What I Remember

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Prologue

When I was born in 1922, the “great war to end all wars and make the world safe for democracy" was over with the peace treaty finally signed the year before. President Wilson's dream of a League of Nations was soundly smashed. Republican Warren Harding of Ohio was elected president, not for his presidential capabilites but as a figurehead that the seasoned politicians could control. Warren Harding, who in many ways was an average American, stated that America's greatest need was healing, not heroics, normalcy and restoration rather than revolution. But what was normal? The strains and tensions of the war had blurred the former standards of what was normal and good. The upheaval of the draft snatching thousands of men and women from their homes and sending them to battlefields in Europe could not be erased. "How can you keep them down on the farm after they've seen Paree?" was a saying that I often heard Pa quote.

Even then the seeds for World War II were being sown. Adolf Hitler was leading 10,000 Bavarian Fascists. Benito Mussolini rallied the Italians who were dissatisfied with her victorious Allies and what they received in the peace settlement. He founded the first "fasci" or political group and adopted a program of passionate nationalism. He became so powerful that in October of 1922, King Emmanual surrendered his throne and called Mussolini to head the government. He used any means to accomplish his ends, murder, exile, and prison camps were common punishments for any who disagreed with his policies.

In England, Lloyd George was Prime Minister with Winston Churchill as Colonial Secretary. Churchill helped to establish the state of Iraq, negotiated the difficult Anglo-Irish treaty, and drafted title deeds for the Palestine mandate.

In the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt ran for Vice President on the Democratic ticket against Harding. In the summer of 1921, he suffered the

attack of polio that left him physically but not mentally crippled. Even with his disability, in 1922 he was Chairman of rthe American Construction Council and was instrumental in putting a moratorium on all speculative building for several months.

Hitler, Mussolini, Churchill, and Roosevelt were to have a profound effect on my life. Their voices came over the radio during the thirties clouding my school days with the threat of immanent war. The explosive Hitler spat out his venom from across the Atlantic. Churchill' s clipped logic and Roosevelt' s "Fireside Chats" are never-to-be-forgotten voices from the past.

Nineteen twenty two was a time of prosperity. Bankers said that times were good. The farmers cried about poor crops and unemployment. Immigration laws were so tight that there was a labor shortage. Steel mills were forced to use a 12-hour day which created a great uproar. There was much labor unrest with John L. Lewis as President of the United Mine Workers leading 550,000 coal miners out on strike. At the same time, 1,200,000 railroad men were promoting a strike that affected half their number.

Over 300,000 motor cars were produced that year with the Ford Motor Company instituting the first installment plan only in reverse. It was possible to own a Model T Ford by making a deposit of $5 and paying monthly until the car was paid for and taken home.

The availablity of cars was especially significant for those of us who lived in the farm country. We were no longer limited to using horses for transportation and could to go to church, town and visiting by Model T. Roads that were still little more than dirt trails were only usable in good weather.

. The first commercial airline from New York to Chicago was planned in 1922 using a rigid dirigible fueled with helium. It would carry 50 passengers and leave New York at 6 in the morning and arrive early the next day with provision for passengers to sleep enroute. Mail was then being transported by air but planes were handicapped by having to fly only during the day. To solve this problem, giant sweeping lights or aerial beacons were placed in Chicago, Iowa City, North Platte, and Cheyenne with flares in between to guide the planes through the night.

Radio was in its infancy with the first broadcasting of a popular event being the election returns of the Harding-Cox presidential election by Station KDKA in Pittsburgh, radio station WEAP in New York broadcast the first commercially sponsored program.

Although motion pictures were considered a cheap form of entertaiment at first, by 1922 they were well established. Charlie Chaplin, Pola Negri, Jackie Cooper, Ben Turpin, Marion Davies, Rin Tin Tin, Lillian Gish, Mary Pickford, Lon Chaney, Gloria Swanson, Buster Keaton, and William S. Hart were movie stars that continued to shine all through the 20' s and 30' s. In the early years, movie theaters were only available to city dwellers but they branched out to small towns making "going to the show" the high point of the week. Movies brought not only entertainment but the whole outside world into our daily lives--new styles, new language, new ways of thinking. Thomas Edison said that in 20 years children would be taught through movies not books. Time magazine was not to be published until 1923. Robert Frost was "Poet in Residence" at Ann Arbor, Carl Sandburg. Amy Lowell and Louis Untermeyer were well-known poets in this decade of the beginning of contemporary literature.

In the field of health and medicine, tuberculosis was the leading killer claiming 90,452 lives that year. Cancer was next with 80,938 estimated deaths . At that

time, the word was unmentionable, so many cases were not identified. Influenza, pneumonia, heart, and kidney diseases took their toll. There were no “”miracle drugs” to combat diseases. Dr. Alexis Carrel discovered white cells in the blood (leukocytes) that year. Scopolomine was discovered and used as a drug to relieve pain and also used as a truth serum. Dr. Serge Varnoff, a Russian surgeon in Paris, was doing gland transplants for rejuvenation. We are still searching for the "fountain of youth.” Dr. Henry Sheridan of Chicago reconstructed Fanny Brice' s nose with plastic surgery and was dubbed a "nose quack" and chased out of Chicago. Birth control was a hot issue even then with the United States and Japan being the only countries that placed abolute restictions on the dissemination of information. It was feared that having access to this kind of knowledge would lead to widespread immorality.

While these events were taking place far from my birthplace in Saskatchewan, Canada on June 24th, 1922 not far from the Saskatchewan River, they had a great influence on how I would live my life. The prosperity of the early twenties contained the seeds of the great depression which was only cured by the false prosperity of World War II The beginnings of World War II were already fermenting in Europe and would explode in 1941 when I was starting my own life as an adult. The communication, transportation,and medical advances have given me choices and opportunites that would have been impossible had I been born a century earlier.

Early Years

We were lost in the wheatfield! I was only three years old but had taken my twenty-eight month old brother, Buddy, by the hand and followed our dad out to the pasture at milking time. We knew we wouldn' t get to go along if he saw us so we kept out of sight by walking along the edge of the field. Suddenly, we were surrounded by the ripe wheat stalks that loomed high over our heads. Every way we turned there was more and more wheat. We were badly frightened and in our panic beat at the stalks frantically trying to find a way out. Fortunately, my dad happened to glance over at the field and saw the wheat heads moving and guessed what was happening. What a welcome sight it was to see his tall figure striding through the grain!

My mother remembers: "I looked out of the window and here he came walking home from the pasture with one of you on each shoulder carrying a pail of milk in each hand."

We were living on a wheat farm in Saskatchewan, Canada owned by a bachelor farmer, Osborne Holen, where my dad was the "hired man" and my mother the "hired girl." That summer our little sister, Joyce, was born so fast that there was no time to get the doctor so my dad had to take his place. In all the confusion, we were banished from the house with no explanation of what was going on. Buddy and I were standing outside of the house trying to peek through the window. Of course, we were too short to see anything but we sensed that whatever was happening was pretty important. A toddler myself,
I think that was whenI assumed the role of "little mother" and took on things that were beyond me. My mother remembers the worry she had about the many dangers there were for children on the farm especially now that she had a new baby, However, we found farm a wonderful, exciting place to explore.

We were especially intrigued by the big red barn with a huge hay mow where nine horses had their stalls. King, Prince, Big Pete, Little Pete, Barney, June, Nancy, Vic, and Jack lived in the barn during the summer when they weren' t working in the field. In the fall they were turned out to graze. Going out to the barn was a thrilling adventure when our parents took us to see the horses munching hay in their managers and switching their tails. We were kept safely back from the heels that could be dangerous. We got to climb up the twenty-foot stairway to the hay mow where we loved to peer down through the opening over each manger and watch the horses heads as they chewed their hay.

here came a day when we ran out of things to do. Our mother was busy with the baby and our dad was out in the field. There was no one to take us out to the barn so I took Buddy by the hand and away we went. The horses were all out in the field so there was nothing to see on the ground floor. Wanting to carry on our adventure, we clambered up the stairs to the haymow and played in the hay. When we tired of that, we explored around and discovered the big open door where hay was loaded in. We were standing at the edge looking out at the countryside when our mother missed us. She was horrified when she saw us standing there.

"I left the baby in the house and ran out to the barn," she told me in describing the incident. "I was afraid to startle you so I quietly crept up the stairway and talked you away from the edge. I was so thankful that you were safe that I couldn' t scold you. I just made you promise that you would never do that again."

During the growing season, the farm work revolved around the crops. While most of the work was handled by Mr. Holen and my dad, when harvest time came a threshing crew took over. Then we were in a constant fever of excitment at the noise of the machinery, the smell of new straw, and all of the

horses and wagons going back and forth. It would all begin with the "whoo, whoo, whoo" of the steam engine's whistle in the distance and then with much puffing and chugging it came into view as we watched from the safety of the house. The machinery was set up in the barn yard, with a long belt bringing power from the engine. The men driving bundle wagons went out into the wheat fields, came back with their loads and pitched the bundles into the hopper. There a conveyer belt moved the bundles through the machine where the wheat kernals were separated from the straw. The grain came out through a spout into the wagon and the straw flew out through the blower. The straw pile got higher and higher and the smell of straw and smoke pervaded everything. A cook car and a bunk car traveled with the crew and and was parked near enough to the house so we could go back and forth on our own. The cook's kitchen was filled with aromas of cookies baking, fat loaves of bread, big roasts. His face was red from the heat of the stove; he mopped his face with his sleeve as he worked but busy as he was, he always had a broad smile and cookies for us.

Three years before that on June 24, 1922, I was born on my great uncle and aunt's farm near Macrorie, about sixty miles south of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. My dad served in the army during World War I in France and Germany and still wasn't ready to settle down in Minnesota so my parents left their family and friends and all that was familiar to build a new life in Canada. They took the long train ride to Saskatchewan where they lived at first with my mother's aunt and uncle, John and Anna Farden. Anna, her sister, Gunda, and her two brothers, Knute and Jake, immigrated from Norway and farmed in that wide-open country near the South Saskatchewan River that dominated the area. My mother relates:

"The river had steep rocky banks covered with small scrubby hardwoods. There were sand bars in the river and it was treacherous. Many people drowned

in its dark swirling waters. When the ' freshet' was on in the spring, the river was close to a mile wide."

The fall after I was born we needed a home of our own so we moved to the "Storbo Place," about a mile and half from the town of Braaten. My mother recalls:

"The house was really a shack. The walls were so thin that the wind went right through them. In the wintertime the temperature could go to forty below. Many times the water in the wash basin would be frozen solid in the morning."She further relates, "I wrapped you up in your dad' s sheepskin coat to keep you warm. The coyotes howled at night and I was so scared when we were home alone that we went to bed at seven o' clock. That didn' t help much because we were awake at three." During that time, my dad was a member of a threshing crew and worked on neighboring farms so my mother and I lived alone

The next year, we moved to the Henry Cole farm about seven miles north of Macrorie. Buddy was born there. My mother describes that time: "There wasn' t a well so every day, Dad would hitch our white-faced horse to the "stone boat" and bring back cans of water." I have a snapshot of my dad and me on the stone boat, which was simply a small platform with runners instead of wheels.

It was a big improvement when we moved to Mr. Holen' s farm near Ardath. My mother remembers, "He had a nice house and barn we and we were comfortable there even though we worked hard." Although we lived about twenty miles from the Fardens, we still got together with them for special occasions. I was in awe of the Norwegian uncles, Knute and Jake, but delighted with the Farden' s little girls, Randi, four, and Gertude, six years old. Gertrude seemed incredibly tal-- I wondered if I would ever be that big!

We stayed in Canada until I was three and a half years old. My parents missed their families back in Minnesota; the future didn' t look very bright in

Canada. My dad' s father died that summer really emphasizing the distance separating them from their old home. That November they packed us up and we got on the train in Conquest for the long ride to Winnipeg where we stayed overnight and took another train for the trip down to Twin Valley, Minnesota. The huffing and puffing of the train' s engine, the clatter of all those cars was really scary for little kids from the farm. We were very shy and bashful and clung together for the first few hours but gradually we responded to friendly people on the train. I remember the feeling of warmth as we played and got acquainted. We had two big trunks and a leather valise that held everything we owned. My mother in looking back on that trip said: “Every time the train stopped, the heat went off so it got really cold, I bundled Joyce up so warm that her face was red as a beet! What a time I had keeping all of you comfortable on that long trip.” Even though I only lived in Canada a short time, the freedom of the open spaces left a lasting impression on me.. When I went back through that country many years later, I had a real feeling of coming home.

Sarlet Fever

It was Christmas Day, 1925 in that farmhouse in northern Minnesota. Snow was deep and the windows were heavily coated with patterns of frost. The big heater roared day and night to keep out the bitter winter cold. There was a Christmas tree but it wasn't in the large dining room as it had been on other Christmases but in the downstairs bedroom adjacent where Buddy and I were sick with scarlet fever.

We had just arrived from Canada a few weeks before. It was a happy reunion for my parents but frightening for me to have all those grown-up uncles and aunts laughing and teasing. They didn't realize how shy we were. We had never known anything but our own little family. I remember taking Buddy and hiding under the kitchen table where we could peek out at the family around the edges of the tablecloth.

What was to be a stay of only a few days turned into almost a whole winter when scarlet fever swept through the family. It all began when we visited my dad's sister and two little girls, Dodo and Bub. Dodo was sick but even so let me play with her doll and I picked up the germs. Grandma Purrier's bedroom became a sick room with the never-to-be forgotten scarlet fever smell pervading everything. Grandma was deathly afraid of drafts and chills under the best conditions; now we were tucked under many woolen quilts that she pieced together from old coats. The fire in the stove couldn't match the fire in my throat and body. The room was a red haze. The Christmas tree glimmered in the corner and those who were well enough tried to encourage me to play with my present, a little wind-up rooster that walked through the bedclothes. In my half-delirious state, it was a threatening monster and I cried to have it taken away.

The situation was frightening enough to have Dr. Bothne drive his horses

and cutter out from Ulen, about eight miles away. I had never seen a doctor before but his portly white-haired presence brought reassurance that all would be well. He opened up his black bag and got out what he called “powders.” My mother mixed it with jelly but even then it was bitter.

I felt I was a big girl but Buddy was still a baby who needed to be rocked. He lost his place when our little sister was born that summer and now when he was so sick, could only be comforted by my dad rocking him hour after hour. Memories of seeing them at the foot of the bed rocking, rocking, rocking--my dad dozing off and slowing down in weariness and Buddy’s little voice saying, “Bock Buddy” are with me still.

We were quarantined for weeks as the bug went through the whole family. No one was allowed to come into the house and no one could leave. The farm was self-sufficient but some supplies had to come from town. An order was placed by phone to the grocery store and picked up by whoever of the uncles was well enough to drive the team and sled. Our isolation was complete but to me, a whole new world opened up. The weeks of illness and being cared for expanded my life to include a whole new family.

The Dilges Place

Our first farm in Northern Minnesota was about six miles east of Ulen. When my dad rented the quarter section (one hundred sixty acres) he took over the cows, horses and machinery from the previous renters so it was all ready to go. There were two teams of horses to pull the wagon, hayrack, plow, cultivator, drill, binder, mower and rake. The horses were the only source of power until 1936 when he bought the first John Deere tractor. Barney and Coaley were the number one team and hardest working. Barney had never been broken for riding but Coaley, a gentle mare, allowed us to crawl all over her. Whatever we did was fine with her. She didn't object to wearing fancy hats or when we braided her mane with ribbons in it. We rode her bareback and she never tried to bump us off. It was different with Tom. He was a lazy bay who let us ride him but almost had to be pushed to make him leave the barn. When we finally got him far enough away and turned him around, he'd take off at a brisk trot, and if he got a chance, would try to go under a tree limb and brush us off. Duster was a bronco who had broken his ankle so he walked with a limp. He'd been demoted to doing farm work but he was also a good and willing horse to ride. We didn't have a saddle so bareback was our only choice and we got good at clutching the mane if we needed an anchor.

Along with the horses, we added half a dozen cows to the farmyard. Jane was a big, bony Holstein who gave lots of low-fat blue milk. I'll never forget Check, a white spotted Guernsey,who had a mean disposition. She had a talent for breaking out of whatever fence was there and also seemed to know just the right moment when the sweet corn was ready. The night before, she would break out of whatever enclosure she was in and wreck the corn, chomping on every ear. Every year, my mother tried to outsmart Check but it was no use; if

the fence was too tight for her to crawl under, she would just jump over. We made a kind of collar out of three boards that we could put around her neck but even then, she got out and did her damage.

Every farm had a working dog to help herd the animals back and forth to the pasture; Mooch joined us as a puppy and he lived with us all his. life. He was a big yellow dog, part German Shepherd and it was said he had a little wolf in him. He was a complete failure at his main duty. He'd nip at a cow's head instead of her heels getting them all confused. He made up for it by being a good watch dog. He was always with us and if anyone that he considered a stranger approached, he circled around us until he was sure that we were safe. He had a great friendship with a gander that we had gotten with the aim of fattening him up for Christmas dinner but who turned out to be another pet. They always slept together, were inseparable, and when the gander drowned in a rainstorm, Mooch buried him out in the field and carefully made a nice mound over the grave. Cats were also an important part of the barnyard and provided an endless supply of kittens to play with.

The house on the Dilges place was a narrow white-frame two-story building. There was a closet in an upstairs bedroom where I took Buddy and Joyce to play barbershop. I watched my dad getting a haircut in the nearby town of Flom and was sure that I knew just what to do.. I found a pair of scissors and went to work first on Buddy and then on Joyce, taking out chunks of hair, then I finished up on myself. I'll never forget the shreiks when my mother discovered us. She kept us home for weeks until our hair grew out again.

A huge boxelder tree out in the yard was a great place for a tire swing. The three of us were never out of something to do. At age four, I was the ringleader and the younger ones followed my directions. We had cousins only a mile or so away, Dodo and Bub, who also joined our fun.

In August of 1928, Denny was born and in September, I started first grade in the one-room school about a mile away. My mother hadn't planned on sending me to school that fall but my second cousin, Lois, who was in the fourth grade, begged me to come and visit school with her. The teacher gave me a primer and after that, there was no keeping me home. School had been in session for two weeks but I quickly caught up. The teacher was a young man with a name I thought was funny "Lester Hefner" and repeated it over and over again. Lois was a bridge between home and the new world of school so my first experience was a good one. I was just getting settled in when it was time to move again. We moved all of the household goods, animals and machinery to a farm about five miles northwest and in another school district.

The Geithman Place

The Giethman farm was a wonderful place for kids to grow up on. The wood-frame house was medium large with a kitchen, dining room, living room and a big screened porch downstairs. There were three large bedrooms upstairs that seemed really roomy at first but during the eight years we lived there, three more brothers were born, Dale in 1930, Jimmie in 1933, and Lee Jr. in 1934 so there was a lot of doubling up. Even though we were crowded, there was always room for company. Little kids could be stashed at the foot of the bed if necessary. The white-iron double bedsteads had link springs and straw ticks for mattresses. Every fall after threshing they were filled with fresh straw and were soft and fluffy. By the next summer, they were really flat. There were patchwork quilts made from wool coats and filled with wool batting for the coldest nights. We doubled up from necesssity and also to keep warm in the winter. Summer nights were hot and humid and we were tormented by bed bugs that hid all day but came out when we went to bed and kept biting us all night . We didn't have pesticides so the best we could do was take the beds apart outside, pour kerosene over them and set them on fire. It was a constant battle.

The house was heated by a wood-burning heater with a stove pipe going out through the chimney. Splitting and carrying wood was a never-ending chore, especially in the winter. What little heat there was upstairs came through a register in the ceiling over the stove. The cast-iron Home Comfort Range was the queen of the kitchen and it needed constant tending. Getting just the right amount of fire going to get the perfect temperature was a real art Scouting the grove around the house for kindling and then adding the larger chunks at the right time took skill. The top of the range had four lids--pans could go right over the fire if necessary but the top of the stove was best. The oven was below and

to the right and at the left side there was a reservoir to heat water. Above was a warming oven to keep food warm. The coffee pot was always on and ready. Coffee grounds and water were added as needed. I was involved in cooking at an early age and remember standing on a chair beating eggs for a cake. I was a good cake baker and never had to worry about failures because my little brothers would eat anything I made. Going down to the cellar and bringing up a dishpan full of potatoes to peel was a daily chore. We filled up a kettle with about ten pounds for noon-time dinner. Leftovers were then fried for supper. In summer, instead of going down in the cellar, we went out to the garden and dug new potatoes from under the plants. Finding nice big ones was like winning a treasure hunt.

We used kerosene lamps for lighting and cleaning the soot out of the glass chimneys every day was one of our chores. During the summer, days were long with the sun coming up before five and not going down until after nine but during the winter we lit the lamps by four o' clock in the afternoon. Everyone gathered around the dining room table for schoolwork or games. Kerosene had to be purchased and was carefully used.

The screened porch was a lifesaver in the summer. On hot nights, we could sleep there protected from mosquitoes. During the day, it was a good place to shell peas and string beans and when the chores were done, a place to play paper dolls or read. In winter, the porch became a deep freeze for the meat.

Water from the well was pumped by hand to fill the horse tank and cooler and was carried to the house pail after pail. The water was ice cold and filled the four-foot round wooden tank that chilled the five-gallon cream cans and whatever else needed cooling. For ordinary use, water was heated in the teakettle on top of the stove and in the reservoir but on washday we used a copper boiler that

covered half of the stove The water was so hard it had to be softened with lye before it could be used for washing. The lye would bind with the minerals in the water and the resulting foam was skimmed off. Water for the Saturday night baths was also heated in the washboiler and put in a round galvanized tub in front of the kitchen range where one after the other of us took his turn. Rain barrels under the eaves of the house caught the soft water in summer that was necessary for shampoos and hand washing. In winter we melted snow in dishpans on top of the stove. It took mountains of snow to get enough soft water but was worth the effort.

Underneath the house a dirt cellar was the storage place for potatoes and vegetables.There were shelves for the many jars of vegetables and fruit and we canned during the summer months. In June, July and August, when thunderstorms and cyclones were common, we spent many a terrified hour down there listening to the crashing of thunder and the roaring of the wind hoping that the house wouldn't blow away.

A necessary extension of the house was the two-hole outhouse at the end of a path through the boxelder grove. In winter it was a cold trip out there and many times we had to brush snow off the seat. There was no lingering then but in the summer time, it was a place to hide out from chores. The past year's Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogs were used as toilet paper and for browsing.

Outbuildings in the farmyard housed the animals and chickens. A granery stored the grain that was harvested in the fall and was a great attraction. It was fun to jump in the bins but we were warned about the possibility of getting buried and suffocating and were very careful around it. Taking care of the animals was a lot of work with cleaning out the manure and bringing in hay and feed. Since I

was a girl, I didn't get involved in too much of that but did enjoy the pleasant times, playing with the calves in the summer when they were small. They became pets and we grieved when it was time to ship them to the slaughter house. The mournful wail of the train whistle coming from about five miles away was painful--we knew that our pets were being taken away. Selling the "vealers" was a necessary part of the farm income so it had to be that way.

At milking time we liked to gather around my dad and listen to his stories as he milked. He read a lot and delighted in telling stories about Africa. with lurid tales of boa constrictors that would wrap themselves around their victims and smother them. Kittens abounded and they quickly learned to sit with their mouths open so he could squirt milk into them. Each of us had to try his hand at milking and it was never my favorite chore. The cows didn't like our fumbling and would switch their tails in our faces and put a foot in the pail whenever they got a chance. If they were especially stubborn, they could withhold their milk so it behooved us to get on good terms with them. I managed to turn that chore over to my younger brothers in short order.

Twice a day, morning and evening, the milk was brought to the house where it was run through a cream separator. Poured into a big metal bowl at the top where it went downward into a rotating bowl, it was powered by one of us turning the crank. The centrifugal force separated the cream and skim milk, each coming out of its separate spout into a five-gallon can for the milk and a smaller one for the cream. All of the parts of the separator had to be washed and scalded every day--a job for the girls of the house. The cream was our source of income and was stored in five-gallon cans in the cooler and then taken to the local Land O' Lakes creamery where it was made into butter. The skim milk was fed to the pigs. With all of that milk around, we seldom drank it but almost every meal used it in soups, baking and puddings.

Chickens were another source of food and income. We always had a flock of hens for eggs and in the spring, my mother ordered baby chicks. It was exciting to see the two hundred or so fluffy yellow “peeps” and watch them turn into chickens. They were raised in a brooder house where a kerosene stove kept them at the right temperature until they were able to survive outside. They were delicate and my mother gave them her constant attention in the early days. In due time, they became either fryers for our table or hens who became layers later on. The first fried chicken dinner of the summer was always a great day for us.

The hens produced eggs that also went to the market. Especially in the spring, they listened to their own biological clock and became broody deciding that it was time to start of family of their own. They could set on as many as a dozen eggs and after thirty days the chicks would begin hatching. She sheltered them under her wings and pecked around finding things for them to eat. It was a common sight seeing a hen surrounded with a gaggle of chicks marching through the barnyard. We kept a wide berth from the setting hens--they could be really cantankerous and would chase us from their nest with wings flapping. Gathering the eggs was another daily chore--sometimes a scary one taking eggs away from a reluctant hen. The roosters were kings who chased us whenever we got in their range. They loudly announced the dawn with their crowing.

My mother also raised turkeys. She ordered baby turkeys and raised them in the a brooder house. They were delicate and stupid--prone to crowding together and smothering so it was a tense time while they were small. Those that survived made good dinners and the rest went to market.

Pigs provided the meat for the family and in the fall when the weather got down to freezing, there was a day for butchering. Friends and family gathered

to assist in this project. The pork was hung, some canned and some put down for sausage; the rest was smoked in the smokehouse for ham and bacon.

As soon as the frost was out of the ground in early May, it was time to plant the garden. A different plot was chosen each year so the soil wouldn't get worn out. We hitched Coaley to the small cultivator that turned over the good black loam, and made rows for the seeds. Potatoes were first cut in pieces with an eye in each one then planted in hills. Sweet corn, peas, beans, lettuce, radishes and green onions planted in straight even rows. The root vegetables, turnips, rutabagas, parsnips, beets were an important part of the garden.Tomatoes, cucumbers, squash and melons spread their tendrils covering the ground and producing bushels of good eating..We carefully patted the soil over the seeds and anxiously watched for the first shoots to come up. Of course, the weeds came up too and kept us busy. By early July, the crops were ready for the table and how welcome it was to finally have fresh vegetables after the long winter and spring. The leaf lettuce was especially good and we believed the folk saying that it made you sleepy--had belladonna or something in it. The green peas were a special treat with a rich cream sauce. In preparation for the winter ahead, we picked bushels of peas and string beans, and canned them in glass jars, processing them by boiling in the wash boiler on the kitchen range. We made cucumbers into dill pickles and put them up in half -gallon jars. Our family could eat a whole half gallon at a meal--my mother claimed they were rich in Vitamin A. We stored turnips, rutabagas, carrots, potatoes , and cabbages in the cellar covered with peat from a bog a few miles away.

Groves of boxelders, chokecherry, and poplar trees surrounded the farmyard, protecting it from the storms that blew acrosss the open fields. We played house out there using our imaginations to make upstairs and downstairs

room, manufacturing furniture out of the twigs and branches and whatever we could find The woods was a good place to hide out too--I was a reader and would escape housework for awhile perched in a tree.

The pasture took us farther from the house. When my mother didn't know where the little kids were, they were probably down in the pasture. With Old Mooch, it was an evening duty to go after the cows and bring them home. There were more groves in the pasture and we knew every raspberry bush and just when they would be ripe. Small sloughs were formed by the melting snow and here we found the first violets in the spring. The yellow violets bloomed just a few days before the purple ones. Pink single petal wild roses blossomed in late June, tiger lilies came out about the 4th of July and buttercups were sprinkled over the grassland. I was on the alert for the quick-as-lightning garter snakes who also lived in the grass. The were said to be harmless but they gave me a life-long phobia. I still keep a careful eye out when walking through grass.

The major income from the farm came from raising wheat, oats, and barley with some flax. We grew corn and alfalfa to feed the animals and also a big potato patch to supply us in the coming year. It was necessary to rent prairie land bout 2 1/2 miles away for hay. When I was nine years old, I was my dad's "right hand man" and went with him and two teams of horses where he drove Barney and Coaley on the mower and I drove Tom and Duster on the hayrake. After the hay was mowed and raked, we loaded it into a hayrack and then stacked it. How proud I was when I learned to make a perfect top that would shed the rain! My mother sent our meals and we stayed until dusk every day. I had two summers in the hayfield, then Buddy took over and I had to go back to helping in the house.

We were involved in all of the farm work-At harvest time, my dad drove the four horses pulling a binder that cut the grain and bound it into bundles. We

took pride in making the bundles into shocks of five or six standing upright so the grain could dry out and keep from molding. Threshing was the next step and a source of almost unbearable excitement for us. Unlike the procedure in Canada, threshing was a community affair. The threshing machine was pulled and operated by a steam engine that made the rounds to the farms. The bundle wagons and were provided by the various farmers involved. This was a major operation for the farm women who had to provide three meals a day for the threshermen. Maiden aunts, neighbor women and kids all fell to and cooked enormous amounts of food. Dinner was the big meal of the day at noon serving a crew of hungry men and the family roasts, potatoes, vegetables and always homemade pie. Forenoon lunch would include sandwiches, cookies, banana bread, doughnuts, gallons of coffee and lemonade to be repeated again in mid afternoon. There was competition among the house wives --a women's reputation could be made or broken by how she handled "feeding the threshers." It took two or three days to do each farm and then the excitement was over for the year.

The potato field took a lot of care. Weeds abounded as did the little black orange-striped potato bugs. We picked the potato bugs off the vines before they could eat up the leaves and dropped them in a can of kerosene where they were later put on fire.In the fall after the first frost and when the vines died down, school was closed for potato vacation, my dad hitched up the horses to the potato digger and everyone got busy picking up potatoes. It was a back breaking job but we knew that our food supply for the coming year depended on it.

We had one hundred sixty acres of land to plow, seed and harvest from early May until late September. Along with taking care of the animals, household chores, and going to school, the whole family was kept busy. We rented the farm on a one-third share to the landlord basis. During those years on the Giethman

place all of the farm work was done by the horses. If crops were good, everyone prospered. However, there were many dry years when crops withered and died. Other years, crops could look good and a sudden hailstorm would wipe out everything. Then there were years when grasshoppers chewed up the crops. We rented the pasture land and had to pay cash rent with cash that was hard to come by in those Depression years during the '30's. My dad warned us regularly that we might go broke and have to move to the woods--probably to scrape out a living cutting down trees and selling the firewood. We tried to imagine what kind of a life that would be; fortunately it didn't come to pass.

After eight years on the Geithman place, our Bohemian neighbors to the north, the Seykoras, bought the farm and it was time to move again, this time to the Tinjum farm about four miles east of Ulen. We were only there for a year this time. In November of 1937 we moved about twenty miles south to the Torgerson place a mile and a half west of Hawley where we lived the rest of the time that I lived in Minnesota.

World War I

When the weather turned cold and blustery as it often did in Minnesota, and we were forced to find entertainment inside, we'd go upstairs to the "cold room," a bedroom on the north, where the trunks were stored. Opening the lid of the trunk was like opening Pandora's Box. Out came World War 1 with all of the memorabilia of my dad's service in France and Germany. The heavy khaki uniform reeked of old wool and moth balls and scratched our skins as we struggled into it to recreate those war stories. Along with the uniform, there were the puttees, leggings that laced up to the knees, topped off with a brimmed hat for the dress uniform and a hard hat for battle. How we struggled with red faces and itching to put ourselves in his shoes! To make the games all the more authentic, a German helmet gave us an enemy too. The most fearsome part of the costume was the gas mask. It too was khaki colored and covered the whole head with little windows to see through and tubes going in and out. World War I was very real to us and even though it was the "war to end all wars," we were not reassured that that was true. He had told us about the horrors of mustard gas and was sure it would used again and probably on everyone. So we practiced putting the gas mask on again and again to be ready.

To those of us who grew up during the twenties and thirties, the battles were very near.. Our dad saw service in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and the Army of Occupation in both France and Germany. Stories about the war painted graphic pictures in our minds as he related tales of Newport News, Virginia; Brest, France; Rheims, Cologne, the Bay of Biscay, and Verdun. We didn't have radio, television or movies so his reminiscences around the dining room table made great entertainment. Along with his war stories, photographs were proudly displayed on the living-room walls, a four-foot long picture of Company M, 54th

Pioneer Infantry, where we could search until we found his face, the troopship, Caserta, that was condemned soon after the trip to France and many others. Fortunately, there are a few letters, a diary and notes written on the back of a map of France that survived the years and they reinforce my memories.
Marshal Foch and General Pershing were prominent names that came up often in the stories. We could tell by the tone of his voice that they were greatly respected and admired. Many years later, I went to the encyclopedia and discovered that Marshal Foch was a Frenchman who finally unified the armies that had been fighting separately. He was put in supreme command of all the Allied Forces in March of 1918. Under his command, the tide was finally turned leading to victory that same year. General Pershing commanded the American Expeditionary Forces that numbered almost two million men. He insisted that the American Army be kept intact. In his diary, my dad wrote on March 11, 1919."Got word that we were to parade before General Pershing on Saturday."There were several days of preparation for the parade and on March 14, he wrote."Parade o.k. by General Pershing." We have a dog-eared postcard of the General in the memorabilia saved through the years as evidence of this high point of his army service. While the generals were pictured as the great heroes they were, the British didn' t fare so well. My dad was angry at them because they hadn't paid their war debt and he never did change his stance. Maybe this accounts for my lack of enthusiasm for things British.
His father was French so he had a natural interest in the language and picked up quite a bit of it while he was overseas. During the Occupation in Germany, he picked up phrases that we didn' t understand but sounded good. Ach Tung,"" Ach du Lieber." There was a French song, *Mademoiselle from Armentiers, Par les vous.* Our mother thought it was too riske for us which made it all the more fun.

My aunt Ollie, remembering the war years says, "It was hot July when he went into the army and was sent to South Carolina--Spartenburg, I think. In those days, the soldiers wore home knit wool clothing with puttees that came up to their knees, home-made socks and sweaters, all khaki in color. Lee wrote home that the heat was so bad the mules were dropping dead. The Red Cross organized us to help furnish things for the soldier boys. Grandma Purrier (her mother) was our leader and we knit sleeveless sweaters, socks, amd wash cloths. Everything had to be made to specification; some of the ladies couldn' t satisfy the government but I was the one who made the perfect heel and I was proud of myself."

In a letter written to his family describing the embarkation from Newport News, Virginia, August 10th, l918, my dad says, "Got about two hours sleep the night before starting. The Captain gave orders for us to be ready to leave camp at a moment' s notice. We had our packs all rolled and at one o' clock were ordered to fall in line outside the barracks and after the roll call, sat down on our packs and waited. We left camp at 3 a.m. and marched about four miles through the streets of Newport News, got there about 5 a.m. and were loaded and left at 11 a.m. Didn' t get to Brest, France until September 12. Got sick the first day out--threw up everything I ate for six days. The old boat rolled so I thought I would go clear over the side."

Once in France, Company M traveled almost across France to a town called Florry until "old Fritz" located them from up in the clouds and they had to hike across country to Claremont. About this time, the Americans started the 41-day-drive that ended the war. In describing this experience, he wrote, "In the Argonne Forest Districts, the guns were thundering all around and the shells from the German guns were screaming around our heads. We were about six miles from the front--maybe you think that wasn' t a wild place to be in."

They traveled north from there to a place near Newville. He remembered the old church that must have been hundreds of years old all shot in and in the north wall a shell hole big enough for a locomotive to come in. The YMCA had their canteen there and this is where they got their cocoa, a very important luxury. He further relates, "From this time on, "Old Fritz" didn' t bother us much, he was so busy on the retreat that he didn' t seem to have much time to entertain us. Every clear night, he' d make a raid out our way. He was trying to blow up the ammunition depot two miles from us, amd would drop a few bombs. Gee, I tell you they shake the earth when they go off. The country was all torn up with shell holes and trenches and covered with barbed-wire entanglements."

The Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918 at 11 a.m. The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month was a sacred day for the veterans of World War I. Armistice Day was declared a national holiday and in our community, we had an all-day festival at the Walworth Baptist Church with good food and a program of speeches and songs of the war. I sang *Keep the Home Fires Burning* when I was nine-years old and alone on the stage. It was my first experience with the shaking knees and sweaty palms of stage fright. In later years, there was an effort to lump the Armistice Day into a Veteran' s weekend but the WW I veterans made such a fuss that the 11th of November is still observed on the day.

In a letter written November 24, 1918, he wrote, "Life was better then. We stayed in an old German Barracks, the first time that we had been under a roof since coming to France. Got just about the whole company in there. We weren' t sure whether we were in the First or Third Army, so for awhile we thought we might get to go home if we were lucky. It didn' t turn out that way. It was the Army of Occupation for six months in Coblenz, Germany."

Germany was battle scarred and food was scarce. Even the men in the army

had to forage to eke out supplies. He told stories about digging potatoes on the farms and how good they tasted sprinkled with salt . Equipment was primitive and they had to build roads using a pick and shovel instead of horses and scrapers. His diary tells of drilling day after day, long marches, guard duty and k.p. Rations were a far cry from Minnesota farms.. For Christmas Eve supper, they had 3 prunes and hardtack, a spoonful of salmon, 4 small potatoes, 1 pickle, black coffee. Breakfast consisted of 1 spoon rice, warmed potatoes, 1 tablespoon syrup, 1 slice bread, hardtack, dinner was corn willy, macaroni, mashed potatoes, bread, candy, supper, beans, coffee, meat, bread. A furlough to Paris late in April was a welcome break. The trip both to and from Paris was carefully documented in his diary but not a word about being there, Just a picture postcard. Aunt Ollie remembers, "He stayed with a German lady and her son for six months helping them get on their feet. I remember he said when he had to say goodbye, he asked what they needed and she said soap."

He was mustered out of the Army at Camp Grant, Illinois on July 7, 1919 and that ended his career in the Army. *How can you keep them down on the farm after they've seen Paree* aptly describes the changes that occurred to the men who served in World War I. It changed their lives and also changed our lives as we listened to the war stories. Even in peacetime deep in the heart of Minnesota, we knew that the horrors of war were possible and were as terrified of the possibility of its happening again as anyone in this generation.

Country School Days

Valborg Thorson was my first-grade teacher in that one-room school on a Minnesota prairie during the thirties. Although she taught at other country schools for periods of a year or so, she always returned to Wild Rose School so she was my teacher intermittently all through the eight grades. If anyone can be said to be a prime mover in my life, it was Miss Thorson.

Barely out of Normal School and no more than eighteen years old, to my six-year old eyes, she was one of the "big people"even though she was just a little over five-feet tall, somehow she managed to convey the impression that she was much more than that. She was a typical blonde blue-eyed Norwegian. In the fashion of the day, her dark-blond hair was permanented to a frizz and parted on the side. No doubt the frizz was helped along by a marcel iron, a wavy metal implement that was heated by putting it down the chimney of a kerosene lamp. Her face was round, a little dimply with a touch of ruddyness.

In the isolation of the northern Minnesota farm country, we longed for glamour and the beauty of the movie stars that adorned the covers of our tablets, but conservative Miss Thorson didn' t honor us with finery. She had three dresses that she wore interchangeably. One was a wine and white stripe with the stripes going in different directions. With those three dresses, she wore yellow leather boots that laced up to the knees. No one else wore anything like that. I can see her now sitting on one of the little chairs at the front of the room listening to the class that was reciting, absentmindedly poking a hardwood pointer down in her boot.

Country-school teachers were completely responsible for the care and upkeep of

the one-room frame building. She came early to build a fire in the five-foot high black cast iron potbellied stove, the sole source of heat that occupied the center of the room. During the coldest forty-below days of winter, the stove was red hot. Even so, the warmth didn' t extend to the edges of the room. Many times we found our sandwiches frozen solid by lunchtime. A pail on top of the stove provided hot water for humidity and if we wanted to have a hot lunch, we could put a jar of food in it to heat through. Lunches came from home in two-quart lard and syrup pails Sandwiches were made from homemade bread and usually filled with peanut butter and jam, egg salad or slices of pork roast. There were cookies and doughnuts and sometimes cake but very little fruit. ! The stove was supplied with chunks of wood from the woodshed out in back. Water came from the well about twenty feet from the door, and we had to pump it by hand. During freezing weather, we were warned never to touch the pump handle with our tongues or all the skin would peel off. A scary prospect and a real temptation, We carried water from the well to the schoolhouse in an enameled pail. A community dipper for drinking and basin for washing constituted the facilities that were used by everyone. Two outhouses, one for the boys and one for the girls, were situated on the far corners of the yard. It was a very chilly trip out there through the snowbanks in the wintertime.

Since we lived only about half a mile from the school, and the teacher had to "board" at one of the homes. Miss Thorson spent many years as part of our family. Fortunately for me, she came to us in the middle of my first year of school. I started in another district where an older cousin helped soften the trauma of leaving home every day. Midway in the year we moved from the Dilges place and I was thrown in with complete strangers. Miss Thorson was another stranger and in my despair, I cried and cried. I'd hide in the pantry in the morning so I wouldn't have to go to school but I was always found. Miss Thorson held me on her lap while she conducted classes but I could not be

consoled until she came to live with us and didn' t seem like a stranger anymore. She delighted in getting the kids together in the evenings and terrorizing us with ghost stories. I can still see her in the gloom of the lamplight spinning her tales of monsters and goblins. As the years went on, four more little brothers were added to the family and she delighted in them. Her own mother was dead, her older sister married so we really filled a place in her life. Her home was in the tiny town of Flom, about three miles away and every weekend she walked home to be with her father. Many years later when my dad died and we gathered together from all over the country, she came fifty miles on that thirty-below February night to be with her "kids" once again.

If she could relax and have fun at home, in school she was all business. She taught all eight grades and had from three to four students in each grade. Genevieve Seykora , Anna Hamernik and Harry Rishovd were in my grade all through the years. Genevieve and I shared a much-carved double desk that had an inkwell in the center. We made a big thing out of cleaning out our desks when we got bored. Harry and I competed with each other but Anna and Genevieve were content to just go along. We studied basic reading, writing and arithmetic plus whatever else the County Board of Education felt necessary. During seatwork time, we studied at our desks and went up to the front of the room when it was our turn to recite. I sat in awe of the "big kids" and their vast knowledge, yearning for the day when I would be in their place. When I finally got to the eighth grade and came face-to-face with the State Board Examinations, it was old stuff and I breezed right through. Passing this test meant the end of compulsory education. Going on to high school was a luxury that was available to very few of us.

We had an interesting mixture of cultures in our school. Our family was half Norwegian and half English-Dutch. Many were all Norwegian and two families were Bohemian, Although most families used their native language at home, the children were urged to learn and speak only English.

We ranged in age from six to sixteen, but somehow order was maintained

even though the "big boys" towered over the teacher. Six-foot tall Tilford Oien, shuffling with shyness at the front of the room recited, "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree." Heavy-browed Clarence Seykora in his deep voice rumbled through "By the Shores of Gitchee Gumee." Farm work had top priorty and anyone who was old enough and strong enough to help with planting and harvesting had to stay out of school to work. With the shortened school year, it took until they were sixteen for many of the older ones to legally finish their education.

I can' t remember a time when I couldn' t read. In the first grade, I delighted in *The Wee Wee Woman* in her white nightgown and nightcap, lighting the stairs with her candle. There was *The Little Red Hen* and her "Who will help me eat the bread?" a saying that I have found appropriate many times since. The years to come brought *The Bobbsey Twins*, The *Hardy Boys*, *Dandelion Cottage*, *Treasure Island*, and best of all, several books written by John Muir. Rereading them made him as real to me as family--particularly his description of the walk from San Francisco to Yosemite when he got down on his knees and carefully scrutinized the tracks left by a beetle. Years later, when I reread his books, it was a thrill to come across the same passage. It' s quite a coincidence that his later-years home was here in Martinez. Attending a birthday celebration at his grave-site in Alhambra Valley, I mentioned my long-time admiration for John Muir to a friend and she commented, "And here you are, both under the same tree."

Money was scarce, and the school board was very spartan about spending money for frills. They could understand geography and history books but novels were considered frivolous, and half a dozen a year for the whole school was considered adequate. For those who didn' t find reading a pleasure, there was a fifteen-minute part of the "opening exercises" when the teacher read from classics*, Ben Hur*,*The Prince and the Pauper, Cudjo's Cave,* and many others.

History to me was an extension of my love of reading with the lore of the settlement of our country and particularly of Minnesota a fascinating saga. The battles of the Sioux and Chippewa Indians and their struggles with the French traders completely absorbed my interest. Arithmetic wasn' t so much fun. Times tables were memorized, long division struggled through. We memorized, memorized, memorized; the names and capitols of all the states, poetry that is with me still. *The snow has begun in the gloaming and busily all the night*, *The goldenrod is yellow, the corn is turning brown*. A stab at drawing was required and I struggled with Christmas Trees and Santa Clauses. My sister, Joyce, could draw wonderful horses and did so at every opportunity. She tells of being caught at it when she was supposed to be studying her big geography book. Miss Thorson crept up behind her and gave her a big shake!

Our school was too poor to have a reed organ, much less a piano but music was part of our day just the same. We went through the Golden Book of Favorite Songs many times. *Santa Lucia, The Old Oaken Bucket*, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, drifted out through the windows and onto the prairie.

Every Friday afternoon, books were put away, and we had "Manual Training"." We collected willow twigs, soaked them so they would bend for handles, and made baskets by alternating the straight pieces at the corners and nailing them together. We cut cats out of black oilcloth, painted faces, sewed them together and stuffed them. It must have really taxed Miss Thorson' s imagination to come up with activities that would be interesting and possible for all of us. Scraping up the materials must have been a challenge too.

Friday afternoons were also the time for a meeting of the "Little Citizen' s League." All of the chores necessary for the upkeep of the building were parceled out, and no shirking of duty was permitted. Wood had to be carried in, ashes carried out and the water pail filled. The basics of parliamentary procedure

were learned almost accidentally in the process. I can still smell the chalk-dust as erasers were slapped together. The blackboards were always a problem for me. I tended to be slipshod and being very short, always had to stand on something.

All of these activities were organized and put into practice by the teacher with supervision and guidance coming from the County Superintendent of Schools whose office was in Detroit Lakes forty miles away. Once or twice a year, Clarissa Bergquist appeared without notice, found a seat in the back of the room and observed. I remember hearing Miss Thorson confiding to my mother the panic she felt both while anticipating the visit and when it actually happened.

If we were kept in line by the stern eye and the hardwood pointer that Miss Thorson kept at hand, when recess and noon hour came, we poured out of the schoolhouse and had wonderful games on the treeless acre that was our yard and the square mile of prairie across the road. During the months of fair weather, we played "Ante-I-Over,"dividing up in teams and throwing the ball over the building with mad dash around it if the other team caught the ball. "Pump, Pump, Pull-away" was a scramble of teams trying to pull each other apart. All of the kids, big and little, made the most of those minutes away from the desk, During the winter months, we pulled on overshoes, scarves, coats, caps, and mittens and braved the cold, built snow forts and had magnificent snow fights. Snowmen towered over us, and the mischievous older boys delighted in putting snow down the necks of whoever they could catch. I still get that shivery feeling whenever I think of snow. We had our own skating rinks formed by the water in the little sloughs that were frozen solid in winter. We used clamp-on skates, they were clumsy and often fell off, but we had a good time anyway. Miss Thorson would put the skates on her yellow boots and stiffly and fearfully do her best. When time was up, she vigorously rang the bell and the fun was over.

The country schools were not only a place for learning but were also the social center of the community. As a fund-raiser and also to show off our talents, at least once a year we put on a "program" practicing one-act plays, memorizing recitations, learning songs and we even tried pantomimes. We put up a pale-green curtain that opened and shut, gliding on rings on a very tenuous rope that extended across the building. The slightest miscue would cause it to fall down in the middle of everything--this happened many times. All of our families came to watch and pray that we wouldn' t get stage fright or burst into tears.
Depending on the season, after-program activities could be apple bobbing at Hallowe' en, catching apples bobbing in a tub of water or hanging from a string attached to the rafter--no hands, just open mouths. At Christmas time we had a wondrous Christmas tree, and it had real candles burning on it. Names were drawn and presents exchanged.

In warmer weather, an ice -cream social was a treat since no one had refrigerators. The ice-cream came from a restaurant several miles away and came in three flavors, vanilla, strawberry, chocolate and sometimes maple-nut. At a nickel a cone, it was a moneymaker. Many times there were basket socials where decorated baskets with lunch for two were auctioned off with the purchaser sharing with the provider. Men usually bought their wive' s baskets, but there was much interest in how the singles paired up. Of course, for everyone else there were mounds of sandwiches, cookies, and cakes. The evenings quite often ended with everyone joining in "singing games." *Four-in-the-Boatand it Won't Go Around* . *There's Somebody Waiting.* Exhilerated and exhausted, we fell into bed after the big program night with a good feeling of helping our school and having a good time in the process.

Miss Thorson ended her teaching career when she married Ted Wendt and became a farmer's wife. Teachers were not allowed to be married so she

turned her energies to raising a family of her own and was a very active in her community. She is still active in her nineties with only poor vision to slow her down.

More than fifty years later, I returned to the "scenes of my childhood." The buildings were gone from that acre, only the space was left, with the echoes of laughter and song drifting over the prairie. We scattered far and wide, many remaining nearby, building the community, others going on to high school and college. All took with them the foundation built by Valborg Thorson at Wild Rose School.

Walworth Baptist Church

Walworth Baptist like many of the country churches of the time, was white frame with a full basement and a steeple visible from all of the surrounding farms. We lived about a mile and a half away and when the weather was good, we piled into the Model T Ford for a bumpy ride on the dirt road. In winter, we hitched Coalie and Barney to the sled and jingled along over the crusty snow. We were warm and snug under blankets with hot bricks at our feet. The horses had their winter coats so didn' t seem to mind the cold.

On July 11, 1897 a few farmers got together and formed a Danish speaking church. In 1901 Fred Sorensen donated land for a building and cemetery with the stipulation that it would become American-speaking . Members met in homes until 1908 when the church building was erected. In the early days, they met only during the milder weather of spring, summer and fall. Through the years, Walworth Baptist was a central part of the community and remains so.

The cemetery occupied the area behind the church. The two outhouses, one for the men and one for the women, were along the fence on the left. There was no electricity or plumbing. Kerosene lamps were used for light and the woodpile supplied the fuel for heating and cooking. Baptists prided themselves on simplicity so the inside was very plain with no stained-glass windows or vestments of any kind. Even candles were suspect. At the front of the church was a small platform with a modest podium for the minister. The reed organ was on the right and the choir filled up the rest of the space. A center aisle with pews on either side took up the middle with the men sitting on one side and the women on the other. Although the sanctuary seemed very spacious to me then, I was amazed when I went back years later to see how small it really was.

The church was full of activity. Sunday morning at ten o' clock was Sunday

School for all ages where we learned the Bible stories and the moral lessons they taught. We treasured the 2" by 3" brightly -colored cards with the story on the back and a picture on the front. They were ours to keep so we went over and over *Moses in the Bulrushes, Daniel in the Lion' s Den*, *Jonah in the Whale*, *Jesus* Baptizing John *in the River Jordan*, and a favorite, *Jesus Blessing the Little*

Children. Vacation Bible School for two weeks in the summer reinforced what we learned during the year with new activities and games and time to play.

After Sunday School came the regular service. Music was important and everyone who could sing participated in the choir. There were solos, duets, and quartets along with the dozen or so voices of the whole choir accompanied at the organ by Mrs. Larson. The organ was a simple affair operated by foot power which activated the reeds and was a soft accompaniment to the rumbling bass of Uncle Watt Dunham, and the clear soprano of Theodosia Larson. Chester, Paul, Muriel, Eleanor and Esther Engebretson were a very musical family and shared their abilities, providing harmony for all of us. The only discordant note was Les Cary. He couldn' t carry a tune but was so happy to be in the choir that his deficiences were overlooked. Congregational singing was enthusiastic--some sopranos that were more like a screech but it all blended in. I discovered I liked to harmonize and preferred singing alto. We didn't have an organ at home but I longed to play and whenever I had a chance, asked Mrs. Larsen to tell me what the notes meant and where they were on the keyboard. Eventually, I learned to play the simplest hymns and thrilled at the rich sound of the chords.

Rev. Carl Jensen, a tall, thin Dane, was the minister and every Sunday entreated his flock to give up their sins and follow the Lord. He was a soft-spoken man--not the pulpit-pounding type.. *I know whom I have believed an am persuaded that He is able* resounded through the years when I was fortunate

enough to receive a copy of his last sermon. He had a habit of rocking back and forth as he talked; we were mesmerized wondering how far he would go. His feet were incredibly long and narrow and must have provided a solid enough foundation.

Although the pews were hard, what I remember is the slippery shininess of the wood with the drone of the sermon in the background as I occupied myself by reading the psalms in the back of the hymnbook and loving the cadence. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name* from the 103rd Psalm is still a favorite. A whole hour was a long time for the seven of us to sit still but we were very shy and would never do anything to attract attention. Sunday evening everyone was back for "singing meeting" and the rafters rang with "*Rescue the Perishing*, *When the Roll is Called Up Yonder, Bringing in the Sheaves*, and the whole gamut of songs in the hymbook, followed by another sermon and prayers.

The Ladies Aid was the bulwark of the church, raising much-needed funds in those Depression days. The farm women met at least once a month for their business and social meeting relieving the isolation of their day-to-day lives. This was a time to get together and plan the church projects, share what was going on in their lives and enjoy the lunches that the hostesses of the day provided. There were open-face sandwiches on home-made buns, cakes of all kinds, cookies and doughnuts with coffee brewed in the five-gallon coffee boilers on the range. My Grandma Purrier and Aunt Ollie were take-charge leaders and saw to it that things were run properly. Aunt Ollie, more than sixty years later at ninety nine is still part of it. My mother was rather shy and busy with the farm and seven children so she played a less prominent role--not very pleased with the bossy way things were run..

Along with her church responsibilies, the minister's wife, Mrs Jensen, was

the angel of mercy who was called on when anyone in the area was ill or needed comfort. She was the midwife who attended the birth of most of the babies and was present several times at our house when the brothers were born. She was a gentle, soft-spoken Dane, tall and thin with silvery hair quietly ministering to all who needed her. Many years later when Dale was killed in an automobile accident we called Mrs. Jensen and she was there to comfort us.

The Baptist Church had a very fundamental doctrine. Unlike the Lutheran and Catholic churches who practiced infant baptism by sprinkling, Baptists accepted only believer' s baptism as valid. A person was "born again" when they accepted Jesus as their personal Savior and were baptized by total immersion as John the Baptist was baptized by Jesus. Only then were they accepted into full membership in the church. Baptisms had to wait until summer when the weather was warm and usually meant a church picnic at either White Earth Lake or the Wild Rice River. I was about twelve when I was baptized. I expected it to be a really profound experience but what I remember most was my terror of being immersed in the water. I stood about waist deep with Rev. Jensen looking down at me just before he dipped me backwards into the water. I did survive and now I was a real Baptist. My mother was raised a Lutheran and came to the Baptist Church reluctantly at first. I remember her sniffing that they didn' t have names since they hadn' t been baptized as babies. In time, she appeared to accept the new way of doing things. There was no formal cachecism or confirmation; each member absorbed the doctrine through Sunday School and church sermons. The Bible was the Word of God and was taken literally. There was no hierarchy over the local congregation; they were self-governing, calling and hiring their own ministers and supporting them. The Northern Baptist Convention provided educational materials and arranged for the summer revivals but they had no authority over the local congregation.

Although the whole teaching of the church was that Baptists were saved from sin, they didn' t take any chances. Drinking, dancing, and playing cards opened the door to hell fire. The pool hall in Flom was a den of iniquity. Profanity was forbidden; it was said that the Ingebetson girls were so pure that they didn' t even say "darn." All of the ten commandments were considered law. Sunday was a day of rest and only the most necessary chores were done on the farm. In rare exceptions, when the grain was dead ripe, harvesting could take place. I don' t remember that fixing meals for a big family was on the forbidden list though. Sewing on Sunday seemed to be one of the worst transgressions amd my Grandma Purrier would never even lift a needle on that day.

Children' s Day was the high point of the year for the kids. If possible, it meant new clothes and my mother's Singer sewing machine whirred for weeks before the big event. Grandpa Jensen, the minister' s father, brought gallons of ice cream as a special treat and we worked hard getting the program ready to please him. He was a soft-spoken Dane with white hair and a long white beard. His favorite hymn was *Jesus Bids Us Shine* and we practiced long and hard at making it perfect for him. There were "pieces" and playlets and memorized Bible verses. *God so loved the world that He gave his only Begotten Son* was part of the program every year. Pete Engebretson, the Sunday School Superintendent, liked my singing and always asked me to sing a solo. After the program, everyone retired to the basement for the dinner when the ladies brought their finest dishes--fried chicken, roast pork, meat balls, scalloped potatoes, baked beans, homemade bread, beet and cucumber pickles. For desert, cake, and cookies were loaded on our plates with lemonade to drink. All of this followed by Grandpa Jensen' s special treat--ice cream cones! One of my brothers remembers that the boys got ahold of the squeezed lemons and had a lemon-rind fight out by the toilets and the losers got locked in.

The cemetery with the twenty or so tombstones marking the graves was a favorite place for us to wander in while the adults were visiting. The names of the neighbors and relatives who were buried there were engraved on the granite with their birthdate and the date of their death. Many had been gone long before we were born but someone always knew something about them. My Grandpa Purrier died while we were still in Canada so we never got to know him but could remember what we had been told about him. He was a French-Canadian, dark and slim and a quiet complement to Grandma. Our uncle fondly called "little Lylie" died of pneumonia when he was only eleven. As we sat by his tombstone, years later, we had serious conversations wondering what he was like. He was very close to the age that we were then so it was clear that dying was a possibilityeven for us. "Did he go to heaven? If so, where was it and what was he doing now?" The first time I went to a funeral, it was for a young man who had been killed in a glider accident. My mother was singing in a trio that day so we were all there. I stood by the casket and looked down at the still face, then walked with the procession to the cemetery. I heard the words of Rev. Jensen, "*Ashes to ashes and dust to dust*. . ." as the first clod of dirt was cast onto the coffin in the open grave.

For a week every summer there were revival meetings in the evenings arranged by the Northern Baptist Convention. A large tent was set up and a visiting evangelist conducted services for the purpose of gathering all unsaved souls into the fold. It was a week of excitement, dinners and much socializing for saved and unsaved alike. Rev. Bolvig came many times. A bombastic, hell-fire and damnation preacher, he was a sharp contrast to gentle Rev. Jensen. One night a thunderstorm suddenly blew up during the service; lightning flashed, thunder crashed and the wind almost took the tent away. Surely Judgment Day had come and we weren' t ready.

The main focus of the teaching was on getting to heaven and living the kind of life that would make this possible. Asking for help in daily living didn' t seem to be part of it. It wasn' t until a serious drought one summer that the congregation was driven to having a prayer meeting to pray for rain. The fields were dry as dust, grain planted didn' t even sprout and winds were blowing the fields away. It was truly a desperate situation and that day at the end of May they gathered at the church and implored the Almighty to intervene. Much to their astonishment, there was a rumble of thunder coming from the west, the clouds rolled in and down came the rain!

For all of my grade-school years, Walworth Baptist Church was an important part of my life and had a big influence on what I am today. The hours spent musing, pondering and questioning led me to search for truth through many denominations and studies of comparative religion always coming back to a church with the warmth and simplicity of that little country church on the prairie.

The Kids

The first born in the family, for the first fifteen months of my life I had my parents all to myself. Born in Marcorie, Saskatchewan, on June 24, 1922, June is still my favorite time of the year with its long days and sunshine. I was small not reaching a height of more than five feet until after my teen years. Very blonde, I inherited the Nowegian and English fairness with hazel eyes from the French influence. My mother relates that she was a very anxious mother listening to see if I was still breathing and my dad responding that it would certainly be an easy death if the worst happened.

I wasn't to be her sole concern for long, however. My oldest brother, Berwin Merle, was born in November of 1923 also in Macrorie. Merle was his Grandpa Purrier's name so he carried on that tradition. We called him Buddy when we were kids which was shortened to Bud as he grew older. He was a fat, roly-poly baby and all smiles; his agreeable disposition slayed with him all his life. He was quiet and let others do the talking. Buddy inherited the French dark hair and complexion although he had blue eyes. Now I had a little partner and he went along with whatever I wanted to do. He must have gotten rebellious one time though; he ran away and for an anxious hour or so we searched the barn and fields until we found him hiding behind the grainery shed.

Joyce Elaine was also born in Saskatchewan on the Holen farm in July of 1925. She too, was a chubby, happy baby with a different disposition. Strong minded, she would go along with things only if it was what she wanted to do. I I remember a Saturday night we were in Ulen doing the grocery shopping. When it was time to go home, she had a tantrum. She liked being at the Johnson Store and plopped herself down on the floor and refused to move. I can still see her furiously sitting there in her red coat. The rest of us were embarrassed at the scene. Joyce was a tomboy and

preferred outdoor activities as she grew older and when dishes were to be washed, she could be found out in the barn with the calves. Her love of animals was expressed in drawing, prominently including all four of the teats. We felt that it was close to being obscene. She did very well with horses too. She regularly got in trouble in school drawing under cover of the big geography book when she was supposed to be doing arithmetic.

A night owl, she liked to stay up late because she had trouble getting to sleep. I worried about it when we stayed overnight at Grandma Purrier's, hoping that she wouldn't get up and wander around. We shared a double bed, many times with one or another of the little brothers. Dishwashing was a job that neither one of us liked but couldn't get out of. We'd procrastinate by having to heat up the water on the stove, then letting it get too hot. She'd disappear and the conflict was on. Joyce was short and stocky with a Dutch-girl haircut, straight with bangs across the forehead.

Dennis Leroy, was born on the Dilges farm in August, 1928. Having a new baby in the house was like having a new doll for a six-year old and was the beginning of assistant motherhood for me. Denny was sociable--liked being around people. He'd listen in the background when the grown ups were talking and was ready to tell all when he got a chance. He had a crush on our teacher, Miss Thorson, when she stayed with us and wanted to marry her when he grew up. One evening, walking along with her and wanting to make impressive conversation, he said, "Moone sheen ikveld?" (Norwegian for *is the moon shining tonight?)* She never forgot it-they still laugh about it when they get together. Like Joyce, Denny could be stubborn. When he was in the first grade, he committed some infraction and the teacher tried to get him to say "excuse me" and he refused. He wouldn't unbend even when he had to spend the rest of the day in the back of the room with the coats.

Dale Heartly was born in February of 1931. He wasn't as sturdy as the others and when he was about eighteen-months old, had a flu bug with a high temperature that

resulted in convulsions. My parents were up with him all one desperate night bathing him down, hoping that he would live until morning. I was awake too and saw the first streaks of dawn afraid of what I'd find downstairs. After that, he was babied and protected by my mother, she lived in terror that it would happen again. Dale was the only one who got away with food preferences--she'd make special things for him. I don't think he ever had a recurrence but he was regarded as being frail from that time on and we accepted the fact that he was the center of her attention. Dale did grow up to be a strong healthy man but was killed in an automobile accident when he was nineteen serving in the Navy.

Jimmie Darrel was born in March, 1933--the week that Franklin Roosevelt was inaugerated as President of the United States. The news came over the new battery radio and we were thrilled to hear his voice. I was eleven by then and felt very grownup so Jimmie became my baby and came to me for comfort. As the sixth child and more quiet than the others, he could get lost in the shuffle. Jimmie was inclined to be moody, if he got his feelings hurt at the dinner table, he'd slide under it and pout for hours. He did have things to say though. My aunt, Ala, remembers a conversation about going to Minneapolis. "We could hitch Barney to the stoneboat and make he gallop." Later when it was time to go to first grade, he said that was no use, he didn't know how to read.

Lee Sherrill, Junior, the baby of the family, was born in October, 1935. He was an upbeat happy child, small for his age but very active, excelling in sports. Unlike Jimmy, he wasn't a bit reticent--always outgoing and moving ahead. Even in the family position, I don't recall that he took advantage. He sat on my dad's lap at meals and was the family pet. With four little brothers, there was always a baby to take care of. It was the frustration of my life that they wouldn't allow themselves to be cuddled, they'd sit bolt upright on my lap refusing my attempts to make dolls of them..

Our Parents

Gertrude Serena Bergeson, was born in southern Minnesota on a farm in Canby in 1902 and lived there until 1916 when the family moved north to Twin Valley. She was next to the oldest in that Norwegian family of seven. Their father died days after they arrived in Twin Valley and never got to live on their new farm at all. The years following were a real struggle for the widow and her children but somehow they managed to survive. My mother told of happy times in the Home Lake community with parties and picnics, good neighbors to share the hard times and the good times. When my mother and dad were married, they went to Saskatchewan, Canada where her uncles and aunts had farms. They lived there until 1925 when they realized they were homsick for family and friends in Minnesota and made the move back.

The years during the 20s and 30s were filled with babies, cooking, cleaning, gardening and all of the activities that are part of keeping a family going during those Depression years. The kerosene lamps had to be filled every day, the chimmneys washed and the wicks trimmed. As far as food was concerned, we were almost self-contained. It was necessary to buy sugar, coffee, yeast, and other baking suppplies but the eggs, butter, and cream came from the farm. Even the flour came from wheat ground at the Faith Mill. My mother baked bread at least three times a week filling her big bread pan with six loaves. Many days there would also be a big pan of cinammon rolls. How wonderful it was to come home from school to hot rolls spread with butter melting and running down our fingers. On other days, there was bread and butter and chokecherry jelly, and sometimes we poured thick cream over bread in a bowl sprinkled with sugar. Cream and bread was a favorite snack any time of the day. She cooked three meals a day with the main meal at noon seven days a week--meat and potatoes,

some kind of vegetable either canned or fresh from the garden. For dessert, there were custards, puddings, and if we were lucky, pie. Supper time was leftovers from dinner and quite often scrambled eggs or potato soup. In addition to that, there was forenoon and afternoon lunch with coffee and sandwiches, cookies, doughnuts and cake. If company happened during the evening, it was lunch again. A housewife's reputation depended on how she could provide for unexpected company so the pantry could never be empty. Then there were the school lunches to be packed; egg salad sandwiches (dressing was cream and mustard) was the standard fare along with cookies or cake.

With nine of us around the table, the food disappeared fast. Everyone quickly learned to be on time or they were out of luck. There was no such thing as not liking something--the danger was that someone else would get what was there. The little boys either ate their dessert first or put an arm around it while they ate to keep it from being gobbled up when they weren't looking.

Babies were born at home in those days with the assistance of Dr. Bothne and the minister's wife, Mrs. Jensen, who was the community midwife. Staying in bed for ten days was mandatory and gave my mother the only rest she got. Grandma Purrier would pack up her carpet bag and bustle over, glad of a chance to really clean up the place. My mother tried to have someone else but my dad liked to have his mother. Grandma would rearrange all the cupboards and do the house over to her liking while my mother fumed. All went well until Lee, Jr. was born; then a hemorrhage after Dr. Bothne was gone put her life in danger. I heard her moaning and ran out to the barn to get my dad. We didn't have a phone so he had to jump in the Model T and go after the doctor again. I'll never forget how scared I was. I was twelve then and could imagine raising the family. Fortunately, Dr. Bothne stopped the bleeding and all was well.

I did get a chance to run the family a year or so later when my mother had

an appendectomy and had to go to the Ada Hospital. She was there about two weeks and I was in charge. Quoting from a letter I wrote to her during that time, “Grandma gave us some rhubarb so we have plenty of that now and we certainly don’t suffer from lack of food. I keep plenty of potatoes cooked and when they are fried in bacon greese, they sure are good. I made some rhubarb upside-down cake yesterday and it was so sour that it gave Buddy and Denny stomach ache but they recovered and are doing fine now.”

Except for Dale’s fever convulsions, the rest of the family had the usual childhood illnesses and they were taken care of at home. Dr. Bothne was about ten miles away; his treatment usually consisted of“Give her a dose of castor oil” so the remedy was worse than the ailment. Earache was common in the winter. Heated bags of salt was a comfort and my mother washed out hurting ears with a small ear syringe. Croup was treated with kerosene and sugar; sore throats called for a wool cloth and Vicks wrapped around the neck. Goose grease was considered a good remedy too. We enjoyed getting special attention when we were sick. She made wonderful milk toast with homemade bread, covered with milk, butter, and sugar and then baked it in the oven. One fall I had a mysterious ailment with a low temperature every day. This went on for several weeks and called for a visit to Dr. Meighan in faraway Twin Valley who gave me a bottle of salty-tasting medicine which seemed to take care of it. Tuberculosis was a threat with no treatment except long months in the sanitorium and I know that was their worry. I enjoyed the attention; I hadn’t been babied for a long time.

Keeping the family clothed was a constant struggle in those days when money was scarce. The treadle sewing machine hummed when it was time for school clothes or a special event. A special memory is the peach-organdy dress made from material ordered from Sears Roebuck. My mother used her egg money to get material for new clothes and took apart things that still had some

wear in them and made new things. Ready-mades also came from the Sears or Montgomery Wards catalogs which were our department stores. Keeping the family in shoes was a problem. When summer came, we went bare foot except for “good.”

Keeping that large family in order was done quietly and with very little nagging. A lot of work had to be done and we knew our survival depended on it. My mother was mortified at misbehavior. Any kind of bad language was forbidden and punished by washing out the offending mouth with P. and G. soap. During those work and worry-filled years, she was often discouraged and exhausted. I remember being concerned when I’d see her writing her maiden name, “Gertrude Bergeson” over and over again as she stared out of the window. At other times, I heard her singing *Red Sails in the Sunset* as she made supper and giggling with her sisters when they came to visit. She was always there--I don’t think there was a time when anyone else came to take care of us. Even when the babies were born, she was in the house and available.

My dad, Leland Hodson Purrier was also born in southern Minnesota in Mankato. The family of six boys and three girls moved toa farm in the Ulen area in the early 1900’s. Grandpa Purrier was French Canadian and Grandma was mostly English and Pennsylvania Dutch. Farming was my dad’s life battling the challenges of the weather. He’d scan the horizon and say, “ It’s clouding up in the west.” The weather affected everything we did during the summer. Bright sunshine brought long productive days out in the fields. Cold rain meant a wait while the grain got knocked down and molded. Even with the tyranny of the weather, he had a keen enjoyment of its visissitudes--thunder storms, blizzards, a cold north wind. Winter brought other challenges. Storm windows to be put on, the house banked up with straw. When the roads were blocked by snow, he stored the Model T Ford in the garage; horses and sled were then our

transportation. Winter was a time to repair the horse's harnesses. My mother stewed when he used her Singer sewing machine for some of the stitching.

He had a quick French temper and we were careful not to ignite it. He used a straight-edge razor and he kept it sharp with a strop that hung by the kitchen door. The ultimate threat of punishment was getting switched with it. We'd check it out, test the feel and strength. I don't think anyone ever found out first hand how it felt but the possibility certainly kept us in order. For really gross misdoing, there was the threat of the reform school at St. Cloud with guards patrolling, guns at the ready, bread and water to eat. We discussed among ourselves about what infraction could bring about such punishment.

My dad smoked Union Leader tobacco. It came in red flat cans that we used to store our treasures in when they were empty. A familiar sight was when he'd roll a cigarette after dinner, light it up, settle down with the Morehead Daily News and doze off with the cigarette half smoked, ashes dribbling down his overall front. It was a desperate situation when we were snowbound and he ran out of tobacco. He'd roll tea leaves in paper from the Sears catalog and smole that. It wasn't the same.

He was a whittler and an expert at making willow whistles. He'd select just the right-sized twig, loosen and slip the bark off, carve out the mouthpiece and put the bark back on. The whistles made a wonderful high trilling sound. He was a whistler himself and went about his chores whistling a happy tune. In the early days, he played the fiddle and could knock out peppy renditions of *Snow Deer, Turkey in the Straw, Red River Valley* and many others.

Many times in the winter, a snow storm would blow up while we were in school. What a welcome sight it was to see him pull up with Coaley and Barney pulling the sled. He'd tuck us up for a safe ride home.

Grandma Bergeson

It was 5 above zero that November day in northern Minnesota. The roads were dangerously icy, but the Lutheran Church in Twin Valley was filled with friends and family who came from all over the country to Grandma Bergeson' s funeral. We gathered there early so we could have time with relatives--some of whom hadn' t been together before. Old friends and neighbors who had come from a distance were part of the group who met there in the church basement where the Ladies Aid was providing food and warmth. I came from California where I had spent all of my adult years so most of the cousins and friends were strangers to me. In talking with them, I quickly realized that each of them had a strong bond with Grandma--that each felt they' d had a special relationship with her. She had been the person they could come to with their knotty problems, chew over the situation, maybe find a solution, maybe not, but at least they had shared a laugh and her close atttention.

I realized that day that the secret of this magnetic personality was her deep interest in individual people. She had never been a joiner and was highly suspicious of the motives of those who were. She had often said that "they would never go unless there was dancing in the basement." As I moved from person to person and looked around the whole group, I wondered if she would think that the biggest attraction here was the casseroles and conversation. She was so modest and humble that I don' t think it would be possible for her to grasp that all of these people were there because they wanted to pay tribute to their friend.

She had often said when there were bewildering changes, "When one chapter ends, another one is beginning". We felt that the ending of this chapter

spelled the end of a pioneer era that had begun July 27, 1882 on the Island of Karmoy off the western shore of Norway and ended here eighty seven years later. Living was harsh on the treeless fishing village in the North Sea. Her father, Andreas Risdaal, spent the spring and summer months fishing off the coast of Iceland to support Gitlaug and the twelve children. The only hope for a better life was the promises held out by the new lands in America. Olena was sixteen years old when with a friend, she sailed across the ocean, traveled a thousand miles by train to Benton County, Iowa, and worked on the farm of an uncle-in-law, Ole Dyrland, who had paid her passage from Norway. She had to work very hard and wasn't happy there so was glad when another opportunity presented itself. The Lars Bergeson family at a neighboring farm needed a "hired girl." She had found her future although she didn' t realize it at the time.

Lars Uhr Bergeson was born on December 8, 1833 and immigrated to a Norwegian settlement in the Fox River Valley in Illinois later moving to Iowa where wages were higher and land cheaper. The Civil War was raging and Lincoln was president when Lars and his friends heard the beat of drums and rousing speeches by recruiters for the Army in Cedar Rapids and signed up for what sounded like a short hitch of a couple months. They were given a ten-day pass to spend with relatives and friends. Arriving in Ottawa, Illinois, they found even more fervent recruiters and were swept away, signing up again in a Norwegian regiment, Henshaw's Battery. They seemed to have forgotten about the previous enlistment but were quickly reminded when they were arrested for desertion upon their arrival in Kentucky. Instead of the beat of drums and martial music, prison awaited them. The War Department finally unsnarled the tangle and they were inducted in Illinois. Their training was a brief thirty days from farmer to front lines. They served for three years and nine months in the Army of Tennesee, Sherman's Army, and the Army of the Cumberland. In the march

across Georgia, North and South Carolina, they built roads and bridges as fast as they marched and destroyed them even faster. Lars used every opportunity to learn the English language by studying bills of lading and copying company orders.

Returning home after the war, he rented land and started farming and with hard work and diligence was soon a landowner eventually buying 800 acres in Emmet County, Iowa. His wife, Anna Serena Bjelland, was also a Norwegian born on January 2, 1843 near Stavanger, Norway. Her family were one of the largest fish packers of the world. They were married in 1866 and raised a large family of seven sons and two daughters all of them graduating from high school--four of the boys had two years at Iowa Academy. Lars was a member of the State Legislature and a flamboyant speaker traveling all over the state--instrumental in promoting public schools in Iowa. He was on intimate terms with Governor Larrabee and prominent Republican leaders entertaining them often in his home. When Anna had surgery and needed a “hired girl, the Bergesons paid off the ship passage bargain with the Dyerlands and Lena came to work for them and became a member of the family when she and Lauritz Bergeson were married in 1900.

After completing his education, Lauritz taught school for awhile --this suited his bookish nature but he had a hearing problem which may have led him to choose farming in the tradition of his family. The new Bergeson family rented a 240 acre farm near Canby, Minnesota. Roy, Gertrude (my mother), Melvin, Mildred, Johnnie, Burnett, and Olive were born during those years in their first home. Farming was a struggle with the whole family pitching in. Lena added to the coffers when she bought a setting of Plymouth Rock eggs and ultimately became known as the chicken queen of the area. A large strawberry patch was an important part of the farm. With all of her successes, I don' t believe she ever

forgot that she considered her status inferior to that of this more educated, high-strung dreamer. One of his dreams was owning a farm in Northern Minnesota, and it came true although he only lived to move the family to the town of Twin Valley where he died within days of their arrival. He had suffered from kidney failure for some time and had to be hospitalized when moving day approached. Grandma stayed with him, leaving the loading of two freight cars with machinery and livestock to Roy and two of the uncles who accompanied them on the train. My mother, Gertrude, only 14, took care of the little kids on the train trip north. The doctor released Grandpa from the hospital knowing how important it was for him to move with the family. He never did get out to the farm. At the age of 42, he died in the hotel in Twin Valley. It was left to Grandma and her seven children, the oldest only sixteen, to hew out a living for themselves and assorted relatives on the farm .

It was a battle all the way with the elements and the Bank which threatened forclosure at every turn. Buying a farm at all in those days was a very precarious undertaking. A widow with seven children attempting it was hardly to be believed. There was many a skirmish eye brow to eye brow with Banker Habedank during during those years as she used every resource just to pay the interest.. The whole family worked hard with the support of new neighbors in the Home Lake Community, the older ones “working out” to bring in cash. Flocks of chickens and turkeys, strawberry and raspberry patches supplemented field crops of oats, barley, wheat, and corn. Cows produced milk for food and cream to go to the creamery for the “cream check” that bought groceries to add to what was raised on the farm.

The farm remained in the family for more than eighty years and was home to the family and many unattached brothers and sisters. Even Great-Grandma Anna came to “be by Lena”when she was widowed. The house was small--only

a kitchen, dining room, living room and screened porch on the first floor and two large bedrooms upstairs. Grandpa Lauritz left a legacy of his love of books and music. He had beautiful penmanship and it was a challenge to try and emulate it. They always had an organ and the boys played guitars, banjo and mandolins whenever they weren't busy on the farm. There was many a sing along in the parlor when work was done. Education was high priority--each one going to high school except Milly who couldn't see any sense of it. Roy and Mike took turns taking courses at the University of Minnesota during the winter. Burnett graduated from the Agricultural College in Crookston. One by one the family left and made homes of the own except Johnnie who lived on the farm until his death. When he married, Grandma moved to Twin Valley and lived there the remaining years of her life.

My own close companionship with her began in my pre-adoloscent years. During the summers, I went up to the farm in Twin Valley for a few days to help Grandma. Being the oldest of seven myself, I was a pretty good housekeeper already, and we worked side by side with the house and garden work. Floors had to be scrubbed with a brush; the front doorstep especially had to be immaculate "That' s what people see first and that' s what they remember."

The same standards prevailed with the washing even though it was incredibly hard. Water was carried from the well and heated in a washboiler on the stove. Wood had to be split at the woodpile and carried into the house to stoke the fire. Clothes were first soaked overnight then rubbed on a board with yellow Fels-Naptha soap. The dish towels had to be snowy white when hung on the clothesline. In the summer they blew out to fluffy softness in the sun and breeze; in winter they were frozen stiff in seconds and had to finish drying draped around inside the house. The water from the well was full of minerals which first had to be removed by putting lye in and skimming the resulting white

foam off the top before it could be used. Many years later in a conversation while we were washing dishes with detergent. "Don' t tell me about the good old days, Grandma said, "We' ve got it so much better now."

Clothes were hard to come by and made over and handed down until there was only enough to piece quilts. Even shoes were passed on and Grandma was often seen wearing a much-to-big pair of men's shoes around the yard.

If the work was hard and pleasures few, Grandma found peace in her garden.The Minnesota growing season was short, but there were roses, peonies, sweet peas, and nasturtiums, and many flowering shrubs around the house. Hours were spent in the vegetable garden picking tomatoes, peas, string beans, and all the other treasures that would be canned and pickled for the winter. Grandma was an artist with her canning. I can still see row on row of jars filled not only with the staples but string-bean pickles, tiny carrots pickled, June-berry sauce, corn relish, raspberry jam, and those half-gallon jars of dill pickles.

Her day began early, building a fire in the cookstove and then grinding coffee for a coffee pot that sat on the back of the stove all day. She cooked meals for whoever was there, but I don' t recall that she ever sat down with the family at the table. I' ve often wondered whether she still saw herself as the "hired girl" or whether in those early years, she felt that she couldn' t take the time to sit down. Whatever her reasons could have been, I suspect that even then she preferred her own company or that of one other person to that of a crowd and welcomed an excuse to be away from the goings on at the dining room table in that big family.

The long summer twilights were the best time. Supper dishes were done, the stove was still warm, the coffee pot simmering on the back. Then Grandma settled down in her chair and released her magnificent chestnut hair from the bun that all respectable Norwegian women wore in those days. She loved to

have it brushed, and I loved it brush it. Very long, down to her waist, it never did turn gray. Whatever I wanted to do with it was all right with her. I put gooey "wave set" on it, and made the waves that were then in style, put combs in it, ribbons, and finally after the light was gone and it was time to go to bed, braided it in one big braid. I was the first granddaughter in the tradition, but all of the others had their turn. I don' t know what device she used with her grandsons but I know that she found a way to forge that link of intimacy with them too.

Her wisdom didn' t come from books. Her standards were high, but they were her own, garnered from a lifetime of struggling to make ends meet and raise a family alone. Most of her values were transmitted simply by knowing her--she was not given to preaching. I can remember one aphorism: “You can always be half-a-decent.” We were expected to make an effort even if we couldn' t be perfect.

I don' t believe that she was ever really sick during those years, She was a strong Norwegian even though she was only about five feet, three inches tall and she kept going no matter how she felt. Years later, when life was easier, she said that she had had the flu and how she enjoyed finally just giving in to being sick. The work was done, and the fire was nice and warm.

So another chapter ended on that November day, but a new chapter began just as she predicted. We scattered to the far corners of the country, each of us taking the inspiration and wisdom that she had given us into our own lives. How many times I' ve remembered "You can always be half-a-decent.”

Grandma Purrier

Late in the day of the third of July, Grandma saw no signs of a birthday party. The next day was her birthday--the most important day of the year. Her large family and the friends in the community had never failed to celebrate it before and it was incredible that the day could go by with no notice even if it did get lumped together with the Fourth. Her disappointment turned into despair as she faced the fact that they had all forgotten and worse yet didn't care. How could she go through the day with no notice--she couldn't. On the morning of the 4th, she got up at 4 and built a fire in the cookstove to heat up the oven, got out her mixing bowl and mixed up the batter for the most elegant cake that she knew how to bake--a checkerboard cake with three layers! By the time the family got up, there it was in the middle of the dining-room table! Even then they didn't respond as she had hoped--they showed more concern about how to celebrate the Fourth. Her disappointment cast a pall over the day. About mid morning her gloom turned to delight when cars loaded with friends and family started coming up the driveway .They had all the makings of a picnic. Saw horses and planks quickly made tables that were laden with fried chicken, potato salad, jello, baked beans, pies and many birthday cakes topped off later with gallons of ice cream. The surprise was complete--the whole community had kept the secret and made this birthday the best in her life. Many years later at the age of eighty five, she had a stroke and lived until July 6th--two days after her birthday. Although she could hardly speak, we knew that she was determined to celebrate the day one more time.

The Purrier farm was about three miles west of us so it was easy to get back and forth in winter with the team of horses and sled and in summer in the Model T Ford. The farmhouse had a big kitchen, dining room, bedroom and

parlor on the first floor and three bedrooms upstairs. A veranda ran across the front of the house. A real luxury was the party line phone--each customer had a special ring so they would know when the call was for them but generally everyone rubbernecked and listened in to all the news. Another luxury that we didn't have was a large cistern storage tank in the cellar that collected rain water. A pump in the kitchen brought soft water up to the sink for washing. During the summer there was plenty of room to play "Run-sheep Run " and many other running games in the yard that extended almost down to the mailbox a quarter of a mile away. A large vegetable garden was a treasure trove of baby carrots, ground cherries warm in the sun, tomatoes lush on the vine. They seemed special because they were at Grandma's. Our cousins, Dodo and Bub, from a neighboring farm joined us in our fun and games. In the colder times of the year, we were allowed to go into the parlour. We tried out the piano, peered at the portraits of older relatives staring down at us, listened in awe to the sounds of the sea coming from the conch shell that someone had brought back from the coast. A Victrola sat in the corner and for special treats an adult would put on a record and we could hear the scratchy music come through the speaker. At mealtimes, the grownups ate in the dining room and the kids sat around the large table in the kitchen. What meals we had especially on the holidays! Chicken and turkey, potatoes, vegetables and pies and cakes of all kinds. There was no food fussiness--everyone ate what was there.

The farmhouse was a busy place with four uncles and two aunts living at home with Grandma as the queen. The oldest uncle was nicknamed "Deck" because Dodo couldn't say Jesse and the name stuck. He was the head of the farming operation assisted by whoever was at home. He was a quiet, gentle man and was always kind to us and interested in what we were doing. The next oldest was Jim,sa little more like his French father, who had the an interesting

hobby of sending for gadgets in the mail. Both Deck and Jim lived on the farm all of their lives. Ted was big and jolly with a hearty laugh and full of funny stories. Louie was much more like his mother--quite fair and stocky. In that big family with so much cooking needed, he got interested in that side of it and turned out some wonderful raised doughnuts and home-made ice cream of all flavors along with everything else. Ted and Louie moved to Ulen in later years and had their own trucking business. Grandma moved to Ulen and lived with them. Deck, Jim and Ted were bachelors all of their lives. Little Lylie was the youngest boy and died at the age of eleven during the flu epidemic in 1918. Ollie was the oldest girl and was married to Palmer Stende and lived on a neighboring farm, Lucy was a small, dark, shy, girl who was much like her father. She had stuttered all of her life and was comfortable only in her own family circle. She did find romance when Art Burud began to spend a lot of time on the farm. He was crippled with a muscular disease and was completely wheel chair bound. His family lived in nearby Ulen but he felt very much at home with all of the Purriers. The men picked him up and carried him whenever the family went someplace. He was a gentle, sweet person always with a laugh. Art and Lucy were married and later moved to Ulen. Alice was the youngest, dark and French. She was in and out--sometimes working in faraway Fargo. She knew what the latest styles were and we enjoyed seeing what she wore. This was during the “flapper” era and she dared to wear the precurser of pants--a kind of pajama outfit with bright flowers. What a wealth of uncles and aunts! We were showered with attention and acceptance. I don’t have any memory of being scolded for anything we did.

Grandma was the center of the family, a widow since Grandpa Merle died in 1925 from kidney failure. She was about five feet three inches tall but had a very stocky build and could work from dawn to dark bustling about with boundless energy. Her hair was grey and worn up in a bun. She always got a

new hat for Easter, each one looking just like the one before. She was a good seamstress making all of her own house dresses and aprons in gaily colored prints. She also made bloomers (a kind of under pants) out of outing flannel and put elastic around of bottoms of the legs and wore them just below the knee. We thought that was very strange. She was an avid handworker, making quilts, embroidering pillow cases and dresser scarves and knitting socks and mittens for the large family. She would sit in her favorite rocker beside the heater turning out her many creations quite often with the family cat in her lap. When she got really absorbed with what she was doing, she poked her tongue out of the corner of her mouth.

She loved to go places and was a real presence in the Baptist Church seldom missing a Sunday. She was usually a little late because she was adamant about having every dish washed and put away before she left and with that large family it was quite a job. Otherwise there were strict restrictions on what was appropriate activity on Sunday. Sewing was especially forbidden and I still get a pang of guilt when I pick up a needle on the day of rest. The Ladies Aid gave her real scope for her managerial talents and I suspect that she ruled it with an iron hand. Whenever someone in the community needed help, she packed up her carpet bag and moved in for a few days putting things to rights.

Although she was strong as a horse, she was affected by every hint of an illness and when she heard of someone with some kind of ailment, she would listen to the symptoms, say “I’ve got that” and take to her bed Many times she had the family gather around for her final words. The only medical care available was Dr. Bothne in Ulen, about six miles away, and he couldn’t do much except listen to her complaints and give her some mysterious potion from his black bag. Needless to say, she was a good customer for the patent medicines then available. Most of them made her feel better because of the alcohol

content which was in conflict with her strict Baptist belief of total abstinence but she managed to justify its use. Peruna was her favorite remedy.

The Purrier family originated in France and migrated to Quebec, Canada. They later moved to Plattsburg, New York where my grandfather, Merrill , was born into a family of ten children in 1857. When he was very young, the family relocated to Nicollett County in Minnesota. In 1893 he was married to Mary Ellen Hodson, the oldest daughter of James and Minerva Hodson. The Hodsons were English with some Pennsylvania Dutch. Grandma's grandparents, Joseph and Anna Hodson imigrated from England. Five children were born to Merrill and Mary while they lived in Nicollett County. Grandpa would have stayed in Nicollett County if he and a good friend, Watson Dunham, hadn't met a land agent in the Judson general store. The land agent talked them into going to Clay County in Northern Minnesota to look at some land. They became so excited about it, that they boarded the train that day, leaving Grandma with the horse and buggy and five small children to get home anyway they could. They had to ford the Minnesota River-- a frightening experience. Grandpa did buy the 320 acres of land and later in the year loaded all of the family and their belongings in rail cars and went to the Ulen area in Clay County. He and Watson rode with the train to feed and milk the cows and care for the animals. The farm turned out to consist mostly of a sand ridge and that combined with dirt storms and grasshoppers made survival a battle. At times the dirt blew so hard the children had to hold on to each other to find their way home from school..They did manage to put up enough hay to feed the cattle. Cows and chickens provided milk and eggs and income and with a big garden they lived well. They "boarded" the teachers who taught in the local rural school and took in agents, peddlers, and sometimes beggers--anyone passing who needed a home for a night.

They moved from Hagen to Walworth Township in Becker County in 1911

and there found a good social life with picnics, and house parties. In Hagen all of the church services were either in Norwegian or German. Grandpa was French and Grandma English and Dutch so it wasn't until the move to Walworth that they found the Baptist Church where they could be comfortable.

The family all worked together, running the farm, cutting and selling wood, working on other farms, helping neighbors when needed. A big thrill came one day when Grandpa came home with a Ford Touring Car. What a thrill it was to go so fast!

The buildings on the farm are gone now--only open fields to remind us of those days when the whole family was together in Walworth Township.

High School Years

Graduating from the eighth grade meant the end of compulsory education in Minnesota. Going on to school was an option and a privilege and an exciting possibility for me. Bussing had just started in the area; we were living in the Twin Valley High School District at the time so in September of 1936 I went off into a strange new world. My status changed radically--now I was a country kid among strange, sophisticated town kids. Everything was different. Algebra was incomprehensible. Home Economics almost laughable to someone who had been cooking and sewing since she was eight. I tried out for the chorus feeling quite confident that I could sing after my success in the Baptist Church but the music teacher, Miss Hole, dismissed me with hardly a glance. Physical Ed. was a nightmare for a shy, modest country girl. I hated getting undressed and showering in a common room. I'd never been athletic, always preferred reading whenever possible so I didn't have any skills in that area. After six weeks in Twin Valley, the family moved to a farm in the Ulen High School District so it was necessary to start all over again this time far behind the other students.

I still rode the bus to school but only four miles this time. My cousin, Lois, was a senior and having a member of the family in the same building helped mitigate the strangeness. I settled in and gradually adusted to the classes. English and History were favorites, Home Ec. was still tedious. The teacher was a fussy person who put little notes on my sewing like "Conceal knots." I had a clarinet that one of our neighbors in the Baptist Church gave me so I went out for band and enjoyed the music although I was a very mediocre player. I had my first real crush on Mr. Korstad, the short, blonde, slim, music teacher and wanted desperately to please him but it was not to be. Clarinets are temperamental and

prone to squeak at the most inopportune times. My family certainly didn't give me any encouragement, they protested every time I brought out the instrument to practice.

My uncle and aunt, Lucy and Art Burud, lived in town so during the times when the roads were completely blocked by snow, I stayed with them. Although the town was very small, I was thrilled at not having to take the bus after school and being where there were stores and school friends. Art had muscular dystrophy and was in a wheel chair so he had time to help me with my lessons in a very kind and patient way. My aunt Lucy was my dad's sister, a shy, gentle person who stuttered whenever she talked. They had a year-old baby, Ardis, who took her first steps to me. After the hurley burley of a big family, I enjoyed the peace.

I finished my freshman year and started on my sophomore year the next fall hoping to continue in Ulen. However, the owner of the farm that we were renting decided to move back there himself so it was time to relocate. My dad bought his first tractor from S.A. Torgerson , the John Deere dealer in Hawley, about twenty miles south, who said that he had just the right farm for us. So it was time to move again this time to a completely new area. It seemed best that I finish the semester in Ulen so after the family moved in November, I stayed with my aunt and uncle, Palmer and Ollie Stende, out in the country. My cousin, Dodo, was a freshman that year so we took the bus together for three weeks, then I shared a rented room in town with Eleanor Birkland. We boarded ourselves, cooked on a kerosene stove and fixed some rather strange meals. Money was very scarce for grocery shopping so our mothers sent in food from the farm. When that was gone, we made do with whatever we could put together. About that time, I discovered that boys weren't just aggravating people to be bossed around but fascinating creatures for flirting with. Our room became a gathering place for boys and girls alike and the landlady kept a sharp eye on the comings

and goings there.

At the end of the semester, I said goodbye to my friends and moved back with my family in Hawley and started the spring semester at the high school. Although there were forty students in my class, everyone was friendly and interested in who I was. There never was the snobbery of the town kids there. The first day one of the older girls on the bus, Evelyn Keeping, took charge of me and introduced me to the principal, Mr. Gussner, and showed me where to sit. Minnie Luthi, a classmate, helped me find my way around and that got me through the first day. I remember one of the first days when I was leaving to go downtown, I met a trio of boys. The blondest one in particular made a real impression on me. It was mutual. Later, I learned that he turned to his pal and said, “That’s the girl I’m going to marry.” and it was so.

Starting in the middle of the year did present problems. Friendships had already been formed and since I was shy, I was reluctant to make the first move. Living in the country was another handicap. At 4 o’clock, I got on the bus and went home so the informal gatherings after school were lost to me. As I settled in and got acquainted with more of the students, I met and liked Lorraine Doran and Louise Gunderson, both freshman and we became life-long friends.

I had been taking Home Economics in Ulen but when I came to Hawley it was’ nt offered so the only alternative was to take agriculture. Although I had lived on farms all my life, I knew nothing about the business of farming. I learned how to judge the merits of various animals, the scientific methods of making the most nourishing feeds and what to plant and when. The many field trips to various farms were enjoyed a lot since I was the only girl in the class.

Although our new home was still without electricity, phone, or running water, we were only a mile and a half from town and just off the main paved road so we

weren't as isolated as before. The house was smaller than the Guitman house and the boys were getting bigger so it was crowded but we all fit in someway. There were two bedrooms upstairs and one downstairs, a small kitchen, larger dining room and small living room and a big screened porch. The farmyard was surrounded by groves of boxelders and poplars.

The big red barn had a haymow that the little boys played in. The town kids loved to come out to the farm and were always welcome. When mealtime came, they were invited to stay and we just cooked more potatoes and put additional plates on the table.

Since we were so close to the road, hoboes passing through came to the door and asked for food. They always got something; many times they did some chores in return. Other dropins were the Jewel-T man selling coffee and other cooking supplies, the Raleigh and McNess men selling various home medications and spices. They were usually willing to take a chicken or produce in payment. In addition to their products, they provided some company for isolated housewives with friendly gossip.

That summer I had my first job in town. For $2 a week, I kept house for the mailman and his wife, Lloyd and Ella Plummer. She was recovering from a broken back so I was in charge of the house and also playing rummy with Mr. Plummer in the evenings. Here I learned what it was like to be a housewife in town, how important it was to be the first to get the snow-white dishtowels out on the clothesline on Monday morning and how I felt when Mrs. Whaley across the back yard got hers out first. The best part of it was being in town--now I was a town kid and could join the others at Mac's Sweet Shop in the evenings when I was free.

On a particular balmy twilight in August, "Music Maestro Please," was playing on the juke box when finally, Fred Bodwell, the blonde boy who had made such an

impression on me earlier, singled me out and suggested that we go for a walk. We were in the same class and had been very much aware of each other during the previous months. I thought he was about the handsomest guy in the world, always immaculate, very blonde with a bright, flashing smile. I sat a few rows ahead of him and across the aisle in the assembly hall and would suddenly become pleasantly aware that he was staring at me. The apples were ripe in the many yards we passed on our stroll and feeling very wicked, we swiped some apples and took them over to the steps of the Methodist Church and settled down to get acquainted. I knew that Fred's mother died when he was twelve and he lived with his stepfather, Ole Halverson, in an apartment above the John Deere Implement Shop and had all his meals in Kvalvik's Cafe. Ole was the proprietor of the potato cellar and was considered to be a prosperous business man. He was in his sixties then and being responsible for teen age boys must have been quite a challenge. Fred's sister, Bea, was married, had a daughter, Peggy, and lived with his parents in town. Leonard, his older brother lived with Bea and her husband, Ray Wange

We must have sat on the steps of the church for a long time because Mrs. Plummer was waiting for me at the door with admonishments about the perils of sixteen-year-olds staying out late with boys. I wasn't used to that as my mother did'nt set any deadlines being preoccupied with so many young ones. I was touched by Mrs. Plummers concern.We had many more of those wonderful evenings that summer and I was sorry to go back to the farm.

My junior and senior years were filled with classes, most of which I liked. There was typing which was tedious. Miss Braaten was a tall-horse-faced Norwegian old maid who was very strict. She'd stand in front of the class dictating "itch i itch space, itch i itch space" over and over again until she felt we could do it properly. I wasn't very proficient and never could turn in the error-free work that she

expected. English and history were my favorite subjects. In my senior year, we had a wonderful public speaking teacher, Miss Grinols, who helped to break the log jam of shyness that I suffered from. I found chemistry fascinating, working out the formulas was exciting. I expected to have the same experience with physics but hit a stone wall there. I had a very weak to non-existent background in Math so probably would have failed the course if Fred hadn't come to the rescue. He had a sharp mind and got it right away so was a big help to me and I did pass.

Fred was a star player in all of the sports. He was five eight and light weight but very quick. In that sports-loving town, he was a hero for many years to come. By our junior year, it was pretty well accepted that we were going steady. That meant walking down the halls together, an occasional movie at the Garrick Theater when transportation and the 15 cent ticket price was available and going to the school activities. I did go out with a few other classmates when they could get a car but eventually gave that up. Getting to the games was a real problem but somehow I managed by staying in town with Lorraine when I could and walked in when the weather permitted. Once in awhile, some of the other kids would get ahold of a car and come and get me..

The Depression was still very real in the late thirties and we had to earn money for clothes and fun any way we could. We depended on potato picking in the fall for most of it. Potatoes were a major crop in the area and when they were ready, the school closed down for two weeks and everyone went to the fields. A potato digger driven by a team of horses went down the rows turning over the hills spilling the potatoes on the ground for us to pick up. It was hard, backbreaking work. The weather was getting cold in October and the long days stooping over rows made us ache all over. We were paid by the bushel and it was a real thrill when we'd come upon a hill with a lot of big potatoes that would fill the basket

quickly..

I also qualified for a job in the library and was paid $2.50 a month. I pondered hard over whether I could spend a nickel for a “Bit of Honey” bar. My biggest expense was silk stockings--girls didn’t wear pants in those days and stockings without runs were a must. Fortunately for me, my aunt was a teacher and rather extravagant. She passed clothes down to me so I managed a fairly decent appearance but it was a challenge.

A pall over everything during the late thirties was the real possibility of war. Hitler was screaming his German rhetoric over a radio that the principal brought to the assembly hall. I’ll never forget the harsh, strident sound of his voice as he threatened our future. At that time, our country was trying to keep out of the foray in Europe but we had already accepted the fact that our generation was going to war.

In May of 1940 the culmination of years of study arrived tossing us out into the adult world. It was preceded by the usual formalities--the junior-senior banquet, the baccalaureate service with the crowning event--graduation. This called for a special dress which came from Sears Roebuck and cost all of $2.98, a pretty blue crepe, and I felt like a queen in it. Fred and I walked down the aisle together with our classmates really feeling the future opening up and wondering what it would be like. Many of my relatives came to the ceremony and gathered at my home afterwards. Fred came out to the house too and I proudly introduced him to my extended family.

The big treat for the seniors was the tradditional weekend at a resort in Detroit Lakes so the forty six members of the class packed up and moved into a rented cottage on the lakeshore for three days. Everyone was scheduled to share in the housekeeping but after chores were done, there was the lake for swimming and boating. In the evening, the Pavilion, an open-air screened hall for dancing,

was open and we danced to the wonderful music of the '40's --*Stardust, Beer-Barrel Polka*, *Mairsy Doats*, and many other songs that have survived to this day.Even with the watchful eye of the chaperones, we got into mischief--somehow wine was smuggled in. Minnesota was a dry state then and most of us had never tasted wine. I didn't like it much but some of the boys drank too much and had horrible headaches the next day. That was the last time the senior class had a weekend at the lake!

A shadow was hanging over the whole class knowing that going into the service was imminent for the boys with an uncertain future for the girls. All except those with disabilities were in the military within a couple of years and many of them lost their lives. For Fred and me a personal shadow fell when his stepfather gave him a one-way bus ticket to California where Bea was now living. Ole had done his duty, gave Fred a home during those four years after his mother died but now it was over. He was due to leave the next week. Fred had been offered an athletic scholarship to Concordia College in nearby Moorhead but neither his real father, who was a printer and living in southern Minnesota, or his stepfather would offer any support so he had no choice.. We sadly accepted the inevitable; he packed up, got on the bus and left me behind with promises to make plans for the future when he got settled.

Summer of 1940

We had high hopes for the future that June. Fred wrote from Redding, California on June 13th where he was living with Bea. "Here is my idea and you may see what you think of it. Very soon now, I'll begin to work and after I have worked two or three weeks, I'll be settled enough so that you could, if you wished, come out and work here. Between the two of us, we could get a used car inside of a month after your arrival. When fall comes, I'll start college and am pretty sure of a place to work for my board and can get my room free. You would still be doing housework if you wanted to and if you don't like housework, I'll quit school and get a full-time job and you won't have to work. It's all up to you. However, my dear, if you don't come out, I'll throw over my plans for a college education and be a bum good-for-nothing. Because I need inspiration before I can do anything and if you don't give it to me, you'll see me as a human derelict. . .Oh, I forgot to tell you before--my new prospect for a job is in Chico where the college is located and the temperature is decidedly more satisfactory than here; of course, if you have already found some other fellow, I suppose I'll have to come back and shoot him. Tell me, Dot, do I have to buy a gun yet? I hope not because I'd hate to be burned in the chair for murder."

His letter reached me in Argusville, North Dakota, where I 'd taken a job as a hired girl with the Hagemeisters, wheat farmers about fifty miles north of Fargo. I was anxious to get away from Hawley and bury myself in work since Fred was gone and this seemed like the ideal solution. Before I started work, my mother insisted that I get my teeth fixed so the Hagemeisters made an appointment with their dentist in Fargo for a whole afternoon. They drove down to Hawley, picked me up and dropped me off at the dentist's office. He ground away for hours and finished by pulling one tooth. When it was over, we

continued on to their farm and I started my new job with an aching jaw and a dentist bill which came out of my earnings. In a lettter to Fred written July 21, I wrote, “I’ve been here a whole month but I haven’t earned any money yet that I can call my own because I’ve earned just enough to pay my dentist bill.”

Although North Dakota was just across the Red River from Minnesota, the terrain was very different. Minnesota with its many lakes and woods and gently rolling hills, was a definite contrast to the wide-open treeless plains of North Dakota. In a letter to Fred describing the thunderstorms that rolled across the countryside almost every night, I wrote, “We had a terrific rain and lightning storm this morning about six. The lightning struck just a little way from here and made the phone sizzle. I don’t especially like thunderstorms for some reason or another. This wasn’t the first storm by any means. It seems as if I’ve been awakened almost every night by Old Mother Nature’s celebrations. Of course, as long as it’s doing so much raining, the work in the fields has been slowed up but it doesn’t affect the work in the house because we have the same amount of people here to cook for.”

I thought I was used to cooking for a big family but now there was the immediate family of John and Bonnie Hagemiester and the two kids, Vernon and Cecelia, plus Grandpa and up to six hired men. Our day started at five a.m. when the sun was just coming up. I’d set out the plates and silverwear on the red-checked oilcloth covered table in the kitchen and load it with platters of bacon and eggs, toast, oatmeal, cookies and doughnuts with everyone gathering around before the day’s work started. Then there were mountains of dishes to wash and preparations for dinner at noon. Bonnie baked the pies, she made an especially good sour-cream raisen. We baked cookies, cakes and doughnuts for the lunches that were provided both midmorning and midafternoon and mountains of bread. After I had been there about six weeks, I was promoted to

baking bread with a raise of a dollar a week In a letter to Fred I wrote, “Even though harvest has begun, I’m not working any harder than usual, one or two extra doesn’t make an awful lot of difference. Then too I got a slight raise so now I’m getting four dollers and fifty cents a week. It doesn’t amount to much but it’s encouraging. Now I have to bake bread and pie which I don’t mind because someone else does the dishes The garden produced most of the vegetables and this meant time spent in gathering and preparation. In addition to the family and hired help, drop-in company was always welcome. Later I wrote, “Last night for supper there were twenty people altogether and this afternoon a neighbor’s three little girls came over to play and stayed for supper along with a family and their four little boys so there is a party-like atmosphere around here.”

In addition to all of the cooking and washing up, the housekeeping routine was strictly adhered to even in the busiest times. Washing on Monday, ironing on Tuesday, cleaning the upstairs on Wednesday, downstairs on Thursday, extra baking for the weekend on Friday. Our days started at five a.m. and ended about eight p.m. when the supper dishes were washed. Once in awhile there was a lull in the middle of the afternoon but that was spent swatting flies. . In that German household, every minute had to be utilized in useful occupation. To this day I don’t swat flies The only time I had off was Sunday afternoon if I was lucky so letter writing had to be done around the edges. The hired girl was part of the family so I did get to go to Arthur on shopping trips and a big treat--a day at the North Dakota State Fair. Otherwise the whole summer was work, work, work.

The focal point of my days was the mailbox down the driveway about two blocks from the house. While I was occupied kneading bread and cutting out cookies, I kept a close eye out for the arrival of the mailman’s old rattle trap. The days that a letter came was wonderful and the empty days a downer. A letter from Fred would stay in my apron pocket until I could find a minute to read

it in peace. Letters also came from my mother; I missed my family in Minnesota. I had never been away from them for that long before.

While I was completely occupied, Fred was having quite a different experience. things weren't working out as we had hoped and he was getting discouraged. In a letter written on July 21, I said, "I'm really sorry that you and Bea don't harmonize very well. Maybe it's because you are two very different people. . . your job is really the most important topic and it sounds like a pretty good set up. I can see why it doesn't appeal to you because there isn't much inspiration or spiritual uplift in selling shoes is there? But if you should change your mind and like it a little better, it sounds like pretty good future. You know the prospect of our getting married is very attractive to me. Of course, I agree with you that we are pretty young to get married yet but if I could come out there, we could have a lot of fun together. It sure would be fun to fix up our house. We could have everything ready and then have clear sailing afterwards. Even if we couldn't get married for three years (it sounds like an awful long time) we'd be twenty one and old enough to take on the responsibilities of marriage. I wish things would work out like that. I'm so afraid that something will intervene and spoil our plans. Now all this is if you want to keep your job. If you don't want to, don't keep it for my sake. I don't want you to be tied down to something you don't like all your life. I know that you would like to be with your brother and go to business college but if you do go to college, why couldn't you come back here and try it? I wish you would come back here, you know you belong here, all your friends are here and they all want you back.

"Im having the same trouble that you are. I couldn't interest myself in anyone else if I wanted to and I definitely don't. Right now there are three not bad looking boys working here but they don't arouse the least flicker of interest in me. There are two who just came yesterday from Kentucky and the other is

Julian who has been here all the time but I'm not susceptible to anyone. If Clark Gable came up here just exuding charm, I'd like as not return to my daydreams of you.

"If you stay out there, I'm going to see if I can come too when I'm through working here or maybe a little later. I'd like to get acquainted with my family again before I leave. So about that time, maybe you can scout out a job for me so I'll have something to do and we can be happy again."

Many anxious days went by after I sent that letter. I watched and waited day by day but there was no word from Fred. Finally on July 22 I got a postcard from Huntington Park, in Southern California with the cryptic message. "I'm with my brother near Los Angeles. I'll write soon and you do the same."

I replied, "I had a hunch that maybe your next letter would come from the town where Leonard lives so wasn't greatly surprised when I got your card this morning. You're getting farther away me all the time aren't you. I don't suppose you are so lonesome now that you are with your cronies. I hope you won't get so fond of California that you'll never want to come back here. . . I was just reading in the Hawley Herald that Dorothy Ann and Thelma are out there for a visit. It must have been a surprise to see them, wasn't it? I must admit my heart missed a beat when you mentioned that you had been with them all day but began to get normal again when you said that Leonard and Augie were the official entertainers. . . you must be having a lot of fun out there seeing all the sights. Have a little for me. I don't have much myself while I'm stagnating up here."

Two days later, I wrote,"Last night again we went up to Arthur, John, Bonnie, the kids, Cecilia and Vernon, Julian and me. Now, don't get any ideas that you shouldn't have because Julian has a crush on Cecelia and Cecelia has a crush on him so I just go along as a chaperone. While those two talk I sit and wish you were here and make myself thoroughly lonesome. . .I was relieved to

hear that compulsory military training includes only the ages from 20 to 30. I was afraid for awhile that you'd have to be cooped up at a training camp for a year far away from me. I suppose that will take in your brother, won't it?. . . I didn't get a letter from you today but I have high hopes for tomorrow. I certainly hope that I'm not disappointed."

Another letter on August 8. "I've been waiting so long for a letter, Why don't you write anymore? I've been thinking of all the possible reasons but can't arrive at any conclusions. I hope that you'll help me out. Maybe your letters are going astray or mine did for awhile or maybe something has happened to you. Then again, maybe you don't care to write anymore but I've been trying hard not to believe that. Anyway, please write, won't you? I've been disappointed every day for so long that I've almost given up. The mailman comes and goes leaving me nothing. I can't imagine a bigger thrill than getting a letter from you again."

Fred finally responded."I have been a terrible heel for not writing to you but the truth of the matter is that I have grown so sick of myself that I no longer feel worthy of you. I'm not working and doubt if I could work if I got a chance. I guess you drew a blank when you pulled me out of the hat.

However, I'm awfully sorry and I'm apologizing in all sincerity. You may rest easy as far as I'm concerned. I have done absolutely nothing whatever against our vows and have no desire to do so. The only thing wrong is that I am no good and do not deserve you. So I got the foolish notion that perhaps I could do you a favor if I stopped writing and freeing you from any responsibility or obligations (if any exists) you might think you owe me. Your letter woke me up though and I guess I was unfair. But you have a good-for-nothing on your hands, I warn you. I'm not worth the paper you 're writing your letter on. Dorothy, I don't know what to do with myself. I would like to come back and attempt college but it seems so impossible. I have been trying to figure out a

way to exist and can find none. I am also trying to find a reason for existing and that too is elusive.. However, why worry about it, my fate doesn't seem to be in my hands as I used to think it was.

"I'll tell you what I want to do though. I want to make a stab at Concordia. I don't know whether or not I can make it but I'd like to try it if somehow or another I could get a chance at it. Oh well, maybe I'm dreaming. Don't take me too seriously. Don't ever believe that I've stopped loving you. You are still and will always be the only girl in the world for me. Please believe it because it is the truth."

In my letter of August 14, I responded. " I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw your letter this morning. I'd just about given up-- a person does that after a silence of three weeks but that made your letter all the more welcome. I was afraid I wouldn't even get an answer because I wasn't sure that you were getting my letters anymore. I had visions of you sick, drowned in the Pacific Ocean, or worse yet, out with another girl. Deep in my heart I had a hunch that what you told me was the reason was what was wrong.

I've never heard of a silllier reason for not writing. I absolutely won't have you thinking such things much less believing it myself. Just because you aren't working now doesn't mean that you are no good. There's a big future ahead and its bound to hold something good in it. . . won't you please try to get more confidence in yourself and forget about being what you call "good-for-nothing "because you're not. All you need is to get started on something you like and it'll be o.k. About Concordia; I wish you would come back and try it. If Concordia is expensive (and I hear that it is) there are other colleges and even if you don't go to college, you can surely find something to do. You belong in Minnesota. I wish that you had never gone to California. You said that you don't see any reason to exist, if you can't see any other reason, won't you try for my sake?

You mean so much to me that I can't bear the thought of not even hoping that someday we won't be 2000 miles apart. . . I realize more and more every day that you are the only one for me and that I can never love anyone else. I don't think I'll ever be good enough for you but maybe if I still have a chance, I can try, can't it? Remember that I'll always love you."

In a later letter I wrote, "I know the situation is very perplexing for you. I guess that I don't take the various phases of it into consideration when I just wish that you would come back. Maybe the main reaon why I want you to come back here is because I don't think I could make it out there this fall and gosh, if you don't come back, it'll be ages until I see you again and it's been too many ages already if you ask me. If nothing else turns up there's always the CCCs (CivilianConservation Corps). But then you'll be miles away again but not so far. There's always a dark side. Oh, heck, such a life. Some people may try to disprove the old saying "Absence makes the heart grow fonder but I'll always defend it. Even though I haven't seen you for three months, I stll love you just as much or more. Maybe thinking about you so much makes me realize more than ever what a fine person you are.

Then on August 31 the good news. Jubililantly I wrote. "I still haven't come down to earth yet after getting your letter this morning but I'd better try to arrange for a descent pretty soon. When you said that you may come back pretty quick. I just utttered a delighted, 'Oh boy' forgetting tht I had an audience. Cecelia and Bonnie laughed, of course, but I just couldn't contain myself, it make me feel so good. If you come back, you'll be back here in a couple of weeks, won't you? I'll still be up here for a month, it all depends. Then I'll probably start scouting around in Fargo or Moorehead for a job so I'll be on deck whenever you are playing if you are in college. I don't know about my being good luck though, but if you think it will do any good, I'll camp at the football field or gym or

wherever you are.

I wouldn't worry too much about a parking place. I'm pretty sure that you could find some place. Remember what my mother told you? And then there's the MacDonalds. They have it pretty well doped out about your staying there. Goodbye for now. I can hardly wait until the time when this guy I love comes back to me."

Fred did decide to come back and somehow got a ride back to Hawley where he was staying with his friend, John McDonald's family. I hadn't had a day off all summer and was more than ready to put the ranch behind me knowing that Fred was only 60 miles away. In my last letter from the Hagemeisters on September 9, I wrote," Good news for me and I hope for you too. I'm coming home on Saturday night! Actually coming home! For awhile I didn't think I'd ever get back again and I almost did stay another week. In fact that was the arrangements I made last Saturday when you letter came but I began to think that two weeks is a long time so I asked if we couldn't possibly finish up the canning etc. this week and after some figuring, Bonnie decided we could so Minnesota here I come' They are going to take me home so I should be there about 9. Hope I can see you then but I probably won't be coming to town. I can hardly believe that our separation is coming to an end and hope that it will never happen again."

Together Again

The day came when I could say goodbye to my job at the Hagemiesters. I packed my cardboard suitcase again and got in the car with them for the sixty-mile drive to Hawley. I'd worked there for three months, twelve to fourteen-hour days, seven days a week and had earned less than $50 but had a real feeling of pride that I had stuck it out and now had a little nest egg to tide me over until I got another job. It was wonderful to see my family again. Junior was only six and the others were stair steps all the way up to sixteen and all were glad to have big sister home. It wasn't until the next evening that Fred and his pals could come out to the farm and what a happy reunion that was--he was welcomed back like a long-lost brother. After the unsettled summer that we had just gone through, it seemed as if our troubles were over and we could look ahead to a future together.

Problems loomed immediately. First, the idea of college for Fred became more and more remote as survival took first priority. He needed a place to stay and the Macdonald's, a large Irish Catholic family, were glad to welcome Fred into their fold even though the house was full to bursting. The oldest boys, John and Donald, had been Fred's closest friends all through high school and their home had provided the love and security that Fred needed after his mother died when he was thirteen. Although he'd lived with his stepfather in an apartment and had all his meals in Kvalviks Cafe, he was always welcome at the MacDonalds.

The father of the family, John T., was employed by the State Highway Department and had a regular salary but feeding and clothing that family of nine children was a constant struggle. Katherine supplemented with her flock of hens and could fry an extra egg when the always-welcome drop ins came. She was

also an R.N. and occasionally did some nursing but taking care of their big family occupied almost of her time and energy. There was just no question that Fred would stay there--they would find a bed somewhere.

The question of a job solved itself quickly. A clerk was needed at the I.G.A. Store and Fred was hired at a salary of $7.50 a week. A grocery store in 1940 was very different from the supermarkets of today. When a customer came in he went up to the counter where he gave his order to the clerk who then got the items together and wrote out the tag. Most of the accounts were paid by the month so very little cash was exchanged. Fred even got involved in meat cutting helping Louie Wiesler, the butcher, when he needed it. Housewives called in their lists in the mornings; Fred put them up and twice a day delivered the groceries to the homes in the delivery truck. The store opened at seven in the morning and closed at seven in the evening every day except Saturday when they were open until eleven so the farmers could come in, do their shopping and visit with their neighbors. At least on Sunday the store was closed. Although the days were long, there was much to enjoy about the job. Fred was well known because of his sports triumphs and no doubt his athletic ability came in handy in handling the demands of the work. He became expert at wrapping up packages--a skill that was useful all his life. A job of any kind in those depression days was a blessing and we really didn't question the wages but the State Department of Employment did. They came in and evaluated the situation and told the owners of the store, the A.J. Carlsons, that the salary would have to be raised to $12.50 a week. That seemed like a real bonanza!

I didn't stay long on the farm either. The Plummers were in need of help again and I was glad to go back to a house with hot and cold running water and a nice bathroom. Mrs. Plummer still wore a brace on her back and Mr. Plummer had suffered a mild heart attack. He recovered and stubbornly insisted on going

back to carrying the mail on the Rural Route that extended for twenty or thirty miles around the farmlands. The doctor insisted that he take someone with him and it seemed like a good arrangement to have me fill the dual positions of housekeeper and assistant mail carrier. I don't know what I would have done if he had had another attack while we were out--I didn't even know how to drive and had no medical training. Fortunately, everything went all right. In the early days of fall, we could go in the car but when snow fell, he made the route in his snowmobile, a cumbersome auto with big treads, that rolled along like a caterpiller tractor. Mr. Plummer was a very quiet, somber person so there wasn't much conversation , I only saw the gentle side of him one night when he was listening to the radio news of the war threats in Europe with tears rolling down his cheeks mourning the boys who would have to go and fight another war.

I had the rest of the day catch up on the housework with all that entailed. Mrs. Plummer was very social and entertained her clubs often so I did a lot of fancy baking and entertaining along with playing rummy with Mr. Plummer in the evenings. Mrs. Plummer was much more talkative--she knew all the gossip in the town and filled me in on it. At one time, one of Fred's cousins, Sylvia Tungseth, had worked for her so she knew his family background. Fred's mother had been a Tungseth, part of a large strict Lutheran Norwegian family and still had brothers living in the area. In those days getting a divorce was almost unheard of and his mother had been divorced twice which really raised eyebrows in the town. That she had raised seven children a lot of the time with no help, cooking in restaurants and even running her own was overlooked. Anna left the area in her twenties with her husband and they settled in Arizona. There they ran a hotel and had four children, Erling, Maurice, Marie, and Thelma. Clarence Bodwell an itinerant printer who often stayed there, served as the catalyst that caused the marriage to fail. After she divorced Mr Awrey, she and Clarence were married

and she was to join him in his many moves from print shop to print shop all over the west coast. They had three children, Bea, Leonard, and Fred with Thelma living with them most of the time. The constant instability of the many moves and absences took its toll and they were divorced. Anna was left to raise their children on her own even having to put Leonard and Fred in an orphans home for awhile. After struggling for several years, she revisited her home town and there met and married Ole Halverson, the owner of the Hawley Potato Cellar. Fred was in the fifth grade when they settled in Hawley and the family settled down in a comfortable white-frame house in Hawley. Ole had plenty of money but was very tight with it. She never had any cash. Mrs. Plummer delighted in telling me all of her stories. She was a fiesty little gray-haired Englishwoman with black framed glasses and sparkling eyes. Only the English were the only true Americans was her firm belief.

We were very hard-working people with little time for each other but were glad to be in the same town at least. There were the gatherings at Mac's Sweet Shop whenever possible. John and Donald MacDonald were still seniors in high school and also on all the teams so we went to the games. The Garrick Theater provided movies for fifteen cents changing three times a week. Carole Lombard, Jean Harlow, Clark Gable, Nelson Eddy, and dozens of others provided adventure and romance The back row in the darkened theater was a wonderful place to be on those cold Minnesota nights. An important part of a night at the movies was the newsreel that the brought the world into sharp focus. The Japanese had been ravaging China for years fighting for space to put their burgeoning population. Hitler was terrorizing Europe--a civil war had been raging in Spain for years. Graphic pictures of the havoc made the outside world all too real to us. Charles Lindberg, our aviator hero, was preaching isolationism trying desperately to keep America out of foreign involvement. Along with the music

and romance at the Garrick was the real threat of war.

We loved to dance and took advantage of every opportunity that came along. When there were wedding dances in the area we did our best to get there. There were very few cars and not much money to buy gas so whenever transportation was available we all piled in. One of the favorite places was a dance hall about ten miles away in Hitterdal on the second floor of the grocery store. When there were wedding dances, everyone came, children, grandparents and all. The building fairly rocked with the music of local fiddlers and piano players.We danced polkas and schottishes--the shag and jitterbug was just coming into vogue. *The Beer Barrel Polka* was popular as well in *In the Mood, Stardust* and many other tunes that are still popular. Any admission money was given to the newly weds to help in getting them started. Another place to dance was Frisks, a sleezy night club in Lake Park that had a beer license. We weren't of age so had to depend on the owner to look the other way when we came in.

In coldest winter, a skating rink was made by leveling off a space in a vacant lot and flooding it with water. A big barrel filled with wood and set afire provided warmth on those below-zero nights. I wasn't much of a skater and had some dramatic falls but it was fun to skate with a partner especially when it was Fred.

Life in that small town didn't promise much but more of the same. In May, Fred's brother, Leonard, and his ex brother-in-law, Ray Wange, drove back to Hawley from California in an old Pontiac that they had managed to buy. They proposed that we return to the Los Angeles area with them. The economy was picking up; Leonard had a job at Luhrs Meat-Packing plant and Ray worked in a grocery store. They were sure we wouldn't have any trouble finding work. It didn't take us long to take them up on the offer. We didn't want to be separated again and my parents didn't object knowing that there wasn't much opportunity in

Hawley. I didn't realize at the time how hard it was for them to give their consent. So again I packed up my cardboard suitcase, this time taking off into an unknown future with only $17 in my purse and Fred at my side.

California Here We Come

We left the farm about ten o'clock on that Thursday morning in May. Although I was excited about the prospect of traveling to new places, I dreaded saying goodbye to my family and leaving them for who knows how long. We are a very undemonstrative family and the kids solved the problem by disappearing when the time came. We took a picture of my parents just before we got in the car to go and I can still see the sadness on their faces as they faced the finality of what was happening.

The plan was to drive straight through with the guys taking turns at the wheel and drive we did through the plains of North Dakota and into Montana Fortunately, the Pontiac purred along with no problems. Montana was truly "Big Sky Country." Treeless plains stretched in all directions for hours and hours. Finally, in the middle of the of the day on Friday we caught sight of the first mountains that I had ever seen just outside of Livingston. It was an awsome sight. Snow capped--suddenly rising over the surrounding prairies, powerful and dominating. It was the beginning of a life-long attraction and fear for me. After we reached the Rocky Mountains, we were in rugged territory for most of the rest of the trip. One memory that sticks in my mind--Leonard and Ray crashing down a steep slope that they were exploring on one of our rest stops. They spotted a snake before it spotted them and didn't stay around to see what kind it was.

We must have picnicked along the way. No one had money to spend in restaurants and didn't want to take the time. Traveling around the clock was exhausting and by the third day I knew I didn't ever want to do that again. Finally, late on Saturday night, we saw the lights of Los Angeles coming into view casting a red glow against the sky. Leonard and Ray lived in a boarding house in Huntington Park, south of Los Angeles, and Fred planned to join them but it

was a men-only place so they had to find a motel for me. I really felt disoriented finding myself alone in a strange city in the middle of the night.

I wasn't abandoned though. The next morning they picked me up and we continued the adventure by going to the Pike, a waterfront playland in Long Beach. I'll never forget seeing the Pacific Ocean for the first time. Here I was on the very edge of the United States with nothing ahead but water. My first and last roller-coaster ride was a terrifying experience. After a couple of hours on the Pike, we headed north for Los Angles where I planned on staying with a friend, Ruth Corwin, who lived with her sister.

It was then that I realized what a huge city Los Angeles was. We drove for miles on city streets with every variety of homes, stores, factories, and tall buildings. The Spanish-style houses with red-tile roofs were quite a change from the frame houses that I was used to. Palm trees lining the boulevards reminded me that I was now in the tropics. There were no freeways so it was slow going. Even then, the air was yellowish-blue with a mixture of smoke and fog but it was just accepted as being part of the city.

We finally reached the residential area and found the address where Ruth lived with her married sister, Eileen, and another young married couple. I got a warm welcome and I stayed with them for a few days until I got a job. They were a big help in showing me what I needed to know in order to get around. I got a street map and studied it until I was familiar with all of the major streets and avenues and the direction they were going. It was time well spent as I always knew where I was and how to get where I wanted to go. I also learned that Los Angeles had an excellent street-car system. The Red Cars ran on all of the major arteries throughout the city. Also we had a lot of fun--they taught me how to play poker the first night.

Job hunting was a top priorty. I found out where the Employment Office

was and and went on my first street-car ride downtown. I got a warm reception there. The clerk who interviewed me said when I told her where I was from. "We like Minesota girls--they're hard workers." She sent me on an interview at a board-and-care home out near Western Avenue so it was back on the Red Car again. The interview went well and I was hired as the cook in the six--patient home. I was promised $8 a week and a raise after three months if all went well The owner was a registered nurse who also lived in the house with her husband and two children. Fortunately for me it was a live-in position so I had a place to stay although I had to share a room with her school age daughter.

I started cooking again this time making attractive trays for the patients and meals for the rest of the family. At least I didn't have to do the cleaning too. In the back yard was a single room that was rented out to a pair of sisters who were in their thirties. They delighted in showing me Los Angeles whenever I could get time off. Going to the Hollywood Bowl to an outdoor production of the opera, *Madame Butterfly,* opened up a whole new world of music for me. I'll never forget hearing *One Fine Day* for the first time, the soprano's voice rising to the stars.

While I was getting settled in this new experience, Fred was doing the same. He had a place to live in a boarding house in Huntington Park, a suberb just south of Los Angeles. Dagney became a good friend and surrogate mother to the guys, providing room and board for only $8 a week and would always find room for the friends and relatives who joined them. Fred got a job almost immediately in the heart of downtown Los Angeles at the Southern Pacific maintenance yard cleaning coaches. At first, he had to work from midnight to 8 a.m so again we were separated by the demands of our jobs. Once in awhile, he could borrow Leonard's car and we explored the city if our time off coincided. At least we were both in the same area and had hopes for the future

I worked in the board-and-care home for about three months. When the promised raise didn't happen, I decided it was time to look for something else so back to the employment office. There was an opening at RCA Victor Manufacturing Plant in Hollywood for a record finisher and I lost no time taking the Red Car to the factory to apply. I was hired and went to work the next Monday The job paid $25 a week! I was thrilled at the prospect of earning so much money. For the first time, I'd be working eight hours a day five days a week from 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. That seemed a welcome change to someone who had been on duty around the clock before.

Shellac 78 rpm records were manufactured in the factory--my part in it was to put a record that had been pressed onto a spinning wheel and polish the edges. Now I had to find a place to stay. Fortunately, there was a room to rent just across the street from where Ruth was living so I moved in in September. My day started very early catching a street car at 5:30 in the morning.

. The work was hard and very repetitive but was exciting because RCA was making records of the popular songs of the day. *Chatanooga Choo Choo* went through my hands by the hundreds. Glen Miller was at his peak then; Woody Herman was playing just a few blocks away at the Palladium and I got to spend an evening there dancing the night away with new friends that I made on the job. There was much excitement about a new singer with the Tommy Dorsey's Orchestra--a skinny little guy who made all the girls scream in ecstasy. That was the beginning of Frank Sinatra's career.

Now that we both had jobs, the next thing was to look around for a car. Fred found just the thing--a 1937 Ford at a price we could afford. Our first expedition was a trip up to Porterville where Fred and Leonard's dad was working as a printer in the local print shop. There hadn't been much communication since the parents were divorced fifteen years before but now

that the boys were grown up, they were anxious to make up for lost time. Leonard was in love with Jackie, a pretty blonde, and they were planning on getting married before he had to go into the service. So the four of us drove the 100 miles up to Porterville and spent the weekend getting acquainted. Clarence Bodwell, (he preferred to be called Charles) their father, was a small, slender man with a quick wit and a fund of funny stories. He was interested in our wedding plans and insisted on buying each of the fellows a new suit to get married in. He proposed that he and the boys go into the printing business together but with the military looming in the future it didn't seem feasible.

We had a car now so it was time to begin making wedding plans. Since we didn't have any family in the area, it became obvious that getting married in Las Vegas was the answer--very few couples had formal weddings, they were too expensive. I realized later that my mother was disappointed at our decision but accepted the practicality of it. I went shopping and found a three-piece suit for myself--a pretty blue one--and on November 1, 1941 Fred, Leonard, Jackie and I left for Las Vegas. The military was very much in evidence there with many other couples lining up for their turn. We had to get our license first and this presented a problem as Fred was only ninteen but we solved that by Leonard giving his true age of twenty one and Fred saying that he was twenty three--the only time an early receding hairline was a plus. There were couples ahead of us and behind us so the ceremony was very brief. The minister had us sign the certificates cautioning Jackie and me to be sure and sign our new names correctly.

Mr. and Mrs.

The wedding had happened so fast and with so little fanfare that it didn't seem real. The couple just behind us were almost pushing us out of the way. He was in Army uniform, she was all dressed up for her wedding day and very pregnant. We came out of the chapel into the reality of Las Vegas at five o'clock in the afternoon--the same people who had walked in but now with a completely different status. In the tension of getting there and getting the paper work done, we hadn't given a thought to what we would do next. The glitter of the casinos looked attractive so even though three of us were under twenty one, we decided to try our luck and ventured into the noise and clatter of the nearest one. Fred had a loose dime in his pocket, put it in the slot, pulled the handle and out rolled eighteen shiny new coins! Afraid that management would nab us, we quickly scooped up the winnings and left. That called for a nice dinner which wasn't hard to find in that party town. In order to get a head start on the trip back to Los Angeles, we started the drive and got about half way before we found a motel and there registered as Mr. and Mrs. Fred Bodwell for the first time.

Both of us had jobs to get back to and now we had to find a place to live. There seemed to be plenty of apartments to choose from. We quickly found what we wanted in the northern part of Los Angeles on Hyperion Street. The apartment was a studio with a kitchen, bathroom, and living room with a Murphy bed that pulled down out of the wall. With our crazy work schedules, it was seldom folded up. They furnished all of the dishes, linen, even the dishtowels for $32 a month so we could move in with just our suitcases. The only thing we had to buy was a luxury for us--a radio with a phonograph on top on which we could play our 78 rpm records..

We started our new life under the handicap of having jobs with conflicting

hours. I worked from 6 a.m. to 2:30 so had to get up before 5. Fred didn't go to work until midnight, coming home in mid morning and sleeping until I finished my day's work. It was a confusing time and not what we imagined married life would be like with the challenge of our strange hours. However, we were very glad to have two incomes and the prospect of a better future.

Fred was still at work that Sunday morning, December 7, 1941. I had attended Baptist Church services in the neighborhood and came out onto the front steps to hear the incredible news that the Japanese were bombing Pearl Harbour in Hawaii. We stared up at the sky expecting planes with the Rising Sun logo to start flying over any minute. Sunday was an anxious day as we listened to the radio for news and directions. We heard that there would be a complete blackout when it got dark and that's what happened. In that big city, there wasn't a light to be seen. No cars on the streets, no planes flying overhead. We stood out in front of the apartment house in the darkness and silence. Voices could be heard from a block away. At first, we expected to be next. We'd been aware that relations between us and the Japanese were touchy but never dreamed they would attack us. We'd felt safe with the oceans between us and the rest of the world but now knew those days were over. The complete blackouts continued for several nights and were modified for the entire time of the war.

Another factor added to our fears. The Los Angeles area had a large Japanese population--were they now our enemies and possibly spies? Were they at this moment planting bombs in our buildings? We had been very much aware of their presence- now they seemed to be everywhere taking pictures. The negotiations in Washington between our country and Japan had seemed to be going well; our main concern was the war in Europe but suddenly everything was turned around. Within hours war was declared between the United States

and Japan. Similar action was taken with Germany and Italy. “A day that will live in infamy ,” are never-to-be-forgotten words as President Franklin Roosevelt broadcast his first “Fireside Chat “on the radio We were to listen carefully in the next few years to his his talks, Eastern accent inspiring, encouraging, reassuring, binding the nation together to make the supreme effort and sacrifice necessary to win the war. We knew that night that our lives and the lives of our generation would be forever changed.

In those days of turmoil we still had to cope with our daily lives. I found keeping house in the confusion of conflicting hours and long days at work hard. I’d been commuting several miles on the Red Car every day and it seemed better to live closer to Hollywood so we moved again--this time to a larger apartment only about three blocks from Hollywood and Vine within walking distance of my job. Our new landlady was amazed when we decided to move in on New Years Eve--she thought all young people would be out partying but we had to fit the move in with our time off. We enjoyed being in the heart of Hollywood and felt that we were in the center of the world. Walking down Hollywood Boulevard in the evenings was like a treasure hunt--we were always looking for movie stars and saw a few. We walked in the footprints in front of Grauman’s Chinese Theater and ate once or twice in the the Brown Derby , pretending that we were important people too. After all, we were still teen-agers.

I was determined to learn to drive; my mother had always driven and I could see that this was the path to independence. I got a Minnesota driver’s license just by walking into the Post Office and paying the 35 cents that was the only requirement. It seemed prudent to be better equipped when I had to take the driving test required in California so I found a driving school nearby and signed up for the course. My first lesson was in the afternoon after I got home from work. After a brief introduction, we got in the training car, I behind the wheel

and the teacher beside me with his set of brake and accelerator pedals .At first we took the side streets, the traffic was fairly light, but after a few blocks, he gave me directions to get right on Hollywood Boulevard. It was five 'clock in the afternoon and rush hour. I almost had to pry my hands off the wheel when the ordeal was over and I could stagger out of the car. Even after that terrifying experience, I kept on and got my license with no problem. I didn't have any trouble until I was behind the wheel one night when we were coming home from Huntington Park at one o' clock in the morning--I ran a red light. We were in the Negro district and I'll never forget the white eyes staring out of black faces as they watched from the street corner. I got a ticket and had to go to court to clear it up. Another humiliating experience--I went on the day they were trying drunk drivers.

While I was coping with so many new experiences, a part of my heart was still with my family in Minnesota. I couldn't call them because there wasn't a phone on the farm so we had to keep in touch with letters. My mother was very good about writing, my dad wrote whenever he had something to say. I missed the arguments that we had and bossing the boys around. Even the kids wrote often telling me about school and whatever they were interested in. A letter from home was always a welcome sight and kept me in touch.

Life went on this way until spring when one day I came home from work to find Fred's sister, Bea, her husband, Buck and their two girls there. They had come down from Chico that day, and found Fred home. Their scheme was that Buck and Fred would go to work in the shipyard in Long Beach that was building Liberty Ships. They had already been down there and gotten hired. The plan was that we would rent a house in Redondo Beach and live together. Buck had such a poor credit rating that they couldn't get the furniture needed so we would use our good name to furnish the house--they would make

the payments and keep the furniture. We knew that Fred would go into the service and didn't want to be encumbered with household goods. All of this had been decided and taken care before I came home from work. While I was stunned at how fast it happened, I was glad that Fred now had a job that could support both of us and the prospect of not working full time sounded good, . Within a week, I quit RCA, packed up our clothes and our radio phonograph and moved to Redondo Beach .

Living with Bea and Buck was difficult from the first. Bea insisted on doing everything just the same way her mother did--even to using Rinso soap!--I didn't agree and felt that since we were paying half, we should have equal say as to how things were run. The little things like mayonaise on the lunch sandwiches or not became an issue. A month or two of that and we were looking for a place of our own and found a one-bedroom-furnished cottage on the main street going through town. Now we could finally settle down and see what a normal life was like.

Our little house was one of six in a row on the main highway going through Redondo Beach with the landlady living in the end one. We quickly made friends with our next-door neighbors, Mr and Mrs. Foster, an elderly couple and with newlyweds on the other side from Kansas. The house was comfortable with a large living-dining room, a bedroom, and bathroom. The kitchen had an old-fashioned ice box which had to be supplied every other day by the iceman. Another inovation was a California cooler--the bottom shelf of one of the cabinets was a screen letting cool air in to keep the vegetables fresh. Fortunately, the house was furnished as we'd used up our credit. We especially enjoyed the tea cart--a little table on wheels that had leaves that opened up. It was painted a cream color and we enjoyed using it was a little dining room table and rolling it out into the living room closer to our radio and phonograph. We even had a little

front yard and a back yard that had room for a small garden. I dug up a small plot about six by three to plant string beans and Mr. Foster loved to tease me about it--saying that it looked a lot like a grave to him and where was Fred.

We settled down in our new home and enjoyed finally achieving what we had dreamed about. Fred worked during the day as a welder-burner down in the double bottoms of the Liberty ships that were being rushed to completion in Long Beach, about fifteen miles away. I had my days to go through cookbooks, trying all kinds of things. Fred commented one night, "Why don't we ever have potatoes?" The next day for dinner we had potatoes--baked, fried, scalloped, French fries, creamed. That took care of that discussion.

As we were only four blocks from the waterfront, we often walked down there in the evenings. We'd buy a big bag of fried shrimp for 15 cents and stroll on the beach. A Friday night luxury was going to the Wagon Wheel and having prime rib. For the first time in our lives, we felt that we could afford it. That's when I found out that rare beef was good. In Minnesota we cooked it past well-done. Leonard and Jackie were also living in Redondo so he and Fred got together on Sunday mornings and played basketball. He was an early riser and I can still remember hearing him bouncing the ball down the street at 7 on Sunday mornings. Their son, Lenny Jr. was born in November of that year and shortly after, Leonard enlisted in SeaBeas, a branch of the Navy.

While we were enjoying having a stable home life, the war was very much with us and became increasingly more so as time went on. At night we could drive only with the amber dimmers on. Windows had to have blackout curtains that would completely block out any light especially when the air-raid warning sirens went off. The Air Raid Wardens had complete authority to monitor whether or not we were complying with the regulations. Any little chink of light would being a loud rapping on the door. Along the coast, especially in the area of

oil fields, barrage balloons flew about fifty feet off the ground protecting what was below from any low-flying planes. One night we were at the movies when the air raid warning went off in the middle of a bombing attack on the screen. That was too real for comfort. We had to stay where we were until the all clear was sounded.

Another real cause of tension was the presence of Japanese truck farms between us and the next town, Torrence. They seemed peaceful enough but we couldn't forget that their relatives in Japan were raining bombs down on our friends and brothers and were threatening to take over all of the Far East. We couldn't be sure that they weren't spying on us in preparation for an invasion and we were afraid. When the farmers brought their produce to sell at stands in town, they seemed peaceable enough but we didn't dare trust them. The first months of the war were very discouraging with loss after loss. Sentiment against the local Japanese rose higher and higher and the decision to relocate them to internment camps was inevitable for their protection as well as ours--we had trusted the Japanese before and they had destroyed that trust.

Shortages of everything became more and more acute. Shoes, sugar, gasoline, tires all had to be purchased with stamps from ration books. What wasn't rationed became very hard to get. Meat was available very seldom and if word got out that a certain store had some, we rushed down, stood in line and bought whatever was available. That's when I found out that I liked lamb. That year for Christmas my mother sent ham and bacon for a real treat. I had to get creative with my Good Housekeeping Cookbook and find satisfying recipes for vegetables. Creamed cabbage got to be a favorite.

Metal of all kinds were devoted to the war effort--very little left for domestic use. No cars were manufactured, no household appliances. We had to make do with what we had. Fortunately for us, our 37 Ford was still in good

shape.

Even with the uncertainty of the war, we were delighted that summer that we found that we were going to be parents. Fred was classified 1A and we knew that he would be called sooner or later. It turned out to be sooner so he went to the Draft Board and asked for a deferrment until after the baby was born. They made some sarcastic remarks implying that we were using the pregnancy to get out of serving but that certainly wasn't the case. Our country was in danger of being taken over by barbarians and everyone had to do everything possible to make it safe again especially now that we were starting a family. Our hometown newspaper kept us informed about our friends and classmates who had already enlisted and we were anxious to do our part. The Draft Board was convinced and did grant the deferrment. We felt that I could get along easily with the $80 allotment if I went back to Minnesota and lived with my family. Going into the military seemed to be a wonderful opportunity to learn a trade--Fred was especially interested in electronics so there was no question in our minds that as soon as the baby was born we would make arrangements to enlist.

Those nine months were contented months. The first three I was nauseated and spent a lot of time on the couch keeping as still as possible. I read the biggest book I could find, *War and Peace* and got about three fourths through it before the nausea passed and have never finished it. To celebrate our first anniversary and getting my stomach settled, we make a trip up to Lake Arrowhead in the mountains near San Bernardino.The pine trees were heavy with frost in the mornings-- a reminder of Minnesota. When we got home I got busy crocheting baby sweaters and blankets and making little kimonos all with embroidery and dreaming about what it would be like to be a parent. I found that being pregnant had advantages. The butcher at the corner grocery was Greek and his tradition taught that women had to have plenty of meat when

they were pregnant so whenever he got some in, he saved it for me.

The last couple of weeks I had to stay in bed because of rising blood pressure and edema which could lead to toxemia--a very dangerous possibility for both mother and baby. Fortunately, the treatment worked. Early in the morning of April 2, I felt the first warning pangs and we quickly drove to the Maternity Hospital in Hermosa Beach, just a few miles away. It was very small with only about six beds but very well staffed. We needn't have hurried because I walked and walked most of the next three days with Fred supporting me. Finally, at 6:15 p.m.on Sunday Frederick Grant was born and our whole life was changed again. We didn't know where we found the name Grant but wanted him to have the same initials that Fred had. Many years later when other branches of the family did geneology research, we found that the name Grant had appeared in several generations of Bodwells.

In those days, new mothers stayed in bed for ten days, not being allowed to dangle their feet until the ninth day. For most of the time, I was the only patient and really got pampered. Having had six younger brothers and a sister, I felt that I was well acqainted with babies but found it was very different having one of my own. Fred was the youngest in his family so babies were new to him but he caught on quickly. I appreciated having the ten days to get used to this new role. Grant had to be encouraged to nurse and didn't sleep nearly as much as most babies do.

A Waiting Time

Bringing an infant into our little house really made changes. Staying in bed for ten days had sapped my strength but I was determined to be the perfect mother and follow all the strict rules that the baby-care experts were espousing then. They favored bottle feeding but I did hold out and insisted on nursing. A strict four-hour feeding schedule was mandatory no matter how much the baby howled in between. I tried my best but the result was that he never did sleep for long periods of time because he was hungry. A never-to-be-forgotten day--he woke up at seven a.m. and stayed up all day and most of the evening.

I remember my struggles to keep a soapy, slippery baby from sliding out of my grasp when I bathed him in the dishpan in the kitchen sink. It was fun getting him dressed up in the things I had made for him and seeing him grow and change every day. I didn't have a washing machine so all of the cute little things plus dozens of cloth diapers were washed by hand and hung out to dry in the backyard

During this time, we were planning our move to Minnesota. The doctor said that it would be o.k. to travel at six weeks so we managed to finagle enough ration points to get tires and gas for the trip. We notified the Draft Board of our new address and early one morning in May packed our possessions in the '37 Ford and were off. We had chosen a route through Arizona and Colorado and took time to go through Oak Creek Canyon and Tuzigoot

National Monument carrying Grant. He paid little attention to it but didn't object either. In Colorado, we went through the Cave of the Winds with him sound asleep all the way. Coping with living on the road was a challenge. I remember drying diapers by tying them to the radio antennae of the car

Fortunately, the car performed well on the trip and we arrived on the farm in Hawley after about a week on the road. I don't remember how my mother managed to fit us in with the rest of the family but somehow it happened. The family were glad to have us back. My mother said that she was glad that the younger kids would have a chance to know what it was like to have a baby in the family. They made a regular toy out of him--wheeling him around in his buggy and carrying him when he was restless. My mother quickly suggested that at least a three-hour schedule was much better and after that he was more contented.

May was a busy season on the farm and Fred fell right in with the work that needed to be done and had a lot of fun with the boys playing ball and whatever game they played when the work was done. He also worked for the Highway Department that summer with John McDonald's father. I was a busy one too helping with the cooking and cleaning along with taking care of Grant. We proudly showed off our baby to the relatives and especially to John and Gretchen McDonald who were married while we were gone. We spent a weekend with them and the MacDonald family at their lake cottage and they must have agreed that having babies was great--they went on the have nine children of their own.

Summer turned into fall and no word from the Draft Board. We were pretty crowded on the farm so we thought it would be a good chance to go down to Minneapolis about three hundred miles south. Fred's half sister, Thelma, her husband, Jim, and three small children lived there and we wanted to get acquainted with them. So we loaded up the Ford again and drove down. We found a housekeeping room on the third floor in a big old house almost downtown in Minneapolis. Our funds were getting a little low so Fred searched the want ads and found that Bemis Bag was advertising for help. He was hired

immediately and had a brief career manufacturing burlap bags. It certainly wasn't what he wanted to do the rest of his life but it did tide us over.

We enjoyed spending time with Thelma and Jim and also enjoyed getting to know Minneapolis. I'd take Grant out in his buggy every day and explore the nearby areas. Minneapolis had parks every few blocks so those balmy fall days with leaves scuttering around will always be remembered. Fall turned into winter and one morning, we found our car covered over with more than a foot of snow. Christmas came and went and still no word from the Draft Board. Our housing was getting increasingly cramped --Grant was beginning to crawl and no place to go--Bemis Bag was very monotonous so Fred wrote to the draft board in Redondo Beach to remind them that we were still alive. That's all it took. By return mail he was reclassified 1A. He then had the option of enlisting in one of the services and since his two half brothers, Erling and Morris, were career Navy men, he chose the Navy and was inducted in Minneapolis. Back to the farm for me and Grant where we settled down in the living room, me on the couch and Grant in his crib.

In The Navy Now

Winter set in with a vengeance. Snow was deep around the farmhouse. The trip to the outhouse called for overshoes and a warm coat. The days were very short with daylight fading by four o'clock in the afternoon**.** The lamps were lit after they were filled with kerosene and the chimneys polished. A bright spot was the mantle lamp on the dining room table that gave out a white light for supper and homework afterwards for the kids all now going to school in Hawley. There was a real rush in the mornings with breakfast and making the lunches before they took off on the bus. Many times I fried pancakes for half an hour, putting stacks of them on the table to be gone in five minutes. Lunches were basically egg-salad sandwiches on homebread bread and wrapped up in the Moorhead Daily News. Paper products of any kind were very scarce and we had to make use of whatever we had. The lunches were fortified with cookies and doughnuts and whatever fruit was available. Baking to replenish the supply was a daily job and kept the Home Comfort Range simmering all day. The boys were in charge of filling the woodbox so the range and the heater in the living room could blast out heat to combat the near zero temperatures outside.

Water was carried in from the well and was carefully used supplemented by melting snow on the stove for the soft water. Keeping the baby clothes clean was a challenge and an everyday affair. They were dried by first hanging them out on the line where they were frozen stiff but still got damp dry. Then they were brought into the house to finish drying draped around the house.

Fred's leaving was wrenching. After he was inducted into the Navy, he was sent to Boot Camp at Farragut, Idaho for two months training followed by a weeks' leave.

The discipline was intense with total immersion in the training. He had hardly a minute left over for anything but he did manage to write whenever time allowed. He seemed to enjoy the regimen--proud of being a Navy man missing his little family but also glad to be serving his country. The food was plentiful but menus strange. Beans and rutabagas for breakfast! My life revolved around the mailbox again and I donned layers and overshoes for the long walk down the driveway hoping that there would be a letter. I wrote every day keeping him up on what Grant was doing and letting him know that he was really missed. I couldn't really be lonely in that lively household. Grant had all the attention any baby could want with grandparents, uncles and aunts laps and arms always available but I felt a big emptiness in my life.

Finally, two months went by and with it came his furlough. I went down to Fargo to meet the train and saw the metamorphosis from civilian to sailor was complete. He was now a proud Navy man. We had an overnight stay in a hotel in Fargo before rejoining the family--time to catch up on the events of the past two months. That whole day I had felt lightheaded but attributed it to excitement. I had my answer when I woke up the next morning to find that I was broken out with German measles! When we arrived home the next day, my brothers had a big laugh at my expense but it was my turn a week later. They had as many spots as I had!

The week went all too fast. We had no idea what the future would bring. Assignment to a school or a new post would take place upon the return to Farragut so we could only hope for the best--possibly some location where Grant and I could join him. The boys enjoyed having their playmate back again--my mother cooked and baked and we visited those friends in town who were still there. Then it was time to get on the train again in Fargo for the trip back to the Navy Base and whatever fate would bring.

I resigned myself to enduring again--waiting for letters, writing every day, wondering what would happen next.. I didn't expect a letter the first few days and didn't get any. Days went by and still no word. I became increasingly worried as a week went by and then two weeks. Finally, a letter came from Farragut in a strange handwriting but Fred's return address. When I opened the letter I got the answer. It was copied through a window in the isolation ward in sick bay.! When Fred got back to Farragut he came down with a strep throat and fever followed by a rash. It was scarlet fever! The only treatment before penicillin was isolation and sulfa drugs which didn't have any effect on strep infections but it was all they had. It didn't prevent one of the commonest complications--rheumatic fever, an inflamation of the joints and most serious, inflamation of the valves of the heart. The diagnosis was confirmed by blood tests determining the sedimentation rate. After the first shock, another letter came from Fred; he was out of isolation but confined to strict bed rest taking twenty eight aspirins a day for the pain and to reduce the inflamation. Many years later in a conversation with a doctor who had practiced in the area, he told me that the Indians wouldn't live in the Farragut area. They called it "Fever Valley" because so many of them fell ill there. To the Navy it was a perfect place to put a boot camp but the many sailors who were stationed there and contracted rhuematic fever found it far from ideal.

That was an anxious winter. I could only write letters, worry and wonder about the future which seemed to have been snatched away from us. The only bright spot was our love of music. Both of us had access to radio and the wonderful romantic songs of the 40's. *Poinciana, String of Pearls, White Cliffs of Dover*, and so many more. Every Saturday night we waited for the Hit Parade to be broadcast with the leading songs of the week. Although there was a one-hour time difference, it was broadcast simultaneously throughout the country so we

could hear the songs at the same time. Fred was completely bedridden so could only read, listen to music, and write letters. The weekly “sed rate” blood test was the pivot around which our lives revolved and weeks went by with no improvement. My husband was desperately ill--already a casualty of the war, and there was no way that I could even go and see him. I comforted myself with embroidering tableclothes and dreaming of a time when we’d have a home together again.

Winter turned into spring. Grant grew and flourished with all of the attention. He went from baby to crawler and toddler during that time. He could do no wrong. A particularly mischievous thing was when he opened up a whole pound of butter--severly rationed even for farmers--and had a wonderful time squishing his hands through it before we discovered what he was doing.Even that was considered cute. He sat on my dad’s lap at mealtimes and ate whatever he was having. Shoes were severely rationed; I saved up points and got a pair of white shoes when he started to walk. Spring had arrived and the yard was a slushy mess of mud. I turned my back and he disappeared outside and was discovered stuck in the mud over his shoe tops. As all metal went into the war effort, he had very little in the way of toys. The only stroller available was all wood and wasn’t sturdy--parts broke and fell off but it did help to keep him off the floor.

While the radio brought music and soap operas to the farm for entertainment, it also brought the war into the living room. The conflict in Europe was intensifying. The Allies had been aproaching Europe through North Africa in hard-fought battles. Pressure for a second front to take the strain off Russia was growing and plans had begun in 1943 to build up munitions, supplies and troops. Bombing of the French coast intensified. Censorship was strict but we knew that thousands of troops were amassed in England and North

Ireland. Our town was decimated of young men with everyone eligible either in the European theater or the Pacific or being trained in the United States. Finally, on June 6, 1944, a date that will always be known as D-Day, the invasion began under the leadership of General Eisenhower. My dad walked into the house from the mailbox that morning with the Moorhead Daily News headlines screaming. “They finally did it, “ was his comment. I wondered if he felt a lingering regret that he wasn’t a part of it. Years later when history was written, the full magnitude of that day could be taken in. Within five days, the Allies landed sixteen divisions and seized eighty miles off the coast of Normandy. Two million British and American men had trained in England preparing for the landing. The war had been raging for two and a half years and now there was hope for an end.

Letters continued to fly back and forth. The sed rate tests every week the high and low points. If the numbers were high, it meant more weeks in bed. I felt as if I were in limbo between two lives. A long-distance wife with an unclear future and being part of a large family. I was again the bossy oldest sister. I remember my dad commenting that it sure was a good thing Dorothy came home to help them raise the kids. Grant and I were camping out in the living room with no privacy. I became more and more aware that I was overcrowding the family in that small house. I began to think about renting an apartment in town but that seemed like a lonely lfe too. Finally, in June the sed rate dropped to a level where Fred could be transferred from Farragut to the Navy Hospital in Balboa Park in San Diego, California . This was great news. The Navy had taken over the luxury hotel for the duration of the war--we had enjoyed walking around the grounds on a visit when we were living in Redondo Beach and knew that it would be a big improvement from the mountain town in Idaho to California once again.

Now it seemed possible to think about joining Fred in California. He would still be in the hospital but I felt he would get well much faster if we were nearby and he agreed wholeheartedly. I had my $80 a month allotment and with Fred's pay of $28, we felt we could make it. His dad lived in a hotel in Los Angeles, I had an aunt in Burbank and other friends and acquaintances so I felt confident that it would work out.

I had to travel light this time as driving the Ford was out of the question. Taking the train was the best option so I made reservations in a sleeping car that had been designed for transporting troops. It was a coach by day and a sleeper at night. What I couldn't take, I stored in my aunt Millie's attic. Our possessions went in the trunk that had accompanied me on the trip from Canada many years before The crib was a necessity and had to come too. The family were devastated at having Grant leave. They had gotten used to having a little boy in the family. He was learning to talk and the boys had been teaching him words--many of them not of my choosing. My parents thought that going out to California again was a crazy thing to do but knew that I was determined to do it.

Back To California

My parents took us to the depot in Fargo and we got settled for the long train ride to Los Angeles. Grant was a good traveler--would eat whatever was on the table and felt at home with the service men who were in our car. Even so, it was a long three days and we were both glad to get to the Los Angeles depot where Fred's dad met us. He had tried to get hotel reservations but found that there was a real reluctantance to rent to children so he had gotten a room for himself and gave us his for the night.

The next day he accompanied us on the bus trip to San Diego, about eighty miles south, where Fred met us at the station. He was able to be up and moving around. What a glad reunion that was. We were immediately faced with the housing problem and this time we did get a room but they would rent it for only five days maximum. The next day I started hunting for a place to stay in that city bursting with others doing the same thing. After several false starts, someone recommended that I try the Salvation Army. They had started an innovative plan of matching up those in need of housing with people who needed help in their homes giving room and board in return. It seemed to be my last hope so I got on the street car with Grant and we went to North Park, a suburb close to the hospital.

Mary Ellen Beck was an overwhelmed housewife with two little boys and pregnant. They had a big house with room for live in help. Her husband worked for Ryan Aircraft and was safe from the draft but even with the security she had, she was in despair trying to keep up with the boys, the house, and morning sickness. We hit it off immediately and I moved into the spare room, put Grant's crib together and we had a comfortable roof over our heads. Fred lived at the hospital but had leave on some weekends and came and stayed with us at the

Becks. They even welcomed my aunt Alice from Burbank who came down and spent a weekend.

The first few days were busy catching up with weeks accumulation of housework. Mary Ellen was glad to have company and someone to help keep tabs on the boys. At fifteen months, Grant was old enough to join in the play and the three of them all under five years old caused a lot of confusion. It was a companiable time with pleasant breaks sitting at the kitchen table drinking coffee, sharing our lives and laughing.

Fred's life was still governed by the weekly sed-rate tests. He had been in bed so long that the bottoms of his feet was were as tender as a baby's and walking for any length of time was painful. When the sed rate rose, it was back to bed until it came down again. When that happened, we went to the hospital and visited him there. He could get up long enough to walk around the grounds. The San Diego Zoo was adjacent and we enjoyed looking at the animals.

San Diego was a Navy town and bustling with men in the uniforms of the Navy and Marines. Bell-bottom navy-blue trousers with the eighteen buttons on the front flap and a pull-over jumper was topped with the jaunty white sailor hat. Now in the summer, "swabbies," as the sailors were called, were immaculate in their whites enjoying respite from duty in the Pacific and last leaves before shipping out. They made the war in the Pacific painfully real even though it was thousands of miles away.

The first few months had seen retreat at every turn. The Japanese had long planned the offensive and amassed troops, ships, and equipment at several locations weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Japanese military men believed that death in battle was a glorious death and would take enormous chances. Wake and Guam Islands, the Phillipines, Hong Kong and Singapore fell. The inroads continued until the Japanese controlled all of the important

areas in the South Pacific. Their plan was to negotiate a peace that would allow them to continue to hold all of the territory that they occupied. It took more than two years but the Allies did recover their strength and “unconditional surrender “ was the only term acceptable. President Roosevelt in his regular Fireside Chats exhorted the country to sacrifice and fight to complete victory.

In January 1944, the largest naval force the world had ever seen, The United States Fifth Fleet, consisting of more than a hundred carriers, battleships cruisers, and destroyers set forth from Pearl Harbor to the Marshall Islands, the keystone of the Japanese defenses. The tide was turned when more than 400 Japanese planes were shot down with no loss to the U.S. The Fifth Fleet made further inroads in the Central Pacific with the capture of Saipan, Guam and Tinian in the Marianas Group. Now we were within air reach of the Phillipines and Japan Finally, in that summer of 1944 we had hope for the first time but knew there would be many months of fighting ahead.

The horror of war was very real to us with the Navy Hospital constantly receiving more of the wounded from the many battles. It hit close to home when the Hawley Herald printed the obituary of one of our classsmates, Harris Romer, who had flown off an aircraft carrier and never returned. Every week brought more news of the wounded and missing in action. Fred’s half brothers, Erling and Maurice, were career Navy men and spent months out to sea in submarines. Even our favorite band leader, Glen Miller, was lost in a plane crash in Europe.

As fall approached, Fred’s condition improved and there was speculation that he would be moved to another Navy Hospital, this time in Arrowhead Springs east of Los Angeles, the same resort area where we had celebrated our first anniversary. That meant that I had to think about relocating and finding a place to live. While the transfer was taking place, I remained at the Becks in San Diego. I had been there about three months; Mary Ellen was feeling better

and we were pretty well caught up with the house. Because I had earned room and board for us, I had saved most of my allotment checks for the next move but where next? Arrowhead Springs was in a remote area in the mountains above San Bernadino so that was out of the question. After three or four weeks, the problem was solved. Fred would be discharged from the hospital to limited duty and stationed at Port Hueme about eighty miles north of Los Angles.

I took the crib apart again and packed our few possessions in the trunk. Since I had no permanent address to ship it too, we asked Fred's sister-in-law, June, who lived in the area to hold it for us until we got settled. She grudgingly agreed to do it with the understanding that it wouldn't be long. Fred had gotten leave the weekend that we left so we got on the bus again and went up to Los Angeles where Leonard's wife, Jackie, was living and stayed overnight with her. Leonard was in the Seabeas, the construction branch of the Navy, and stationed in the Aleution Islands near Alaska. Jackie was employed in an Ice Cream Factory. She really enjoyed being a working woman and we sensed that she planned on continuing working when Leonard got back. In the 40's that meant choosing between work and marriage and she chose work--their marriage broke up soon after the war was over.

When Fred reported back to the hospital in Arrowhead Springs that Sunday night, I was on my own again. Here was our chance to go down to Redondo Beach and stay a couple of days with our former neighbor, Mrs Foster. Grant was fussing with an earache and I wanted to take him to see the doctor who had delivered him. It was good to see Dr. Butt again; he gave me drops to put in the hurting ear and didn't charge for the visit. I'd written to my aunt Alice in Burbank hoping to spend a couple of days with her but but she answered saying that it wouldn't be convenient.Those few days taught me a lesson. We were getting an education in being a vagabonds.

By this time, I was getting expert at figuring out bus schedules. It looked as if Ventura, about ten miles north of Port Hueneme, would be our next destination. Fred was due to be moved that weekend so we headed north and again started searching for a place to stay. Here, as in San Diego, there was a five-day limit in the hotels and a great reluctance to rent to children. After trying several and getting turned away, I found one that would take us and we were off the streets again.

Limited Duty

Like Redondo Beach, Ventura was a quiet waterfront town so it seemed like home again. The Ventura Mission set the tone for the buildings mostly in the Spanish style with their red-tile roofs. Ventura was known as the Poinsettia capital of world and that fall they were just beginning to show tinges of red. Unlike most poinsettias that were carefully tended in pots, these grew up like trees and vines clambered all over the buildings. They flourished in the damp ocean air and the warm climate filling up every available spot. We were to discover that the same moist air had a down side. Clothes and shoes got mildewed in the closet, mold collected on the walls and iron pans quickly got rusty.

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be carried. After a couple of fruitless days, I was pretty discouraged. On the way back to the hotel, we passed by a mortuary and I remember thinking, "I wonder if they would have room for us in there?" There was nothing to do but keep on trying and finally had success when I knocked on Lottie Farrar's door on Ventura Boulevard and she just happened to have an vacancy. There was a small building in the backyard with one rental room and one studio-type room with a kitchenette. The room with the kitchenette was already rented to a Lieutenant and his wife and I hoped that when they got into Navy housing we would have a chance. In the meantime, Lottie rented the room to us for seven dollars a week and with that we got to use her kitchen and the bathroom in the house. It wasn't spacious but we were delighted to have a roof over our heads again. We could send for our trunk and the crib that had been stored in San Diego and settle down.

There were four service couples renting rooms at the Farrars and we all shared the kitchen with each having a little space in the refrigerater. The living room was a common gathering place. One of the women was a knitter and she offered to teach me--the beginning of a lifelong hobby. She was from Florida and introduced me to Southern cooking. I even learned to like grits and learned how to cook them. Grant fared well there too with many laps to sit on. Mr. Farrar usually held him and shared whatever he was having.

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Even with the good news from the battlefronts, we realized that peace was far in the future. Public transportation was good but we thought more and more of our '37 Ford in Minnesota. Fred was feeling pretty well by then and we pondered on the possibility of his going back to Minnesota and bringing the car back. That would give us a base from which to operate--at least it could provide a roof over our heads if we had to house hunt again. Fortunately, he heard of someone driving back just for sharing the cost of the gas and our gas ration points. Somehow he managed to get leave enough to make the trip. We jumped at the chance and Grant and I waited at the Farrars. Weather was a worry as it was now late in the fall with the possibility of ice and snow on the long trip but what we feared didn't happen. When Fred got to my parents' place in Hawley, he discovered that the tires on the car were worn out and couldn't possibly make the long trip to California. He and my brother Denny went in to the local garage and Mr. Burns just looked at them in astonishment when they said they wanted four new tires. He hadn't had any new tires for sale for years! Fred was told that in order to qualify for any kind of tire, it would be necessary to apply at Ration Board in Moorehead about 25 miles away. So they hailed the Greyhound bus and got to the Ration Board only to find out that they would have to come back the next day. Rather than make two trips , they stayed in a hotel that night and were at the Ration Board first thing in the morning to be first in line.

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At Home In Foster Park

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The End Of The War

The spring and summer of 1945 brought increasingly intense news from the Far East with massive attacks by B-29 Superfortress bomber raids on the homeland of Japan destroying cities and industries. However, they wouldn't be able to protect armed forces invading Japan so it was necessary to acquire bases closer in. It took six months of heavy bombing to capture the tiny island of Iwo Jima. The Japanese dug themselves in underground but finally had to give up making it possible to build airfields. Every day we followed the progress through our radio and the newspapers. The next island to be acquired was Okinawa which already had a base. Planes and ships bombarded for nine days before a landing could be made. There was heavy oppositon and we had 45,000 casualties before the island was taken. More than 5,000 Japanese kamikaze suicide pilots dived at Allied targets and many of our destroyers were put out of action with the Navy suffering 10,000 casualties. Our hearts were heavy knowing that many of our friends and relatives were involved and that many of them had already served years in the European theater.

On July 26, 1945 the leaders of the United States and Great Britain met in Potsdam and issued conditions for the unconditional surrender of Japan knowing that if the invasion took place, casualties could amount to millions dead and wounded and millions of dollars worth of damage on both sides. Japan refused to surrender and it seemed as if more bloodshed was inevitable.

On August 6, we were electrified by the news of a new kind of bomb--an atom bomb had been transported on the bomber, Inola Gay, and was dropped on Hiroshima, destroying a city of 343,000 in western Japan. President Harry

Truman again called on Japan to surrender. When Japan still wouldn't capitulate, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Adding to the pressure, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria. Finally, on August 10, the Japanese Government accepted the Potsdam terms asking only that Emporer Hirohito be allowed to keep his throne. I heard the news of the surrender over the car radio as Grant and I were driving home from downtown Ventura on that momentous day. Suddenly all around me, people seemed to go crazy yelling, singing, and throwing their hats in the air. My first thought was that being out on the road in that wildness was no place for me. I headed for Foster Park as fast as possible and the safety of our little cabin.

Those first days at the end of the war were filled with excitement and confusion. It was hard to comprehend the magnitude of the atomic bomb. Clearly, it was a completely different force that could destroy the world. Now it seemed possible that at last this was the war to end all wars. After almost four weary years, everyone was thankful that this war had finally come to an end even with the destruction that the bomb caused. Millions would have lost their lives in the months to come if the struggle had continued. Now the countries of the world could turn to the task of healing the wounds of war. Families could be reunited and factories would turn from the war effort to production for the home front. The numbers of people involved was staggering. By 1944, twelve million Americans were in uniform. There were ninteen million more workers than there had been in the five years previously and 35 per cent of them were women. This represented a mass movement from rural areas into cities. Homes had been broken up--many never to be reunited. Families of the servicemen had to scramble for whatever housing existed at the beginning of the war. Because the attack on Pearl Harbor had aroused public opinion against the Japanese who had always been viewed with suspicion, the President had authorized the

Secretary of War to mark off all military areas and defense installations and move all American-born and enemy-alien Japanese, non-citizen Italians and Germans away from the West Coast into camps in California, Utah, Colorado and Arkansas. When the United States entered the war, there were 111,000 alien and *nisei* Japanese in the Western States. Now that the war was over, they were permitted to come back to their homes along with the returning flood of servicemen. This was truly a time of upheaval and we were a tiny part of it.

Things moved fast after that. Fred was discharged from the Navy on October 15, 1945 with an Honorable Discharge as a Seaman first Class with one year, ten months, and eight days of service. Because of his illness with rheumatic fever, he was classified 50 % disabled and given a small pension which continued for the first few years.

Unlike many others, we didn't have a home base or a job to to come back to. We didn't plan on going back to Minnesota and Consolidated Shipyards, where he had worked in Wilmington before he joined the Navy, was no longer building Liberty Ships. It was a time of great freedom but also a time of decision. We considered his using the GI Bill to go to school and learn a new trade--he even toyed with learning accounting at the urging of his sister, Bea. The GI Bill would pay a mimimum stipend and all expenses.

The end of the war meant the rapid discharge of thousands of Navy men from Port Hueme resulting in a drop in customers at the Hob Hob so my fun job lasted only a few more weeks. As the men were discharged and the families moved away, apartments became vacant; here was our chance to get better accomodations. We liked Ventura and weren't anxious to leave so we found a small apartment downtown that actually had a bathroom!

This gave us time to get reorganized. Fred's brother, Leonard, was discharged from the Navy SeaBeas about the same time so we had a few get-to-

gethers with him and Jackie, his wife, and little Lenny. They at least knew that they were going to remain in the Los Angeles area. Jackie had a job that she really liked in an ice cream factory and was hoping that no serviceman would return and claim it.

We moved from our little cabin just in the nick of time. In the hullabaloo of packing, the floor gave out and the end of the bed sank to the ground underneath. We were fortunate that it had lasted as long as it did. It had given us shelter for as long as we needed it and then collapsed.

Although Ventura was a pretty little town, it didn't have any industry and very little opportunity to get a job. Fred didn't feel that he was up to the rigor of going to school and years of penny pinching didn't sound very attactive. Bea was now living in Martinez in Northern California and asked us to come up there for a visit. Buck was employed by the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office as a deputy at the jail and they were sure that many jobs would be opening up at the two oil refineries in the area. Taking a trip sounded like just what we needed. Fred's dad who was living in Los Angeles agreed to come too. He had been estranged from Bea for years and this seemed like a good change to heal the rift.

Our trip came to a halt in Bakersfield when we heard a noise in the back of the trusty Ford. We barely made it to a garage and there they told us that the rear end was worn out and that it would take three days to get the parts. We found a hotel room and settled down for the wait. At least now with the war over, parts were becoming available. Our car had lasted as long as necessary just like the floor in the cabin. Fred's dad was full of fun and we made a game of what could otherwise have been frustrating. We discovered that each of us had a passion for liver and had it for most of our meals carefully comparing one restaurant with another.

We were on the road again, this time with no mishaps. We arrived in Martinez about 10:30 on that January night and my first impression was that it was a lot colder than Ventura. We came in at the very edge of Shell Refinery--a maze of lights and noise. I was mixed up in my directions and never did get straightened out. We got a warm welcome and somehow we all fitted into that small house on Shell Avenue. Both of the refineries were hiring and the first order of business for Fred was to go out to Associated Oil in Avon, about four miles away, and apply for a job. Having a steady income with benefits sounded very good to us. He was hired with a monthly salary of $298 which seemed like real wealth to us. He couldn't have been hired at Shell because Bea was working there and they didn't hire relatives.

So it was back to Ventura to pack up for the move to Martinez where we would stay with Bea until we could find something for ourselves. A flu bug was going through the family when we left and before we got back to Ventura, I had a bad sore throat and was beginning to feel feverish. I fell into bed as soon as we got there and got sicker and sicker and sicker with chills that lasted for hours and then a raging fever of up to 104 degrees. We no longer had medical coverage through the Navy so Fred checked the phone book and called Doctor Mangan who came out to see me. Through a red haze of fever, he appeared as an angel of mercy. I was so weak that I couldn't raise my head from the pillow. He told Fred that I had Type B flu that was raging through the state. The only treatment at the time was aspirin and a quart of water or fruit juice at least once an hour around the clock. He knew that the sulfa drugs had no effect on flu and that was all he could do. Fred did the best he could taking care of me and Grant. It was nothing short of a miracle that neither of them caught it. I got no better, was worse if anything so when Fred called the doctor again, he had me admitted to the hospital where I could receive the new drug--penicillin, which had been

perfected during the war and could only be given in shots. I really thought in my delirium that I was going to die and had no strength to resist. The hospital seemed like a little bit of heaven with its cool, white sheets and white-uniformed nurses taking care of me. Because I had a contagious illness, I had a private room and could get some sleep because I had fluids dripping intravenously and the penicillin got to work immediately. I hadn't eaten anything for days and will never forget how good Cream of Wheat tasted.

I stayed in the hospital for three or four days worrying about the cost depleting our nest egg. We were no were longer eligible for Navy care and health insurance didn't exist so it was cash only. Whatever it cost, I felt that it saved my life. I was limp as spaghetti when I was discharged but immediately had to take on the task of moving. Fred was overdue at starting his new job so we had to do it as quickly as possible. Somehow we got everything loaded in the car and left Ventura for Martinez.

At Home In Martinez

This time we didn't have car trouble and made the trip in a day. I don't know how we managed to fit into Bea's small house but somehow we did knowing that it would be temporary. Buck was working the 4 to 12 p.m. swing shift at the jail, Bea worked days at nearby Shell Oil, Fred was on a rotating shift in the Control Lab at what was then known as Tidewater Associated Oil Refinery. It truly was a confusing household with four small children underfoot. It fell to me to take care of them when their parents were at work and in my weakened condition from the flu, it wasn't an easy task.

A bright spot was new legislation called the GI Bill which made it possible for veterans to buy a home without a down payment. Buck had a friend who sold real estate so we got in touch with him. There was only one house for sale in the Martinez and the neighboring unincorporated areas of Mountain View and Vine Hill that we could consider.

3134 Rose Street was a rambling two-story duplex with the shingled exterior painted white. The owner, Ted Mitchell, had built a new home for himself on the adjacent narrow lot so the house was vacant. The asking price was $6,000, a monumental sum to us. It was necessary to put up $1,500 to cover the closing costs and we barely had that much money in our hard-earned savings account. Because Fred was now employed, we qualified for the loan and moved in on the first of April. Grant was able to celebrate his third birthday in a permanent home.

Martinez was similar to Ventura in many ways. It was roughly the same size with a population of around 7,000. The second-largest city in Contra Costa County, only Richmond with its large shipyards superseded it. Like Ventura, it was also on the water scattered along the shoreline of Suisun Bay which

extended far inland. Benicia, on the opposite shore, was a small town greatly expanded by the Army Arsenal that employed hundreds of people and had briefly been the capitol of California. The Charles Van Damme Auto Ferry made many trips across the bay each day and was the only way to cross to the other side except for the railroad bridge. The bay was a busy transportation route with oil tankers and cargo vessels serving the refineries and farming areas farther inland. Shell Oil Refinery dominated the shoreline with its throbbing towers, and emissions of smoke and fumes. Around 700 men and women were employed there and most of them lived in Martinez. Another flourishing industry was commercial fishing mostly done by the Italians who lived in their own section of town.

As the county seat of Contra Costa County, the administrative buildings and the jail were an important part of downtown Martinez with the hospital farther south on Alhambra Avenue adjacent to the community hospital. Adding to the bustle, the Southern Pacific railroad depot was a major junction with passenger and freight trains sounding their whistles day and night.

Downtown Martinez was a busy place with a J.C. Penneys, Hilsons Department Store, half a dozen women's dress shops, mens shops, several shoe stores, and two drug stores. Favorite places were the two soda fountains, Dairy Vale and Wilsons. The Gazette was the major newspaper in the county at that time and was published downtown. Paul's and Nick's along with the Venetian Club were popular Italian Restaurants and Spriggs, about four miles south of town and run by a black family, featured wonderful southern cooking. Two theaters, the State and the Avalon brought the latest movies to town.

A cannery operated at full steam for most of the summer months perfuming the air with the tomatoes, peaches, and fruits of the season, and employing scores of women. A common sight during the summer was trucks

laden with produce from the neighborhood farms going to the cannery.

Walnut Creek, about 12 miles south and Concord, 12 miles southeast, at that time were small villages with a little shopping on a couple blocks of main street. Pacheco at the intersection of Arnold Highway and Pacheco Boulevard was a small crossroads community. What we now know as Pleasant Hill didn't exist. The rest of the area was agricultural with tomato fields, apricot, peach, pear, and walnut orchards the major crops.

Moving day came at last. Finally, we had our own front door with a lock and key that made it our own private paradise after five years of shuttling from one place to another. That front door was a symbol of safety and security and has remained that to me all through the years. It didn't take long to move our trunk and Grant's crib into the empty house. The first order of business was to go to the Martinez Furniture Store and look through the second-hand section. What immediately caught my eye was a golden-oak upright bungalow piano. I fell in love with its simple lines and beautiful tone. The asking price was $200--a real extragance for a family without any other furniture --but we arranged time payments and paid on it for many months. I'd dreamed of having a piano all my life and this one seemed to be made for us. It was one of the first pieces of furniture that was moved into the house. Through the years, every member of the family took piano lesssons, seldom a day going by without the sound of the Behr Brothers 1914 piano resounding through the house.

Although the war was over, there were still shortages of household furnishings and appliances. We did manage to get a bed and a comfortable green sofa. I know that we didn't get a table and chairs for awhile because I remember sitting on the stairway for meals with our plates in our laps. Several months went by before we got a new Frigidaire refrigerator and what a treat that was. I did the washing by hand in the two stationary tubs on the back porch until

we could get a washing machine. I was thankful to have our own tubs and the clotheslines were all mine. Fortunately, we had a good supply of white-wool Navy blankets and plenty of Navy towels to get started with.

The house was a duplex with the one-bedroom apartment already rented to a family from Texas. The rent was almost exactly what our payments were, $32 a month so we felt we were pretty smart investors. Our part of the house consisted of a large living room, a large kitchen and bathoom on the first floor and two bedrooms upstairs. The bathroom had a large old-fashioned tub with four legs. Whoever built the house appparently hadn't bothered with niceties like following building codes and he put it together with whatever materials he could scrounge up. For example, the risers on the stairway were of different widths. The house was in the unincorporated section if Mountain View so the city didn't have any jurisdiction and the county didn't seem to have an interest in building standards. It didn't have a foundation which became a problem nineteen years later when we put it up for sale but it didn't dampen our enthusiasm for finally having a roof over our heads.

They All Came

` We were still getting settled with our few belongings when Fred's dad wrote from Los Angeles that he was between jobs and would like to come up and see what was available in this area. Our brother-in-law, Buck, was from the fruit-growing Chico area and proposed that he truck some of the produce down here. They would set up a fruit stand along Mt. Diablo Boulevard in nearby Lafayette with Fred's dad running it. There was a lot of enthusiasm for the idea among the men but I was skeptical from the first. Although his dad had never supported the family and was absent through most of the the growing up years, Fred was glad to have him join our household and Grant looked on him as another playmate. They had a little game at bedtime when Grant would say "Goodnight" and his grandpa would respond with, "Don't let the bedbugs bite." My experiences during the war of being a homeless wanderer made a deep impression on me and I was sympathetic with those who were in need of a place to stay. Besides that, I had been strongly influenced by my Grandma Bergeson and how she sheltered those who needed a home. We got another bed and put it in the bedroom with Grant and his crib.

His legal name was Clarence but he didn't like it and preferred to be called Charles. A slender person, he was only about five feet, eight inches tall and didn't weigh more than 150 pounds . As was typical of the men at that time, he wore a felt hat when he went out of the house. Restlessness was his nature and he'd pace the floor with his hands behind his back. Grant thought that looked like fun so he'd pace right behind him.

He was a voracious reader and would disappear behind the newspaper whenever the bustle of our household was too much. Used to years of living alone in hotels, it must have been hard to be with people all day and night. He'd

been a printer by trade but the printing business had changed and his skills were enough out of date to make it hard for him to find a job doing what he knew. Also, the returning servicemen had first claim on whatever openings there were. The dream of operating a fruit stand didn't work out either--too many restrictions and technicalities to deal with and no money to get started. Unemployment insurance was a possibility that he refused to accept, firmly convinced that it was some kind of charity and he had too much pride for that. I was having a struggle making ends meet on Fred's salary and would have welcomed a little help. It really scared me when he had an attack of nausea and shortness of breath. At Buck's recommendation, we called Dr. Edmeades who came out to the house and checked him over. Fortunately, it wasn't the heart attack that we feared but seemed to be a chronic gall-bladder infection. A bottle of pills and a few days of rest helped. When he recovered , he decided to go back to Los Angles where there was more possibility of going to work again.

During this time, I had been suffering from an acute inflammation of the membranes in my mouth. The only doctor that anyone in the family knew about was the jail doctor, Dr. Edmeades. Buck told us that he was a little rough but took good care of the prisoners so I gave it a chance and went down to see him. He had a gruff manner and was about as big around as he was tall. His office was in an old white-frame house close to downtown Martinez. He recognized immediately that I had trench mouth and painted my mouth with something awful tasting and recommended a sodium-perborate mouthwash. I tried this for several days but nothing seemed to help. I couldn't eat anything that wouldn't go down with a straw. When I went back to see the doctor, he checked my mouth more thoroughly and said that he didn't think I would ever get over the infection unless I had my tonsils out. He could do it himself right there in the office.

At that time, doctors were usually both physicians and surgeons and I

learned later that they were apt to recommend surgery as the treatment of choice. The thought of having him cut on me was frightening but I was in so much pain that I felt I had to go ahead with it. On the day of the surgery, Fred took me down to the office and I was ushered into the surgery room where his nurse had me sit down on a plain straight-back chair. I was horrified to see Dr. Edmeades coming in holding a huge needle filled with novocain to deaden the area and told me to open my mouth. As scary as the sight of the needle was and the pain of the injection, it was nothing compared to the actual procedure of carving out the tonsil. The nurse stood behind me holding me down when I got up to leave after the first one. Finally it was over and we went home where I went to bed in great pain after the novocain wore off. Ironically, he gave me pain pills but the thought of even trying to swallow them was impossible. I couldn't talk and Fred and his dad went about a repair job on the back porch believing that since I wasn't complaining, all was well. I'll never forget the feeling of helplessness of not being able to get their attention. A few days of discomfort followed but I did heal and that was the end of the trench mouth. Several years later, Dr. Edmeades had his own tonsils out and never again did he do the procedure in his office.

I had barely gotten the sheets washed from Clarence's bed when I got a note from my aunt, Ala, who had been teaching in Los Angeles saying that school was out and she would like to come up and see us. We hadn't seen her for several months; we were excited about showing her our new home so I wrote back welcoming her. She took the San Joaquin Daylight and we met her at the depot in Martinez. We had a good time reminiscing about the Foster Park days when we had to scrounge nickels and dimes out of the bottom of our purses so we could go to a movie, that evening when we sat out on Jim Spivey's woodpile in the January chill wondering what to do next, laughing about the dilapitated

cottages we lived in. The first few days we proudly showed her around Martinez and the surrounding area. Our 37 Ford was still in good condition and now we had gas and tires enough to do what we wanted to do. All went well until she developed severe abdominal pain that didn't respond to any of our home ministrations

This time, I wasn't about to call Dr. Edmeades. I checked the phone book and settled on Dr. Coates, also a physician and surgeon. We took her down to his office on Pine Street and after a careful examination, he told us that she had an infection in her Fallopian tubes and would need surgery as soon as possible. This really was a blow but there didn't seem to be any way around it so within a week, she was admitted to Martinez Community Hospital for surgery.
Although everything went well, there were anxious days going back and forth to the hospital. When she came home, she was very depressed, knowing that she would never be able to have children of her own. I wasn't as sympathetic as I might have been as I considered her to be a hopeless old maid at thirty five. As it happened, within a year she married a chiropractor who had grown sons and had no interest in raising another family. She took to her bed upstairs requiring much waiting on. Grant helped a lot, running up and down on sturdy little legs to bring things to Aunt Lala.

While all of this was going on, we were adapting to our long-dreamed about lives as a family in a house of our own. For the first time, Grant had a room even though he had to share it with whoever came to visit us. However, he kept his old habits of staying up until everyone else went to bed. Now he had a back yard to play in and a new friend, Marba Mitchell, a three-year -old blonde, bue-eyed next door neighbor. Our car had a garage although the floor was dirt. We had an olive tree and a pecan tree in the front yard and a couple of black walnut trees in the back.

If we had acticipated settling down to a stable routine, it wasn't to be. Tidewater Oil Refinery operated around the clock seven days a week refining the crude oil that came through pipe lines and tankers from oil fields around the world. In Southern California we lived with oil fields all around us so it was interesting to see the other end of the production Crude oil was processed in huge units many stories high that separated the crude into gasoline and many other derivatives. During the breaking down process, constant testing was necessary in the various labs for quality control before the refined products could be shipped out by tanker trucks and ships. Fred started working in the Control Lab and was there for several years before he transferred to the Octane Lab. Although we knew that shift work with its rotating schedule could keep our days and nights in turmoil, we felt that the benefits would outweigh the deficits. There was five per cent shift differential for afternoon shift and ten percent for graveyard shift and that sounded pretty attractive along with the security of working for a large company with a strong union. We started the new regime optimistically sure that we could manage the changeable schedules, not really facing the fact that for the next three decades it would be our way of life. Day shift began at six in the morning, afternoon shift at two in the afternoon and graveyard shift at ten in the evening working a week on each one with two and sometimes three days off when the shift changed. Fred liked having so much time off giving him daylight hours for projects around the house and golf but I never could settle down into any kind of routine. I found myself making breakfast anytime from five a.m. to three in the afternoon. Dinner could be at one in the afternoon or six in the evening with lunches and snacks anytime. I'd had dreams of being the perfect housewife now that I had my own home but they had to be cast aside while I just barely coped day by day.

The summer went by and Ala gradually recovered and made plans to go

back to her teaching position in Los Angeles, It was with a great feeling of relief that we saw her off on the San Joaquin Daylight and went back to our house with just the three of us. A week or so later, I happened to glance out the front door to see a person carrying a suitcase coming down the street toward our house. All I could think of was “Oh no, someone else is coming to stay.” Imagine my relief when the person who knocked on my door was the Fuller Brush Man!

A New Era

In the fall of 1946, the country was adapting to peace-time after five years of shortages of all kinds. Factories turned out pots and pans instead of guns and tanks. Houses were built with lumber and nails finally available. Returning servicemen bought lots and built houses on them buying materials board by board each payday. We felt we were lucky to have a house already built, ramshackle as it was. Now we needed to equip it with the necessities of daily living. Having a regular income made it possible to open
charge acconunts but when the payments came due, one paycheck wasn't enough.

When we heard that the Benicia Arsenal was hiring clerical employees, I remembered taking typing in High School and thought that might qualify me for a job. My application went in and no test was required--I hadn't touched a typewriter in years. I checked the box indicating that I was a citizen and born in Minnesota, conveniently forgetting that my birthplace was Canada. Because my parents were both born in Minnesota, I must be a citizen but had no proof of it. Fortunately, they didn't require a birth certificate. After I was hired. this caused me a lot of worry The Arsenal was Federal Civil Service and I was haunted by the possibility that my oversight would be discovered and I'd probably be sent to Alcatraz. It didn't happen but it did push me into clearing up my citizenship years later which turned out to be quite a complicated procedure. I had to get my birth certificate which only proved that I was born in Canada. Then came the search for my parents birth certificates and baptismal records certifying I had lived in Minnesota. Months went by and the day finally came when I stood in the County Clerks office in Martinez, raised my right hand and swore to uphold the governmentof the United States. It was an impressive moment--I could finally

say that I was a citizen with docments to prove it..

As luck would have it, Chrlene Perry, my neighbor up the hill, was also feeling a financial pinch and was glad to baby sit. Alan was the same age as Grant so it was a perfect arrangement. The person who had alerted me to the Arsenal was also in a carpool which I was welcome to join. I began the daily routine of the ride to the ferry slip on the waterfront of Martinez, and then across the Bay to the Benicia Arsenal. It took about half an hour on good days but when it was foggy during those fall and winter mornings, could take a couple hours. Many mornings, we wandered around, lost in the pea-soup fog.

The Arsenal was a completely different office environment. Walking into the barnlike room for the first time, I was overwhelmed by the size and the clatter of unfamiliar office equipment. My supervisor proudly showed me around and explained the background of what they felt was the last word in modern accounting methods. As far back as the 1890s punch cards had been used in compiling information for the Federal Census. It wasn't until 1939 that International Business Machines deveoped a new technology using computers and business Machines to add, subtract, multiply, divide, and list data fed into it. For more than five years, engineers worked to develop a fully automatic system that could speed up the tedious process of accounting currently being used. The first computers in the 40s were 50 feet long and 8 feet high but by the time I was introduced to the IBM Department, the machines were only about 7 feet high and 8 feet long. Even with the reduced size, they made an incredible amount of noise as they tabulated the information fed into them by the rows of clerks key punching, sorting, proof reading, and collating. I had no idea that I was being introduced to the very beginning of an age that would revolutionize data processing around the world.

My first assignment was in the proof reading section. Checking every little

hole in the cards that had been punched was tedious and I didn't feel very successful at it. One of the days returning from work with my car pool, when I told them about a mistake I had made, they reassured me by telling about an engineer who had made an error which resulted in moving the wrong hill!

A few months went by and while the extra money was a help, being away from home all day was hard. Commuting across the bay was cold and sometimes scary; the work was tiring and repetitive. Supervision in the department was augumented by Army officers returning from active duty and they believed in running a tight operation. One in particular, was a Colonel whose sole responsibility seemed to be clocking our trips to the restroom! When Charlene told me they were moving and could no longer take care of Grant, I was relieved. Now this housewife and mother could stay home and manage with what we had.

If we had imagined during the long,weary years of the war that we would emerge into an era of peace, it was not to be. We had fought two wars to end all wars and now the specter of the Soviet Union with its dictator, Joe Stalin loomed over us. Uneasy allies during the world-wide conflict, during 1946 and 47 it became increasingly clear that a persistant and ominous hostility prevailed. The Soviet Union had declared war on Japan three months before the Japanese surrender and lost no time in spreading its influence into North Korea. European occupied countries were divided up among the Allies and when the Soviets moved, the people there were faced with a dictatorshp as evil as what they had been suffering. Again our radio brough world news that was frightening. Winston Churchill said that "an iron curtain has descended across the continent." China was falling to communism. The possibility that the Soviet Union was developing an atom bomb held fearsome possibilities. Now our cities were vulnerable to atomic attacks. We had exchanged Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito for Joe Stalin

who had every intention of spreading communism throughout the world. In1947, Secretary of State Barnard Beruch,coined the phrase. “Today we are in the midst of a cold war.” We were to live under that shadow for decades. Our strong, forceful charasmatic leaders, Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt were gone replaced by unknown and untried Prime Minister Clement Atlee and President Harry Truman. We weren’t sure that they were up to the challenge of this uneasy peace.

Family Complete

3134 Rose Street was full of life. When we first moved there, the apartment was rented to the Hanleys, a family with two school-age boys who had moved to Martinez to take advantage of the war-time employment boom. The apartment had a living room, bedroom, small kitchen, tiny bathroom and back porch so they must have been very crowded but it was worth it to them to have the opportunity to save money so they could a buy a farm in Northern California. We enjoyed them as neighbors and especially getting introduced to Texas cooking. Natalie's biscuits were fabulous and pinto beans boiled for hours with a bit of bacon or ham became a family favorite. Minnesotans baked navy beans in the oven flavored with molasses and brown sugar so the concept of boiling beans was something new. They lived there for about a year and when they found the farm of their dreams, they moved up to Gridley.

Vern and Cathy Hoar were the next tenants. A young married couple, they like us, were starting a new life as civilians. Vern went to work at Union Oil in Rodeo and Cathy settled down to being a housewife. She had been raised in quite affluent circumstances in Kentucky and made it quite plain that she wasn't used to living without hired help. On top of that, she became pregnant almost immediately compounding her problems. Since there was only a wall separating their apartment from ours, we were well aware of their difficulties. Vern's mother came out from Kansas to help out but Cathy expected her to take the place of her maids and the mother-in-law went back home in a huff. Other than that, we enjoyed them as friends and were sorry when they moved back to Kansas after the baby was born so Vern could go to college under the GI Bill.

It had been a boost to our finances to have the apartment rent pay our house payments of $32 a month, but we gave serious thought to taking over the

whole house for ourselves when they moved out. We hoped to have more children and knowing how often our relatives arrived on the doorstep for extended stays, the decision was easy to make. The only remodeling we had to do was put a door between our bathroom and the apartment's living room. A door between our pantry and the hall needed only to be opened. Now we had four bedrooms and two bathrooms and best of all, no one but us living in the house

In the spring of 1947, my sister, Joyce, wrote that she was tired of working in the bank in the hometown of Hawley and would like to come out and see what she could find out here. Of course, we welcomed her and she was a part of our family for the next two years. She went to work in the office at Shell Oil almost immediately. There she met her future husband, Bill Slobodnik, a mechanical engineer and they were married April 2, 1949. Joyce had always been a night owl and that hadn't changed. She'd stay up late, set the alarm and snuggle in bed until the last possible minute. Bread was quickly put into the non-automatic toaster--a mad dash upstairs to get dressed and invariably she'd forget the toast until black smoke poured through the whole house.

In early summer of 1947, we got the good news that I was pregnant. I suffered the usual three months of being a pale shade of green at the thought of food. My first hint was getting nauseated at the smell of hamburgers while we drove past a restaurant in the car. The time did pass and changed into a period of contentment anticipating the next addition to our family. We hoped for a girl and jokingly called her Prunella. Grant would be almost five when the new baby came and after growing up in a family where the babies were only two years apart, I felt that it would be good for both of them to have that time gap between them. Now we could look forward to a future enjoying the family in our own house with a stable future. We even had Health Insurance through the company

although they didn't pay for childbirth. We had to save up the $300 that the doctor and hospital would cost. When Dr. Coates seriously told me that I would have to have a Caesarian, he must have expected me to be upset but that wasn't the case. I remembered the three days of labor I'd had before and welcomed getting it all over with at once. Besides, the Insurance would pay for the surgery and we could use the $300 to send my mother a train ticket to make her first trip to California. Another plus with having surgery was being able to schedule in advance so we made plans for my mother to be here when the baby was born on the 5th of February.

She got her train ticket to be here before that time. The winter weather in Minnesota was exceptionally blustery and she told us about having to walk a mile to the main road because their road was snowed in. The best laid plans went awry and early in the morning of the first of February I woke up and knew the time had come. Fred called Dr. Coates and he answered--to our relief--and told us to get to the hospital immediately. He loved his boat and had a reputation for being out on the water when he was needed. I was shaking like a leaf, didn't even remember to pack my suitcase so went without even a toothbrush. Fred wasn't much better. He was so nervous that he actually took wrong turns on the short trip. This was my first experience in an operating room-- the bright lights overhead, the hospital equipment. Big, burly, ruddy-faced Dr. Coates and his assistant, slim, dark and handsome Doctor Dorsey dressed in their surgical greens. I had a spinal so was conscious the whole time and will never forget my indignation when I heard the doctors chatting about their vegetable gardens while they cut and stitched. The first cry at one minute after eight and "It's a girl!" were like music. What a strange feeling it was to be moved from the surgery to the maternity ward--with the spinal, I could feel nothing at all from my neck down!

The biggest excitement was when the nurse appeared in the doorway with a pink-wrapped bundle and a very tiny baby with a wide-open mouth looking around for her breakfast. She was only seventeen inches long and weighed less than six pounds but had a lusty cry and even then seemed to know what she wanted. We hadn't really decided on a name but I seemed to know immediately that she was Elaine Joy. We quickly discarded Prunella. This time I only spent seven days in the hospital healing the incision, coping with an allergy to adhesive and getting acquainted with Elaine.

We came home to a full house. A couple of weeks before I went to the hospital, my Aunt Alice in Southern California wrote that her marriage was breaking up and she'd like to come up and stay a few weeks. What could we say? It turned out that friends in the church were planning a baby shower for me on the 2nd again thinking that would give us plenty of time. So Joyce and Alice went to the shower in my place. My mother arrived after a three-day trip on the train. Grant was interested in the new baby and assumed a role from the beginning as another care taker sprinkling talcum powder on her after her bath, holding her bottle, and patting her back to bring up the burps.

The transition of taking over the whole house hadn't happened yet so we put my mother, Alice, Joyce, and Grant upstairs in the two upstairs bedrooms and Fred and I took over the divan in the living room. I wasn't supposed to climb stairs at first so that seemed like a good solution. Getting up in the middle of the night with Elaine was easier. I remember those quiet times sitting in the rocking chair enjoying this little girl so different from Grant.

Alice was a fanatic housekeeper and immediately took over the household duties. No dish was allowed to linger in the sink--if something dropped on the floor, it was immediately washed and hung out on the clothesline. My mother was an excellent cook and Fred basked at the table now laden with fried chicken,

apple pie, and doughnuts and all her familiar dishes. With my stomach full of stitches, I was glad to have my mother take care of Elaine during the day. She had always bathed the babies in her lap sitting in front of the oven for warmth and went right back to that familiar routine. Alice was a cribbage player and when she wasn't busy cleaning something, played many a spirited game with Fred when he was off. He was still working shift work--I can't imagine how he got any sleep in that crowded household. He must have crawled into whatever bed was available. When I was able to be left alone with the baby, Fred took the ladies sight seeing in the area. The weather had turned to spring and my mother marveled at the daffodils and flowering fruit trees in February

Six weeks passed; Alice left for Burbank and my mother got on the train to go back to frozen Minnesota. It has been hectic. My mother mentioned later that she was a little disappointed that Alice was there--it was a distraction on her first visit.

With our house to ourselves , the four of us settled down as a family. Grant had Marba next door to play with and in September of that year started kindergarten. Elaine liked a predictable routine--ate when it was time and slept when it was time. If it was naptime when we were out, she simply went to sleep wherever she was and was carried home like a rag doll and continued to snooze. Joyce was busy at her job at Shell Oil and her new social life there. Fred had time around his shifts to take up golf which became a lifetime passion. There were softball games between departments of the plant and bowling leagues flouished. I had taken some piano lessons before Elaine was born and played for relaxation whenever I had time. Living in a town with a library was a luxury and I borrowed books whenever I could and read in any moments I could find. We joined the Baptist church and were active in building the new building. Our 37 Ford was still going strong and took us wherever we wanted to go. Our

early dreams had come true and we were living them out.

Epilogue

The house on Rose Street was to be our home for 19 years and continued to be a haven for family who needed place to live for awhile. Joyce was part of our family for two years, Denny lived with us for four years until he married Ethel Nelson, also from Minnesota. Lee Jr. spent a semester here while attending Diablo Valley College. My parents spent several winters with us. Adding it up some years later, I estimated that for eight years we shared our home with others. Grant and Elaine benefited by having aunts, uncles and grandparents here reinforcing the idea that they were part of an extended family and the neighborhood. They grew up playing in vacant lots across the street and attending Mountain View Primary School on Palm Avenue and the brand-new John Muir Elementary School on Vista Way. The Bodwells' was a gathering place for the neighborhood kids of all ages. Many of the mothers preferred to keep their houses neat so it was handy to send their offspring someplace else. I liked knowing what Grant and Elaine were doing so it worked out well. Fred organized games on the vacant lots and boys and girls from kindergarten to high school participated. Because he worked shift work, he was usually available sometime during the day. It didn't surprise me to go to the door and hear a little voice say, "Can Fred come out and play?"

Susie Q, our red cocker spaniel, joined our household and produced a litter of puppies almost every year. We managed to find new homes for them but there was real sadness when we had to give them up. Kittens abounded and also were dispersed through the neighborhood--we knew the mother cat would supply a new litter.

. The piano became the center of the household. Along with my self-taught knowledge, I added lessons before Elaine was born and learned enough to enjoy

playing for relaxation when I had a few moments. Fred got interested and also took lessons from Cassius Cameron, a local piano and accordian teacher--I especially remember his rendition of *Doggie in the Window*. Elaine started her musical education when she was about six and continued for eight years until she started high school. The break came when it was time to get serious and study with Wanda Krasoff, a concert pianist, who would require that she cut her fingernails and practice three hours a day. Her response was, “Absolutely not.” All wasn’t lost however, the skill she developed made her a natural for her career as a court reporter using machine shorthand in the Municipal and Superior Courts. Grant was also musical, taking up the trumpet in elementary school and continuing on the tuba during high school. He thought it was fun to play *Star Spangled Banner* to get me up in the morning. Music continued to be important in his life all through high school and his teaching career continuing with participation in the Sonoma Town Band.

Our ‘37 Ford held up through part of the fifties then we had to replace it. It had been a good friend through our travels and we said goodbye to it with a real pang of sadness. In its place, we bought a big white second-hand Pontiac with a back seat so far from the front that I couldn’t reach the kids if it was necessary to settle them down. Seatbelts hadn’t been invented yet so they could get quite rambunctious. We discovered camping as a long weekend or vacation recreation and gradually added equipment as our charge account at Montgomery Wards allowed. The State Parks offered camp sites, with a barbecue, cupboard, and picnic table for a only a dollar a day. That included a wash house with hot showers, laundry facilities and toilets that were usually less than a block away. Guided hikes during the day and campfire programs in the evening provided all the activities we wanted. Elaine didn’t like hiking and I walked behind her with a little stick in my hand to encourage her to keep going. Deer strolled through our

campsites and chipmunks cautiously visited when they felt it was safe to accept our left-over pancakes. As often as we could afford it, we took a summer vacation with the long drive to Minnesota to visit my family and our friends. We semi-camped on those trips during the day but found that driving at night was best when the kids could go to sleep in the back seat. The long hours behind the wheel bolstered by No Doze took its toll--Fred was sure he saw alligators crossing the road in North Dakota in the middle of the afternoon! We'd drive until we were too sleepy to go on, then stop and nap for a couple of hours. The stars were big and bright in the wide-open country.

If we went visiting on our family vacations, we were also visited. Jim and Thelma (Fred's sister) with their four children drove out from Minnneapolis where Jim still worked at Honeywell; brother Jimmie and Joanne and two girls from Renton, Washington where both were employed by Boeing Aircraft; Lee, J. and Marie and their three girls and a boy from San Diego where he was a cilivian emplyee of the Navy. Bud spent his working life driving an eighteen-wheeler truck transporting heavy equipment. Quite often we'd see the big rig pull up outside the house. My aunt Alice and Jim quite often stayed a few days when they came through . Bea and Sal, her second husband, lived a few blocks away, Joyce and Bill and four children lived in nearby Concord and Denny and Ethel and two adopted children lived in Martinez. Denny worked in construction and Ethel was a nurse at Kaiser Permanente. Whenever any of us locally had company it called for dinners, picnics, and all manner of family gatherings. The Bay Area was rich with interesting places to take out-of-state visitors and gave us an excuse to visit them also.

When the kids started school, my world opened up. We had been active in the Baptist Church--I even sang alto in the choir. The new church on Alhambra Avenue was built and Fred spent many hours there participating in the

construction. Now the PTA beckoned me to get interested in school activities. Elaine had not started kindergarten and went with me to executive board meetings playing on the floor with the little Tutt girls. To my chagrin, I didn't say no fast enough and found myself president elect. Still a shy country girl, I was terrified at the idea of presiding at meetings. Fortunately, I noticed that the Adult School was offering a Dale Carnegie Public Speaking Course and I saw that as my only hope. It turned out to be a life saver. Doing the silly things we had to do to limber up and then polishing what we had learned made presiding at meetings fun. I worked with the parents and school people in not only our area but in the whole district. During the early fifties, there was much concern about earthquakes and we all worked hard on bond drives to repair and replace what didn't meet standards for safety. The Martinez Elementary School was condemned as being unsafe and later used as the Martinez City Hall. Another big concern was the epidemics of poliomyelitis that swept through the country every summer. We were overjoyed when Jonas Salk developed a killed virus vaccine which was going to be distributed at clinics in the schools using PTA members as assistants. Funding was available to vaccinate in the primary grades. We felt that at last we were going to stamp out the dreaded disease. One million eight hundred fifty thousand primary school children were given the vaccine that day, Elaine among them. Newspapers sent photographers and I'll never forget seeing my picture holding one of the fearful little ones. We were horrified to learn a couple of days later that some of the children were developing polio. The epidemic didn't turn out to be as serious as was first suspected but it was a wake-up call to develop a vaccine that was safer.It was only year later that Albert Sabin developed an oral vaccine that was administered in a sugar cube. Now our summers could be enjoyed free of terror of that dreaded disease.

The years went by. I'd planned and cooked thousands of meals and was

beginning to sense a sameness to all of it particularly since the family had settled into their familiar likes and dislikes. This particular day, looking for inspiration, I found a recipe for stuffed zucchini and it seemed to be the perfect answer to my boredom. I chopped and peeled, browned, took out the centers of the zucchini and carefully stuffed them, baked them and proudly presented them at the dinner table. I expected high praise for my efforts but instead there was silence then, "Why don't we ever have goulash?" I'd made goulash at least once a week for years. I realized then that it was time to broaden my horizens. The next semester found me signing up for a typing class at the Adult Education School. Here was another wake-up experience when I noticed that several of the women enrolled were recently widowed, had no skills, didn't even drive a car, and were forced to think of some way to make a living. It was then that I vowed never to be in that predicament and the following fall I enrolled at Diablo Valley College taking typing and shorthand in the day classes along with the recent high-school graduates. I'd encouraged a friend to come with me; she didn't even drive so she also signed up for lessons. We enjoyed being in the hustle and bustle of the campus and especially being accepted as just another student. My original plan was to learn skills enough to qualify for a job but the Liberal Arts courses looked appealing too so I added a Humanities course. I was hooked. The courses piled up and I got an Associate of Arts Degree in 1969 and a Bachelor of Arts degree from John F. Kennedy University in Orinda in1985. As soon as I got my skills up enough to pass a county civil service test, I turned my attention to the working world taking my first job in the Medical Records Department at the County Hospital late in 1962. That was the beginning of seventeen years of employment in the Disaster office, Public Works Department, and the County Library, fitting college courses in around the edges.

The pall of the cold war hung over us during those years however, culminating

in the Cuban missile crisis in the 60s. Bomb shelters were being built by individuals and the big ethical question of the day was “Would I let my neighbor into my shelter?” I was working in the Disaster Office at that time where escape routes were being planned and emergency supplies were stored. We tried out the emergency cookies which were something like graham crackers. They tasted good and must have been nourishing as all of us put on weight. Kruschev replaced Stalin and the tension continued instead of abating. Knowing that missiles were pointed at our homes and children was unnerving. Three of my brothers were in the service, Denny spent twenty months in the Army mostly in cold, bleak Korea, Jimmie was also in the army at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri and Korea. Junior joined the Air Force and because he had an aptitude for languages, studied Russian, monitoring broadcasts while stationed at an Air Base in Newfoundland. The Vietnaam war was divisive with those of us who had participated in WWII feeling that it was necessary to halt the spread of communism through Asia--we really believed in the domino effect. The younger element rebelled early on seeing that it wasn’t our war. The long anticipated peace wasn’t peaceful.

Years went by. The family changed when Grant married Linda Warfield and moved to Cotati where they both attended Sonoma State. Elaine was in high school with college in the future. We no longer needed vacant lots for them to play in; the lots had been filled up with houses some years in the past. When Shell Oil built a new refinery a couple of blocks from us across Pacheco Boulevard, we started looking around for another house in a better neighborhood and found what we wanted on the edge of Alhambra Valley still in Martinez. The house on Rose Street was eventually sold back to the original owners for twice the $6,000 we had paid for it. There came the day when we locked the front door for the last time and opened a new one on Lander Drive.

My Dad's Diary WWI

Training Base, NewPort News, Virginia

. . . Treats given out by the .Y.M.C.A. and Knights of Columbus. Sat. ate too much candy and got sick, had a hell of a time, pretty much turned inside out. Feeling better on Sunday, Monday o.k. again; drilled all day.

Left here Friday morning August 30th at 3 a.m., marched thro Newport News to the wharf, got there at 5 a.m. Got some cookies and coffee from the Red Cross, were loaded into a devil of a mess on board, dirty as a hog pen. Sailed out of port at 11 a.m. had dinner and got sick soon after. Was sick for six days, threw up everything I ate. Had some stormy weather, ship rolling like a log in the water. Did not do any drilling during the time we were on board. Saw land at daybreak Friday morning Sept. 12. Were unloaded 3 p.m., marched 3 miles to a rest camp and slept in our pup tents for the first time. This place turned out to be more of a detail then a rest camp, were on the jump all the time, carrying supplies, hauling water and also some carpenter work at the Pontezan Barricks. All got the diarrhea, had a thunder of a time, had to line up at the latrine, ha, ha. Left here September 17th, marched back to town and were loaded 40 men to a box car and shipped across country. Stopped off September 20th in a pretty little meadow, took a swim, and washed some clothes in the deep canal. Got our gas masks here also, did some guard work and a lot of detail, saw Ed again. (Eddie Rasmussen, close friend) Stayed in pup tents. Left here September 22nd by train, traveled through some very nice country. Arrived at destination September 20th and hiked to a woods about 3 miles from Fleury, here we stayed, slept on the wet ground, did a little drilling in the Manual of Bayonet Fighting and got some details. Fritz has his eye on us here from up in the clouds. September 24 p.m., we were ordered to pack up and be ready for a hike

under cover of darkness, packed up at 7 p.m. left at. . . page missing. . .stayed in the ravine until October 1 and moved to a place 2 miles west near Neuville. Rigged up a nice comfortable camp, dug in a rock quarry in a side hill. Had a hard frost, both good and bad weather, mostly rainy, not much sunshine.
From this time on worked every day at the quarry and gravel pit north of Neuville, put in seven days per week, had good eats but not any too much of it. Had our first payday October 26, received 303 1/2 francs, sent 166 1/2 home. October 31 got our first mail middle of this month for the first time abroad--I got 13 letters. November 1 moved four miles north to Bourellio and worked on the narrow gauge, ditching and tamping rock under ties. Dirty job, especially the ditching part, it was through barbed wire entanglements and soft sticky clay, big deep holes all around us, staying in tents the whole time.

Rainy weather, got our leather vests and extra blankets, socks and a towel. Search lights in the sky every night with an occasional visit from Fritz during the day. Worked in the gravel pit during the last days here. November 11, Armistice was signed. Received the news at 10 a.m. Everybody happy even the hogs. (frogs?)
Left Bouvelle 17th of November, marched 28 kilometers, light packs, hard hike anyway. Got to Dun at 7 p.m., raised tents, had supper and went to bed. November 18 did a little detail, drilled during the time here, saw Ed again, was looking fine. He had been in the hospital for 6 weeks and had just got out. Got a family picture from the folks at home.
November 20th went on a hike. 21st started out a 8:30 for a village called Louppy, 13 miles from Dun. Here we moved into an old saw mill--first time under a roof since leaving USA. Worked on the road every day. Rained occasionally. Spent our Thanksgiving here also. Had our first Sunday off, spent it roaming around looking for souvenirs, got a few. November 30 had a day off, took a bath

and had a general clean up.

December 1 got up at 5 a.m., ate breakfast, rolled our packs, got ready for a long hike to Longurjon. Started at 8:30 a.m. had dinner on the road and at 3:30 arrived at our destination, spent the night in regular German barracks and our squad got a room up in the attic of an old building, I and Fred Sinell are taking care of some Frenchmen--fine fellows all of them, other boys are doing quard work. On detail all day Sunday, sick on Friday. December 13th 54th Pioneers left on train for Germany. Rained every day since the 2nd. Haven' t had a frost for a long time, no snow so far. Got our mail the 11th. Had 2 letters from home. One from Lucy dated November 15, 1918.

December 14, same old song, some rain... Were relieved by the 34th Infantry at 4 p.m. December 15th on detail--loaded 3 cars with baled hay. Rained, had a little sunshine, half day off. December 16. Rain, taking care of Frenchmen, rest of company doing policing, getting ready for a move--on schedule to move tomorrow morning. (Did not move) 17th. Detail, rain. 18th Drilling from 8 til 3 p.m. more rain.19. Detail 20th. Rifle inspection a.m. Band concert, Third Batt. p.m. 21st. Preparing to leave. 22nd Left Rekon 10 a.m. by box car, traveled through Salmrahn 11 p.m., hiked to Clausen, got here 1:30 a.m. staying with private family. Rain, some snow. 23rd. Were assigned to new quarters. Rain. 24th. Drill 5 hours. Fine weather. 25th. Holiday, went to church at 9 a.m. New quarters, fine day. 2 inches of snow.

CHRISTMAS MEALS AT CLAUSEN

Christmas Eve Supper. 3 prunes and hardtack, a spoonful salmon, 4 small potatos, 1 pickle, black coffee.

Breakfast. 1 spoon rice, warmed potatoes,1 tablespoon syrip, l slice bread, hardtack. Dinner. Corn willy, mararoni, mashed potatoes, bread, candy.

Supper. Beans, coffee, meat, bread.

31st. Went down and had a look at the Rhine, 60 rods wide, river high. On detail with Tom Crow, Paul Theobald.

No drill. New Years, January 1st, 1919. 1. Went on guard 3 p.m., weather fair. 2, Off guard 3 p.m. 3, 6:30 reveille, 8 o' clock drill till 11:40. Fine day. 4, Day off, received Christmas package from home. Fine day, Jamuary 5, Sunday, holiday. No reveille, retreat at 4. 5. Fine Day. Bought helmet from Ziegler.6. Drill all day, retreat at 4:10. Fine sunshiny day. Drilled by Lieutenant Bert. 7. Drill a.m. until 2:40 guard. On guard 5 to 7. 8. Finished up guard work, got some more Christmas packages from the Red Cross. 9. On detail at Metternich, loading guns and recrating same. Fine weather. 10. Drill 2 p.m., guard mount. F.W.Ste. Kenyon. 11. Inspection a.m. guard p.m. 12. Moved to Rubenauch. Went to concert in the eve. 13. Overslept, no drill, a.m. nothing doing p.m. 14. a.m. drill. p.m. hike with pack. 15. On detail at Coblenz got pay-- 431 marks. 16. a.m. drill with 2nd platoon. p.m. on guard. 17. Finished guard work, got mail. Were relieved by L. Company. 18. Inspection a.m., p.m. holiday. 19. Went to Coblenz 1 p.m. with Arthur Otto, Got home 10 p.m.. 20. Detail at Coblenz, 21 the same. 22. Overslept a.m. on guard p.m. 2 p.m. 23. Finished M.C. relief. Some snow, relieved by L. Company. 24. On detail.

25, 26, 27,28,, 29. Sunday no work--on detail at Coblenz. 30. Forenoon off, p.m. detail, 31. Drill, Feb. 1, Detail, 2, Art Larson and I to Coblenz. 3. Forenoon Drill p.m. 4. Finished guardwork. Cold weather, no snow. 5. same, Drill in a.m., afternoon off. 6.and 7. no notes. 8. Third relief kitchen guard, 1 to 5:30. 9. Sunday all day. 10. Had our blankets deloused a.m., p.m. off. 11. On detail at Coblenz. 12. a.m. company drill and hike. p.m. i hour drill. 13. Detail. 14. Detail 15. Detail, rain at night. 15. Inspection a.m. on guard p.m. 16. Finished guard 2 p.m.. 17 Detail, 18 Detail. 19 Drill and lectures. 20. Detail. 21 Drill, Hike, boxing.

22. K.P. at mess hall. 23. Sunday reading 10:45 Articles of War by Capt. Medermott.

24. Drill. a.m. on guard lst platoon p.m. 25. Off guard. 26. Detail 27. On guard 4th platoon. 28. Off guard, examination by Medical Department p.m.

March 1. Detail 2:30 for home(?) 2. Sunday supposed to be re-examined by Medical Department but was called off until Monday morning. 3. Went to Coblenz to get throat cu;ture. 4. Detail. 5. Drill and games. 6. Detail--rain in the evening. 7. Inspection a.m., went to Coblenz p.m. Took in sights at Ehrenbretstien Fortress. 8. Birthday, got a pass to go to Coblenz with Joe Redday, Corporal Sian, Cavender and Theobold. Took a trip to Stolzenfels Castle and to Arenberg. 9. Third and fourth platoons went on excursion down the Rhine, left here 7:30 had dinner on the boat. Got home at 5:00. 10. Forenoon drill p.m. guard 4th platoon. No. 1. 11. Off guard, Palm and I went to town. Got word that we were to parade before General Pershing on Saturday. 12. Washed equipment a.m. went to town p.m. out to Arenburg. Had supper at Fest Hall. 13. Washing forenoon and afternoon. One hour drill. Balance of time getting ready for parade. 14. Parade O.K. by General Pershing. 16. Sunday all day. 17. Monday a.m. drill. p.m. guard first platoon. 18. off guard. 19 Detail Ammunution Dump Lutzel. 20. Guard 4th platoon. 21. off guard, went to Coblenz with Sherman and Van Arsdale. 22. Detail at Ordnance Dept. Home at noon. 23. Sunday band came and played a few pieces. 24. Monday, snow and rain both. Signed payroll. 25, day off (rain and snow) 26. On guard, 4th platoon. raining. 27. Off guard. 28. On guard at Amunition Dump. Snow. 29. Finished it up. More snow. on pass to Coblenz with Dean. 30. Got our 4th inoculation. Snow 2 inches. 31. Good stiff arm .

APRIL FOOL

1. K.A. (?) for bath a.m., on guard p.m. 2. off guard. 3:30 went to Coblenz with Theobold, Dean. 3 and 4.

Delousing at Matternich. 5. On detail at Ordinance. 6. Sunday, fine day. 7 and 8., a.m. detail. 9. K.P. 10. On guard 4th platoon. Got paid 174 1/3 francs. 11. off guard. 12. Amunition Dump gurd. 13. Home--off guard, rain. 14. Drill forenoon. 15. Detail a.m. guard --at night first relief. 16. Off guard at 10 a.m. to a doughboy show at night. 17. Detail at a.m.. 18. K.P. at kitchen Sinel. 19. Was made MP--went on guard at 12 p.m.. 20. Off at 6 a.m. 6 hours on and 6 hours off and 6 in guard house. 21 Day off. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26,27 Guard. 28. Day off.

29. Furlough to Paris. Left Rubenack at 6: 20 a.m. leave Coblenz 9:40. Passed through Salomrohr near Clausen, 6 tunnels so far-- one a half an hour long. 1 p.m. scenery mountainous with a few valleys. Ehrang, small river taken taken over by American Troops. Railroad Center. Palzell River. Trier 1:20. Bought lunch from Red Cross. Luxemburg at 2:30. Snowstorm. Ukrange Woippy hogs. Metz 5:20. left 6:15. Arrived at Tool 9 p.m. Missed 9:15 train and had to wait for the next one on schedule at (9:57 but did not come until 11:00, squeezed in with a bunch of Frenchmen--had to stand up in the toilet--two of us. Were ordered out at 2:30 a.m. at a French leave camp. Were out of luck on breakfast and dinner. Had some hot coffee with a bunch of Turks. Nearly missed our train. Got in with a bunch of frogs and one American. Left at 6:30 and traveled until 2:00 p.m. got to Paris, had our papers stamped again by the a.p.m. and were hauled in a motor truck to the A.R.C. No. 12 39 Avenue Wagrani. . . . . Left Paris for home Monday morning at 11. Arrived at French Leave Camp at 4 p.m. left at 9, got into Tool at 2 a.m. left at 9:40, Coblenz at 9:10, Got to Rubenach at 10:20.

May 7. Nothing doing. 8. On guard again at noon. 9. Guard at noon. 10. Guard. 11. Guard, rain and thunder. Show at night. 12. Day off. 13, 14, 15, On Guard again. 16. Changed to a night shift. 17. Guard. 18. On guard 6 p.m., got two prisoners drunk and raising hell in general. 19. Day off, to Coblenz with John Johnson. 20, 21, and 22. Guard. 23. Guard 24. Left Rubenech for France en route for home. Left Rubenich at 8:30 a.m. hiked to Coblenz, 7 kilo full pack. Boarded the train 36 min per(?)left Coblenz at 11:30. 26. Reached destination at 3 a.m. Monday morning. Had a luch and hiked 12 kilos to a small town (Avoise) billeted here in a barn doing a little hiking for excerise. 27, 28, 29, hiking. 30 Decoration Day, took in a concert at headquarters, 5 kilos. 31. Inspection of equipment by Lieutenant Hbe called out anytime.

End of Diary

Letter written by my mother to her sister, Olive.
after the death of my brother, Dale, in 1950

Hawley, Minnesota
May 30, 1950

Dear Olive,

At last I guess I'll be able to write to you. Dorothy has gone back now so I may as well make up my mind to do my own writing. She left last Friday p.m. and would get home on Sunday nite which is better connections than I got

The box of candy you sent arriveded last week and it was delicious. Thanks a lot. Dorothy sure liked it. We miss them now. Elaine was such a little character. She learned to talk so much after she got here and she'd repeat everything we said. You know, Fred was going to dive up here to get them ut at the last minute almost, he got bluffed out and didn't dare take the 37 Ford on another long trip. Dorothy was such a good help, I don't know what I'd have done without her. We went to Canistota while she was here and she and Elaine went too. Dorothy has been quite nervous for over a year and had to rely on sedatives more or less so I thought it was a good idea for her to go to. She was beginning to feel a lot better too--not so tense. Esther sure got a bang out of Elaine.

The weather has been nice now for quite some time and I hope we can finish the springs work without too much interuption.

Well, it is now almost 2 months since Dale left us and I still can hardly believe it's true. It doesn't seem to get much easier to take and of course as long as I live I'll never get over it. Lots of things have been said that perhaps it was for the best etc. but I still can't'see the justice of it. Of course, I try and sometimes I can believe that too. But when I think of a young fellow like our wonderful precious Dale being snuffed out like that before ever having a chance it just seems almost too much. Sometimes I don't think I'm a very good Christian not being able to take it with good grace, I really did better at first. Today, of course,. I feel worse than ever being as it's Memorial Day. Last evening we went to the cemetary andplanted some flowers and today we went to the services there in the cemetary. Jr. had to give the answer to Flanders Field. The American Legion had put uip a little flag at Dale's grave too and it was fluttering away so brave. The Senior Class of '49, his class, presented a plaque to Hawley High School in his memory and last week it arrived. It's a beautiful things. He was certainly honored and it did help to soften the blow that people thought so much of him. But I sure would rather have him back.

Thursday morning:

I didn't finish the other night which is usually my way of writing letters nowadays.I feel better today and of course I'm much stronger than I was physically. I think Canistota really helped too. I don't think I would have been much good if I hadn't gone.

Had a letter from Dorothy today and she got home o.k. Fred had the house all shined up. Elaine took the trip in stride as she does everything.

We finally got a report on the accident from the Commanding Officer at the Base in Memphis. It was very thorough but I didn't read it as I was afraid there'd be something I didn't want to see. However, they told us a few things and there was no excuse for the accident at all. The car Dale was riding in was going along slow and this other one was going 50 m.p.h. and ran into them and of course knocked them off the road etc. It has bothered so much that the car burned but I think the boys were knocked out and probably gone before it caught fire as it was the rear end that burned mostly. Lee wrote to Joyce and told most of the details of it so if you want to know more you can probably get it from her. It happened at 11:45 on Sunday evening instead of Monday morning, April 10 which is more like it. They were coming home from a baseball game. It was a wide road there so there was no excuse. Guess I have run out of paper so will have to close for now.

Write again sometime,

Love,

Gertrude