

The Darlo and Irene Kollars life history tidbits
November, 1998 revised January, 2012

Currently Darlo and Irene have 10 children, 29 grandchildren, and 14 great-grandchildren living throughout the United States.

Irene Cecelia Kohles was born on November 22, 1923, 5 miles NE of Crofton, Nebraska where she lived for 5 years. The family of Paul and Julia Kohles then moved 1 1/2 miles SW of Crofton (currently Kevin Kohles's farm). Irene has one sister (Lorene), two step brothers (Lawrence and Albert) and one step sister Pauline. She attended St. Rose Catholic School and Crofton Public School and graduated from high school in 1941. Irene married Darlo Martin Kollars on October 26, 1942. She was an active member of the Altar Society of St. Rose of Lima Church along with serving on bazaar committee, several times as president. Irene was active also at the St. Rose grade school in volunteering her time. Bowling and golfing were just two activities Darlo and Irene enjoyed while living in Crofton. After most of the children were grown, Irene worked at Dr. Carlson's for 2-3 years and later as the City Clerk of Crofton for 5 1/2 years.

NOTE: Irene was born on Grandpa John Frey's birthday and Grandpa Frey and Grandma Frey's anniversary day.

Darlo Martin Kollars was born August 5, 1922, on the family farm less than 1 mile SE of Crofton, Nebraska (currently Guy and Bonnie Kohles's farm). Darlo had four brothers (Donald, Dalph, Trudo, & Orville) and four sisters (Gail, Glondale, Glenara, & Jackie). Darlo attended St. Rose Catholic School and Crofton Public until the 9th grade and had to quit because of migraines. Darlo and Irene were married October 26, 1942. Darlo was active in church and sporting activities in the Crofton area. He was active in both men's and couples bowling leagues serving as president for 2 years and captain for 17 years. During the summer, golf was his passion, serving as president of the Crofton golf club and participating in golf league at the Hartington Country Club. Darlo also honed his golf skills and placed in numerous golf tournaments in the area as well as in Arizona. Darlo won the Hartington Invitational golf tournament in 1988 and was 2nd three times the preceeding 20 years. St. Rose also benefited with Darlo holding offices in the 1st church council, trustee on the church and parish council, secretary of the Order of Foresters for 4 years and usher in the church for 30 years. He was a Crofton Public School, school board member for 6 years during this time. Darlo retired from farming in 1974 and then proceeded to work at Steffen's Mobil (now Steffen's Sinclair) for 10 years.

What follows is a rolling history as told by Darlo & Irene during numerous visits to Kearney during the summers of 1995 - 1997.

Darlo & Irene both went to St. Rose Catholic School and usually walked to and from. Darlo growing up just southeast of Crofton and Irene to the northeast. During those cold winter days, sometimes their dads would give them rides to school with the horse and wagon or sleigh.

D & I got to know each other mainly since Lawrence and Glondale were dating. Darlo remembers learning to dance in his dad's hay-mow (Guy Kohles's farm as of 2000) and Irene being there at the same time. D & I would dance together at wedding dances in surrounding towns that had a cover charge of a dime.

During his teenage years, Darlo managed the Crofton Roller Rink that was located at the Crofton city auditorium. Mom said Pops was an excellent skater, being able to skate backward and also dance to the music. The Crofton rink closed around 1940 and since Randolph operated the Crofton rink, Darlo moved to Randolph to manage that rink. He received \$25.00 per week in wages and remembers paying 2% social security tax and \$5.00 room rent per week. Irene and friends would sometimes travel to Randolph to skate and see Pops!

In the spring of 1941, Darlo moved back home to help farm and during the fall of that year, picked corn by hand for Joe Schumacher Jr., Pete Meyer, Stevens, & Hoffmeir. He could pick 125 to 130 bushels of corn per day and was paid .03 per bushel. That is roughly \$3.75 to 4.00 per day in wages! Darlo remembers working 6 weeks to have enough money to buy a suit and topcoat.

During the same time period, Irene worked on the family farm milking cows, cooking, gardening, and general work on the farm. After graduating from Crofton High School in 1941, Irene attended a Business College in Sioux City, Iowa. She stopped attending after a couple months. She did remember having to hitch hike from Sioux City to Crofton during that time.

Darlo and Irene were married at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 26, 1942, in the old St. Rose of Lima church that has since been razed. Best man was Earl Guenther (friend) and bridesmaid was Lorene Kohles (sister). A reception followed at the home of Paul & Julia Kohles (currently Kevin Kohles's home as of 2000). The dinner was cooked by a number of friends and relatives including Elizabeth (Pete) Kohles. A wedding dance followed at the Crofton City Auditorium with the band Art Ridicle. The band charged \$25.00 for the night. A honeymoon was taken to Bellevue, Nebraska, and D & I rode there with Lawrence and Glondale Kohles.

D & I first car was a 1928 Model A Ford Coupe with a rumble seat and it was purchased in 1942.

After returning from the honeymoon, D & I lived with Irene's parents, Paul & Julia. Darlo farmed with Paul in 1943 and was paid \$100 per month. D & I had their bedroom right off the kitchen while Paul & Julia slept upstairs. During 1943

a 1937 Ford V8 was purchased. Darlo's first tractor was a used Farmall Regular with steel wheels that cost \$500. Darlo remembers riding with a trucker down to Omaha to purchase rubber tires for the tractor.

In 1944, besides doing field work, Darlo milked cows and had 150 pigs to fatten before selling. Darlo didn't raising pigs and so he did not always have pigs on the farm.

Collin was born February 9, 1944, and originally had his named spelled Colin, but it was later changed! Dr. Ray McNamara was the family doctor and delivered all the children (except for June where a midwife assisted) at the farm house, and Todd was born at Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton, SD.

In 1944 also, Darlo traveled to Kansas for a physical before being enlisted in the army. Darlo did have some luck though and failed the physical due to migraine headaches.

D & I moved to their farmhouse which was located 1 ½ miles south of the west edge of Crofton, at the end of February of 1945 and Gary was born March 5, 1945. The farmhouse, which consisted of a 16 x 16 kitchen, a living room, bedroom and upstairs, needed quite a bit of work. Also, consider the fact with two children under two, and no running water, no indoor plumbing (no toilet or bath for you youngsters) and no electricity!! Heat was provided by an old black cob and wood burning cook stove and oil burners for the living room.

This farm was 160 acres in size that consisted of pasture and cropland. The farm was rented from Irene's dad, Paul Kohles. In 1945, Darlo sharecropped the land with Paul which amounted to \$1500 per year for cropland and \$300 for the pasture and farm place. A hog shed was built around this time and added onto later in the years.

Dale was born on March 4, 1946, the same year a gas refrigerator was purchased. Corn, oats and alfalfa were the main crops.

In 1947, D & I purchased the farm with a \$500 down payment. The 160 acres were paid off within 4 years. Cost was \$55.00 per acre or \$8800.

Darlo and his brother Dalph Kollars purchased the areas first self-propelled combine in the spring of 1948. The combine was purchased for \$12500 off the black market, split between the two brothers. The two brothers went to South Sioux City, NE to a shack next to the railroad tracks to meet the salesman. The two wrote out checks to cover the cost of the combine and then went home to wait for the combine to be delivered. Darlo stated it was the worst 12 hours of his life as he waited to see if they would get anything for their money. It was delivered in pieces that night at 12:00 a.m. The oats head was the most time consuming to put together and there was little of any instructions. Darlo and

Dalph worked together in doing custom combining for neighbors in the Wausa, Bloomfield and Creighton areas until 1960. Darlo netted \$500 the first year, with the next year receiving \$200 a day (\$5.00 per acre at 40 acres per day) plus gas to combine milo. Dad said that the custom combining paid for the farm.

Also in 1948, a Ford was purchased brand new from Ken Schneider dealership in Yankton, South Dakota. It came with a mounted cultivator, scraper, plow, and mower and cost \$850.

Darlo and Irene used a Jeep between 1946 to 1948 to provide transportation along with power for the milking system. They milked around 8 to 10 head with this setup. Dad even said they disc the fields with the Jeep.

June was born June 10, 1948. During the fall of 1948, Charlie Thoene (brother-in-law) installed electric wire and outlets in the farmhouse and buildings and then there was light! Also late in '48 or early 1949, a bathroom was installed in the house and running water was finally available!

Vonda was born September 28, 1949, and had a 107 degree temperature within two days of being born and was taken to the hospital with pneumonia. Gary remembers Vonda as very quite and sensitive and that she had and still has that sheepish grin that she had as a child. (Vonda!)

Bought first electric refrigerator in 1949.

Thomas was born January 28, 1951. Bought a brand new Nash for \$2150 in 1951. Darlo built the cement block two-car garage that was just north of the farmhouse during the summer. An interesting side-note to the building on the cement garage as remembered by Gary, was that Dennis Bogner (son of Bruno & Olga) was invited over to watch Darlo build the garage. This was a big event since up until that point, Dennis always stayed in the house by doctors orders because of a heart condition. After being out to watch the building project, Dennis decided he could handle the outdoors and went on to have a family and local clothing business.

Irene purchased her first automatic washing machine in the early 50's.

The 160 acres, which includes the home place, was paid off in 1951 with money made from custom combining and a large profit made from the sale of feeder pigs from that year.

Patrick was born March 18, 1952. During the mid '50's the chicken coop was expanded to house more chickens for eggs that were sold by the case. Every April, 300 to 350 springers (baby chickens) were purchased and raised on the farm to be butchered in July. Mom's fried chicken meals were a favorite where everyone fought over the "crispies"!

A Ferguson was bought new in 1954. The Ford was traded in at this time.

In 1955 or 56, the farm dried out. Darlo worked for a contractor and helped build the Standard Gas stations in Crofton and Wausa. All the corn was cut for silage. Dad worked for a \$1.00 per hour and put in 70-hour work-weeks. A 1952 Nash Ambassador was purchased used in 1955 from Greg Schumacher in Omaha.

Mark was born July 25, 1956.

In the fall of '56 or spring of 1957, Darlo & Irene purchase a boat as a kit. It was a 14' boat that came in pieces of marine plywood and a fiberglass topcoating that Pops and Alton Gobel put together. The kit cost \$210 and the 35 hp Evinrude motor cost \$515. The boat was named Darene and was painted blue and white to match 1956 Mercury Phantom. During the first year, skiing and fishing were very popular pastimes. Two skiers could be pulled and the skiing took place at Lewis & Clark Lake, south shore or Weigand locations. Collin, Gary, Dale, and Darlo would ski 1 to 2 times a week. Some of that fried chicken mentioned before was an exceptional meal for the boating trips to South Shore! In 1956 milk and cream was bottled in quart milk bottles, cardboard lids were put on and delivered to customers in town.

Hogs were farrowed and finished (220 lbs.) on the farm for a short period of time. Also, some feeder pigs (15 to 20 lbs.) were sold instead of finishing the pigs for market

A used IH 350 was purchased in 1957 for a loader tractor after the International M was getting older. The 350 was used till about 1965.

A lean-two was added to the south side of the barn for protection for the cattle. Gary and Collin helped build this around 1957 to 1959. Also in 1957 or '58 the stainless steel bulk tank was purchased and installed in the barn for storage of the milk. At this time more milk cows were purchase to increase production. Seventeen to twenty-three cows were milked twice daily. Milking would take one to 1 ½ hours with Collin and Gary doing the milking in the early years, and Tom, Sid, and Mark taking their turns years later. Dale would handle other chores including feeding the calves. Darlo was present most of the time to milk by hand the hard cows.

An addition to the farmhouse was added in 1958. The addition to the west consisted of a master bedroom, and 16 x 24 add-on to the living room. Darlo had some help from neighbors, relatives including Mac Gobel & Charles Thoene and some schoolteachers including John Cory. Collin, Gary & Dale were also involved in one way or another in the addition. Darlo did most of the building including: framing, shingling, wiring and finishing himself and had intended to receive a large amount of help from Grandpa Joe Kollars. But, while assembling the floor, Grandpa Joe smashed a finger and was no longer able to lend a hand

in the building project. Throughout the project (and every year!) Mom did her best to keep everyone fed with great meals and desserts including homemade bread and pies. Mark was two years old during the project.

Darlo & Irene took a train to Springfield, Ohio, in 1962, changing trains in Chicago, (just making the transfer with 5 minutes to spare). Pops then drove one International pickup and pulled a second back to Crofton for Hesse's Implement. D & I then purchased one of the pickups.

In 1963 a red 1961 Ford Starliner 2 door hardtop stick shift was purchased used from Greg Schumacher.

In 1964 a '63 Mercury Monterey was purchased. The unique part of this car was that the rear window was electric and could be raised and lowered.

In the late '60's electric baseboard heat was installed in the house and finally an electric heater was installed upstairs. (Finally!-Gary K.) Before this, only a large amount of covers were used to keep warm on those cold frosty winter nights. Gary remembers a few times when frost would be on the inside of the walls of the upstairs because of the brutally cold temperatures.

80 acres was purchased in 1962 for \$175 per acre from Bruno Bogner. This land is North of the lane of the original farm place and ran East until the middle of the section. D & I's new house, built in 1974 by Sid Kollars and Jim Pietz, was on the Northwest corner of this property located along the gravel road that goes to Crofton, pass the Paul Kohles (City) dam's.

Todd was born on July 30, 1964 in the Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton, South Dakota. Todd was the only child of Darlo & Irene's that was born in the hospital. Paula Jo was the last little bundle of joy and showed up on the doorstep sometime around April 27, 1966. (just kid'in)

A Ford 4000 was bought used in Yankton, SD in 1965. The north lean-two was built in 1965, using lumber from Bruno's barn that was torn down. Bruno's was the farm place D & I purchased that was just north and a little east of the current farmstead.

There were many building projects on the farm that Darlo and Irene undertook. Mom & Dad said every window and door in the kitchen was moved and/or replaced sometime during their stay there. A bathroom and running water and electricity was added to the home early in their marriage. An enclosed porch was added to the east side of the house and the old porch moved to the cow lot, and the large living room and bedrooms to the west side. The stairway to upstairs was changed and moved. The block garage was built to the north of the home, the chicken coop was added onto and the hog house too. The barn had lean-to's added over the years for cattle care and machine storage. A silage pit

and concrete walls was added for the cow's winter feedings. A concrete manger for feeding the stock and milk cows was built in the 70's. And Irene would always talk about all the moresco (cheap paint) that was removed from the every wall in the house and carried out in bucket fulls.

During these times Mom always seemed to be busy with daily chores but she also managed to have a large garden that she would can: pickles, beans, beats, and tomatoes. Mom also said she would can beef for later enjoyment. Apples were canned from the apple tree just south of the house and from Bruno's orchard every summer with over 250 quarts being put up a number of times! Along with freezing chickens, sweet corn was another staple of the summer that was frozen for winter appetites, and oh so good to eat while cutting it off the cob! Also, many bountiful harvests of the strawberry and raspberry patches were put away for enjoyment during the cold winter months. The cellar of the farm house was also a great place to store the large amounts of potatoes and onions that were harvested in the fall, along with pears from Bruno's orchard. I have never found a pear that tastes as good as those.

As farming goes, there were many years of low production because of drought, since the farm did not have any irrigation like you see today. The soil was light and rocky in places and we as kids were lucky enough to help remove those from the fields each year! I do remember dad saying there were some very good years with his best year of corn harvesting around 70 bushels per acre. One year also the corn in the lower portion of the field (draw), was over his head when he stood on the fender of the Ford tractor. Dad never farmed with anything bigger than 2-row equipment (planter, cultivator) and only grain farmed 180 acres (also rented 80 acres from Paul Kohles) but was able to raise a family and still put money away for retirement.

As Collin, Gary and Dale can attest to, the alfalfa production was good throughout the year with old-fashioned hay-stacks being put together with Dad on the tractor with the hay sweep and the boys on the top of the stack placing the piles of hay in order! Life on the farm in the 50's and 60's was a lot of work including: a Grade B dairy that had no heat, no running water, but it had chores to do, twice a-day, every day; eggs to collect from the chicken (hen) house, pigs to take care off from birth to butcher, baby calves to bottle feed and vaccinate, to the farm dog and numerous cats to give fresh milk!

There were many good times on the farmstead including gatherings with cousins almost each Sunday, baseball or softball games in the yard or pasture, basketball games in the haymow, and card games including sheephead, youker, and 10 point pitch. But there also were some dangerous times: A gas floor furnace emitted fumes in the home in 1959 when a gas water heater was installed improperly was vented to the interior of the house. This caused the entire family to get very sick while they were sleeping. Irene remembers getting up to go to the bathroom, and then waking up on the bathroom floor. She then

yelled to get everyone outside. Darlo went outside to do chores and found Collin and Dale sleeping in the ground feed bin of the barn. Dale drank kerosene and lived to tell about it! He was forced to drink cream per the doctor's orders.

There was a large cattle tank between the house and the barn that had a wood framed top that was the scene of a few accidents. Dale fell into the tank when he was two years old. PJ fell into the water tank when she was also around two. Todd was asked where PJ went, and Todd pointed to the water tank. PJ was found floating on top of the water. Gary pull her out and held her upside down until she started to cry and cough. To get even with Todd, a few years later PJ slammed the door of the water tank on Todd's fingers.

The maroon 1970 Continental was purchased used in 1971.

Darlo started working at Steffen Service in Crofton around 1971-72. Pops usually worked M – W – F all day and Tue – Thur half days. The rest of those half days he would wonder over to the Hartington golf course for golf league. Golf was a main activity during the summer with bowling taking up a few nights during each week during the winter months.

During the summer of 1974, Sid built the "new house" located just a few feet over a mile South of Crofton on the city dam road (just North over the hill from the farm place). D & I, Todd, PJ and Spot were all involved in one way or another along with Jim Peitz construction. Dale and family came from Sioux Falls two to three weekends to help during the roofing and framing. D&I along with Todd and PJ moved into the new home in February 1975. Darlo and Irene sold this house in 1991.

1976 Mercury Marquis was bought new in Sioux Falls.

All ten children went to St. Rose elementary school and then finished the 9th through 12th grades at Crofton Public School. Darlo and Irene also went to these same two schools with mom graduating from Crofton High School in 1941.

Darlo and Irene moved to a Casa Verde mobile-home (in was not a "trailer" as mom would say) court in Casa Grande, Arizona. Mom & Dad retired to Arizona in 1988 first living in their camper then buying a single wide mobile home (not sure how it was called "mobile" since the wheels were removed and it was ground level!) and later buying a double-wide. They had good health for 15 years of retirement and partook in numerous activities at the retirement village including playing bridge for mom and golf 2 to 3 times a week for dad. "The court" as Ma and Pa call it, is a grouping of 350 manufactured homes that are in a permanent setting. To live in this area you must be 55 years or older and willing to socialize. Numerous block parties are attended throughout the week. Both enjoyed the warm winter days as opposed to those of long ago in Nebraska.

I would like to think Mom & Pops did an unbelievable job of raising 10 children from Collin's birth in 1944 through 1984 when PJ graduated from high school. From the time they were married in 1942, they built up a farm they purchased from Irene's folks and fed and educated all those kids. I remember Pops saying they didn't have a dime in their pockets after paying the band at their wedding dance, but they were able to move onto their own farm place in 1944 and start the family in a home with no running water, indoor plumbing or electricity. Amazing to think about really, if you allow yourself to ponder the amount of work it would take just to cook breakfast, wash a load of clothes, or milk cows twice a day with no electricity! They did it though, plus feeding, raising, and educating a family. Guess that is where the work ethic comes from, (which I would like to think we all have), and for that I am thankful. Also, Mom & Pops instilled our religious education with church on Sunday's and our paid catholic education through 8th grade at St. Rose. All in all, I have been blessed with a great farm background and upbringing and connection to the land that I appreciate and value.

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