



# Looking for better opportunities

This is the story of two boys who left their homes and countries to seek jobs in the United States and became successful men.

George Schweser left Germany in 1867 as a 14 year old and became the founder and owner of Schweser's clothing, headquartered in Fremont. Roger Aguirre left El Salvador in 1989 as a 19 year old and invested his wages from steady labor in Nebraska's meat packing industry.

Each immigrant left their home because of few opportunities, and found new opportunities in Nebraska; each invested in better lives for their families.



Ty Smith's great-grandfather, George Schweser, immigrated to the United States from Germany at the age of 14.

## Smith's great-grandfather immigrated from Germany

Ty Smith: Germany 1867

Schweser's is a landmark on Sixth Street in downtown Fremont and was founded by an immigrant from Germany, George Schweser. He was born in 1853 in Coburg, Germany, a town in central Germany located near the Itz River.

Looking down from a high hill over Coburg is one of Germany's largest castles built in 1225; for a time, Martin Luther resided in the castle while translating the Bible into German.

When George was only 14, he left his German hometown because of great poverty and moved to the United States. He knew of relatives living in Elgin, Ill., and so he traveled to Illinois and became an apprentice in a general store and saved his money.

By the time George was 27, he had saved enough money to "go west" and open a business. He heard that there was store for sale in David City. So, in 1880, with \$700 in his pocket, he took the train to Kansas. But, because there was no railroad going north and he didn't was to spend any money on a horse and buggy, George walked 100 miles from the train station to David City and his future home.

With his savings, he purchased a store in David City which became Schweser's general store, selling groceries, dry goods and furniture. George became known in the community as "Honest George" for his values of honesty, customer service and hard work.

George married Elise Baumgartner Schweser, an educated woman he met while living in Illinois. The couple had five children, four sons and one daughter; George was proud that he was able to send all five children to college. His sons joined him in his business, including his youngest son, Fred Schweser.

After his father retired in 1928, Fred and brother Harold Schweser ran the store. They could see that the retail environment was chang-



Photo Courtesy Ty Smith

George Schweser immigrated from Germany to the United States at the age of 14.

ing with the automobile, improved roads and national competition and that a single store operation would soon be outdated. In 1929, they purchased the Columbus store and ten years later bought the Fremont store. After the death of Harold in 1940, Fred took over leadership of the company and moved its headquarters to Fremont, where he continued to expand the company.

Beginning in the 1970s, Fred's daughter, Barbara Schweser Smith, led the company, centralizing many activities and offering specialty stores that featured well-priced fashions and quality service. By 2000, the company had 18 stores in five states. Her son, Ty Smith, became president of the company in 2003 and he has continued to lead the company's growth, expanding into additional Midwest communities.

Soon the initial economic opportunities first cultivated by Ty's great-grandfather in the late 1800s will support the opening of the company's 23rd store in Albert Lea, Minn.

## Aguirre sought a better life in U.S.

Roger Aguirre: El Salvador 1998

Roger Aguirre made the decision to leave his country El Salvador and seek economic opportunity in the United States.

In Spanish, El Salvador means "Republic of the Savior," named by the Spanish conquistadors in the 1500s. El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated country in Central America with tropical forests, mountains and many coffee trees.

"I left my dearest El Salvador to go to the land of dreams called the USA," Aguirre said, "and maybe like many other dreamers try to give a better future to my family."

In 1989, Aguirre left the small town he was born and raised in, Talnique, El Salvador. His father, Jose, a tailor and barber, did not want him to go but feared for his son's life. The 26-year civil war (1980-2006) was destroying opportunities; neighborhoods were dominated by "death squads," children huddled in gutters to keep down from random fire and both the military and guerrillas were always looking for young boys.

At his father's urging, Aguirre left "his dearest El Salvador" at 19 and arrived in Los Angeles, where his older brother, Elmer, and his wife lived. His brother helped him get a job working as a janitor for a telephone company and taught him English.

After commuting two and a half hours a day for two years, Aguirre moved to Nebraska.

"I remember it was April 14, 1996, when we arrived at a town called Schuyler; it was 11:30 at night and it was something new and different," he said.

He had never seen "brown trees" before.

"I was shocked; it is always green in El Salvador," he said.

Aguirre got a job at Excel working on the "cut floor" bagging meat. Four men bagged 1,500 pieces of meat in two hours. It was hard repetitive work.

In 1998, Roger took a job

with Hormel in Fremont, continuing his work on the "cut floor." On the line next to him was Darcy Dobberstine, who was born and raised in Fremont and who would eventually become Roger's wife and the mother of his son, Cole.

Dobberstine, whose ancestors were immigrants from Germany and Czechoslovakia, followed in her grandfather's footsteps and began working for Hormel in 1997. Her grandfather worked for Hormel his whole life, from the time he was 18 years old. She found herself trimming ribs for Famous Dave's and Tony Roma's working next to a Hispanic man with an American sounding name, Roger. (Roger was named after an American baseball player.)

"I didn't like him at first. I didn't know him," Darcy confessed. "One day, one of my friends asked if I would ever date a Hispanic and I said, 'no way! I thought, he must be illegal, or have fake papers because his name is Roger. But look at us today!'"

The couple got to know each other while working on the line; they became best friends for years and then fell in love and married. Their son, Cole, is now 4.

While life in the United States has provided economic opportunities not available in El Salvador, it has also been difficult. Aguirre described how hard it is to live discrimination.

"I have known disrespect," he said. "I try to show respect to everyone; Respect is very important."

But most difficult, he said, is being so far way from family.

"My father died in El Salvador and I could not be there for my mother," he said.

And yet, Aguirre, who is studying to become a naturalized citizen, is thankful for the opportunities he has had in the United States.

## Guard holds meeting

The Fremont unit of the Nebraska Army National Guard will be holding a Family Readiness Group Town Hall Meeting this week.

The event begins at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Fremont Armory, 910 N. Lincoln Ave.

The discussion will provide information from the 67th Brigade Commander, Colonel Philip Stemple, to families of the Fremont unit, the community and employers regarding the upcoming deployments for B Troop 1-134th Cavalry.

Everyone is welcome to attend.

## Curves holds food drive

Curves in Fremont is collecting non-perishable items and monetary donations for local food banks this month.

Members who donate a bag of groceries or make a minimum donation of \$30 during March will receive a reusable Curves grocery freezer bag for free. Non-members who do likewise until March 20 can join Curves for free.

As part of this effort, Curves locations in the area will be participating in a company-wide contest for the most food drive donations collected by Curves locations across the nation. Winners will receive one of several cash prizes to be donated to their local food bank.

## POLICE BEAT

### Man faces several charges

Tribune Staff

A 20-year-old Fremont man was arrested Tuesday afternoon after punching out a window of a vehicle, Fremont Police reported.

Robert Hardy was charged with third-degree assault, criminal mischief, disturbing the peace and disorderly conduct. He remained in Dodge County Jail this morning and his bond was set at \$3,000.

Lt. Kurt Bottorff said Hardy had punched out the window of the vehicle during a dispute, and glass from the window cut a 2-year-old child who was in the back seat, Bottorff said the child sustained minor cuts in the incident.

### Police look into thefts

Tribune Staff

Fremont Police are investigating a Tuesday afternoon report of items stolen from a vehicle.

Lt. Kurt Bottorff said a cell phone, digital camera and cash were taken from a van parked in the 800 block of North Broad Street. The loss was estimated at \$205.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call CrimeStoppers at 727-4002 or Fremont Police at 727-2677.

### Police probe break-ins

Tribune Staff

Fremont Police are investigating break-ins to a pair of glass businesses reported Tuesday.

Lt. Kurt Bottorff said a door was damaged and cash was stolen from Fremont Glass in the 200 block of East Fourth Street. The loss was estimated at \$500.

Officers also received a report of damage to a desk drawer at Lindy Glass in the 1700 block of East 23rd Street. Bottorff said the damage was estimated at \$30.

Anyone with information about these incidents is asked to call CrimeStoppers at 727-4002 or Fremont Police at 727-2677.

1867: Ty Smith's great-great grandfather, George Schweser, arrives in Nebraska from Germany.

1998: Roger Aguirre arrives in Fremont from El Salvador.

1856 1870 1890 1910 1930 1950 1970 1990 2010

Periods of large immigrant arrivals throughout Fremont's history. ■ 1856-1890: Mostly northern Europeans; ■ 1900-1920: Mostly southern Europeans; ■ 1990-present: Mostly Latin American, Asians, Europeans.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

"Building Fremont: Immigrants 1856 to present" is a special four-week project of the Fremont Tribune, Fremont Area Art Association, United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 22 and Nebraska Is Home Fremont. It features photography by Dean Jacobs. Personal stories were compiled by Nebraska Is Home Fremont.