

us holding on to her mane or tail, or even lying on her back. She was so old that her teeth were ground down to the gums, and we had to feed her ground oats; but she was, in Pop's words, "limber as a rag." When other kids and I were riding together, sometimes I would slip away from the others and lay Sally down in tall weeds or some inconspicuous spot, then lie beside her while everyone searched for us.

Pop bought Sally from "Rattrap" Lewis, and he told us the story of Rattrap's neighbor losing corn from his corncrib and setting a bear trap inside the liftup door. Next morning the old horse-trader was sitting there with his arm in the trap. He bore the scars and the name for the rest of his life.

## Major

I don't know where Pop found Major, but he was more than just a slender old workhorse. For a while he served as my riding horse as well, always bareback. I can remember stretching my legs to get on board while trying to get him to stand close to a convenient fence. I also remember a time when Noel and I were riding Major, and I urged him to cross a great mud wallow made by the hogs in the creek where it crossed the South Pasture. Obediently he waded in, and promptly sank to his belly, unable to move. My only thoughts were how stupid I had been to urge him in, what Pop would think of such a childish act, and whether or not I could get Major, Noel, or myself out of the mess. I finally climbed off Major and mudded my way to the creek bank. To my great relief, with my weight gone, Major managed to lurch his way out and was none the worse for the wear. Major inspired the following verse, written over 50 years ago:

Major was a bay road horse.  
He was old and tired,  
and he limped on his game hind leg.  
But when a small boy bridled old Major  
and led him to the gate where he could climb up easily,  
and straddle the firm, broad, red back  
and ride down across the East Pasture,

down the steep paths made by the cattle,  
between the oak trees, past the rock pile,  
and out of sight behind the curve of the hill,  
Major became a swift Indian pony,  
ridden by a lean, straight warrior  
who pulled up and stared across the prairie  
to the village shining in the hot Illinois sun,  
then pounded at a gallop across the steep ravine,  
past the oaks and the rock pile,  
and up a dry creek bed and wheeled,  
breathless, then, at a call,  
stopped and sat, turned,  
and drove the cows home to be milked.

### **My First Calf**

When I was ten years old Pop bought me a red grade heifer, probably a Guernsey-Shorthorn cross, from Billy Musick. I remember the excitement of driving with Pop to the Musick farm, and through the pasture to Billy's barn, which stood in a wooded area back from the road. We brought the calf home in the back seat of the Ford and put her in a portable hog house in the chicken lot north of the house. The first night I took her a bucket of milk and discovered she didn't know how to drink. I was at a loss. I tried unsuccessfully to push her nose down into the bucket. She was very hungry, and so I kept wetting my finger in the milk and letting her suck on it. At some point I had a brilliant idea, wet my finger, and while she was sucking on it lowered it slowly into the milk in the bucket. Immediately she began drinking. I was so elated that I could hardly wait to rush to the barn and announce my brilliance to Pop.