

**LIFE ON A DANVERS FARM** By Marilyn Carlson Norwood

*My* grandfather's obituary cited him as "local grocer". He was certainly that but he was so much more. He had a farm, a real working farm and I spent a lot of time there. I have some wonderful memories of it.

Gramp was the manager of the First National store in downtown Danvers, but he always had a farm, first a small one in Peabody and then a much larger one on Route 1 in Danvers.

He came from "the north of Ireland" as they say and he had a charming brogue. He was just a teenager when he came here with other members of his family, mostly cousins and and uncles.

When he retired from the store, he became a full-time farmer. He had two farm-hands who lived at the farmhouse. He had about fifteen cows, chickens, bee hives, potato fields, corn fields, apple trees, a pear tree, a cherry tree, strawberry beds. And lots of grandchildren.

As soon as school was out, we headed for the farm - the three oldest grandchildren - my cousin, my sister and me.

He also had about eight overnight cabins which got a lot of use in the summer as Route 1 was the way you got to Maine and New Hampshire in those days.

He always put us to work - no idle hands with this guy. We picked strawberries in June, corn in July and August. We gathered eggs, cleaned cabins, ironed sheets and we scooped ice cream all summer when he opened his own ice cream stand on the highway. We manned his little stand on weekends where he taught us to count change.

Gramp delivered milk all over Danvers. We used to go with him on his milk route. If we wanted to go up to the farm, we hitched a ride in his truck when he delivered milk to our house. We always had a way to get there.

He delivered cream to the little ice cream stand on Conant Street called Caramel Kiss. It was possibly the first ice cream stand around at the time. After church on Sunday morning, he would go to the Caramel Kiss and get his free quart of Vanilla to bring home. I suppose that is where the idea came from to build his own ice cream stand.

My grandmother was in charge of the overnight cabins. On hot summer nights we would sit with her on the front steps while she waited for a car to come looking for a place to stay. She would put her flashlight on and lead them up to the cabins. We would catch fireflies while we waited. After World War II ended, we had two family member military couples living in two of the larger cabins until they got a bigger place to live.

The process of collecting and storing hay for the cows was a huge deal on the farm. After the hay was cut and dried a little, it was trucked to the barn where it was lifted in huge batches with a giant fork up into the hayloft. It was dangerous work and we had to steer clear of the whole thing.

Everything changed when Route I-95 was built. The state took the farm and Gramp moved across Rt. 1.