Chapter 8.

1-A. Fit to Kill

All male citizens and all male resident aliens born between October 1, 1922 and September 18, 1930 were required by law (approved by Congress June 24, 1948) to register for the draft and

John, Dick, Dad, and Bill loading hay on our Jeep at Skyland Farm.

appear at their nearest Selective Service Board between August 1 and September 30, 1948.

When I returned to the Berea College campus for my sophomore year in early September, 1948, I found that the College had made arrangements to transport those students eighteen and over (I had turned eighteen in April.) to Richmond, the county seat of Madison County, to

register on 17 September. I don't recall much about the registration except for one question on the form which puzzled me. It said something about requesting a "special" form. I do recall reasoning that I wanted to be treated like everybody else, not special. I didn't realize that my answer had enormous, lifetime implications. I filled in "No."

The passage actually read:

By reason of religious training and belief I am conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form and for this reason request that the local board furnish me with a Special Form for Conscientious Objector (SSS Form 150) which I am to complete and return to the local board for its consideration. … Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe in the use of force? … Describe the actions and behavior in your life which in your opinion most conspicuously demonstrate the consistency and depth of your religious conviction.

There was no time, while registering, to sort out the significance of *Form 150* nor, if I had understood it, to decide what I felt about being trained to wage war. I knew about conscientious objection to war but had not thought about it in a personal way. Howard Alexander, a close friend of my parents, had been a CO during World War II and spent time being used to test various medical procedures in lieu of serving in the armed forces. For myself, such adult decisions seemed a long way off. The country was not at war and there was no danger of my being called up. I was not prepared to answer the question sprung upon me without warning. I had been spending an idyllic summer growing corn and watermelons and making hay on our Georgia farm when the registration law was passed. I was now a college sophomore and focused on classes, student labor, and campus life; deciding on the weighty matters of war and peace were held at arms length.

Berea College Mountain Day, October 1950: Maurice Wesley, Margaret Smith, Doris Graybeal, Dick Ramsay, Bill Ramsay, John Ramsay, Tom Vickers on On East Pinnacle.

In May, 1949, just before the end of the sophomore year, I received a Classification

Questionnaire. Section XI asked about my status as a student. I responded , "I am in college studying for a Georgia Teacher's Certificate in Agr." A week later, on May 31, a I-A classification was mailed back to me. However, I still had every reason to believe that I would not be "called up" until I graduated and assumed the Government knew what it was doing. Selective Service regulations stipulated postponements to students legitimately enrolled in school.

I went on with my life, but during my junior year I did begin attending meetings of the Fellowship of Reconciliation on the Berea campus and volunteered to help Roscoe Giffin, a sociology professor, administer a door-to-door poll of the citizens of Berea concerning the issue of Universal Military Training. I had been attending the Methodist Church in town and had talked with Dr. Ira J. Martin, III, the Methodist's student advisor, about nonviolence. I also found Rev. Leon (Sandy) Sandborne to be very helpful as I tried to sort out my thinking in regards to military solutions and other options. Sandy was the pastor of Union Church, an anti-sectarian church on the Berea campus founded by John G. Fee, the abolitionist preacher who also founded Berea College. Sandy was a pacifist, knew my family well from our Ohio days, and officiated at my sister's wedding.

I spent the summer of 1950 as a camp counselor for Camp Waco, a YMCA camp in Georgia, and then, in September, went on up to Kentucky for my senior year. On September 20, the draft board mailed me an Order to Report for Armed Forces Physical Examination, Form 223. It required me to be in Douglasville, Georgia, *"at 8:00 a.m., on the 27th of Sept., 1950."* I immediately went to the College's Dean of Men, Kenneth Thompson, for advice and we mailed an application for a change of the physical exam to Richmond, Kentucky. Dean Thompson also sent the draft board the following letter:

"This is to certify that Mr. John Martin Ramsay is classified as a Senior (4th year) in Berea College. He has completed more than one academic year of full time course of instruction in college. He has a point standing of 1.821. The median of the class is 1.649. This places him in the upper half of his class. His rank is 78 in a class of 227.

He paid his deposit and made a tentative registration program in May 1950, thus prior to August 1, 1950 he planned to attend Berea College for the school year 1950-51."

John in the Panama Canal aboard the U.S.S. New Market with a load of high octane gasoline bound for San Francisco.

The draft board approved the transfer and I went to Lexington on October 16 for the pre induction physical. I assume that I took the bus from Berea to Lexington since Berea College students were not permitted to own or have access to cars. I was just beginning to learn how Selective Service would make interruptions in my life.

A few days later, on October 23, 1950, I was mailed a Certificate of Acceptability stating that I was "FOUND ACCEPTABLE FOR INDUCTION INTO THE ARMED SERVICES." I simply continued on with my life, still expecting not to face induction until graduation.

Douglas, Tommy, and Russel Ritchie in Houston, Texas ready to fly the model plane John built for the boys while at sea.

Two months later, on January 8, Mother, just back from Christmas travels, found, in the pile of accumulated mail, a notice for me to report for induction on that day! She immediately called me. I don't recall how she got me since phones were scarce on campus back in those days. I went right to Dean Thompson although it was already 4:00 in the afternoon. He tried to call Local Board No. 49 in Douglasville, Georgia, my local draft board, and, failing to get through, sent the Board a telegram requesting a postponement of induction until June 4. The next day he sent a letter in which he pointed out that provision was made in the Selective Service Act *"that a registrant may be denied a deferment but that he may not be denied a postponement."* On January 12, the Board mailed a notice of a I-A-P classification. I was able

to complete that school year. But, I did not graduate since I still had practice teaching and an education course to fulfill. Unfortunately, Dean Thompson had not noticed this when he had written to the draft board. I went ahead and registered with the College for the fall term, my final term.

Bill and I took the Selective Service System College Qualifying Test on May 26, 1951. I scored 76, which qualified me for deferrment. That summer, I worked as a wiper (lowest rank in the engine room) on the U.S.S. New Market, a tanker carrying petroleum products for Texaco. I loved the sea. My fellow sailors were friendly, if a bit salty! I got on well enough with them but found their lifestyle quite dismal and degrading. In port, I didn't follow them to the red light districts to spend our pay. Instead, I went to the post office, sent money orders to my bank for next year's college expenses, and visited friends. The other sailors were concerned that I didn't carry a knife when leaving ship and couldn't understand why I was less afraid of being mugged than they were. My pacifism was beginning to show.

It was really quite an enjoyable summer: seeing new places, getting acquainted with a different level of society, earning good wages. The work was dirty— chipping rusty bulkheads, painting them afresh, and putting threads on large steam pipes. There was plenty of time-off to build a model airplane, write letters, read some, and watch the porpoises racing at the ship's prow. Late in the summer, we took a load of gasoline from Houston to San Francisco via the Panama Canal. At that point, I had earned the limit to able

Dick, Dad, John, Mother, and Bill together at Patty's in Columbus for Christmas.

to be claimed as a dependent on my parents' income tax. I left ship in San Francisco and took a 4 day bus journey, across the country, home to Georgia.

On August 20, the draft board again classified me I-A and a week later advised me to prepare for induction. I asked for postponement until I finished school and requested a hearing to plead my case. I then went on to Kentucky and had begun my practice teaching under supervision from the University of Kentucky when notice came that a hearing was set for 8:30 Friday morning September 21. I made the trip back to Georgia to meet the draft board. College students were still being given an exemption from the draft as long as they were full time students in good standing. My main goal at that time was to finish college. That I was singled out to leave school was somewhat distracting, but I fully trusted the deferment to come through. I made the trip back to Georgia to meet with the draft board. Only the chairman showed up. I talked with him for an hour or so explaining that I only had 17 weeks of school left. I was mostly concerned that I might not be in a position to finish my college work if I didn't get the degree now. I asked for a hearing before the entire board and the chairman told me he would call another meeting. I stayed the weekend but heard nothing from the Board.

Charles Maurice Wesley at Dodge Gym in Berea for one last dance before shipping out to Korea.

By mail, mailed the same day, I was informed that the full board had met in the afternoon of September 21 and that my classification remained I-A. As soon as I received that notice, I wrote asking for an appeal to the State Selective Service Board. On September 26th the draft board had mailed me an Order to Report for Induction in Douglasville on the 8th of October. That order and my appeal request crossed in the mail. The State Board, responding to a query from the local board when they received my request,

informed the local board that *"the registrant is within his rights and should be allowed to appeal."*

I was not required to report for induction while the appeal was being processed. The Appeal Board quickly granted me a II-S classification until the 1st of February.

Thus far, I had said nothing to the draft board about my conscientious objection to war. I can just imagine what a stir that would have made within the Board and what a disruption divulging that news would have made in my life! It would have precipitated a confrontation much earlier; I was not ready for a confrontation. I would not have been able to graduate nor obtain a teaching certificate. Perhaps I had taken the easy way out, but I'm sure that I would also have been unprepared to effectively argue my case for the I-O classification. I think I knew in my heart that I could never use weapons to solve world problems but kept putting off that acknowledgment because of the consequences. And I still had to convince myself that I would rather die than take another's life. It would have been foolhardy to request conscientious objector status before I was quite clear about that.

Fran, Martha, Henry III, and Dr. Henry Allen Gleason, Jr. on their front porch in Hartford, Connecticut.

After spending Christmas with my family at Patty and Earl's house in Columbus, on New Year's Eve, 1951, I made a resolution to notify the draft board and request Form 150. I knew the consequences and was finally ready to meet them.

It took me until February 1 (the last day of my student deferment) to compose the letter stating that I was a conscientious objector and get up the courage to actually send it off to the draft board . I acknowledged in that letter that the board *"may be distressed at this news but I have been in distress for the last four years thinking about going to war."* A week later I notified the board that I had been accepted at Hartford Seminary Foundation to take a course in the School of Missions and had applied for a position in Asia with the Methodist Board of Missions.

During my first three years of college, the issue of military training had been more of an intellectual debate for me than an immediate decision which had to be made. However, when the United States entered the Korean War (1950), and graduation neared, the matter began to weigh on me more and more. My last semester on the Berea campus saw many late night discussions about human nature, violence and nonviolence, various types of solutions to conflicts, and the impending choice of serving our country as a soldier in Korea or finding other ways to serve.

My deepest and most meaningful discussions were with my classmate Maurice Wesley. Maurice was drafted the summer after graduation in the spring of 1951. I felt that he was one of the few soldiers who went to that war having looked squarely at the issues and finally deciding that it was his duty to defend the free world from communists by military means. Most men, I was sure, went without asking questions simply because serving in the army was what one did. They were certainly courageous, too, but in a different way. Maurice served in the Infantry and saw, firsthand, the reality of war. We never discussed his experiences after the war but have remained fast friends; in fact, I asked him to be my best man when I got married in 1954 and took him back to Korea as a member of an alumni dance troupe in 1984. In Soule, as we Americans passed by on parade with other troupes participating in the Orient's first C.I.O.F.F folk festival, I felt that the enthusiastic applause given to our American troupe was meant for Maurice. The South Koreans appreciated what Americans had done.

I took a different route. I felt that many international conflicts arise from the end results of greed, repression, and disparities between rich and poor. An agriculturalist might be able to

provide some remedies to hunger and poverty. I was aware that plowshares take time to put to use whereas swords can be put to immediate use. But I decided to give my life to the long view in order to deflect future crises before they became so intractable that they led to war.

Form 150 requested me to *"describe the nature of your belief…and state whether or not your belief in a Supreme Being involves duties which to you are superior to those arising from any human relation."* At age 72, I'm not certain that I could answer that question any better than I did at age 21. I was then, and am sure now, that allegiance to God comes first. The commandments are: Thou shalt not kill, do good to those who hate you, lay down your life.

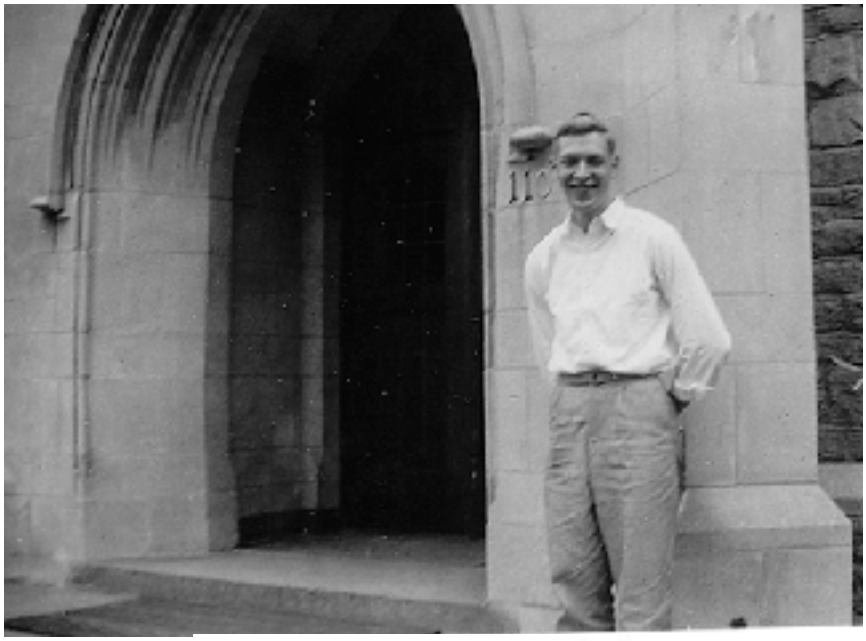
I enrolled in the Kennedy School of Missions at Hartford Seminary Foundation in Hartford, Connecticut to prepare to become an agricultural missionary under the Methodist Church. George Strong, assistant pastor at Union Church in Berea, had helped make the arrangements with Hartford Seminary and put me in touch with Sam Bertchi, a faculty member.

Sam met me at the train station and took me to his apartment for the first night. He had arranged a small party with two other returning male students. Wine was served; I declined but the other guys soon progressed through the entire bottle. Perhaps they had brought it as a gift for our host. In the middle of the night both guys got sick. The odor of wine in puke and my experiences onboard the U.S.S. New Market reinforced my resolve, a legacy passed on by my parents, not to drink alcoholic beverages.

Arrangements were made for me to stay in the home of Dr. and Mrs. Henry Allen Gleason, Jr., my linguistics professor. The Gleasons had two young children, a girl and a boy, and treated me like a family member. I may have helped with some of the housework, but am truly indebted to them for their hospitality.

I took classes in Linguistics, How to Stay Healthy in Hot Climates, and Indian Culture. I learned the Indian national anthem, how to hear and duplicate sounds from many languages, and

that syrup of ipecac was indispensable in a missionary's first aid kit. I took a physical exam as part of the application procedures for service overseas under the Methodist Board of Missions. I wanted to go to Africa where the needs seemed greatest and improved agriculture to be one of the solutions. I also filled out From 150 and it was received by the draft board on February 15, 1952. A copy of it is in my file.



Winona Lotz, one of the girls I met at Hartford, sent me this picture with the note on the back. This initiated our corespondence and, eventually, our marriage.

I worked as a busboy in the Hartford Seminary dining room to partially earn my way. The dining room was an elegant hall. Elegant French cuisine was served by Frank, an elegant chef. There were two memorable meals.

Two Greek Orthodox priests were visiting the campus. Greek Orthodox priests do not cut their hair– ever! These guys had long gray beards and mustaches. In order to eat the soup served as the first course, they had to part the hair attached to their upper lip before inserting the spoon. I was fascinated and curious about how grooming and cutting of hair developed during the process of cultural evolution. But, I was glad to be clean-shaven!

The other memorable meal was for graduation at the end of the term. Frank prepared lobster au Newberg. It reeked of wine. Several students got sick afterwards, so my otherwise productive experience at Hartford was squeezed between two wines. But I'm getting ahead of

myself. This is a chapter about my selective service ordeal and not about the rest of my life (which, as attested to by the photographs, I continued to pursue with determination).

The Board classified me I-A on February 20 and received, on March 3, 1952, my request for a personal appearance. I was advised to appear before the board on March 17. In the meantime, I asked various church and school officials and personal friends to write letters to the draft board concerning my desire to serve my country in nonmilitary ways. The draft board received letters from Rev. Leon D. Sanborne, pastor of Union Church in Berea, Kentucky; M. O. Williams, Jr., Secretary of Missionary Personnel for the Board of Missions and Church Extension of The Methodist Church; Witherspoon Dodge; Waldo E. Rasnake; Herman Will, Jr., Commission on World Peace of The Methodist Church; Rev. Lloyd F. Worley, pastor, The First Methodist Church, Hartford, Connecticut; Henry A Gleason, Jr. Secretary, Kennedy School of Missions Faculty, Hartford Seminary Foundation; Rev. Hubert Reynolds, Chairman of The Hartford Fellowship of Reconciliation; and E. J. Weekes, Acting Head of the Department of English, Berea College and former dorm parent.

I took a train from Connecticut to Georgia for the hearing and then immediately returned to my studies. The expense of the trip was beyond my budget and my parents helped me out.

The members of the local board in Douglasville were decent men and knew my parents, favorably I think, in spite of Dad's work with the C.I.O. Our entire family was active in the Lithia Springs Methodist Church and was well respected in our community. Still, these men were quite localized in their outlook. There had never been a conscientious objector in Douglas County and they were not about to recognize one.

A young Jehovah's Witness had met with the Board just before me. One Board member was very angry as I went in because the young man had said he would refuse to salute the American flag. I had talked briefly with him before his meeting and was concerned for him because he had not had the many advantages of education and family support that I had had.

A couple of the draft board members were a bit belligerent toward me during my meeting. They wanted to know what I would do if a rapist attacked my sister. I told them that I would certainly try to physically restrain the rapist, although I didn't know for sure how I would react in such a confrontation. But I also noted that I didn't equate such a one-on-one situation with two nations at war where many civilians would be among the casualties.

My position went something like this.

I believe in a Supreme Being, a God of love, and that every human person inherits that love in some form. Therefore, in good conscience, I cannot kill because it would be like killing a part of God. I take the Ten Commandments to heart, including, "Thou shalt not kill." Some say that I am an idealist and not very practical– I hope that I am. I believe that Jesus was an idealist. What can be more practical in terms of human relationships than the way of Jesus? "Do good to them who hate you" and "Love your enemies." Other ways lead to the ravages of war. "Take up the sword and perish by the sword." I am a Christian, a follower of Jesus. Yes, nonviolence is the best way even though it meant that Jesus accepted crucifixion. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for another."

As soon as I left the building, the local board classified me as I-A, and mailed me a notice that I was available for military duty. I immediately appealed to the State Board.

The "Minutes of Actions by Local Board and Appeal Board" show the following entries:

3-24-52 Forwarded file to State Headquarters for Appeal (in Mrs. Brantley's handwriting)
3-28-52 Received by Appeal Board (typed…)

I'm unclear as to just when I had a hearing before the State judge. Did I make another trip from Connecticut to Georgia in the spring of 1952 or was the hearing called for in the summer after I left Hartford? I do recall that the hearing was before a single judge and that he was much more sympathetic than the local board, listened closely, and seemed tolerant of my views. My parents went with me to meet him in Atlanta. I guess that Rev. Leon Sanborne went with me, too.

…continuing with the draft board minutes entries…

5-6-52 Appeal Board reviewed file, and voted 3-0 and classified registrant in Class I-A.
6-6-52 Forwarded to Appeal Board by State Director for resubmission because of erroneous classification
6-6-52 Appeal Board again reviewed and voted 4-0 to submit file to Dept. of Justice for recommendation.
6-10-52Cover Sheet forwarded to Dept. of Justice for advisory recommendation.

When my semester at Hartford Seminary was over, I went to New York and Philadelphia looking for an assignment. I visited Point 4, additional appropriate agencies, and the offices of M. O. Williams, head of Foreign Missions for the Methodist Church. I had been in correspondence with Mr. Williams regarding an assignment in Africa, but my problems with Uncle Sam and the wax found in my ears during the Mission Board's medical exam put a hold on any possible assignment. They also wanted me to have some experience before going overseas. I then learned about a position with the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions at Warren Wilson Junior College near Asheville, North Carolina. I applied for the job as Dairy Manager and Agriculture Instructor at Warren Wilson and got the job, starting immediately as a volunteer and then officially on July 1, 1952.

I wrote to the draft board in June to tell them of my new position and address, and took up my new duties. I heard nothing more from the draft board until the following spring. But the local board was not happy with this ten month delay. March 11, 1953, the Georgia State Headquarters of the Selective Service System, presumably in response to an inquiry from the local board, wrote to them that "The United States Department of Justice has advised this Headquarters that the investigation reports on the above listed registrant were submitted to the Hearing Officer in August, 1952. As yet they have not received the recommendation of the Hearing Officer, and the appeal is still pending." In other words, the FBI investigation had taken a couple of months but the Hearing Officer as sitting on the report. In the meantime, I was thoroughly busy at Warren Wilson.

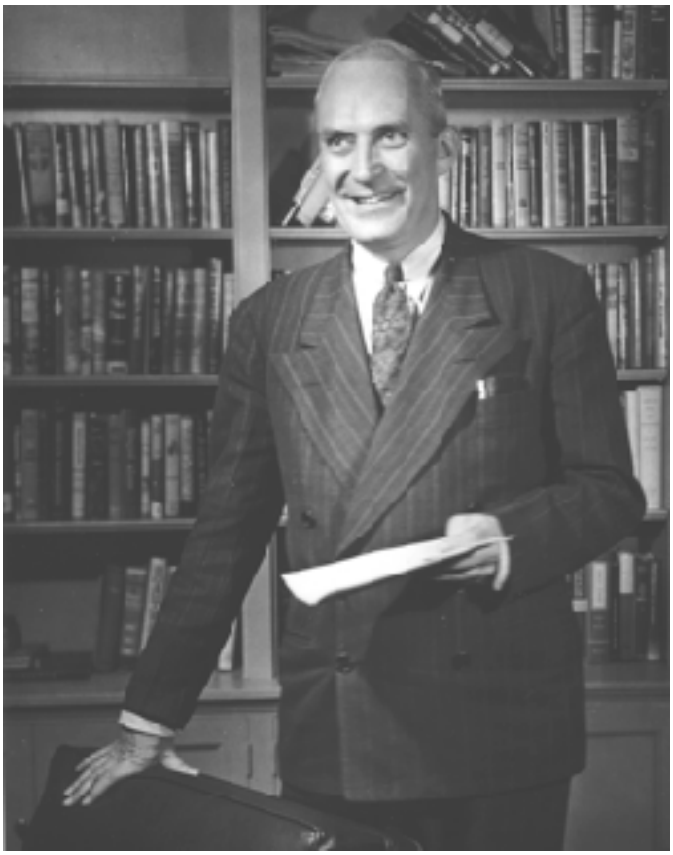
Then, Mother sent me a clipping from the front page of the *Atlanta Constitution*, April 3, 1953:

Draft Board in Douglas Resigns; Lack of Cooperation Is Charged

…resigned after charging "lack of cooperation" by State Selective Service Headquarters and the federal Justice department in handling the case of a Douglas County registrant…failure…to take action concerning John Martin Ramsay. …Neither Ramsay nor his father, John G. Ramsay, a Southeastern CIO organizer and public relations representative, could be reached for comment. …Spruell said board members explained their resignations as follows: "…In respect to the boys already serving and some who have died, we cannot with a clear conscience call anyone else with the John Martin Ramsay case in its present status."

On April 7, 1953, Mr. Spruell wrote to the Classification Officer for the Atlanta Selective Service office,

"Mr. Ramsay hearing was held on January 30, 1953 but due to the press of other matters, it has simply been impossible for me to prepare and file my formal report. The report has been dictated and in due course should be received. Under my recommendation, Mr. Ramsay would be deferred as a conscientious objector within the meaning of Section 6(j) of the Universal Military Training & Service Act. …"



…continuing with the draft board minutes entries…

4-7-53 File Ret. to Headquarters from Dept. of Justice with
recommendation that
Registrant be placed in I-O
[handwritten]

T. Oscar Smith, Special Assistant to the Attorney General of the Depart of Justice, sent a letter to the Appeal Board which concerned me. Until then, I assumed that the FBI was perfection itself.

But the letter stated, *"Registrant was born in Philadelphia."* I was born in Bethlehem. It stated, *"While in Ohio he attended the Methodist Church…"* It was a Presbyterian Church. It stated, *"the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a pacifist youth movement. …"* It is not a youth movement. But the letter concluded,

"After consideration of the entire file and record, the Department of Justice finds that the registrant's objections are sustained as to both combatant and noncombatant training and service. It is, therefore, recommended to your Board that the registrant be classified in Class I-O."

At least the Department of Justice recognized the validity of my objections.

…continuing with the draft board minutes entries…

5-7-53 Adjudicated by Appeal Board classed I-A
5-8-53 Fwd to LB.
5-11-53Rec'd file from Appeal Board [Mrs. Lila Brantley's handwriting…]
Classified I-A by Appeal Board on 5-7-53; 2 yes,1 no
Mailed SS Form 110, Notice of Classification
Mailed letter advising registrant he may appeal to President.
All correspondence concerning reg. rec'd in office while file
was on appeal added to file.


Gertrude Eleanor Martin Ramsay

In the end, after some unrecorded negotiating, the split vote of two-one gave me the right for a presidential appeal; unanimous votes gave no option for the Presidential appeal. It seems the state board preferred to pass the case on. I immediately appealed to the Presidential Appeal Board and worked, once again, on the best way to express my beliefs. I noted *"…I have an inner compulsion– a living drive– to make the way of love the powerful force it was meant to be. On the world scale it means working together for better*

economic conditions, for better trade relations, for understanding and reconciling our various ways of life. …"

Warren Wilson College President, Arthur M. Bannerman, wrote to the draft board on May 20, 1953 quoting from a formal statement provided to the draft board a year earlier (June 11, 1952), *"Mr. Ramsay is a truly appointed missionary for the full time mission service and is, for the purpose of the draft act, a minister of our church."* Art didn't want to lose his dairy manager and agriculture instructor. Rev. Irving Deihl, Elizabeth Landfield and Ethel Klemm, three of my faculty colleagues at Warren Wilson, also wrote to the draft board. Mother and Dad appeared at the draft board in Douglasville and examined my file. They found nothing but material to support my position as a conscientious objector. My file was then forwarded to the District Attorney.

On August 3, 1953 the National Selective Service Appeal Board voted 3-0 to classify me I-A. I had exhausted the possible appeals and had to face induction or breaking the law. I knew what I would do but I wasn't going to go to jail without objection. I composed a letter and sent it to 151 people who could attest to my sincerity. I was still under the illusion that if Selective Service could be convinced of my sincerity, they would classify me as a conscientious objector. Perhaps it is just as well that I went on milking cows each day and carrying on my duties as a teacher and college community member because I didn't have the financial resources nor the interest to tackle an imperfect judicial system. But I certainly could live as honorably as possible day by day.

I wrote to the draft board:

"Should I be called for induction I must refuse to take the oath of induction and thus break the law. I am sorry that in a 'free' land this is necessary but it is better to break a civil law than to break the direction God gives to me. One is a crime, the other a sin. Being at Warren Wilson has proved to be constructive work in line with what God has planned for me. Therefore I will

stay at Warren Wilson until forcibly removed. No, I won't put up a fight but I won't go willingly from what I feel is God's work."

President Bannerman also wrote:

"…we would be put in a hard position here at Warren Wilson if we were to lose Mr. Ramsay just at the beginning of the fall term. As you know, good teachers are generally hard to get and they are particularly hard to secure in a Church institution such as Warren Wilson College, where the salary scale is lower than in public institutions. …"

My letter to my friends was one of disappointment if not despair. I asked them at least to speak up for other conscientious objectors if not for me. Sixty-four wrote to my draft board. All of the letters are eloquent. I will give a sample of them here. The first, from my father, was addressed to President Eisenhower.

Dear President Eisenhower: Dated September 1, 1953

Perhaps I am late in writing to you in regards to my son John M. Ramsay, who appealed to the county draft board, the State of Georgia Appeal Board and the Presidential Appeal Board for a I-O classification as a conscientious objector to war. These appeals have not changed the I-A classification given by our county board.

I have always allowed my children the freedom to individually seek and do the Will of God. I have always been ready to help them out of my personal experience. In this matter I have had no experience and had not allowed my personal conjecture to influence this decision.

Perhaps my personal convictions can be best explained from a page in the "Armed Forces Prayer Book" which gives a prayer I had written at the request of Dr. Daniel A. Poling and a portion of my comment to Dr. Poling as follows:

> *John Ramsay, Public Relations Director of the C.I.O., writes: "I have not had a personal experience in war: in World War I, I was too young; in World War II, I was too old and my sons were too young. At the present time I have two sons who will probably soon be in the service. May God richly bless you."*
>
> *Our Heavenly Father, in these troubled times when men are distrustful and fearful of each other, grant that our faith in Christ Jesus can overcome the bitterness of heart and mind; grant that we*

can recognize corporate sin but love the individual; grant that all men may love thee enough that wars may cease.

May I not only be willing to die for my nation but be determined to live for Christ Jesus and his Kingdom.

Grant me Thy peace, O Lord."
Amen.

John applied for draft deferment to complete his education. He had to appeal to the State Board for this privilege. Upon his graduation he received immediately a draft status of I-A. He asked for a reconsideration and at the request of the county draft board made an 800 mile [round] trip to meet them. The board members did not appear at the meeting. Later on that day he saw the chairman of the board who told him he would call another meeting. John waited over the weekend and as he was leaving again for college he received a notice that the board had met without his presence and still gave him a I-A classification. He then appealed to the state board.

The State Appeal Board referred John's case to the Department of Justice who had the Federal Bureau in investigate into his past history. I believe a thorough investigation was made by the F.B.I. and the Department of Justice. It was recommended that he was a sincere conscientious objector and should be given the classification.

The county draft board then resigned, making a public statement which was printed in the Sunday edition of the Atlanta-Consititution-Journal which also stated that John's father was Director of Community Relations of the C.I.O. Of course, my employment has nothing to do with John's request for a I-O classification, but was used to confuse prejudiced minds.

The State Appeal Board then voted against his request two to one and an appeal was made to your board. We were told that no direct appeal could be made, that your board would make its decision upon the facts as they appeared in John's file.

John authorized his mother and I, in his absence, to look at the file. We did and found no facts to prejudice his appeal, except the statement of the local draft board that he did not make up his mind immediately on his first registration.

John offered to serve as an agriculture missionary or instructor in Korea or anywhere else where he could use his talents to build a better world as a Christian and as an American. He made application to the M.S.A. of our Federal Government, The Methodist and the Presbyterian Churches. All advised him to gain three years practical experience at home before going into a foreign field. John had continued his studies at Hartford, Connecticut Missionary College during this period. He prepared for foreign service in Phonetics, Health, etc.

The Presbyterian Church then accepted him as herdsman and instructor in agriculture at Warren Wilson, our Presbyterian Missionary College at Swannanoa, North Carolina. This position was later classified as one for alternative service.

My son-in-law, Earl A. Todt was in the service in World War II. My son William is now in service with a classification (I-A-O). He graduated from Fort Sam Houston as top men in his class, as an X-ray Technician. My youngest son Dick is now a senior in Berea College. He is just 19 and when he reached this age, requested a I-O classification instead of a student classification. He was also turned down. The new county draft board did not feel competent and passed the buck, so to speak.

Mr. President, I sincerely believe this case was settled by various steps on a basis of prejudice and not on fact. I believe in the laws of our land and abid(e) by them. If I do not agree I will work to change them.

In the case of my son John M. Ramsay I believe the decision that has been made is wrong and urge your personal attention.

Yours respectfully, John G. Ramsay

Mother's letter discloses her more partisan stance:

Dear Sirs:

I am writing as the Mother of my son John Ramsay who has appealed to you for the classification of I-O or conscientious objector to war or serving in the military but who is quite willing to serve his country in "alternative service" which the law provides for those who feel so strongly to their conscience under God.

I understand you, the local board, has the right to reopen the case which now has gone through the procedure of appeal to the State and President. I urge you to reopen this case and, on the record of you own files, you must be convinced that John is sincere.

We have brought him up from youth with the desire to discover the will of God and live by it – I am proud that he has taken this stand.

Certainly, unless we change our attitude toward other nations and people of this earth, we have nothing to look forward to but more war. "We will be forced to live like rats under the ground" as a commentator has said regarding the Russian Hydrogen Bomb unless we learn to live above the ground like children of God.

The treatment John has received certainly gives cause to lose faith in those who have the responsibility to carry out our laws which say that they uphold each individual's right to freedom of conscience in this matter.

Mr. Spruel, the original chairman of the first draft board, has even since moved from Douglasville and is taking no more responsibility for his actions, yet his lack of understanding in John's case will leave its imprint on John's life. You have the responsibility to reconsider the evidence which you have before you in this case and grant him his right to his conscience on this matter under our law.

You have young men's lives in your hands and more than that you have a deep responsibility for their souls.

Yours sincerely, Mrs. John G. Ramsay

Of the letters from men and one woman who had served their country in a fight for freedom of conscience, here is one to represent the many others:

Dear Sirs,

I have just learned of the situation in which John M. Ramsey (sic) finds himself with respect to the stand your board has taken concerning his induction into the armed forces. I am told that the Board does not accept as sincere his statement that he is a Conscientious Objector. I have known John Ramsey and worked with him in student Christian activities in the Southeast Region, and I know that whatever statement he would make to your Board would be made in truth and with utter sincerity. I have known John's family, and therefore know his background and what he has been taught as he has grown up, and I know that all the teaching and background to which he has been exposed would lead him to

Winona Lotz, John Ramsay, and Asheville Ormsby Girl with the Warren Wilson dairy barn in the background.

Marty Kemp, Pat Calvert, Patty Todt, Max Heirick (organist and WWC faculty), Louise Agassiz, Leon Sanborn, Paul Lotz, Winona Lotz Ramsay, Charles James Lotz (Winona's father), Susan Todt, John Martin Ramsay, Ira J. Martin III, Charles Maurice Wesley, Harold Lotz, Bill Ramsay, Earl Todt, Dick Ramsay in Danforth Chapel on the Berea College campus.

take a position of conscientious objection to war.

I write to you because I believe an injustice has been done this young man. I would like to point out that I myself do not agree with his position. I served as an officer in the regular Army during World War II and after, and resigned in the grade of Major. I had nearly three years of uninterrupted front-line service, and I am proud of what has been referred to as a brilliant military career. I say this only to point out that I at that time considered it necessary to take up arms in defense of my country, and I have never regretted that decision nor have I changed my own attitude toward military service, but I do firmly believe in the right of any person to decline to serve if he sincerely believes that God's Law forbids it. Our Government has seen fit to legally recognize this position, and I believe that we are all duty bound to see to it that in a fight for freedom throughout the world every legal protection must be given to freedom of conscience, or we place ourselves in a false position. I am sure members of your Board cannot disagree with me in this, and that when you are convinced of the sincerity of any young man, he will be given the opportunity for alternative service which the law provides.

I attest to the sincerity of John Ramsey.

Martin Lotz Ramsay

Respectfully yours, John C. Gleason

And a part of another such letter:

…I have known John for 13 years, and detected the seeds of his present convictions long before he became of draft age. This, in addition to the fact that John was reared in a very devout Christian family which has consistently attempted to see the relevance of Christianity to day to day living. This family has been of a great inspiration to me personally.

I am able to write these words in spite of the fact that I do not agree with the decision John has reached. In 1941 I reached the opposite decision. I chose to join the army. I conceived it my duty to fight in order to save our God-given rights to disagree with one another in good conscience. Since I am unreservedly convinced that John Ramsay is sincere in his religious convictions against his participation in war, a refusal to classify him as a conscientious objector would seem to indicate that my own vision of fighting to preserve the democratic way was, in this case, pursued in vain. It would sadden me to have to come to this conclusion. …

Sincerely yours, Reverend Norris B. Woodie
Director of Campus Life, Alderson-Broaddus College, Philippi, WV

My favorite letter is from my cousin Grace Price. She speaks for me:

Dear sirs:

Having heard that my cousin, John Ramsay, has received another I-A classification from his draft board and conscious that he has appealed his case as a conscientious objector to the full limits as prescribed by law, I feel that perhaps as a close relative and childhood companion I can be of aid in convincing you that he is very sincere in his convictions.

Idealistically, if all men believed as John Ramsay does, there would be no such thing as war. Even our Bible tells us that good conquers evil. John Ramsay, as a good Christian, is doing as Jesus would in refusing to take up weapons against his fellow-man. If only all of us followed the teachings of our Bible as sincerely, the world would not be in the state of chaos that it is in now.

This belief of John Ramsay is not something that has popped up overnight. Even in childhood he was the peacemaker– the one to refrain from taking sides in quarrels.

I do hope you have given this letter full consideration and thus will not reject John Ramsay's appeal as a conscientious objector. I implore you to follow your conscience– <u>he</u> <u>is</u>.

Very sincerely yours, Grace A. Price

John , central campus at Warren Wilson Junior College with Four Brothers in background, 1953

There were two letters which were quite different from all of the others but are worth repeating because they give voice to general sentiments of Americans at that time.

Gentlemen: Re: John M. Ramsay

A resident and citizen of Berea, Kentucky, has contacted me with reference to a letter received from the above party appealing for assistance with your Board in an attempt to avoid being drafted for service by reason of religious belief, (conscientious objection to war).

This citizen is one of many who have received letters from this party requesting their aid, and this citizen requested that I inform you that she has no sympathy whatsoever with the demand of the above party, and that it is her feeling that he should be obligated to enter the service immediately. That he is not sincere in his belief.

This citizen has a son in service and several other individuals from this community who have received these letters, have sons or relatives who have patriotically served their country; and it is not their desire to be used as a lever in an attempt to avoid serving in Armed Forces.

For your information I am enclosing the copy of the letter received by this party.

Very truly yours, Guy K Duerson, Jr., Commander American Legion Post No. 50

Dan Ford and Billy Ed Wheeler with a garbage can

Dear Sir,

The conscientious objector Mr John M. Ramsay Swannanoa N.C. has written, us, requesting we plead his case.

Why should we plead for him not to be drafted, when we have 3 sons and one- son in-law in the service. If my boys have to go into service, it is no more than right some others ought to go.

He wants us to talk with our friends, write to our local paper and congressmen, that our voices might be heard. If all boys & girls refused to serve, we would soon be over run with the enemy, then these consciontious objectors would be the first one to say, shoot the hell out of the leaders and Law makers.

We all could be consciontious objectors if we were afraid to die and didn't care for anyone but ourselves.

I don't wish anyone hard luck but I do hope he has to serve even for a short while. His brother (he didn't mention his name) is a conscontious objector too. Hers hoping you will do right by all of them. I remain

Mrs. J. M. Sutherland
Fletcher N.C. R.1

P.S. He wouldn't approve of this if he could read it, but I am sure I am right.

In a letter mailed directly to me, Mrs. Sutherland asks,

"…How do you perpose to stay free if you don't have war and conquer your enimies. You asking Alice to help you, when her husband is in the navy and her 3 brothers in the army. What kind of Christian are you. Just a yellow bellied coward. You and your consdciontious objections, what would you do if the enimy came over here and killed your sisters and raped your mother and did all the things war does to women and children…I have began to think you haven't got a heart. …"

I appreciate that Mrs. Sutherland had the courage to speak her mind and to write to me directly. Note that neither of the above two knew me personally. Those who knew me said,

"Above all his stand has not been for lack of courage or patriotism for it would have been much easier for John to go into the Army and even into war…"

Charles Maurice Wesley

In spite of the flood of favorable letters, I was ordered for induction. I made arrangements at Warren Wilson for managing the dairy and my classes and took the bus to Atlanta. Early on the 15th of October, I was at the Douglas County Draft Board. I felt it was great irony that the Board, which seemed to deny my sincerity, singled me out with the following appointment:

"Special confidence being placed in the integrity and ability of John Martin Ramsay, he is hereby appointed leader of a contingent of selected men from Local Board No. 49, State of Georgia. He is therefore, charged with the enforcement of the Selective Service Regulations governing selected men enroute to Joint Examining and Induction Station during the journey from Douglasville, Georgia to Atlanta, Georgia and all men included in the contingent are directed to obey his lawful orders during the journey."

Anastatio Martin and Wilcoll Elmat, our own young bull, son of #55.

We arrived at the induction center in

Chamblee without incident. I immediately informed the processing officers of my intention to refuse induction. We were given a physical exam and supper and shown to our bunks. I was informed that I would be given a psychiatric evaluation after supper.

As I recall, it was about 10 o'clock before I was called in by the psychiatrist. The examination lasted maybe an hour and the psychiatrist ended up by commenting that I would not be an asset to the army and that he would recommend 4-F. That was a surprise to me and I left him and went to bed almost on cloud nine! Imagine, after five years of worry, to be free of any further obligation! No more hearings, no more wondering about the future, no required alternative service– free to live my life as I saw fit. I fell into a peaceful sleep.

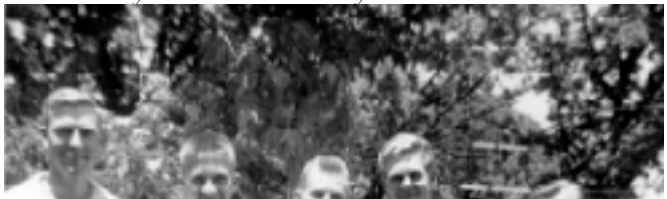
Blossom Hill Amanda Dunloggin at the start of her record breaking lactation.

But at 4 am, I woke suddenly with the understanding– to me it was sent from above– that the 4-F suggestion could be a calculated lie and that I should not get my hopes up.

After breakfast, I requested to speak with the Induction Officer to learn the results of the psychiatric examination. The clinical record states,

"Patient has protective marginal social history. Patient is passive, markedly effeminate (altho denies overt homosex experience), presents paranoid feelings, as well as self primitive tendencies. Immature personality."

But those were simply nasty words to add to my file. I was recommended as suitable army material. After lunch, eleven of us were assembled and lined up for the induction ceremony. I had learned that the step forward, when your name was called *before* the oath of induction was given, was the critical point. If you stepped forward you were no longer a civilian and under



civil law but were then already under military law. That, I could not allow to happen! But, what if someone nudged me when my name was called? What if I twitched? What if I fainted? What if…? When my name was called, I didn't move and was quietly ushered out of the room to wait in the Major's office until after the ceremony. I was then read my rights, arrested, finger printed, and asked to file a statement. It is in my file (witnessed by three officers) and states,

"I am a conscientious objector to war and cannot conscientiously participate in any military organization. This fact is based on my convictions about God as expressed by Jesus. …To accept induction would be to forsake my conscience and to deny that the law provides for sincere, religious objectors."

I was then sent to see a judge who allowed me to go home on my own recognizance. I would have to await trial. I then hired Morris B. Abram, an attorney, to represent me. His fee was $500 as a retainer with an additional fee to depend on the outcome of the case and how much time was involved in my defense.

I was able to return to Warren Wilson and resume my duties there, as well as my courtship, for the remainedr of the fall, winter and spring terms.

Bill Walden checks the udder attachments of Wilcoll Ferine.

On June 6, 1954, Winona Ruth Lotz and I were married by Dr. Ira J. Martin, 3rd with Rev. Leon D. Sanborne and Rev. Charles Lotz (the bride's father) assisting.

The rest of the story can be dealt with in short form. Attorney Abram pursued legal technicalities in the case. There are often technical issues which can by argued regardless of the moral issues involved. Mine had something to do with my not having been provided with the

report from the F.B.I. A Supreme Court decision in another case meant that my case was dismissed in the summer of 1955.

That was good news! But there was also bad news. My file was then returned to the local draft board and the entire process was repeated with a I-A classification from the local board, a split vote from the State Appeal Board, and a final Presidential appeal. During this time my parents had moved to Washington, D.C. and Dad had become a deacon in the National Presbyterian Church. Among the members were President Eisenhower and J. Edgar Hoover. Dad spoke to Rev. Elson, the pastor, about my situation. On May 3, 1956, I was informed that I had finally been granted a I-O classification. It was the day my first son, Martin was born. I also learned that since I was twenty-six years old and a father, I would not be called up for military service in any account.

Part of the Warren Wilson College Folk Dance Club dancing "open tunnel and open wide, watch your head and watch it close, if you don't watch out we'll double the dose." This picture included two of "my" boys: John Paul Wagoner (in tunnerl) and Dan Ford (first arch), plus David Miller in the back and myself in the middle.

Although relieved, I also felt that our system of government had failed. I wanted it to work! It was like sour grapes that my conscientious objection to war was only recognized by "pulling strings." It took me many years to heal emotionally from the entire experience. I felt out of sync with society. I was forced to feel "special" while I only wanted to be treated fairly. I had been denied service overseas. I was

threatened with jail and fingerprinted. The stigma hung on until 1991, but that is another chapter!

I remain deeply committed to giving my life in service which will make peace, not war. Although I no longer am certain that love is stronger than hate, I know that I will try my utmost to wage peace, beginning at home and then encompassing the whole world. I believe in the Golden Rule, that we should treat others just like we want them to treat us. Gracie was right!

Winona Ruth Lotz in front of the Riceville Presbyterian Church, 1954

Charles and Clara Lotz, Winona and John Ramsay, Gertrude and John Ramsay, Danforth Chapel, Berea College, June 6, 1954.

Chapter 9.

The Start of a Career

In the summer of 1952 (as skimmed over in the previous chapter), I was appointed Dairy Manager and Agriculture Instructor at Warren Wilson Junior College, a Presbyterian school east of Asheville, North Carolina. The governing board was the Bureau of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church. I took a room in Sunderland Hall, the men's dormitory, on the second floor.

My take home pay was only $80 a month but my expenses were minimal. Meals were provided in the faculty dining room. On the one hand, I could not have afforded a car on that salary, but on the other hand, I was totally engaged with campus responsibilities and activities.. A dairy manager's responsibilities run 365 days a year and 24 hours a day so, in my case, there was no time left for automobile excursions. When I needed or wanted to go to town, I could walk the three miles to Swannanoa, home of Beacon Blankets, or take the 30 minute bus trip to Asheville. Yet, I really had little interest in anything other than being an effective teacher and the best dairy manager in the state.

Bringing the cows in along the Riceville Road for miliing. Blossom Hill Amanda Dunloggin leads the way.

Warren Wilson is located in a high mountain valley at the foot of the Craggy Mountains of western North Carolina. The Blue Ridge Parkway winds up the crests of the cup of ridges that cradle the school. A series of four peaks, called Four Brothers, provides a fine backdrop for the central campus. Winters are relatively mild at this latitude and summers are pleasant at this elevation. The setting along the Swannanoa River is magnificent and the bottoms along the river provided excellent cropland. The dairy pastures were on the surrounding hills. Arrowheads and stone axes were still to be found in fields and along access roads.

John in the milking barn with the only "grade" (unregistered) cow in the herd. She was later killed while standing under a sycamore tree by a stroke of lightening. The herd was now a registered herd by an act of God.

The faculty, administration, and students all lived on campus. President Arthur Bannerman

and married faculty lived in college owned houses. Single faculty, like me, lived in a room or small apartment in the dormitories or other buildings. Every faculty member supervised a student crew or had some other campus responsibility and provided for all of the needs of the school community. There were no hired workers: the resident staff and students did everything from meal preparation and operating the dining room (Kathryn Larsen), or running the boiler plant (Julio Guisasola) , to upkeep of the grounds and construction of new buildings (Leon Deschamps), or even servicing the electrical utilities (Roger Stuck). Bernhard Larsen was the manager of the farm and its crews, oversaw the herds of beef cattle and swine, and had responsibility for the gardens and crop production. I was the manager of the dairy and taught the agricultural classes.

The dairy herd of some 40 head produced the milk for the school. After milking each morning, the students and I delivered fresh, raw milk to the kitchen and ran a milk route to the faculty homes. Faculty provided their own milk containers; whatever they left out at the back door one day was filled for delivery the next day. We also collected the garbage as we delivered the milk and then deposited the garbage and any excess milk at the pig farm before washing the pickup truck assigned to the dairy.

John's students showing their "respeect" for their teacher just after graduation. We were all tough in those days!.

The mixture of milk and garbage in the same truck was probably not the nicest arrangement, but it was efficient and

didn't seem to cause problems. It was used by the students to poke fun at some of the food served in the dining hall– a common diversion among college students. My student crew and I considered ourselves the dairy crew, but one of the kitchen crew announced our arrival to deliver milk during breakfast preparations one morning, "Mrs. Larsen, the garbage boys are here." She is reported to have replied, "Tell them to leave 50 gallons today."

The food was actually very good. Perhaps the high level of the fare made a few dishes undesirable by contrast. The students called one soupy dish composed of leftover vegetables plus a base of kernels of corn and tomatoes "Oklahoma slum gully." But, top of the line was Kathryn's Danish Apple Cake, a deep dish of applesauce lined with a graham cracker crust and smothered with fresh whipped cream. Both Kathryn and her husband, Bernhard, whom we all called Fessor, had been born in Denmark and retained their Danish accents. They had two sons, the older of the two is now the farm manager at Warren Wilson.

The dairy herd had been brought to a high level by the previous manager. Unfortunately, he died suddenly of a heart attack. The College brought in a young man from Pennsylvania to manage things on a temporary basis while they looked for a permanent dairyman and agriculture teacher. When I was hired he gave me an orientation and turned the operation over to me. As I took charge, he students were a big help. But some records had not been kept up during this abrupt transition. It was crucial that I know which cows were pregnant and when they were expected to calve because a cow needs a dry period of two months before having her next calf

and, if not pregnant, needs professional attention from a veterinarian.

Winona and John on apartment balcony with cats, Graybeal and Nyanga, overlooking Warren Wilson campus

I hired the local vet to come out and examine those cows with questionable status. Julian Cornwell, the vet, was generous with his advice and I followed his examinations with great interest as well as a clipboard to take down the results. He donned a long-sleeved rubber glove and rectally palpated each cow's uterus. He was even able to gently grasp the uterus in his hand if she was not pregnant or had conceived only 30-40 days earlier; then by letting the uterus slip through his hand he could sometimes feel the tiny bump of a fetus. If there was no sign of a fetus, a manual examination of the ovaries might reveal the pimple of a ripening egg or a cyst which needed to be expelled, either manually or with hormones. Julian charged $5 per cow, a reasonable fee but not included in the dairy budget.

Students (including a Jordanian) pose at dairy for my 1952 Christmas card

The following Sunday I determined to train myself to be able to check a cow's reproductive status. I lined up a series of cows with known status and went back and forth until I "grasped the technique." I didn't have a glove but had decided that for $5 I would put my hand in almost anything. By the end of the session, my arm was stained "manure green" and I had to wear a long sleeved shirt to supper. The techniques learned proved very useful to me in the years to come. I was soon able to assist cows with breech deliveries where the calf's head was turned

back instead of lying between their front feet or where the calf came hind feet first. Natural childbirth was impossinble in either situation.

I remember my first class in agriculture. I arranged the chairs in a circle and designed my lesson plan to make use of peer learning. I acted as a resource person rather than a lecturer. That evening as I was lying on my bed in the dorm, I overheard some of the students talking in the hall about their first day. Anastatio Martin, one of the Cuban boys and in my class, said that he had gone to a strange class where they sat around talking while they waited two hours for the teacher to arrive but he never did come! Anastatio was older than I and was later assigned to the dairy crew. I was pleased that he didn't recognize me as a teacher on that first day. I wanted to treat students with respect and realized that they had each several years of experience from which we could all benefit. Can you imagine me trying to instruct someone from Cuba on how to grow sugar cane?

The experiences we shared in running the dairy made the best sort of laboratory for learning. It was icing on the cake when I realized, on going over the records of the herd's production by the Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA), that Blossom Hill Amanda Dunloggin, better know to us as #67, had completed an unusually fine lactation before I came to Warren Wilson. I felt that we could make a state record if we gave her special attention before her next lactation. I discussed it with the student crew. They were willing to put in the extra time, including milking her by hand three times a day when she first freshened, feeding her only the best alfalfa, and keeping her in a comfortable pen instead of competing with the rest of the herd. It paid off and her official DHIA record of 27,000 pounds of milk in 300 day was a state record and stood for eight years. For a while she was giving fifteen gallons of milk a day!

We had other opportunities for laboratory experience at the dairy. Many of the cows had not been bred when I arrived in the summer. That meant that they would calve in the spring since a cow's gestation period is 9 months. Having cows calve in the spring was poor planning because production automatically goes up when the cows are turned out to spring pastures. To

have the cows "fresh" at that time meant that we had great surpluses for the pigs in the spring. The surpluses continued during the summer when all students except the summer crews went home for summer vacation. Then when we went onto less productive winter rations in October and November and the cows began to go dry, we scarcely had enough mile to supply the kitchen.

We set about to change the situation. By careful observation, diligent record keeping, and intelligent planning, we were able, in my three years at Warren Wilson, to turn the situation around. We delayed rebreeding some of the better producing cows, bred some of the lower producing ones early, and bred the first calf heifers to freshen in August or September.

Winona and John as extras in the opening production of Wilderness Road, summer 1955

steady in a flexed position with the hoof on a board so the bottom of the hoof faced up. For the first few cows I had the boys do the holding while I showed them how to do the trimming; you have to be careful not to get into the "quick" of the hoof which contains nerves and blood vessels. But then it was time for the boys to try their hands and for me to do the holding. I stood by the next cow's side and placed my knee in her flank in front of her hind leg. Then I gently nudged her leg until it was extended and the ankle could be flexed and the hoof placed on the board. As her leg was extended, I moved with the leg until I was supporting the weight which would have been on that leg. I was bent over the extended leg and holding the tendon at the hock joint as a deterrent to having her kick. Then I felt someone reaching into my back pocket. I was just about to reach back to grab the prankster when I realized that it wasn't a hand at all. The cow, naturally nervous from the procedure, was defecating right into my back pocket. It was loose and warm. As soon as that hoof was done, I took off my coveralls much to the amusement of my students.

My major activity aside from classes and dairy was with the folk dance club. Clothilde Guisasola was the club's leader but kindly invited me to be assistant. Clothilde (pronounced Clo-teel) is the daughter of May Ritchie Deschamps, the oldest of the renowned "singing family of the Cumberlands." The Ritchies were active in Pine Mountain Settlement School, Hindman Settlement School, and Berea College. Clothilde's Aunt Edna graduated from Berea and became an itinerant recreation leader in the Southern Highlands. Her Aunt Jean became America's foremost singer of traditional Appalachian music. Clothilde had grown up doing English country dances. Julio, her Cuban husband and College heat and power manager, was her partner. We trained members of the club and took them to the Mountain Folk Festival in Berea each spring as well as giving occasional performances on campus and locally.

At age 22 and now with a full time job, I was also looking for a lifetime partner. I took the Greyhound Bus to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, at Thanksgiving to see one of my Berea College classmates, but I had to cut the visit short when a blizzard rolled into the mountains. I couldn't be away from the dairy more than overnight. I caught the last bus out of Gatlinburg before the

snow closed down the highway over the Smokies. "On top of old Smoky, all covered with snow, I lost my true lover for courtin'' too slow."

My problems with Uncle Sam were still hanging over me. The Presidential appeal had been denied and I was required to appear for induction into the army. I went back to Douglasville, Georgia, willing to cooperate with our government up to the point of taking the step which would place me in the Army and under military courts. After all, Congress had passed legislation to accommodate those who for religious reasons were conscientiously opposed to war. I hoped that somewhere along the line I would be given that I-O classification.

During this time, I was corresponding with Winona Ruth Lotz, a classmate at Hartford Seminary Foundation up in Connecticut. She was completing her Masters in Religious Education in the spring of 1953 and offered to come to Asheville that summer so that we could get better acquainted. She took a job in Customer Service at Sears Roebuck in Asheville and was able to arrange for a room in the home of Keith and Elsa Mitchell just 1.4 miles from Warren Wilson. I often walked that distance down the Riceville road to visit with her and she often came to Warren Wilson for special events.

Keith Mitchell was pastor of the Riceville Presbyterian Church. Elsa had been raised in Korea where her parents had been missionaries. The Mitchells were wonderful friends. We had one memorable day-long Thanksgiving dinner with them in 1953, cooking, eating, and stretching out on their wall to wall carpeting while listening to recordings of Howard Hanson, Bach, and Copeland and then eating again and again. We were introduced to kimchi.

We began to make plans to marry in June and on June 6, 1954 we were married in the Danforth Chapel on the Berea College campus by three ministers: Leon Sanborne, Charles James Lotz (Winona's father), and Dr. Ira J. Martin, 3rd, one of my College professors. We chose Berea because it was halfway between my family in Lithia Springs, Georgia and Winona's family in Bloomington, Illinois. When I applied for the marriage permit in the county seat of

John is holding the Confederate flag for this photo setup at the back of the Log House Sales Room on the Berea campus. He is bidding farewell to Edna Ritchie. Maurice Wesley is just to the right of the flag.

Richmond, Kentucky, the clerk was curious where a Georgia boy and a girl from Illinois ever met. When I told her that we met in Connecticut she was bemused.

Pauge Geouge's truck loaded with three heifers, our start of a herd.

Loading the U-Haul at Sunset Home in Quincy, Illinois.

Chapter 10.

Influenza

John and Winona in front of their home, the Mary Kay House in Celo Community, Inc.

Cows don't take holidays– they don't take a break for New Years, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas, or even Easter. My first Easter at Warren Wilson Junior College as Dairy Manager and Agriculture Instructor, left me literally "holding the bag!"

During the spring break of 1953, many students left campus, leaving me with a skeleton crew to run the dairy. Then the flu hit and my crew of two or three boys came down with it. I sent them to bed after the milking Saturday morning. They needed the rest and, more importantly, raw milk could well be a means of spreading the virus to the entire remaining campus community.

Wilcoll Querido Texal Agatha, Wilcoll Plutocrat Hollia, and Wilcoll Bucky Girl being milked by Winona, the beginning of our dairy.

I tackled the chore of milking by myself on Saturday afternoon. It was a formidable task: climbing the silo and forking down more than a ton of silage, forking it again in distributing it in the troughs, spreading fresh shavings in the stanchions and gutters, assembling the milking machines, bringing the cows in, scooping out measured amounts of grain for each individual cow, washing their udders and milking them, carrying each pail of milk to the milk room to

John and his John Deere.

be strained into cans, putting the 100 pound cans into the ice cold water bath, throwing down hay bales from the loft, breaking them up and distributing them to the cows, disassembling and scouring the milking equipment, removing any fresh manure, adding additional bedding where needed so the cows would have a clean spot in which to lie down, feeding the calves and the dry cows (those not giving milk in their 2-month rest beofre calving), and finally turning out the lights since it was dark by this time.

Morning chores began at 4:00 Easter morning. As the morning wore on, I realized that I was aching and chilling. It was 10:00 before I headed for the school kitchen and begged some breakfast. I then went to bed. I woke up about 4:00 in the afternoon with a full fledged case of the flu. As a young man– I had just turned 23– I felt it necessary to show my mettle as well as to get those cows milked; there wasn't anyone else to do the job. I would have to feed the potentially contaminated milk to the pigs. Off I went to the dairy and, for the third time, milked the cows myself. The aches and chills continued as I worked but I persisted and worked hard enough to work up a good sweat. I'm sure I had a fever, too, but in a way it felt good to work those sore muscles and "sweat the

John and part of his 7th grade class at Micaville, spring 1958.

poisons out of my system" as my mother would say. Then, the fever broke and I knew that I had won!

Our new milking parlor and barn in Celo Community. A metal silo we dismantled on S.T. Henry's farm in Spruce Pine and rebuilt in Celo is barely visible on the right.

The boys were back on their feet Monday morning; I went down to get things started but left after the cows were milked and let the boys do the remaining chores. It had been a good feeling to break that fever, conquer the flu, and prove to myself that I was a tough guy.

1.
2.
3.

Chapter 11.

Changes Astir

Warren Wilson Junior College was a wonderful school. The work of creating and carrying on an intelligent community, whether it be peeling potatoes, typing a letter, shelving books, or milking cows, brought students, staff, and administration together in a healthy way—each position was needed and of vital importance to everyone else. We may have called it a

Christian community although adjectives such as: democratic, spiritual, loving, cooperative, and tolerant were included in what we meant by Christian and would have served as well. Many of our students came from Cuba, Iran, Iraq, and other foreign countries. Some were Christians, but others followed their own religions as they made their contributions to the democratic, spiritual, loving, cooperative, and tolerant community life without the need to call it Christian.

At that time, the school offered high school level courses as well as the junior college courses. The Appalachian area surrounding Swannanoa, the nearest village to the College, still had students who were not prepared for college studies. We had about 250 students but the high school share was dwindling as access to schools in the mountain region improved. Instead, we were getting more and more students, both in the high school and in the college who for one reason or another were not able to live at home. More and more were coming from broken homes and more and more were emotionally troubled.

Bart Dean was assigned to my dairy crew the fall of 1954. He was older than I. I welcomed him more as a brother than as a student. His foster parents generously sent him to Warren Wilson in search of a college education and degree. He was of slight stature but was tough and able to tackle the chores at the dairy barn. We talked at length as we milked the cows and I learned that he was an orphan and had served in Korea.

Winona and I had married in June. After completing the dairy chores each day, I, as a newlywed, headed home. Bart, on the other hand, soon integrated himself into the religious life of the campus. He gained the respect of his fellow students and was often called on to lead vespers.

Our paths were diverging. But, Bart seemed to seek more and more from my friendship and to expect me to be available to him at any time. I had to turn him off at times in order to protect my married life. During the months that followed, I began to realize that he was trying to pressure me into choosing between him and Winona. He doled out information bit by bit: that

his orphanage had been in Canada; that it had burnt down and all records had been lost; that he was placed in an American foster home; that he volunteered for the Service, was captured in Korea, was tortured as a POW; and that there was a bill in Congress to give him American citizenship and veteran's rights. As each part of the story called for greater and greater sympathy, I became suspicious and more reserved. The more reserved I became, the greater the trauma of his life became.

This was a dilemma for me. I left college inspired to think that I could make a difference in the world. Yet, here I was unwilling to reach out to just one individual. I had the feeling that Bart was calling for someone to love him unconditionally and that if he found such a person, he would no longer feel the need to continually seek such affirmation. I was not willing to be that person. As he became more and more deeply imbedded in the religious life of the campus, I became more and more apprehensive. I didn't trust him! Nor was I willing to try to take the time get to the bottom of it.

One evening, Bart was not on duty. Milking had been completed, but it was obvious that Blossom Hill Amanda Dunloggin, our top cow, was in labor. I needed to be there to make sure that the birth had no complications. This was a great opportunity for staff and students to see a calf born. After supper, a small group of us walked down to the dairy barn and assembled near the cow's stall. The audience was distracting the cow from her labors, so I turned the lights out and we waited quietly and patiently.

A car drove up to the barn, three men got out, went up the stairs into the hayloft, and lit cigarettes! I broke the silence and boomed out, "There will be no smoking in this barn." The men were taken by surprise, jumped out of the barn's second story, and sped away in their car, but not before another group of students arriving on the scene saw them. One was Bart Dean!

Bart didn't appear for classes or work for several days and his disappearance was reported to the police. It was then that we learned that he was wanted by the FBI. A year later,

the Asheville Citizen carried a short piece saying that Bart Dean, under an alias, had been arrested in Kansas for embezzlement. He was posing as the preacher in a small Presbyterian church.

This taught me to trust my instincts about people. It showed me that one can never be sure about another person's life. It also made me more realistic about my ability to make much of a difference in this world.

Faculty meetings at that time were being given over to discussing the future of the college. There was considerable wrestling with consciences over whether to gear up to serve troubled youth or to give emphases which would attract students with greater academic potential The latter was more attractive but I felt that the former was a more suitable mission for the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church. In the end, the College decided to take the more attractive route and become a four year college. I was pleased that the labor program would continue and that a focus would be made on international relations. The school talked about becoming a "little United Nations."

I had now been at the school for three years. Academic teachers usually take the summer off; you've heard it said, "There are three good reasons for being a teacher: June, July, and August!" I was tied down to 11 months by the dairy duties and by my contract.

I had accomplished a lot during the three years at Warren Wilson— we had built a "base" and thus were able to sell surplus milk at top prices and we were getting our milk pasteurized. However, the Health Department wanted us to build a new, more sanitary milk room. It became obvious that the College was reluctant to spend that money. The Farm Manager considered the dairy operation to be in competition with his farm operations. He was a good farmer, had been at the College for many years, and carried a good deal of weight. I felt that I needed a break for the summer to gain some perspective from the demanding schedule and responsibility.

When I was offered a speaking role in a new outdoor drama being planned by Berea College, my alma mater, to celebrate its centennial, I requested a leave of absence for the summer. My request was denied. Winona and I, after much thought, finally decided to leave Warren Wilson. By the time we made that decision, the speaking role was already filled but we were offered jobs in the drama as extras. We notified the College of our decision to leave.

The College decided to sell the dairy. However, the students objected so strenuously that the College reversed its decision. We did not wish to change our minds. One of my students, Gene Hileman, was appointed as dairy manager to carry on. By the end of the summer, however, the College had found a buyer, sold the herd, and prepared to close the dairy down.

Winona and I became actors!

Chapter 12.

We Join a Commune

The word “commune” was a dangerous word back in 1955. The United States was in a “cold war” and considered communism to be the mortal enemy of democracy. Anything labeled, “C,” colored “red,” or even “pink” by anybody was considered too dangerously subversive to tolerate, whether it was or was not. McCarthyism was at its peak. COoperation was suspect although COmpetition was not. Our leaders and most of our citizens considered that there was a master plot by Russian leaders to take over the entire world. Our relations with our neighbors and with the rest of the world were colored by this outlook.

Barbara Geouge, a lovely blond student at Warren Wilson College, told my wife,Winona, about a community in a high mountain valley north of the college, in Yancey County, North Carolina in which the members owned the land in common. Her parents, mountsin people and natives of the county, had joined the community. The members were trying to create a society in which neighbors cared for each other and for the land. No one dominated, everything was done by consensus. Some of the members had been conscientious objectors and many were Quakers. Winona was interested! She made contact with the community leaders.

One Sunday in the winter of 1954-55 we arranged a ride up to see this utopian society. The community is legally named Celo Community, Inc. and is located in the South Toe (for the Indian term Estatoe) valley which is formed by the Black Mountain range running from Mt. Celo (also from an Indian word) to Mt. Mitchell, the highest peak in eastern United States and Seven Mile Ridge on the other. We attended the Quaker Meeting which was held in what was formerly a goat shed. It was furbished with very pleasing benches made of wormy chestnut, a floor of light colored pebbles, and a spectacular view of the Black Mountain range. At the meeting for worship, attenders sit in silence and thoughtfully align themselves both individually and corporately with “the light within.” When moved to share from this inward worship and communion, individuals may stand and speak, often in an eloquence of sincerity flowing directly from heart and soul. This was my first Quaker meeting. After a period of centering in on the silence, a widow spoke up about some difficult problem she was having in raising two teenage boys. A series of responses followed, all thoughtful and displaying uncommon sensitivity, as

various attenders were led to "minister" to the lady's needs, both material and spiritual. I was struck by the contrast between this communal type of worship and the higherarchical Presbyterian services at Warren Wilson College where the preacher sermonized and the worshipers only listened.

After the Quaker meeting we were invited to have lunch with Bob and Dottie Barrus and then to meet with several Community members. We learned that the Community owned 1,250 acres and that individual families, after a period of trial membership, could take out a "holding," somewhat like a lease, for a homestead but with restrictions. The arrangement is not all that different from those of today's condominiums.

The charter of the corporation outlines a broad purpose.

... to encourage and assist in the establishment of homes and small holdings; to assist in developing means for subsistence for persons, so located; to carry on research, experiments and demonstrations in community organization and development, in the development of vocations and in establishing men and women in suitable vocations; to assist in studying and development of the resources and economic possibilities of Western North Carolina and adjacent regions with the view of helping families to become economically and socially established... website http://www.press.uillinois.edu/epub/books/hicks/ch9.html

The Community's brochure stated that the Community

"*is not an attempt to escape the problems of the world. Some necessary escape it does offer, members believe, from commercialized distractions that hinder cultivation of lives capable of creating peace. Such cultivation is the central problem which like-minded persons are invited to share.... As to the future, the pattern remains flexible, leaving individuals and small groups within the Community free to experiment with more specialized patterns.*"

Winona, with her background in religious education at Hartford Seminary (she had completed her Master), had definite ideas about raising children and this type of community seemed like an ideal place. I, still suffering from the stigma of having been forced to pit personal conscience against national sentiment, welcomed the thought of living in a community where the individual was given respect and encouragement.

Winona and I decided to leave Warren Wilson and apply for membership in Celo Community, Inc. The plan was to join the cast of Wilderness Road for the summer. Then I would take training as a Dairy Herd Improvement Association Supervisor and take a job covering the dairies in Western North Carolina while I built my own dairy farm on idle Community property.

The speaking part in Wilderness Road had been given to someone else but we were both hired as dances and as refugees in one scene. I was also a homesick Union soldier, got to carry the Stars and Stripes up the mountain, and get shot. We liked the script very much. It showed an Appalachian community divided by the Civil War. The hero was forced to choose between the Bible in his right hand and the gun in his left. In one scene, Confederate sympathisers gathered to the right side of the stage and the Union sympathisers to the left. Simultaneously, both prayed to God for victory—"…for our cause is just…" they both intoned.

We arranged to house-sit for Rev. Leon and Marion Sanborne during the summer and to rent out their bedrooms for the influx of toursits expected to come to see the drama. We also secured jobs at a hospitality desk at Boone Tavern, Berea College's hotel, where we made the assignments for overflow of guests in private homes (including the parsonage) when there were no hotel or motel rooms available. I also obtained the job of transcribing into a new notebook the music for the Berea College chimes which had fallen into disarray. It was a sucessful summer and we ended with $500 available to get started in Celo Community. We had also started our family.

Warren Wilson, when I submitted my resignation, decided to close its dairy operation. However, the students objected so strongly that the decision was reversed and Gene Hileman, one of my students, was put in charge of the dairy. Before leaving Warren Wilson, I purchased three heifers from which to start my own herd and arranged with Paul Geouge, Barbara's father, not only to take care of the animals for the summer, but to become my partner. I felt that dairying should be a partnership so that no one was required to be on duty 365 days a year.

Winona's parents sold us their old Studebaker when we left Warren Wilson. We rented a U-Hual and moved our belongings from Warren Wilson to their place in Quincy, Illinois where Winona could stay while I took my D.H.I.A. training. In the fall, after completing the training, we moved to Celo and I took up my duties weighing the production of each cow in herds enrolled in the program, running butterfat tests, and calculating figures to show each cow's net profit. Membership in D.H.I.A. is voluntary and herd owners pay for the service which is supervised by the United States Department of Agriculture. Dairy herds in Western North Carolina were scattered over a wide area with mountainous roads between. In order to take a sample of the production of each cow in a twenty-four hour period, I had to spend the night at each farm. Winona sometimes went with me and was plucky enough to actually take the samples at one farm while I went to a second one nearby. As the pregnancy progressed, she stayed at home and, when Paul was otherwise engaged, even milked our big cow, Blossom Hill Amanda Dunloggin.

Yes, we bought her from Warren Wilson College and moved her up the mountains to Celo! Here's how it happened: the College decided to sell the dairy herd toward the end of the summer. Richard Queen, who already owned a dairy herd in Maggie Valley, bought the College herd to add to his. But, the deal did not include a few animals which he deemed not worth buying. One was Asheville Querido Texal Agatha, the matriarch of

the herd. She had been a fine cow, producing a calf regularly each year, but was aging. Blossom Hill Amanda Dunloggin was nearing the end of a spectacular lactation which had stretched her udder so that it hung low. Richards comment, reported to me when I was brought up to date on the status of the dairy at Warren Wilson, was, "I wouldn't have a cow with an udder like that in my herd." Her record breaking production had not yet been published and was, in fact, terminated on the 300th day of her lactation (305 days is standard) when the herd was sold. She had produced more than 13 tons of milk in that one lactation!

I went over to Warren Wilson and after checking on these two cows (yes, I did the arm exam and found both of them were pregnant) I looked up 'Fessor Larsen, the farm manager to find out what he planned to do with them. He planned to slaughter them for the kitchen. I asked if he wouldn't rather have nice tender beef animals instead of tough old cows and told him that I would be interested in trading with him. He agreed. I purchased to nice young steers for the College and Blossom Hill Amanda Duloggin and Asheville Querido Texal Agatha added some high class bloodlines to the Celo herd, We were into the dairy business faster than we had hoped!

That first winter, I constructed a lean-to shed for our cows and purchased hay. I went about sizing up the amount of hay in a stack with tape measure and conversion tables much to the amusement of the local farmer I was dealing with. He knew from long experience how much hay was in the stack and what it was worth. I, being green in such matters as stacked hay, had to prove to myself that I wasn't being taken advantage of. We struck a deal and Paul helped move the hay to Celo by the same means that he had used to move the cows— on his flatbed truck, a vital piece of equipment.

As spring approached, I was able to buy a used tractor, plow, harrow, mower, and hayrake from one of the D.H.I.A. herds and prepare to produce our own hay and pasture. The tractor, a John Deere B had only two cylinders which were mounted on their

sides. The tractor appeared to have no motor and made a characteristic "put-put" when running. During the summer, Paul showed me how to stack hay properly so that it would shed water. All five of our cows had heifer (female) calves, thus doubling the size of our herd. We sold fresh milk to our grateful neighbors. Paul's wife strained and bottled it and collected the money. Winona kept the books.

By the end of that first year it became apparent that D.H.I.A. supervisors in western North Carolina could not expect to make a decent living. Travel time and mileage limited realized income. The flexible schedule was nice and it was quite interesting to see various dairy farm operations and to meet the people who devoted their lives to producing milk. But I could see that I must find another job. I was hired to teach science and math at Micaville High School in the fall of 1956.

At age 26, men can be incredibly strong, resilient, and ready to conquer the world. For three years I did the morning milking chores, hauled the cans of milk to Robinsons Dairy for processing, put in a full day of teaching, did the evening chores, graded papers and made lesson plans, and tackled improvements to the "farm" on weekends. I was the cow man and Paul and his truck hauled feed, cinder blocks for a milk room, a used metal silo, hemlock lumber for a respectable barn, and carried on with his landscaping and forestry jobs to provide his own major source of his income. Being "homesteaders" was pretty heady stuff!