

Preface

The Walters of Oakfield is a collection of short stories about the Walter Schrank family that lived at N2997 County Road B, Oakfield, Wisconsin, from 1950 to 1966. The narrator is the 10th of eleven children in the family called Ricky, whose voice alternates between that of a child and an adult in reflection.

Unlike a novel or novella, each of the chapters is a stand-alone story that a reader can complete in one sitting. Written in the story-telling style of a couple of contemporary Irish writers, including the memoirs of Frank McCourt (e.g., *Angela's Ashes*, *'Tis*, and *Teacher Man*) and literary style of Niall Williams's fiction (e.g., *This is Happiness*, *Time of the Child*, *As It is In Heaven*, *Four Letters of Love*, and *Only Say the Word*), *The Walters of Oakfield* is both memoir and autobiographically inspired fiction. Elements of the stories exist on a continuum of non-fiction to fiction: the setting is real; the stories are reconstructed from memories of a life there; some characters, although based on real persons, are fictionalized for literary effect; and much of the dialogue is imaginative. Even the family surname contains a bit of non-fiction amid the fiction; as my father's given name, Walter, the moniker of the family contains a modicum of truth. The result of these influences is an inspired narrative about life in a real place and of a time long gone by where, uniquely, and inimitably, we were the Walters.

Chapters One through Four are posted to this dedicated website. If my interest in this project continues in the coming years, additional chapters will be added to the site. If the stories turn out to be good enough,

they will be professionally bound and gifted as part of a contribution to the local history corner of the Oakfield, Wisconsin Public Library. I hope you enjoy reading the stories of this work-in-progress.

Fredrick A. Schrank
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