

George Dawes Sr. of La Crosse

He Invented First Soap Flakes

By **PAT MOORE**
Tribune Correspondent

The man who invited the first commercially practical process for the manufacture of soap flakes died in a local nursing home Friday afternoon. Up until now few people knew that George F. Dawes Sr., 89, had invented and patented such a process in his home at 1917 Liberty St.

That's the way Dawes wanted it.

One of his surviving sons, George Jr., of 1913 Liberty St. said his father was "introverted, shy and retiring."

"All his life, he wanted to be anonymous. There was never any publicity given to him, that I know of. He always said that after his death he would like to be known as the man who invented the process but he didn't want any publicity while he was alive. I think he felt kind of bad because he never got anything out of it," the son said.

Dawes had patented the process in 1921 and sold it in 1929 for \$500 to Procter and Gamble Co.

"About a week later," his son relates, "someone came and offered him \$1,500 plus royalties." Dawes experimented on his theory for 10 years, taking bar soap and baking it in an old oil stove oven.

"Through temperature and humidity control," said the younger Dawes; "you could take soap and after it was baked, crumble it or flake it." All the soap companies, at that time, he says, were working on a process; but none had come up with one that was workable.

His father tried other inventions. "but nothing that was ever patented. He was very creative," his son added.

Dawes at one time had a shoe factory in La Crosse in the 1600 block of Liberty St. That was around 1906.

Dawes was born in Fond du Lac on Dec. 1, 1884. He had an eighth-grade education. One of his sisters was the "school marm" and taught Dawes in the seventh and eighth grades. That same sister, Mildred, now deceased, is the mother of actress Mildred Natwick, who is featured in this week's TV Guide as "Thoroughly Modest Millie." George Dawes Jr. recalled that Miss Natwick's last visit to La Crosse was about 1957.

Two children, a son, William, and a daughter, Frances, were of Dawes' first marriage to Martha Krase. Martha died a few years later of cancer and Dawes married her older sister, Elizabeth. George Jr. and Edith were born of that union.

Dawes Jr. recalls that his mother "suffered right along with him. He never got over the fact that he had sold the process so cheaply. It was a heartbreak."

He is survived by two sons, William of La Crescent and George Jr. of 1913 Liberty St.; two daughters, Mrs. Robert Snyder of West Salem and Mrs. B. J. Herman of Madison; two sisters, Mrs. Emma Nelson of Sioux Falls, S.D., and Sister Eulogia Dawes of Sinsinawa, Wis.; 13 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be Monday at 11 a.m. at the graveside in the Oak Grove Cemetery and friends may call at the Nelson Funeral Home, Sunday between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m.



George F. Dawes Sr.