the past as the Roaring Twenties came into full swing.

The achievement of this prosperity was not easy. Instead, it was a lengthy process, resulting from the gradual changes in the way people lived and the way they thought. The widespread changes happening throughout the nation were not the result of any presidential program, but of technology. The 1920's were a time of relaxation and revitalization for society, and technology played a big role. A contributing factor to these changes was the automobile—it was a key to prosperity. The single greatest invention next to the car, however, had been the development of electricity, as the U.S. produced more electricity than all other countries combined. During the 1920s, the U.S. Patent Office received plans for 90,000 (yearly) new gadgets. Other inventions also fueled the fire of prosperity, but none were as valuable as the radio. The radio became a source of entertainment as more stations opened and more families owned receivers.19

As the prosperity continued, the nation's young people tested their parents and the traditional moral codes they imposed. Historians disagree on the cause of this social breakdown, but it is easy to see that the Victorian era was fragile by its very nature, and
when the bonds of the era were broken, they would not be easily mended.20

Actually, the changes in many of the moral codes of behavior were not inherently bad. The real problem began when Americans began living beyond their means.

At the heart of America’s wastefulness with her money was speculation. The ability to "buy now, pay later" through installment plans became more enticing as people bought useless, high priced, wasteland in Florida with hopes at selling it at a higher price in order to make a profit.

Not only was land a source of speculation, but so was the stock market. In 1927, the price of corporation stocks rose tremendously, inviting people throughout the country to invest in the stock market. The problem, however, was not that people were buying stock, but that they had no intention of keeping the stock and collecting dividends. Their intent was to sell at a higher price and make a quick profit; with this, however, came problems. Since the value of a stock share reflects the companies earning power, the purpose of selling stock is to raise money to improve corporation facilities and to improve earning potential. But, the rise in prices between 1925–1929 reflected the prices that the investors had bid up believing someone else would pay even more.
Corporations contributed to problem by not using the money raised to improve earning potential or to pay dividends to the stockholder. The stocks values, therefore, were empty.21

To prudent investors, the crash seemed inevitable for several reasons. First, there was the complicated practice of buying on the margin which was what most of the first-time investors were doing. Second, many of these new investors were people with low paying jobs, leaving few people to bid prices any higher.

On September 3, 1929, the price of shares on the New York Exchange began dropping. On Black Thursday, 13 million shares exchanged hands at even lower prices. On Tuesday, October 29, panic struck as 16 million shares were dumped onto the exchange. When the dust settled $30 billion of the stock’s paper value was destroyed. Normally, after stock prices fell they would rise again, but in this case, it never happened. Prices fell for nearly four years creating a vicious cycle. In this cycle, banks who had lent money to the speculators went bankrupt, and those who had been frugal with their money lost everything when the banks closed. Corporations closed because people without jobs could not buy their products, which prevented the corporation’s workers from making payments on
installment plan purchases, putting even more businesses under.

In the small towns of America, the Depression was not felt as bad as in the big cities. Selma, Garnet, and Jewel remember the Great Depression, but do not recall any variance from the lifestyle they were accustomed to.

Garnet recalls hearing about the stock market crash through newspaper extras, but says that she was really too young to remember and too excited about graduating from high school to be attentive.

"All we knew was that in New York, people jumped out of windows and there was a lot of suicide," stated Selma, "but other than that, I don't think we really noticed though—it didn't phase me."

"I remember hearing about bread lines and the homeless, but not in Aurora," recalls Garnet, "that's heresay from other cities, but that's not Aurora. I never even heard of any business closing."

Selma, who worked for the Southern Indiana Telephone Company, remembered a conversation with Mr. Achatz, her boss.

"Mr. Achatz came to us (the operators) and even thanked us for working like we had, but we still got paid the same amount and worked the same amount" she said.

She continued, "We were just middle class and we weren't rich or poor but right in the middle."
Garnet believes that the reason they were not affected by the Great Depression was because the family was self-sufficient.

"Pop fished in the summer and hunted in the winter. Mom raised chickens, kept a garden, and canned what we didn't eat. She didn't even buy chicken feed—she cooked potato peelings," she stated mindfully. "We only bought milk and butter because we didn't have a cow, and that was delivered fresh every morning."

Garnet's story prompted Selma, "We wore our black, wide-ribbed stockings all week with bloomers over them to keep them clean. We wore asafetidy bags [small bags containing a cake of fetid sap obtained from several large umbelliferous plants of Persia, Afghanistan, and India. Used as an atispasmodic—this information came from an old dictionary. There is no citation for it because the title cannot be read and the first few pages of the book are missing] to keep from getting germs!" she recalls. "No one could get close enough to us to give us anything because they smelled so bad!"

While the Lischkge sisters did not feel the worst of the Great Depression, thousands of Americans suffered under the worst economic and social depression the Nation was to ever experience.

While Aurora survived the Great Depression without much damage, most of the nation struggled to survive. The hurting nation blamed Herbert Hoover for its downfall, although he was not solely responsible. His effort to cure the depression was not enough to satisfy the nation's thirst for relief, leaving him humiliated and frustrated. His public works program was aimed at supplying jobs to some unemployed, while the public
good was serviced through the construction of highways, dams, and other major projects. He also started the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) which loaned money to failing banks and corporations to help them rebuild, but it was too little too late, and Franklin D. Roosevelt won the next election by a landslide.

Upon taking office, Roosevelt immediately turned his attention to the depression. For many months, he and his advisors, known as the Brains Trust, sent hundreds of bills to Congress. Congress, frustrated and desperate for action, passed most of them.

To stop the public's mounting fear of banks, Roosevelt ordered a national bank holiday in which all banks were ordered closed. Only "safe" banks could re-open which was designed to end people's banking fears and to stop further withdraw of accounts.

Jesalena Lischkge (Clayton's wife) remembered that, during the period when the banks were being tested for safety, loans were hard to come by.

"Still," she recalls, "we didn't have any reason to panic over the banks because we really weren't affected, so we just went on with our business."

In retrospect, Garnet believed that the farmer was the one who suffered the most.

"The very beginning of the Great Depression started with what they called the Dust Bowl out in Oklahoma." she said, "The farmers had borrowed so much
money and then couldn't pay it back when their crops failed."

To save the farmer, Roosevelt came up with an innovative and controversial group known as the AAA or Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The AAA's first attempt to increase farm profits was a request for farmers to plow under one-fourth to one-half of their 1933 crops. Within two years farm profits increased 50 percent through the successful, but controversial, way of raising the crop prices.22

In the midst of the Depression, love bloomed! In 1936 at the Evangelic Church in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, Garnet Louise Lischkge was married to Elmer Lee "Bud" Powell. For his new bride, Bud bought the home that had been in his family for generations. Garnet, who had a job at the local distillery, purchased the furniture. They had been married for one year when the worst flood in the Ohio River's history happened.

In December of 1936, the rains began in Aurora, Indiana. Further north, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, heavy accumulations of snow filled all tributaries to the Ohio River.
As winter pressed on, the rain and snow continued along the Ohio-Mississippi River Valley. According to the Red Cross, Aurora, and other river towns, were soon "to know devastation without parallel in the history of the United States." 23

"Black Sunday was when the water rose so fast" recalled Garnet. January 24 was known as Black Sunday because there was "the greatest 24 hour rise, from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., on a river already raging out of its banks, happened after exceptionally heavy rains on the 20th and 21st. The water rose 6.7 feet at Cincinnati and 6.3 feet at Louisville." 24

"I remember Happy Peters came running down the street telling everyone to get out because the water was going to get to 80 feet," said Selma, "But no one really paid any attention to him--thought he was crazy. He was right."

"Indianapolis Chair was on Exporting Street and there was an alarm whistle and when we heard the whistle blow at the chair company we left everything," Jesalena said, "We were eating lunch on the second floor of the apartment with my sister and her husband, and we left everything! When we returned everything was as we left it--even the dirty dishes on the dinning room table were undisturbed!"

Fresh in Garnet's memory was the fact that she was just married and had to shelter the rest of her family.

"We were just married," she said, "Bud couldn't get to work and Eva [Bud's relative] was in Florida, and so we moved Eva's belongings, and moved Aunt Eddie and Jimmy who came to stay with us. Anyone that had room had to take someone in."
"There was no flood like the '37 flood," said Garnet. "The 1913 flood only came up to the doorknobs! It [the 1913 flood] gave people a false sense of security when it came to the '37 flood. People stored their furniture in the upper levels of their homes, and in 1937, the houses just floated away."

"It was midnight on January 18 [William Lischkge's birthday] that Pop was watching the house [on Decatur Street]." said Garnet somberly, "I remember him telling us it [the house] just pulled up and bobbed like a cork, and then floated away. The house landed at Laughery Creek. Bud and Pop went down and brought back a fan and some other things, but most of the things were stolen."

"Yeah!" said Selma, "Someone did find Mom and Pop's wedding picture and propped it up along side the road!"

"But you would have never thought anything had even happened as far as Pop was concerned!" reflected Jesalena with a smile.

"Yes!" said Garnet smiling, "He loved the River and even enjoyed the floods I think!"

"The town was in shambles! There was drift on Decatur Street as high as the houses." recalled Garnet. (See Appendix 5)

"I worked at the Telephone Company still." said Selma, "and we worked through the flood. I got there by boat and the water was up to the windows, so we crawled in the windows. There was water on the floor, so we had to wear boots. It [the water] got so high that eventually we couldn't even leave the building." (See Appendix 6)

"You know," Garnet said matter-of-factly, "we didn't think anything about it really, and soon you don't even look at it as a tragedy and we survived."

Continuing, Garnet recalled, "We had no water, no electricity but, fortunately, nothing was run by electricity then. The furnaces were hand fired. We had heat, and they brought in water from Milan [Indiana] on trucks. We [Her and Bud] went to Milan to get groceries. You see, we could get out—we were lucky 'cause we could go up over the hill to Milan. A lot of people couldn't even get out."
Finally, the River crested on Tuesday at 82.7 the highest the river had ever reached (See Appendix 7). As the waters of the mighty Ohio withdrew back into its banks, Aurora began to recover from the disaster. (See Appendix 8)

"Mom and Pop had help from the Red Cross in order to rebuild," remembered Garnet, "but there was never enough to cover your loss completely, so they had to take out loans."

"They [William and Alma] were in their 50's when they lost everything, but they came back good as new," Garnet said with a smile, "They built in the same place. We wanted Pop to buy the farm up here by the water tower, but he wouldn't leave down there. Pop was a river man, he knew all there was to know about the activities of the river. He died happy—he loved that river and [at 86] he died there." (See Appendix 9)

"We still love the river even though it is mean sometimes," Garnet stated fondly, "They always say there's never a dull moment on the river, and there wasn't. As treacherous as it was, I wouldn't live anywhere else. I loved it there. You know the water came up every spring, after the rains, and we took it as a matter of course. Everyone helped everyone else. People in those days worked together helping one another. We never gave it much though, we did what we had to do one day at a time, and had a good time doing it! We simply started over again." (See Appendix 10)

As the forces of the mighty Ohio River wreaked havoc on Aurora and surrounding areas, there were forces at work on a global scale which would effect an entire generation.

Germany was also devastated by the Great Depression brought on by the stiff penalties placed on them after World War I. The Nazi party, under Adolf
Hitler, was able to portray itself as the savior of the people. Hitler creatively used the media to influence public opinion, and through these mediums, he created a cult from which he emerged as the Führer of Germany. 25 As the U.S. saw the growing tide of unrest in Europe she was faced with a choice "between more active efforts to stabilize the world or more energetic attempts to isolate the nation from it." 26

During the summer of 1935, it seemed more apparent that Europe was once more ready to explode. The U.S. reacted in typical fashion and withdrew into her shell with the Neutrality Act of 1935. As Roosevelt watched in dismay, Hitler began to mobilize his great plan to take over the world. Hitler seemed unstoppable as attempts at peaceful ends to Hitler's conquests failed, prompting France and Great Britain to declare war on Germany. The United States watched in alarm as the rest of the world was swept under in the currents of war, and she did her best to remain neutral. But her involvement became necessary as on Sunday, December 7, 1941 at 7:55 a.m., Japanese bombers attacked Pearl Harbor.

As America entered the war, the nation geared itself for wartime production. The manufacturing of automobiles came to a halt as factories produced tanks, jeeps, and planes. Gasoline was rationed and the speed
limit was cut to 35 miles an hour. Rationing carried over to food staples also. Not only was money needed to buy food, now the necessary ration stamps were also needed.

The currents of war that were sweeping the country arrived in Aurora. Gasoline, food, and other items were rationed here as well. (See Appendix 11) and draft lists continually appeared in the local paper.

"Bud was drafted," remembers Garnet with a serious look, "but he had a family and worked at the power plant, so he didn’t have to go immediately--if it had lasted much longer, I’m sure he would have had to go too."

"When it came to going to war not too many hesitated," remembered Selma, "because we were attacked and we were defending our rights."

Garnet reminisced about life during the war. "They recycled a lot of things--toothpaste tubes was something that I remember," she said, "We had to turn in our old tube in order to get a new tube."

"Yes." Jesalena recalled, "Stamps were given out according to the size of your family, and they only allowed you to buy so many things."

"In order to get sugar you had to get so much flaked hominy," said Selma.

"We use [sic] to have blackouts too," Garnet remembered, "We would have to pull our curtains, and no lights! There were these people on each block, the Civil Defense, they called it, and they were the watchmen and they would give the warning. They [government] were leery about our area because of all the power plants. There was a launching area right near here--Texas Gas Road I think."

"Yeah." Selma joined in, "When they had that out at Dillsboro and Aunt Eff kept all those soldiers [placed at the "Nike Base" to protect the power
plants]. It was all underground, like a bomb shelter and they called the Nike Base [Even though Nike missiles were not installed until the early 60’s, the base was in existence during W.W. II and it was used a military installation for the protection of the area. It is known as the Nike Base]."

"Well, they had those men there for protection of the area because of the power plants," said Jesalena, "I thought they were going to take off a couple of times!"

America moved quickly with the Allies to end the Germany threat, and with the careful planning of General Dwight Eisenhower, the Thousand Year Reich was stopped in 12 years with the success of Operation Overlord or D-Day.27 Meanwhile, during the battles in Europe, America was also worrying about the continual threat of the Japanese in the Pacific. The Manhattan Project [the invention of the first atomic bomb] was designed to prevent a D-Day in Japan which had an army 2.5 million strong. After Roosevelt’s death on April 12, 1945, Truman decided to drop Little Boy, the first non-experimental atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Truman thought it would be a decisive end to the war, and would save one million American lives and millions of Japanese, but Japan fought on. Fat Man, the second atomic bomb dropped in war was, therefore, dropped on Nagasaki bringing surrender from Japan.28

"It was a happy day when it was over with" recalled Jesalena with a smile.
According to Mastering World History, the "United States and the Soviet Union emerged from World War II as far and away the two most powerful nations on earth. Efforts of the USSR to expand its system, and the determination of the United States to check communist expansion, brought on a 'cold war' between the democratic (non-communist) and the communist nations of the earth. A new balance of power developed." 29 Opinions had to be put aside in World War II to stop Hitler, and the war brought the two countries together like never before. After the war at the Yalta Conference, however, the nations could not agree on elections in Poland and other points, and the breakdown began. Distrustful feelings were increased as communist guerrillas began to invade Greece. Truman responded by asking Congress for $400 million in aid for Greece and Turkey and the Truman Doctrine was born. Secretary of State George Marshall believed the communist party was aided in these depressed areas because of the economic hardships the countries were experiencing since the war. He proposed investing money in financial reconstruction of Europe. The United States offered the same help to the U.S.S.R. and they refused—the breakdown was complete.

The cold war continued for years and many Presidents faced the challenges of dealing with a
hostile Russia. When John F. Kennedy took office, he faced the challenge of the Cuban Missile Crisis which could have started World War III. Fortunately, a cool head and a calm hand prevented such a disaster and ended the disturbance.

Kennedy, however, found more problems at home than at abroad. Since the U.S. was at peace, he had a hard time passing much of his key legislation, such as Medicare, which would have supplied medical insurance for the elderly. Some of Kennedy's projects did win support, however, like the space program, which would put America on the moon by 1970. Still, Kennedy faced his greatest challenge with the growing civil rights movement of the time. Although he approached the civil rights movement carefully, he was for civil rights for many reasons. First, Southern congressmen had given no support to his program, the New Frontier. Second, 80 percent of blacks voted Democratic. Third, Kennedy was sympathetic to the plight of the blacks. Fourth, and finally, such support would win friends in Third World countries. A short time later, Kennedy committed himself and his administration to the support of Civil Rights.

Aurora faced a small civil rights problem of its own—there were no blacks in Aurora.

Garnet recalled a story she had once heard.
"I heard that once a black man was hung from the wagon bridge down in town and that a black wouldn’t stay after sundown in Aurora. We are known all over for not having any blacks and its unfortunate because blacks are just as good as whites—people are just people!"

Not only were people fighting in Aurora, but the United States was fighting a little known war in an unknown country—Vietnam. At first, Kennedy believed that the government of South Vietnam, lead by Ngo Dinh Diem, was interested in helping the ordinary Vietnamese, therefore, he sent special troops, the Green Berets, to train Diem’s army. As the corruption of Diem’s government was exposed and it was discovered that no one in power was interested in reform, Kennedy refused to deepen America’s involvement. After Kennedy was assassinated, the new President, Lyndon Johnson, decided that escalation would bring a decisive victory over the Viet Cong. This proved to be Johnson’s fatal mistake as the North Vietnamese were far from beaten and all hopes for re-election for Johnson were over. In 1969, Richard Nixon was sworn in as the nation’s next President with promises to end the war.

Nixon’s promises seemed like lies when, as he was withdrawing troops from some areas, he broadened the scope of the war to include Cambodia. He believed that such action would force the two factions to the bargaining table.
The Lischkge sisters were among millions of American's who never understood the war.

"Everyone said that it [the war] should have never been." said Selma with a serious tone.

"I did not understand what they were fighting for!" said Garnet quizzically, "All I knew was that North Vietnam invaded South Vietnam and they didn't want to be taken over."

Finally, in January of 1973 a ceasefire was signed and the war was brought to a surprisingly quick end. The large amounts of money spent on the Vietnam war could have possibly been the cause of the nation's economic troubles in the middle to late 1970's and early 1980's. Nixon's success at pulling American troops and winning the next election came crashing down quickly as the Watergate Scandal revealed that the President of the United States was involved in the cover up of a serious crime. As impeachment resolutions were being adopted, the President resigned on August 9, 1974.30

"I don't think much of Nixon." said Garnet.

"I admired him for being able to get along with Russia." said Jesalena quickly.

"They went and put bugs in the building?" asked Selma quizzically.

Garnet chimed in, "I don't know what it was all about! We get disillusioned about a lot of things [concerning government], but I still believe that we have the best government in the world."
"They are in there for what they can get out of it," said Jesalena disgustedly.

"I think Reagan brought a lot back to the Presidency," exclaimed Garnet, "and restored it to importance."

Garnet, however, noted the biggest difference between now and her childhood days. "There were stronger family values than now," she said, "I don't understand why women work—why do they need everything! I would be scared. I don't understand why people want the government to raise their families! It reminded me of Hitler, when he wanted the government to raise all of the children, and he picked out certain kids—awful! Those kids will have the values of the teachers and will do the same things to their kids—it's a cycle."

Garnet's response prompted Jesalena, "I think Aurora has gone backwards," she said.

"Yes," said Garnet, "There were so many companies right here in town, and there was all kinds of entertainment with two theaters. Aurora was a booming town on Saturday night, and Pop would pay his Teaney's bill [groceries], and then we'd go see the show and then go to Nitenburg's for ice cream. It was really something."

And what for the future? Garnet does not think it looks good. "It does not look good," she exclaimed, "What you see on T.V. is enough to make you throw up!"

Selma, with a serious look, stated emphatically, "I think it is the second coming of Jesus. The prophecy of the Bible is beginning to come true. There is war, children hating their parents, and one tragedy after another."

* * * * * * *

The lives and times of my relatives have fascinated me to no end! I am constantly amazed at their views and reactions to the world around them. What I would consider a disaster, they took as a matter
of course, and what I saw as awful, they saw as wonderful.

Still, even with our different views, there is no generation gap in the world that could separate my love and devotion for these people, and the experiences they have to share.

Through their description, I have been able to visit a part of my own history, and have been able to feel the course of world events as they felt them. Like them, I also see a sad world, and I wonder if it is too late for the world to start over, like the people of Aurora did after the 1937 flood, and make the world a better place. Or if, like Selma, the pattern of history indicates the second coming of Christ. As a Christian, it is enough to make you think twice.

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.'"

"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." 31
NOTES


3. Ibid., p. 11.


10. Ibid., p. 152.

11. Ibid., p. 163.


18. Ibid., p. 704.


22. Ibid., p. 667.


24. Ibid., n.p.


28. Ibid., p. 700.


WORKS CITED


Top: This is the first car that the sisters remember—
A 'Villey' s Knight
Bottom: This postcard shows
the destruction of the '17
flood on Decatur St., also
known as "Texas"
"Hello" Girls Render Faithful Service

The account of the flood would not be complete without mention of the splendid service rendered by the Southern Indiana Telephone Co. during the recent weeks of anxious experience. While the service was limited to a certain extent because of the tremendous increase in the number of calls, it was always possible to get connection when necessary, which was of great benefit to the stricken area. This would not have been available without the heroic faithfulness of the telephone operators who worked day and night in their posts of duty, eating and sleeping at the office during the weeks of the flood and working with several inches of water on the floor when the flood reached the second story. One of the young women operators stuck to her task, although their homes remained their furniture and all of their clothing were swept down the river in the mad, swirling stream.

This article appeared in the local paper during the 1937 flood and talks of the telephone operator who provided faithful service during the flood. One of the operators in the article is talking about is Selma.
# The Great Southeastern Valley Flood of 1937

## Appendix 7

The flood of the Ohio River between 7 and 8 a.m. on 3 outstanding dates during the flood of 1937, and comparative data.*

### Stage above flood stage from Cincinnati, Ohio, to Paducah, Ky.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Flood stage</th>
<th>Crest and date</th>
<th>Previous highest and year</th>
<th>Height of crest above</th>
<th>Flood stage</th>
<th>Previous highest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cairo, Ill.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>46.0—1936</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paducah, Ky.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>46.0—1936</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savannah, Ga.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>46.0—1936</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans, La.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>46.0—1936</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| *From United States Weather Bureau.*

### Stage reached along the lower Mississippi River in 1937 in comparison to the previous highest stages of record.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Flood stage</th>
<th>Crest and date</th>
<th>Previous highest and year</th>
<th>Height of crest above</th>
<th>Flood stage</th>
<th>Previous highest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cairo, Ill.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>14.0—1913</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paducah, Ky.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>14.0—1913</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savannah, Ga.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>14.0—1913</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*From United States Weather Bureau.*
These views of the 1887 flood
were part of the Waring collection.
An 1887 court view of the flood as an "affair of many", while others
show the devastation of the town.
Original postcards from the 1937 flood from Selma's collection
These photos from Selma's collection show the Lischkge's new house built in the same place as the old one. Both of these photos were taken during the flood of 1964.
Let's Start Over Again

A woman and her husband looked at what had been their home, flood waters the days before had carried it away. They were shocked, stunned, lost and in their bewilderment did not know where to turn.

The human mind has a way of turning to trivial action in its efforts to make adjustments to such catastrophes. I never saw a more touching sight than those two stand there. "Everything is gone!" said he. "Yes, everything," added the woman, as she sobbed. A friend urged them to get away for a time from the scene of their grief. "But where can we go?" asked the woman. "We haven't anything left." "Oh, yes, you have," insisted the friend. "You have everything you had before the flood except a house and its equipment. You still have each other, still have your friends, your children, your health and energy and you still have faith, courage and love. Flood waters cannot destroy these qualities."

These people found refuge in the home of a friend—soon they will start to rebuild for they have lost nothing but things—and things can be replaced. This is the spirit that prevails here in Aurora. The greatest flood in the history of mankind has caused an estimated loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars in this community, but everybody has taken the attitude that will build a bigger and better Aurora and right now is the time for everyone gloomy person, every worried person, every scared person to sit down and list in one column his losses, in another his assets. The losses will include money, probably some luxuries and maybe a dash of pride. The permanent assets will include love, strength, faith, family, friends and so on through a list too long to enumerate. Every man, woman and child in this community is solvent spiritually, or can be. Every normal person in Aurora is perfectly capable of starting all over again and building upon the wreckage of the past, a finer life than the old one, so LET'S START ALL OVER AGAIN!

Taken from: M.O. Whitney's The Ghost City Story of the Lawrenceburg 1937 Flood