

Faith, Family, and Farming



Life Stories of Charles Evertt Becker

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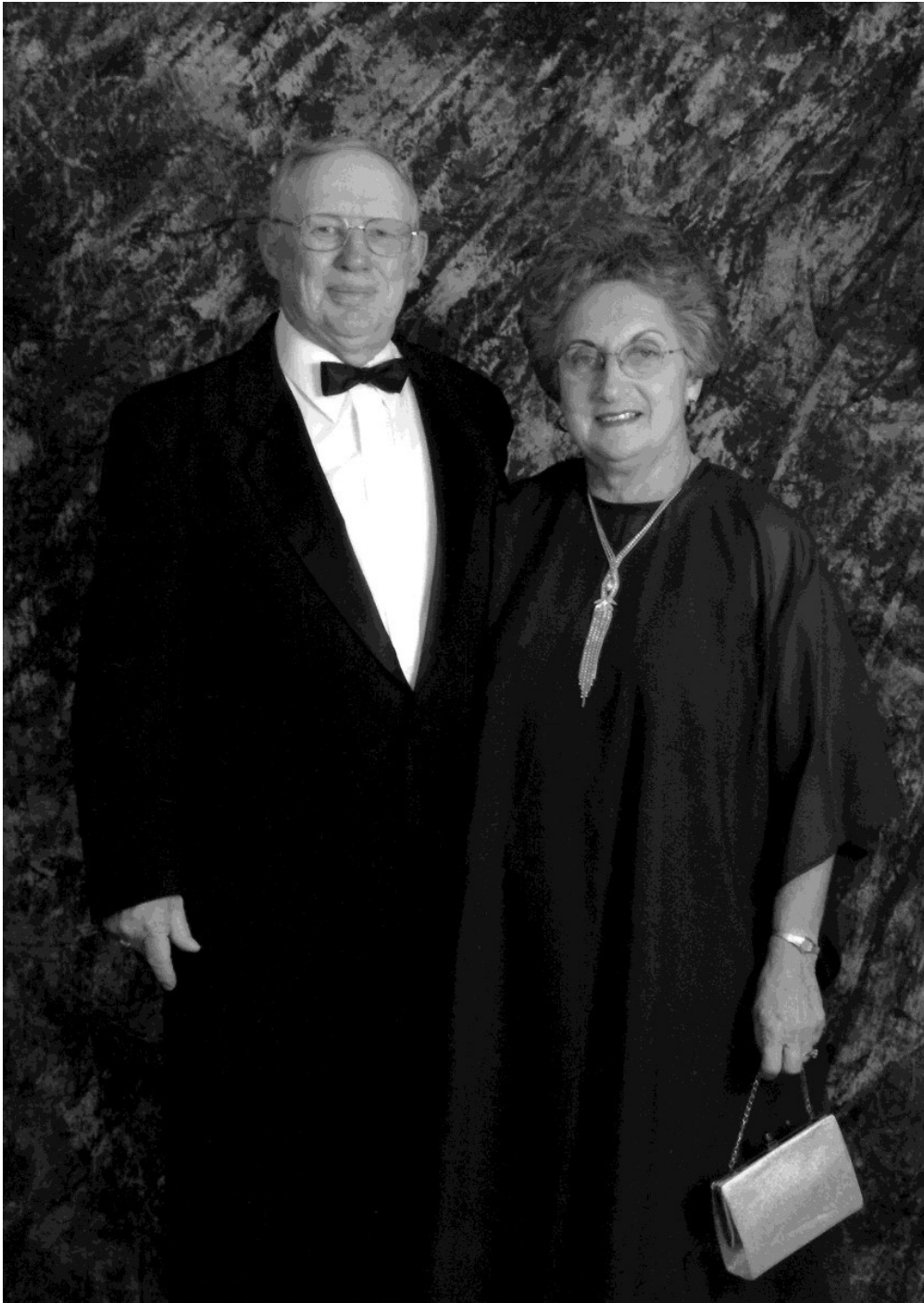
Foreword

Reflecting on my brother's life shows the tough times, the challenging good times, and all the in-between times. Being a Christian doesn't guarantee us immunity from the cares and concerns of this world. But as believers, we are promised something of greater value...*God's ever-present help in dealing with those concerns.*

Many of the characteristics found in *Faith, Family, and Farming* are the simple keys of being a true Christian: love, patience, self-honesty, love of family, neighbors, and others. These qualities can do more than merely help you overcome the challenges and obstacles of life; they can help you grow and use the lessons inherent in each situation to become the best you can be.

May you enjoy the following pages and cherish the love, laughter, joy, and sorrow shared in them. My sister, Gladys (Becker) Kerschen, and myself, consider it a privilege to have shared our lives with our brother Charles.

Charlotte (Becker) Ringer



Charles and Mary, attending his Fourth Degree Knight ceremony, 1990s.

“A Christian leaves a *legacy* through their walk of *faith* that does more than point us *back* to a wonderful life remembered...It also points us *forward* in *hope* to an amazing celebration that is to come.”

Author Unknown



Patterson Farm, where Charles was born.

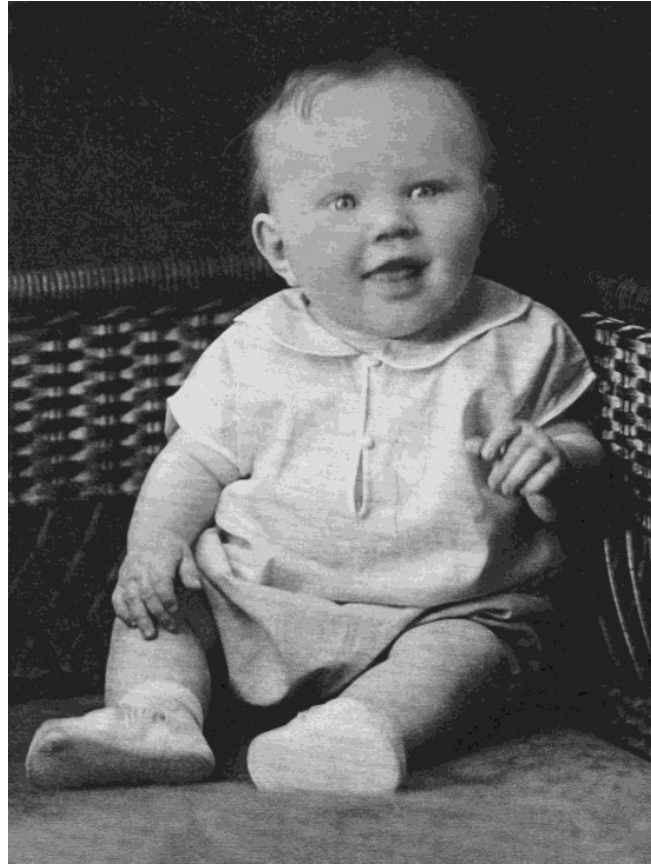
Childhood



My parents, Carl Everette Becker and Mae Jean Ohnemiller, were married on September 4, 1928. My oldest sister, Gladys Joan, was born in 1931, and I was born on October 1, 1934, on the Patterson farm in Tyler, Kansas. My younger sister, Charlotte Ann, was born 13 months after me.

In 1935, our family moved to the Lucas farm near Schulte, Kansas. We lived there in an old homestead house built during the land grant days of the 1870s. During that time, to encourage settlement, the government sold people land at the very low price of \$2.50 an acre. You had to build a 15-by-15 foot square house and live on the property for five years, and then the land was yours.

When our family moved to the Lucas farm, the house was being used as a granary. Dad and his brother Bill were cleaning it, and when they threw a bucket of water down to scrub the floor, the water leaked through all of the cracks. For our first winter,



Charles at six months, 1935.

they covered the floor with linoleum and we lived in three rooms—the kitchen, dining room, and one bedroom. There was also a living room, but without insulation, it was too cold to use.

Dad soon remodeled the house. He and Uncle Bill installed a solid wood floor with used oak flooring from a torn down Schulte dance hall. Dad had the ceiling insulated with wool and put new windows all around the house. That helped, but the cold air still came in, so he stuccoed the outside of the house and put storm windows in as well. On a cold winter day, we would take a pump can of hot water, which freezes faster than cold water, and squirt it alongside the windows so it would freeze up and block the wind.

We progressed through several different heating systems. We originally had a wood and coal stove, then a coal oil stove, a distillate stove, and finally, a floor furnace. Before Dad could put in the furnace, we had to have a basement, so he and Lawrence Nuse dug a basement with a shovel and spade, hauling the dirt out on a conveyer belt powered by a one-cylinder John Deere engine.

Dad and Uncle Bill purchased the 160 acre farm together. About thirty years later, when they both inherited 80 acres of the Becker home place, Dad traded with Uncle Bill, giving him his 80 of the land inherited from their father, so we could have Uncle Bill's half of the Schulte farm and have a complete 160 acres. (see Appendix B for history of the Becker Farm)



I was a typical, happy-go-lucky kid. I wore bib overalls until the knees wore out, then cut them off and wore them as shorts. Being so close in age, Charlotte and I played together a lot. She was always dragging behind, so Gladys and I called her Pookie Jones. I always looked up to Gladys; she was a guiding light—but she was also a fireball.

My sisters included me in everything. We didn't have a lot of toys, but we did with what we had and made our own fun and games. We played baby and dolls and made mud pies. We played church in the basement, using Mom's ornate jelly dish as a chalice. Of course, I was the priest.

We built a lot of playhouses, and I loved playing in the trees; heights did not bother me at all. There was a row of trees near the house, and I would climb up in one and swing down the row,

tree to tree, like a monkey. Mom would just about die, “You’re going to fall and break your neck!”



In the mid-1930s, the farming community was affected by the drought. I was quite young during the Depression, but I remember it. Mom cooked a lot of potato patties and mush. Mush was cornmeal dipped in butter and egg and fried in a skillet. We ate it with homemade butter and syrup. We had rice patties and also ate a lot of soup and beans.

We had milk cows and once a year, Dad butchered a calf for our family. Mom fried the meat and stored it in crocks layered with lard, with a plate turned over the top to keep the critters out. We had a big garden, and Mom canned all kinds of vegetables and stored them in the basement. Mom raised chickens so we had eggs. Every week, she sold 12 dozen eggs to the grocery store, which paid for the other groceries we needed. Times were tough, but we got by—we never wanted for something to eat.

Mom would let us kids help in the kitchen; she was very patient with us. Whenever she made a raisin pie, there was some dough left over. We had a little pie tin, so I’d take the leftover dough and make my own little pie, and Mom would bake it in the oven with hers.

For a long time, we had an ice box. The ice man delivered to the house when we placed a card in the window telling him how many pounds of ice we needed. The block of ice was kept on one side of the box, with a tray under the bottom to catch the drip as it slowly melted.