

**MEMORIES OF
LEWIS ARTHUR "SLIM" BAUMANN
(1904-1993)**

spouse of
RUBY LEONA GUDDALL (1907-1988).

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

After moving to a farm in 1914 [age 10], I milked a cow every morning and night. Before school it was my job to clean the manure out of the horse barn and cow barn on a wheelbarrow. Once in awhile I would claim I had a bad headache and would get to stay home. My headache would disappear about 11 a.m.

I had five neighbor boys and played with them up in the hay loft. Occasionally we tried sucking raw eggs. I got to use a 22 caliber rifle and shoot sparrows from the hog house off the barn and got to be a good shot. After school I milked my one cow and fed the calves and one day a fresh cow gave birth to a new calf. On Saturday I usually shot birds in the grove when the neighbor kids didn't come up to play.

In the summer I had to herd the cows along the road as there was no pasture for them to graze on the farm. One summer day a shower came up and before I could get the cows home lightning struck a big cottonwood tree and split it wide open. I was so close I could smell the ozone from the strike. Close enough !!

I bought an old bicycle for \$5.00 from the neighbor kids and it was the greatest toy in my life. I churned butter and ran an old hand washing machine when wash day came around. When Saturday arrived I got a 5cent pack of gum and I hoarded it until I had saved 20 packs or more. Then we moved to town and I finished town school in 10 grades in Thor and went to another school at Eagle Grove and finished high school there.

A couple of incidents I omitted when I lived on the farm – I walked one mile every day to school and back. A pleasant memory was finding a patch of wild strawberries on the way to school – very sweet and delicious !

WORK ON THE RAILROAD

After high school I got a job on the railroad. Jobs were hard to get then also. I worked two years and it was real hard work when it was 100 degrees in the shade. Our boss was very fussy and we had the reputation of having the best section from here to Hawarden.

From fall until spring the crew consisted of the boss and one man. When spring came a crew of six was hired. About May 1st the summer work would begin. The first work consisted of weeding the nine miles of the section. The weeding was done with a flat-type hoe that was pushed between the ties to cut the weeds. A crew of six men, three men on each side, worked an 8-hour-day from 7 a.m. until 3 p.m. Each man weeded one rail at a time and alternated weeding with two other men until the entire section was weeded.

The next order of work was mowing the swath. The same procedure was followed as the weeding. Each man had a scythe and whetstone for sharpening the scythe as he worked. The swath was cut one swath wide on the shoulder of the right-of-way. The entire section was mowed.

The next work on the section was unloading of creosoted ties and piling them up in the yard. These were later hauled out on the railroad to places where the old ties had rotted out. The old ties had to be dug out individually and replaced with a new tie and then securely tamped under the tie to be spiked and held in place. The day's work usually consisted of 100 ties replaced. We then moved to the next spot where old ties had to be replaced and continued on until the new ties were used up. Lunch was at noon for twenty minutes, each man carrying a lunch pail.

In tamping the ties it was called "gandy-dancing" and the men were called "gandy dancers". When all the old ties were completely replaced general repair work such as snow fences and other odd jobs were completed. We looked forward to rainy days as we were not required to work on the right-of-way of the railroad if it was raining. We stayed in an old boxcar until the rain stopped.

In 1923 good jobs were also very scarce and a job on the section was considered as a job at the "bottom of the ladder". The railroad hired

Mexicans and almost anyone without skills. It just required men with strong backs and willing hands to earn \$3.04 per day – not per hour.

ELEVATOR WORK

My next job was at an elevator as Second Man. I weighed and dumped grain, loaded grain cars and unloaded feed bags. They weighed 100 pounds and we piled them up eight feet high in a feed house. Flour and salt barrels were put there too and many bags of seed for farmers to plant. Tile was put there by the car load and coal scooped into a bin from a coal car, usually 50 tons or more. I worked here for nine years and then came The Depression and I was laid off. I had no job until beer became legal and I started the Dutch Beer Garden, so named by my wife. I ran the business for 30-years.

DUTCH BEER GARDEN YEARS (Thor, Humboldt, IA)

It was in the spring of 1934, a year after prohibition was repealed, that 3.2 beer became legal. The only place that sold beer [in Thor] was a restaurant and a goodly portion of beer drinkers were hold-overs from the pre-prohibition days who resented going into a restaurant where there were lots of women. Their conscience bothered them to drink more than one beer or do lots of “man talk” with women present.

After lots of “persuasion” by many of my men friends I was persuaded to start a beer tavern. I rented an old doctor’s office which had two rooms with a back door. A very dear friend of mine, who had been in the business before prohibition, helped me tremendously in procuring a bar and a beer cooler. The cost was \$135 in those days, which included rinse tubs and glasses, and I was set up.

I opened up feeling very apprehensive about my business being a success, but to my surprise it was a success at once! In a few weeks I was selling 12-16 gallons per week and doing great! An old-time ice house was hauled in to keep the extra beer kegs cool as I used them and business was great!

Barely two months had gone by when the great fire completely burned down the whole town [Thor business district] including my tavern. The only buildings that didn’t burn were four

brick ones. I was urged to rebuild but money was the deterrent. Through the good will of the lumber store I made arrangements to build on credit. It was a big undertaking to go into debt at that time (1933 Depression). My friends all agreed to help and I got started.

I bought the lot where the original tavern stood and the first order of business was to dig a basement. Many of my friends helped with spades and shovels and another friend, who owned a small Caterpillar tractor-dozzer, let me use his machine and we finally got the basement dug.

Before I got started on the brick building many of my friends helped build a wooden one-room shack and I sold beer in that for two months. The shack was built in one day and everyone helped with no pay at all. About this same time five other businesses [in Thor] decided to rebuild: a hardware store, café, pool hall, telephone office and garage. Believe me, every worker was a good beer drinker!

Two brothers who were brick masons from a nearby town were engaged to do the brickwork for my building and after a month of steady work it was completed and featured six new booths with new painting and decorating. Customers continued to come in and business prospered.

By September two-thirds of the town [Thor] had been rebuilt and the city officials decided to hold a “Play Day” celebrating the new town. A traveling carnival was engaged, a baseball game scheduled –the works.

In anticipation of a big crowd I hired three new waiters, all men. The beer distributor and I worked the two taps and it was the biggest day in thirty years! We sold 14 barrels that day; six from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and eight more from 6 p.m. until midnight. After closing we all went to a big town and had steaks as we were all completely worn out.

The next morning on cleaning up the place we found gum wrappers, candy wrappers, hankies, women’s stockings, money and anything else you can name! The crowd had been so large that the taps were never shut off from 7-11:30 p.m. After that [day] beer was delivered once a week, twelve kegs at a time, more beer than any of the larger taverns in the surrounding towns.

Christmas came and I introduced a practice that was carried on for all thirty years: free beer for five hours and a big, free "feed" to go along with it. Every year was different – baked ham, baloney, cheese and crackers, roast coon, deer burgers (from the deer I shot myself), wieners and sauerkraut and many other foods. This meal went to my regular customers as well as dozens of "free loaders" whom I saw once a year, but it advertised the place and was worth it.

In the winter, about February, I held a best-player card tournament, Somerset only. Play was held once a week for four weeks. Cash prizes were given and a lot of friendly kidding took place. The players always looked forward to the next year.

Every Saturday night I popped popcorn for one solid hour which was given free to the customers and card players. Everyone played pitch for the treats and lots of nights three to four games were going at the same time. The popcorn (well-salted) created quite a thirst for beer as well as keeping everyone sober. Some customers came in just for the free popcorn and would treat their friends to a beer. I bought the corn in 100 pound sacks and used many, many bags.

In the early years the beer was cooled by a copper coil packed in ice which had to be replenished twice a day. The beer was kept at 42-degrees and the bottles were cooled in an old time bottle cooler.

In the fall of the year I raised lots of large ducks and come Thanksgiving and Christmas they were dressed and games of Bingo were held with free ducks as prizes.

In the summer of 1936 an incredible thing happened. It was a very hot day in July when a huge man came into the tavern and ordered a quart [bottle] of beer. Most of the local people drank keg beer and bottles were a rarity, so when he continued to order quarts they were easy to count as all quarts and pint bottles were kept in separate cases. I went home for supper and the man was still there, having gone to the bathroom only once. Finally at 8:30 p.m. he went to the bathroom again and then left for home. We counted the quarts and he had consumed 26 full quarts and gone to the "john" only twice !! Counting ounces, he had drank 524 ounces of liquid. We marveled at his capacity and wondered where he went. The sweat had just

poured off him so I presumed he just "sweat it out".

I was exceptionally fortunate, at last, to have a good assistant bartender. The first few years I had hired two local boys. One was okay but the other had his fingers in the cash register. A friend told me the many always had a pocket full of silver – dimes, quarters and halves. He was dismissed at once. My good bartender was exceptional and was named Lars Larson. He was neat, clean and honest. Being a former brick mason he was very strong. Everyone knew of his strength and he kept order very well. I could leave for a week and upon my return things were better than when I left. He was great! Lars came from Norway, and after hiring him steady, he moved into my basement at the tavern - - warm in the winter and cool in summer. It was very clean and cozy and no room rent. [Lois Bauman Nerem recalls that Lars had a bed and shower in the basement and led a simple life. He ate his meals at the Thor restaurant and at the Baumann residence. She says Lars was known for his honesty.]

In thirty years I was never robbed. A would-be robber once forced a window and my barkeeper, who was sleeping in the basement, heard the footsteps upstairs. Lars turned on the basement light which reflected upstairs, alerted the would-be robber, and the man made a hasty retreat. After that episode I was never broken into and all windows and doors were barred.

My basement was often used as a meeting place for farmers and other groups who didn't have to rent a meeting place. The farmers would settle up after the threshing run was completed to even out the hours of difference between themselves.

For entertainment there were two old-time fiddlers who often came up on a Saturday. They played for their own enjoyment as well as the crowds that gathered and enjoyed it a lot. We also had a threesome that came up every two weeks. The wife played the piano, the husband the banjo and the other man a fiddle and guitar. They would play for three hours and the only pay they received was beer from the customers and an occasional six-pack from me. That's all they asked for.

In those days everyone had a nick name. Some of these were Big Knute, Little Andy, Big Amen, The Cattle Feeder, Mr. Putz, The Rifleman,

Hitler & Musollini and Stavanger Lars. Even some of the women had nick names: Tilly Gin, Sugar Babe, Nicky-Nicky, Sapphire and Madame Queen, usually named by their husbands.

I had a customer who freely talked about his family life. One day he came in all smiles and I asked him what he was so happy about. He replied that his wife had been gone for a week and last night he had sex. I "egged him on" and said "I suppose your wife was ready too". He replied, "Well, she didn't put up much of a fight!"

Another customer had too much beer and ran into a telephone pole on the way home and went into the road ditch. The next time he came in I tried to console him by saying that they didn't have any reason to put the pole there in the first place! He replied, "Of course not!". No one was hurt.

Another man always came in early to get the early hog market on the radio. During the war, a seed corn company imported several hundred Jamaicans to detassel corn. They were transported to their work in huge school buses. This man would watch out the window and as they went to their work he would remark, "There go the G-makers". On this particular morning the radio announcer said "The hog market is late in coming in and in the meantime we will listen to some music by the Philadelphia Philharmonic Orchestra, a selection in G-Major". The man looked up at the radio and said. "Holy Majority, the G-Makers", meaning the Jamaicans.

Here's the top for speed - - a man told this story to be true. In the fall of the year a man saw five wild geese headed in a straight line over his house. He dashed into his house, grabbed his muzzle-loading shotgun and shot the leader, reloaded and shot the next three, reloading each time. He said, "I would have shot the fifth goose too, but I put the shot ahead of the powder and the last shot failed to fire!"

From the middle 40's [1940's] to the middle 50's [1950's] beer sales dropped off considerably as over 150 of my good beer drinkers had passed away. I had kept a record of who had left us and believe me, 150 or more good customers sure made a big difference in beer sales.

Each year it dropped off from 12-10-8-6-4 kegs per week and finally it got to the point where business was no longer profitable. Due to the reputation of my business and the reputation of the town being known as a good beer town, I finally sold all my fixtures and rented the building to a very nice couple from some distance away. So ended an era of a very successful beer business.

One more chapter must be added to complete the events of keeping order in the tavern. Only four fights erupted in 30 years. One was between two neighbors who squared off for each other but were quickly subdued and kicked out of the place. No blows were struck.

One other fight was between two friendly workers arguing about who should collect their wages as they were partners working together. One blow was struck but no damage. Both were quickly ejected.

The third incident was between two friends and one blow floored the other. No serious damage. Both were ejected.

The fourth fight was between two brothers and was stopped before any blows were struck.

Over the course of 30 years one must expect some bad accounts. My business was no exception. I had some accounts around \$20 for beer and cigarettes that should have been paid but were not because of dishonesty. These two parties who had run up the accounts both inherited quite a lot of money but no amount of sending statements or asking for payment produced any results.

One of the two people was considered by his family not to be capable of taking care of his affairs and sent him to an institution for three years. Upon returning home he remembered he owed me an account of less than \$10. He immediately asked how much it was and paid it in full. I had already crossed off the account and never expected to collect but this act alone restored my faith in humanity very much.

CUSTOMER POETRY

A customer of mine was very adept at quoting poetry. The following are his two best:

*It was by a western waterfall, one cold
November day.
Inside an empty boxcar, a dying hobo lay.
I'm going to a better land, said he, where
everything is bright,
And hand-outs grow on bushes and you sleep out
every night.
You never have to take a bath, not even wash
your socks,
And little streams of whiskey come trickling
down the rocks.*

Another favorite was how to tell the age of a man:

*From 20 to 30 if a man is right,
It's once in the morning and again at night.
From 30 to 40 if he still is right,
He cuts out the morning or else the night.
40 to 50 it's now and then,
50 to 60 it's God knows when.
60 to 70, if he's still "so inclined",
Don't let him kid you, it's all in his mind!*

EXCEPTIONAL EVENTS

Most beer sales in one day – 14 half barrels.

Most sales to one person in a day- 26 full quarts.

First time beer was shipped by rail for resale-
1936 when all roads were blocked by snow.

I was chairman in bond sales [War Bonds] and the first town [Thor] in the USA to go over the top in bond sales. This event made the Stars and Stripes, the official paper of the G.I.'S in service. Some of the local boys read this news in the paper overseas. I also pulled the switch for the first blackout ever held in Thor when we were expected to be bombed by Germany.

MY LOVING WIFE

The 30 years wouldn't be complete without mentioning my very loving and compassionate wife [Ruby Guddall] who put up with me as a bartender's wife and who was completely ignored in the community because in the 30's people who sold beer were considered 2ND class people. I must add that for 30 years the tavern was scrubbed every week and was a place where no one needed to be ashamed to come in due to cleanliness or a "den of iniquity". All of this my good wife endured and practically raised our two children through grade school and high school. I was so wrapped up in the business that I spent

14-16 hours daily at the tavern and sadly neglected my home life. Ruby did a wonderful job and both children are now grown, have families of their own and are very successful.

Many other incidents took place over these 30 years but these are the highlights.

THRESHING RUN

In the fall of the year, before threshing machines went out, I would go out to my half-brother's place. When it came time for him to have the threshers there I would help.

I was raised on a farm and I knew the threshing routine very well. There was always a need for an extra hand and my job was to haul oats to the home bin or the surplus to the local elevator.

When noon came, we (the workers) all partook in an enormous home-cooked meal of roast beef, mashed potatoes/gravy, and many extras, including pie for dessert. Then we relaxed for twenty minutes until 1 p.m. when we started all over again until suppertime. Then I would go back to town and tend bar from 8 p.m. until 12 a.m.

HUNTING [FISHING AND OTHER SPORTS] EXPERIENCES

Most of my years as a bartender were 16 hour days. A few of these days were exceptions when I would take off a few hours in the afternoon and go crow hunting. I would station myself near a rookery, set up my decoys and start calling. I usually had great success and the average "bag" was from ten to thirty a day. Thirty-five was the exception and was well remembered.

Other hunting trips included digging-out fox dens. One season a pal of mine and myself collected thirty bounties. We were required to cut off the ears and turn them in to the County Recorder. They paid \$1 for pups and \$2 for adults. Many times we also got the parents of the pups by staking out one pup near the den and ringing him with steel traps. When it got dark the pup would howl for help and the parents would come up and get caught in the traps.

Deer hunting trips, duck hunting and pheasant hunting also were enjoyable and successful. I remember even as a boy every spring the wild ducks migrated by the thousands and every farm

had a one or two-acre pond on it. After school a neighbor boy and myself would crawl on our bellies to get up close enough to shoot. Finally the ducks would rise up and we would shoot them in the air. I remember shooting one (as a boy) and when it came down and was dressed it had only one BB in the breast. I had used a 10-gauge, double barrel [shotgun]. It had been my first duck. A great experience!

So you see, bartending has its diversions and sports provided many pleasant hours to keep tending bar from becoming a bore.

For quite a few years I went on a yearly deer hunting trip to northeast Iowa and usually brought back a deer. The first year I was lucky enough to bag the second largest deer in the state, a 265-pound, eight-point buck, a real trophy! This meat was served for my Christmas treat for my customers in the tavern and everyone enjoyed deer burgers and cheese.

At other times in early June, a group of my friends [and I] went to Minnesota to Leech Lake and Portage where we had wonderful luck catching walleyes and northerns along with some perch.

All this was possible due to my wonderful help and the distributor who looked after the business while I was gone. A great deal of my success was due to my best friend and distributor of Budweiser beer. One time he took me to St Louis to see the Cardinals play ball. I was treated royally to a dinner at Stan Musial's Restaurant and at the ballpark I enjoyed the biggest olives I ever ate! I sat in the owner's special box seats and enjoyed the game.

One other trip should be mentioned, the trip to Canada. We flew from International Falls 400 miles to the Lake of the Woods. I caught a 20-pound lake trout and only I was lucky enough to catch one. Fishing was great and a buddy of mine caught a 10-pound silver northern, a beautiful fish. It took a while to land as it was in a speedy river and very rocky. The flight up was something to remember as we were over water the entire flight and saw many beautiful things.

On our trips to Minnesota in the 30's and 40's our licenses allowed us to ship home 50 pounds of fish for an additional \$1 tag on our license. We usually did this and the box of fish were distributed to my customers who looked forward (yearly) to free fish.

Here is an unusual thing that happened. About a mile from our cabin down the road what was called Tamarak Forest. You could leave the road and go back 150 feet and pick moss – ice cold moss. We used this to ship our fish home as it kept the ice from melting fast. The moss actually grew on a layer of ice.

A huge tree was an unusual attraction as it took six men with out-stretched arms to reach around it and in Canada we saw moose and bear tracks on shore wherever we fished.

We took a trip to Kettle Falls, Minnesota one year which is the only place in the United States you can look south into Canada. We stayed at an old lumberman's camp or logger's hotel which had been converted to a fishing resort. It featured a huge kitchen, dining room and dance floor which still bore the hobnail marks of the logger's boots.

A couple of weeks before the camp opened it was usually stocked with provisions for the fishing season such as potatoes, fruit juices, flour, etc. for the cook to use in preparing breakfasts and meals for the fishermen. The owner of the camp would load a launch full of supplies and would bring it to the camp one day and return the next.

A few days after the first trip he discovered the back screen door had been broken into and the flour, fruit juices and other supplies had been dragged all over the kitchen. He guessed it had to be a black bear just coming out of hibernation. A night or two later he heard a noise in the kitchen and he went outside to investigate. There in the dim moonlight he saw something disappearing into the woods. He fired several shots from his rifle not knowing the results. Three weeks later when the camp cook went into the wood to pick blackberries he found a 400-pound black bear lying in the path partly decomposed.

The next morning at the breakfast table we were told about the bear but we were skeptical. The cook told us to see for ourselves as it was still there. We checked and discovered the bear just as it had been told to us. I became so interested that I got my pliers out of my tackle box and proceeded to go back to where the bear lay and pull out most of the huge teeth and claws for souvenirs. The huge teeth were at least two-

inches long and the claws were enormous. I preserved all these for several years until I got the idea to make a necklace out of the teeth and the claws. When I was having them put into a chain in a jewelry store I attracted quite a crowd as I related how I had obtained them. My granddaughter now owns the necklace.

BASEBALL

In the 30's [1930's] every town had a baseball team of its own and every town played every other town during the season. Each individual player furnished his own bat and glove. Baseballs were furnished by the team. We played many semi-pro traveling teams such as "House of David", "Capitol City Giants" and "Black Barons". These teams were considered next to Western League caliber. We played every Sunday and all holidays and were always chosen as one competitor at the 4th of July celebration at Humboldt and also for the Humboldt County Fair.

One game stands out in my mind at the Humboldt Fair. We were playing the Tama Indian team and I was batting left handed (a switch hitter). I was exceptionally lucky to hit one deep right center field for a Home Run. After circling the bases I was greeted on the bench by several loyal fans who presented me with several dollars in appreciation for my effort. Home runs were a rarity by players on our team.

When night came we danced our legs off in the pavilion for 10-cents a dance with all our girlfriends and local girls. The season continued until Labor Day which was considered the end of the season. The club secretary then divided the money from gate receipts which usually amounted to about \$5 for each player. Baseball wasn't played for money in those days but for the sheer sport of it.

Plans were made for the next season. We had an exceptionally large following of loyal fans at our games, maybe a crowd of 500 at special games. I was exceptionally proud of my record as a centerfielder as I made only one error in nine years if playing!

ADDENDUM

Lois Baumann Nerem, who returned to Thor with her husband in retirement, recalls that the north half of the building in which her father's

tavern was located was a pool hall. Inside there was a connecting door between the two. She said the pool hall was operated by Tom Langeland who came from Norway.

She recalls that some of the local beer drinkers were uncomfortable with being seen walking directly into the tavern through the front door so they would go into the pool hall and then through the connecting door into the tavern.

After a fire in later years there was an auction and a girlfriend of Lois's was "overcome by a wave of nostalgia" and bid on the door for Lois that connected the pool hall and tavern. Lois now has that door.

Lois recalls the boys who lived in Thor used to play pool after school and on Saturdays. Lois says she used to go to the pool hall to buy salted sunflower seeds. It was the only place in town that had them.

She explained that Slims tavern was strictly a beer bar with no hard liquor. Beer and pop were offered. She says she still marvels at how her father raised a family in the early days on the profits of 5-cent beers.

Reflecting on the annual customer appreciation feeds at the tavern she said the meat would be prepared by Treloar's in Ft Dodge which was a well known restaurant, best known for its barbeque. Lois said that she, her mother and Barbara Hanna, the wife of Mace Hanna, one of his bartenders, always did the serving for the customer feed.