

INTRODUCTION



My roots extend deep into the rich soil of the farm where I was born and raised in the Missouri and James River valleys of Yankton County, South Dakota. My ethnic roots extend far deeper into the faraway, misty crevasses of Irish history in County Waterford and County Westmeath, the ancestral homes of my forebears—the Lyons and Donohoe families.

My outlook on life was firmly and unalterably set by the people and events that I knew in the 1930s and 1940s within a small semi-circle centered at our farm. The flat segment of the semi-circle was the Missouri River that marked the border between South Dakota and Nebraska.

My outlook could not have been more firmly and indelibly imbedded in my psyche if it had been chiseled on a marble tablet. There were never any doubts on matters of right or wrong; ethics; spirituality; tolerance for all creeds, races, and customs; sympathy for the underdog; steadfast commitment to family, friends, and colleagues; and the proper regard for wealth and material possessions.

These principles became the touchstones for the rest of my life. They come close to Thomas Jefferson's when he wrote in The United States Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self evident..."

A serious examination of my life in regard to adherence to these lofty and noble principles would likely show an occasional wobble to the right or left of true north, but when this happened it was always with a firm voice whispering in my ear that a detour was underway.

The stories in this book are based on my memories of events from far off times. Some may have accumulated a coat of gilt when in reality the originals were brushed with common barn paint. Others may be like

a string-tied file of disorganized papers, faded pictures, and yellow clippings retrieved from a forgotten cubby hole. It's even possible that a few of the remembered events never happened. If the stories are amusing, but in some instances receive low marks when subjected to fact-checks, I propose that the reader kindly let them stand.

The stories recall, record, and share cherished memories from a distant age that was crammed with wonder, excitement, expectation, discovery, and dreams.