By Terri Lang

The Thanksgiving meal was always the traditional turkey and dressing and all the trimmings at the Jack and Hermina Jochim home. It had to be a very large turkey to feed a family of 18. They weren’t all able to fit around the table in one sitting. “We could eat at the same time, but we did have a big group around the table,” Hermina said. “Jack and I would first eat with the boys and then the girls would eat.”

Hermina gave birth to 17 children within 22 years. A big family seemed to be an acceptable number. “I didn’t even think of having so many kids,” she said. “They had to help out and give us lots of them.”

As a child, I thought to myself, hoping to have a big family. “I didn’t ever think that having so many kids was unusual. She was just a few minutes old. She didn’t even think of having so many kids,” Hermina added.

Growing up in a large family, Hermina didn’t even think of having so many kids was unusual. She had 12 siblings. She was the daughter of Max and Philemonia Heidrich. She was born on March 14, 1924, and grew up on a farm near Krassna, southwest of Strasburg. On May 20, 1946, she married the man who would be helping raise their large family – Jack P. Jochim.

Jack was born on Dec. 3, 1925, and died on Dec. 17, 2005. His parents were Pete and Amelia Jochim, and their family farmed a farm near Winona, west of Strasburg until 1997. The Tom and Laura Jochim family now reside on that farmstead.

Hermina said she dated Jack for about a year prior to him asking the big question. Their dates were usually a polka! “He was such a good dancer, and I was glad he was learning the skill,” Hermina said.

Hermina remembered selling wheat for $1 a bushel. Times were not always easy. “But always we made it work and always had a crop,” she said. “We worked hard.”

In the house, cooking kept the gals busy. Rita said her mom made the best noodles and strudels. Hermina said they also provided clothes, hand-me-downs and grains such as wheat, oats and corn. She must have learned the skill from doing so much cooking while growing up.

“I remember mom would water it. She said her sisters and sisters-in-law had gardens and they would supply them with plenty of fresh vegetables.”

“Hermina Jochim remembers cooking for her large family of 18 at Thanksgiving.”

“At Christmas, each of us got gifts from mom and dad, and sometimes, toys, paper dolls, games, water colors – all the fun stuff!”

Hermina said they had to be helping raise their large family – Jack P. Jochim. “He could read,” she said. “He was such a good reader!”

“You never went away hungry,” Rita said. “Mom was a great cook.”

Hermina added that if they couldn’t get a basket that was not theirs, they had to leave it where it was. “It was hard living in a large family, so I didn’t even think that having so many kids was unusual.”

At Easter time, their mom would have all the kids make their own Easter baskets. “She would have us decorate a can and then we would put green grass in it, mom would hide the baskets outside, and we would all have to find them,” Rita said.

Hermina said they had very busy raising the family. “We figured out how to make the meals and sometimes, the kids would hide the baskets outside. We had to find them!”

Hermina said she did not have a garden as they had very sandy soils, and they would not have been able to water it. She said her sisters and sisters-in-law had gardens and they would supply them with plenty of fresh vegetables.

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Hermina Jochim remembers cooking for her large family of 18 at Thanksgiving.

This family photo was taken in the late 1970s. The Jochim family are, front row, left to right, Jolenta, Sheila, Hermina, Jack, Jeanette and Alice; middle row, Esther, Melissa (Missy), Glenn, Rita and Lavern; back row, Jerome, Florian, Gerard, Kevin, Davey, Penny and Danny. Jack and Hermina had 17 children. Their daughter, Mary, died when she was just a few minutes old.

At Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Strasburg, Jack and Hermina Jochim were honored on their 50th wedding anniversary. Jack passed away on Dec. 17, 2005. He was 90 years old.

The spouses of Hermina’s children who attended are, front row, left to right, Lori (Kevlin), Sue (Glen), Annette (Jerome) and Chuck Job (Sheila); back row, Terry Holzer (Rita), Doris (Kenny), Elaine (Florian), Pete Penoncillo (Jolenta), Sean Peck (Esther) and Wilbur Goldade (Jeanette).

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Rita (Heidrich) and Jack Jochim were married on May 20, 1946. They took this photo for their wedding picture.

On her 90th birthday, Hermina’s family gathered to celebrate with their mother, grand- mother and great-grandmother. Hermina Jochim’s children and grandchildren are Mary, LaVerne, Florian, Danny and Davey.

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Hermina (Heidrich) and Jack Jochim were married on May 20, 1946. They took this photo for their wedding picture.
The Jack and Hermina Jochim family were members of the St. Bernard Catholic Church. This photo was taken in 1976 for their church directory. Near Katzenbach, a characteristic formation on Cattail Creek, the mission church of St. Bernard’s was constructed in the early 1900’s, by Father Bernard for the settlers in the western half of the county. While it is said the mission had its beginnings before the turn of the century, until 1915 the church was served by the Benedictines. However, when Fr. Eichner was sent to Holy Trinity at Krassna, St. Bernard’s became a mission church of Krassna’s Holy Trinity Parish. In 1933, a larger basement church was constructed nearer the market roadway and the old church moved to the site to be used as a parish hall. In 1964 Holy Trinity closed its doors and St. Bernard’s became a mission of St. Anthony’s of Linton.

Hermina has 26 grandchildren and those able to attend her 90th birthday are, back row, left to right, Blaine Jangula, Justin Jochim, Jeremy Holzer, Cody Job, Josh Jochim and Jason Jochim; front row, Lisa Mueller, Melanie Burkhardt, Samantha Jangula, Hermina and Staci Jochim.

Hermina has 47 great-grandchildren but only 10 were able to be at her 90th birthday.

The Jack and Hermina Jochim family lived on a farm about 26 miles west of Strasburg. The house remains at that location near N.D. Highway 1804.

Hermina and Jack Jochim grew up on a farm west of Strasburg. Here, Jack is working on the farm with his dad, Pete Jochim. This photo was taken in the 1950s.

Hermina and Jack Jochim celebrated their 20th Wedding Anniversary in 1966.