

## The Web of Life

To some people Iowa is a land of corn and pigs. To others it is rolling acres from a Grant Wood painting, and a place where church steeples rise above massive trees in a hundred different towns and cities. Iowa is also a way of life. Within her borders New England conservatism and a southern aversion toward hurrying have been fused into a remarkable blend which the rest of America labels as a particular species of *Americanus midwesternia*. For all his dependence on agriculture and despite the lack of big city allurements, the Iowan in 1952 believed himself to be remarkably well off. Some of the uncertainties of living on the land had been cushioned by government aid. The marvels of science made the cultural contacts of the largest metropolis only the touch of a switch away. Over a decade of prosperity had contributed to growing bank accounts, to a better life. America's new role of world leadership could seem distant and remote to a man on a tractor moving slowly up and down the fields under a hot July sun.

Iowans fit no stereotype, however, as they proved again in 1952. Bill Bridgeman, a native of Ottumwa, made aviation history as he streaked

through the skies in a jet-powered Douglas Skyrocket at a record 1,238 miles per hour. The navy released information on Bridgeman's records, previously kept secret, that showed he also had flown higher than any other man with a 79,494-foot climb. Then there was a conscience-stricken Washington County farmer who sent a \$1,000 check to the State Employment Security Commission with a note explaining that his claims as a jobless veteran had not been "honestly drawn." The stamp of individuality was on every Iowan as he threaded his way through the web of life in the pursuit of happiness.

Foremost in importance to 52,064 Iowans who had been inducted into the armed services since June 25, 1950, was the Korean war. By late December of 1952, 434 Iowans had died, some in far-away places. Lieut. Harold E. Fischer, Jr., of Swea City, shot down his second Russian-built MIG-15 and damaged another with the weapons on his F-86 Sabrejet. Truce negotiations lagged, and hundreds of Iowans were "rotated" back home after months on the firing line. Some anxious parents received anonymous letters from Shanghai stating that their sons were alive in enemy prison stockades. A Harlan veteran of World War II who was recalled to active duty in the air force was honorably discharged with eleven other pilots who found the strain of flying had become too much to endure. Franz Kriwanek, a Czech con-

scripted into the German Afrika Korps ten years earlier, returned to Clarinda with his family to live and work near the site of his confinement in a POW camp in 1943-1944. The Mount Vernon citizen who had refused to pay his 1951 income tax "to support an illegal war" said he would not pay a 1952 tax, either.

Love and fellowship overcame an assortment of stumbling blocks. Nineteen-year-old Mariam Brown of Grundy Center climaxed her pen-pal romance with Sgt. Raymond G. Larr when they said their marriage vows, a few days after they had seen each other for the first time. Ernest Lindquist, after forty-two years in the state penitentiary, took Mrs. Annie Jackson for his bride. Mrs. Jackson heard that Lindquist had not received a letter in twenty years, and their exchange of letters led to the altar after Lindquist's parole. After anonymous phone calls had caused a real estate agent to return to a Japanese-American couple their first payment, the James Nishimura family of Des Moines finally moved into a new home. Their future neighbors heard about the phone calls and assured the Nishimuras that they would be welcome. Jesse Stilson's friends at Montezuma replaced his blacksmith shop, which had been razed by fire, with a new building and new equipment. A spokesman for Stilson's customers said they did it to recognize "a lifetime of service here in the community."

Iowa's youth channeled boundless energy and enthusiasm into a variety of activities. Ronald Rietveld, fifteen-year-old Des Moines student, received national attention when he discovered a long-lost photograph showing President Lincoln in his coffin. Young Rietveld found the picture, made from a plate that had been destroyed at the Lincoln family's request, while rummaging through materials on the Civil War president in Springfield, Illinois. Mara Gay Masselink, a Burlington high school student, won the national "Voice of Democracy" essay contest and presented a plaque to President Truman in Washington, "in appreciation of his devotion to the youth of the nation who have spoken for democracy." Carolyn Hill of Cedar Falls won the "Miss Iowa of 1952" title while still in her teens. Hundreds of youngsters who had never ridden a train were aboard the Milwaukee Railroad's last run between Des Moines and Spirit Lake, as "Old 33" ended fifty-three years of passenger service along the line.

Flying saucer scares, which had been occurring every summer since 1947 with regularity if not credulity, touched Iowa again in 1952. Three Windham residents said they saw the saucers flying in a V-shaped formation, leaving a vapor trail, and making a noise "like a blowtorch." Professor C. C. Wylie of the University of Iowa astronomy department said the nearness of the planet Jupiter could account for some of the reports.

Residents of the Quad Cities area were shocked by the disclosures of horse meat sales in Illinois meat markets, and a Rock Island grand jury witness said 3,000 pounds had been shipped to Davenport and Burlington labelled "hamburger." State health department tests of a hundred samples disclosed no evidence that the meat was being sold over Iowa counters, however.

One pitfall in the Iowan's pursuit of happiness in 1952 came in the form of a vicious polio epidemic. Sioux City health officers became gravely concerned when forty-five cases, three of them fatal, were reported late in June. The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis sent a staff to Sioux City in July, after 153 polio cases and 9 deaths in less than a month indicated the disease had reached epidemic proportions. A mass testing program for 16,500 Sioux City youngsters was begun, with half of the children receiving injections of gama globulin and half getting a gelatin substitute in an effort to check the disease and determine the effect of the injections. Twelve navy corpsmen were sent to the stricken city to relieve overworked hospital staffs before the epidemic was checked.

With the return of cooler weather the number of new polio cases rapidly declined. But 119 Iowans had died from the dreaded malady and over 1,400 had been stricken. Among individual families the hardest hit was that of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Thiel of Mapleton. Eleven of the Thiel's fourteen

children suffered from polio during the epidemic, and two sons remained in braces after the other nine recovered.

A brighter side to the health picture came from the cities where new hospitals were being built to bring comfort and ease to the afflicted. The new \$10,000,000 Veterans Administration Hospital at Iowa City admitted its first patient on March 3. Ottumwa dedicated a 175-bed hospital, Osceola's Clarke County General Hospital had beds for 32 patients, and the Audubon County Memorial Hospital provided beds for 30. In the field of preventive medicine, fifteen Iowa towns were selected as demonstration areas for water flouridation programs under the supervision of the State Department of Health. Dubuque and Waukon had already started flouridation programs in an effort to check tooth decay, but a group opposed to the plan called it "socialized medicine."

M. E. Lindskoog of Odebolt voiced a familiar complaint in the *Des Moines Register* when he objected to parking meters on city streets and asked motorists to avoid towns which used the devices. The parking meter had its defenders, however, especially in cities hard-pressed for revenue. Des Moines motorists pushed \$120,550 into the machines in 1952 alone, more than the entire cost of the state government in 1853 and 1854! In Iowa City, three hitching posts were placed in the municipal parking lot after Amish visitors told city

officials they had been unable to park their horse-drawn buggies in the motorized community.

Ease in finding jobs and the cleanup of gambling were cited as reasons for the relatively small number of crimes in Iowa in 1952 by Chief R. W. Nebergall of the State Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Iowa was fourth among all states in the fewest number of major crimes on a population basis. There were no unsolved murders committed in 1952, and only the \$25,720 Ankeny State Bank robbery baffled police. Another robbery at Des Moines resulted in an early conviction. The FBI said North Dakota was the safest place to live if one wanted to be free of criminal activities, but Iowa had a good score with the gangbusters. Iowa cities had 1.70 murders per 100,000 persons, as contrasted with 20.67 per 100,000 in Georgia.

The pleasant shortage of criminal cases led city officials in Gilbertville to conclude that they should sell their long-empty jail. Not all cities were so singularly blessed. A twenty-two-year-old rejected suitor in Cedar Rapids shot and killed his rival, then answered a radio appeal from his mother by surrendering to police. A Sioux City businessman was sentenced to five years in the penitentiary and fined \$10,000 after he was convicted of illegally sending an inferior quality of produce to the armed forces. A newly married Fort Madison couple received ten-year sentences

after police found they had been furnishing their apartment through a series of burglaries. Cedar Rapids officers had little sympathy for an old age pensioner who admitted robbing charity contribution boxes. He had \$1,970, most of it in \$100 bills, in his pockets when arrested.

The reports from Hollywood that interested Iowans most mixed good news with the sad. Vivacious Donna Reed came back to her farm home near Denison and visited her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Mullenger. A major studio announced that it would begin filming the life story of Glenn Miller, famous Iowa-born orchestra leader who died in World War II. Karen Morley, who left Ottumwa for Hollywood in 1931 and became an actress, was subpoenaed by a Congressional committee. In Washington the former film star refused to tell the probers whether she had ever been, or was now, a Communist.

Historic Amana made news again in 1952 by reaffirming the 1932 decision to adopt a regular business corporation charter. Prior to the 1932 vote, the 1,400 inhabitants in the seven Amana villages had lived in a religious-communistic form of society. The vote to remain a corporation was 633-0. Dr. H. G. Moershel, the society president, said the book value of their stock (which had been \$50 a share in 1932) had reached \$3,135.47 per share.

Despite the seriousness of life, Iowans found



time to joke and look at the lighter side in 1952. A Mount Pleasant truck dealer made a sale to an itinerant painter, then removed the gas tank on the trade-in and found 854 coins amounting to \$427. The painter explained that he had used the gas tank for a "piggy bank." A New Hampton woman sought a divorce after seven months of marriage to a man who had failed to present her with a promised Cadillac. Cedar Rapids police and firemen used their facilities to recover a wallet from an ice-covered river, then found it contained one cent. Twins Gene and Gerald Schwade of Nora Springs gave their schoolmates sums ranging from \$10 to \$80 before their parents discovered \$250 missing from a cream pitcher. All the money was recovered. An understanding Cedar Rapids judge gave a man charged with public drunkenness a ten-day suspended sentence. It was Lincoln's Birthday, so the accused man talked his way out of jail by relating an anecdote that involved Lincoln, General Grant, and John Barleycorn.

The sports scene in Iowa had its usual champions, upsets, and thrills. When the University of Iowa football team defeated heavily-favored Ohio State 8-0, the 44,659 fans in Iowa City witnessed one of the year's major sports upsets. Earlier football news concerned the hiring of Forest Evashevski as head coach at Iowa, replacing Leonard Raffensperger. Reinbeck won the girls'

basketball title by defeating Monona, 61-55, and Davenport won the boys' championship by edging Keokuk, 48-45. Chuck Darling, all-American basketball player at Iowa, was named the most valuable player in the Big Ten. His 364-point total, or an average of 26 per game, was expected to stand for many years. Bill Smith of Iowa State Teachers College won the Olympic gold medal for his wrestling prowess at the Helsinki games.

It appeared for a while that Iowa might have an entry in the Kentucky Derby. Gift Silver, an untried three-year-old horse owned by an Ottumwa locomotive engineer and his wife, was nominated for the "run for the roses," but a cut on the horse's leg forced a withdrawal two days before the big race. Although floods cancelled the \$15,000 Quad City Open Golf Tournament, the Sioux City Open was played and won by pro Al Besselink with a record 266 score. Art Koch became the first Waterloo golfer to wear the Iowa Amateur crown when he defeated Rodney Bliss, the Des Moines defender, 2 and 1. Loddie Kempa, a Kansas City pro, won the fifteenth Iowa Masters Tournament at Ames.

Perhaps the most gruelling sports effort was performed by golfer Bob Barnes of Dubuque. The husky former Marine shot 225 holes in twenty-seven hours, thus exceeding the presumed previous marathon record of 218 holes. Then Barnes heard that a North Carolina pro shot 343 holes.

Encouraging reports came from traffic officials who found that despite the 561 highway deaths in Iowa during 1952 this total was 64 less than the 1951 death toll. Thirty-nine of the sixty-three Iowa cities having a population of 4,000 or more had no traffic fatalities. Le Mars has had no traffic deaths reported since 1940. Fifty persons were killed at railroad crossings, but the toll was the lowest in four years. A story of courage and fortitude was revealed at Sidney when a sixty-year-old woman was seriously injured and trapped in an overturned car for five days in mid-November. She stayed alive by sipping rain water and eating several pieces of homemade fudge.

Among the honors passed on to Iowans was the naming of three newspapermen for "Master Editor-Publisher" awards from the Iowa Press Association. The highest esteem of their fellow editors went to G. E. Whitehead of the *Perry Daily Chief*, B. H. Shearer of the *Columbus Gazette* at Columbus Junction, and W. F. Lindsey of the *Leon Journal-Reporter*. Mrs. Charles S. Hickman of Centerville was chosen as "Iowa Mother of 1952." Miss Helen Irwin of Des Moines was elected president of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs at the Boston convention.

Death overtook many Iowans noted for their contributions to society through the years. The list of notable dead included Arthur H. Brayton,

Des Moines convention director; Byron J. Lambert, educator and engineer; Rabbi Eugene Mannheim of Des Moines; Philip Charles Jeans, professor emeritus of pediatrics at the University of Iowa; historians Joseph Kinsey Howard, Horace Peterson, and Harrison John Thornton; Frances Argle Ely, Des Moines neuro-psychiatrist; John Ely Briggs, editor of THE PALIMPSEST for 23 years and university professor; Fred Hahne, publisher of the *Aberdeen-Angus Journal*; George M. Bechtel, Davenport financier; Ralph Cram, retired editor and publisher; Fred S. Hird, former U. S. Marshal and 1912 Olympic rifle champion; Capt. Gus Siefert, retired Mississippi steamboat captain; and Harry J. Lytle, Davenport businessman and civic leader. Former state legislators who died during 1952 included Paul E. Stillman, Ernest Lee Humbert, John H. Hager, Anthony M. McColl, Albert J. Shaw, Edward R. Brown, and Emil A. Larson.

As her sons and daughters pursued happiness in 1952 Iowa saw the tragedies of floods and the gaiety of a basketball crowd, the sadness of a polio epidemic and the elation of a wedding party. All the emotions and experiences of mankind were known to Iowans in 1952 as they marched over the same pathway that had carried their forefathers forward in their search for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

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