

11  
Now that I have reached 60 years, I thought I might look back over this span of years and record some of the changes that I can remember in my life and in our little community here at Avon, Indiana.

I was born October 9, 1911. My parents lived in Tom Hurin's "rented" house. A large square two story house painted a moss green. It stood where the present Bud's Auto Parts is now. I was the oldest of four children born to Herman and Ada Reed Barker. Both the Barker and the Reed's were among the first settlers in Avon. My great-grandfather Robert Barker and my grandfather Stright Barker were both constables of the town. Having a law office in their home. The present Avon Schools are built on the farm lands owned by my grandparents. The Barkers also brought the mail from Plainfield by horse back until Avon itself had a post office. However, the post office was short lived. My grandfather Barker had seven sisters, most of them married and left the Avon community to settle in far away places like Rockville and Greencastle, one in Iowa and one in Nebraska. Occasionally they would come back to the home place and we would get to see them. The home place or "Barkers" was the large white colonial house just south of Avon where the Charles Muston family now lives, a great-great grandson of the original owner Robert Barker.

Aunt Hannah Merritt lived on a farm near Avon and Aunt Mary Barker and Aunt Carrie Ross lived south of Avon. One of my first memories is going to Uncle Eli's. Uncle Eli Ross kept a journal all the years of his life and he would get it out and read some to us. Also Uncle Eli and Aunt Carrie and my grandpa Daniel Stright Barker had singing schools at different times. My grandpa loved to sing. And the story grows that after supper in the cabins around Avon, people used to sit outside on the door steps and maybe they might hear Stright Barker singing. (The radio or T.V. program of that day) My grandmother Barker - Emily Ann was known for her helpful kindness to her neighbors, she was a quiet unassuming person who was always there when needed. The large barn on the Barker place was built to shelter the railroad teams when the railroad was built from Indianapolis west and it was a place of shelter for anyone traveling through (Hobo's). It was a well known fact that Emily Barker never let anyone go on hungry. You could always get breakfast at her back door. Of course, the church was the center of our family's life. Although not a minister many offices were held by different members of the family. The Barkers were actually community minded farmers. They farmed but they also "filled in" wherever the need arose in the community, church, school, law, mail, lunch counters and always singing.

The Reeds lived north of 36 on what is now known as Dan Jones Road. My husband Irvin Muston and I live on 5 acres of what used to be farm lands of each side of the road owned by my grandfather William Reed. Grandpa Reed did many interesting things too. He carpentered, and built some of the houses that still stand in this area. He had a brick and tile kiln and made much of the tile that was used in this area for the original ditches. Watching the fires for the kiln was a 24 hour a day job. He bought a clock to strike the hours to awaken him to go tend the fire. We have this clock yet. Grandpa Reed's had a sugar camp too, back in the woods behind our present house. I remember my grandma Reed, Sarah Larsh Reed, so tall and straight with high cheek bones and was thrilled to learn that yes she did have a grandmother who was an Indian. William and Sarah Reed were very strict hard shell Baptists. Churches in their day had church once a month all day, with a business meeting and a little service thrown in to boot on Saturday afternoon before Sunday. The other 3 sundays were days of rest and if you had a good team you might go to another church for their church sunday. You see the minister



2  
would travel from church to church. I went to this kind of church as a child. We also had summer revival services when some guest minister from Georgia would come. I remember wondering as a child why they always came from Georgia. Dinner on church Sunday was held on the grounds in summer time. If it came up a rain I remember the minister asking the Lord if we could put up the tables in the back of the church, fortunately we could but it was the church and meant no playing around during dinner hour by us kids. During the winter some one had the minister for dinner and my grandma Reed always took her turn. First the minister and the men ate. Then the older women and then the children. To this day I remember waiting and hoping there would be chicken and pie left for my brother and sisters and me. My grandmother loves us, but it was the seemly way to do. Now my Grandma Barker always figured the children were hungry and we sat right down at the first table and the children's plates were filled first and she always figured we ought to have another piece of pie cause she was thinking of how we would like it when she baked it.

To go back to my Grandpa Reed's, after I was older I learned that William Reed was a country fiddler. As a young man he played for Saturday night barn dances and house warmings and the like. He had been married and divorced. My grandmother Sarah Ann caught his eye. Certainly he was not a fit suitor for this little 16 year old. But grandpa used to ride by on his horse and leave a letter for her down the road in a hollow tree. Later grandma would fly down the road to read it. True love won out and they were married. But grandpa's gay fiddling was heard only at home since he had found the Lord. In our church no musical instruments at all were allowed. I can remember my grandpa as he played the fiddle for us grandchildren= he'd play it "right", then put it to one side and the other, then clear around on his back. He taught all his children to play the fiddle and any musical instrument they could get their hands on. My mother had perfect pitch, she played the pump organ, the fore-runner of the piano, and was said she and her little brother sang tunes before they talked. She also played any instrument she could get hold of. She loved to play and sing on the guitar. She and her 2 brothers and sister sang as a quartet. Anytime we went to Grandpa Reed's we always sang in the afternoon and "played" whatever anyone had that day. I can remember my Grandma Reed sitting so quietly listening to the children and grandpa-- but I don't remember her singing. Since Grandpa Reed was older they sold their farms and retired to Danville. And when grandpa became bedfast my parents moved in with them so my mother could help out. So I went to Danville my second grade of school. How I hated the city school. I was scared of all the boys as I walked the sidewalk home to grandma's. Truly I was a country mouse. My grandpa died that winter and come spring my parents bought a home 2 miles north of Avon on the southeast corner of 267 and Wall Street Pike. But I had to stay at grandma's until school was out. It was this home on the 4 acres that I remember most. Although before moving to Danville we had lived north of 36 on Dan Jones Road. Here my brother Ira and sister Lorna were born. I remember the strawberry patch, We had young girls who came in and picked strawberries and my dad sold them. My mother canned the "culls". We loved strawberries, I also remember my father driving a school hack at this time. This was with a team of horses, of course. And I remember the barn and the woods and the coal shed where I boosted Ira and Lorna up and didn't get them down for supper. I remember the snow drifts here as high as the fence (they still are) that us kids could walk on right over the fences. And the large maple trees that shaded our yard. And one of the most exciting things was the book-mobile that came from Plainfield once a month. A library brought the world to our home. Since my mother had graduated from Indiana State College and taught school before her marriage she was eager for us to have all the advantages of learning. My dad had attended Purdue for a short while but became homesick and gave it up.