

~~~ The Geese Guffaw ~~~



Before I begin, a couple definitions:

Gaggle: A flock of geese when not in flight.

Gagging: The cackling sound made by geese.

The German word for gagging is 'Schnaufen', but Grandpa Carl's German was somewhat different. The word he used in the telling of this story was 'Schnuter'. I spell the word according to its pronunciation.

Allow me to give you a brief description of the Geier farmstead as I remember it. The house was situated on the top of a low hill. The barn was perhaps 100 or more yards below the hill to the east in a relatively flat area. Between the house and the barn, and toward the north, stood two or three utility buildings. One or more of these housed their flocks of chickens, geese, and turkeys, which they raised for the usual purposes. It is important to visualize this setting as it relates to this tale.

Like most farmers Carl Geier began each day getting ready to do the morning chores. No, breakfast would have to wait until these chores were completed. So he got dressed, left the house, and walked down the hill toward the barn. I don't know for sure in what order he completed his tasks. In my day we began with the milking and finished with the cleanup. There were any number of other jobs in between, but now I digress.

Just picture this in your mind: Carl is down by the barn and Henrietta is in the house, probably in the kitchen preparing breakfast. Between the house and the barn are a large and varied group of domesticated fowl, scattered about, feeding on the grain put out for them. Suddenly Grandma appears at the front door of the house, spies Carl out in the yard, and hollers out some word to get his attention. Carl is now on notice and hollers back in German, "Was?" Unfortunately, this is when the trouble begins. Every time the two of them attempt to communicate the geese begin their caterwauling, or in Carl Geier's vernacular, schnutering. In the end, Grandpa has to stop what he was doing and walk up the hill to the house to find out what Grandma wants. I got the distinct impression this happened all too often.