

## Pavučina Corner – By Tony Kadlec

### SILVER LAKE FAMILY SPOTLIGHT: THE GEHLEN FAMILY

This past week marked the passing of a well respected Silver Lake resident and pillar of the community, Joe Gehlen. My personal memories of him date back to about thirty years ago, from our family's visits to the Gehlen elevator to have our corn ground into animal feed. As we were "new" to town, we appreciated his magnanimous spirit and his constant willingness to introduce us to his other customers from town who we hadn't met.

Here is the Gehlen Family Story from the McLeod County History book of 1978:

"Joe W. Gehlen, Silver Lake Minnesota, owner of Gehlen Farm Services, Inc., since 1951 was born in Glencoe, Minnesota on May 3, 1920 and is the son of Josef F. and Katherine (Willems) Gehlen.

Joseph F. Gehlen is one of six children born to William and Katherine (Mohrbacher) Gehlen. For Katherine this was a second marriage. Her first husband (Casper Zencius) was killed by the long horn of an ox. Katherine and Casper Zencius, too, had six children. Joseph F. Gehlen is only one of this family still living in 1978. He was 95 on March 10, 1978.

Katherine Willems married Joseph F. Gehlen on February 16, 1909 in Cologne, Minnesota. Katherine's childhood was spent in the Cologne area. She was the daughter of John and Beth (Aretz) Willems, one of five girls born of this marriage; twins, Crest and Gertrude, died in infancy. Her father, John Willems was previously married to Leona Hoen. Of that union two sons were born, William and Pete. Leona died at the birth of her second son.

Josef F. and Katherine Gehlen farmed near Glencoe on a farm in Helen Township. Eleven children were born: Wilbert, Irene, Richard, Elzear (Father Al), Catherine (deceased), Joseph W., Mark (deceased), Doris, Mary Francis (deceased), Claire and Joanne. Katherine Gehlen passed away on July 18, 1973.

Joseph W. Gehlen attended St. Peter and Paul's Grade School in Glencoe and graduated from Glencoe High School in 1938. He entered the service in 1941 and served in the Coast Guard during World War II for five years.

In 1948 he married Bernice Podrasky at St. Joseph Church in Silver Lake. They are presently members there. Bernice is the only living child of Mary (Matousek) and Henry Podrasky, a brother Leonard died in infancy. Henry and Mary Podrasky lived on a farm in Rich Valley Township near Koniska.

Mary Matousek was the daughter of Martin and Victoria (Posusta) Matousek. Mary had four sisters and five brothers, namely: Annie, Sam, Tillie, Julie, Victoria, Henry, Martin, Theodore and Joseph. Her family was from a pioneer family in the Rich Valley (Silver Lake) area. Mary died July 13, 1966.

Henry Podrasky was the son of Joseph and Katherine (Kucera) Podrasky. Henry had two sisters and two brothers: Katherine, Joseph, Charles and Mary. Henry died October 11, 1939.

Bernice (Podrasky) Gehlen attended St. Joseph Catholic Grade School, Silver Lake; S.S. Peter and Paul Catholic School, Glencoe; and graduated from Glencoe High School in 1941.

Joseph W. and Bernice Gehlen have five children: Joseph, Mark, Mary, Paul, and Jon. Bernice works in the McLeod County Recorder's office. She has been active in church and community committees.



JOE W. GEHLEN FAMILY; *Front:* Joe W., Jon and Bernice *Middle:* Joe J. and Paul *Back:* Mark and Mary.

Joe is a member of the Silver Lake Fire Department, a charter member of the Glencoe Community Jaycees and past president, a past member of the Glencoe Recreational Board, past officer of the Glencoe Knights of Columbus Club, member and past officer of St. Joseph's Society of S.S. Peter and Paul Church, a charter member of the Silver Lake Lion's Club and past president. Past Grand Knight of Mother Cabrini Council Knights of Columbus, past Commander of the American Legion Post No. 141, member of the McLeod County Fair Board, and served as Mayor of Silver lake for 16 years."

Source: McLeod County History Book, 1978.

### **Směs (Miscellany)**

#### **Empanger Connection in Koniska**

Last week's column mentioned the Hopkins area Czech businessman/farmer named John Empanger, who introduced the raspberry crop to the area in the 1880's. Ron Pulkrabek noted an Empanger connection in Koniska:

"We have four Empangers buried here on the Koniska Cemetery. Joseph [d. 1937] and Frances [d.1902] Empanger farmed about three miles east of Koniska. Two of their children age twenty and age

one year are here also. Per the cemetery records William Empanger would attend meetings during the 1940's and 1950's and donate money for gravesite upkeep. The last record is Ann Empanger donating three dollars in 1967. A total of \$53.25, including the lot, was donated in the last 120 years.

A Joseph Empanger [d.1949] married Lizzie Pulkrabek [d.1951] would come from Hopkins [per Erwin Skorpik] to visit the cemetery. Lizzie's parents Anton and Anna Pulkrabek are buried in the Koniska Cemetery also." (Source: Ron Pulkrabek)

### **Locating the Dudek Blacksmith Shop**

Wallace Oliva seems to recall that a blacksmith shop had burned down somewhere just south of the present day fire station, which fits the description of the Dudek blacksmith shop.

### ***Mluvíte Český? Do You Speak Czech?***

**starosta** ('STA-roh-sta'): mayor

**dát/snést někomu modré z nebe** ('DAHT/SNEYST NYE-ko-mu MOH-drey z NEYH-beyh'): literally: to give/bring someone the blue from the sky or in English, to give someone the moon).

As a rule, you should always stress the first syllable of a Czech word!

If you have any contributions or suggestions for topics for future columns, please contact me by email: [tkadlec@gmail.com](mailto:tkadlec@gmail.com) or call me: (651) 271-0422 or send your letters to my attention: 1408 Fairmount Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105. Děkuji! Tony Kadlec