

Sylvester (Lett) Janssen

My name is Sylvester Janssen known as **Lett**. I was born November 2, 1906 in Combined Locks, WI to Herman and Mary (Menting) Janssen. The house where I was born is still standing on the street now known as Janssen Street and people will recognize where the street is located as it has the famous Mulry Christmas decorations. My father, Herman was born in Essen, Germany in 1874. The family emigrated to the U.S. and settled in Combined Locks in 1883. Combined Locks was named for the two locks on the Fox River. Mary Menting was born in 1880 in the Town of Buchanan and married Herman in 1901. I have 2 brothers, Herman Jr. and Harold and a sister Katherine (Kate) Lamers. My father Herman was very involved in the civic affairs of Combined Locks. His support of public education resulted in the Janssen school being named for him.

I attended the Moler System of Colleges in Milwaukee studying Barbering and graduated in 1928. After an apprenticeship in Greenleaf, I was able to open my own shop in Little Chute. The word barber comes from the Latin meaning beard. The early tribes believed spirits were driven out of the head by cutting hair, so barbers were the foremost men of their time. The barber pole is the oldest mark of any profession, before the birth of Christ. Barbers also pulled teeth and did bloodletting. The colors of the pole and said to represent red blood, white bandages and blue veins. The major tools of my trade were a strop, hone, razors, combs and shears. The strop was made of leather and canvas and was used to sharpen and clean razors during the shaving process. The hone was used to sharpen razors and could be wet or dry.

I lived with my sister, Kate until my marriage to Mathilda (Tilly) Schippers in 1940. Tilly was born in 1909 in DePere. We have three children, Thomas, Jean and Jerry. In 1950 we were able to build a house on Park Avenue across from Doyle Park. The house is still in the family with a hill known for its fine sledding.

I also enjoy music and singing. I was a member of the Little Chute Community Band, the St. John Choir and Half Ton Barbershop Quartet and celebrated 50 years playing the with the band and singing with the choir. I have many enjoyable years as part of the Barbershop Quartet that included my brothers Herman and Harold and cousin Ray, we were awarded 1st place on a Milwaukee radio show in 1937.

My shop was located at 515 Pine Street. It was open six days a week and as it has no restroom, so according to state regulation the door to the connecting bar was always open to provide access to their restroom. I worked six days a week, no vacations and walked to work everyday. I have fond memories of shaving Tony Wonders, who owned a popular night club on the corner of OO and Madison St. The shop was a place of lively conversations and for men to meet.

Little Chute Historical Society Cemetery Walk 2012



Harold & Lett Janssen 1924



Lett & Dr. Werick





