

Grandpa's 1930 GMC Farm Truck

By Terrell Schaffer

"Look out, Terrell. We gotta get out of here", yelled my older bother Rick. At the age of 8 he was the wiser of the two of us. I looked up to see Grandpa's Green farm truck as he returned from the wheat field, kicking up dust from the dirt road and his fist pumping in the air out the window. I was never sure exactly what the German words he spoke that day, but I do know my brother Rick and I had been given orders "not to play in the ditch" near the Old Farm House in Northwest Kansas. We were in trouble. Grandparents today are said to be firm but fair. Grandpas in 1955 Kansas were firm and firm. I mention this because it is the first memory I have of the Old Green Truck but would certainly not be my last.

Grandpa Charley Frank Schaffer was born Sept 9, 1893 in Hosmer, Edmunds County, South Dakota. My Great Grandmother, Christina, had just arrived from Gluckstall, Bergdorf, Odessa, Russia. They made their way to West-ern Kansas by Wagon in 1905.

He began wheat farming a few miles north of the Smoley Hill River in Logan County, Kansas shortly thereafter. As a blacksmith, toolmaker, custom thresher, and farmer he worked hard and raised his family.

In May of 1930 he saw an ad in the County weekly newspaper about the best farm truck on the market at that time. The brand new 1930 GMC 1 ½ ton truck to haul his wheat to market. The stock market had just crashed at the end of 1929 and the dust bowl days were on the horizon. I'm sure Grandma questioned his timing on his \$960 purchase.

For the next 30 years the truck would haul thousands of bushels of wheat. Many years the drought, grasshop-pers, and disease would take their toll on the harvest, but he, nor his GMC, ever stopped. I remember riding in the truck often when I visited the farm from "town" as a young boy.

On one of those weekend visits, I learned a valuable lesson that has been passed on to my children and grand-children. I was no more than 4 or 5 when grandma rang the dinner bell (lunch to all you Northerners). Grandpa came from the barn and we sat down at the same time. He looked at me and spoke in his heavy German accent, "Terrell, have you verked t'day yet?" I must have had a puzzled look on face as his next words were, "you go feed them cats, that will be your verk for the day" I did as I was told and when I returned Grandpa said, with his weath-ered, callused index finger pointed at me so I'd be sure to understand, "You must always remember that if ya wants to eat... Ya gotz ta verk, by Gott!" Men throughout history have said basically the same thing but somehow when Grandpa spoke those words my whole life took on new meaning.



After 30 years of driving through the pastures, wheat fields and dirt roads, it was time to allow his prized possession to be assigned a place of honor in the old red barn. His crimson 1960 International pickup would now make the needed trips to town and visits to the field.

It would remain in the barn for the next 25 years, Visited often, I'm sure, by Grandpa. In July 1985, a few months before his 92nd birthday, it was time for the farm sale. Having been on the same section of ground since 1919 I can only imagine my grandparent's thoughts on that hot summer day as the auctioneer moved from pile to pile. He had remained as active as possible, having planted the wheat in the Fall of 1984 that was harvested a few weeks before the sale. Photos taken that day show the old truck in remarkable good condition. It was sold to Glen Close Implement and was moved to his property less than 5 miles away.

In the summer of 2019, I found the Old Truck in possession of Mr. Close's daughter and her husband (Mike and Melinda Moeder) still just 5 miles north of Grandpa's old farmstead. You can only imagine the emotion welling up inside of me as I walked into their metal storage building and approached the Old 1930 Green GMC. It had changed very little from my memory. The old orange material from my memory still covered the worn-out seat, with more springs showing than padding, which grandpa had sat upon. My Father Otis, and my big brother Rick (both now passed) had each scratched their initials on the dash name plate. Even the 1960 Kansas license plate "LG T142" was still attached from the day Grandpa drove it into the old red barn, 43 years before.

I was told by the Moeders that if they ever sold the old truck, they would give me the first opportunity to buy it because of the family ties. In the summer of 1923, I received a call to see if I was still interested in the old GMC. I spoke one word, "ABSOLUTELY"! I contacted my daughter Lyndsey Hermann and we agreed to make the purchase together. That is how Grandpa's 2 owner 1930 GMC found its way home, just 6 blocks from where it was first purchased 93 years before in Oakley, Kansas. I later was able to document the ad for GMC's latest and greatest, as well as my grandpa's name on the local news page (dated May 23, 1930) that listed he and 3 other farmers as having purchased their trunks in time for the upcoming harvest.

