

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF LUANN ZUERN SCHWAI

France had Joan of Arc, India had Mother Teresa, Israel had Golda Maier, but Cedar Creek has LuAnn Zuern Schwai, a legend in her time. If she had been born in Wyoming, she would have grown into a cowgirl, in Oklahoma she would have become an oil wildcatter, but in Wisconsin, she has become the matriarch of the Schwailight Zone.

She wants to dedicate this biography to the memory of her parents, Frank and Margaret Zuern, her brothers and sisters, and the many friends and relatives of that family. She further dedicates this biography to the Schwai family before and after she married her beloved husband, Joe. Most of all, she wanted to dedicate this biography to their family, as it will be important for them to know just how much all of them mean to her. The many friends and patrons of Schwai's Catering, Country Store, Tavern and Hall will never forget her, and she remembers them, too. Who can forget her encouraging words of "Suck up, I see your behind" while she tended bar.

With all of that said, she has been one of the most wonderful people I have ever written about. She has been warm and genuine in all the details written about her life. Her ability to laugh, live and love come through in every conversation we had in order to put this biography together. Her deep religious faith allows her to look life fully in the face, remembering each of you who have helped her to become everything that she is. She thanks you, just as we all thank her for being just who she is.

As told to Don Ensenbach

By

LuAnn Schwai



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Margaret and Frank Zuern



1919 Mary Margaus Weber, Margaret Mary Weber Zuern, Frank J. Zuern, Margaret Kolzer Zuern

IN THE BEGINNING

LuAnn was born at St. Joseph's Hospital in Milwaukee on October 5th, 1927 as the 3rd of 5 children to Frank J. Zuern and Margaret Mary Weber Zuern. Frank and Margaret named her Luella Ann, a name that she legally changed to LuAnn when she became 21. Her parents had bought a farm, which butted up to the inlet and outlet of Pike Lake on the south side of the farm, and extended beyond the dusty and graveled state highway 60, 2 miles east of Hartford, Wisconsin. The main barn, machine shed, pig barn and fields were located on the south side of the highway touching the lake, and the house was on the north side of the highway. The farm had been bought on August 1st, 1927, from John and Anna Zuern, Frank's uncle and aunt. At the time of her birth, LuAnn had an older brother Ted, who was 6 years older than she was, and an older sister, Margaret Mary (Peggy) who was 3 years older. The household also contained Frank's father, Frank, Sr., and mother, Margaret Koelzer Zuern, grandparents to LuAnn, and her siblings. The house had 4 upstairs bedrooms and a large main floor hall next to the stairs with a daybed. Her parents slept in the bedroom facing the highway, Ted had the east bedroom, Peg and LuAnn had the west bedroom, while grandpa and grandma Zuern slept in the north bedroom. Behind the house was an old cabin that was used as a tool shed. The outhouse was on one side, with the 2-door garage on the other side of the tool shed. As you can see, the farm was bought shortly before the Great Depression, and it was fortunate that the family was able to butcher their own cows, pigs, and chickens for meat and eggs, and grow apples, and garden products to eat during those lean years.

St. Nick's visit was on December 5th. The older children would be studying at the dining room table. A noise would be heard on the back porch, and then all of the children would run out to the porch, where they would find apples, oranges, nuts and Xmas hard candy. The children's father had been working out in the barn, came up to the back porch to leave the food gifts, make the noise and return to the barn. He would turn off the lights in the barn and return to the house to find the children eating some of the goodies. What a great thing to be a child!

Valentine's day was celebrated with their mother making cutout cookies with red and pink frosting. Birthdays allowed each of the children to choose the food and cake for their birthday dinner. LuAnn enjoyed her mother's delicious chicken and dumplings, and jimmy cake. Fourth of July celebrations were a lot of fun as uncle Fred Bangert, aunt Olga, and LuAnn's cousins, Fred, Jr., Lois and Rita came to the Zuern farm for the day. LuAnn's mother would make stewed chicken with dumplings, and serve home made ice cream and home made root beer. The two families would have small firecrackers and sparklers for the evening's entertainment.

Money was scarce, so Christmas presents consisted of necessary clothing, pencils, crayons, tablets of paper for school, toothbrushes, and an occasional book for reading. LuAnn's father would pay the children 3 cents for their desserts occasionally, which they then put into their banks. LuAnn's parents were the poorest of the Zuern cousins, but were extremely religious, and guided all five of their children to be successful by their examples,

guidance and love. Christmas dinners consisted of chicken, duck, or curried ham, (all homegrown), mashed potatoes, homegrown vegetables, and jello salads. Homemade pies, tortes, stollens, cookies and candies, such as fudge, sea foam, peanut brittle, and chocolate covered mints served as perfect desserts. "MMMM, so good!

Thanksgivings were spent with Uncle Arthur and Aunt Arabelle in Milwaukee. They would furnish the turkey dinner with all the trimmings. LuAnn did not like the eggplant that Aunt Arabelle would serve, believe that or not! She likes it now. So that just goes to show you that tastes change as you get older.

There was a large front yard with beautiful shade trees, which in the summer was used a lot for relaxing, playing croquet, and had room for a badminton court. By the way, Pike Lake is shaped like a heart, and the Indians had called it Heart Lake when they had resided there before the White Men took it over. Another side note from LuAnn's memory was that the family owned 25 dogs that were killed, 24 by cars, and one by train.

LuAnn's parents had 2 children born after her, a brother Tom on July 13th, 1929 and a sister Donna on September 29th, 1931. Tom joined Ted in the east bedroom, while Donna slept in the daybed in the hall. By the time Donna was born, the die had been cast, and LuAnn can remember some of the very entertaining events of her early life. This is your life, LuAnn Zuern Schwai! One of LuAnn's first memories was when her younger sister Donna was born on September 29th, 1931, while LuAnn was 4 years old. Their mother was bedridden for several months, and their father's cousin, Adeline Zuern, came to care for their mother, and the siblings. One of Adeline's first jobs every morning was to wash the milk cans. LuAnn would get to sit on the milk cans as Adeline rolled them back and forth between the milk house and the wash station. Adeline allowed this as a bribe for a promise by LuAnn to be good for the rest of the day. Why was this necessary to Adeline's mental health? One time, LuAnn chased the chickens from their nests in the chicken coop, climbed on a pail in order to pick out some of the eggs, then threw them and tried to hit the chickens. This resulted in what she called a **BUTT-WARMING**. In winter, LuAnn, her brother and sister would slide down a small hill in their backyard. Ted went farther down the hill than LuAnn, so she went up and hit him in the arm. She received another fanny paddling. She really wasn't a bad child, just mischievous, and always on the go. Sixty-five years later, Adeline told LuAnn she never saw a child that age get into more trouble. She must have left a lasting impression on Adeline.

The first automobile her family owned was an Oakland that sat nine people. During an early milk strike, her family was delivering three cans of milk to town when they were stopped along the road by strikers. The milk cans had been placed on the floor between the front and back seats with a board covering the cans. The children were told to sit on the board, and keep their big mouths shut if they were stopped. Although scared, the children behaved as they were told, and the strikers waved the family through.

Later, there was a time that LuAnn's father had a model "T" truck. Tom, Donna and LuAnn were playing in the sand box. LuAnn threw sand and had to come into the house as a

punishment. Tom and Donna decided to paint the truck with old oil and brushes they found in the machine shed. Their mother went to look for them, as she didn't see them in the sand box anymore. Upon finding them and seeing what they had done, she called their father from the barn, and they received a spanking. Then, she washed them, hair and all, with a scrub brush and homemade soap, and put them to bed. They never painted another truck, and for once, LuAnn didn't get the spanking. Compared to Tom and Donna, she was a very good girl for a change.

The Frank Zuern family was like many of the other families living on farms in the Wisconsin countryside. LuAnn's grandparents lived with the family, and grandma helped with the supervision of the children and knit scarves and mittens for the family. The mittens had cords holding the two mittens together so they wouldn't get lost. LuAnn's mother had a large vegetable and flower garden, and did a lot of canning for winter use. She also made the dresses, coats and underslips for the girls.

One time during the summer, while LuAnn's parents were in town shopping, LuAnn, Tom and Donna were playing in the yard outside when their grandmother came running outside to tell them to get in the house with her. The reason she gave was that some Jehova Witnesses were approaching the house. The three children did not know what this meant, so they stayed outside until they saw the car approach the front of the house, and come around toward the backdoor. Scared to death, they ran up to the backdoor of the house, found it locked, so they ran into the machine shed, and locked the door. Peeking out of the window, they saw their grandmother come out of the backdoor with a large steaming teakettle in hand. She told them to leave right away, or she would throw the scalding hot water over them. They left post-haste.

Just before Christmas, 1935 when LuAnn was 8 years old, she was found to have a cavity in one of her teeth. Her uncle Arthur Reuter was a dentist and had an office in Milwaukee. Her brother, Ted, was to take her down by Greyhound Bus, have her teeth checked, and the cavity filled. The bus stopped for them in front of their farmhouse, as they waved it down. She couldn't enjoy the bus ride as she was afraid of having the cavity filled. She had the work done on her teeth, and as they had some time before the return bus left, they walked over to the Schuster's store on 3rd Street and Wisconsin, and she went to see Santa. She talked with Santa and was told that she could have a present from him if she paid a nickel. Ted said that their mother told him "he couldn't spend the nickel." LuAnn told him "mother had told me that I could get a gift." Ted wouldn't listen to it, and they left for the bus station for the ride back home. She has never forgotten that trip back home, as she cried her heart out.