

They were overwhelmed with the generosity shown them by the Rosengard church members who bought them a house to move onto the property. The \$1500 insurance went towards a basement. Later, with many more grandchildren to enjoy gathering for Christmas, we always had 100% turnout for it was an important time for family togetherness.

Maria took a keen interest in all her childrens' and grandchildrens' lives. She always made sure we all had enough to eat and enjoyed the Christ-

mas carols sung. She always handed out silver dollars and gifts to everyone. Halvah was only one of many types of candy there.

#### Death 1990.

In January of 1990, Maria suffered a heart attack and that coupled with asthma made it hard for her to be as active as she had been. It was a shock to all of us when she died early one Monday morning after an asthma attack in July of 1990.

Maria Ginter left a void in many lives and is still spoken of today as a lovely lady who's sorely missed. She would be pleased to know that her grandson, Jacob F. Dueck has followed in her footsteps and is busy doing chiropracting in Rosengard today.

The following song which Maria's father used to sing, speaks also of this special woman who left her special mark in our memories. "Nur einmal machts du diese Riese, Las eine gute Spur Zurick."

## "De Fiey Dokta"

"De Fiey Dokta": Johann Schultz Kehler 1894-1962 and Annie Unger Wieler 1901-1991,  
by son Glen Kehler, Box 280, Oakbank, Manitoba, R0E 1J0.

#### Introduction.

Johann S. Kehler was the fourth of Jacob K (Berliner) Kehler's eight sons. He filled an essential service in and around the Steinbach area from about 1937 to 1959. Since the south-east of Manitoba was a fast growing agricultural area, the need for a Veterinarian was very apparent to John, who as a young man, had taken a keen interest in animal health.

During the early 1930s John contracted typhoid fever and having survived the dreaded illness, he was further bedridden with severe arthritis and sciatica, which affected his legs.

This was an opportunity to study veterinary medicine, and he went about procuring many books on the subject. John soon struck up an acquaintance with two Doctors of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Manitoba. Dr. Savage is the only name I recall, but both were very helpful and encouraging and furthered John's career with good books and advice.

This relationship continued for many years. When John was in doubt or stumped with a new problem he would load the animal into his car and take a run to the U. of M. and they would perform an autopsy. If the animal was too large a load to take along in the car, he would take the diseased body part along for a thorough diagnosis in order to have a remedy to prevent or cure the problem.

#### Veterinarian Problems.

Every farmer worked at improving their beef and/or dairy herd by introducing better and larger bulls. But this compounded the calving problems which were a large part of John's workload. This was often a very strenuous task. In winter he worked in cold drafty barns where he would have to strip down to his waist for the work at hand. This took its toll on his health, but there was no thought of asking the farmer to bring the animal to him...

John was quite innovative and made the most of his harnesses and devised to perform the difficult tasks, some of which were in rather confined space.

Hogs were a rather easy animal to raise until the advent of feed additives to enhance growth. These were made by the feed companys some of whom added harmful fillers to the

concentrate, which after an autopsy revealed that it had burned the lining of the stomach. John was a strong advocate against these harmful concentrates, and eventually the feed companys had to clean up their act.

Around 1938 a very serious outbreak of Equine Encephalitis, commonly known as sleeping sickness in horses, ravaged south-eastern Manitoba. Since every farmer had a



Stunt man John S. Kehler on a high wire act in Ebenfeld in 1917. Photo courtesy of Linda Buhler, Historical Sketches, page 116.

barn full of horses, which played a large role in the operation of most farms, this was devastating. There was no known cure for this illness, and horses were dying everywhere.

It did not take long for John to come to the rescue. He knew that it was an inflammation of the brain, and if he could get the fever under control and eliminate the bodily waste manually, he could save the animal...and it worked.

Word spread about his success. This kept him going day and night throughout the summer. He would phone home for messages and go from farm to farm. In between John made pickups at C. T. Loewen's ice house for ice packs for the horses' heads. This, more than anything else, gave John's career the boost it

needed. In short order, John knew everyone within a 30 mile radius and all the farmers knew him, and they also knew he was only a phone call away day or night. He often said that he knew every rabbit trail and could follow them all with his 1929 Ford Model A. since many roads were no more than wagon ruts through the bush.

John got through even if he had to put the Fort in gear and get out to push. During the winter he would equip the Model A with "Knobby" tires and a set of chains if needed. After some of the memorable snowstorms, John had to resort to hiring the local "snow plane" in emergency cases, but only as a last resort.

#### Tuberculosis.

Over the years Tuberculosis was a silent and ever present problem for the cattle farmers which had to be addressed. The farmers were shipping their milk to the Winnipeg creameries and their beef to the packers. If it was discovered that the animals were not fit for human consumption, the farmers would not be compensated. No one could afford that.

The Provincial and the Federal Governments joined forces to eradicate the disease once and for all. In about 1944 John teamed up with Dr. Edmond Gariepy who had opened a clinic in St. Pierre. Dr. Gariepy was a graduate of Veterinary Medicine from a Quebec university. They would travel together two days a week and test every animal in the southeast district. The animals that tested positive had to be shipped to the packers in Winnipeg. The farmer was paid market price for the edible part of the animal, which went into KLIK, and the contaminated parts went as animal food, for which the Government reimbursed the farmer.

Once the diseased animals were culled, the farmer had to sanitize the barn to John's satisfaction. After the T. B. testing was completed, Dr. Gariepy eventually went back to Quebec and John resumed his practice as before.

John had a small office where he had his library and his various medications. In many cases he would mix it as a liquid and/or fill capsules which he would dispense and sell to the farmers or administer to the animal himself. He also had jars of horse teeth which he had pulled over the years. This was an impor-

tant part of his work. If horses had tooth problems they would not eat and would be useless as a work animal. Horses' teeth had to be filed if they grew uneven and extracted if loose.

Horse dentistry required a full set of tools, which included files of various abrasiveness, various sizes of long-handled extractors, large and small cutters and, most importantly, the hold-open device to keep the animal's jaw wide open allowing John to work safely in the horse's mouth.

#### Memorable Cases.

During the late 1930s there was a farmer living east of Steinbach, who had a violent temper and also a drinking problem, and would abuse his wife and horses. It seemed that nothing could be done to stop this cruelty, until this man's brother-in-law asked John and the R. C. M. P. officer to accompany him to this man's farm and check the horses. John deemed the animals near death due to starvation and beatings.

This was enough to send the man to jail for six months and 10 lashes. The man was cured completely, but it was the cruelty to the animals that finally put a stop to the abuse. When he was released from jail he sold his farm and moved to another town, got a job and had a good life with his family.

During his years attending to sick animals, John ran across many birth defects, and deformed animals including extra legs. One of the memorable cases was the delivery of a two-headed calf, which lived for only a few minutes. The calf was beautifully formed with a short neck and two



*The Southeast has produced its share of agricultural oddities during the past decades and this two-headed calf was one of them. John S. Kehler poses with one of the unique discoveries of his veterinarian career. photo courtesy of Carillon News, 1950.*

heads.

John was not keen on working on small animals, but would not let them suffer. I remember occasions when people would bring in their dogs that had attacked a porcupine. The poor animals whose mouths and paws were full of quills cried in agony when John had to remove them. This was very painful for the animal as well as for me when I had to help.

And there were the sad times when people, usually from Winnipeg, brought their faithful pets in for humane euthanasia. Oh, the tears that were shed when the owners would pick up their much loved pets for burial.

During the war years the gasoline and tires were rationed. Because a Veterinarian was deemed an essential service, John was issued extra ration books and was able to carry on as before. The tires were poorly made from synthetic rubber so a good jack and tire-patching kit was also an essential part of John's travel kit.

#### Humour.

John had a trait in finding humor in most situations. I recall many humorous stories he

told us and many were also told about him.

One dark spring night, he received an urgent phone call from a farmer east of La Broquerie. The farmer could only speak a few words of English, and said "John come quick, my cow she has milk fever!" He gave his name, and that was all John needed. He quickly got dressed and jumped into his Model A. He left the yard almost on two wheels, as milk fever is a fatal illness if not treated within a short time of onslaught. He drove as fast as the rough roads allowed, finally turning into the driveway and jumping out of the car with satchel in hand while the car was still rolling, running into the barn.

There he saw the cow dead laying in the aisleway with the farmer holding up a lantern, standing over the cow with tears in his eyes because this was the best cow in his barn. He stood there silently.

Finally the farmer turned to John and said in broken English, "Funny ting she never die before".

On another occasion he was called to a farm south of Steinbach, and upon arrival, the farmer's wife came out to greet John, and pointing to the pig barn said "Jake is in the pig barn go on in. You'll recognize him, he's the one with the cap on."

On yet another occasion he was called to a widow's farm near Kleefeld. He was greeted by a young lad about 10 years old, who acted as if he was the man in charge, and asked if he could help? and

John assured him he most certainly could. They walked into the barn and the young lad pointed out the sick cow, and asked what he could do? John told him to stand behind the cow and he would go to the front of the cow. He then told the lad to lift the cow's tail, which he did. John asked "Can you see me?" The boy said "no." and John said "Just as I thought Faschtuped - constipated." The young boy told me this story after he grew up, and thought it very humorous, and was not offended.

#### Retirement.

John enjoyed his work and never refused anyone his services and in many cases was never paid for his work. In many instances the poorer farmers just could not come up with the few dollar fee he asked for. In some instances he accepted payment in moose or deer meat, which was a pleasant change from our steady diet of pork. John never kept a record of debts owed, possibly not a good business practice.

John retired at age 65 when his health slowed him down. But he enjoyed telling us stories about his years as a Veterinarian, especially the humorous ones. He left us with a life time of good memories.



*Veterinarian John S. Kehler with his medical bag, 1954.*