

Riskedahl's Store

Linda Scherbenske with additions from Barbara

Several of our family (Clifford, Erna, Ruby, Louise, Burt, Barbara, Laura, Alan) spent many hours of their lives working in Riskedahl's Store. Most of our families lived in Tuttle, and were regular, dependent customers of Riskedahl's store. That being the case it seems only right that some memories be shared of Riskedahl's Store.

Clifford started working in a Tuttle grocery store when he was a teenager. The store was under the mentorship of Henry Kremenetsky. Years and events led to his owning the store by the 1930s. As more years and events went by, Louise and Ruby became employees who, to make a long story short, did everything and did it so very well. They were clerks who took care of customers, they ordered, unpacked, and shelved, they cleaned, they were a vital part of the store.

When Erna wasn't taking care of the Riskedahl home and family, or being organist at the Lutheran Church, she also did all that was needed at the store. Through the years Burt, Barbara, Laura, and Alan were also enlisted to work in the store. By the late 1960s, Riskedahl's Store was the only grocery, hardware, paint, appliance, drugstore, dry goods store in Tuttle.

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Memories of Riskedahl's Store:

Clifford's office was up a few stairs in the back of the store. He did all of the book work, bill paying, phone calls, office work from that spot. He had a typewriter on which he typed with two fingers. While Clifford certainly worked as hard or harder than others who worked in the store, and it was always clear to all that this was Clifford's store, he had a talent of relating to people that was based not only on his knowing the history of most people who came to the store, but also on his business acumen, honesty, concern for Tuttle, and an interested, outgoing and kind personality.

It's easy to picture Clifford standing in the store, his leg up on a carton or two, talking with a customer he'd likely known all his life. The topic could have been anything from the weather to the purchase of a washing machine to Twins baseball to a dilemma in someone's life where help was needed.

One day a week was "truck day". On "truck day" a huge semi would back up to the big south door. It would be loaded with boxes and boxes of whatever had been ordered. Those boxes contains cans, jars, bag that needed to be unloaded and unpacked on the store shelves. While we weren't always aware of the physical labor needed to work in the store, "truck day" as well as many other days was a busy, labor intensive day. It's likely Burt, Barbara, Laura, and Alan could tell us today where things were located in the store as they unpacked groceries into their places many times.

Several times in the 1960s, Clifford took Barbara, Laura, Alan, and Linda to Minneapolis where Clifford would go to the big wholesale companies to purchase inventory. We drove all the way in one day, had a picnic along the way, stayed at the Andrews' Hotel, and always went to a Twins baseball game.

Somewhere in the days in MN, Clifford would go to various distributors to do his buying. We'd come home with the car packed to the roof of things to sell at the store. The rest of what he ordered got to the store somehow or other. He'd also always buy Fanny Farmer candy for Ruby and Louise and others.

Clifford delivered groceries when that was needed. That included taking propane tanks to people's home. The elderly or ill knew Clifford would bring them what they ordered. He also delivered and installed all of the appliances people bought including washers, dryers, refrigerators, stoves, and the now less-known staple, the "chest freezer" large enough to hold at least "a side of beef" and lots of frozen things from gardening.

The store had a big, likely heavy, white door on the south side. It was locked with padlock. After Clifford was gone, his keys to that big door were in a glass case in Erna's house. One can almost hear those keys rattling in Clifford's pocket.

After Christmas there were always a few days in which several of us were enlisted to help with inventory. Ruby would give us the sheets needed and show us what to do. I do hope that was as helpful as it was fun. It was Burt, Barbara, and Alan who did a lot of the egg "candling" on weekends. Barbara remembers that her long hours of egg candling meant her rendezvous with her date, Allan Zerr, would be delayed until 10:30.

Many farmers had lots of chickens and would bring dozens and dozens of eggs to the store to sell. The eggs were put in front of a light bulb to ensure they were good. Good egg candlers could hold lots of eggs in one hand at a time, turn them with just the right twist to see the inside of the egg, and return them to the case without breaking. On nights when people like Robert Gerr didn't roll in until about 11:30 with his 60 dozen, Barbara became very adept at moving entire layers of eggs from the crate to the cardboard storage box without having to look at each one.

Saturday nights were big business in Tuttle. The store would be open until midnight, with the door often not being locked until 1:00 a.m.

- Families from all over Tuttle rural area would come to town to see neighbors, get groceries, and do business. It was a big night! It was a dating night for kids. Now and then there was a dance or the roller skating hall would be open. It's easy to imagine how tired Clifford, Erna, Ruby, and Louise must have been at the end of a long and busy Saturday.

A part of every Christmas of the Sauter clan gathering was Clifford giving Ruby and Louise each a gift of a \$500 savings bond.

Tuttle rather reeled when Clifford died suddenly on a blizzardy December day in 1972. Not only was his very presence missed, his owning the only store in town was a concern. Erna, Ruby and Louise keep the store going until it was sold in late 1973. Things changed: the highway made it easier to get to Bismarck to shop; the number of farms dwindled dramatically with the onset of big machinery. When the new Community Store opened a few years later, Erna wrote a letter of congratulations and support that hangs in the store yet today.

Commented [1]: Another addendum to the Riskedahl Story. When I asked Martie to marry me in the spring of 1964 I not purchased an engagement ring. So when I came home from Denver on spring break I knew it was time to find a ring. Not many jewelry stores in Tuttle back then. So at Burt's suggestion we went to Riskedahl's store to see if Uncle Clifford could help me out. It didn't help that I was on a budget of about \$200.00. Clifford got out a couple of catalogs and we browsed until we found one that fit my budget. It looked good so he ordered it. It came in by the time Burt and I WENT BACK TO Denver at which time I gave it to Martie. Several years later I had the diamond placed on a gold ring (a little wealthier by then). I asked for an appraisal of the ring from the jeweler. He said it was a good diamond with good color and clarity and that it was worth considerably more than I had paid for it. Thank you, UNCLE CLIFFORD. Vern