

INTRODUCTION

On Dec. 1, 1918, 7-year-old Glenn Rieke stood with his father on a Chicago street corner to witness the dawn of a new era.

Father and son gaped in amazement as horse-drawn vehicles sidled to an orchestrated stop alongside their brand-new, gas-powered cousins. Then everyone--the wagons, the automobiles, the crowd assembled on the sidewalk--watched tiny glowing filaments seen through tinted glass. When

ued on its way. Members of the crowd gave varied expressions to a singular refrain:

Amazing!

At that street corner, at that moment in time, the father and son were caught in a tidal wave of change. In six weeks since leaving their Montana homestead, they had bounced over dirt prairie roads in a Model T Ford, dodged the infamous Asian influenza epidemic, and witnessed frenetic celebrations over the end of what

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wrecked and sold. The money it brought bought five train tickets to Chicago. Unfortunately, there were six Riekes, so Glenn's older brother, Irvin, then 17, stayed in Minneapolis with a car-washing job and this instruction from his father: when you earn enough money for a ticket, meet us in Chicago. The farewell instruction included no street address to knock at, no landmark to look for, no telephone number to dial. Even in those simpler times, the goodbye scene played to a tune of hopeless, ridiculous chance.

"Meet us in Chicago."

Then six weeks later, Glenn and his father stood at the Windy City corner. While watching the magical light, Glenn glanced across the street and noticed a figure crossing diagonally towards them.

"Dad, there's Irvin!" he said.

Shaken by the pure chance of their reunion, his father answered, "Well, I'll be god-damned!"

Eight decades later, sitting at a desk he's worked at for more than half a century and leaning back in its creaky

they weren't important. But as years go on, you wish you'd kept a diary."

That's where this book comes in.

Through a series of interview ses-



Glenn, above, as he appeared at the height of his career.

sions conducted in the last half of 1998 and the beginning of 1999, Glenn T. Rieke recorded his memories. This

industrial complex side which G Rieke--started in a shop.

But there's so

Besides TV important people younger brother M in-law Jerry Kell Leonard Rathert. Legends in their c Fitzsimmons and Glenn's mother, M: his sister, Ruth, and Eric.

There's stories as the unearthed m the horse that fell ledge and the car not. There's won such as turning a sible into a glider s small boy's medi multi-million-dolla

There's won such as building a hand tools and meat out of a m

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tragedy, such as those shed for two toddler brothers who lost their lives to accident and illness. There's tears of laughter, such as those shed in the retelling of the horse with money in his belly and the outhouse with a voice in its bowels.

Plus, behind Glenn's personal tales is the dynamic curtain of world history. When Glenn was growing up, his father used horses to till the ground. To make changes in this book, Glenn communicated via e-mail. "There isn't any question," he concluded, "I've lived in the most exciting age of man!"

Finally, woven throughout this historic tale is the thread of fate. The chances that this book might have ended differently are great. If the Montana drought years hadn't been quite so severe, or if strip farming technology had come along sooner, the family might not have left the homestead. If TW hadn't received the inspiration of invention, or if Irvin hadn't gotten that first big order, the family business might have died a-borning. If the Auburn Commercial Club hadn't recognized its potential or if an early sale had

might not have survived to tell his tale.

True, Glenn hedged his bets with long, hard work. And, by pulling the one-armed bandit of opportunity so

A presidential perspective

Through the writing of this book, Glenn T. Rieke had lived during the terms of 16 U.S. Presidents. They are:

William H. Taft
Woodrow Wilson
Warren G. Harding
Calvin Coolidge
Herbert Hoover
Franklin D. Roosevelt
Harry S. Truman
Dwight D. Eisenhower
John F. Kennedy
Lyndon B. Johnson
Richard M. Nixon
Gerald R. Ford
Jimmy Carter
Ronald Reagan
George Bush
Bill Clinton

Yet, as Irv toward that Chicago each cast of the dice to fall in Glenn's fate predestination to hit it in which he tells the struggles—he would turn out as

For the reader time that this book to its appeal. Look life can be sobering long life studded adventures, wor gambles that pai work and hard pla vibrant backdrop o logical and societal 1900s—can be dow

And, as if hi Glenn stressed the the glory. As a resu he takes part as a other instances wh above the crowd, C he's standing on s ders.

The text that

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Rieke family history in detail. To give the story unity, Glenn remains the lead actor throughout, yet a host of other characters move in and out to prove his extraordinary life did not develop in a vacuum.

Hopefully the book succeeds on several levels. Yet, it's a small matter if it doesn't. Stripped of all ornaments, individual incidents that make up the text are fascinating in their own right.

In other words, you can't miss with good material.

Lee P. Sauer

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Editor's note: Several people helped gather material for this book. Glenn wished to give special thanks to two: his wife and "secretary" Thelma, and his Montana cousin, Mildred Hoge.