



Act Two
After the War — New Management
1945 - 1983

Act Two, Scene One
Shady Oaks Cafe - Supper Club

The Rutherfords

This scene began when Shady Oaks Cafe ("Cafe") or Supper Club, now extinct, reopened after the war. The new owner, Bryant ("BJ") Rutherford and Ilene Griggs met at Tinker Field in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, during World War II. Bryant was in the Army and stationed there, while Ilene worked as a supervisor in a factory that made parts for airplanes. Ilene was doing the patriotic thing, as were many other women on the home front. It was a romantic time, and the fellows (soldiers) were heroes.

The couple was married on April 1, 1945, in Wichita, Kansas. Shortly after BJ was discharged, they moved to his home near Marshalltown.

Ilene's mother and father, Kyle and Gladys Griggs, of rural Oklahoma City loaned them money to buy the Cafe and gas station on old Highway 30. Upon purchasing it from Leslie Norton for \$5,000 on June 17, 1946, the Rutherfords worked diligently, cleaning and getting things out of storage to reopen. Ilene's son by a previous marriage, Ronald ("Ron") Chalfant, remained with Ilene's parents to finish his first year of school. At seven, he joined his parents in Iowa.

BJ thought pumping gas and selling oil would be his livelihood. The gas pumps, at that time, displayed the Flying Red Horse for Mobile gas. Andy Burt was their delivery man. New Highway 30 was under construction south of Shady Oaks. Many highway workers came to the station wanting breakfast, sandwiches or coffee. Guests from the nearby Shady Oaks Cabin Camp walked over for breakfast. Though a cafe wasn't his dream, it became a budding business.

With BJ out front taking orders and Ilene in the kitchen turning out southern-style cooking, they were a combination that seemed to click. The counter room had five stools and three tables. Since no advertising could be

afforded, their reputation was spread by word-of-mouth; and growth resulted.

They were often described as a "cute couple." Both were dark haired and nice looking. BJ's dark, wavy hair was combed back in a pompadour, and Ilene's shoulder-length hair curled around her smiling face. She was barely five feet tall wearing heels, and BJ walked taller than he actually was.

On February 6, 1948, old Highway 30 east to Shady Oaks corner was turned over to the Marshall County road system; and traffic was rerouted south of Shady Oaks. Adjusting to the change, semi-truck drivers on new Highway 30 were soon spreading the word that the country fresh eggs were fried in real bacon grease "the old-fashioned, farm way."

For lunch, hamburgers, tenderloins, steak sandwiches, pork chops and French fries were available. Drinks were coffee, tea, milk and soda pop. There were two rooms adjoining the counter room. The Rutherfords used one for living quarters. After the first year, the other room was opened with more tables and chairs. The indomitable Rutherfords' days were filled with challenges.

Early Menu Items and Prices

Meals included potato salad, bread and drink:

Fried Chicken	\$.85	Coffee	\$.05
Pork Chops	.60	Milk	.05
T-Bone Steak	1.25	Juice	.10
Cheeseburger	.25	Sweet Roll	.05
Hamburger	.10	Cereal	.15
Fried Egg	.10	3 Slices Toast	
Grilled Cheese	.15	(buttered)	.10
BLT	.25	Donuts	2/.05
Ham	.15	Hot Cakes (3)	
French Fries	.15	Syrup & Drink	.20

Like most kids those days, Ron had jobs to do around the Cafe after school. He mowed the grass, pulled the weeds and kept the gravel driveway free of cigarette butts and trash. He also helped in the kitchen. Nights

and weekends were spent in food preparation and washing dishes. When Ron wasn't working, he played with his dog, "Gunner," and fished in Timber Creek near Rainbow Arch Bridge. It was along the paths created by fishermen that Ron found a number of arrowheads in the early 1950s. During the school year, Ron walked one mile up the road to Rock Valley School where a teacher taught eight grades in one room.

At the age of 10, Ron became ill with polio while visiting his grandparents in Oklahoma. Ilene went to Oklahoma, and a week later she brought Ron back to Iowa by train. He was bedridden for one year with ultimately no disabling effects. A large part of this was attributed to Dr. Jack ("Doc") Jensen and his wife, Katie. Most evenings, the Jensens would drive out to Shady Oaks to get Ron. They would take him to their home for hot baths, as BJ and Ilene did not have a tub.

When the Rutherfords started serving fried chicken, they couldn't afford to purchase more dishes. Instead, they bought baskets in which they served the crispy chicken and fresh-cut French fries. It was garnished with a tasty green onion and carrot and celery sticks. This popular specialty was called "Chicken-in-a-Basket."

At the onset, BJ borrowed a Chevy coupe belonging to his parents, Charley and Pearl Rutherford, to go from farm to farm buying young fryer chickens. He hauled them home in a wire chicken coup on the back of the car. Rutherford's brother and wife, Gilbert (died January 1994) and Alice, also raised and dressed chickens on their farm. At the Cafe, everything was tasty, because it was so fresh. Potatoes were peeled and cut up for French fries, and the shrimp had to be deveined.

Their one-room living area off the kitchen had no bathroom, so BJ installed a shower in the basement. The outdoor privy (two holer) was used by customers and family alike.

After graduating from high school in 1947, Donna Vannatta (Hoge-Crookshank) went to work as a summer kitchen helper (dishes and clean up) at the Cafe. On one weekend in June, flood waters made it almost impossible to get there. Without Saturday night customers, Donna was given the night off. She went to bed in the back room, which was her's for the summer. Sometime later, she dimly heard voices over the pitter-patter

of rain. The next day Donna learned that some of the usual crowd found a round-about way to get to the Cafe. While Donna slept the night away, BJ and Ilene served the late-night diners.

The Rutherford's added French-fried onion rings to the menu. They soon became a house specialty, as customers at nearly every table ordered them. Along with delicious fried chicken, there was U.S. choice T-bone steak (16 oz.), top sirloin steak (12 oz.), pork chops, chopped sirloin steak, French fried shrimp, catfish steaks, fried oysters, home-made French fries and baked potatoes. Ilene's homemade French, Garlic, Thousand Island and Roquefort salad dressings were enjoyed by all. A house specialty was her thick, chocolate topping for sundaes.

Dressed in a starched, fresh white uniform, Ilene's talents did not end with her unforgettable cooking. Her effervescent personality was apparent, as she shared jokes in an amusing, childlike way. She charmed both children and adults. Ilene was a gifted "peacemaker."

BJ's meticulous ways were not acquired in the service, they were innate. He was much the same when he worked in Grinnell before the war. At the Cafe, he usually wore dark trousers topped off with crisp, white shirt, unbuttoned at the collar; his attire belied his workaholic nature. His famous quote shall not be forgotten, "There are three ways to do something, the wrong way, the right way and my way, and you will do it my way." This was BJ's unwritten, although not unspoken, premise at Shady Oaks.

Around 1950, a neighbor, Maynard Johnson, asked Ilene's young son Ron, to be a part of the tapping and boil-down of maple syrup. They tapped the trees back of the Cafe and up the road at Maynard's place. Art Bates, a patrolman, enjoyed the outdoors and also assisted in this Spring ceremony. These fellows were all there the night that some old oak posts burned too hot, and the precious syrup almost entirely evaporated.

In 1953, the garage was converted into living quarters; and the dining room was expanded. It resulted in a completely new inside and out remodeling job. Further remodeling and all new furnishings followed in 1955. With this, the Cafe went to evening hours.

I enjoyed looking over some ads that appeared in the Times-Republican ("TR") for Shady Oaks Cafe. They read: "Drive out for Easter Dinner," "Drive Out! Now Open, It's Cool and Comfortable Here!" and "Extra Special Steaks."

Each ad featured different hours. At one time, the Cafe was open on Sunday from 12 noon to 2 p.m. and again from 5 p.m. to midnight. After the dining room was remodeled to accommodate private parties, the Cafe's hours were from 6 a.m. to midnight daily; and on Sunday, 6 p.m. to midnight. The hours fluctuated again; and the Cafe was open from 12 noon until 12:45 a.m. everyday, except Thursday.

"Bring the Youngsters, They Like to Eat Out Too," "Children's Portions are Available." "Make Eating Out a Family Affair . . . Bring the Children" an ad said. Another noted, "Open 5 p.m. to 12:45 a.m. Daily, Sunday 12 Noon to 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. to Midnight, Closed Tuesday."

This ad caught my eye, and I wished the adjacent Shady Oaks Cafe was still in existence. "Say! Have You Tried That Delicious, Chicken In the Basket? (The chicken is also packed to take out)." Later, after we moved to Shady Oaks, the Cafe was closed on Sunday and Monday.

Arden Olson clearly remembers taking his wife Marian to the restaurant in the 1950s. Arden said, "On many memorable Saturday nights, we danced to the fancy music that the proprietor played. At midnight, with 35 to 40 merrymakers still there, BJ would flip off the music and announce, 'No more dancing.'"

After everyone left, the Rutherfords' night wasn't over. When all their tasks were finished, BJ and Ilene finally stepped outside in the night air, locked the door and walked around the building to their living quarters. Many times, the Olsons waited to walk them home. The two families were friends. Often the Rutherfords, Ilene's son Ron, the Olsons, and their daughter Sharon drove to Boone or Des Moines on Sundays.

Redecorating was completed for the 1956 summer season and tenth year of operation. The Cafe now sported a brick and redwood exterior, plus a new sign. They could seat 80 diners, 64 in the large room and 16 in the entrance room. At this time, their son

assisted; and one waitress, Bernice Wolken, was employed by the Rutherfords. Chicken, steaks and house specialty dressings were featured on the Shady Oaks menu.

The Rutherfords' living quarters adjoined the Cafe for quite a few years before they bought the land across the road. The small farm was owned by Bill and Ruth Wright. The Rutherfords' put up a comfortable brick home on this unique setting of the old mill site. The yard was landscaped, and evergreen trees were set out on either side of the long lane. This enabled them to again remodel the Cafe and convert what had been a garage, then living quarters, into a cocktail lounge.

Marshalltown folks attending shows at KRNT Theatre in Des Moines liked to drive back to friendly Shady Oaks to indulge in their food and drinks. The homey atmosphere and service was like a magnet.

In the late 1950s, the Marshalltown Bobcats' basketball teams were very popular. Lots of fans, pep club and cheerleaders supported the team both at home and away. Shady Oaks was the jiving place to go after a game. They even came back from away games just to go to Shady Oaks. Busloads and carloads of people drove out to their favorite after-game spot. It was another place for the cheerleaders to show off their big mum corsages. All the followers feasted on humongous platters of onion rings, a famous Shady Oaks speciality.

Their business continued to grow with Ilene in the kitchen and BJ tending bar. Ron waited on tables when he was home from the University of Oklahoma. Several full-time and part-time waitresses were employed. The gas pumps vanished in 1960, as the Cafe had become a very popular restaurant.

Ron, a major in marketing and advertising, designed the artwork for the new look. After the fireplace was added at the Cafe, this ad was created for the "Marshalltown Briefs" in the TR:

"Where the oak leaves have fallen, you will find a well-marbled, personally selected USDA Choice Top Sirloin steak. It has been excellently prepared to a tender succulence. It is served with oven fresh French bread, our crisp tossed salad with homemade Roquefort, Garlic, French or 1000 Island dressing, a giant baked potato or French fries and choice of beverage.

"Also, enjoy our favorite cocktail, the 'Dreamy Flicker' and wispy aroma of our Old English fireplace, which combined creates an atmosphere of complete lounging enjoyment."

After college, Ron served in the Army. When he returned home from the service in 1964, Ron and his former wife, Lola (Rasmussen), became actively engaged in the day-to-day operation of the restaurant. After a trial period, he decided to go into advertising; and they moved to Denver, Colorado.

BJ and Ilene continued to run the Cafe until they were divorced in 1967, and their country home was sold to Ron and Shirley Settle. Ilene moved to Denver to work with Ron in the retail clothing and shoe stores he opened in Larimer Square. Ilene and Ron Chalfant both currently live in Dallas, Texas.

When we moved here, the "Cafe" was in its prime. Cars lined the road on Friday and Saturday nights. It was a neighborhood gathering place. Teachers and business men from LeGrand and Marshalltown frequented the unique home-owned bar and diner. Hospital staff members often held their annual Christmas parties at Shady Oaks. Nurses and doctors scheduled different nights. The busy holiday season required making reservations well in advance. We continue to receive a few long distance calls inquiring about serving hours.

The Cafe was in the midst of a friendly, farming community. It was a place where good friends, both new and old, met and exchanged interesting conversations while sharing great food. Female customers were warmly called "Hon" by BJ, the maitre d'. He exchanged warm greetings with both regular and occasional customers. It was always a special part of dining at Shady Oaks when BJ stopped at your table.

When Mark and Chris Rubenbauer shared some of their memorable moments at the Cafe, it brought smiles and a few chuckles. Many of the young, farm couples enjoyed meeting and visiting at BJ's on Saturday night. It was hard to break up their fun, and they were so close to home.

BJ attempted to give them a friendly hint that he was tired, ready to close, tidy up and go home to bed. Perhaps he got a little angry, like a cat with a puffed-up tail, as he pushed the noisy vacuum cleaner back and forth.

Now, the Rubenbauers look back on the "Good Old Days" and know that BJ loved his young clientele.

The smells that drifted from the Cafe were always tantalizing, especially from the steak and delicious onion rings. A large platter of the crispy, brown delicacies were almost a meal in itself.

I recall the large beverage trucks delivering soda and beer a couple of times a week. BJ had to be at the Cafe early on those mornings. The weekend usually drew larger, lingering crowds. There was much to be done after the last guest left. In the summertime, through my open bedroom window, I could hear the crashing of bottles being thrown out the back door of the Cafe. BJ's voice was distinctly heard above the din of washing dishes and the back door opening and closing as they carried out the garbage. I often laid awake until I heard their cars start and BJ yell good night to each one by name.

In the winter, I was often awakened by the cars starting, motors roaring to keep them going, letting them run 20 minutes or more to warm up and finally their headlights on the ceiling of my bedroom. On cold nights, they said their good nights by honking horns. It was a welcome sound. Strange as it may seem, I miss the activity.

I remember being at the Cafe on BJ's last New Year's Eve in 1982. BJ and Rosie (Kamper) Rutherford were great hosts. The celebration was complete with caps, horns, confetti, noise makers, toasts and clinking glasses. The festivities and good cheer made it hard to believe it was the end of an era. The Cafe was called different names by different folks. It was referred to as a steak house, roadhouse, supper club, night club or lounge. To all, it was a place where friends met friends. BJ retired in May of 1983 after 36 years of successfully operating Shady Oaks Cafe.

This thank you from Bryant Rutherford appeared in the TR: "I would personally like to thank all the loyal customers that have visited my restaurant over the past 36 years. Shady Oaks has become a landmark. I have been told many times by people that have left Marshalltown, they would make it a point to visit us, whenever they were in the area.

"I wish the new owners, Gordon Johnson and Craig Buffington, the Best of Luck."

According to Gordie Johnson, "Eating at Shady Oaks in the 1950s was a special treat." He remembers ordering "polk chops" (as he called them then). The small bottles of Coke were just his size, and he thought his dad looked so funny drinking from one. Gordie, local restaurateur, began his career in 1958 when his father opened Cecil's Cafe at the intersection of Highways 14 and 30. He took over the management of Cecil's in 1980, and it is still in the same location.

Not many people get to fulfill a dream, but Gordie did. In May of 1983, Gordie and a friend, Craig Buffington, purchased Shady Oaks Cafe. They enjoyed welcoming people back to the restaurant. The menu remained pretty much the same, and they were open at noon and night. A small bridge between Shady Oaks and Marshalltown was replaced during the Summer and Fall of 1984. The road was closed for six months making accessibility difficult. Unfortunately, times were bad, and Gordie and Craig had to close the Cafe in January of 1985. Even though the Cafe was reopened for only a short time, Gordie has great memories of bringing it back to life one more time.

Rainbow Arch Bridge was closed for use in 1987, and a new bridge reopened Shady Oaks Road in the Fall of 1989. During this time, the Cafe (under new ownership) was seized by the U.S. Marshall for tax evasion. Once again, weeds grew as the Cafe sat vacant until Larry Brown purchased the property in the Spring of 1991.

Sadly enough, BJ died on May 25, 1991. We lost a good neighbor. The Cafe and its happenings are now legendary. I lament the loss.

The recipe for the famous Shady Oaks Onion Rings is not lost. On occasion, Ilene and Ron Chalfant in Dallas, Texas, prepare the delicacy. While BJ was able, he went to Gary Rutherford's (nephew) home and shared his cooking secrets with Louise and Jana, Gary's wife and daughter.

What magic did BJ possess? Many folks still talk about the great food and good times they shared within the Cafe's four walls. The Rutherfords created an aura of grandeur and made the simplest cuisine great. Culinary mastery and hard work paid off.

Living so close, I often wondered if the spirit within would ever live again as the Cafe's future was in limbo for some time. I pictured the structure as a coffee house, tearoom, antique shop or tavern of distinction as it was built with visions, perseverance and love.

Reminiscences of former Cafe employees are included in the following paragraphs.

Bernice (Wolken) Stonewall graduated from high school at 16 and helped her folks, Dale and Elsa Wolken, on their farm in the Shady Oaks community. BJ and Ilene went to her parents' home to ask Bernice to help them at the newly remodeled Cafe. She had been out of school about three years; and although shy, she accepted her first job away from home. From 1950 to 1957, Bernice worked evenings in the dining room, waitressing, making coffee and sometimes helping with the dishwashing.

According to Bernice: "I had lots of respect for Bryant, Ilene and Ron. Ron was still in school and enjoyed helping his Mom in the kitchen. They were fun to work for. Ilene cooked, and Bryant waited tables and ran the cash register. They were fast, hard workers - a great team! Bryant ran a tight ship and had good control over the customers.

"Shady Oaks was noted for very fine food. The Rutherfords purchased excellent meats. They precooked chicken, baked potatoes, peeled shrimp, and made their own French fries and battered onion rings. Ilene prepared her own secret salad dressings."

While Bernice worked there, the hours were from 5:00 p.m. until 1:00 a.m. Monday, Wednesday through Saturday and Sunday from 12:00 noon to 1:00 a.m. The Cafe was closed on Tuesdays. She worked from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. on week nights and from 6:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. on Saturdays and holidays. On week nights, she drove her dad's car to work; but on the late nights, she was brought to work, and Bryant drove her home to insure her safety. She lived with her folks on a farm about five miles away.

The greater part of the clientele were business people from Marshalltown. When Bernice went in establishments in town, she was often surprised to see someone she had waited on the night before. People from LeGrand, Gilman, Dunbar, Ferguson, Dillon and nearby farms also frequented the Cafe,

along with travelers from Shady Oaks Cabin Camp and the nearby motel.

The hardest part of her job was working holidays and missing out on the Wolken family get-togethers. However, the Cafe was usually closed for vacation during the month of February.

Bernice was working there when the new front was added. The original knotty-pine walls were painted gray, and red carpet and drapes were installed. Some of Ron's taxidermy work was displayed on the walls giving the Cafe a woodsy, outdoor look.

Saturdays were usually extremely busy. Bernice recalled, "Edith Rouse, a nice lady from LeGrand, washed dishes on Saturday nights. After work, we were all treated to a big, delicious meal. Usually a couple of patrolmen joined us for this late-night feast."

This all seems a long time ago to Bernice. As she reflected about her first job at Shady Oaks and the way times were, she commented, "I never had to look for a job, as people always asked me to work for them." Two doctors wanted to train her to be a lab technician, which now requires schooling; and the produce, where her folks sold eggs, also wanted to hire her. This certainly reflects how drastically the job market has changed for young folks.

Bernice left Shady Oaks when she was offered an office job in the Circulation Department at the Times-Republican. She felt it was time to make a change. Today, approximately 40 years later, she is married to Dale Stonewall and lives in Cedar Rapids.

Doris Gummert married Darrell Greenwood on June 18, 1950. Their first home, as newlyweds, was a boxcar trailer just south of Shady Oaks. It was parked on the west side of the old Lincoln Highway. They paid \$35 a month rent and had to carry water from the Trowbridge place on the east side of the highway.

One evening Doris walked up the road to the Cafe and asked the Rutherfords if they needed any help on the weekends. She was immediately hired to work on Saturday nights for one dollar an hour. Through the week, she worked at Fishers.

Darrell helped wash dishes on especially busy nights. Bryant and Doris worked the dining room, and Ilene did all the cooking. Doris noted, "On a good night, tips would be from \$25 to \$30."

The house specialty was, "Chicken in the Basket" which included three pieces of chicken, French fries, tossed salad, bread and butter. They sold hundreds of the special. The chicken was fried in deep-iron skillets. Around 7:30 to 8:00 p.m., extra chicken was browned and put in the oven to be served quickly when things got busy later in the evening.

Shady Oaks was one of the first restaurants to make their own onion rings. After preparation, they were put on large, silver trays and set aside in a cool room just off the kitchen. They were fried just before serving them to the customers.

No liquor was served, but customers brought their booze in brown sacks. The Cafe offered sweet and sour set-ups. A juke box in the dining room provided music for dancing, and this went on until 1:00 a.m. According to Doris, "Some of the biggest names in Marshalltown came out to dine and dance the night away."

One night Bryant had heard the song, "Good-night Irene" one too many times. He unplugged the juke box, and it wasn't played for quite awhile.

In 1995, Doris (now Smith) shared, "I enjoyed working at Shady Oaks, as I got to see so many people. Usually at closing time, there would be some chicken left; and we all enjoyed eating it. I learned to love garlic dressing, but I could never find out how it was made. Bryant and Ilene were wonderful to work for. Ilene had Southern charm and know-how in the kitchen. Bryant knew the business end and how to handle the crowds of people."

For several years, Karen (Gummert) Campbell worked as a waitress and bartender at the Cafe. This "quality time" experience added much to her personal growth.

To the "regulars" who frequented the Cafe for great food, hospitality and friendship, it was like a second home. These people also became Karen's family, as they cared about the happenings in each others' lives. Both good and bad times were shared. Karen felt a sense of warmth and belonging. This atmosphere kept BJ going and aiming to please.

Holidays at the Cafe were exciting, and they left her with very special memories. Decorations were important. Halloween was like a big costume party. The best part was when BJ went out the back door and came in

the front door attired in costume and full mask. He said very little to anyone and kept the curious crowd guessing as long as he could. BJ's ruse was a success. It was fun for everyone.

Many parties were scheduled during the Christmas holiday season. It started right after Thanksgiving. This brought in both old and new patrons who were all treated royally. They were kept busy through New Year's Eve. All of the regulars, and their friends, rang in the New Year together.

The people she worked with were, and still are, some of her best friends. It was never an effort to go to work. She misses Shady Oaks for both the great food (mouth-watering steaks and homemade onion rings) and the people who shared in that part of her life. It was her home away from home.

Throughout the late-1940s and 1950s, the Cafe became a regular dining spot for Bob Groff's family and friends. Often they had to wait in line for the fried chicken special. Bob was a Borden milkman, and the Cafe was on his route. "When I delivered milk and ice cream, I was always impressed with the Cafe's spotless kitchen; it was the cleanest on my route" said Groff.

In the early 1970s, E. J. Stupp was working in an auto machine shop in Marshalltown. A call came in one morning asking if the establishment had a cleaning tank. They did and the caller said he would stop in later. Around noon, E. J. recognized the voice asking him how he was doing. The customer said he had some burners in his pickup that needed cleaning.

As E. J. walked out to the truck, he wondered what kind of burners this determined little guy wanted cleaned. The answer was soon clear when he saw the cast-iron burners and grates from a large oven or stove. They both unloaded the parts and went back into the shop to fill out the work order. E. J. asked his client's name and telephone number.

A smile spread across the man's face; and with a gleam in his eye, he slowly said, "My name is BJ Rutherford (the FORD quietly fading away), and you can reach me at Shady Oaks, I'm always there." Brimming with energy, which increased his stature, BJ explained that every year the Cafe was closed for several weeks to take care of such chores. Rutherford's pride in his operation was as evident as the way he said his name.

E. J. Stupp says, "This small, personable fellow with steel gray hair and wire-rimmed glasses will always stay in my mind. He's the kind of man this old world could use more of today."

According to Larry Brown, the defunct Shady Oaks Cafe will retire as a residence. May its walls again ring with good times. Nature and property recycle. What goes around comes around.

I feel a deep sense of loss as I look at the back door of the Cafe today. A certain eeriness surrounds the cold, empty shell that was once filled with warmth, delicious foods and friends. It stands as a locked memory box.

Act Two, Scene Two Shady Oaks Cabin Camp and Lodge

The Smiths

The years of the Fireside Chats were history, and everyone wondered how President Truman, the "little man from Missouri," would solve the perplexing problems of the day. Truman did choose to drop the atomic bomb on Japan. World War II was over on August 14, 1945, and the Smiths' deed to Shady Oaks was executed on August 17, 1945. Both an ending and beginning had transpired.

Scene Two began with a change in command at Shady Oaks Cabin Camp. Les Norton stepped aside after more than 20 years of fulfilling his dreams. William ("Wm.") and Jennie M. Smith became the owners/operators of the Cabin Camp for the next five years.

During the 1930s, the Smiths lived on May Street in Marshalltown. Wm. first worked at Gra-Iron Foundry Corporation as a moulder and was employed at Fisher Governor for a short time preceding their Shady Oaks' years.

Jennie was a licensed cosmetologist and had a beauty shop in the north bedroom of the original Shady Oaks' office/residence. This accounts for the water pipes in the room's large walk-in closet. Later on, her shop was in the Stoddard Hotel on Third Avenue.

The house had two front doors to the glassed-in porch. Through the south door, you entered a partitioned hall that went directly back to the Smiths' kitchen.

Sometimes, during the busy season, Wm. and Jennie rented out the front rooms to tourists. This explains the locks on the doors of the bedrooms and adjoining walk-through closet. Some people preferred the "tourist home" type of lodging. In the evenings, they could chat with visitors on the enclosed front porch. One would wonder if the little lodge welcomed, or groaned, when hosting its multitude of guests. It survived and received some tender loving care in 1994.

During their stay, the Smiths took the fence down around the park. A green neon "Office" sign replaced the previous wooden sign above the office doorway. They also modernized Cabins #1 through #8 and #13, #14 and #15. Previously, overnight guests used the restroom and shower facilities in the Log Cabin. Dollhouse and Dreamland were always modern, as well as Cabins #9 through #12. The Log Cabin also housed the laundry, which consisted of a couple of Maytag washers and square rinse tubs.

It turned out to be busy years for the Smiths, as an influx of tourists resumed after the war. Once again, America was on the move. By 1948, there were 17 cottages listed in the Cabin Camp Directory. They rented for \$4 and \$5 per night. In addition, both the house (tourist rooms) and the trailer in Sleepy Hollow were noted on registration cards. A box of cards was found amongst the cobwebs in the attic of the original office/home. Some had been initialed by the desk clerk on duty.

On a below-zero February evening in 1995, I delighted in scanning the cards from the years 1946, 1947 and 1948. Forty-five states were represented in the guest registrations; Arkansas, Mississippi and New Hampshire were missing from these three years. Tourists from Chicago and the entire State of Illinois outranked all the rest; each day, two or more were registered. California and New York vied for second place. States along the Lincoln Highway were usually represented daily.

Many Americans with titles were on the road. Colonels, Captains, Navy Commanders, Majors, Lieutenant Colonels, Chaplains and Doctors with addresses such as Lowery Field (Colorado), Mitchell Field (New York), Walter Reed General Hospital, Letterman General Hospital, U.S. Naval Hospital (Seattle), Navy Department, U.S.S. Chicago and Washington D.C., stayed here.

On one registration card, "Just Married" was written below the names of Mr. and Mrs. McGehee of Marshalltown. Looking in the telephone directory, I chose a McGehee to call. Wilma McGehee answered, and I told her about the registration card. Wilma and Robert McGehee were married on Sunday, May 26, 1946, in a small afternoon ceremony at the Christian Church. Due to gas rationing, they attended a high school baseball game that afternoon and spent their honeymoon at Shady Oaks.

Wilma shared a humorous aspect of the "Big Day" in our phone conversation, "Robert was so anxious to get in the cabin, that he forgot to put the car's brake on. The car rolled across the drive into an outhouse, setting it askew. However, the park operator wasn't too mad as he realized we were on our honeymoon."

A few days later I received a note from Wilma, "Your call, Mary, made my day. It brought back so many memories. Robert and I made it 45 years and one week together loving every minute."

Not only Robert and Wilma, but folks from Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Hawaii, Maui, Havana (Cuba) and Panama discovered this Marshall County oasis and honeymoon haven.

The call to Wilma was so much fun that I decided to choose another card with "Just Married" written on it. It was just as rewarding. I dialed information for Charles M. Staples of Jewell and called the number. Sweet success! I asked the man that answered if he recalled staying at Shady Oaks in May of 1946. He said, "I'll be! I don't believe it! That's when we were married."

Charles M. Staples (25) and Frances L. Peterson (18) were married at the Bethesda Lutheran Church in Jewell. After the reception, they left on their honeymoon to Indiana and spent the night of May 27, 1946 at Shady Oaks Cabin Camp.

Several days later after my call, the following note arrived from Frances: "It was a neat, clean and friendly camp. It was the first time I stayed in a cabin, went out of state and stayed away from home that long; and I was very homesick."

The Staples have lived and worked in Jewell all of their married life. They have

three daughters and two sons (another son was lost in a car accident), seven grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Charles and Frances hope to visit Shady Oaks again soon.

I found a registration card for Bradley Miles of Dallas Center who registered on June 15, 1946. "Mr. and Mrs." was penciled in above his name. When I called the Miles, I learned that they were another newly married couple who stayed in Dreamland nearly 50 years ago. Almost a "golden circle" of time has passed for Shady Oaks and these honeymooners of the 1940s.

Janice Anderson of Minburn graduated from Iowa State College on the 14th of June. Since the Methodist Church in Minburn was destroyed by fire the year before, the Collegiate Methodist Church in Ames was chosen for their wedding making it possible for college friends to attend.

Once again, a rewarding note arrived in the mail. Brad wrote, "Jan and I spent one night of our honeymoon at Shady Oaks. Jan

graduated from college the day before, and I was beginning a 44-year tenure in farming near Dallas Center." The Miles have four married daughters, four son-in-laws, eight grandsons and one granddaughter.

"Shady Oaks Cabin Camp of 1946 reflected an 'easier going' and more relaxed atmosphere than we experience today. Priorities and values were far, far different — and marriage was undertaken with real commitment. The great Depression was ending, but it had left an indelible mark on all of us — as had the second great world conflict.

"After leaving Shady Oaks, we traveled to the Wisconsin Dells for the balance of our honeymoon. The cottage at the Dells was considerably more primitive than the one at Shady Oaks. It is our hope to visit Shady Oaks and bring our fifth-wheel camper, when the weather moderates."

Marvin Simonson and wife stayed in Dreamland at Shady Oaks on June 24, 1946. The "Just Married" couple from Stratford, Iowa, were on their way home from



Just Married!

Genre of Shady Oaks: Act Two

Minnesota. Marvin's first wife died in 1978, and he is remarried. The Simonsons of Stratford hope to pay a visit to Shady Oaks and the Big Treehouse. It is always my pleasure to reach a former guest of nearly fifty years ago.

Every response has brought joy and a renewed faith in people. It's a living history of a generation. May these paragraphs speak for the individuals themselves.

During a 1995 Treehouse visit, Dick and Janet Wagoner of Garwin surprised me by sharing that they had spent their wedding night in a little cabin at Shady Oaks in 1947. The couple was married at the LeGrand Friends Church. Although their finances and troublesome 1936 Oldsmobile only allowed them to travel a few miles for their honeymoon, their memories are priceless.

While Janet was in high school, she stayed with Harry and Gertrude Kaisand and their four children on the first farm north of Shady Oaks. Mischievous Harry learned of their wedding plans and gained permission from the Smiths to enter their reserved cabin before they arrived. The prankster carefully placed cockleburs on top of the bed sheets. Although the couple was surprised, it took only moments to realize that Harry had been there.

Another registration card aroused my curiosity, three "Misses" from the Cotton Exchange Building in Dallas, Texas, stayed in Cabin #10 on September 20, 1947. I'm sure these ladies will remain incognito forever.

The Nortons were told that the Smiths were not as compassionate with their guests and business partners as were the previous owners. As a couple, the Smiths were cordial and businesslike, but aloof. They never sought close friends, just acquaintances. Wm. looked like a southern gentleman and took tremendous pride in sporting a big, new car every year.

In 1948, Ray and Irene Glynn arrived in Marshalltown during an August heat wave. Ray had accepted a teaching position in the Marshalltown School system, and they did not have a place to live. They spent a restless first night at the Tallcorn Hotel, which did not have air conditioning. Upon suggestion, they rented a cabin at Shady Oaks and found it delightfully cool and restful. Irene still remembers the warm, summer evenings with the soft breeze blowing the curtains of the small cottage.

Two years after young Donna Vanatta worked at Shady Oaks Cafe she married Ernie Hoge of LeGrand in 1949. They spent the second night of their marriage in one of the little cabins. Donna remembers, "The weather was hot, and the cabin was small (without air conditioning), but it was a very nice 'Honeymoon Cottage' and got our 36-year marriage off to a good start."

I also found some of the Smiths' cancelled checks for Iowa Electric Light and Power. In May, their check for electricity was \$109.65; in July, their check was for \$212.39. It's evident that warmer weather increased the amount of water pumped for bathing and washing linens for the cabins.

Other checks included the monthly estimated tax deposit of \$30 for the IRS; \$52.50 for the American Motel Association membership; \$75 to insure the cabins through C. A. Ames in the Kresge Building; and supplies from Sims Print Shop, Ward Lumber, Sears Roebuck and Co., Abbott and Son and George Weyer.

The Smiths bid adieu to Shady Oaks in 1950. They moved to the Evans Hotel and managed both the Hotel and the Bundy Apartments for the next 15 years. Wm. preceded Jennie in death in 1965.

These crumpled notes were found with registration cards and cancelled checks. The first one was dated September 16, 1947: "Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith, We'll never forget staying at Shady Oaks. My husband enjoyed reminiscing with friends he never expected to see again. Neither of us had ever been to Iowa before. Our stay at Shady Oaks Cabin Camp was like the honeymoon we had to forsake. It was so cool and peaceful. Staying in Dreamland will be remembered. The E. A. Macklows, D.C."

This note was addressed to Shady Oaks Auto Camp and the date was missing: "Dear Smiths, My wife and I spent two nights at Shady Oaks. In haste, I left my razor, shaving cream and shoe polish, in a case on the ledge in Cabin #8. The contents aren't important, but I would like the leather case returned as it was a present from my mother.

"Allow a week and send only the bag C.O.D. Our stay was quite pleasant. You have my home address. Yours truly, George Bailey, Los Angeles, California."

*"The real voyage of discovery consists
not in seeking new landscapes
but in having new eyes."
— Marcel Proust*

*Travelers from near and far stopped in,
As spring and summer rolled around;
To stay a night, or two, or three,
At Shady Oaks Cabin Campground.*

*From each green spring till gold in fall,
Shade is a blessing from the leaves;
Branches shelter from high above,
All folks staying beneath the trees.*

**Act Two, Scene Three
Shady Oaks Cabin Camp Transition**

The Williamsons

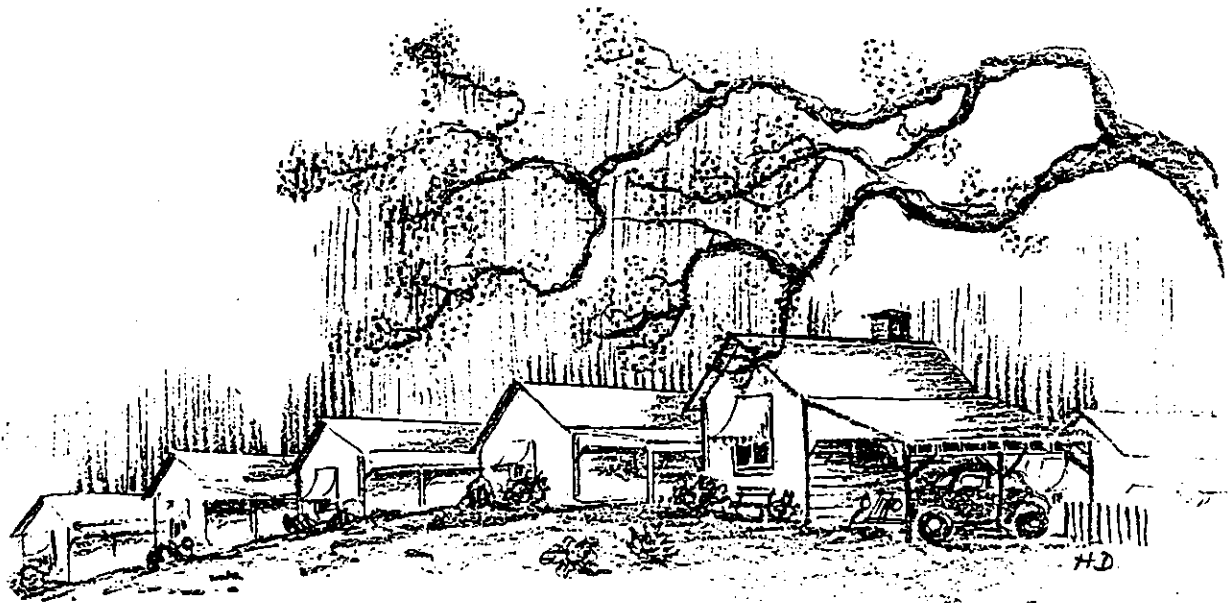
Scene Three portrays a decade of change. During these years, Dwight D. Eisenhower (a five-star general) became President, the

Korean War ended, school desegregation began and Hawaii and Alaska became states. Shady Oaks would undergo a facelift. Mobile homes were destined to replace the waning popularity of cabin camps.

*"Make no mistakes in a hurry,
but alas any decision is better than none."
— Dwight D. Eisenhower*

This scene found Don and Madrine Williamson at the helm. They came as a foursome and left as a family of five.

In the Fall of 1992, the Williamsons of Cathedral City, California, stopped by to visit their home during the 1950s. Memories of happy family gatherings at Shady Oaks overflowed. They paid \$5,000 for the Cabin Camp and had \$30 left on which to live. Making do was a sign of the times. Madrine said, "Soon after we moved, we knocked out all the partitions the Smiths' had installed in the home." The tourist home idea was quickly abolished to make room for their family.



The First Five Cabins at Shady Oaks

When the Williamsons moved to Shady Oaks in March of 1950, their son Michael was fourteen and their daughter Bonnie was five years old. Their huge piano was put in Jennie's Beauty Shop and became Bonnie's bedroom.

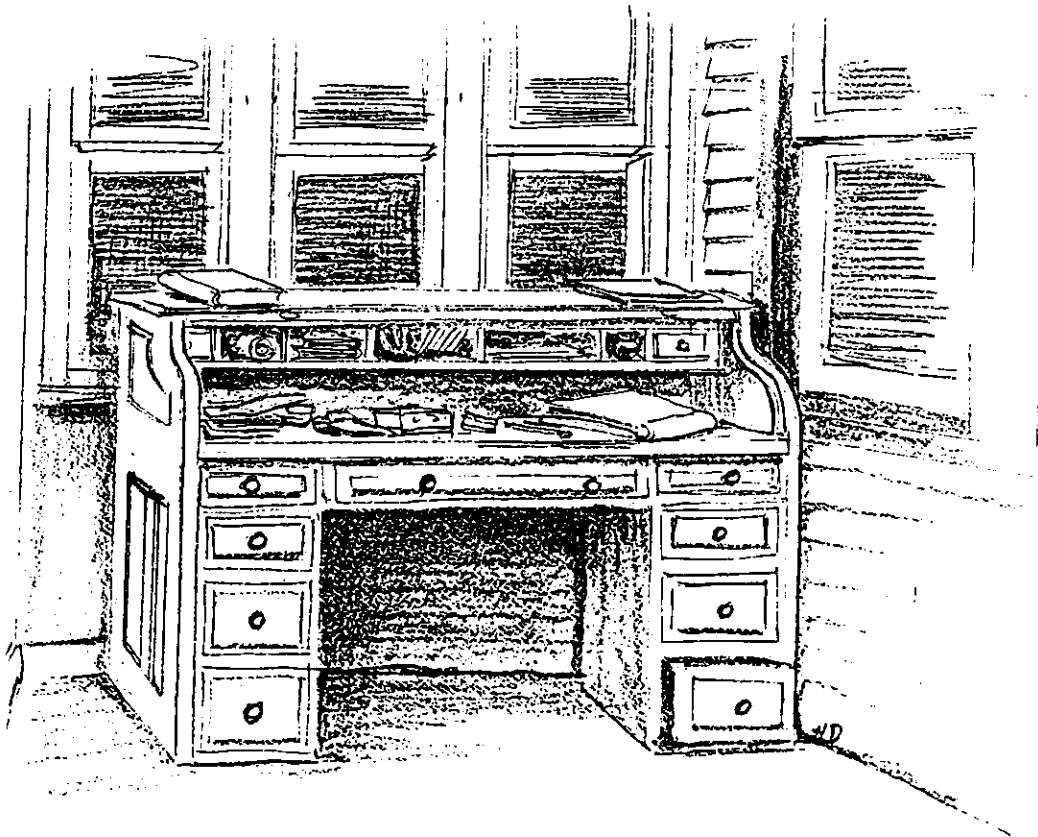
Madrine wrote, "Our youngest, John, was born there (Shady Oaks) in 1953. He was an afterthought, not really a thought. He was a joy to the whole family." Until then, the Williamsons didn't own a camera. After that, they took lots of pictures.

It was difficult to look after the baby and care for the cabins. When the Williamsons' cleaned, they took John with them from cabin to cabin. It was easier to take him along as a baby than when he was two and three years. John found the red-colored O'Cedar furniture polish attractive. At one time, he attempted to drink it. When he was four years old, he took their lawnmower apart. Madrine said, "We never found all the parts." He was a good little worker and could rake leaves as well as most adults. Don and Madrine don't believe

they could have managed without the help of their children.

Don used the same large, roll-top desk on the glassed-in porch for guest registration. It was his office. During the tourist season, the endless flow of linens (sheets and towels) for the cabins were kept neatly stacked for daily replenishing, across the drive in the Log Cabin's storage area. The Williamsons took great pride in their cabins. The daily washing and ironing during the busy season must have been a monumental task for a family operation. They weren't concerned about showing off their home, as their pride was devoted to the appearance of the cabins.

The travel accommodations were open from early spring through late fall. The first year they anxiously opened during a warm prelude to spring. Old man winter abruptly returned one night; and to their chagrin, everything froze up. The pipes in the cabins expanded, and the sinks pushed up away from the floor and tipped over. It was an expensive lesson. Caution prevailed the ensuing year.



Les Norton's Roll Top Desk

Madrine described the cabins' interiors. The curtains were made of various small, patterned cotton prints. The short curtains hung on a rod and had to be pulled shut. The woman's touch was evident. This was a plus because quite often it was the woman who checked out the cabin for cleanliness, plumbing and the softness of the pillows. Madrine could understand their concerns. The "Congoleum" flooring looked like either hardwood, or knotty pine; brand names like this made a statement of their own. The cabins now had woodgrained drywall on their walls and ceilings.

Each cabin was outfitted with a gas wall-heater about four feet tall that stood in a corner. A wide ledge held a cosmetic bag, or personal items. Velvety chenille bedspreads covered the double beds and perhaps a rag rug added a cozy touch. A mirror and pull chain light hung above the ledge with a chair, or bench, below.

The larger cabins had their own showers. The three small cabins down the back sidewalk were known as over-nighters; they were furnished with a double bed and had a half-bath (toilet and sink). Two of the cabins in the center row were doubles. The original iron beds had very high backs. To enhance the decor, Don and Madrine switched the foot for the head board; the cut-off heads were put at the foot.

Five iron cots were available to make up for extra beds at a cost of \$1 each. Madrine recalls that they were very heavy to carry. When the Camp was filled up, they took in at least \$180 per night. On one occasion, they rented cabins to two black ball teams.

With the new Highway 30, the Rutherfords and Williamsons collaborated and invested in a big neon sign. They put it up at the intersection of the new and old Highway 30s, on the Skinner place where the Rutherfords were living.

Madrine wrote of several experiences with rentals. "One time a 'bunch' rented several cabins. They were building corn cribs in Marshalltown. They had mean kids who fought and cussed anyone and everyone." As you have guessed, they were evicted. Many nice guests made up for the troublesome ones.

Three months after the Williamsons started operating the Cabin Camp, Wayne and

Betty (Holubar) Fouts of State Center were married on June 4, 1950 at the Little Brown Church in Nashua. Although they didn't plan a honeymoon, they spent their wedding night at Shady Oaks.

The Williamsons recall a celebrity that stayed at Shady Oaks several times a year. This was Guy Mark Gillette from Cherokee; he was a popular United States Senator. Madrine remembers the Gillettes as very nice, down-to-earth people.

Gillette, a Democrat, was from the 46th Senatorial District which included Cherokee, Ida and Plymouth Counties. On the death of Louis Murphy in 1936, Gillette was elected to fill the vacancy. He served until 1945 and again from 1949 to 1955.

For five years (1952-1956), the whole place was rented for the Lee family reunion over Labor Day weekend. They arrived in carloads, 50 people or more total, from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Nebraska. Marshalltown was a mid-point location for the families from east and west to meet. Madrine said, "Our family actually looked forward to their arrival."

Evelyn (Mrs. Ralph) Duggan of Olympia Fields, Illinois, sent a brief history of the staunch Norwegian Lee family consisting of five brothers and five sisters and their offspring. According to their 1952 minutes (per Lucille Lee, secretary), "Shady Oaks Cabin Camp was the nicest place we ever had a reunion."

In 1994, Ardeth Halverson of Fenton, Iowa, shared her special memories on the Lee family reunions: "Snipe hunting was a traditional trick played on first timers at the reunions. Each was given a sack in which to catch the elusive snipe. One little girl screamed with delight when she saw her sack moving. 'I've caught a snipe!' she repeated over and over. Needless-to-say, we were all excited. Upon inspection, a playful kitten jumped out."

Traditionally, the Iowa-Nebraska Lees played baseball against the Illinois-Indiana relatives. The men also enjoyed fishing and horseshoes. Evening activities included watching movies and slides of previous reunions and travels, playing bingo, singing and visiting around the fireplace and sharing refreshments before bedtime.

Suspicious rentals made the Williamsons adept observers of license plates. The term "quickie rental" quickly labeled a camp with a bad reputation. They checked the cabins shortly after the people left. If anything was missing such as towels, blankets or bedspreads, Don pursued them down the road. If they got away, license numbers made it easy to notify the Sheriff to track them down. We requested that the items be returned, and they usually were. Don said, "We couldn't afford to replace those things that often."

Many tourists stopped at Shady Oaks from the Chicago area, as it was a good day's drive at that time. Most were headed for Yellowstone National Park. Madrine wrote, "We dreamed of going there ourselves and finally made it in 1986."

Madrine's dad and Don built the stone fireplace back of their home near the road and the picnic tables. The Williamsons' large family gathered at Shady Oaks almost every Sunday.

The cabin camp business continued to be good until the motel boom exploded on new Highway 30. Shortly after, a mobile home park situated in the trees became more than just a dream. They decided it might go well and began to develop it in earnest.

First, they sold 12 of the cabins to Pilgrim Heights, a church camp in Tama County. The original, identical five were left on the front row. Next, Don put in all the water pipes and patios for the spaces. It was perfect timing for them.

The Log Cabin (central building) with the huge hot water heater once housed the showers. As motels began to flourish and the seasonal cabins were replaced with mobile homes, the Log Cabin now housed both the laundry room and post office. The influx of permanent residents created a need for mail distribution.

As the mobile home park blossomed, Madrine found herself at home with a preschool child, two in high school and Don working in Marshalltown. She was constant host to the ladies in the eight-foot wide trailers, as they did not yet work away from home. The Williamsons toyed with the dream of moving to another state after her brother moved to Alaska. When opportunity knocked, they sold Shady Oaks and moved into Marshalltown in 1961. This move was followed by a visit to the

desert. They fell in love with the climate and made Cathedral City, California, their home.

In 1994, we were pleased to locate Cabins #7 and #8. Even though they are redwood in color, the numbers remain, along with their distinctive characteristics. Larry Hinegardner purchased them from Pilgrim Heights a long time ago. Cabin #8 differed from the rest, because it had both a front and back door and was the only one with twin beds. The beds remain with their springs standing in disarray against the wall. These cabins went with the land Hinegardner sold to the Sac and Fox Settlement in 1993.

Bonnie Williamson Growing Up at Shady Oaks Cabin Camp

Bonnie, the second child and only daughter of the Williamsons, was five years old when she and her family moved to Shady Oaks. She was the only student in her class at the nearby Rock Valley School. The teacher allowed her to take first and second grades in one year. The country school closed that spring, and Bonnie started third grade in LeGrand the next fall. She was 16, the youngest in her class, when she graduated from LeGrand High School.

Bonnie wrote, "I loved Shady Oaks, and I had one of the happiest childhoods anyone could ask for. My parents were the best; and though far from rich, I can't remember being without anything I wanted. My Mom and Dad worked very hard to make it financially at Shady Oaks.

"Summers, we were tied down to the cabins; and winters, my dad worked full-time, for several years, at Rhinehart Moving Company in Marshalltown. After my little brother started school, my Mom went back to nursing. Previous to that, she worked Saturday nights waitressing at Shady Oaks Cafe for Bryant and Ilene Rutherford, who were wonderful neighbors.

"Once we took a two-week vacation to visit my Mom's brother in Montana, and we took short trips to Detroit, Michigan, where my dad's two sisters lived. My dad owned either a Pontiac or Buick.

"John was born when I was nine years old. He was like a new toy to my older brother, Mike, and myself. We taught him all the tricks we could and regretted it later. I took care of

him during the summer when mother and daddy were cleaning the cabins. When we were filled up, it took most of the morning.

"When the cabins were ready, my mother would cook our favorite combination of breakfast and lunch. It consisted of eggs, toast (sometimes bacon) and iced tea. We always sat down together, as a family, to eat our meals.

"After lunch, my dad worked on the lawn. He was always mowing. Everyone remarked how nice the lawn always looked. Mike used the big lawn mower, and John did too when he was older.

"My grandpa McCubbin was sort of a carpenter. John was only three year's old when grandpa handed him a crowbar and let him swing at the walls. They had a great time taking out the walls to the kitchen and living room in our home.

"In 1953, my mother got a real fur coat; they were quite fashionable at the time. Mike and I took turns covering our heads with it, pretending to be a grizzly bear and chasing little John."

Bonnie will always remember the green neon "Office" sign, which came on daily at 5 p.m.; the Log Cabin, her favorite place to play house; and a slumber party for her twelfth birthday in Cabin #12, when seven or eight girlfriends stayed over night. Her mother came out only a few times to quiet the giggling girls so they wouldn't disturb the tourists. Cabin #12 was sold in 1957.

Bonnie will never forget their neighbors, Lyle and Ursula Johnson. The Johnsons lived in the newly remodeled Rock Valley Schoolhouse. They were wonderful people and faithful Quakers who picked up Mike and Bonnie every Sunday for Church in LeGrand.

Bonnie said, "Ursula was a delightful person and fabulous musician. She encouraged me to

sing and play the piano. No one could play church hymns like Ursula. I loved to visit their home and hear stories of their travels to real Eskimo villages in Alaska. When the Johnsons camped out, they always slept in their Nash automobile."

Ursula wanted Bonnie to experience camping. So she invited the Wright girls, who lived across the road, and Bonnie to go across the field to the old railroad bridge. Ursula and the girls cooked their dinner outside and slept in the Nash automobile. The trains were right on schedule, and they all waved at the engineers. Bonnie has never forgotten camping out or singing solos in church.

Bonnie wrote, "Shady Oaks was a great place to grow up. We used to spend a lot of time at the creeks, both the big one (Timber) and the little one east of our house. Along with my brother, Mike, and Ron Chalfant, Ilene Rutherford's son, we often caught frogs. Sometimes we put firecrackers in the frogs' mouths, lit the fuse and watched them fly."

In the winter, Bonnie and Mike went sledding and ice skating at the big creek or on Clem Thompson's pond. When she was very brave, she would walk over the arch of the old bridge (Rainbow Arch Bridge) and throw pebbles at passing cars; this, of course, was unknown to her parents.

According to Bonnie, "I feel really fortunate to have grown up at the time I did, as life wasn't nearly so complicated. I was surrounded by love and strong family ties."

**Fadeout and Curtain
End of Act Two**



A Shady Oaks Cabin Camp Registration Card from the 1940's and 1950's.

<i>Shady Oaks Cabin Camp</i> ROUTE 2, MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA		Date	Amt. Paid	Clerk
		Room or Cottage No.		
Guests not checking out by 12:00 Noon will be charged for another day. Guests staying over please notify the Office. Not responsible for injury or loss of any kind.				
Shady Oaks Cabin Camp ROUTE 2, MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA				
GUEST REGISTRATION				
NAME _____				
STREET _____				
CITY _____			STATE _____	
NOTICE TO GUESTS				
This property is privately owned and the management reserves the right to refuse service to anyone, and will not be responsible for accidents or injury to guests or for loss of money, jewelry or valuables of any kind.				
Please Pay In Advance				
Room or Cottage No.	No. in Party	Make of Car	License No.	State
Date	Rate	Clerk	Remarks	
FORM 342. THE SIME PRINT SHOP, NEWTON, IOWA. PRINTED IN U.S.A.				