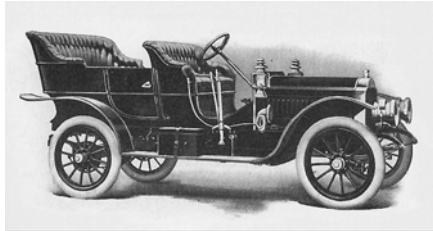


Descendants of Henry and Perseda Zeisset

By Paul Zeisset, July 30, 2016

Merton and Carol

Henry and Perseda Zeisset had two children, Merton, born November 8, 1909, and Carol, born on Christmas Day, 1911.



When Merton and Carol were children, the family had no automobile. The family used a buggy and later a two-horse carriage. My dad admitted that as a child he was afraid of automobiles. On those infrequent occasions when a car drove into the yard, he ran for cover. He recalled hiding once under the bed, and

another time running for the cow shed. Eventually, young Merton was persuaded to go along with the family on ride in the car of a family friend. It turned out to be fun, and that was the end of his fear of automobiles.



Merton recalled that he and Carol got along quite well, as siblings go.



As Merton and Carol grew up, they befriended various farm animals. I wish I could ask my dad about this sheep, of which several pictures were taken.



Merton and Carol shared a bicycle. It was ordered from Montgomery Ward and came in a wooden crate only partly assembled. Merton mastered the bicycle first, but in time Carol rode it as well, but they also rode together sometimes.

Fairview School

Both children attended Fairview School, the same school their father had attended briefly. When Merton started school, Fairview was a 1-room school and that school year had 39 pupils--and an inexperienced teacher. Discipline was in short supply, and Merton recalls being picked on by the older boys his first year. My dad was never one to brag about the old one-room schools. When the class was large, not to mention of widely varying ages, personal attention from the teacher could be hard to come by.

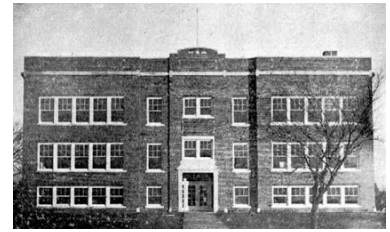


By the time Carol started school, the school board had built a two-room building. The two rooms were separated by folding doors which opened to give a fair-sized meeting room. The full basement provided play space in winter and on rainy days. The new school had better out-houses, too.

Merton

High school

In the fall of 1923, Merton started high school in an old building, just before the new new high school building was ready. Once in the new school, they had the best building anywhere near. He recalled that there was hot rivalry among nearby schools, especially between Leonardville and Riley. In his four years, they did not lose to Riley in any sports event, and they considered that very important at the time.



Merton usually drove a horse and buggy to school. He didn't always have a good horse, though, since his father kept the best horses for farm work. Often, he took cream and eggs to the station on the way to school.

Preparing for the ministry

In 1927, Merton graduated from high school. His cousin Jake Nanninga urged my father to go along with him that fall to Western Union College. Jake's brother Milt Nanninga was headed off to Emporia. But Merton had not planned on college, and once he was out of high school, he began working full time with his father on the farm. It wasn't until after he had worked on the farm for three years that he decided he wanted to prepare for the ministry.



How was it that it took Merton so long to decide? His maternal grandfather had been a preacher. His mother must have always hoped he would feel the call. Preachers were held in high regard in their home.

When Merton was young, the preacher's sermons seemed long. He would ask his father how soon church would be over, and typically get the reply, "After a while." A few years later, he timed their pastor, Rev. C. E. Platz, and found that he preached 43 minutes on average, morning and evening. But Merton gradually got more of an appreciation of the sermons, and their Biblical content. Merton studied the catechism three summers, meeting with Rev. Platz on Saturday afternoons for instruction. He felt that he also had encouragement from other preachers he knew. But he never discussed it with his parents until he had made a firm decision in his own mind to study for the ministry. He said it was hard for him to work up his courage to tell his parents that he wanted to leave, but he found them supportive in every way.

College and seminary

In the fall of 1930, Merton left for Western Union College in LeMars, Iowa. The college was sponsored by the Evangelical Church, the denomination he had grown up in. To reach LeMars, Merton took the train to Marysville, another to Lincoln, another to Omaha, and finally a fourth through Sioux City to LeMars, Iowa.



Ina Hubbard

In college Merton met Ina Hubbard of Nevada, Iowa. She was the fourth of 8 children and grew up on the family farm in Story County, Iowa. She attended Central Iowa Business College in Marshalltown staying with her grandmother. None of her older siblings had gone on to high school. What Ina really wanted to do was to become a missionary overseas. To that end she pursued a college degree



at Western Union College. But, when she graduated in 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression, there were no mission appointments available, indeed there wasn't enough money to maintain missionaries already on duty, and many had to come home. After college, Ina went back to Story County and got a job in the county Treasurer's office, a place she had also worked before college. In time, she became Deputy County Treasurer. She later admitted that she felt disapproval from some women in the community, who felt that she should go back home to live with her parents, and let an unemployed man have the job she had gained.

Merton graduated from Western Union College a year after Ina left, and proceeded on to study three years at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Naperville, Illinois, near Chicago. He kept in touch with Ina, though, and was able to visit her hometown on his way between Kansas and Illinois. Once he got his Probationer's License, he was considered a member of the clergy, and thus became eligible for discounted train travel.



Merton and Ina were married in Nevada, Iowa, Ina's hometown, May 12, 1937, only two days after Merton graduated from the seminary in Illinois. After the wedding, they headed to Topeka, for the Evangelical Church's Annual Conference, and from there, after a brief stop in Leonardville, they proceeded to their first pastorate, in Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma City may have been a big city, but their church was small, and didn't even have a bank account. Merton was paid every Sunday night in cash, usually \$15. With supplements from the Conference, his annual remuneration was about \$1000, or, in today's dollars, about \$17,000..

In Oklahoma City, they started a family, with the birth of Ray Merton in December of 1939.



After 5 years in Oklahoma City, their next three pastorates were in rural or small town Kansas churches, in Hillsboro, Marion, and Worden. Hillsboro was an advancement for my father, and all three congregations were much larger than Oklahoma City's, and provided some increase in their cash income. They also benefited from in-kind contributions from church members, a dozen eggs here, a chicken there, or even 96 gallons of strawberries one year. But they initially missed some of the advantages of urban life they had experienced in Oklahoma City.

The Worden parsonage was the only place they lived that did not have indoor plumbing. When my father asked if the church trustees couldn't install running water in the house, one trustee objected since he didn't want to give in to his own wife, who wanted indoor plumbing, and if the parsonage got indoor plumbing it would be a bad precedent.



I was born in 1946, while they lived in Worden. As my father left the hospital in Lawrencel after attending my birth, he stopped at the ration office for an additional allotment of sugar, to which my birth certificate now entitled us.



In 1948, my father was assigned to the congregation in Enid, Oklahoma. It meant a 50% increase in pay, and soon they felt they were getting on their feet financially. My father could afford a new suit, which meant that my mother could stop mending the holes in the seat of the old one. Within a year they could afford a new car, with help from the Enid congregation.

Ray feels Enid is where he grew up, across 7 years in the 4th through 10th grades.

In 1955, we moved to Newton, Kansas, where my father had the opportunity to serve the largest congregation in the Kansas Conference.

And in Newton, my brother Ray met his future bride Carolyn Moore.

In 1958, we moved to Jewell, the place I remember best because that is where I attended 7th grade through high school. This was the first of three pastorates where my father served two churches together.

My mother had always enjoyed teaching in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School over the years, but while we were in Jewell, she got opportunities to teach in nearby public schools. Her longest and most satisfying job was teaching at the Girls Industrial School in Beloit, KS, where she felt a sense of mission to those girls left out of other educational opportunities. She was able to keep within commuting distance of that job as they moved in 1965 to Huscher.

In 1969, my Grandmother Perseda died. Thereafter, proximity to Leonardville no longer had to be a consideration. Later that year they moved to Attica, and 4 years after that they began their last full-time pastorate in Satanta..



Travel

My parents had always been interested in travel and learning.

- In 1948, Henry and Perseda were interested in visiting the EUB church's Redbird Mission in Kentucky, and the idea expanded to include our family. Henry had a nice large Kaiser automobile, while my parents did not yet have a good car. The 6 of us all packed ourselves into my grandfather's car. Ray recalls that the traveling conditions were very spartan by modern standards. We stayed in tourist cabins that provided a roof over our heads but little else. Meals were all "picnic style" with provisions purchased along the way. That trip detoured down to Pensacola, FL, to see a bit of the Gulf Coast. One can only imagine what it was like for 70-year-old Henry and Perseda to be on such a long 3-generation car trip. Incidentally, the trip allowed my father to visit 10 states they hadn't been in before.
- In 1950, we had a new Studebaker of our own and we drove West to California, where we went to see my mother's sister Eva and her family, visiting the EUB mission in Espanola, NM, on the way and dipping into Mexico along the way on the way home. These long trips were possible because my father got the Enid congregation to allow him to save up his two weeks of vacation time from one year to the next so that we could take a 4-week trip every other year.
- In 1952, we attended the denomination's general convention in Ohio.
- In 1954, my father arranged to fill in at the church of a seminary classmate, then in Brooklyn, New York, for 4 Sundays, and we used that trip to travel to Washington, DC, and all the way to the tip of Maine. On the way home we traveled to Niagara Falls and through a bit of Canada, too.
- In 1956, a denominational conference in Minnesota gave us the excuse to travel around the northern plains.
- In 1957, our longest trip took us back to California, and from there north to Washington State and back through Boise, ID, the place my mother was born, when her father was trying out sheep ranching for a year before returning with his family to Iowa.



- With the 1957 trip, my parents had gone to all 48 states, and by taking me along, I achieved that milestone at the age of only 10.
- I got in on three more long domestic trips, in 1959, 1963 and 1964, but Ray missed them because he had gone off to college and then got married, except that he and Carolyn met us on a trip that included Washington, DC, where we had our picture taken with Bob Dole, who was our Congressman at the time.



For Christmas in 1969, Ray and I gave our parents the seed money for a trip to Europe. That trip, which Ray and Carolyn planned and accompanied them on in 1970, included Kreuzfeld and a few other sites with ancestral connections, and served as a catalyst for some of my father's later writings on Zeisset family history. Afterwards, my parents supposed that the 1970 trip would be their only overseas journey, but the congregation they served in Satanta was supportive and

- in 1974 they took a tour to Israel, Greece, and Rome;
- in 1976 to seven countries in Africa, and
- in 1978 to England and Scotland.

In retirement, their travels continued:

- in 1980 to visit Methodist churches in Korea;
- in 1983 to visit Methodist churches in Cuba (at a time when travel to Cuba was almost unheard);
- in 1985 to Israel and Egypt, and
- in 1989 to Eastern Europe.



Retirement

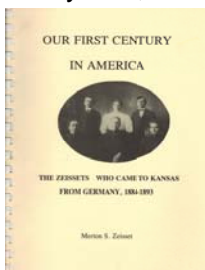
From 1937 to 1979, my parents spent 42 years in the pastoral ministry in the Evangelical Church, the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and the United Methodist Church, as the denominations merged. My father edited the Kansas Conference Bulletin for his denomination for 26 of those years.

Upon retirement in 1979, Merton and Ina moved to Leonardville, to a home built by his sister, Carol, and her husband. They enjoyed that house until early 2000, when they moved to Beninga Acres, an independent living apartment associated with the Leonardville Nursing Home.



In his retirement years, Merton served eight years on the Riley County Senior Citizens board, six years on the County Historical Society board, and fifteen years on the board of Tuttle Creek Lake Ministries. In the local community, he was a member of the Lions Club, serving twice as its president; he was instrumental in organizing the Leonardville Senior Citizens and served as its first president. He was on the Pride Committee for two periods and served on committees of the Leonardville United Methodist Church.

Picking up again on pastoral duties in retirement, Merton served as Minister of Visitation for the Clay Center United Methodist Church for 13 years, and preached in dozens of churches as there was need on occasional Sundays. He truly enjoyed preaching and making pastoral calls. The Leonardville United Methodist Church named him Pastor Emeritus in the 1980s.



In 1992, Merton published a compilation of genealogy and family history entitled *Our First Century in America: The Zeissetts Who Came to Kansas from Germany*,

1884-1893. His leadership and stories inspired our biennial Zeisset reunions for many years.

Both of my parents lived to the age of 95. My mother died in December of 2000. My father stayed active until pain from cancer forced him to move to the Leonardville Nursing Home in August, 2004—but not until after he played an active part in the 2004 Zeisset reunion, especially its tour of the farms of the immigrant generation around Leonardville.



Merton died February 18, 2005. He had lived alone those last four years, but prior to that had shared 63 years of marriage and partnership with my mother.

The next generations

Both Ray and I followed in our parents' footsteps by going to Western Union College, or Westmar as the name had changed to avoid confusion with the telegraph company. Also attending Westmar was Carolyn Moore, who would become Ray's bride after he graduated in 1961.



Ray earned his doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Illinois, and spent most of his career in the mental health system of Nebraska, and they raised their family in Lincoln. He and Carolyn have both written books, on genealogy, statistics, and the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory

I earned a masters degree in Psychology and Statistics from the University of Texas, and spent my career as a statistician at the U.S. Census Bureau in Washington, DC.

Among Merton and Ina's grandchildren, all shown in this earliest photo--



Two are now in the military:

- Ray's son Tim is a Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Army and is stationed in Portland, OR
- My son Jonathan, with a masters degree in criminal justice, serves in the Army Special Forces and is stationed in Fayetteville, NC

One is a contractor to the military:

- Ray's daughter Michelle, with a PhD in Operations Research, is a research analyst for the Air Force, and lives outside Alamagordo, NM

Two are in medicine:

- Ray's daughter Crista is a doctor of internal medicine in Denver, CO
- Ray's daughter Heidi is a registered nurse in Omaha, NE
- ...and both married medical doctors.

So Merton and Ina had five grandchildren and now have five great-grandchildren. All of Ray's family were present at the wedding of his daughter Crista. My son and his children are shown in this less formal pose.



Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge assistance I received in preparation of this presentation. Ray and Carolyn provided useful comments. But mostly I wish to thank both of my parents for writing about family history during their retirement. They gave us a wonderful legacy.

Carol and her family

[Dwight Benninga presented stories of Carol Zeisset and Raymond Benninga and their descendants.]

