

Anna Hammen

Good Afternoon!

My Name is Anna Hammen and I love to have fun! I was born July 3, 1893 in Little Chute to Nicolous Dercks and Wilhelmina “Minnie” Vanden Heuvel. My parents, along with my sibling and I, worked the farmstead that originally belonged to my Grandpa and Grandma Dercks. Dad and Mom had 10 Children, five handsome boys and five beautiful daughters.

On May 6th, 1913 I married the love of my life, William Hammen. Bill was a talented athlete and played bass horn in the village band. He was a hard worker, working shifts at Kimberly Clark, a job he began at age 16.

The home where we raise our 13, that’s right, 13 children, still stands to this day at 532 Vanden Broek St. Life was difficult and we had little money. But I was used to hard work, just as everyone was back in those days. I loved our home and it soon became a gathering spot for friends and family. With seven sons and six daughters, there was always lots of activity.

Even though Bill worked seven days a week, we’d still find time to have some fun. Friends would come from as far away as Appleton to our house to play sheephead. Bill would grease a bucket and send one of the boys over to Duce’s Bar for beer and we would shuffle the cards all afternoon.

Sadly, my Bill died of cancer on January 26, 1944 at the age of 51. After his death, I had to earn enough money to support the family. I had a reputation for being a good cook. I loved to cook for the family, friends and sick neighbors. I decided to put my cooking skill to work

and open a restaurant. My cousin, Jack Hammen, owned a hotel in town, and was nice enough to give me space, rent free, for the start of Hammen's Restaurant. You may know the restaurant today. It is called Jack's or Better.

After a number of years, I left the restaurant, but my daughters and I continued cooking food at home and catered hundreds of weddings and banquets. My hot beef and potatoes became legendary. As a matter of fact, the local Pick 'n Save used my potato salad recipe for years.

Many remember me for cooking, but my family remembers me as the free spirit that loved people. I loved to do things like invite the garbage men in for a beer at Christmas time. The children loved how, at Easter, I'd transform my dining room table into a giant bunny's nest; complete with jellybeans, chocolates, and over 100 decorated Easter eggs. I even started the tradition that on their birthday, all my children, their spouses, my grandchildren, and great grandchildren would receive a card with \$1.00 bill inside. This tradition continues to this day in my family.

On my birthday, all my family would come over for hot dogs, chips, and ice cream. Even though I died on Dec. 27, 1974, at age 81, each year, the entire Hammen family, now close to 400 people, still gathers in my honor for the annual Hammen Family Reunion. The fun and my spirit still live on.

Thank you for coming today. I have enjoyed telling you my story.

I am Mary Romenesko, granddaughter of Anna Hammen.

Little Chute Historical Society Cemetery Walk 2008







