

CERTIFIED COPY OF BIRTH REGISTER

State of Minnesota, County of Brown, Prairieville Twp.

No.	FULL NAME OF CHILD	Sex	Single Twins Triplets	New order of Birth	Legitimate	DATE OF BIRTH
H-13-448	Curtis Lynea Meinert	M	S	3	yes	June 30 1934

FATHER			
NAME	Age	Color	Birthplace
Arthur A. Meinert	37	W	Minn.
OCCUPATION		Farmer	

MOTHER			
FULL MAIDEN NAME	Age	Color	Birthplace
Mabel Christensen	34	W	Minn.
OCCUPATION		H'wife	

Attending Physician, Midwife, Parent or Other Informant		
NAME	ADDRESS	Date of Report
A. P. Goblirsch		7-9-34

REGISTRAR		
NAME	ADDRESS	Date of Filing
V. G. Robertson	Sleepy Eye	7-16-34

REMARKS: NONE

STATE OF MINNESOTA, IN DISTRICT COURT, I, Carl A. Witt, Clerk of the District Court in
County of Brown, Fifth Judicial District and for said County and State, do hereby certify that the
foregoing is a full and complete transcript of the entries appearing on record in the Register of Births now remaining in my
said office relating to the birth of said Curtis Lynea Meinert and the whole thereof.

WITNESSES my hand and the seal of said Court hereto
affixed at New Ulm, Minn., this 29th day of December, A. D., 19 34

By Carl A. Witt Clerk
Halter A. Grams Deputy

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I was born on Saturday the 30th of June 1934. I was born at home, because the nearest hospital then was in New Ulm, 14 miles east - a great distance in 1934.

Gasoline was 10 cents a gallon, a loaf of bread 8 cents, a pound of butter 24 cents and the hourly wage was 20 cents. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was in the White House and Floyd Olson was in the governor's house in Minnesota.

I was born as we were emerging from the Great Depression. Herbert Hoover had just been soundly defeated by Roosevelt. Things were looking up but storm clouds were gathering across the Atlantic. I was born on the exact same day as the start of a three day purge in Germany known as the "Night of the Long Knives". The purge resulted in the execution of several Nazis at Hitler's behest, most notably his long time confidant, Ernst Röhm, leader of the Sturmabteilung (SA) or "Brownshirts".

I was third born, preceded by a brother, Maynard, died before I was born, and a sister Bonnie, born shortly after Maynard's death. My birth would be followed two

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years later by another sister, Carol, and three years after her by a brother, Gerald, known primarily by his middle name, Dean.

Everybody is from somewhere and I am from Sleepy Eye. More accurately, from a farm near Sleepy Eye, but that is too many words and more than people want to know.

Sleepy Eye is in Brown County, one of the 87 counties comprising Minnesota; population about 25,000 (2016) and area of about 620 square miles. Its northern boundary is the Minnesota river with Sleepy Eye in the center, with New Ulm 14 miles to the East marking the eastern boundary and Springfield about the same distance to the West marking the western boundary.

I never longed to be from somewhere else. In fact, I have always been proud of the connection. Sleepy Eye is like Garrison Keller's Lake Wobegon "where all the women are strong, all the men are good looking, and all the children are above average".

Often, at conferences, I would introduce myself as a farmer from Sleepy Eye and nothing more, as if everyone should know where it is and leaving people to wonder if it is a real or made up place.

I have found the farmer label useful in places like Hopkins, surrounded by people with fancy Ivy League degrees. I have used the characterization to dodge questions I cannot answer. "I don't know, I am just a farmer from Sleepy Eye".

Indeed, for some time I used the "farmer" characterization to fend off questions from my dean, but, eventually he wised up, coming to see it as a gambit akin to Sam Ervin's "I am just a country lawyer" as a prelude to a withering interrogation of a witness in front of his Select Committee on Watergate.

When in an argument with colleagues over some intractable issue I would turn to Sleepy Eye, lean back in my chair and say "The way we would settle this back in Sleepy Eye is" and then proceed to spin a yarn involving people and places I grew

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up with, some real and some made up, but helpful, if not in settling the issue, then at least in lightening the moment.

Everything is flat where I was born. Before it was farming country it was an expansive prairie. A vast expanse of native grasses, and before that ice.

Much of Minnesota has been covered by glaciers many times, most recently just 10,000 years ago. Indeed its claim “The land of 10,000 lakes” is due to the work of glaciers.

Sleepy Eye is about 1,000 feet above sea level. Everything is gently up hill. Five hundred feet from Chicago to Sleepy Eye. About 2,000 feet from Sleepy Eye to Rapid City and another 3,000 feet up from there to Denver.

Sleepy Eye is about 120 miles southwest of Minneapolis, 80 miles north of the Iowa border, and 140 miles west of the South Dakota border. Its population, when I was born, was around 2,500 and about 3,600 now.

The town took its name from a native American chief of the Sisseton Dakota tribe, Ishtabkhaba. Dubbed “Sleepy Eye” because of a drooping eye lid, probably due to ptosis. Chief Ishtabkhaba and his following settled (1857 - 1859) on the Pretty Water By The Big Trees, just north of what was to become Sleepy Eye. The town was platted in 1872 and incorporated in 1903.

After the Dakota Conflict of 1862, started at Fort Ridgely and ending in Mankato, local residents decided they did not want a town named after an Indian chief. The name was changed to Lorenzo in early 1880 and then changed back to its original name, Sleepy Eye Lake, on 2 May 1881.

The town from 1929 into the 1950s had a drum and bugle corps. From 1948 to when it faded away the corps was under the leadership of Pinky (Leo B) Schroepfer. When he was not drilling the corps he was cutting hair.

The corps won seven state championships under his leadership.

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Sleepy Eye is republican country - like much of rural America. I grew up in a split household. My father was democrat, my mother republican. They voted in Evan, about six miles northwest of our farm. My mother did not drive so she depended on my father for transport. By the time I was ten, I knew they would cancel their votes, but they never failed to vote!

The southern boundary of my birth place is US highway 14, a 1,400 mile east-west route that starts in Chicago and ends at the eastern entrance to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming; known as the Black and Yellow Trail because the highway passes through the Black Hills on the way to Yellowstone.

It was 8 years (1926) before I was born when the road became a numbered highway and three years later when it was paved. Before that cars got stuck in mud after rainstorms. My parents told of having to hitch horses to pull cars out of the mud.

Hang a left from my driveway and head east. In about three miles you come to a 90° curve. Now you are heading north. Keep going. Past the golf course. Now another curve and you are heading east again and then, there, at the western outskirt of Sleepy Eye is the “canning factory”, Del Monte Plant 114 – the plant that, according to Del Monte, was number one in cans of peas and corn canned.

The plant was built in 1929 and opened in 1930. It has been upgraded and expanded several times since, most recently in 1993 with a major addition. (Alas, the plant closed in the fall of 2019 to the consternation of many locals.)

Keep going from Plant 114 about a mile, then hang a left onto Minnesota Highway 4. Head north, past Sleepy Eye Lake. Keep going 14 miles across the Minnesota River to Fort Ridgely.

By the time I came along Fort Ridgely was a place to have picnics and summer outings, but from 1853-1867 it was an Army outpost that figured prominently in the last Indian uprising in the U.S.

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The Indians in the summer of 1862 were starving. Little Crow and several council members met with Andrew Jackson Myrick (head trader for the Lower Agency) to plead for food. Myrick's reply was "let them eat grass". A few weeks later (18 August) Myrick was dead with a mouth full of grass.

The uprising came to an end 26 December 1862 with the hanging of 38 Indians along side the Minnesota River in Mankato, about 40 miles from where the uprising started.

Take a right out of our driveway and head west about 40 miles and you come to Walnut Grove. You will know the location if you grew up watching Little House on the Prairie; a popular TV series (1974 - 1983) starring Michael Landon, Melissa Gilbert, and Karen Grassle based on Laura Ingalls "Little House on the Prairie".

The setting is Plum Creek near Walnut Grove, a town today of about 850 but many fewer in the late 1800s when Laura Ingalls was there.

There were various occasions in the series when "Pa", by horse and wagon, went to Sleepy Eye for supplies.

Sleepy Eye is where I am from and proud to call myself a citizen!
