



Ann Roberts:

As Time Goes By

A memoir of a rich life for my family

April 2013

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Note: I want to credit our older daughter Becky Llewellyn (Rebecca Ann Roberts) for her initiative and persistence over the last 17 years to put this memoir together with me. She has collected and transcribed my interviews and put them together for me to edit. We have had great fun and unfortunately had to leave out many stories, feelings and details, not to mention that we had way too many photos to choose from. In time, this will be available on www.billrobertsstory.com with my husband Bill's own story for family members with some music I have made and some extra visuals.

Introduction

To my children, grandchildren and those who follow: thank you for reading this memoir. You too, like many who have met me, may be surprised at my story of mothering five children so close in age. This was not uncommon in my peer group, whose husbands had come home from WWII and wanted to settle into family life. Many of our friends had up to seven children.

That fact that I finished university, married and had all five children before I was 30 may vary from your lives, with people having children later in your time. That opened up my 30s and 40s to a world of development as I enjoyed the stages of babies, then schoolchildren. I continued to admire and wonder at their choices as they grew. I firmly believe they had the right to be themselves.

My life-long partner Bill and I learned that we were both risk-takers and path-finders, leading to a rich life that you will read in this story. Looking back, I see that our children were my guides and angels. A sadness of my life is that we haven't lived closer to our grandchildren, although I feel close to you as shining lights, relishing the time I've spent with each of you. My hope is that you continue to be healthy and happy, even you who are as yet unborn!

At 86, I marvel at the life I have had and feel content. I hope I have contributed to the world in ways I don't know, especially in the love Bill and I have shown over our 65 year marriage. It's amazing how quickly that time has slipped by. So please enjoy reading this woman's story of the various people and decades that shaped my experiences and relationships. It's been a rich life and I hope you enjoy finding out more about me.

With all love

Ann, Mom, Grandma Ann

Chapter 1 - My Lake Crystal Childhood

I am Ann Elizabeth Roberts. My maiden name was Leffler before I married. I was named after my two grandmothers, both of whom died before I was born. Anna was my maternal grandmother and Elizabeth, my paternal grandmother. I've always liked my name as its association with the females in the family before me means a lot.

In a way I have felt cheated not to get to know my grandmothers. However, there was a dear lady in the neighborhood, Anna Hartwig, who was a surrogate grandmother to me. I named her 'Mungy'. She moved to California when I was about 8. She was a very special person in my life, outside my family. Fortunately I had many aunties nearby who were all my mother's sisters.

I was born in Lake Crystal, Minnesota on October 9th 1926 and lived there until I went to college and got married. I was born at home and was the first child in the family, so I'm sure I was probably very special. I don't know that I was especially cute or good or any of those things. I've lived quite a long time: I'm almost 85 years old now and it's hard to believe I have all those years behind me. It's also hard to believe the amount of snow we lived with and just took for granted as shown in this photo from our front porch.



We lived in the home where I was born for a few years. The next home we rented and lived in during most of my elementary school years. After a summer of living in the country with Uncle Nolan and Aunt Marion, we moved into a brick house with a big yard where the neighborhood kids came to play ball. It was the oldest home in Lake Crystal when pioneers founded the city. It was a two-story grand brick house with two parlors.

When I was about 12 years old (1938), my Dad bought the house that our children knew as their grandparent's home for \$2,000 cash. It was on Murphy Street in Lake Crystal. We didn't really use addresses. There was a Robinson Street (named after the first white settler to Lake Crystal) and a Main Street.

The house had two stories above that basement – the main floor with kitchen, two parlors, dining room and my parent's bedroom. Upstairs there were two bedrooms and a large bathroom and closets. Heat rises so that wasn't a big problem. I remember the years when my Dad had to get up in the middle of the night to keep the furnace going. We always had a warm house or a warm enough house.

Lake Crystal is a lovely town in southern Minnesota servicing the rural sector around it. When I was there, it was a village of about 1200 people. Now it has grown to about 2000. It

is situated near three lakes – Crystal Lake, Lily Lake and Loon Lake. For southern Minnesota, that is pretty special. Our homes were always less than two blocks from Crystal Lake. We would skate on the lake in the wintertime. As soon as the ice was strong enough, my Dad would let me go – but not until he was sure the ice was strong enough, if we didn't have a skating rink. Some years the ice was clear and without a lot of snow, so we could skate across to the cemetery.

The cemetery is part of a peninsula that goes out into the lake – a very pretty area where my parents are buried. There are lots of family and friends buried there and it is really an idyllic spot. In the last few years of her life, Mother lived at the Health Care Center on the road to the cemetery. On one of my last visits, there was a beautiful snowfall and we drove around the cemetery where there were no other tracks. Unfortunately we got stuck and as it was a rental car, we didn't have the tools that most people have with them in the wintertime. So we had to call for help. Our trusty brother-in-law Eldon came out, dressed in boots and hat with tools and he got us out! We were, to say the least, a little embarrassed. But the cemetery is a beautiful spot all times of the year.

Lake Crystal is a center for the rural area and for schools and community activities. We used to have a band shell in the park where once a week, the high school band would put on a concert in the summer. People would come and park all around the four sides of the town square. After each piece, the people would honk their horns and let us know they thought it was great. And one of the churches would have an ice cream social, organized so that some church group would be there with cake, pie, and ice cream.

Maybe in the early years there wasn't an ice cream social. I can remember how proud I was when my Dad was the provider of the treats for the band. He usually gave us little ice cream bars. Different businessmen would do that.

The park also has the famous canon from WWI (now moved). Set in cement, it was a great place for children to play on and around. One of my special memories, besides our children playing on it, was when I studied Latin in high school with Bill and we had a Roman banquet. We did quite a few fun things, including wearing white sheets for togas. In the olden days, there weren't such things as colored or patterned sheets. We thought we looked like real ancient Romans, with our togas draped around us. I remember Bill, as the orator of the ceremony. He sat on top the cannon or spoke, gesturing around it. I don't know why, maybe as a place of military power? He also wore the toga for his first visit to our home, when he picked me up to take me to the banquet.

At one time there were five grocery stores in town, including Jack Spratt, Neesons, and Sam Wegowski's. I worked at Levines store when I was 13 or 14. I wasn't very knowledgeable about the world, and I remember some man came in and asked for snuff. I didn't know what it was. Shopping was so different then, not like the self-service supermarkets of today.

People came to the counter and gave you a list of what they wanted and you wrote their order on a pad, collected the items for them and put them in a box or bag, then they paid for it.

We had three Jewish shopkeepers and I don't think there are any Jewish people living there today. Sam Wegowski had a two-part store. One part was for groceries and the other was for small goods, like thread and 'yard goods', meaning material for sewing. All the kinds of things you might find in a 'five and dime' today, stores like dollar stores where you can buy everything you need for some household things. It stocked crepe paper to make decorations for parties, thimbles to help with hand sewing – all sorts of handy things.

All the farmers came in to town for their supplies, so we needed a variety of places. There was a meat market and a post office of course, a barber shop, a beauty shop. The men never went to the beauty shop as they do nowadays. I had an end curl when I was about 12. It was my first permanent. Oh, if you could imagine! Think about a tall pole with wires hanging off the top of a wheel with wires ending in a curler. They would wrap our hair then put a special solution on the hair in the curlers to soak and then to heat until curled. We weren't done until the neutralizer was added to the hair. It was all very smelly. That cost about a dollar and a half.

I earned the money for my first end curl by picking gooseberries in Crookson's woods. Gooseberries are green berries, not quite as big as a cherry. Sometimes they had thorn like pickers on them. Oh! We wore long-sleeved shirts to try to protect our arms from getting all scratched up. We'd pick the berries, bring them home and sell them to Flora, our next-door neighbor, for about 20 cents a quart. They loved getting those gooseberries to make jam.

I also picked strawberries 4 or 5 miles from home. Somebody would drive a bunch of us girls who wanted to make money out to a big field. We got 2 cents a basket. It was hard work. We were on our knees or leaning over most of the time. The most I ever made in a day was a dollar – that would be a lot of hard work. Usually I made less. It was no fun if it was wet. I did that for a couple of years when I was about 11 to 13 for the short season of strawberries.

I also detasseled corn when I was about 16 or 17. The soil around Lake Crystal is wonderful dark black soil; one of the five best farming areas in the world, if I recall. Corn was grown there. They also grow some other crops, especially soy beans. DeKalb or Northrup King seed corn were grown in special plots around Lake Crystal. Interesting how they were planted in female and male rows, at least they were when we finished detasseling them. There would be two male rows, where they left the tassels and there would be four rows of corn where we removed the tassels – the female rows, so the seed could be pollinated. Some of the corn stalks were very tall so I had an advantage pulling off the tassels at the top because I was tall. Nowadays they ride on trucks to do this. I did this for two or three years. It was a

wonderful way to make better money than the berry picking. We could earn \$40, \$60 or \$80 within two weeks because it had to be done at just the right time.

One time my sister and I contracted for 8 acres of farmland. It was our job to have the corn detasseled in a certain amount of time. Then supervisors could come out and check it. My Dad would always drive us out there. I froze and canned corn in my college years for summer employment. That was common employment for people our age.

One summer when I worked in a factory in Madelia, a town about 12 miles away, we were freezing corn and across the belt from us, as we were wrapping the packages of corn as fast as we could as it moved along, there were young German boys who were the prisoners of war from World War II. They were very cute, much like our schoolmates and yet, they weren't allowed to speak to us and we weren't allowed to speak to them. They wore colored feed sacks, whatever they could find, around their necks for scarves.

It was hard to get over that these young men were our enemies. And you know my father was of German descent. It was a lesson for us in looking at people in a different way.

I was a good student and I remember being very interested in newspaper reports about the War. My Dad and Mother were avid radio listeners, so we grew up hearing a lot of news about what was happening. There were so many men from our community who were out fighting the War and many casualties in our community. As you know, Bill's brother Newt drowned in a plane accident near Hawaii in WWII. His mother was a Gold Star mother, meaning they had lost a son or possibly a daughter in the War.

I kept a scrapbook of headlines of major battles when I was a teenager and I still have that. I have one ration book. Every family was allowed a coupon book for limited supplies, such as sugar, butter, and meat. There were many products that were limited because they had to go overseas, or supply the men in the War. The rations continued for many of the War years, 1942 and after, including gas rationing for the automobiles.

It wasn't the rations that kept me slim. I was always tall and slim in my class. In the class photo, I was in the middle of the top row with the boys. I wasn't extraordinarily tall, just one of the taller girls. I didn't like it when the kids called me 'skinny' in 4th grade. 'Tall' was okay. I grew to be taller than my folks.

I learned a lot of sewing mostly in 7th grade when I made an apron and in 8th grade, when I made a dress. From that time on, I made almost all my clothes for many years. I also used my summer earnings to cover my clothing needs in high school. The item of clothing for girls everywhere, at least in the Midwest, was wool pleated skirts, often plaid. One of our Saturday jobs was to press our pleats in, so they would be nice for the next week. I had some really nice ones that I passed down to my sister, and then to my cousin Cary. I

remember her saying how nice it was to have clothes that we had. We didn't go to the store and buy much.

We wore sweaters. I learned to knit in high school but I think we bought our sweaters. Quite often we wore a white blouse under them so the collar would show over the top of a crew neck. We didn't have school uniforms. The only people who did were military schools or private schools and there weren't any private schools in southern Minnesota, only a military school. The Catholic schools in Mankato probably had uniforms too.

Our world was small, looking back. We didn't have television so we didn't know what was happening everywhere else. We felt very comfortable, growing up in our world of Lake Crystal. We could go walking anywhere in town and have no worries. Our parents usually knew where we were – with friends or walking home at night from school programs. Our home was 3 or 4 blocks from school. We went home for lunch every day. I remember keeping a diary of my high school years and I circled every night I went out to some event connected with school. In my junior and senior years, that was probably an average of four nights a week – ball games, music activities, dances, and Saturday night I almost always went out on a date. It was an active, fun-filled time.

I was very active in Campfire Girls from the time I was about 8 years old. We had good leaders who made it lots of fun. We had an active group, with girls ranging over 6 or more years in age. There were always older girls to look up to. They always liked to sing. We did a lot of singing. And we learned to camp. We went camping every summer at Campfire Camp. Our ceremonies revolved around the Indian lore, meaning Native Americans but at that time we called them 'Indians'. I made a beaded headband to wear that had symbols representing my name which I chose, "Minnehaha" and the beads were all different shades of blue.

We called each other by pretty names, such as "Tanya" or "Hiawatha". We had lots of crafts and did service projects involving the community. My Indian gown was a hand-me-down from my Aunt Marion. It was special because it was already old. She had been a Campfire leader. It had brown leather fringe under the arms. I made a neckpiece out of leather chamois so it was very soft. It had fringes on it so I could string the beads I earned and sew badges on it.

Many years ago, I gave that to Marshada, because she was in Campfire for a long time. Keif was too, because it changed to be Campfire Girls and Boys. They had very good leaders in their community. It makes such a difference if you are in a place where the leaders are interested in you. You gain a lot from that. I went through the ranks from the beginning in Campfire, right through to Torchbearer in Social Leadership which meant I had to have two other credits as torchbearer. One I did was in music and the other was in nature. Very few girls earned Torchbearer in Social Leadership. I finished that by the time I was a junior in

high school, and was honored in a ceremony in Mankato. My sister played her flute with my friend Gloria, singing "Indian Love Song".

We had a Campfire camp at Lake Patterson, on the other side of Mankato on a very nice lake. Our Lake Crystal group went for one week every summer. We had young college girls who were leaders, and who stayed with us in our cabins. I always looked up to girls who were a little older than I was. They seemed more knowledgeable about the world. One of the funny things about going to camp is that we took our supplies in an old wooden crate. I suppose maybe an apple crate, 14 inches high. We tipped it up on one end and made a nice little curtain out of colored fabric to put in front of it to make a dressed up cupboard. Sometimes we decorated a little nail keg for a little seat to go with it. I don't know if we took it to camp but we had it at home. It was 12 inches across, bulging out in the center with two metal hoops to hold it together, like a little wine barrel. We padded that for seating. We loved to make things!

In 1926, the year I was born, the interesting things that had happened to women were that they had the power to vote, and it was the flapper era. There is a picture of my mother with short hair and wonderful waves. The dresses were typically in the 'flapper' style – mid-calf, narrow all the way down with fringes at the hem. Mother had a nice cloche hat and some beaded bags in the 20s style.

Before I was born, Mother was a stenographer for a banker, and that's where she met my Dad. A stenographer was a person who takes shorthand notes as someone speaks. It's a step up from being a typist. After you transcribe it from all these funny little curlicues that you write on paper, you type it and submit it to your boss. Letters sent out were done that way.

As we were growing up, if there was a popular song on the radio, and we wanted to know the lyrics, we would ask Mother to do it in shorthand. We were very impressed because she had this whole other coded language, something we didn't know about, kind of a mystery.

I think my Mother would have left that job after she married my Dad, who also had his job at the bank as a bookkeeper. It was more or less understood that after you married, it was your role to take care of your husband and the house. They didn't want two people earning an income from the same source.

Nearly everybody had a garden in those days. If you didn't have space for them in your own back yard, you would find space for one at your neighbor's or outside of town a bit. The women took it as one of their major tasks to can food. 'To put food up' is another expression. It means using glass bottles, putting corn, which was cleaned and pre-cooked, then steamed in a big boiler-like tub. We did this with tomatoes, corn, beans, maybe peas. Peaches and pears were not part of our local produce but you could buy a crate for \$1.50 and make 12 bottles of canned fruit. We also bought Bing cherries and Italian prunes to can.

In fact, when I was studying canning in 9th grade Home Economics, my parents provided a crate of Italian prunes for our class. They bought them in the store. The only local fruit were apples. Mother and Dad would always make applesauce and apple butter, with a lot of cinnamon sticks, like a jam. The other foods, the corn and tomatoes were all local produce.

It was very difficult to get fresh foods in the stores. People had their apples in their cellars, wrapped separately in a piece of newspaper or catalog. At least in town we had our own plumbing. Potatoes were also kept over the winter and onions for part of the winter. In the stores, you could sometimes buy oranges, but not often. You could get cabbage and root vegetables. My Dad loved rutabagas (Swedes) and that is something we rarely buy today. Carrots and beets you could keep. Beets and cucumbers were used for pickles usually.

Mother had a very large triangular shaped sieve to push the tomatoes through, catching the skins. She put this puree in the jars, sealed it, put a ring around to make it tight, then put it in the steamer. Sometimes they were cold pressed. There were different methods of doing it. I always liked canning season, working in a team with my Mother.

You might be interested in how we kept our food cool in the summertime. We had an icebox which was quite elite. Not everyone had one. You put a big chunk of ice into a compartment near the top. As it melted, it dripped into a pan in the bottom and cooled the food through evaporation. As it melted, we had to check that pan once or twice a day. If we didn't, we would have had puddles of water on the floor. So that was a job that we all shared. That is where we kept our butter and fresh things when we lived in town.

There was an ice house where we bought these chunks, cut out of the lake in the wintertime in huge chunks. The owners put straw between the chunks to keep them from sticking together. The men had huge ice tongs to lift them as they came around in their ice wagons to deliver into the kitchen. Sometimes the icebox was kept in a back room near a pantry so they could come in with their dirty boots. This was probably more than twice a week. Today iceboxes are popular pieces of furniture, mostly made out of oak.

My mother kept all her home preserves in the basement. You had to go down a rather narrow stairway lit by electric lights. It was like an unfinished basement, almost like a cave. There was an aroma, an odor that went with it, that was very definitely a damp smell, offensive to some people, but I liked it. Bill could not understand that, but I associated that damp smell with my Mother's self-esteem because she took her older sisters down at the end of summer or maybe several times, so they would be proud of her. I know that's why I liked that smell. Smells are good for memories because you have such strong direct associations.

There were three layers of shelves where the quart size jars were and pint size jars were. And also maybe some boxes of potatoes and apples. They weren't on the floor. They were always on the shelves in very neat rows – all organized together. Tomatoes were all

together. They were one of the best things to have because you could make “goulash”. Do you know that word? That’s meat and tomatoes and onions – children almost everywhere love that. That’s what we had for birthday parties, goulash, and cakes of course.

All the women were so proud of their canned goods, displayed beautifully on shelves. Mother would invite her sisters and friends to come into the basement to see what they had done over the summer. It was a priority of life in that snowy climate and a value which people put on taking care of your family. All of the mothers who stayed at home, which were all the mothers, made some of their own bread. There were no freezer sections in the stores for food, although we did freeze corn. When I came home from my college years it was beginning to change, once the War was over.

Mother had an old wringer washing machine in the basement. On some farms, it might have been on the side porch. It was a big round tub with a motorized agitator. Some people had gas but we always had electricity. There two other tubs, including a rinse tub with cool water. We always washed in hot water. In order to get the clothes from the first wash into the rinse, it had to go through a ringer. That was run by hand – two big round rubberized cylinders. As you wound these clothes through the rollers, they fell into a tub of cooler water, the first rinse water. The second rinse water had bluing in it. This was a liquid which I think you can still buy today, although it is hard to find. It makes your ‘white clothes whiter’!

I can remember washing clothes in the basement and how that changed over the years. Monday was wash day. There was a Maytag washer that had a hand wringer on it. After the clothes were washed, you would turn a handle of this wringer and the clothes would go into rinse water with bluing in it for the white clothes. Mother had a set way of hanging the clothes on the line. The white clothes went on the outside of the lines and the colored clothes on the inside. It was important that the white clothes get most of the sun. In the winter, we hung clothes in the basement instead. The clothes hung stiff there.

Tuesday was ironing day. Ironing was an art. People loved doing a good job. I remember learning to iron with an electric iron when I was about 12. I learned how to properly iron a man’s shirt. Before you could iron these clothes, they had to be dampened with water. You would sprinkle them slightly and turn the clothes so that everything would get dampened. When there were no steam irons, you would then bundle the clothes up, rolling them tightly in a blanket or towel.

You started with the collars and cuffs of men’s shirts by starching them when they came out of the washing machine before they were dry. We made up a mixture of the soft, powdery starch in water and then dipped the collar and cuffs into it. Men’s shirts had to have the button area starched so it would stay clean longer.

It was very important to hang your clothes out on the line outside and to have white clothes. No dirty, dingy, gray clothes. There were no fences between our houses, so

everyone could see each other's laundry. This was another matter of pride. How you hung your clothes was another matter of pride. You would hang the sheets all together, and the pillowcases next to it. Your underwear would be in the center so the neighbors couldn't see them. We had wooden clothes pins (pegs) to hang them, and I learned quickly how to do a good job of making a nice-looking clothesline.

We had to carry the clothes from the basement, up the stairs in a basket to our clothes line. That alone could be a big job. In the wintertime, clothes froze on the line. You would have men's underwear with long sleeves and long legs, and it would come in looking like a ghost. You would let it freeze on the line, and then bring it into a room with a heater. When you think of the humidity, and all that dripping of the clothes onto the floor, it was a terrible lot of work. What a role for women! No wonder their hands looked chapped, red and raw.

In our house, we hung the clothes up in the basement, near a big furnace so they didn't clutter up the house. It had been converted from coal to gas. When it was a coal furnace, there was a little chute where coal was delivered directly into the basement. We could hear it sliding down.

Ironing was a major job because we didn't have polyester clothes, only cotton. That's very nice, if you stop to think about it. I love cotton clothes – that is about all I will wear here in Tucson, where it's hot.

In my last years of high school and college, my Mother helped my Dad for three months of the year as a tax preparer. My father had an insurance agency. I mentioned that he had been a banker but when the Depression came, he lost his job as a young banker. The bank was never reopened in that building, as it merged with another bank in town. My Dad decided to find something else to do. There were no jobs. He went out to help farmers at harvest time. I don't know all the things he did, but he was keeping busy to earn as little as \$5 a week to feed and clothe our family. These years were very difficult for our parents.

We were like all the other families in town. We children never felt poor. We always had food because, even though we didn't live on a farm, all my Johnson cousins (Mother's side) were on farms. We were very close to our cousins. They were almost like brothers and sisters. They came in every Saturday to shop, and stop at our house, so it was almost like a party every Saturday. Sunday we went out to the farms and played games with my cousins. Most of them were a bit younger than I was, so I was seen as the organizer for a lot of these play activities. Cards were always a favorite.

The relatives sometimes brought us eggs, chicken and other meat. My Aunt Nora and Uncle Ben canned pork. I would dearly love to eat canned pork again! I can just see those jars with white lard showing. Our Aunt Marion and Uncle Nolan butchered beef. There was always a lot of sharing. We would help each other in some way, and they would help us.

My Dad really was a businessman, and he started his insurance agency. He worked for different companies that provided services for farmers in particular – hail damage to crops, fire damage, and car insurance. He provided everything except life insurance. He didn't believe in life insurance at that time, or very minimal life insurance. I think I had a policy for \$1,000 that he bought for my sister Helen and me. It would take you through until you were 65 or something.

His office was in the old bank building. That was where my parents met. There was a HUGE stairway. I can't imagine how grand it was – 40 steps up to a Masonic Hall, a big room for their activities. My Dad was in Masons, and my Mother was active in Eastern Star, the women's branch of the Masonic organization.

I remember these organizations having huge dinners with oyster stew suppers in the wintertime, and at other times, I went there for family events. The meat market I mentioned earlier, would have carried oysters in brine for all the Norwegians who lived locally. That was a real treat – milk, butter and oyster crackers. I sang with a group of girls – one song I remember was called "Alma, dear Alma", to an Italian tune, special songs for special people. Helen and I did tap dancing and played piano duets.

Across from this Lodge was where Dad's office was. He had two very large rooms with big windows, a big roll-top desk. I thought it was wonderful to go up those steps and play 'Office'. There were all these stamps and hole punchers – nothing like a modern office. My Dad was a great bookkeeper. He had the neatest records. Later on my Dad moved down to the ground floor of another building, but I think he kept kind of fit with all that walking up and down.

He always had his car with him, even though his office was only less than three blocks from home, because there might be an emergency somewhere that he might need to go to – a car accident or fire, so he could be on the ground to give service. There was no theft in Lake Crystal at the time – people didn't lock their houses. Community trust made for a nice lifestyle to grow up in.

My Dad always drove black cars, and he loved Chevrolets. The first new Chevrolet we got was 1938 when his business was starting to do well. Helen and I both had new coats for Easter one year. Mother had a new coat. We were almost embarrassed by our riches. Dad changed his car every two years. On Labor Day every year we would wax the car as a family project. Helen and I were out there waxing it. First you gave it a really good wash then you waxed and rubbed it to give it protection for the winter. Our cars were always in a garage overnight so they were well taken care of. I think when he traded them in they were in pretty good shape, every time.

Chapter 2 - My Father - Raymond Leffler

My father, Raymond Francis Leffler, was born on July 24th 1902, the youngest child, with four brothers, and one sister. Most of my father's siblings were born in Iowa, although the oldest was born in Germany. Dad was ten years younger than his youngest brother, being born in 1902. His only sister Elizabeth gave him a lot of care when he was growing up, especially after his mother died in his late teens.

Ray's mother was born in 1864 and was 38 years old when he was born. She had started having kids when she was twenty. They immigrated to the US from Germany in 1885 with a new baby, Christ (pronounced Kris). Our family name, Leffler, was initially spelled with an 'o', Loeffler. I never heard my father speak German but he would have heard it growing up. I don't think he identified with being German in any way. He was American through and through. He wasn't identified as being German as far as I know.

About the only thing I remember him saying about his childhood was that he helped plant a row of trees on their farm in southern Minnesota. He took us to see that on a trip.

I don't know that he felt he had emotional support in his family as an adult. It made him extra-aware of giving us that sense. I always felt I could do anything I wanted, and he would help and support me. My Dad's father was financially helpful to some of the elder brothers but I don't think he did much for my Dad in terms of financial support. He had been close to his sister Elizabeth in childhood, but I don't think they wrote letters and they saw each other infrequently. She was very fond of him.

We were not close to our Grandpa who lived 100 miles away in St. Paul. We visited him when we drove to Hamline. He was a city man by this time, and liked the hustle and bustle of Selby Avenue. His second wife might have had an apartment there. Grandpa didn't like coming to Lake Crystal much, because he found it too quiet after living on a streetcar line.

Obviously, my Dad finished high school in Delft in the area of Windom, Minnesota. Delft is a very small place. He then went to Commercial College in Mankato. I've heard a few things about him before that. He had a motorcycle and was a very gregarious youth, so he had a reputation for being pretty wild. I'll have to find out more about that. He went to the Lake Crystal bank after Commercial College, working as a bookkeeper. He was the youngest man to work in the bank. My mother also had gone to the Mankato Commercial College, but I don't think they met until they worked at the bank in Lake Crystal. He lost his job in the Depression, when the bank closed, and never went back to banking.

Dad had dark hair and brown eyes. He was an average man's size. He was handsome, I thought. He was the best looking of all his brothers. I can see why my Mother would have fallen for him. He was very convincing in wooing her. I've heard from Bud Thomas who

worked in the bank at that time that they were like any young lovers, walking in the park, with his arms around her.

When she wanted to get married, she would have been 24. Her sisters did not want her to get married. They thought she should have a turn keeping house at the old family farm where her single brothers and sisters still lived, at least to put in her time. Weddings were not really big important affairs. They were usually in a parsonage, or in the home. Somehow Dad convinced her that they should elope. I'm so pleased about that!

They were married by Rev. Edward Johnson at his home in Mankato, Minnesota. Mother didn't have parents to put on a wedding in their home. Mother had a pretty green dress and her hair was marcelled in a 20's style. She was a flapper and she liked to look nice. They were a good looking couple. Dad had rented an old Ford from Dr. Franchere, the family doctor, and they took a week's trip into Iowa. They saw the old home farm where he was born, and visited some of his relatives along the way. It was a 300 mile trip, and he introduced his new bride, Pearl, to them.

The first house they lived in was rented, across from Mungy's house, on the Main Street going down towards the lake. It was a lovely big old house with a front porch. By the time Helen was born, we lived in a smaller house by the creek, about a block and a half away. We rented that house from the baker in town and it is the first house I remember. It had a garden and a garage and was a cozy house, nothing fancy. That's when the Depression hit. One summer we went out to my Mother's home farm and lived with Uncle Nolan and Aunt Marion. During that time Daddy was at the farm, he was looking for a house to rent in Lake Crystal.

I don't think he was ever interested in going back to being an employee. He did whatever work he could during the Depression to put food on our table. He helped out on farms a bit and made as little as \$5 a week during haying season. It must have been fairly early that he decided he wanted to be independent, and he became an insurance agent. We're guessing it was around 1934. Primarily the insurance was for farmers to protect them against hail and crop damage, house and auto insurance. He was never in favor of life insurance so he didn't handle it. In 1936, we bought a new car and paid cash for it. It was shiny black, as all cars in those days were black!

In 1936, we moved into a two-story brick house. It is known as a historic 1860s house. It had a big corner lot with big oak trees. I remember Dad going to the basement and stoking coal in the furnace to keep us warm. Helen and I had a second floor bedroom. That house looks much the same now, as it did then. It had an empty lot next to it. Dad loved to play ball out there. We girls were never good ball players. I was good at running but could never hit the ball. He had all the kids in the neighborhood over to play softball. It was fun.

Later, they bought the house you knew them in. He took the gardening responsibilities seriously, and kept the outside immaculately. Oak trees are known for a lot of branches and acorns falling down. He always kept the lawn nicely mowed and helped Mother set out her vegetable garden. Everybody in those times gardened.

He liked to feed squirrels. He would sometimes feed them from his hand. We always had a spot in our yard where we could play croquet and badminton. It was kind of a neighborhood center where we would run around and play tag and other games. We never had dogs, only a few cats.

If he was under stress, I think he probably got angry and we learned to stay out of his way. Helen remembers him as being sterner than I do. That is surprising in many ways, because I paved the way as the first child, the first driver in the family, the first asking to go out with boys. I am amazed when I think of going out with Bill, and coming home after the second show in Mankato, and we would stop for food before, so I got home at 12 or 1 a.m. Bill would come in, and we would cuddle on the sofa, and he stayed in his bedroom upstairs and never once came down. He had a trust in me which was great, and was earned. I responded to that trust.

He had a little workshop in his garage with quite a few tools, all kept nicely in order. He used to fix things in the house. He and Mother painted and wallpapered the house, but bigger jobs were done by carpenters. He had fishing equipment, although he wasn't a great fisher. He also had golf clubs, but I can't remember him using them. He had a gun, and hunted pheasants in the fall. His hobbies were mainly keeping the house and yard in order.



He liked reading. We used to get Collier's magazine and two or three other subscriptions. He was a good sport. Eldon wanted to take him for a ride on an airplane after he became a pilot. Dad went, but never flew again. They came to Austin on an airplane to see us. It was a rough flight and that was that. He liked to drive. Our family had annual trips.

We had a week at a northern lake in the summer for recreation, always with one or two other families. We rented a cabin, cooked and fished together. Usually it was the Peterson and Nicholson families.

He always bought Chevrolets. He changed them over every two years. On Labor Day we cleaned and waxed the car. He was neat, and liked things neat and tidy. He was the organizer in the family, and I got this tendency from him. He was very dependable and honest, a straight-shooter.

He had grown up in a German Lutheran Church, and Mother in a Norwegian Lutheran Church. They decided to compromise and go to the Methodist Church in Lake Crystal. Once he said he'd be involved, he was very committed to that church. He was always a pall bearer for funerals when needed. He and Mother gave money to buy the stained glass windows in the front of the church.

He was ambitious and a hard worker so it suited him to be in business for himself. He served many rural communities in our area, and insurance turned out to be a good choice, because people were trying to get a sense of security after the Depression. I went out with him to contact people sometimes. I also remember going to home or barn fires as well.

We always had a telephone in Lake Crystal. Our number was 1-2. He was a telephone man. We would call the operator who said, "Number please?" He would ring Mother about 11am each day and find out what to bring back for dinner at noon. We also came home from school and had 20 minutes to eat so we could get back in time for band practice. One day a client rang and asked if my Dad was a notary public. I answered, misunderstanding, "No, he's a Democrat!" That was one of the oft-told family jokes.

My folks got quite a kick out of that. They had quite a lot of humor between themselves, and we always had a lot of laughing around the table. One day I was walking with the minister's wife and the baby made a lot of farting noises. I said, "That's OK. My Dad does that all the time." They loved telling those kind of stories.

He loved my Mother's family, and made himself a close member of it. They eloped in 1925, when he was 23. In later years, he helped her sisters as they became widows. He was always there to help. That was true in the church as well. He was a service oriented man. He also loved to keep his yard neat and after spending time mowing, would enjoy sitting smelling the grass.



He loved being involved. He was a treasurer of the church and performed that role well because he was very organized and efficient. People trusted him for that. When the church had their food booth at the County Fair, he was the first one there to help build it and man it all day long, or whatever was needed. On Sunday morning, if the snow fell before church, he would be out there shoveling the walks so others could find a path.

He was a lifelong Mason. The Lake Crystal Masonic Lodge was a source of friendship. He committed himself to it regularly. He was Worthy Patron in Eastern Star when Mother was Worthy Matron, so that was something they did together. In later years, he was very active in Lions Club, and went to District meetings. He got tired of the drinking that was around those meetings.

I think that is why he stopped. He was a teetotaler. He refused to go to church the one Sunday of the year they talked about temperance because he didn't need that lesson. So you could say he was strong minded. There wasn't drinking in my Mother's family either, and very little in Lake Crystal generally. A few went in and out the back door of the liquor store.

Dad's office was on the second floor of the old bank building. There were many steps up, maybe 30. It was a huge room with high ceilings, next to the Masonic Lodge. He had a giant desk and wonderful windows looking down at the town.



He drove his car two and a half blocks from our home to work and said the reason was somebody might have a claim or need him. We only had one car. Whenever Mother wanted to go to Mankato, he would stop work, and take her. Later on, he drove down to Phoenix to stay with us over the cold winter back home. Whenever school kids needed anything, I could always volunteer my Dad, and he would take

us anywhere. He liked driving, and he was in the position of being able to plan his own time. That's why we could count on him. He was a great father in supporting our interests. If we wanted colored sand to fill pretty bottles to sell in our sand store, he would take us down to the Judson hill and get nice white sand. There was another place we could go and get golden sand. It made him happy to make us happy.

He would have been a good employee but even more than that, he liked being independent. His business was called Leffler Insurance Agency. Later he moved to a ground floor office on the Main Street.

My Dad went up to the White Swan some nights of the week. It was a smoky place and my Dad did smoke. There was drinking there. I hated to walk there because it smelled of beer. They had a pool hall and a restaurant. He played pool, and it was a place to meet contacts for his business, and I think he just liked it.

Most nights of the week though, we sat around the radio and listened to programs. Monday night was Lux Radio Theatre and Tuesday was Fibber McGee, a comedian, and there were favorite nights like Saturday, with the Hit Parade! Dad also was very keen on listening to the news.

After Helen and I did the dishes, we would sit in the living room with our shoes off on the couch and comfortable chair. We would keep our shoes nearby so if someone came to the

door, we could slip them on! Our piano practicing was always before dinner. I think we must have done our homework at school mostly.

My Dad was playful, in spite of being strict. We played a lot of games. He liked to win. He was very competitive. If he had any weaknesses, it would probably be that he was not very flexible. He was the boss in our family, but my Mother had a lot of influence. We girls tended to ask her for permission first, and sometimes she would say, "Ask your father" but she was a 'soft soap'.

We were a little scared of him. He did spank us, but not very often. He washed out my mouth with soap once, when I swore, or said something I wasn't supposed to, like calling my sister a name. I could bend him to my way. He always assumed I would go to Mankato Teacher's College, and I knew I didn't want to go there. It was only 12 miles from home. I had my aspirations, which were a little higher. When I visited Hamline and Macalester, and I got a scholarship through our Minister, who was liberal and progressive, I let Dad know that is what I wanted to do. He supported me.

My parents supported Franklin D. Roosevelt, and have always been Democrats. In Minnesota, this was called the "Democratic Farm Labor Party". The Republican Party in those days, appealed to people such as the Welsh. They were reluctant, I thought, to make changes. I believe, the Scandinavian Johnson side of the family was more progressive. I remember Dad sitting by the radio, and listening to President Roosevelt. He was interested in current affairs, and very up to date. He was in-between the ages for conscription to the military, so he never went to war. I remember my parents remarking that he was either too young, or too old.

Dad was involved in the community business when Lake Crystal was looking at whether to be a village, or a city. He was on the Charter Committee. He was a participant in local affairs, but I have the feeling he was not always well liked. It seemed to have something to do with his being German, in a mostly Welsh community. There were other Germans, but Dad never attempted to use ethnicity for a tool for buying or selling anything. It seemed unimportant to him.

He liked quality things. He bought a good typewriter, and great cameras. From the time he had his business, he would buy a new suit or two each year, in shades of blue. He loved to look nice. He always wore a suit to work and church, with a white shirt, and up-to-date ties. I don't remember what he wore for mowing the lawn, but probably still his dress pants, and white shirt. He was willing to spend what he needed for appearances. He wanted us to have good quality shoes.

He was a fussy eater, and wasn't willing to try things he didn't like. He sang in a kind of monotone. No music comes down from his side. He loved photography. My cousin Charlotte was touring in Germany, and he asked her to buy him a Leica camera, about the time Becky

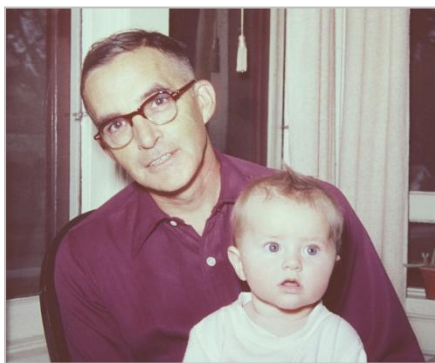
was born. He had a box camera before that. He loved to take pictures on family picnics, and camping trips. He wasn't a great photographer. Once in a while he took a silly picture just for a joke on Mother's sisters. He especially loved taking slide photographs of his ten grandchildren.

He was proud of being involved in the City Charter. He was seen as a quiet, but competent leader. He wasn't one to push himself ahead, not at all showy, just a down-to-earth, hard worker, efficient and organized.

He seemed perfectly content with his social life, family and friends. Then there was the Masonic Lodge. Our family of four was the core of his life. We played lots of card games. A favorite was 500. We even played 500 with other families. Mother played bridge and Dad played Buck Euchre. Other card games included Hearts, and Canasta. Dad was a champion at Rummy. He loved to shuffle the cards really fast, and he taught us a few card tricks.

Dad smoked Camel cigarettes, and smoked a pack or more a day. He didn't smoke that much at home. He had a cigarette in his hand a lot. He didn't believe in doctors much. He had bunions and other foot problems. He was willing to spend money for good fitting shoes, because he walked rather poorly. Other than that I don't remember him ever going to the doctor, but he did have a hernia operation.

Having gone through the Depression, he wanted to make sure that Mother would be provided for. As he got more successful in his business, he put a little away. He believed people should stand on their own two feet, to be responsible, and self-sufficient. He had turned down his older brother Christ once when he asked for a loan, because he felt he should be responsible for his own affairs.



Dad loved being Grandpa to our five kids, and Helen's five children. He was playful and caring. I think he was a satisfied man. The fact that he financially assisted both of his daughters to finish college was an honor to him.

We achieved things for him when we started out in our early grade school, and that made him very happy. He took huge pride in the families, but he thought Bill and I had too many babies, too close together. He talked with Bill about condoms. Bill did start using them after Suzanne was born. Later, when we moved to Arizona, from Minnesota, Bill was able to get a vasectomy.

When we moved back to Mankato from Cherokee in 1965, we were also geographically close to my parents for the first time in our married life, only ten miles away. He helped us greatly getting settled. Both were looking forward to having time with us. He had just retired three months before, and they were planning on many long driving holidays. They

had worked together every tax season for a number of years, and he always found things to do at home. He had hobbies waiting to be developed, including photography and woodwork.

Bill and I had dinner with him, a pork chop dinner, on the Monday before Thanksgiving. That kind of surprises me that we were both free, perhaps it was Armistice Day. Maybe it was two weeks before. They went to Cary Lou's in Minneapolis for Thanksgiving dinner with Aunt Marion and Uncle Nolan. We used to have Bill's family for Thanksgiving one year, and my folks the other year.

Well it turned out that our first year in Mankato, Helen's were entertaining the Jones family. The Roberts relatives came to our house. And why we didn't invite our folks for dinner, I'll never know. Dad didn't feel well coming back from Cary Lou's on Thursday. Friday he thought he had flu, and didn't go to the doctor. He died of a cardiac arrest, relatively early on Saturday night in November, at home getting into bed, after having a shower.

He had had hernia surgery about 3 years before he died. Aunt Clara said he never recovered from that. Dad died of a sudden heart attack the evening of November 27th 1965. He had been a heavy smoker, and was panting a lot before then, so there is no question in my mind that tobacco was the culprit. There was a vote in Lake Crystal that week that hadn't turned out the way he wanted which might have been stressful. I think what else had contributed to the stress, was that Mother's sister Nora moved to town from the farm when she became a widow, and built a new house. Dad helped her get settled, putting in her lawn and plantings and he just worked too hard.

At the time of his sudden death from a heart attack, he had all his business affairs set up in a very precise way. He had sold his business to his nephew, Glenn Johnson, son of Mother's older brother Jense. I think part of the reason he had all his business affairs set up in a very precise way is because he had handled the estates of some of Mother's other sisters that weren't in such good shape. So, he wanted to be sure that Mother had everything organized. And maybe he knew. Maybe he wasn't feeling well.

It was a real shock to everybody. He had been looking forward to participating in our family music and sporting events. He had been active in Scouting in Lake Crystal, sometimes taking campers way up north to their campsites, and was looking forward to the Scouting involvement of our three sons.

His funeral was at the Methodist Church in Lake Crystal. I remember one thing the Minister said was that Dad had passed the baton of voluntary work in the church to a younger generation. It was another way of saying that he had retired not only from church, but from active duty at church, so he could have more time with Mother. He is buried in the Lake Crystal cemetery, in the Leffler plot, with Mother buried alongside him. He was well loved by those who knew him best, his family.

Chapter 3 – My Mother – Pearl Johnson

My mother, Pearl Johnson, came from a Norwegian-Danish farm family. She was born on December 13, 1901, the 11th child of 14, including two step-sisters from her father's first wife. They were interested in education, music and contributing to society. My uncles were well-respected community people. Here she is at her brother's farm door with many female relatives around, wearing her apron.



My mother had blonde hair as a young woman. It would have been straight, and I imagine she wore it in braids. She was rather cute with big eyes, and she was a shy child. She told me of refusing to take a bath and getting a spanking – the only one she could remember. They used to get in the tub, one after the other, before the men came in from the fields.

She came from a peaceful, big happy family. They were seldom home all at the same time. Her playmates were primarily her sister Alma, who was two years older, and her two younger brothers, Nolan and Howard. They were a little quartet. They had their own chores to do like collecting eggs, and carrying drinking water, and keeping the wood box full, but they had a lot of time for playing. In the summer, they played a lot outdoors. In the winter, they played a lot of games, card games, checkers and things like that.

They did a lot of singing around the piano. Two of her older sisters were very good pianists. Mother learned to play a bit at home, and later she learned more as we daughters were taking our own lessons. A number of the brothers and sisters liked to sing, so music was an important part of their life. They had an early phonograph in their home where they could hear records over and over and learn songs.

They didn't have winter clothes like we do to protect them in the snow, so I don't think they played in the snow with sliding and tobogganing like we do today. They had a two-mile walk to school in the winter. It was so cold, even in the school that the food in the lunchboxes froze. She talked about having chilblains from the cold. Minnesota winters can easily get down to 30° Fahrenheit below zero. Walking would be difficult because there would have been snow drifts. They probably saw snow as much less fun than kids of today who have appropriate clothes and snow equipment. Fun for them would have been a sleigh ride pulled by live animals.

When she was five, mother's first grade teacher was her sister, Gena. It was the same year her father died. There was a one room school with grades from first through eighth with probably thirty students. Every seat was full, so it was a big job for the teacher. That school is gone now. There are very few of the one-room country schools left.

I think she was probably quite scared. There were some Norwegian boys who had come from Norway and were actually adults in their early 20s also in that school trying to learn English. These older learners were threatening to someone young and used to a quiet peaceful family. I think she would have been especially good at words, as spelling bees were easy for her.

Mother's childhood home was the large farm home that my Grandfather Nils Johnson and his wife Anna built in 1890. It was a nice looking big house. It had wood siding and shutters, with four windows on each side on both stories. It had a nice open front porch with four columns supporting the roof. They must have been proud of it. It is still standing although it is in disrepair. It was probably built with relatives and neighboring farmers all pitching in. Some of the sons were big enough to help with carrying the supplies.

All the farm families had a summer garden with things that came up each spring, like rhubarb and asparagus. They always had corn to eat from the field. There was a lovely grove of trees and different trees scattered about, by the windmill and other places. There were apple trees and crab apple trees.

The girls in the house did knitting for winter, knitting socks and mittens. There was embroidering, considered one of the women's arts. They used to crochet doilies and fancy linen circular cloths that had 'cut work', pulling out the threads to reveal patterns. It was very beautiful. With so many girls in the family, they did a lot of handwork.

My mother felt that most of her clothes were passed down to her but I have pictures of them and the girls look lovely. They sewed their own dresses. Aunt Gena became an excellent seamstress. Once the older ones started working, they helped put the next ones through college. Some of the money went into hats and looking nice.

My mother was unable to bake as she was growing up because the older ones didn't want anything wasted. They were afraid to let the younger ones waste eggs or anything.

She moved from the farm at 13 to start high school in Lake Crystal, a distance of 6 miles from the farm. She lived in a room or two in a boarding house with the Johnson four children mentioned before as the quartet. They all graduated from high school, which was unusual for those times to be so committed to school. It wasn't always easy trying to live on the food they brought from home for the Monday to Friday boarding. They also had about 50c given to them to buy milk, bread or meat. The rent was \$2 a month. The milk was 5c a

quart. They could buy enough hamburger or baloney or wieners to serve two people for 5 or 10c. That's how they had to economize. They had to learn to make the potatoes last.

On Friday night, an older brother came to town to pick them up, probably in their first car which they got in 1914. They went back to town on Sunday night, so they learned some independence at that point.

When she was a senior and almost ready to graduate, Mother was called out of school and told her mother was dying. She rushed home. Her mother had had a farm accident and an infection set in with blood poisoning so she died quickly. I don't know if Mother went through her graduation ceremony or not because this happened in mid to late June but she is pictured with her class.

She stayed at the farm for some time, an orphan at the age of 17, but with many older siblings that kept her going. It was a crisis point in her life but I don't recall her saying, "I was an orphan." She then went on to Mankato Commercial College for two years I'm guessing, probably with help to pay for her tuition from older sisters who were teaching school. This was a business college where she learned to be a bookkeeper and secretary. She was very good at taking shorthand, which is a dying art today.

She was hired as a bookkeeper at the Lake Crystal National Bank. She could take shorthand for the bank president but also helped keep books, so she was a multi-skilled worker. She had a cousin through her father's brother, Peter, who came to visit in the summer. Those people owned the Mankato Commercial College, so there is a possibility that there was a connection in those early days. It was quite unusual for women of mother's age and time to be in business. It was great to be a teacher and acceptable to be a nurse. It was rather new to be in business.

Mother had very good girlfriends in the community. They all liked to sew, do craft things and also to play cards.

I don't think she met her husband-to-be before she came back to Lake Crystal to work in the bank. I'm guessing that they courted for a year or two, no longer. They were married August 15, 1925 in Mankato by Rev Edward Johnson at his home and honeymooned in Iowa for a week. They met some of Dad's family there. Mother had been at the farm for a few months prior to that. She had turned in her resignation at the bank a few months before that to help with the farm over summer.

They set up housekeeping in Lake Crystal with very little money or furniture but they were a very happy young couple. Of her sisters, Gena, Lena and Nora had married so she was the fourth and last girl in the family to marry. Cary, Emma, Clara and Alma all remained single. I don't think this is particularly typical but they were young women during and after WW1 and a lot of the men didn't come home. That might have been a factor. They had seen their

mother work so hard and didn't want to be burdened by so many children. They had opportunities to marry farmers but did not want to be farmer's wives. They wanted careers. The singles became a teacher, nurse, teacher and businesswoman.

I remember when her sister Cary died in 1936, aged 50. She had heart problems and was a teacher in northern Minnesota, dearly loved by the whole family. She was beautiful and a singer. I remember sitting around the table with the other aunties who were there and the terrible grief on everyone's face when the news came during our dinner. It was my first experience with death in the family.

Our home had two bedrooms upstairs and a bathroom. The bigger bedroom was my folks with wonderful blue wallpaper with dogwood blossoms all over it. I can remember hearing my folks chuckling in bed and having a pleasant time. They must have moved downstairs after we girls finished college. The piano had been in the downstairs room that became their bedroom. It was easier to heat the downstairs part of the house. They turned the kitchen pantry into their downstairs en suite bathroom about 1950. The back room was also a storage area in my day but later was turned into a lovely enclosed porch where we could have meals and look out on the garden and backyard. They didn't use it in the winter.



Mother had a real talent for making a beautiful home. She kept it nicely. I remember the wood floors, the pretty green rug, pink draperies. She fed the winter birds and always had indoor plants and a summer garden. She loved to set a pretty table and put out a nice dinner. We always had our biggest meal of the day at noon which was meat, potatoes and vegetable with some kind of fruit sauce or

cookie for dessert. We drank lots of milk even when we didn't know the value of it for avoiding osteoporosis.

She liked everything we girls did. She expected us to do well at school and to have fun being active. She was encouraging and supportive. We were in Campfire, church groups and music programs at school. We gave her a lot of pleasure which was different from her growing up years which was not nearly as much fun in terms of social networks. Hers was more family oriented and ours was more about the wider community.

Without parents to guide her as an adult, she looked for people to be models of being warm parents. In her family, some were warm and others were brusque. So she chose to be otherwise. I always felt loved by her. I can remember coming home from the relatives on a Sunday afternoon in the backseat of the car when I put my head in her lap and she would

stroke my hair. Often, the rain would be pitter-pattering on the car roof and this has been a favorite memory.

With their two daughters, the philosophy of my parents was that they should treat us equally. If one of us got a doll, the other would get a doll. There wasn't much individuation for that very reason. I think there was jealousy, particularly on my sister Helen's part because she was the younger. She followed my footsteps and went to the same college. When it was time for her children to go to college, she encouraged them to choose different colleges, so they could all be themselves, for that very reason. It wasn't a happy experience for her to go to Hamline with me being there first.

We were a middle-class family in the town of about 1200 people. There was a group of women, including wives of the doctor and banker, who had a large circle playing bridge and Mother was invited to be a substitute with them occasionally. She could keep up with them in terms of her brightness but I don't think she really enjoyed it. It's a little bit of that elitism you would find in a small town and Mother wasn't comfortable with that.

We didn't hear a lot of gossip that I recall. Once Dad came home, upset because a well-known businessman had committed suicide and that was a shock. Dad used to bring news home from uptown to share with Mother but it was between them. My parents were kind of careful of other people's private lives. They didn't want their life known either.

They had one big blow. The second house we lived in during the Depression was owned by a Welshman who owned the store and bakery. Our parents were kicked out of that house, which was hard because I'm sure they were trying as hard as anyone. The cards were stacked against them for a while when they didn't pay the rent and it was a blow. They would have felt ashamed of that and we never went to that man's store even though it was the closest one.

Grandma would occasionally ask to go to Mankato for shopping and she had to ask Dad for money and he would say, "How much?" That was probably normal for the times, but she would probably have liked it otherwise because she had earned her own money in the past.

The basement had two levels. The lowest level had steps out to the clothes line outside with the furnace at that level. The steps were covered over by wooden doors that met in the center. No one was supposed to go down there except the meter man but our kids liked playing in this area which was also a spot where coal had been delivered for the furnace when it burned coal.

The first level of the cellar had the shelves where Mother showed off her canned goods. She put tomatoes, green beans, apple sauce, peaches, pears, Bing cherries, Italian plums, and corn into glass jars. That all changed when freezers came in.

Every other Wednesday, she had an afternoon of playing bridge with her club. I don't remember anything special for Thursday or Friday, but Saturday was set aside for cleaning in the morning, and then in the afternoon, we had company. Our home in Lake Crystal was the special place for Mother's sisters or sister-in-laws to come. They would do their shopping in town and come over for coffee and cookies. I would take care of the little kids. Mother was the only sister who lived in town and was a great hostess.

In the days of our early childhood, mother was not very strong. My guess is she probably didn't have proper nutrition. Maybe it was her immune system. She was lucky to have had two healthy pregnancies, and births of Helen and me.

I know Mother wanted to be a good mother. I found a book about childcare that she had, which shows she wanted to know the newest thoughts on child rearing. She always wanted us to be clean and neat. Even washing our hair was not easy. She had to heat water for our bath. I have vivid memories of bending over the sink and having a vinegar rinse. Then having my hair curled with rags. Some of the time we had short hair and wore big hair bows or ribbons. Other time we had long curls. This was accomplished by wrapping a section of hair in a rag, and then it was tied up until it dried.

Mother used to dress Helen and I like two little dolls. She wanted us to be pretty and ladylike. It was important to her in the code of the day. She cared what other people thought. When we came home from school, she always had a clean apron on and would take time to talk with us. We always had cookies or fruit. Those few hours after school she was always available to us. Sometimes it meant sitting us down in front of the piano to practice.

When she made supper, our lighter meal of the day, we would set the table while she cooked. She wanted a clean tablecloth. We learned how to set the table properly. She liked having us with her when she did things and teaching us, not so much how to cook, but how to bake. She liked to make cookies of all kinds, decorated, piped, fried croquettes on a dipping mold with batter and with powdered sugar. There were some Scandinavian foods she liked to make. Some of her favorite foods for the grandchildren were beef stew, chicken hot dishes, wonderful breaded pork chops and lots of good things.

There was always more baking at Christmas. She made nice braided bread that we all loved with citron in it, decorated with powdered sugar and cherries, but not as a wreath shape that I can recall. Her favorite treat was a steamed cranberry pudding with a rich butter and cream sauce.

She got a lot of ideas from ladies magazines which were popular in those years. Things like ice cream houses and gingerbread houses would have come from *Ladies Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping* or other magazines like this. We had *Colliers'* magazines and *Readers*

Digest when that started. We always had books, not a lot of new ones but I remember Edgar Guest, the poet's book, which I still have.

During WWII, it was more difficult for everyone because of rationing. We had food stamps which limited the amount of sugar, butter and so on. There were lessons given on how to make nutritious meals.

There was a lot of sharing recipes between women. I have so many recipes with her name on them. They shared food in public more, like pot luck suppers in the basement of the church or the ice cream socials in the park where women all made pies. They did have recipe collections of the women in the church or another group she belonged to, Eastern Star. This was a big part of Mother's life and she was honored as a 50 year member. She participated in all the leadership roles. I was impressed with her formal long gowns she wore for their programs.

She took some leadership in Sunday School and the woman's society at church. She helped with the County Fair stall to raise money. She was a good worker. She had a good sense of humor that I see more as I have grown older. In the family, she was quite outward but in the community she seemed more inward. She didn't show her true self other than to her special friends.

One of the challenges for her being the last girl at the end of such a big family was that she had to live not only through her parents' early death, but through the deaths of all her siblings. She was very close to some of them. Cary was first, then Leonard died of cancer after his wife had died. We talked about it at different times. Emma, who had been a nurse and was diabetic. My Mother often went in the ambulance with her to Mankato. Mother kind of looked after her. Aunt Lena was almost 100 when she died, so mostly her family were long-lived. Mother lived until age 94.

Mother was not a smoker or drinker. She liked her coffee which she made by adding egg-shells to the water the way the Norwegians did. She did learn to drink a little alcohol with the Australians in the family later in life, so it showed she could change. I think she liked dancing but I didn't see it. She didn't make a huge fuss when we said we were going to move countries. So I would say she was adaptable and that was a good trait for living with my Dad. She was an optimistic, positive person.



She believed in country, church and family. She stood her ground for being a Democrat in a mainly Republican town and once in a while was willing to speak out about that. She lived out her values with practical support, such as the County Fair stall for the church where they raised money. They sold hamburgers and potato salad. I have a recipe for a gallon of potato salad and everyone in the church contributed what they could. They made pies, pickles and Dad would set up the grill for hotdogs and hamburgers. They had coffee with their pie or cake.

The basement of the church was where they gathered for socials, including our wedding reception. They had special events like the Mother and Daughter banquet, Father and Son banquet, church showers, baptisms and wedding receptions. She was glad when they remodeled the toilet area, not very well hidden from the room.

People liked to come together and bring food. There was always food served after funerals and food brought to your house after someone died. It's a tradition in Lake Crystal to be warm and supportive to someone who has a tragedy, whether it's a farmer whose arm has been cut off with machinery or hail damage or a death. Recently there was a little girl on kidney dialysis and the outpouring of help has been amazing.

In hard times, she would talk with her friend Anna Hartwig whom I called Mungy. She stayed with her during the high school years and I feel she was a surrogate mother. As well, she would have talked with her older sisters. She had friends from the bank who continued as a friendship network. We always had a telephone so she could call people.

I can remember her arguing with Dad and them having some disagreements so I imagine if she complained, it was to him. She didn't want us to know their hard times, kind of like hiding it. She wasn't one to look back and regret things. She made a comfortable life for us all.

She was looking forward to his retirement so they could go travelling to see more. They had been out West on some trips but they had the whole east coast to explore. They were in New England for the fall leaves one year but there was a lot more to discover. As a school-aged child, it was important for them to take us on trips. Most of my friends had not been to Canada, where we went to Thunder Bay or the Black Hills in South Dakota. They had stopped near Grand Rapids and taken us to a paper mill. It was such a good feeling to be able to report to my class on seeing something like that.

Mother was a very spiritual woman. She was really in touch with the God within her although she may not have expressed it in that way. There were little clippings she kept in her calendar in an envelope on the bottom of it with The Serenity Prayer and others. She had a devotional practice with thoughts for the day with a book called The Upper Room which I think was very helpful to her. Every month there was a different edition, perhaps

issued as a quarterly. She supported all the ministers. Some she liked better than others. They lived a few houses from the Methodist parsonage.



She loved being a grandmother and proudly wore her charm bracelet with the 10 grandchildren's names engraved on each heart. She wanted to be helpful to us when the children were born. She really was. She always came to be with me for a few days after I came home from the hospital. If I ever needed her, she was willing to come.

She loved making clothes and buying clothes. Those were easier for her to do financially than it was for us at the time. She made adorable cowboy shirts for the boys with embroidered designs on the yoke. She made coats for the girls. She bought little Carter soft knit dresses in soft pink and blue for the girls. It was a great help to us.

Both my Mother and Father volunteered. She worked with the Red Cross drives. They were team players without being the top leaders and willing to co-operate with others. Uncle Nolan was her favorite brother and she was the next younger. He lived in Lake Crystal when he moved off the farm. They would phone each other about answers to crossword puzzles, talk about Democratic politics and talk about Lake Crystal. Nolan's wife Marion was the dearest sister-in-law, so easy to be with.

If I were to list the traumatic events in her life it would be her mother's death, Dad losing his job at the bank, and having to leave a rented home. I think they knew that I wasn't going to live in Lake Crystal after I finished college. Whatever I did with Bill was pretty much OK. Her husband's death was probably the biggest shock. It took her quite a long time to recover, longer than we expected. They were a team, partners in work and life. And it was a surprise, out of the blue with no time to prepare. It would have been many family deaths that she endured in her life.

On the surface she was very brave and unwilling to spoil the adventure of us moving to Australia in 1969. It must have been very difficult for her to understand why we would do that and it was even harder for my sister and Bill's siblings to understand. They still all lived in Lake Crystal except Helen Ruth. When we made the decision to move, we got rid of some of our belongings. We had some sales. Before we had sales, I gave away a lot of things to my

friends and to family. They could not understand how we could give away wedding gifts and presents. Mother never complained about that to me.

She got a lot of satisfaction about the markers of family life – the births, baptisms, weddings and family parties. Coming to Australia with her sisters Clara and Alma was amazing. She turned 70 when she was in Adelaide. We had a birthday party for her at our home in Urrbrae. At the end of the day, we counted all the people who had signed the guest book and there were 70 guests which we thought was really neat. She loved the Australian people, their manners and their welcoming ways. Several of our friends entertained her specially. She felt a little awkward around some of those women who were very verbal.

Another highlight was her 80th birthday in Hawaii. We took a year to plan that with all of our family coming from the US and Australia and all of Helen's family. She said, "I was queen for the day!"

Mother loved to come to Tucson in the wintertime, spending four to six weeks with us, sitting in the sun and having a great time. When we moved to the town house, we realized how much easier it was for us. Mother was still living in her family home. We heard her saying how hard it was to find someone to pick up the falling branches or do repairs on the house. So we encouraged her to think about selling the house. She didn't really want to because that is where Dad and she had lived. Peter and Nancy came back from Sioux City to work at Crysteel, the equipment manufacturing plant Eldon Jones started in Lake Crystal. It seemed just perfect for her to be able to sell the family home to her grandson Peter and his wife Nancy.

That made it possible for her to move into an apartment house. She had a couple of different apartments. Leaving her home wasn't the happiest time for her. She was still able to walk to town. She fell and broke her collarbone or upper arm in the icy winter paths. In about her mid-80s, it became more noticeable that she was having difficulty remembering. She was still going to bridge club regularly, playing Scrabble, doing crossword puzzles.

It became more and more difficult for Helen to check on Mother, because my sister was the CEO of the company her husband had founded, Crysteel. I went once a year, sometimes twice a year, to stay with her. I encouraged the Joneses to take a vacation when I came as a respite. The Lake Crystal grandchildren and great-grandchildren also had a role in checking on her.

She wanted to continue with her checkbook even though Helen was beginning to see there were problems. We had someone come in to care for her once for a few days before I got there and she found that Mother was quite confused. Meals on Wheels were delivering meals to her and Mother loved to introduce me to those people as they came. She was proud of me. I came and sat and knitted while we talked. When I told her that I wanted her

to go to the Nursing Home, I said we had to go to the doctor first and she said, "OK." There was really no half-way place at the time as there is now in Lake Crystal.

Mother had been in the Nursing Home when she broke her hip once and had found it OK so I didn't think it would be so difficult. She went willingly. I didn't get to take her unfortunately. The first day she was very upset and went to the doors and set off the fire alarms trying to get out. She did settle down. The problem was that one week after she was there, she fell again and was put into a wheelchair and from that day remained in it for the rest of her life, with a belt around her. She fiddled with her hands mostly. She was a bit combative with the food serving staff. She didn't want to eat and they wanted her to. As far as I know that was the only outward sign of her Alzheimer's.

She continued to have her hair looking nice, which is something that was important to her. She threw away her false teeth and they couldn't find them so we had new ones made. She was unknowing at the end of her life, though she recognized both Bill and me on our last visit. We took her to the music room and sang and played for her but nothing registered and she used to love that before. We did play games with her rather late in her life but not at the Nursing Home. On the last day, she turned to Bill and said, "I'd like to introduce you to my daughter, Ann." That was wonderful to know she could still recognize us even though she didn't have it all right.

I was proud of my Mother and loved her dearly. I think of her often, how she supported and encouraged me always. She was a wonderful gift to me.

At the age of 94, with Alzheimer's, she was frail. She died in the Lake Crystal Nursing Home on January 15th 1995. Her heart gave out on a Sunday afternoon in the presence of Helen, my sister and her husband Eldon Jones. She had been a widow for 30 years. She is buried next to her beloved husband, Ray Leffler, in the beautiful cemetery in Lake Crystal.

Chapter 4 - My Grandparents - Nels and Anna Johnson



My mother knew her mother, but her father, Nels Johnson, had died when she was a child. I don't think she had any memory of him as I don't remember her talking about him. Her father, Nels, was born April 22, 1850 in Denmark.

Nels father's name was Jense Nels so being the son of Jense would have made his name Jensen before he came to this country. He was always Nels Johnson in Minnesota. He came to this country with two other brothers from Ellrup, Fjien, Denmark (near Odense). It is on the eastern end of Denmark near Odense. We toured through that area once.

My guess is these three brothers were looking for a better future. Nels was born in 1850 and came to America when he was about 19. His father was a cobbler and a wooden ware craftsman. He died on March 18, 1875. I'm sure my grandfather learned something of the same trade. I remember Mother saying he was a shoemaker, probably a boot maker when he came to Minnesota.

My great-grandmother's name was Nielsine and was married to her first cousin, Jens Nielsen and lived to the age of 94. They owned their own house, a typical thatched roof Danish country home. The homes are leased to citizens for life but reverted to the government on death.

The other brothers were Hans Jensen (Johnson) who became a stone cutter in Mankato. He owned part of a quarry there and lived in Kasota and had four children. Christ Jensen (Kristan Johnson) was a butcher at Heron Lake, Minnesota and had a big family. The three sisters who stayed in Denmark were Maren who left Denmark in 1899, migrated through Ellis Island after her husband died, and settled in Rapidan, Minnesota. Another sister, Anne, was unmarried. A third sister, Karen, stayed in Denmark, married a shoe maker and had a large family.

My grandfather Nels must have been an ambitious man. What pleases me, thinking about him, is that being Danish, he eventually settled on a farm where there were few other

Danish people. Everybody around his farm was Norwegian. A little farther away were the Welsh. We have a map of the Blue Earth County early settlements showing his little piece of land colored blue and all around him are pink for the Norwegians.

I have an idea that Nels really believed in education because the family, either through the mother or father, was exceptionally well-educated for a farm family of the times. I'm talking not just high school, but there were a lot of teachers in the family after going to Teacher's College.

I don't know about my grandmother, Anna's education. She married Nels on October 8, 1882 when she was 20 and he was 32. He already had two little girls from his first wife Julia who had died in childbirth. I remember the farm where she grew up. It wasn't too far from the school, so my guess is she did some schooling.

From the photo of Nels and Anna with Jense, Mary, Gena and Annie, it is clear he wore a beard. I don't know if he was tall or small. To me he looks like Abraham Lincoln. The house my grandparents built around 1890 was really a beautiful farm home. Again, we have a picture of it. That's how I've pieced together that he was ambitious and determined to have a good life. His oldest son went off to university Farm School. Most of them were farmers. Uncle Howard, the youngest son, is the only one I can think of who never did farming. He was a teacher and principal of a high school in Eveleth, Minnesota. He loved teaching.

Their farm was probably about 120 acres. On the farm, they had both crops and animals. They had chickens and pigs, cows and horses, sometimes sheep. I used to go to this home farm often with my parents when I was young to visit with my Uncle Nolan and family.

My grandmother Anna died while my mother was a senior in high school. They called into the school and asked my mother to call home immediately. I think she missed her graduation. Anna had been working outside and was cut, perhaps by barbed wire. An infection set in and she died within a couple of days from "blood poisoning". There were no antibiotics then. She died aged 57, the mother of 12 children.

Paradoxically, Nels also died aged 57 of pneumonia on May 25th 1907. Maybe in those days that was an average life span. Mother was an orphan by the time she was 18.

The early life of Anna is that she was born in Canada, en route to Minnesota. She had been born in Quebec on December 31st 1862. Her mother must have been pregnant through the Atlantic voyage from Norway. Anna had one brother who was born 6 years later. She had two sisters, two years after each other. I remember her youngest sister, Great Aunt Lena and I also remember her brother, Peder Olson. They lived in the general area of Butternut, Minnesota, near the Johnson farm.

You wonder if they would have brought some wealth with them from Norway, although that doesn't seem likely. We are told that a lot of the migrants were not poor people. They were given resources to come because there wasn't enough land to share at home. I don't think there was ever any return to Norway or Denmark. It was, as far as I know, a one way ticket.

Perhaps her parents were financially able to help with the building of that lovely home on the farm. They seemed to have some means. Their names were Ole Skibeveag Olson. Skibeveag is in the south of Norway where they lived. His wife was Guro Hadlesdater. Her name tells us she was the daughter of Hadle.

Pictures of the house at the home farm show beautiful shutters that were gone by my lifetime. That house had big closets which was unusual in those days. It was a two-story house. It had four or five bedrooms and felt quite spacious. We liked to enter by the kitchen, common in home farms. There was a hand pump on the kitchen counter to bring in the water from the windmill. They had a big pantry and cook stove heated by corn cobs and wood. In my day, Aunt Marion washed clothes in a washing machine on the side porch. The water was carried by the women and heated. So much heavy work in the daily routines.

Inside, to the left of the kitchen was a big living room but I think we tended to eat in the big kitchen. There also was a parlor which wasn't used very often. It was saved for 'best' company. That was typical of many homes. All the bedrooms but one was upstairs. There was not a bathroom as we know them. I can recall going outside to the two-seater outhouse!

These Protestant farm families typically had many children. Some people believe they wanted sons to help with the farm work, but I think it was because of the natural course of events. There weren't good contraceptives available.

Nels and Anna were active church people at the Lincoln Lutheran Church. I've seen the books for that church. I know that they learned English very soon after they came. My mother only knew a tiny bit of her mother's language, Norwegian. I think she could understand it. As a family, they wanted to be American.

The women did their own sewing. We do have some pictures of the Johnson family. They all looked so nice. I have the feeling they were not hardscrabble people. It was important to them to look nice. Mother had a lot of hand-me-downs from her older sisters. Aunt Gena became a dressmaker. She had experience making beautiful long dresses for herself and her sisters.

There was a lot of deep relationships and love within that family, especially between the sisters, and between the brothers. Mother's closest brother was Nolan and he was a favorite of hers. They made their own fun, but they also sang around the piano, so I think mother's interest in having us learn the piano was a carried down tradition.

Her mother used to bake bread. With all those older sisters, I'm sure they had goodies around. In later years, my mother liked to have a cookie with her coffee, even if it was breakfast time. She always had cookies on hand, which I guess is a carryover too, as I like it!

They had a grove of trees near the farmhouse which was very typical. It served as a playground for the children. There was also a sloping front yard where they played. They had animals as pets. They must have had books because everyone in that family enjoyed learning.

They wanted their children to do well. Mother's older brother would take several of the children 6 miles into town on a horse and buggy on Sunday night to a boarding house in Lake Crystal and picked them up on Friday night. They sent them in with food for the week and perhaps gave them a little money for their necessities. Then they went home for the weekend. They did that all through high school. Four years. That is the key to that family for me. My mother told Becky that she got very hungry by the end of the week because they tended to eat most of their food early in the week.

Mother's parents probably belonged to the Farm Bureau, which was primarily an association of farmers. It was both a social and educational organization. Speakers came in to talk about all topics, including politics. It included families, like an extended neighborhood, for once a month gatherings. That was a highlight of the month, other than going to church.

I do know that the oldest son was sent to Agricultural College at the University of Minnesota so that to me, says my grandfather was a progressive farmer. He was willing to learn new ways. My grandmother was probably overburdened with so many children. I've heard stories about a first cousin of my grandmother who visited from Wisconsin and would bring her big family with her and my grandmother would say "Oh dear!" It was just too many children and too many mouths to feed. Most summers they came for this family visit.

They were a happy, upbeat family. I can't think of a single one of them who was a downer or a negative person or unhappy. None of them were sickly, so they must have had a good start and happy family life.

For my mother, having older brothers and sisters was a good substitute for losing her parents. Nels had died when Anna was 45 and she lived another 12 years as a widow with several children still to care for until June 9, 1919. Mother also spoke about being close to her Aunt Lena and Gena, so there was an extended network of the older generation for her. Their names are repeated in their children.

None of my uncles were in the service during WWI, but my Aunt Emma was a nurse, and went overseas during the war. That's the most direct impact I know of. Farmers were valued in their role and expected to feed the troops and the country.

I can only guess my grandmother made the best of her situation. In some ways, she made an impact on all of her daughters because they didn't have big families. A number of them did not marry. Aunt Nora married and had no children. Aunt Lena had one child. Gena, Annie and my mother each had two children. Cary, Emma, Clara, Mary and Alma did not marry, so it's interesting to wonder if they had thought their mother was overworked or if somehow she may have encouraged their sense of independence. Jense had four children, Howard and Leonard three. Nolan had two. The brothers had more kids than their sisters!

The older children were the models. After teacher's college they taught, sometimes even in their home school. In those days, so few women were working outside the home, so that's a key to understanding this family, this desire for learning. Once they became teachers, they took care of themselves. Mother had three teachers in grade school who were her older sisters!

Aunt Cary went to a school near Bill's home at Four Corners, so they didn't feel they needed to teach in a home school. Cary became very fond of the Welsh people and they were very fond of her. Aunt Clara taught in Sioux City, Iowa. The parents didn't expect the kids to stay near home once they got jobs.

Aunt Emma was a nurse in Madelia after WWI, but mainly the girls became teachers. Aunt Alma was employed in business. My mother was a businesswoman, a bookkeeper, so she broke the tradition of teaching. One sister was a wonderful seamstress and ran a boarding house and made a living that way. They learned to adapt and do the best they could. They all had big gardens to keep food growing near them. The Depression didn't seem to make a difference to their actual living.

They had small Christmas celebrations. My mother loved Christmas and I think she had this as a child. There were summer festivals, from the Norwegian tradition.

This family is buried in Butternut Township, Lincoln Cemetery, about 8 miles northwest from Lake Crystal, where a school and church used to be. I've seen their graves about a mile from their farm. That's where they went to grade school. The family monument at the grave says Skibevaag, which was their name in Norway.

I think they would have been pretty satisfied because their children turned out so nice. There was quite a sense of humor in many of the children. I've felt badly that I didn't know either grandmother, and knew only one grandfather, but I had the benefit of so many uncles and aunts as a close part of my life.

The boarding home where my mother stayed when she went to high school was run by a woman called Anna Hartwig. I've forgotten her nationality. She was like a mother to my mother and a grandmother to me. She taught her new ways of doing things. When Mother and Dad rented their first house in Lake Crystal, it was "kitty-corner" from Anna Hartwig's.

Mother could run over there and chat. At an early age, I was running across the front porch and called her "Mungy" and from then on, that was her name. She lived out the latter part of her life in California. I had her address but I never saw her after she left Lake Crystal. She had that very big house where we played games like Dillinger in the closets, and getting away from the robbers. We have fond memories of that place, Helen and I.

Chapter 5 - My Childhood - 1926 - 1935

I was born on October 9, 1926 at home, which was the common practice in rural areas. Dr. Francher attended my birth. He was of French extraction. A lot of French settled in Minnesota as a result of the early fur traders. There was no hospital in Lake Crystal in my day, but a few years later, Helen was born in the new hospital in Dr. Francher's beautiful home.

Lake Crystal was the center for all the farmers who lived around. It had a population around 1000 in those days. Almost everyone in the town had an income based around the farming community. There was a bakery, three grocery stores, a mill, a post office – all those things that are so essential, especially if you didn't have a car.

Everybody came to town with their automobiles on Saturdays for shopping night. All the stores were open, including the grocery stores. The streets were filled with people, and it was a time to visit and exchange gossip. In my home, only two blocks from the downtown area, we always had open house. After the shopping was done, the aunts, uncles and cousins would come and visit. That was something we looked forward to as little girls. Sometimes it was Saturday afternoons too.

Sunday was a time for us to go visit them on their farms. It was quite a ritual. There were enough relatives so we would rotate three different homes. My Mother's brothers and sisters we saw frequently but my Dad's family were further flung.

I love my name. My maternal grandmother was Anna Johnson. I never knew her. My name Ann comes from her. My second name, Elizabeth comes from my Dad's mother. So I have a wonderful heritage in my name. I'm not sure if I was baptized at the Lake Crystal Methodist Church, or maybe at the parsonage where the minister lived. They went to this church because Dad had been German Lutheran and Mother, Norwegian Lutheran, so they compromised on becoming Methodists. There was a nice feeling about the ministers we had in those early years. It's worked out well for me, as I've been Methodist most of my life.

I remember one minister from the English tradition would get out on his soap box in the park corner and give fiery sermons on Saturday night when all the people were in town. We thought that was a little strange.

Dad took on the 'male' responsibilities in our family. He provided the income, took care of all the bills, the yard, the repairs and even did dishes. He never cooked inside although he liked to barbecue food in later years. He would give Mother a dollar or two if she needed something but basically he did the shopping. He called up at lunch to see what she wanted him to bring back from the store.

Mother's siblings were our extended family. We never had a Christmas without them. We were together at Aunt Gena's house in Mankato. We had a big Christmas celebration. One thing that was so special as a little girl was that Aunt Clara who lived in Sioux City, Iowa would come and she brought little Chinese place cards. They were small, about 2" in length, white with cut-out red Chinese intricate designs – so special.



I was lucky I had my sister Helen who was a built-in friend. We played together with dolls, baby carriage, wooden cupboard that Dad had made for us, play dishes – so a lot of it was mimicking what we saw our mother do. We didn't have child care. Mother was home. We were never left alone and I don't remember babysitters. My folks went out, but usually we went with them to everything. That's how people managed in those days.

Aunt Cary came and one year gave me a shiny red apple that had a child's gold ring in it. It probably wasn't really gold but the ring was pushed into the apple so it was partly hidden. We always had gifts from these aunts

who had jobs. We had really little income in the Depression years when I was growing up.

Our families were quite different in that we had older aunts with no children of their own who enjoyed giving us small gifts. Our grandfather came when Helen and I were young and brought us a beautiful green wicker doll buggy. I had a favorite big baby doll named Peggy. Helen and I took very good care of our dolls. We spent time playing with our dolls, or paper dolls with friends.

I think my parents really sacrificed for us to have these nice toys. We didn't have a lot but we had good things. We had Tinker Toys. As we got older, we had Chinese checkers, jacks, croquet and badminton in our yard, card games and our dolls always had beautiful clothing. My friend Gloria's mother liked to sew dresses and little felt shoes. It wasn't that we had a lot of toys compared with children today but we took care of what we had. We had doll dishes. I remember the little tin painted dishes and a table and cupboard made out of wood. My father hired somebody to make that for us.

Every year we got a couple two-inch-thick catalogs from Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward. We cut out faces of women and different clothes we liked and made our own paper dolls. Paper dolls are basically a cardboard figure and the clothes are put on by pressing tabs over the back to hold them. We moved them around and talked with them. We also had formal traditional paper doll books too, especially like the Dionne quintuplets who were born in Ontario in 1934. They were the first surviving quintuplets in the world. The government made them wards of the State and started commercial and tourism events to

see them. They really were taking advantage of that family. I think those girls grew up unhappy.

We liked to color sand. Dad would bring home a pail of white sand from a hill near Judson. It would be wet from the river banks. We would dry a small amount in the sun, then get dye from cooking beets, from the bluing for washing clothes or whatever we could think of from the yard and the house. We used popsicle sticks to stir so our hands were not full of dye. We made 3" by 3" patch, stir it to get the color even, dry it again on pages from a catalog and put it in pretty little bottles such as maraschino cherry jars.

Then we put it in our sand store. Mostly we sold tablespoons of sand in exchange for a button or two. Friends from town would come to our store to buy the little bottles of sand we created and wrapped in catalog pages. One of the favorite things to do was buy a pretty bottle, tip in one color in one corner and make layers like a rainbow – sand painting in layers. Helen and I had this nice little cupboard for our sand bottles and our friends liked to come to our sand store. It was really fun and I've been able to teach making colored sand bottles at some of our church events in Tucson.

We had a good start in terms of making our own play. We had one bike for two girls, and one sled. We both had roller skates which was very important. You wore your regular shoes and they clipped on. We had favorite places on the sidewalk to skate. Some had more lines and some had more hills. I liked the hills. We often had skinned knees from falling. We jumped rope and played jacks, a game with 10 little metal stars and a small ball. You toss them in the air, let them land and try to pick them up in various combinations while throwing the ball. It was good for coordination.

My dad was good about setting up the croquet set with hoops in the backyard. There were lots of kids in our neighborhood. At night we would run around and play games like Annie-Annie-Over, Red Rover, Tag, Kick the Can, Duck-Duck-Gray-Duck before it turned dark. Sometimes we played in the streets as there wasn't much traffic, or we played between the yards because there were no fences between them.

We always played cards, Old Maid if nothing else. The cards have pictures of men and women characters. The one who is left with the Old Maid loses. The phrase is of a spinster woman, perhaps 30 years old. Ha! We played marbles. We had neighbors with boys who had a place under their deck, and they would tease us with fake guns. We basically played with our own gender. I didn't have brothers either.

When I was 5, I started school with full days at Kindergarten. All of my first 12 years were in the same school but in different parts of it. I loved school. So much of the school year is in the winter so we had snow suits, jackets and kind of a big blousy bottom and boots, nothing handsome at all. Each room had their own cloak hall where the clothes could dry off and be ready for us at recess, or to go home at lunch. We played chalk board games especially if

there was a storm outside, and we would stay close until parents could rescue us. There were snow days too, where we didn't have school if there was too much snow.

We put our coats and boots on at lunch because we all went home for lunch. I walked about three blocks each way, and Mother put on a hot meal for us, with Dad home too. Mostly people shoveled their sidewalks, but if they didn't, we just stomped through it - no big deal.

I loved the school play equipment like teeter totter and slippery slides. It's all gone now because someone thought it was too dangerous. Giant strides was my favorite, with a center pole and a ring around the top that made a chain swing around, and the more motion you got, the more it swung out.

I always went to a co-ed school. Some of the same people I was in kindergarten with graduated from high school with me. There were 37 in our graduating class in 1944 and in 2012 there are still over 20 of us surviving in our mid-80s. I have been back for reunions to Lake Crystal many times, and keep in touch with many of my female graduates.

I can remember the names of my teachers, but few distinct things. I remember spelling the word 'department' in second grade! Such a long word! The weekly newspaper used to list the students who got 100 in their spelling tests, so that was an incentive.

I learned to ice skate when I was 7 or so in the limited 2-3 months when the lake froze over. Roller skating came first. My cousins gave me hand-me-down skates. My only new skates were black speed skates that Dad thought I should have.

I wasn't aware, and didn't make a lot of demands for things I would like. I think now that I didn't learn how to make choices very well. My sister seemed to be clearer about what she wanted, but I think this gave her more disappointments than I had when her expectations weren't fulfilled. One Christmas we got beautiful wool blankets – mine was lavender and hers was gold. Helen was sick because she wanted skis. I don't remember ever being disappointed to the point I would have talked about it. I had as nice clothes as anyone of my friends. We were all from middle class families, except a few girls who were the doctor's daughters. I didn't get many hand-me-downs. Helen and my cousins got them.

Mom made a lot of our clothes and later I learned to sew from patterns. We wore a lot of sweaters because of the cold. We mostly shopped in Mankato, 12 miles away with a big commercial area. We always wore dresses or knee length skirts, never jeans. When I did want to wear long pants for casual wear, they were plaid or colorful and went with my sweaters.

My closest friend was Gloria, a single daughter of camping/fishing friends of my folks, and we were in the same grade. Her mother used to make doll clothes and little boot shoes out of felt or soft leather. Helen had a smaller version of my doll. Lil Peterson loved to sew and

even made a dress for Becky out of handkerchiefs when she was a baby. Gloria lived a mile away. We grew apart in high school. She started dating in junior high. I was always a bit jealous of her – she started piano lessons before I did. When they needed a pianist at the Methodist Church, they asked Gloria even though her family weren't active in the church. She got paid, I think 50 cents a week, sometimes a dollar. How I wanted to do that job! I could play as well as she did, but not at the beginning when she got the job. What's interesting is she still plays today, in a lobby at a hospital. She had an unhappy marriage, and I wouldn't trade my life for hers at all. But it is funny how little things at the time seem important.

My sister Helen was my closest friend. We slept in the same double bed all those years. We laughed and had fun. She had friends her own age, both male and female. That was how her class divided. It depended on the mothers and how they entertained at parties. Helen's class happened to have several mothers of boys who invited girls to play with them. My class had twice as many girls as boys, and we didn't have that. Mostly my friends were geographically close, a gang of about 6 girls.

During the Depression years, we girls participated in several WPA (Works Progress Administration) programs financed by FDR, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (our President) and Congress to support artists. We learned to use wood burners to make pictures, and to tap dance. Older boys worked in the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps program to improve parks, build stone bridges over small streams. It was a great program to keep youth active in rather desperate times.

In terms of my musical development, I was helped by two piano teachers. I started with Mrs. Norman for about a year when I was 8, and then I went to Mrs. Stanley Jones, who taught everyone in town. She had graduated from MacPhail School of Music in Minneapolis, which is still going today. She was a Welsh lady, a singer and a pianist, and she became a favorite person to me. She wasn't a role model, but was so supportive of me.

Both Helen and I were kind of shy. We knew what our limits were – we were expected to be nice young girls and to make our parents proud, which I think we did. We often wore big hair bows. Mother liked us in plaid hair bows 4" wide with lots of curls. I curled my hair after shampooing with what we called rags. Take a section of long hair and wind it up in a rag, sleep on it, and in the morning it would be dry and curly. What a torture to sleep on all those lumpy rags! They were like long Goldilocks curls. We did that for a number of years in that decade.

We didn't have TV when I was growing up. We listened to the radio at night as a family. Sometimes it was on during the evening meal. Helen and I took turns washing and drying the dishes as part of the schedule. We weren't allowed into adult material. We had magazines appropriate for girls. We always had reading material at home, and I loved the

library. I read all the series books, like Nancy Drew the female detective. I liked biographies too.

The weekends were the time for extended family. Farmers came to town on Saturday afternoon or night for double feature cowboy movies. I only went to a few movies there. The first one I saw might have been Shirley Temple who was adorable. The farm relatives came in often with eggs from their chickens and they traded egg money for other things like sugar, butter and flour – basics they needed. They came over for coffee and cookies with Mother. My job was to babysit the cousins who were younger. Sometimes they were there at night but not as much.

My early school years coincided with the Depression. Helen and I had a saving bank in the image of Abraham Lincoln, a penny bank at home. That's how Mother explained there was a Depression. Our coins weren't worth anything. I felt so bad. Dad didn't have a job.

He and Mother had both worked at the bank, but no longer did after she was married. I might have been 4 when he lost his job – I honestly don't remember. We were fortunate to have relatives who brought food. Dad always did hard farm work when he lost his job. One week he earned \$5.

I think it was then he decided to be his own boss, and set up his insurance agency for farmers. I don't know how he did it, how he got the capital to start. He started slowly but by 1938 he bought our own home for \$2000 cash. My parents were careful how they spent their money. That house was a great investment.

Chapter 6 – My Teens - 1936 - 1945

The years between ages 10 to 20 were fun for me. I feel lucky because a lot of people can't look back on their high school teen years and be happy. For me, it was a wonderful period of learning more about myself, my family, a relationship with a male, and achievements and explorations of all kinds. I look at it as a precious time in my life.

It wasn't that we were wealthy but Dad did well eventually in his fledgling insurance business. When we got our car in 1938 or so, there was one Easter when my Mother was almost too embarrassed to go to church because we all had new coats. Somehow having new coats was very important. Usually we had coats handed down from older cousins or coats that Mother made. I can remember some beautiful coats I had. One we got on our trip to Canada – brown with an orange pattern and big buttons with an animal on it. Such a wonderful coat!

One Easter, my sister and I had twin camel-hair coats, double-breasted and Dad had a new Chevrolet. We had to drive the two blocks, and I remember being embarrassed because we had too much! It sounds like a lot when I think about it now.

When I was about 11, I started learning to sew on Mother's treadle sewing machine where you pumped the metal grate on the bottom with your feet before there were electric sewing machines. We had a pump organ too that we used our feet to make the sound. That organ came from the Sunday School at church, and was updated by the Joneses for their home, who later passed it on to their family.

In the summer of my 7th grade, we had a chance to pick strawberries at a farm. That was one of my first tastes of hard work. I made 2 cents a basket, and I never made a dollar a day. We went in the early mornings when the plants were wet. Dad got up early to take my friends and me. We only worked in the mornings, before it got hot. We had no cell phones. We just made plans for Dad to pick us up at noon.

Later I did baby-sitting and worked in a store. When I was older, I worked in a cannery and a frozen food factory. Minnesota was known for corn and peas, and we worked at the freezing factory 12 miles from home where they froze corn. Four friends and I also worked in Fairmont, forty miles from home, and stayed in an upstairs of the Methodist parsonage while the corn season was on. We worked a night shift and slept in the day. I would have been 16-17. We cooked a bit and made pretty good money. I would come home with \$100 after maybe 6 weeks work. My fingers were nimble, and I enjoyed packing work.

For a short time I worked in Blue Earth County with an unusual job at the canning factory. I had to hit a big chute with a hammer if the corn got stuck. I had to hit it hard which was not my idea of a great job! I didn't stay there long.

I made quite a lot of money detasseling corn. Corn is planted with a special seed with six rows of female seed and two rows of male. It hybridizes via detasseling the corn in those rows. We had to pull the tassel out of the top of each corn stalk, and drop it on the ground. I did that during two summers. Dad would take us out in the early morning when the smell of the dew in the cornfields was amazing. One year Helen and I contracted for seven acres. That meant we were responsible for the whole field. That was quite a challenge. We did it. Later the seed company used wagons carrying workers through the fields, but at my time we walked.

We all had to pay a bit of tax the next year for the little we earned. From high school on I paid for most of my clothing, so I had used the proceeds for that. I really loved sewing. I made pleated plaid skirts and wore cardigan sweaters. We didn't have jeans or uniforms. One day of the year we had Sadie Hawkins day where people wore baggy pants of some kind. In a reversal of normal behavior on that day, the girls are supposed to ask the guys if they want a date.



I don't think we ever had a vacation until after Dad's insurance business developed, unless it was going to see a relative. We had vacations later that were nice, especially with other families. I remember going to Lake Okoboji in Iowa as a child. We would also swim and be in the lake just outside our hometown at the Stony Point camp. We had annual trips to Canada, Iowa and South Dakota. Here we are in the Badlands, South Dakota.

I got active in Campfire, where we imagined we were Indian maidens. There were some older girls in our troop and they were our models. They were active, popular, singers, explorers. From ages 10 – 12, I loved the Campfire Girls camp(Camp Patterson) about 30 miles away. We had campfires where we sang and camped and made beaded headbands. The name I chose was Minnehaha and I made a blue headband with shapes like rivers and mountains. I gained confidence by trying to earn badges and beads. We got together weekly.

We also camped on Crystal Lake with the older girls. Campfire is a little like Girl Scouts, but it became co-ed not long after I was in it. My Aunt Marion, who had been a leader, gave me a beautiful long gown, in the style of Sioux Indians with beads for achievement which I later passed on to Marshada. Dave and Janie's family were all active in Campfire. By my junior year in high school, I was at the top rank for two areas – social leadership and music. The council leader in Mankato and I earned the top honor of Torch Bearer together. I remember Helen on flute and Gloria singing "Indian Love Call" at the presentation ceremony with the lights low, and I felt so happy. Campfire was a way for me to climb the ladder, so to speak, as I enjoyed finding out about things, and succeeding when I could.

Later we attended the Frontenac Lake church camp from ages 13 – 14, sponsored by the Methodist Church. We had classes and sing-alongs, chances to work and worship with other young people. At that time, I had a big crush on the Minister from our home church who was elegant, intelligent and more cultured than most people. He was the man who recommended me for a scholarship to go to college.

In the summer, there were band concerts in the town square. I played clarinet and Helen played flute. I was in the school band as 4th clarinet, and moved up over 6 years to the top as people graduated. We had white uniforms with saddle shoes, wore hats and capes with gold lining. In the summer, we would march in parades. I didn't like clarinet that much, and wasn't that good. Our instruments were chosen for us, and I picked up lessons at school from a volunteer. We rented our instruments for \$2.50 a year.

When I was about 15, I started going to events at school at night – ball games, concerts in Lake Crystal and other neighboring communities and so forth. Very often I went with Bill! I think I was in every organization that was possible for a Lake Crystal girl. My high school was not all work. In fact, it probably was not challenging enough. In my Senior year, I was editor of the school paper, a full page that appeared weekly in the town's newspaper.

I was in both class plays. Once I was a hillbilly with my front tooth blacked out, and I think I played a mother – silly plays, but every class did it. Latin was the only language which was a prerequisite for those of us going to college. There were secretarial courses like typing. There was shop for the guys and home economics for girls. Typing was compulsory. I loved my gym class. We did driver training at school. English and history were my favorite subjects, and I did like algebra. Geometry was no fun, and we only had physics every other year, so I missed it. We had a poor chemistry teacher, as a lot of capable people had gone to the war, so we had people teaching subjects they weren't qualified for. But along the way in my education, I had some excellent teachers.

One of my embarrassing moments was when I was graduating from High School. All the girls were wearing long white gowns. After I gave my speech for being the class Salutatorian; an usher came up with a bouquet of American Beauty roses for me. I had never seen that done anywhere. I came back to my seat without knowing who they were from. Finally I looked, and they were from my piano teacher, Mrs. Stanley Jones, who was very proud of me. I felt embarrassed, and felt awkward being singled out. But it was a lovely compliment. I took two more years of piano at Hamline, so I had about 10 years of piano study altogether.

I can also remember being attracted to a missionary, someone who had traveled outside the country. I suppose he had worked with the 'heathens'! Maybe he was the one who was telling about the song 'Bringing in the Sheaves' and as a young boy, he thought that meant 'bringing in Chinese'!

Starting my sophomore year, when I was 15, Bill was a year older, and he noticed me one day when I was playing at a Parent Teachers Association meeting. He doesn't know why he was there! I was on the stage alone, playing *Claire de Lune* by Debussy and was dressed in my neighbor Dora Pritchard's white formal with red polka dots. Bill said he saw me for the first time, even though I had been sitting in front of him in Latin class for several weeks.

We saw each other at school activities. He had a car which helped when living in the country. At night, after the milking was done, we would go on Saturday night dates – usually 8pm or later. Mostly we attended movies in Mankato with another couple. Double dating we called it. We always stopped to eat at our favorite spot, so I got home after midnight. It seemed to be OK, as long as I got up early on Sunday to go to church.



I remember driving through the Main Street of our small town, population 1200, and Bill had his arm around me. I remember saying, "Oh, no, we shouldn't be doing this if people can see us." It was all right to do it, as long as people couldn't see it! Bill told me, "It's not important what people think." That was a new thought for me, and it was difficult for me.

Friends Paul and Lillian double dated with us. Together we went with her parents to their holiday house cabin near Spicer on Green Lake where we had a few days on a beautiful lake. Her father was a Minister so my parents felt it would be OK. Bill was 16 going on 17, as the song says, in the summer of 1942. We were standing in a boat, trying to cast like our friends did in the next boat, fishing for bass. It was silly and dangerous to do because Bill couldn't swim. A cousin had drowned recently, and his family feared water.

We were standing up to cast and as he cast out the hook with three prongs, it got caught in the seat of my nice homemade pants! Really embarrassing. I couldn't sit, and he couldn't remove it from my pants! The boat was rocking with our laughter, and luckily we were close to shore. Of course we caught no fish, just each other. The Rev. Oppens also had an old pump organ, and we enjoyed singing and playing at that cabin. Bill had sung a lot of solos at church and school, and loved singing.

I have to laugh when I think about it now, but it was very important for me to be seen in a good light. I think as parents, we put a lot of pressure on our children. As I look back now, I took on an awfully lot of pressure to conform, and to be seen in a good light. If we were to start over again, I think we would be much less rigid. Sometimes I think we were rather flexible, but other times I honestly believe we were very fundamental, strict and close-minded, true Minnesotans.

In high school, we had a wonderful music teacher, Miss Rauk. She asked me to be the accompanist for the choirs, and some small groups. My friend Gloria had a lovely soprano voice, so she went into singing music. I loved being an accompanist. If I sang, I sang second soprano, but I wasn't really a natural singer. My mother sang and played a little, but my Dad had no background in music. I was much happier at the piano.

You can see I didn't have time to be bored. I read a lot, sewed, socialized. In terms of sport, at school I did tumbling for girls at 12-14, and could bend down to my head doing backbends. At home I played badminton and croquet in the back yard. I tried to play softball, and was a good runner, if I could ever hit the ball.

Helen and I lived more separate lives starting at about 12. We were living in the home our children knew as their grandparents home. We both practiced piano before dinner. We shared one bike, but I don't remember that as a problem. I do remember riding to Butternut on rough gravel country roads, 8 miles each way.

I was tall and skinny all through. I hated that word 'skinny'. The boys could really get my goat when they called me 'skinny'. There was some bullying in my school years. A boy called Buster loved to hide behind bushes and scare the girls. The teachers generally had so much control over the class and discipline. If they couldn't do it, you were sent down to I.R. Anderson, the Superintendent, who was tough. I cooked a penny in some acid in the chemistry lab one day. Boy was it stinky. I think that might have led to a trip to the Superintendent but I don't think that happened. We had a 'weak' chemistry teacher.

As a girl, growing up in the 1930s, it was important to please. These were the years of the Depression, and maybe that was the least we could do was to give joy and happiness by being good. I've never thought of that before! There was enough trial and tribulation for our parents without having bratty children.

We lived in an area where there were cultural expectations to conform. What other people thought was seen as important. We were beginning to resist that as we came to know each other in our high school days. Sometimes I was a bit of a rebel in the class, maybe it was 8th grade geography. I remember getting everyone to put a book on the top of their head so when our teacher came in to teach the class we all had good posture. "What's going on here?" They all fell off. I don't remember being punished, but I remember doing that.

Everything I learned about how to be a woman was through my mother's modeling. She was an encouraging person to me in everything. No matter what I chose to do, she supported me. I shared easily with her and don't remember strong disagreements. If I had them it was with Dad, and she would intervene, and be on my side. I told them I wanted to go to Chicago to a summer school course. She said yes. Helen remembers the word 'no' coming from both of our parents. I think if I hadn't done it as the older child, she wouldn't have been allowed her request.

My grade school years were shaped by the Depression, and in high school, WWII was on. Our family had ration books, like all the others, for sugar, butter, gasoline – items not available in plenty as they had been in the past, as they had to feed the troops overseas. We all saved our rubber bands, tin foil and were conscious of the War all the time in the daily newspapers. I made a scrap book of clippings from the War which I still have. When I look at it now I see that it doesn't identify the date or source. No one had taught us how to do research.

Boys from Lake Crystal were going to the war and dying. In Bill's class, the only child of the Presbyterian Minister became a flier and was killed almost immediately. That really hit us – someone our age. Students who were two or three years older got in on some of the action. Some of Bill's class didn't take their senior year, but got credit for it when they got back. The government wanted young boys to stay on the farm, to get the farm products for the troops, so they were exempt from the draft.

Bill's older brother Earl was running the farm after Newt, his brother was killed in the Pacific in an air crash, and that left Bill available to be drafted. He went into the Navy, and during that time I wrote to him almost every day. He later was able to write back to me when he ended up in a hospital with rheumatic fever, but that's a whole other story. There were two boys in my class who left early, choosing to join up.

Our family was patriotic and supportive of the President, Franklin Roosevelt. We would hang flags off our front porch on special days. I was out at my cousin Caryl's when Pearl Harbor was bombed on Dec. 7, 1941, and I remember how we all gathered around the radio to hear the news. I also remember when Roosevelt died as I was coming home from one of those factory jobs. We hitchhiked, two girls together. A soldier picked us up, and his car radio told us the solemn news. We each had a suitcase. He just let us off on the highway near home. Bill did not like the idea that we were doing this dangerous thing of hitchhiking.

The first time I remember Bill coming to our house was when he came dressed in a sheet! It was the Roman banquet for our Latin class. I thought it was very funny to have my beau come dressed in a sheet toga to call for me. That was unusual for southern Minnesota – we certainly didn't know much about the Ku Klux Klan! We didn't even know much about the Romans at the event. We reclined on the floor, tearing out hunks of baked bread from a loaf and ate vegetables like celery and carrots. Our teacher made Latin interesting.

We mostly got our news by radio or newspapers. We got the *Mankato Free Press* daily and the *Lake Crystal Tribune* weekly. We also got the Minneapolis papers. We had magazines and books. In our home, my mother, father and my sister often would sit around and listen to the radio. Every night we had our favorite shows –



the *Lux Theatre*, Monday night. *Fibber McGee and Molly* on Tuesday, *College of Musical Knowledge* – Wednesday and Thursday was *Major Bowes*. Friday was the *First Nighters*. Saturday was *Hit Parade* and Sunday was John Charles Thomas. Thomas L. Thomas hosted a lot of musical shows.

We loved quiz shows, like the *\$64,000 Question* and *Mr. IQ*. We sat around and listened to the radio with our shoes off, and I remember when the doorbell rang, we had to make a decision whether to put our shoes on. If it was going to be a relative or close friend, we could keep them off. But you know, a young man coming to call for the first time, I suppose we put our shoes on!

I grew up thinking I would be a teacher. I had lots of aunts as teachers. I felt I couldn't be a teacher because I hoped to be married out of college and have a family. In those days you couldn't be a teacher, if you were a wife and mother. You could not have two people in a family earning incomes in our days. The man was expected to 'bring home the bacon' and the wife was expected to stay at home. So I knew that whatever job I had, I would finish it when I started having children.

I wanted to do something that no one had ever heard of. I used to subscribe to magazines like *American Girl* and they used to feature articles on different occupations. The idea of being a landscape architect, or a dietician was beyond the scope of most of my friends, and therefore I thought it was something I could entertain as a career. I didn't know anyone who was a social worker other than Shirley Wegowski, daughter of one of our shopkeepers, and Jane Adams, whose autobiography I'd read. I thought I could do those things too.

I did not want to go to the Teachers College in Mankato 12 miles away. I wanted the experience of being further away. Instinctively, I wanted something different, so if I went to a big city, there would be lots of opportunities. I loved my family, but was getting restless, even though I probably didn't acknowledge that at the time. Most everybody in Lake Crystal who went on to College went to the Mankato Teachers College, which later became a university. I didn't want to be driving back and forth every day which is what that decision would have meant.



My Latin teacher had taken us to the Twin Cities (Minneapolis/ St. Paul) to see Macalester and Hamline, both with Protestant ties. Lois Davis and I both chose Hamline. The college was looking for bright students from rural areas to make a mix of students, so we didn't have to fight for a position, because most of the guys had gone to service. We had 20 men and 800 women in our school. For the first two years it was like a girl's college.

Hamline University was a Methodist College 100 miles away. Our Minister Carl Clark wrote me a reference to Hamline, the first

college in Minnesota, and sure enough, I got a scholarship, and I told my folks that is where I wanted to go. I felt that with a scholarship and me working, I could manage the costs, and my Dad said okay.

It was a feminine period of dressing, influenced by the glamorous female movie stars. I had some nice clothes from shops in Mankato, and some were real favorites. I wore gloves and made myself a suit, a green jacket and skirts before starting at Hamline.

Going to Hamline was just fun, fun, fun. I lived in a house with a housemother and eight girls. That's where I slept and studied, but I ate in Manor House, a big dormitory and a formal dining room. We griped a bit about our roommates, but it was interesting being teamed up with different girls. We developed new friendships. I wrote to my parents weekly, and they wrote back because telephones were expensive. I had two years in that house, and then moved to a dormitory in a suite with a bathroom between rooms.

We went home about once a month on the bus. Sometimes we had to stand. No more hitchhiking for me. We also had special bags out of metal, like a suitcase with a strap, that we could send our dirty laundry home through the post office. We didn't have Laundromats. I probably sent one every two weeks, and when I got it back I had cookies and other treats. Everybody did it. It might have cost \$1.50. It kept our mothers busy. She missed me and wanted to know everything I was doing, and I wrote her everything I was doing.

My studies were a mix of standard courses and electives. I opted out of an English course on the basis of a test, and instead took Chinese Literature from a professor who had lived there many years. Everyone took Western civilization. I still have those course notes which were fantastic. We had one course of comparative religions, and my best teacher was a Jewish Rabbi. They were progressive teachers. We also had speakers who reinforced this, such as civil rights speakers. We only had a few people of color on campus. We had very interesting plays, music recitals and concerts. I didn't take any art unfortunately. I had two years of piano lessons, and one class in music theory. Ernst Krenek was a composer in residence who was exploring 12-tone music.

I took Spanish at Hamline. The professor used the South American dialect. That cued up my interest in living outside the country. Bill and I picked out a couple countries we thought would be interesting to live in.

For extra-curricular activities, I was selected to be in a Literary Society, a fun group. We did not have sororities there. It was for girls who wanted to have a group together. I was with fun-loving girls who liked sports. We invited our parents to events like an ice-skating show. We had little ceremonies. I remember playing *Moonlight Sonata* at one! I made punch for the parties. There was no alcohol in my day. Girls didn't drink or smoke. We were pretty innocent young girls.

My sister Helen was at Hamline by then, and was in the sciences, rather than the arts. I had two role models at Hamline. Betty Bernhager was my social work teacher. I really liked her. She was a rough and tumble looking character who taught with a lot of experience. I wrote about her in my letters to Bill, and he picked up on that. She encouraged the men to get Masters Degrees for better opportunities. Theda Wolf taught psychology, and became a friend of mine. I could talk to them about my personal life.

They encouraged me to postpone marriage until I graduated, in case I had a baby, and couldn't finish my education. You need to know that we didn't have good birth control practices in those years. I am glad I waited. It was only one week after graduating that Bill and I got married, June 18, 1948.

I'll talk more about the last two years of my college experience in the next chapter, but I certainly enjoyed this part of my life.

Chapter 7 - My Twenties - 1946 - 1955

The decade of my twenties was wonderful for me because my dreams all came true. I was married to the person I wanted to marry, had a happy time with him from the very beginning, then our children were born – Becky in 1950, David in 1951, Ned in 1953, Jim in 1954 and Suzanne in 1955.



I chose my major, social work, in the last two years of college. I liked my courses, exploring group work and working and living in a Settlement House. I worked in a school and was excited when I wrote and talked with Bill. I think it opened a door for him when he started at Macalester. I encouraged him to get a Master's Degree as I knew I wasn't going to get one, but was encouraged by Betty Bernhagen to do that.

I was basically healthy but got sore throats if I was overtired. I took individual sports and group sports and was exposed to skiing, archery and field hockey. You couldn't graduate from Hamline without knowing how to swim which I thought was really smart in a State with over 10,000 lakes.

I had a driver's license in those years but didn't drive because my Dad was so willing to take us. Very few people had a car on campus. We used streetcars (trams) to get around.

I think I wanted to save Dad money because he was going to pay for a big wedding so I moved off campus. Even with the scholarship, it cost my Dad \$3,000, not including the scholarship I was given for my four years tuition and living expenses which included living in the dormitories except the last term when I was at a Settlement House. I did volunteer work during the semester, teaching piano and doing group work in both poor and rich areas as a research project. I graduated Magna Cum Laude (with honors) after four years at Hamline.

I ran a playground program back in Lake Crystal one summer and went to a course in Chicago one summer. When I went to school, we were really encouraged to be patriotic. I can't believe there are people who don't vote. It is so ingrained in me to vote. At the age of 10, I began wearing campaign buttons for my parent's preferred party, the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party and we were allowed to wear them to class. One of my friends, Norman Lundy, was a staunch Republican. I learned a bit of my own talking with him. Later when I became a social worker, the Democrats were the obvious party for us, as they were concerned with the underdog, like people in poverty and people with disabilities that were a natural fit for us.

Going back to high school days, I had a lot of dates with Bill. I think he knew very early he wanted to marry me. I thought he was very special, at least in our community he was the most special person. But somehow I didn't really want to commit until I had more experience in the world. There was no rush really but I thought I might meet someone else. My mother had married someone from another state and I thought that was really wonderful. Now our children have experience marrying people from other countries. In my classes I learned about the stability of marrying from similar neighborhoods and social classes and now look how all of that has changed for our family and many others.

We continued our dating after he got back from the Navy and was a student at Macalester. Bill wrote me 250-300 letters during that time. He called when he could afford it too.

Our two colleges were about 2 miles apart on the streetcar. We went to his concerts and my Literary Society events. We went to dances, basketball games, concerts and plays at both schools. I dressed in long dresses for the dinner dances and wore a corsage Bill gave me. I continued to make my own clothes when I was back home in Lake Crystal.

We became engaged on January 11th 1948 under the bell tower at Macalester College. I wasn't surprised but he had a ring in a box for me. By that time I knew I wanted to marry Bill. Actually I always knew he was the one. I spent a lot of time with him, talking and even explored going to South America together. We had big dreams for the future. We wanted a family and talked about having 12 children until we realized that not many couples were doing that! We also had our music to share. The first year of our married life we bought an 800 pound upright piano that we moved over and over again.

I had a wedding shower with my college friends before we left school. I also had a shower at the Church before the wedding, which was very common, with relatives and friends of mine and mother's. For the wedding, I wanted both our mothers in formal dress. Nain made hers with a nice print and followed the 'rule' that the groom's mother should wear beige! My mother made hers, both bridesmaid dresses and my wedding dress. Dad's role was to pay for the wedding. Bill's sister Dorothy hosted a wedding dinner at her home the night before the wedding.



We married on June 18, 1948 and our family found out we had a date set when Bill was interviewed when his Macalester barbershop quartet sang on the radio. It was totally unexpected to make such an announcement. We were glad the regular minister of our church would be away on that date which meant we could invite the Welsh pastor, Rev. Owen, who had officiated at the weddings of all the other Roberts siblings. I loved the way he said, Ann Elizabeth. We married about a week after I graduated from Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. We

were ready for marriage. It was hard to wait. We both had values of chastity which was the commonly accepted way to go into marriage. That's why people married early I believe. I was 21 years old and Bill was about 22. We had dated for years.

We had about 150 people at our wedding with beautiful cut flowers from my parent's yard that were white. We filled the Lake Crystal Methodist Church with flowers. It was all very sensual. Two of my best friends played the piano and sang. I planned a lot with Mother and picked out fabric for our two sisters both named Helen who were my bridesmaids. Mother didn't think they were suitable and used the same color yellow and green but in a different fabric. Bill had his brother Earl and a college roommate as his best men. He wore elevator shoes to be as tall as I was. Mother made my beautiful dress. I realized later that there was only one pattern available for a wedding dress and my Minnesota friends had the same pattern. Mother added lace and made covered buttons all down the back. I saved my wedding dress. Funnily enough, for our 60th wedding anniversary, I fit into that dress and could do so even more easily today. It didn't have a train but I borrowed a veil. I wore a blue garter.

Both families were happy for the match. More people from the extended family came for our wedding than any other cousin. Mother had all of her living sisters from Iowa, North Dakota and Minnesota. They all wore hats to dress up. Bill's relatives came from a distance too. We had a beautiful reception table with two aunties as hostesses. They served freshly made angel food cake with ice cream in the church basement. Bill's only niece, Kathleen, carried a basket of wrapped fruit cake for our guests at the reception.

We carried all our presents that we had opened at Mother and Dad's to the church basement so people could see the gifts. I still have many of these gifts, especially our bright yellow Franciscan pottery dishes. Girls in college at that time chose their silver pattern so we got many pieces of that and other serving pieces that I've held onto. I never had a hope chest but my Mother did. Some of my aunties made fancy crocheted lace which they sewed to the top of sheets for us. I felt very special.

Bill's sister Dorothy loaned us her car for our honeymoon. It was a secret and we had to do a lot of pretending because it was the custom to keep the bride away from the groom, so we pretended to use Dad's car. They threw rice as we left the church and it began to sprinkle. I have told many others, "Happy is the bride on whom the rain falls." I had going away clothes – a short sleeve navy blue suit and a special corsage.

We left the reception as early as we could and drove nearly 100 miles to White Pine Inn, a lovely hotel where we had been for a dinner dance earlier. We were so glad we had this booked as we were exhausted after all those activities. I feel like I talked the whole way to keep Bill awake. The next day we went to a lake in Northern Minnesota and fortunately it rained for 4 days, giving us time together indoors as honeymooners! We went back to

Macalester and moved into a prefab married students housing on Snelling which Bill had booked a few years ahead. It was a grey prefab, small but just fine.

We bought a sewing machine set in a wooden desk with our wedding money so I was able to make curtains, covered a studio bed and made a bolster for our sofa. We painted cheap furniture. We were very happy.

After our honeymoon, my professional work involved placing children in foster homes for Ramsey County Child Welfare. It was kind of a choice job coming out of college. I did it for a year and a half until Becky was born. The children in my program had already been removed from their homes so I didn't work with dysfunctional families. I saw the children in their placement homes. There was no encouragement for them to go back to their families as happened years later. It was surprising to learn how little some people know about raising children. Foster homes in Minnesota generally were good. Selection was done by another department. I worked across the desk from a nice black American guy and we had a chance to go into a wide variety of homes. We tried to keep children of one family together. I had a lot of supervision and used the streetcar to get to homes and when I think of all the time taken to get there it is amazing.



We went to Seattle on the train a year after I had been working and Bill graduated from Macalester. We spent time with Bill's sister who lived there, Helen Ruth and her husband Bud. We went to the Butchart Gardens in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada and celebrated Bill's birthday on Mount Rainier in Washington state. It was at that time I found out I was pregnant. I didn't know much about pregnancy. Helen and Bud took us to a fish restaurant and everyone ordered fish but I couldn't stand the odor so ordered a toasted cheese sandwich. That confirmed my suspicions.

We took the train back to the Twin Cities and found housing in a Jewish ghetto area. There was a housing shortage after the War. Becky was born when we lived in this house on Milton Street, but I'll come back to the births later. We were there for six months until Bill got into the University of Minnesota campus housing for married students. Bill was doing his Masters of Social Work--a two year graduate course there. We lived in a rounded metal Quonset hut after a month or two in other trailer homes.

We were all in the same boat with young families and few had cars. We finally bought an old Oldsmobile from a cousin after Becky was born. We wanted to take Becky to Lake Crystal to show her off. She was a beauty.

I had a good pregnancy – they all were. I wasn't a drinker of alcohol and I didn't smoke. All the babies it seemed to me were overdue. We didn't have a car so that was scary for the first two births. Our friends who planned to take me to the hospital called every night for weeks. Becky was born on a cold Sunday night, in March 1950, after 11pm. For the baby's birth, we chose a specialist as it was all new to us. I don't think he got there because when I got up the next day the afterbirth fell out. That tells me that an intern or nurse delivered her. I never talked to the obstetrician about that. We were not encouraged to share our honest feelings with our doctors. They were our "gods".

Becky was our smallest baby, 6 pounds 13 ounces. I breastfed all the babies, but just to get them started so it wasn't very long. I named our firstborn Rebecca Ann. Rebecca was suggested by my mother, a name in the Bible and it would be looked on favorably. When she went to school, there were two Rebeccas in the class and I think she wanted to be a Becky. All of our children have a middle name with a special meaning. Hers is Ann, my name.



We didn't use breastfeeding as a contraceptive but I'm sure it helped. At about three months we started feeding Becky solids. We bought canned baby food. We tended to give cereal before bed so the babies would sleep longer. No one had pacifiers (dummies). We didn't have our own blenders or microwaves or disposable diapers (nappies). After we had three children, we only

needed one nightie for each child. I washed clothes each morning and dried them in my dryer during the day. We decided early to get a dryer because we lived in such cold country.

David came next. Bill's paternal grandfather's name was David (Dave). His middle name was Raymond, after my father. He was born in July 1951 in a training hospital in Minneapolis for male obstetricians. The university women liked to go there. I had been exposed to the childbirth theories of Grantly Dick-Read. I was in favor of that because I wanted to experience childbirth naturally. I got Dr. Senor Abularoti from Argentina. David's delivery doctor was so great. The delivery rooms were occupied. I asked to watch the baby's birth so



he found a mirror. It was a joyous experience as a woman.



After Bill graduated, he got work in 1952 and we moved to Austin where Ned was born in January 1953. Dave and Becky were with my parents during this time. We gave him Austin for his middle name for our city and Ned was just a unique name. If he had been a girl, it was going to be Molly. I was unsure what to do with two boys as I didn't even have

brothers. In Austin, we rented a couple of different houses.

Austin was fun for us as adults. We had a group of people we really enjoyed. Monday nights in the summer we went to band rehearsal while a colleague from Bill's work babysat. Bill played the bass drum and I played clarinet in concerts outdoors. We earned \$2 each for the rehearsals and the concert. That made a difference in our income as Bill was making about \$250 a month. As we moved, it was an opportunity for advancement, both in responsibility and in income.

In 1952, the polio scare had the streets being sprayed. We left Becky with her grandparents to go to a cabin with our friends, the Nordin in northern Minnesota. After a few days they called to ask us to come back because they were concerned when she had a cold that it might turn into polio. Our favorite baby furniture was called a Teeter Babe. All the children got strong legs and backs from jumping. Ned would sit in this canvas seat on a spring set on the floor. He would laugh and laugh at the older kids on his level. Whatever they were doing, he thought it was funny. It was easy entertainment.

Bill was almost ready to finish his three-year commitment for his college tuition by working for the Government in a rural community. We moved to St Cloud, a bit further north. This is where Jim and Suzanne were born. James William was born in April 1954, known as Jim or Jimmy and had his Dad's first name as his middle name. I was supposed to go to a meeting that night. I called the girls about 8:30pm and said "I'm sorry I'm late but I'm in the hospital because a son was born tonight". They thought it was an April Fools' joke.

Grandma came up right away to help out. She and my Dad were great helpers. For the fifth baby, she predicted it would be a girl with red hair and sure enough, we got Suzanne in June 1955. Her middle name is Elizabeth, my middle name. So we had girls on the ends of the family spectrum and they both have one of my names.

We bought our first house there in 1954 and lived in it four years. We found out later it was the oldest house in St Cloud (1871) with a big yard for the kids to play in. This red brick house was like a gingerbread house with a gable and scallops. The house was cold and by adding a render which Bill painted white it made it warmer. The kids were playing on the floor all the time. We had bats every once in a while and one time, a huge bumblebee.



We loved it there. It was close to the Laboratory School of the University where Becky and David started school and had excellent teachers. It was on the banks of the Mississippi River at its beginning which was still quite a sizeable river. The older children walked six blocks to

school by themselves through a park. We got our first black and white TV at that home after Jim was born.

Our peers were having big families too. For the men coming back from the War home and family were very special. Our personal friends, all college graduates, had four, five, up to seven children. We were told that we were the educated class and that we should be having children. Dr. Spock's theories about child-rearing were favored at that time. Bill learned about modern parenting principles in his courses. I had lots of child development theory and together, we believed in lots of love. We did not believe in spanking. We believed in setting and enforcing limits. We had very few problems with this method. Our children were cooperative, loved each other and played well together.



You start early with setting limits. For instance, if you have a big outdoor play space with no fences as is true in Minnesota, the kids knew they could go to that corner but not beyond. It was based on mutual responsibility and trust and I started it early. Distraction was one of my main techniques with lots of ideas for what to do to change the dynamic of problem behavior. Games, crafts, reading, singing and dancing were all available. I took a nap when I could to keep my energy up when the children were napping at the same time. We didn't have child care but we had college girls living in our house. We hired them one at a time to make meals, clean up or to read to the children. Bill and I both read to them a lot. The college girls were able to bring books home from the University library. We had our own books as well. I connected with one of them in recent years and she could identify each child's personality after all this time. It was quite amazing.

We walked to the Presbyterian Church in St Cloud and we liked the people and the Minister. I sang in the choir along with Bill for a short time. I sewed clothes for the children and dressed them for church but stayed home with Sue and Jim often. Jim got chickenpox the day he was baptized!

With all the young children, I gave up most of my adult activities but was still in the League of Women Voters and church circle, both monthly meetings at night, as I needed to involve myself in something outside of home. I got so I didn't know if I could talk with adults. So much of my life was watching the children grow, which was very interesting and I loved it. It was special. Caring for the whole family, I gave up a lot but I received more. We had wonderful neighbor friends, the Andersons and kept up with other friends from college who had a large family, the Leafs.

Bill's siblings had very few children. Dorothy had Kathleen – but she was the only other one of the five who did have a child. They were pretty surprised at our big family and I didn't have much support from them. My Dad was really concerned our fast-growing family was too



hard on my health. It's like I couldn't help getting pregnant even though I had a fitted diaphragm. We had all five children before I was 30. Once we knew we were moving to Phoenix we found out that a vasectomy would be available to Bill there as that was not the case in St. Cloud, Minnesota at that time.

In some ways, it was an advantage for the births to be close together so we could travel and have various activities as a family group. No one was going off to do different things because of their age. The children all seemed like early developers to us. We also played a lot of games. For instance, I would play the piano and stop unexpectedly. The kids would either freeze or sit down. The last to sit down was 'it' which wasn't really fair to Sue as the youngest.

The year after Sue was born I had an emergency hernia operation caused, I imagine, from picking up and carrying children too much. We had been to an ice cream social the night before but I didn't sleep. Bill took me to the doctor and by noon I was having surgery. My folks came up right away and the neighbors helped too.

When in St. Cloud, we went on at least two holidays. We went to a church camp when Sue was almost two. The same summer we drove to Lake Superior which was very cold for swimming but fun for the kids to explore. We had a swing set out in the backyard. Becky was like a little monkey and all the kids tried to copy her. She fell on her head a few times! Some Swedish neighbors called to report this to me. They loved to watch the children play but were worried.

In the winter days indoors, it was more difficult where there was often heavy snow. Indoors, the children had a lot of building and construction toys, like Lincoln Logs, an early Lego, Erector set, little soldiers, blocks. They were very good at making their own fun. We had a fabric house that fit over a card table and played house. The girls had dolls. They all played dress-up clothes with hand-me-downs and I sewed costumes. It was a creative time. I kept milk bottle tops and other recycling materials for collages, Christmas decorations or other

play. The babies had pots and pans and moved Cheerios around on the high chair tray. We had lots of stuffed animals. We didn't buy toys but people gave us toys.

Every Tuesday night Bill had his barbershop quartet around to sing. He looks back at the St. Cloud years and wonders that he thought himself a good father. In addition to this, he was gone three nights a week – to bowling with people from work, sang in the choir with weekly rehearsals and helped run a Scout troop at the church. He was being a good community person. He came home for supper and I got a chance to talk with him. He called every noon which I looked forward to.

I didn't have radio on during the day. My ears needed to be ready in case anyone was in trouble or in need. I was the monitor and supervisor. One winter they all had what we call 'red measles', the hard measles. We always planned to go to Lake Crystal for Thanksgiving or Christmas but not that year. After the measles, David got pneumonia and was so pale. That was the winter that Bill got sick. Becky had two operations, a mastoid ear operation and both she and Dave had their tonsils out. They had inoculations but also got chickenpox and mumps. Colds and sore throats were a problem too.

It was hard to get fresh food in the winter in those days. I could get food delivered from the neighborhood store after I called in an order. We could get 4 loaves of bread a week from Cox Bakery which Bill picked up. We drank a lot of milk which was delivered to the front door of our house. We had frozen orange juice and I gave the kids cod liver oil to improve their health.

My hobby was sewing even though there was precious little spare time. I sewed a fur coat by hand for Becky from a hand-me-down fur. I made vests, bow ties and suits for the boys for Sunday School. I loved making mother-daughter outfits too. Later I dressed Sue and Becky in matching outfits.



There were some scary times, especially a huge hail storm when 17 windows were broken in our house and our car was dented. I had all the children curled up around me on a sofa in one place because the windows were breaking with rain pouring in. We had college students downstairs and an old man, Fred, living upstairs. There was a doctor's office on the side of the house and we had a refugee family living there. I couldn't relate well to them. When there was a bad storm, those rooms got damaged so they left. We demolished those add-on rooms after that, which had originally been doctor's rooms.

I had taken a college course called family finance. From the first week of our marriage, we kept a budget. We decided together what we could afford to buy or to pay. When Bill moved from the county to the federal system his pay went up. Living in northern Minnesota imposed a lot of extra costs to keep warm, the heating costs, snow suits and snow boots. To heat the house we had a gas furnace in the basement heating steam radiators upstairs. We planned together for most everything.



The house was my responsibility. In St Cloud I had a farm woman who was strong and helped me weekly. She cleaned the floor for the children to play on. I did all the cooking and baking, except for the help from the children. I enjoyed making cookies, rolls, birthday cakes, pies. I made a lot of stews and casseroles. We had fun ways to entice the children to eat, like

putting potatoes through a ricer, coloring potato soup and later putting their initials on pancakes. We mainly used canned food. Frozen food wasn't available except in meat lockers. In season, our family bought berries and other fresh food.

I think I was more the controller but there were certain things Bill would not abide, like throwing food. If someone was too noisy or upset in the car, he would pull over and stop on the side of the road. It may have been my idea but he did it and it really worked. I had subscriptions to a couple of parenting magazines that gave me ideas. We had children's magazines and we walked the few blocks to the public library.

Our friends marveled at me managing that troop of active, energetic, bright kids. They thought I was the cat's meow because they were struggling with two or three. I felt I was doing a good job. I knew the basics of what was needed. I kept the babies close to me as they slept in a buggy, I could move around the home as needed.

The hardest times were when Bill was away and I was entirely responsible. Any time children were sick it was difficult. I took a day at a time and plugged on. I had a few good friends I could call or who would come over. I always liked my neighbors. We could share recipes and help each other. I remember one of our friends bringing over our first pizza from a shop! Thank goodness for my folks who often drove the 150 miles to be with us. The hardest time was feeling stuck at home without adult company and they were wonderful. It was a handful when we went to their house in Lake Crystal but they seemed to always enjoy their grandchildren. They must have said 'whew' when we left!

Watching and encouraging your children to grow is such an incredibly wonderful experience. My pleasure was increased by the interactions I witnessed among the children over time. There was rarely a dull day. I learned so much about life through our children. They were truly blessings from God.



Chapter 8 - My Thirties - 1956 - 1965

In the decade of my thirties, we lived in three different states. I only remember making one unilateral decision in my life, and we kind of laugh about it – when a doctor told me, “This Minnesota climate isn’t good for your family.” I went home and said to Bill, “We’re moving to Phoenix, Arizona.”

Bill was back to work but had spent a few months away from us during that winter with a recurrence of his rheumatic fever. We knew there was a Veteran’s hospital in Phoenix and the Veterans Hospital in St Cloud made it possible for him to move jobs within the organization. The only thing was that he went from a psychiatric to a medical hospital and the setting was not as stimulating for him.

For the family and for me, it was a wonderful move. We packed up everybody and drove the 1800 miles, a long way from our family for those days. Our car was a station wagon with no seat belts. We stayed in motels along the way and we got there in August 1956. The boys loved the small swimming pool at the motel. We were only at the motel for a week.

In that time we found a new ranch-style brick house at 1828 Marshall Street in a good school district, Madison 1, with advice from Bill’s boss-to-be. Our house was in a former orange grove. We moved in right away and the St. Cloud house was sold. We made a couple of thousand dollars on that sale. We had life insurance after all the



children were born as Bill wasn’t in the most excellent health. In Phoenix he improved a lot when he was on penicillin all the time, not available before then.

I loved the sun. I could rest in a hammock. The children played around the orange trees, front and back and every couple of weeks, we irrigated the trees with flooding, so we had more oranges than we knew what to do with from the 14 trees! We felt very fortunate. We bought a new piano and had very little furniture other than old Navy triple bunks for the boys and twin beds for the girls. We lived simply with a picnic table in our kitchen to eat from. We were happy there. There were lots of children in the neighborhood to play and walk to school with. It was such a liberation for me to say, “OK kids, you can go outside,” without having to dress children in snow clothes, long stockings and boots. It was a corner

house so the kids played on both sides of the property and used the shade-covered concrete driveway for their trikes, playing jacks and ball games. Becky used to roller skate there. On the patio, we had a washing machine in a covered building outside the kitchen door.

The school was great. Becky started in second grade, Dave in first and Ned in beginning first, their name for kindergarten. When we got to Cherokee later, the boys found school boring as they had been accelerated, and Becky walked to the junior high for an advanced reading class because she was a year ahead. She and David both qualified for a speed reading course.



We made friends and with our Jewish friends, joined the Jewish Community Center. I made little bathing suits out of seersucker with little fish so all I had to do was count off 5 little fish in matching suits. I got in the water too which made me very happy, the sun and water both. We took the family to South Mountain to play and I packed peanut butter sandwiches and oranges and that was Sunday lunch. We had two pets - a cat and some turtles. I remember taking them with us when we went on a trip to Lake Crystal, Minnesota. They were under my feet the whole trip!

A lot of things were different from Minnesota culturally in Phoenix. The newspapers were into exposes and gossip that we didn't like but we still bought the paper. We felt Arizona was behind in terms of roads and other infrastructure – it only became a state in 1912. Phoenix only had a quarter of its current population at 250,000. We went to rodeo themed parks. The boys had cowboy shirts Grandma made with embroidered yokes. Our neighbor hand-tooled some leather holsters for the boys so we got them toy guns, something we didn't like doing. The summer temperatures on David's July birthday went up to 116 degrees. That was the hottest day I remember. Mostly we were comfortable indoors with an effective air-conditioner.

People coming from the north and the east brought their favorite plants, and allergies really increased. Our water was cheaper in Arizona than Minnesota. Canals followed the paths of Native American paths. There wasn't much concern about the environmental consequences.

I was able to do my own grocery shopping in Phoenix, as I had the car several days a week. Bill carpooled. Families didn't have two cars in those days. We belonged to an early Costco called Fed Mart. We got some of our clothes and our camping equipment there. The supermarket was quite close to home.

It was a blessing to have time with Jim and Suzanne at home while the others were at school. Everyone could read early and we had a lot of books. There weren't such things as playgroups so we were basically at home. I felt I had my own playgroup in the family.

We had supper about 5:30 after Bill came home. Our neighbors were important to us and we enjoyed getting together when the night weather cooled off. I started to entertain a bit with more freedom and time to make special foods. I always liked to be there when the kids came home from school to hear about the day. We didn't have much contact with teachers as they do nowadays.



We just trusted the system. We didn't have problems. The kids weren't absentees because all of them were healthy during that period. Being outside in the sun made the difference I think.

Phoenix was a whole other world from St. Cloud, a very Catholic town. The children went to Sunday School at the Methodist Church about 2 miles from our home. Bill sang in the choir and was the president for a while.

We took the family to drive-in family movies during that time and now they are just about gone. They loved the Disney Shaggy Dog movie. We had a TV but didn't watch too much except a daily children's show. There was the historic Sputnik moon landing in 1957 which captivated the imaginations of the older children. I very much enjoyed Perry Mason, a weekly detective series.

One Christmas, Bill's mother came with her daughter Dorothy and her husband Don, and their daughter Kathleen, and we had our Christmas dinner out of doors.



I missed my family but we didn't use the phone because it was expensive. I wrote weekly letters to Nain and Mother. My parents came

and stayed with us for a week or two after they finished their work of tax season in March.



Bill's sister Helen Ruth came once with her husband Bud but found it too hot for her fair skin. She lived in Seattle and came to visit us in Adelaide and in Hawaii later. Lake Crystal people who were friends of our families would come to visit for a cup of coffee. We still received the *Lake Crystal Tribune* newspaper via mail to keep in touch with news there.

Phoenix was a joyful place for us. Bill and I sang in a madrigal group with our Jewish friends. Bill was home more than in St. Cloud. There was a difference for us because we could be outside for more of the day instead of being forced to stay in, and as a family we enjoyed swimming and other activities at night. We had birthday parties out of doors. We made a great party for Ned when he was 6 with a popcorn ball snowman and lots of games. No one was in organized sport. It was just play, play, play. Competition hadn't entered their lives.



The children did a lot of outside play with talking, costumes and fantasy – cowboy and Indians, doctors and nurses, Robin Hood and his merry men. It was a delight to watch the interactions. I can't imagine having an only child. We gave our children opportunities to choose. I was visiting a doctor when his child phoned and asked if he could bring home ice cream. The doctor asked 'What flavor do you want?' He told me to let children make as many choices as possible, and that advice stayed with me.

I tried to give piano lessons to the oldest three, but I wasn't the best teacher for the kids. I didn't help with homework. I encouraged projects. If they wanted to build a volcano, I would help find materials. But it was our belief the child needed to do it themselves and be responsible.

When I think of our older children in the first years of school, I can remember polishing their shoes every night. Looking back on that, it was rather ridiculous, because I was still trying to impress the teacher about what a good parent I was.



That's another thing in terms of appearance that makes me think I was stuck in the past because I remember for years cutting off the boys jeans for shorts and hemming them. No one does that now. I spent hours hemming and patching jeans! They would have been just as happy, maybe even happier with holes in their jeans. In fact, in later years, it was necessary for them to buy and wear holes in jeans! How times change!

When we started giving allowances, it was a penny a day so the kids could buy a package of gum for a nickel. That was about all. We gave them money for Sunday School and every year we added five cents a year up to 50c. We got them into a habit of saving with piggy banks.

We had a wonderful trip to San Diego to see the zoo and tented at Oceanside Beach near the tide pools. Right after that we went to the White Mountains with some friends and did some primitive camping with no bathrooms. We learned a bit about trout fishing and food preparation over the fire from our knowledgeable friends. They planted food for skunks at a distance so they would come at night and as we kept very quiet, they came. For two nights, we saw five beautiful black and white skunks, walking between my legs and Mrs. Applebees. It was a good start to develop the love of camping and love of nature.



We became eager to see our Minnesota family after living for two years in Phoenix. We camped through the Rocky Mountains and on the way, perhaps before, Bill said, “We could go through Cherokee, Iowa to see how things are.” He had been interested in a potential job there, and had met the people he’d be working with, and liked them. Also he didn’t like his job in Phoenix in the medical hospital. Doctors didn’t know how to use social workers. He did research into cancer there. Unfortunately, his supervisor made things difficult. No one seemed interested in how patients felt.

I think it was pre-ordained, because when the Iowa employers saw him again, they said, “You can start tomorrow.” He was offered a new job with an extra \$4,000 a year. With children growing and needing shoes and the reality of being closer to the Lake Crystal family, it was too good to resist.

So the decision was made by us to move back to the snowy Midwest to Cherokee, only 150 miles from Lake Crystal. It was a town of about 8,000 people in northwest Iowa. Having left Phoenix on a vacation, I never went back or said good-bye to my friends. Bill and his brother Earl packed up the house with a trailer. They enjoyed having this time together. Earl packed up the house while Bill finished working. He saw bugs he’d never seen before that came in with grocery bags. What a shock to him! The children and I stayed at my folks’ house until Bill found a house to buy in Cherokee.

We stayed in workers quarters at the Cherokee Mental Health Institute so the children could start school before we moved into our new house. The Mental Health Institute was a grand collection of turn-of-the-century buildings, built in a French chateau style with many lovely features. They had a big farm that provided work with animals and gardens for many of the 1000 patients. This was before the era of de-institutionalization. Staff members were able to have a garden plot which was the first garden experience for our family. We went up about once a week after supper and tended to our plot so our backyard was free for playing games like badminton, softball and just lying there looking at clouds.

We lived in Cherokee from 1959-1965, longer than in any other place in our children's childhood. They were good years and important years for the family and the country. All the children were in school. I had a chance to branch out. I started with Tone Circle, a musical organization which gave me the privilege of accompanying wonderful singers and instrumentalists. We performed in churches and played for each other.

It was the delight of my life where the emphasis was so great on culture which we never found anywhere else to be so strong. Someone told me once it was like an oasis in the desert. There was a wonderful Museum and Planetarium. Cherokee had a Little Theater and Bill was in several plays. I never got involved with theater because I wanted to be with the children at night. We did sometimes hire a neighborhood girl to be a baby-sitter. There were also a lot of family parties and quite a lot of parties with Bill's cosmopolitan colleagues including Hi-Fi Club at the Superintendent's apartment. That encouraged Bill and a psychologist colleague to build us a hi-fi set.

We started buying records for the first time. The Beatles were popular and we subscribed to the Readers Digest Record Club which was a great education in the classics for the kids. We also got books by subscription. Of course, the children were massive library users. When Becky and David finished all the books in the children's section, the librarians let them start to use the upstairs adult section well before the usual age limit to do so.

Reading was a family affair. We got many different magazine subscriptions. I got home-making magazines like *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Good Housekeeping* but not fashion magazines which weren't popular yet. We got *Life* and *Time* for current affairs, and *National Geographic* or *Newsweek*. Becky and Sue had some girls' magazines and the boys had scouting magazines. Bill got work-related material like *Psychology Today* and *Journal of Social Work*.



We had a two-story house plus basement, built in 1931. There was a big front porch where we hung a swing. The living room had leadlight clear glass doors and small bookcases as you entered. There were French doors between the living and dining rooms with beautiful woodwork all around. We did a little wallpapering in the dining room and featured church centenary plates on the plate rails from

our Lake Crystal churches. We had Ethan Allen maple spoon foot furniture, buying new furniture for the first time.

We had a narrow galley style kitchen and a family room next to that with bookcases, games and our TV set. We had a gas stove for the first time in our kitchen. I had two ovens and a

large electric stove in the three-roomed basement so I could bake rolls and pie and turkey all the same day with all the ovens. I even had a deep soup dish burner which I don't think I used much. I wasn't into preserving. I loved sewing and keeping everyone clean. I loved homemaking and tried to make the table look nice at home. We often had candles and Bill's sister gave us a wonderful clock like a duck pond and the little duck moved by a magnet around to point at the time. After dinner, Bill often read the kids a chapter of a book while he smoked and sometimes blew smoke rings at them. A favorite was *Cheaper by the Dozen*, about a family with 12 kids. He read with such humor and drama and everyone got a chance to use their imaginations listening to him read.

The kids had a ping-pong table in the basement and a dress-up box. They used to roller skate around the circuit of these rooms where the floor ramped down to the furnace lower level. I had my washing machine and dryer there and the kids threw their clothes down the laundry chute from the upstairs. I kept our crank-style ice cream maker in the basement and that's where we also shucked popcorn off the cobs we had grown in our garden plot.

We had a good-sized family room and we put up peg board on one of the walls behind the TV where I could put up pictures. That room was a favorite place for everyone to sit because we had all our books and games there. David prided himself on reading every page of the *World Book Encyclopedia* set. Dave had a bedroom by himself and he read an awfully lot.

The boys started playing Little League ball. We went to all their games. All the kids became Scouts. They were active in church groups, church choir and youth choir.

Most of them learned to play instruments. Both Minnesota and Iowa had excellent music school programs. Art fell by the wayside because we didn't have the right paper and equipment or even encouragement. Music was always encouraged. Becky went to music camp in the summer and learned violin from our neighbor's daughter, Merle Robinson. Sue picked up flute, Jim played trombone, Ned, guitar and bassoon and David sang. Everybody sang, often in the car and in camping times.



Like most people in our small town, we went to the County Fair. I remember one year Ned won three stuffed animals, throwing darts or something. He gave them all to Sue. Wasn't that nice!

All of the children did well at school. The schools were full of single women teaching in Cherokee. A group of us parents thought they should allow married women to teach and just as we planned to protest, the School Board changed its policy to allow that. The early years are so important and with the more mature teachers, they could give kids the best

start because they weren't still trying to learn their profession. We think they got a very good education there.

The teachers thought, 'here comes another Roberts!' The root beer stand was just down the hill from our house with a manager who liked to reward kids who got an A or B with free root beers. At the end of the school year, we cleaned up with all of his offers. The kids got 15c stein-size root beers for each A and 10c glass for each B. It was close to the swimming pool and the kids found they could stretch out their coupons over the summer with a drink after swimming!

Our kids were normal kids and there was little conflict. Sometimes you could say they were boisterous but basically it was pretty quiet. They tended to spend most of the three month vacation at the community swimming pool in the afternoons. We went on picnics and played with friends. They made their own fun a lot. All the kids liked sitting near me when I sewed. Ned learned to sew and later made big pillows. Becky sewed me a dress with bound buttonholes. They liked cooking and baking. In the winter they went sliding and tobogganing on the local hills. They went to activities at the Sanford Museum, and enjoyed the geological specimens, African animals, dinosaur bones and an antique music collection.

The family were quite well in those years, though not as much as in Arizona. Ned had sore throats a lot. In second grade Ned said he knew what was going on at school, so he'd rather be home with Mother and we could watch soap operas. Becky says she liked to pretend to be sick and watch old movies, also getting time with me. I had a continuing virus in Cherokee and eventually went to the Mayo Clinic. The doctors concluded it was a virus, no more than that. I wonder if I was allergic to our cat, Inky.

One of our big experiences there was working with African students from Morningside College in Sioux City who had worked with Rhodesian students trying to help them advance. About forty people including children went into homes of Methodists. It was a great thing because there were no blacks living in our community at that time. In March we had a huge snowfall.



Our African visitors said, "God must really love you people so much that you can be smart enough to heat your homes to live here."

On Nov. 22nd 1963, our President, John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. We were all crushed, unbelieving it could happen. It stunned everyone. We all remember where we were when we heard this news. They gave us details slowly so we could take it in. A few

days later when we came home from church, our neighbor told us to turn on TV to see Jack Ruby shoot the man who shot Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald.

The Protestant ministers separated themselves from Catholics and they were not in favor of electing a President who was a Catholic, as Kennedy was. We didn't feel that should make any difference. The Sunday before the election, Bill and I sang in the choir and we were determined that if anything came up about not voting for a Catholic, we were not going to just sit there. It came true. When the minister started, we looked at each other and walked out. Unfortunately people didn't realize we were making a protest so we failed in that regard. But it made a big impression on the kids when we told them about it later. Somehow I wonder if it didn't contribute to us moving to Australia.

I loved Cherokee and think all the children did. We had a wonderful play space in the backyard – a native woods-- a wild area we called the ravine with a creek running through it, and lots of friends and music. There was a nice group of men who worked together as social workers. We played with their families. It was busy and happy. We had a lot of favorite TV shows at night. *Man from Uncle*, the *Lawrence Welk Show* which we still watch on re-runs, comedies, the *Ed Sullivan Show* and the *Perry Mason Show*. The TV was still in black and white there. There were a lot of new influences coming into our home like the Beatles, the Liverpool music group.

Living in a small town, I liked to take the family to the nearest large town, Sioux City, to shop and see shows, like the Ice Capades. One time we took Becky's Girl Scout troupe to Omaha, Nebraska to see a Cinerama movie, *How the West Was Won* and later the 3D movies with glasses.



While we were there we had a number of wonderful family holidays. We went to the Black Hills in South Dakota where we saw the famous presidents carved in stone, the Ozarks in Missouri, a crystal grotto in Iowa and a place where the kids could swing on big vines over the Mississippi.

We loved taking trips to the Worlds' Fair in both Seattle in 1962 and the Expo in Montreal in 1967. Both were great places for the children to learn about other places in the world. We were all very impressed with the new technology, including the IBM Selectric (golf ball) typewriter which has become an antique since the advent of computers. But it was exciting then. I remember packing 30 sweatshirts for those trips.

We had a Rambler station wagon with the back seat facing backwards and a trailer with Snoopy, the Charles Schulz character Becky and her friend painted on the sides. People

waved and honked as we passed. At the back of the trailer, we had a cupboard with essentials plus a stove if we weren't doing fires. We could make coffee and the kids loved the little boxes of cereal they got for our camping trips. I had made heavy gray tablecloth years before but I cut it up and made drawstring bags with initial on them for each child instead of using suitcases.

I don't know if Bill was getting restless but Ron Evans, a distant cousin of his from Mankato, who was on the Board of Supervisors, got in touch with Bill about coming to work in Mankato at the Mental Health Center. Bill was Director of his department and was happy there but was tempted by the professional opportunity that was so close to relatives at a time when our children were doing so many things. Bill's work life reflected new areas when they were just beginning in various places we lived, like community mental health, group work in Australia and later family medicine in Tucson. He was always looking for something new. One by one we talked with our kids and asked if the move was OK. I think I had some doubts about it. I was the one who had to pack and get ready and this was a huge job when we had two stories plus a basement. My memory is that the furniture movers said we had 14,000 pounds when we moved to Mankato to a house slightly bigger than our Cherokee house in 1965.

We found a house which was very similar, with woodwork, wood floors, a big porch, basement, attic and an extra bedroom. I made curtains and we bought two large braided oval rugs. I had a house cleaner in both Cherokee and Mankato. My first years there I spent decorating and making a home. I wondered what I wanted to do next because with all the kids at school, I had kind of an empty feeling. Even then we didn't use the phone to call our family 12 miles away.

We saw my family more and we had more holidays together in Mankato. My Dad died three months after we moved there, suddenly which I told about earlier. I was just trying to keep things going after that. I don't know that I had much grief support nor was I available to help my Mother and the kids. We did see more of the Jones family and loved their woods, and playing with the cousins. The move to be with the family turned out to be precious because Bill's mother also got sick and died while we were there. Bill visited every noon for the three months she was in the hospital. His job turned out to not be easy, working with the Board of Supervisors of the County.

In this decade of my thirties, I moved the family four times from St Cloud, to Phoenix, Cherokee and Mankato. I was getting tired of moving with the big family but it was interesting to end up at home after making this big loop around the country. I didn't realize then that this was the end of my time at home and in my forties, I went into the workforce for a new work-life balance.

Chapter 9 - My Forties 1966 – 1975

In the decade of my forties I started working part-time. I was looking for something to do after we finished the wallpapering and got the home and children settled more or less. I found a music job advertised in the newspaper and for three years I worked at a small rural school in Rapidan where I taught music (singing especially) to all the elementary grade students, about 200 in the school. I also had a junior high social studies class. It was perfect for me as a mother. I loved teaching school, although I was paid very poorly. Being a woman and working part-time turned out to be a disadvantage to me. The male band leader who was there had a good salary. I enjoyed a summer school course one year in geography and history to renew my teacher's certificate. We had a good mixed chorus and sang at neighborhood functions. I taught from the piano which was perfect for accompanying singers.

I had a car of my own, a little VW Beetle, to drive to this school about 6 miles away. I had to be there at 10 a.m., and left at 2 in the afternoon. I always stopped on the way home to buy groceries because at that time we had all those hungry teenagers. Sometimes I had two carts – lots of bread, maybe 2 loaves a day. We had an AFS student from Sweden, Martin Carlson in 1968-69 who was a bit taller than David so with four big boys and the girls, all who had good appetites, I was busy at home. I had a lot of clothes to iron. Polyester was coming in I believe, but we missed out on it in Mankato. There was always laundry, cooking and baking to do.

While we were in Mankato, the family just blossomed. Everyone was active in the community as well as in school. Becky played with the symphony orchestra. The three boys became Eagle Scouts and were active in different sports. Sue played flute and Ned played bassoon. We loved being closer to the relatives even though we didn't see them as much as we thought we might.

We took the family to Chicago in 1966 and saw the famous Art Institute on a fascinating day. I had been there in 1947 when I represented Hamline at a course on social justice at the University of Chicago. There were 30 students from 30 US colleges. I got a chance to hear Saul Alinsky, the community organizer and activist. I spent spare time knitting a vest in an argyle pattern for Bill who would be my husband a year later. It was great to go back to this lovely city on Lake Michigan.

Every time there was an opportunity to view the world, it was a plus. We could only afford to do that by camping along the way. We cooked our own food mostly. The next summer we had a three-week long holiday, driving from Mankato to the Montreal Expo 67, the second world's fair we had been to. On the way, we stopped at Lake Erie, the Great Lake north of Ohio and Pennsylvania, and it was full of sludge. We got in as far as our knees and

were covered with black oil film and debris. It was very hard to get it off in the showers. I believe that in our lifetime, this industrial pollution legacy has been remediated.

It was a great experience to be in Montreal, Quebec, a French-speaking city. We had our tent and stayed in Chautauqua Park. People didn't want us to order foods in English. At the stores they would try to teach us the French words. The boys got a kick out of watching one of their favorite TV shows in French – *Gilligan's Island*! I remember eating Russian ice cream there. We saw the Buckminster Fuller geodesic dome, the new idea of dense living in Habitat and many interesting pavilions by so many countries.

After that we stopped at the Boardwalk in Atlantic City, New Jersey and bought t-shirts with the names of Ivy League colleges. Then we went on to Boston, where we went to a crazy restaurant in a market area and ate Boston Baked Beans. The waitresses were known to be rude so we went for the atmosphere. This place had been recommended to us because many famous people liked to be seen there.

Then we took the freeway to Washington, DC for the kids to see the city. In August camping in a tent it was way too hot and humid. Bill and I had been there earlier in the year during cherry blossom time. We wanted the kids to see the Senate where we left our cameras at a security holding station. Jim went back with Bill to retrieve it. When they were walking down the hall, they passed three men. One called out, "Hey Bill, whatcha' doing?" They turned around and it was Fritz (Walter Mondale) an active Minnesota Senator who had sung in the choir at Macalester with Bill. Jim got to shake hands with Mondale who didn't win the Presidency when he tried later and Senator Robert Kennedy, brother of the slain US President who himself was slain in 1968, and Sen. Edward Muskie. That was a real highlight and Jim didn't want to wash his hands after that.



We had several nice meetings with families along the way. We went with Lois Wafler's family to the Mormon dramatization of the story of its founder, Joseph Smith in an outdoor amphitheater in New York. It was very beautiful with lights on the hills and an epic production. It must have been crowded in the car with all the teenagers but my memory is we all got on well.

The next summer we went on a family camping trip to the Boundary Waters of Northern Minnesota near Canada. David had been there on a Scout trip the summer before and he thought he could be our guide. We got special waterproof maps of that area and rented two more canoes to supplement ours. All of our food was pre prepared and packed by professional outfitters, so I didn't have to do any planning. Bill and I couldn't be in the same

canoe because we went in circles! When strong Dave headed up one canoe, everything worked better. We portaged and found our first island to set up camp and lo and behold, we hit a rainy week.

We pretty much stayed in that little tent 9'x 12' with an annex 24 hours a day for a week. I remember Jim went out and caught a fish – a Northern Pike. It rained and poured. How did we seven get along with each other? We sang, we laughed, we threw pillows at each other, we played cards, made shadow puppets, and we got mad at Jim when he threatened to put his finger on the canvas tent side to make it leak. We heard the loons at night but basically it was disappointing because we were stuck.



To return after that week of rain, our Scouts decided to put the three canoes side by side, lashed them together with saplings they found on our island and put our ground cover tarp up as a sail. Bill was feeling unwell. We later realized he had hypothermia, which can be fatal, which worried me with his rheumatic fever background. The boys took charge and sped us back with that sail method. We got

back three times faster than individual paddling. I don't remember how we cooked. All the packages were wrapped so if we tipped over, the food would be OK. Looking back, this was a little pilot to see how well our family could get along in tough situations, which we did encounter in the hostel in Sydney a few years later.

We had the experience of exchange students in Cherokee and saw the benefit of them. We put out that we would like to have one and there were two in town in 1968: Trish Madigan from Brisbane, Queensland and Martin Carlson, from Sweden who came to live with us for a year. He probably would have preferred to go to California or someplace urbane. He was a polished student and a lovely boy with long arms. I can still remember him waving out of the bus window when he arrived. We later met his parents and two sisters. We have been to Sweden three times and they have been here a few times. Sue lived with them for several months and picked up a lot of Swedish in that time.

Martin was a little older than David and had to do another year of high school when he got back to Sweden so he didn't have much to learn in our school system. It was so interesting for him to be invited to homes of Minnesotans celebrating Christmas as they did 100 years ago when they came to Minnesota. Of course, he came from the modern Sweden and it was totally different!



Martin was wonderful to have in our family. He valued everyone in our family. Way back then he was a conservationist, careful with water and other resources. This agreed with the values of saving that I grew up with in the poverty of the Depression. I used to save most things to recycle that I could and we were careful with our financial resources. We had low to middle-size incomes, because our main interest was in serving people. We always had enough money.

In Mankato, I was teaching, had the big family and exchange student and was closer to our family, so I didn't really have time to develop a circle of friends. I had a few high school friends and some at my school, but there were more family connections there as an extended family. I liked cooking turkey at holidays and did enjoy baking a lot. We had a few couple friends from Bill's board and at the music association, so I did entertaining in that way. As a couple, we traveled to Bill's conferences in San Francisco and Washington, D.C.



The kids have reminded me that we brought in popular culture from these trips, including psychedelic band records from San Francisco. We had a lot of classical records, but enjoyed popular bands of the 60s too. None of the kids had their own sound equipment. We only had one TV in the family room, still in black and white, and the stereo was in a closet in the hall.

Everyone was out a lot at night, but we had definite times to be together, like meal time. I didn't cook a special meal for someone going off to their activity. Supper was at 5:30. We sat around the table and talked about our days. I remember Sue talking about her sex education class so it was really very open. The kids didn't get into fights that I knew about at school or sports. That was the model for families at that time, peacefulness. We knew some unhappy families but mostly it was pretty good.

We had two cars by then and Becky and Dave could drive and take care of themselves. Until then, all our children walked to school no matter the distance. We tended to buy homes close to schools.

During our years in Mankato in the 1960s, Martin Luther King was killed and then John F. Kennedy's brother, Robert. This was the beginning of rattling our family and our community that this was not the way to be living. We had the Black Panthers and an unruly Democratic Convention in Chicago where the police charged at people. Later demonstrators at Kent State University were shot dead by troopers. A rocket ship went up with astronaut John Glenn in 1969, right before Martin left, so there were things going on outside our family. Becky recently gave me a book, *1968, the year that rocked the world*, which says there was turmoil all around the world. People had bumper stickers, *America – love it or leave it* and

there was widespread disagreement over US involvement in the Vietnam War. Civil rights were front and center.



While we were in Mankato we decided on a new adventure, which probably happened in part because of our exchange students. We had wanted all of our children to have that opportunity which would have been hard to fund. That may have entered into the formula. After Martin came, we were sitting around the table when Jim said, “Martin’s here finding out what it’s like to live in America. Why don’t we all do something like that?” Bill reminds me that I said, “Why not?”

We talked about it for about three months before we came to a decision. Things felt up in the air in lots of ways. Becky was at Hamline University on a scholarship and I think having some fabulous times with excellent teachers and a great choir to sing in. We didn’t think she or David would want to come, but we went ahead with the planning for us and the three youngest children. We started thinking about where to go. Our first choice was Rhodesia, Zimbabwe as it is now called, where our friends the Andersons had lived. We wanted an English-speaking culture, a place with good educational opportunities where the kids could live at home, and decent weather, not extreme. Those were our parameters.

We dismissed Africa quickly after talking with our friends, the Andersons, who had spent time teaching math in Africa. They didn’t think it would even be safe, with all the diseases and the issues of boarding schools. Because of the Australian exchange student in town, Trish, we thought of Australia. It felt far away, but it fit our parameters. Bill was in Minneapolis one day and stopped at the British trade consul. They said, “Don’t come to England because they were getting immigrants from many places and we have more people than we need. Have you ever thought about Australia?”

So we thought, “Why not go to Australia?” There didn’t seem to be many other choices except perhaps a South American country. We had no connections with them. We started collecting information, pasting it up on the wall on the door between the kitchen and dining room. When Becky came home for her snow holiday, she, Ned and Sue made a snow kangaroo. Both David and Becky signed onto the idea when we had a vote in November 1968. We talked about what we had to give up and we didn’t really know what we had to



gain. Bill needed to find out if he could get a job and how we would go and where to live.

Basically it was a very courageous thing to do, voluntary migration, but we had complete trust it would work for us. I was 43 years old, taking our 5 kids to another country. I was pleased with the courage it displayed and that everyone agreed to the plan. It meant that Ned didn't get to play in the high school top basketball program. Becky would miss out on her choir and her presidential scholarship. Dave had won a merit scholarship to Macalester, his Dad's alma mater. David wanted to see the world. He had to break up with a steady girlfriend. Jim and Sue were younger. Jim turned out to be the one who spoke most ardently about it when we were interviewed on TV in Mankato. He seemed to be the spokesman for the children. You have to wonder why when you look back, what he was looking for. He didn't know he would be interested in being a film director at that point.

We sang at the Lake Crystal Methodist Church before we left: *We are One in the Spirit* with the boys playing guitar. It was a picturesque family that could have bloomed in Minnesota but in our estimation it may have been too limiting. We didn't really know that or understand that, but it's like the grade school, "Here comes another Roberts child", everyone needed to express themselves apart from the family. I didn't know that at the time either, but can see it now.

The reaction in the community was, "They don't want their boys to fight in the war." That was what we heard the most. Some thought us unpatriotic. They thought it was too scary – we were either courageous or crazy. Responding to someone who said directly about the draft, I said we were putting them in the possibility of being in two drafts. Some never forgave us. We weren't so open about sharing our plans with Bill's family. They heard first from the *Mankato Free Press*. The editor Ken Berg was on the Board of Directors so he interviewed us when he knew about it. We were meeting Australian people and other Americans who had lived there. We got a lot of misinformation that way. Mainly a big mistake was getting rid of our warm clothes, not knowing we would settle in South Australia that faces the South Pole!

Someone who read the interview in the *Mankato Free Press* let us know about a Quaker psychiatrist from Nebraska who had moved with his family to Sydney. They put us in touch with the McLean family. They wrote to us, and met us with some Swedish friends when we arrived in Sydney.

From November to maybe February, we didn't tell many people. Bill finally had to tell his Board of Directors. Then we had to tell Mother, which was hard, because she had been a widow since 1965. We took her for a Sunday ride and told her what we were thinking. She said she would come and see us and gave us her blessing. It was so wonderful to have that kind of support and trust. She actually did come and see us around her 70th birthday along with her sisters Alma and Clara. We had a birthday party for Mother. Using our guest book,

we counted that we had 70 new friends there. Mother enjoyed her Australian summer with us, especially the colorful trees and gardens.

We found out the best way to go was to migrate and live there for two years. Bill wrote to the Australian Consulate in New York to apply for us to be permanent residents. He passed all the credentials because he had more social work training than most of their professionals. He said he'd been a farmer and if he couldn't work, then the kids could! The Australian Consulate approved skilled migration for a talented family. They paid one-third of the cost of our trip. We left in September 1969 and each of the children had earned their \$450 part of the price for travel on the P&O *Oriana* from Vancouver to Sydney. We sold our house in August and had many porch sales. One weekend we sold sports equipment. The children had to give up their material things. Another weekend we sold games and toys. Towards the end it was just the last furniture. We lived there until people came and picked up their furniture.

I kept one trunk of historical records, some favorite wedding gifts and a packet of school information, etc. saved for each of the children. My mother stored these. Everything else went. For some of the family, that was difficult because we gave away gifts they had given us. But we had to. In those days we didn't have access to rental units where things could be stored. In our imagination, we felt if everything went really well and we were happy, we might stay. But it wasn't a settled thing. In order to afford going and starting over, we had to sell our beautiful new Kimball piano. Bill's sister Dorothy helped with keeping financial records for us in Mankato. We made a couple of thousand on selling the house. We didn't leave a bank account except to cover some tax matters.



So, we closed our Midwestern career, to go explore the world in 1969. It took a week to drive from Minnesota to Seattle on the west coast where we stayed with Bill's sister Helen Ruth before getting on the ship. We had two cars, one a Dodge sedan, the only new car we had had up to that point which pulled the Snoopy trailer, and the VW Bug. Mostly Becky and Dave drove the Bug. On the way we stopped in Miles City, Montana to see college friends, the Stickneys. We

had a wonderful evening of singing together and left in the morning. We had fun with Helen and Bud and his extended family.

The belongings we were taking with us, dishes, bedding, records, were packed in the Snoopy trailer. Bill and the boys went to the Vancouver dock and unloaded all those things to be packed into the hold of our ship, the P & O *Oriana*. On the way home, they sold the trailer but kidded that they dumped it over the cliff. Maybe that's how they were feeling about

dumping our life over the cliff! We sold the car and managed to set a time and place for the hand-over. The new owner gave us cash for our car. Jim and Ned counted out the \$1500.

We got on the *Oriana* with a lot of English people going back to Australia. There were about 40 families from the US and Canada, many of whom were disaffected with what was going on in their countries. We heard later that many of them didn't stay long in Australia, only a month or two. We didn't take a jumbo jet because they weren't invented until 1972. We see now looking back that we were at the end of the Golden Age of ship migration. The *Oriana* traveled only two more years. I felt lucky for the experience.

For me, once we left Lake Crystal and said good-bye, I collapsed. I was so tired from all that planning, all that work and making decisions. On the ship, I was finally able to relax. Becky, Sue and I were in a cabin with a midwife from England. The whole concept of midwifery was new to me. The fact that the crew was from Goa, in the southwest of India, taught us how important the curry spice was to all their cooking! We had lots of silverware at our plates. It was very fancy. It was more set up for tourists, not really immigrants. We were invited to the Captain's table once. The boys had some interesting experiences.

Early on the trip, some of us were seasick. Becky especially, but after a few days, she got over it. On the ship, we participated in a talent contest, using some new music we had bought in Seattle. Becky played violin, I played piano, Ned bassoon and Sue flute and later the family sang *Downtown*. This had quite an impact on the audience! I remember one of the older women saying to me, "Treasure this time because your family will start breaking apart soon." That was a new thought to me because we had been close and had done so many things together. Our lovely daughter Becky was much sought after by the young men on the ship.

We stopped in Hawaii and met Bud's sister and family and were treated royally by them. They gave us leis which we wore all day and tossed them in the sea, which is the way to guarantee you'll go back. It seemed such a waste of flowers but in our case, it really did work when our family gathered there in 1981 for a reunion to celebrate my mother's 80th birthday.

We had a day at a Hawaiian church which we enjoyed and we saw the memorial to Bill's brother, David Newton Roberts at Punchbowl Cemetery, whose name is listed with all the other Americans killed in the South Pacific during WWII. He died in a non-service related accident but was the only one in a plane of 27 people who did not survive. That is sad. I like to think he was helping people off. Bill thinks he could have been trying to fix the plane's engine.





After Hawaii, we had nice calm waters and stopped in the tropical Fiji islands. We went shopping and bought a huge wooden bowl that we love for 75 cents. We got a sewing machine that worked in America and Australia with its different power systems. We bought cameras and a record player. Fiji is settled by Indians and Malaysians but when we left there was an indigenous brass band dressed in their

white skirts playing farewell music. We were moved as the ship pulled away.

After more time cruising on the Pacific, we landed at Auckland and saw some of the North Island and a bit of the city. People were dressed in old-fashioned long coats because it was cold and I was beginning to wonder about leaving all our coats in Minnesota. We had several interesting experiences, including the Pacific Islanders museum. Then we were off to Sydney, covering the Tasman Sea which is a dangerous patch of water. We were on a secure boat but the waves were 35 feet high which was quite frightening.



We came through the Sydney Heads on September 19th 1969, with the Sydney Opera House looming, still in construction as we headed to Circular Quay. It was quite a sight.



After clearing immigration at the Customs House, we were taken by bus to housing considered suitable to British or English speakers, the Burwood Hostel. Other immigrant people went to a different hostel. So we met people from all over the UK and heard things differently with all their accents.

We had to learn how to do things in a different way, how to use the Post Office, how to drive on the other side of the road, how to park without getting a ticket, how to use the public telephones with their annoyingly erratic A and B buttons to talk. We had an accident with a newish Holden HR car we bought and it took six weeks to repair the petrol tank because we were told we had to get a part from Melbourne. We thought the Holden was supposedly a reliable and easy to repair car. Meanwhile we were looking for houses, so Becky and I went by train. We wanted to find a home because we thought we would end up in Sydney.

By early December, nothing had worked the way we expected. Ned was responsible for seeing an ad in the classified section of the newspaper, saying, "Wanted. Social work teacher. Adelaide." Bill and I flew to Adelaide and contacted our good friends from the ship, Ann and Tim Marshall. Bill met the Institute of Technology staff and got the job to teach social work students.

We know now that 1969 was the coldest Australian spring for 40 years. It was cold everywhere with no central heating, just little space heaters. Bill felt it badly even though he wore vests. We all got used to wearing layers to keep warm.

We flew back to Sydney, packed up our life at the Burwood Hostel and just before Christmas drove for three days across the Hay Plain to Adelaide in our Holden and Simca car. We stayed at a bed and breakfast in the Riverland with feather mattresses and where the apricots were ripe. We ate a lot there and the owner gave us some when we left. We were stopped at the State line and had to either eat or throw them out, so we tried to eat them all!



We were so busy looking at North Adelaide when we got there, that one of our cars crashed into the other. So our welcome to our new home was to report to the police and have Aussie burgers with beets and fried eggs at the Blue and White Cafe!

The social work staff was thrilled with Bill's mix of skills and he was a real asset to the Department. His boss was so grateful for him many times. Teaching in Aussie style was new to him and he had such diligent students trying to take notes of every word. Finally he taught them how to look up and experience learning by listening.

He loved it there and the staff were supportive, providing us with temporary accommodation with a week or two here or there. None accepted money. We had a cold summer Christmas with one of his colleagues cooking traditional British fare.



We settled fairly quickly once Becky and Ned found the house we lived in at 83 Cross Road in Urrbrae, a lovely suburb. It was a big house, wonderful for entertaining, had a big yard (3/4 acre), and lots of trees, including fruit trees. We were very happy there. The ceiling in the front room had plaster cherubs on the ceiling playing violin and flute, like cherubs sculptures we had over the piano for years. It had keyhole stain glass windows and rosettes down the hall. The large front lobby had black and white floor tiles. I antiqued a large chest

in a dark red color that we still have today. It looked magnificent as you entered through the front door. My neighbor brought in flowers and I loved having fresh bouquets in our home.

We hung up old things we found without real art. Becky and I went to second-hand shops and auctions to furnish this large house. I was very well-known in those circuits. We furnished the whole house easily with second-hand things and antiques, which was a lesson to all our kids. Antiques were out of fashion but we loved them. The modern was terrible. The big excitement is that Becky and David went into an antique shop and heard music. The owner said he had a piano but it was at his home. We found a large grand piano in his ballroom. I said, "We couldn't have that!" but it turned out that we went back several times, played violin and sang. We became friends. He sold it to us for \$800 which is what we paid for our last piano. It has been part of our family joy ever since. We know it was made in London and had gone from the YWCA to John Brown, furniture dealer and to us in our new house and to both our homes in Tucson, and finally to the home of my niece Maggie Jones.

I got to know my neighbors and met people through Bill's staff. People were very interested in us and our big family. What we had done was unbelievable to them. Many had small families, so they found five teenagers quite amazing. They invited us to Sunday morning brunches instead of going to church, which we found too cold anyway. It was the heyday of dinner parties because the impact of women's lib hadn't fully been felt in Adelaide so the women weren't working away from home.

We would sit at a table from 7 to 11 in the evening and sometimes have five courses. Each course had a different wine. It was really fun. We were known because we were Americans. We entertained a lot. We had Indian friends, someone from Iowa, Ben Yengi from Sudan, Joyce Rapp an American who worked with Bill and loved to sing. People would come with flagons of red wine. David bought me a flagon of wine for my birthday in Sydney that wasn't too good, but South Australia had a great wine heritage and the flagons were great. We started drinking wine in Adelaide. We had a winter party on the 4th of July. We ordered hot dogs from David Jones from Sydney. We had beans and picnic style food for a huge gang. We had a costume party. The kids were enthusiastic about meeting people and we met others in the American Field Service network and met their friends with parties in their homes.

We met a Minnesota family whose vehicle had broken down in Andamooka, the opal mining area. They stayed with their family and grew a garden by collecting dew on their large roof and into a dam. Bill and I flew up there once for the Opal Festival. We stayed in a windowless shack. Our friend turned over the mattress and the dust flew. There was a pail above for showers and if you needed to use the bathroom, you went back to the hotel. That was an Outback adventure we really loved. We also went to the Flinders Ranges and a sheep station in the south-east. People were very kind to us and tried to show us a lot of the countryside.

This experience was very rich because of the children, who were all facing new challenges of settling into a new country. We had to learn the language which was littered with colloquialisms. We loved the Central Market for buying fresh foods and meats. I remember sides of lamb hung up for \$2 and I had to figure out what to do with all the different cuts. I drove to a local store but even with all the beautiful food, I was not a good sport or a good cook.

I missed too many things I was used to. I used to bake and use molasses and Karo corn syrup. I was inexperienced in the British/Aussie style of cooking and I needed a lot of food as the family was growing. Aunt Alma wrote in her diary after her trip, "Food not too good at home," which I think was true. But that was my chief role, to cook and I did. Australian cooking was boring at that time, before the multi-cultural influences. Nothing was open at night. If we were out with our Malay classes for 'supper' meaning a snack rather than a meal, it was hard to find places to eat. One time I had pancakes with ice cream for dessert at Adelaide's only 24-hour restaurant.

Cooking and shopping were hard for me. But I loved the vegetables and I know more about vegetable cooking now than I did then. So eventually I thought it might be better if I worked. I found a summer school class for teachers who had been out of the field and I studied for two months. So I went to this and was assigned to a third-grade class far away from our home, about ten miles. We were in a portable building, an overflow building, in a hot summer. I had about thirty students and it was quite an unhappy experience for me because I had not even been trained in the US to be a teacher but had hoped I could. They were used to strict rules: "now it is time to pick up your pencil -- now it is time to put your pencil down." It was not creative. It wasn't right for me. We had one particularly bad boy who needed special help. I stayed only a short time and everyone who came after me also quit. A few students really loved me and did well but my overall experience was bad. It was the first time in my life I quit. I realized I couldn't do it and it wasn't fair to the children. I didn't work after that.

Becky got a Commonwealth scholarship and began a degree at Flinders University. They didn't count credit for her year at Hamline. She was the first to leave home. She went to stay with a group of friends who all had training in the Ecumenical Institute and eventually moved out with a boyfriend. This was very hard on me because it was not part of my Minnesota background to go and live with the opposite sex. I guess I was envious because it would have been nice if I could have done that. All the children have lived with their intended before marriage. In her third year of university, she met and fell in love with Richard and that made her future one in Australia.

David made a decision to leave Flinders University and to go to India but he ended up in South-East Asia. He had many adventures in Laos after a sea trip through Timor where he piloted a boat after reading up on sailing the night before. But that was not a happy time for

me with the older children. I wasn't prepared yet for an empty nest. We didn't know where David was, and there was no way to contact him. We knew at times where he was but he was growing up seeing the Vietnam War up close. He came back to see us in Australia and wanted to go back to the US, so he was the first to return.

But first he lived in Guatemala and learned weaving, living the simple life. This became a focus for him, living cooperatively and using barter exchange. He went to University at Santa Cruz, California, worked in a meat factory and took care of himself financially. He learned to garden, to build homes, to cook and to master the basics of living at the farm affiliated with the campus. He was full of energy for sustainable living and the solar industry, but it wasn't ready for him. He found his mate Janie, while in Berkeley.

The younger three were all at Unley High School. Ned graduated from school after a year, doing very well and earning a scholarship. He stayed in Adelaide and got a double major in psychology and philosophy from Adelaide University. He taught and became a leader in the Transcendental Meditation program there. He spent seven years in total in Adelaide before returning to the United States.

Jim continued at Unley High School and was the SRC President. He was having difficulty with math. Ned, Jim and Sue all had been pushed one year ahead due to the timing of the school year and their ages. A friend we had met from Minnesota who was a math teacher knew what training Jim had been missing. Jim helped this man in exchange for tutoring and he encouraged Jim to apply for a scholarship at Yale. Jim was into writing at this time but was tired of getting responses back from his English teacher that would say 'too American' and it seemed to be always critical.

When he finished at school he decided to take the Kangaroo route to England on his way back to America, the common overland trail that many young Australians used to visit the homeland. He was 17. He took the train to Perth, sailed to Singapore on a Russian ship, took another train to Bangkok, flew to Calcutta, flew to Kathmandu, then got on a bus tour that went through India. On this trip he met Jill Fanning who later became his wife. Both missed their families, and commiserated about feeling the loss.

Along the way he turned 18 and legally had to register for the draft. So he did that at the US embassy in Tehran which was later the scene of the hostage taking. When he got back he went to Yale. I think in some ways he was immature and in others too mature. He saw Yale as too competitive, with students focused on positions of money and power. This environment didn't suit him. He loved working in the Yale Library surrounded by books, but got sacked due to a misunderstanding, so that was a low point for him. He only stayed one year and then did a bit of university here in Tucson. He had jaw surgery and he couldn't talk so that was a perfect chance for him. He could write and others could read his works in class.

Suzanne was 14 when we moved to Adelaide. Two years later, when she was 16, she was given the choice of going to Sweden to live with Martin's parents and his two sisters, or going to Seattle, Washington to be with her Aunt Helen Ruth and Uncle Bud because Bill and I were going to take a long trip back. She chose Sweden. At 16 years of age, she boarded a plane from Adelaide to Perth with us, and then went on alone in a Russian ship with a Russian crew, going to Singapore where she spent 3 days and 2 nights. She was pretty brave to do that. Then she flew from Singapore to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) where the plane got a flat tire upon landing. Her arrival into London was late due to the flat tire repair time, so all of her airplane connections to Sweden failed. She stayed overnight at an English bed and breakfast, and flew to Sweden the next day where she joined up with the Carlson family.



Most Swedes know some English, but Martin's father didn't. They were lovely to her. She learned weaving on a table loom, and also bread making from Mrs. Carlson. Later she built her own floor loom with Tony, her to-be-husband. They eventually bought land in the country, and built their own home. She's very happy there.

So our family was splitting apart by the end of 1971. After two years, we would have to pay Australian tax, after a grace period. We decided that we needed to go home so we could pay into Social Security for our future. We didn't see our future with the salary Bill was getting in Australia, which had fallen to a third from the Mankato salary. We felt we were probably three years behind in our savings for our future. We were able to buy the house and car in Adelaide because we had sold our house in Minnesota. We made some money on the share market which was going through a mining boom in those years. We left the kids there with the small sum of \$400 each.

If we had seen our future the way we see Australia now, it would have been a different story. There was no role for me that I could find. I was at a time where I was almost free of children at 45 of age and I didn't know what would fill my life. It was a time of questioning about the role of women. We did not want a third person with us as we felt insecure enough about traveling through Asia and Europe without subjecting Sue to that. That's why we gave her a choice of what to do.

Many Australians came to the airport to say good-bye to us in December 1970. We had not planned it but we all got in a circle, very much like the basketball teams before they go out to play, shouted and raised our arms. We left in a surprising mood for the Australians, and I think we even surprised ourselves when we got on the plane. Sue who was with us and Bill and I had a couple of days in Perth to see her off on her trip. Becky was in charge of our

finances. We made that official. The house had sold the day before we left. We didn't know where Becky, Ned and Jim were going to be. The kids rented a home in the city after they packed up our house.

It was a dream to go to Australia that I wanted to do for Bill and me. The fact that all the children were game for it made me very proud of them because there was the possibility of it being a disaster. And there certainly was a lot of unhappiness with the systems of education and all different kinds of things, yet they adjusted. They learned you can live on very little material possessions. They traveled separately to quite a few places in Australia. They made friends easily. They did well in the school system and I tell people, they all learned to write. They can express themselves well and are beautiful writers. We wrote a lot of letters to each other because there was no telephoning in all these travels. The costs were too high.

Bill and I had a wonderful three month trip home. We had a \$1000 plane ticket each that was effective for as many stops as we wanted and we could stay as long as we wanted as long as we traveled west. It was a wonderful freedom experience. We thought we might do it for four months but three months was plenty long. We met wonderful people along the way, had wonderful experiences, saw weddings, funerals, circumcisions, and learned to visit a few rather than a lot of things.

We had connections so we stayed with people. Indonesia was very fascinating. We were there for three weeks and on the Christmas holiday, our family with the youngest being 16 and the oldest 21, were on four continents! Becky, Ned and Jim lived together in Adelaide. Sue was in Sweden. David was in Guatemala and we were in Bali. To me that was outstanding.

I was in my mid-forties when we left Australia. Our trip back to the US was very pleasant trip but I missed the children so much. It was a real break. We were only able to be in touch at the various Consulates. It was like a second honeymoon. We decided to see as many countries as we could and Bill did a research paper on the way home on how families interacted with their patients in hospitals. It varied a lot from our culture.

The beginning of our trip was Denpasar, Indonesia – what a shock. We were one block away from the slums. I'm sure all of that has been cleaned up. We had three weeks there. It was a bad time in that country and we saw a lot of guards with guns. The best part of being in Java was our contact with the family of Bill's student. That happened often where people would host us or meet us for a meal. We were in Bali for the week before Christmas which was both exciting and troubling. We had more food than many had seen.

Then we met in Singapore and met with some of our Malay class for New Year. We went on to Malaysia and in Kuala Lumpur went to a wedding of a young couple where we copied

what our friend did at the Buddhist wedding, bowing, kneeling, ate as she did. We went to weddings along the way and gave opals as presents.

Hong Kong was next where we met another student's family at Jumbo's Floating Restaurant. From there we went to Thailand and saw many musical instruments going up in the elevator of our hotel. We found out there would be a wedding reception for 800 people on the rooftop garden and were invited. I put on my long dress, wig and had a bite to eat but when they saw us, they put us at the head table because we spoke English with military people who had studied in the US and wanted to talk with us. I sat next to the General. It was the time of our life, right next to the musicians and strange sounds coming out of the singer. So much food, so many courses, so much drink and we were in all the photos!

Our next stop was India where we were not terribly welcome. We saw a big billboard, "Nixon go home!" because the US had been favoring Pakistan in the war between it and India. So we weren't that welcome and only stayed five days. We stayed in a YWCA hotel which was a good base for our trips out. We saw the famous Taj Mahal which was on my bucket list of things to see in my life. It was winter, so the grounds were not as pretty as usual and no water was in the pool in front. But it was so majestic with the marble carvings outside. We took our shoes off and went inside. It was the only religious building we entered in that trip.

We had planned to go to Iran but with a snowstorm, our pilot announced that we would go to Istanbul instead. We sat on the tarmac for a long time and finally went into the terminal. We had to surrender our passports but we just waited until we went back to Tehran on a jumbo, which was our first experience of a big plane. When Bill was doing his research, our hotel was right across from the American Embassy, where Jim later signed up for the draft and was the center of the hostage crisis with the US.

I walked out for a few blocks to see the shops and the soft fresh snow, having been in Australia for a few years. I noticed there were three men keeping kind of close surveillance behind me. I got scared, made a turn to go back home and thought I lost them, but they followed me into a jewelry shop. I fell down on the ice at one stage. I was made aware that women don't have the privileges we do and I had no right to be out alone.

From then on it was easier, changing planes in Athens, we went to Austria. Vienna surprised us with women wearing big fur coats and candy shops – so different from Asia! Fortunately we heard the Vienna Boys Choir singing in a chapel during a Sunday service – a real highlight of our lives. We went to two operas, walking through snow without proper footwear. We dreamed of going back there in summer to see the beautiful city. We saw the incredible white horses doing dressage performances at the Imperial Palace, which was touristy but great.

We didn't have time to study about the places before we left, so I tried to read pamphlets where we were to learn about the places. Then we went on to Amsterdam and across the water to England. It was the first time for both of us, but we kept right on going to see how Sue was doing in Sweden. She was staying in Orebrö, the home of Martin Carlson's family. She was happy to see us, and had turned into quite a little Swedish girl. She had learned a lot of Swedish and was good at languages.

Sue spent the rest of our trip with us, traveling through Denmark, Germany, and Holland. We got to New York on a Gulf charter plane which was a gimmick to save on the airfare. I felt like kissing the ground when I got back to New York. The first cup of coffee felt so familiar. When we got back to New York, we went to a Russian restaurant with Bill's boss, Dr. Fanny and someone thought Sue was Swedish with her two thick braids of hair. Dr. Fanny said she could get him a job back in Cherokee but that was not his intention.

Then we flew to Minnesota, saw the family and stayed with Grandma who was happy to see us. Bill had his heart set on being out west. An Indian woman who we knew in Adelaide had told us about the new development where social workers were integrated into teams with primary care doctors. When Bill stopped in Phoenix, he went to lunch with old friends, one of whom knew there was a vacancy in the faculty in Tucson. Bill rented a car and drove to Tucson, met the staff, Dr. Abrams and El Rio, the community clinic and left without knowing if he got the job.

He went on to the VA in San Diego where they seemed interested in him. He went on to Santa Cruz where Dave was living in a tepee on the Santa Cruz University of California sustainability farm. But Sue and I were back in Lake Crystal with Grandma. I gave a few talks using slides of Australia from the government. I found I loved talking to groups, piecing together a simple story of our journey. Otherwise, I wondered how things would work out. Sue and I had a lot of time together. She didn't start school in Minnesota because we didn't know how long we would be there. We waited.

It didn't take too long until we had a call from Tucson. It was March 1972. The next day he got a call from San Diego but had to turn them down because he had already committed to Tucson. Often we have talked about the coincidence of that close timing but the advantages here have been great. We bought a car in Minnesota and drove down, stopping to see friends on the way. We were not exactly taken with the desert at first. Bill had been there while the wildflowers were blooming. We came in from the back of the mountain and were really surprised at the landscape. Later, both of us came to love this paradise on Earth.

We rented an apartment and then bought a house on East Seneca close to Sue's school and Bill's work. He could walk there. We called Australia and asked for our furniture to be sent. So that took a few months. We took up the carpet and had the wood floors polished and made that old house fresh. The furniture came in June. We certainly brought back more

than we took, but we had enjoyed the old Australian furniture. It came in two containers and the cost was relatively minor, something like \$1000 to get to Los Angeles. From LA to Tucson on the train, it was like \$1,500 for the shorter journey. It was worth it for us and we had a lot of enjoyment out of the furniture and the memories.

Living in Phoenix had given us a taste of the summer. It is usually a little cooler in Tucson because of the elevation. If you want to be cool, you can drive to Mt. Lemmon to cool off. We like that once in a while for a picnic lunch and to breathe the cool air. Of course, we have air conditioning in most homes. We stay inside more except early mornings. Evenings are pleasant for sitting out. This summer we had 40 days over 100° F.

It wasn't hard for me to settle after being in Australia because America was home. I don't remember it being hard. We were focused on what we were going to do next. Now, I had my almost empty nest. Sue had her senior year of high school to complete in Tucson. I decided to go back to University. The tuition was so low for family members of University of Arizona employees. We always wondered why our three youngest didn't make use of it. \$25 a semester plus books, but that made it possible. We spent the money we saved buying a house and car. We always got VA loans on our housing which was an advantage of Bill being in the service.

Bill was settling into his role training family doctors, just another example of him being in the forefront of new ideas in his work world. My degree was in Family Development and Childcare. It has another name now but it basically was around family with aging courses which interested me a great deal. I started in August of that first year and I was 46 years old. There were many people older than me, so I felt like one of the kids. I had friends who were older, some were gay, but the important thing was that I had something to focus on and do. I really enjoyed the course work. I took statistics one summer and at the same time bought an edition of Scott Joplin piano rags. When the statistics got too complicated I would go to the piano and they got me through.

Ned was very excited about this new/old movement Transcendental Meditation. In one of my courses we had to comment on research of something new happening in the world so I chose TM. And when I researched it, I thought we'd better start, so we've been meditating since 1972. It has really changed our lives in many ways and we've become more mellow. I had no trouble with exams and very little stress. It was fun. I opened the eyes of many people to this practice. I wore the same thing almost every day – navy pants and shirt and my long Iranian coat to my knees with traditional pattern and fringes along the front and hem. Then I had a beautiful aboriginal dilly bag from Becky that women made by chewing bark into string to weave. I wore that over my shoulder and was one of the college kids.

That Christmas we had a family reunion, and Helen and Eldon and family came in an RV. Becky and Ned were back from Australia. We had a new swimming pool in our back garden

which we heated. There were quite a few of us around the table. The Joneses laughed about me making too much rice for the Christmas Eve dish that Grandma made. I'm sure we had turkey. Even then I had a lot of help from the family with cooking. We went to a Christmas Eve service, had a poor service, and as the kids were questioning religion it was a very disappointing experience. We had nice picnics at Sabino Canyon where we drove in further than you can today.

This was my first chance to gather my kids together after our big trip. People had changed. Their hair styles had changed. Their lives were changing. It was such a fleeting time together. When we live so far apart it makes getting together difficult, so I



enjoyed every minute. Jim was beginning to be interested in animation and he took a wonderful picture of us sitting on the rocks of Sabino Canyon. But it wasn't the same as the early years.

Everyone was changing. I was even in a women's consciousness raising group. The wives of the doctors in Bill's department included me in their group even though I was a lowly social worker's spouse, but I actually had training in this area. It was all based on a Chinese circle where you talked about yourself and self-awareness. We all had children about the same age and we helped each other. We all struggled with the change of our kids sleeping with boyfriends/girlfriends and doing non-traditional work activities. It had not been part of the Puritan American culture. We didn't talk much about gay people but it was an emphasis on women as a minority. We made a lot of progress and the girls who are coming up now do not know how hard generations of women have fought for the right to vote, the right to own land, the right to have their own bank accounts.

It was focused on women's liberation. It never changed my relationship with Bill – that was cast in cement. In a way there were times when I wanted a full-time job, but Bill pointed out it would be hard to find time to go to Australia that would match his times. In a way I was hand-cuffed by that idea. I did teach after I got my Master's degree. I taught a course on marriage at Pima College. It was one hour a day, three days a week and I loved the teaching. But it was quite a distance to drive, and very low pay. At the end of the first semester we wanted to go to Australia for Christmas. I said no to the job but they used my curriculum for future teachers. I made so many friends and the class was so full that people were sitting on low cupboards, almost like standing room only. I would have done it in a minute if the pay had been commensurate.

I expect I was going through menopause during those years and it was finished by about 50. I have not been the best person in being aware of my physical health and taking care of myself. I would have better documents on that if I started over!

Everyone says it is something they are glad of-- that they had the Australian experience. With two members of the family living there full time and having four grandchildren and now two great-grandchildren there, it is our second home. We have returned there about 22 times to be close. Bill was on sabbatical in England and I went to Australia for the birth of Morgan and Nellie in July 1979.



We have tried to stay in touch so the early trips strengthened our bonds and we have been a part of their lives. Now we watch and see how the new families grow and give thanks for all their trips to connect with us. The technology of how we kept in touch changed over time, first writing aerograms, then a few decades of sending cassette tapes, then as telephone charges were more realistic, using phones and now Skype video calls. Our family's modes of communication are a bird's eye view of ways it changed over this period.

I'm glad we did it and I'm glad we got back in time for me to be with my Mother who was a widow for thirty years and had Alzheimer's at the end of her life. I had a chance to spend time with her when I went back, some very sweet times.

Chapter 10 - My Fifties and Sixties 1976 – 1995

When we first came to Tucson, we wanted to find a new church, and we found a big Methodist Church with a wonderful choir. We both sang with this choir for four years. Finally, in frustration with the patriarchal system, I rebelled because I was feeling worse going to church than staying home. We found St. Francis of the Foothills, a United Methodist church that caters to anyone who wants to feel a part of a community. That has been a great pleasure to us. It was also a fun place to take our adult children when they came to visit, and it is where Becky and Marty got married in January 2010 with a wonderful celebration.

About the same time we moved to St. Francis, we met some friends who introduced us to the Amway business which sold cleaning and washing products that weren't damaging to the environment. I was not teaching, and decided to have a go at running my own business. It turned out to be quite interesting. I met people of all different persuasions and I was the core of my business network. I was quite successful, getting to the Direct level. I even carried my enthusiasm over to Australia. Morgan and Anna called me Gramway! I gave a little talk there, and got Becky and Richard started in the business.

A lot of friends and others tried it, but it required a whole different thought system. I had a big storage room in the backyard, and people came to me for their products. Nowadays it is all done by email, and a delivery system that is so much easier. I did that for 8 years. In 1983 when we moved to Creekside out of our Seneca Street home where the storage room was, we were no longer able to keep the products, and I think we were wearing out. We made a little money and had great tax benefits during that time.

Bill and I went to Salt Lake City for a workshop on couple communication. It was such a wonderful experience. Here we were married 25 years and we learned some things about communicating we didn't know. We became qualified as teachers. It was very useful for our marriage enrichment classes which we taught once a month at a facility in Tucson. We called it "Couple Communication", a one day workshop where the evaluations were really powerful. Whether or not that carried on in these couples' lives, we didn't know because we didn't have follow up. We tried to have follow-up meetings, but everyone was too busy or too far away, so it didn't work. One time when we wanted to go to Australia, we asked two other couples who did training, but both were in the midst of a divorce!

In those years when I was studying for a Master's degree, I volunteered in the Greater Tucson Family Life Council. I was a Board member, eventually President and then historian. The idea was to bring together people working in the human service field to talk to each other. Now that function has all been taken over by government so there was no longer a need for what we started with agencies and individuals. That is one way I used my education.

My thesis was called “Fifty Couples Married Fifty Years or Longer in Tucson, Arizona”. It was the basis for many, many talks. It was a positive view of aging in a relationship at a time when the society in general was discouraged about marriage. We talked with 100 people. Bill had helped me do the study by interviewing the men, and I interviewed the women, so it was natural that later, we spoke together about it. Churches and agencies invited us, the nursing college and medical school. I had done all the setting up of the study but with this experience, Bill also became an instant “expert” in healthy aging. The doctors only saw people when they were sick, so we wanted to show people who were independent in the community. We found them through a newsletter from the Pima Council on Aging and once that got out, couples volunteered and adult children referred their parents to us. So we had great success recruiting.

I loved reporting on the findings of our descriptive study and was doing so at the University and other places. Once Bill came in, it changed completely because I had a set format before. When he came in, we were very free and adapted to the particular group. We were a two-person act. I had the facts in my head and would use them when needed. Bill would have a joke or a play on words and together it worked really well. The first time we did this at a State meeting we got a standing ovation. The Salvation Army representative who was there paid our way to go to California to talk to a group and that began some of our travels through the next fifteen years. We spoke in New York, Florida, Kentucky, New Mexico, Mississippi and others. We went to national conferences. Never once were we turned down when we sent in an abstract and we were always included in the main program. The feminist leader Betty Friedan came to one of our meetings. We had several workshops at Arcosanti, a healing ‘new age’ conference center north of Phoenix and received a large outdoor bell made by Paolo Soleri.

We had a lot of different tools. We used materials I had collected from the Gray Panthers, an early organization of aging people (based on the Black Panthers activist group in the 60s). They had some exercises that we were able to adapt. If we weren’t doing the introspective exercise, we were leaders of a game that a PhD student devised. She chose us to go to New York to present her game. But mostly we spoke at conferences. One time we had three conferences in New York City – National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) and two gerontology meetings. It was all based on my thesis. Once we wrote something which was published in a journal, but because we were in England at the time, Bill’s secretary put only his name on it as author. So I don’t have credit for that. We tried writing a book about the study, but didn’t do well in that mode. We had different styles. I tried writing alone, but we were better at telling the stories, rather than the statistics.

We even got into Seven Questions about Sex and the first one was “Do you sleep together in a double bed?” A woman answered, “No, but it’s not far between the beds.” No one was talking about sexuality and aging in those days. But I said to Bill that we don’t want to be

experts in that field because we didn't have the medical background, so we kind of backed out of that after maybe three talks in Tucson, one at the School of Nursing.

So we had twin subjects of the marriage study and couple communication. We mixed them together in a new combination. We went to Green Valley several times. We were featured twice in the National Enquirer, a kind of scandal magazine. At a conference on aging, the press group took us to breakfast and said, "The National Enquirer wants to interview you, and they have always handled our material well." We kind of gulped but said yes, if we could read the article before publication. They agreed to that. They wrote a story called, "Ten Reasons to Stay Married." Janie read it without knowing it was based on my study. My cousin Carol's minister preached on it. It was then syndicated to over 200 newspapers all over the country. Eight years later the National Enquirer called to do another story.

We kept in touch with these surviving couples over the years to continue a longitudinal descriptive study. It wasn't highly technical. We could have advertised more if we'd been willing to give over our material, but since we didn't know if there would be a demand for that information, we said no. We didn't earn a living from this work, but it was my passion and identity. I was interviewed on radio and TV. Sometimes the two of us were. We went to North Carolina for advanced training as leaders in marriage enrichment. We were aware that we could keep learning and growing to stay alive and aware.

We had a group at our church who we worked with every few years on this topic. We also ran family camps at the church. All the traveling, meeting other people, was so fun. One night in New York, we struck up a conversation with two men who were part of our booth, but separated by a short board. It turned out they were stage managers from the Rockefeller Center. They invited us to come to their show, and to come early for the organ recital which we did. Then we got to stand behind the curtain with them and see the Rockettes and the whole show. It was a wonderful experience. We found that if you're open to people, good things happen, like getting into all those weddings traveling through Asia.

We bought a plane ticket to the West Coast at an auction and for \$100 we rode in a four-seater plane. We chose to go to San Rafael after stopping halfway to refuel and flew with one of the Monthan boys, from the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson. We attended a workshop SAGE, (Seniors Aging Growth Exploration) and spent the weekend learning techniques of relaxation among other things. One morning I tripped going into the cafeteria and sprained my wrist, so the next day I took a class in healing and at the end of an hour I had all the normal feeling back, could pick up a tray and shut the car door. Amazing!

We've been lucky enough to be at three of the five children's weddings, all except Jim and Jill's, and Becky and Richard's in Australia. Jim was the first to marry with his Australian fiancée Jill Fanning.

Suzanne then married Tony Basurto here in Tucson after she turned 21, the same age as I was when I got married. She wore an off-white muslin gauze and lace hippie bohemian wedding dress. They were married by a Justice of the Peace in El Presidio Park.

They spent time with their guru, Swamiji (Swami Amar Jyoti) at spiritual retreats in Colorado, Michigan, California and Arizona. . He has ashrams in Pune, India, Tucson, and in the mountains outside of Boulder, Colorado.

Sue and Tony have reminders of Swamiji throughout their house which sits on 9 acres of land. They have a beautiful home in the desert west of Tucson which they built over many years. It has beautiful light and a feeling of calm that is highlighted with devotional paintings that Sue has made. They are great hosts for their siblings when they come to Tucson. They love making things. They have made a wonderful natural garden and grow organic vegetables. Suzanne has worked in accounting in the private sector, and in payroll for the Sheriff's Department and other Pima County Departments. She retired when she was 53 years of age, and Tony worked for the City of Tucson. She always makes me a lovely pie or cake for my birthday, like rhubarb and pineapple pie, pumpkin streusel pie, or homegrown Lakota squash cake, something inventive.

Becky and Richard Llewellyn married next in 1977, in a park a block from their home with friends around and a Baha'i celebrant. We probably could not have gotten off on the spur of the moment to go, but we knew Richard well, as they lived together for five years. The guests painted flags, and Becky made it into a wall hanging. It was original, which suited them as a couple. She sewed Richard's three-piece suit and Jill helped her pick out her dress. It was the party they wanted, and a chance for Becky to change her name to Llewellyn.

We first met Dave's partner, Janie Finwall with Marshada and Keif when the kids were 2 and 1 year old, when we celebrated Thanksgiving in Berkeley. We later attended their wedding in their home garden. They both love flowers and bought huge bouquets the morning of their wedding. It was a beautiful outdoor ceremony. We finished the day with singing. I loved being the pianist to accompany any group singing. Her step-father was there but her mother Pat was sick so we didn't meet her until later. She was able to come to our 60th wedding anniversary in Truckee in 2008.

Ned and Judi Green had met at MIU, Maharishi International University in Iowa where both were students and teachers of Transcendental Meditation. Judi had grown up in New Jersey and her Jewish parents were in Florida. There was a lot of diversity in the choice of spouses of our children compared to our choices, where we were of similar background and geographical location. Also, all of our kids married someone older which tells me that they were quite socially mature, especially for the "fellows". We really liked Judi's family and have had some very good times with them.

Judi and Ned married in a beautiful park with a lot of Judi's family from the East Coast, aunts, uncles, cousins and many of their friends. Judi was an absolutely beautiful bride. They had a chuppah, a wedding arch in a Jewish wedding which they stood under. They settled in California, renting near Chinatown in San Francisco, and lived in two other rental houses, both of which were destroyed by wildfires. They bought a beautiful home in Orinda on a hilltop where we really had a good chance to get to know the grandchildren. We used to go once a year every summer, and often at Christmas. We felt like we got to know them because we spent a lot of time together.

In the late 1970s, I read an article about thyroid problems that recommended if you have had any type of X-ray treatment to your face in the 1940s, you should check to see if you have lumps in your thyroid. Thyroid was quite a common thing in my generation and the one before. Several aunts had goiters or thyroid tumors removed. It was assumed that this was because of a lack of iodized salt. Before Bill came home from the Navy, I got some X-ray treatments on my face for a little acne I had. It worked, but I think it damaged more than we knew. I only did this treatment because a schoolmate worked as a nurse for this doctor and encouraged me. Three of our five children have problems stemming from their thyroids, and I feel guilty about this. Some of the kids think they have this because they ate radioactive snow while the nuclear tests in Nevada were prevalent in the early 1960s. Others think it is just genetic.

I had an X-ray of my thyroid, which is shaped like a butterfly. In one corner there was a discoloration, one spot. They said I had the beginnings of thyroid cancer, which is slow growing. I told the doctor I was going to Australia for 6 weeks and I wouldn't have it when I got back. During the trip and on the plane, I focused on that spot and saw it surrounded by light. Finally one day, I couldn't see the spot at all. I remember telling Jill and Jim it was gone. Back in the US, I saw the doctor and he agreed it was. He said, "Oh, my wife would be so interested in this," but I found it interesting that as a man of science he couldn't think about that type of healing. My experience at the San Raphael workshop convinced me of our own power.

During this time, we had a dear older friend, Margaret Francis, who was born in Iowa but lived in Hollywood most of her life where she was active as a speaker, actress and playwright. She was a frail woman, living alone and needed someone who could take her to the doctor and help her. We spent 15 years helping her. First it was Bill alone and then it was me too. Every day we phoned and three times a week we would see her in the afternoons. We helped her move several times. She did not have children and was interested to hear of ours. She was a spiritual person.

When she died, she left us her estate. That really helped us because Bill retired at age 60 due to the stress of work. He didn't feel he would live much longer if he kept up that pace. We have had almost 30 years of retirement together. We have had some employment, but

without Margaret's bequest when she died in 1997, it would have been hard. We had to get our Social Security payments earlier than at age 65 when the payments would have been bigger. That was interesting.

We thought we could make a living on "positive aging". You can never do these things in your own home town. We planned a workshop for San Diego. We did all the press work. So one beautiful Saturday, not one person attended our workshop there. So we had paid for renting the room in a hotel. It was our first and last experience in trying to make a business of it.

In those years, we visited Australia as often as we could. We never went anywhere else in terms of an overseas trip because we always wanted to go west to Australia to see both Jim's and Becky's family. It was wonderful. I think we were able to bond with them because we lived in their homes for two or three weeks.

One time we went to Kangaroo Island with Jim and Jill, Nellie and David and a wonderful recreation center, Wirrina on the Fleurieu Peninsula where we did archery, half-court tennis and tai chi. We went on a houseboat on the River Murray with Becky's family and some friends. Classical music was playing all the time, black swans flew by, great food and some of the best wine I've had. When Anna was 7 and Morgan 10, we had the idea he would enjoy Lute Olsen's basketball camp for boys 10 and over run by our revered Wildcats basketball coach. They were brave to come in June when the weather was very hot, so he could go. Anna had birthday parties in a park with a piñata and at the pool. The highlight was music – we found the sheet music for *What a Wonderful World*. The children had sweet voices and carried the melody and they sang at our church as I played, while Bill and Becky harmonized like no one else can. At the end of our song with three generations singing, we had a standing ovation.

Bill and I taught a six week course in aging at the Institute of Technology (now UniSA City East) in Adelaide, where Bill had worked earlier. We also taught at TAFE (vocational training) with lectures on communication and aging. We had about ten nuns in the workshop and they were flying high by the time we left. We started with an experiential exercise going back to your childhood and reminiscing. They came from the same European country and hadn't been encouraged to think about their memories much, but to share with one other person was outstanding. We have a letter from them and a thank you book. We have a number of letters where people said, I can't wait for your book. I think it was our personalities. We demonstrated before we asked them to do it, to make them comfortable. There were no put downs or anything like that.

We had a special visit to us when Nellie and David came, aged 11 and 9 and lived with us for a month. David had been sick on the plane over, but Nell took care of him. We did a tour out west. We went to Disneyland first. Leaving the grounds, David was skipping along and read a

big sign, The Happiest Place on Earth. He said, "This truly is the happiest place on Earth!" Then we went on to the San Diego Zoo, and some camping at Yellowstone. While they were staying with us, they would rummage around in the closets to get out costumes, and made plays. I saw them make plays at Becky's house too, so it was a favorite thing for them to do. We saw their uncles, and saw many of the natural wonders, like the giant sequoia trees near Dave's house in Guerneville. On the way back, we gave him some medicine for the jet.

They came one other time, when they were in their mid-teens with their parents which was a special trip. Becky and Richard came with their kids about every four years so we feel very blessed that the four Aussie grandchildren had a good connection with our lives and our country with their trips here.

The biggest reunion was in Hawaii. In our early frequent trips to Australia the planes refueled in Hawaii. Sometimes we would stay two or three days to make it a business trip and attend Amway seminars. I got the idea, why don't we have a party for Grandma here on December 13th 1981! I talked to my sister about it and they have five children as well. They had some business connections who helped them find a hotel, practically on the beach at Waikiki. We were there for ten days. We went early and bought leis to meet each family as they came in. We were all in the same hotel, but people did their own thing except for the big dinners together. Grandma's birthday was really fun. Richard was great at giving toasts and made her feel very grand. In a special dining room we had wonderful salads and different foods than we usually eat. Grandma returned the favor and put on a picnic on the beach for us all.

Bill's sister Helen Ruth and Bud Meredith came as a surprise. They had come to Australia earlier. In Hawaii, all our children had their life partners except Jim, as Jill was 9 months pregnant with David who was born on January 1st. Morgan was there, cute as a bug's ear, and Nellie, a darling little girl. Keif and Marshada were also there about 5 and 7 years old. Becky was pregnant with Anna, so it wasn't always easy as they had just come from an international disability conference in Singapore, then back to Australia for a day, then to Hawaii. We bought matching Hawaiian clothes and we have worn our matching outfits several times to parties. I have one wonderful muumuu I've kept for years. I'm hoping one of our grand-daughters would like it one day. We really liked getting together and had a lot of one-on-ones. David and Janie were so enthralled with Hawaii, that they made it a pattern to go most years at the Easter spring break for teachers and students. Judi came with Ned and was impressed we would do something so adventurous as a family. Sue and Tony were there, and Grandma loved having time with everyone.

We moved in 1983 from our Seneca Street home to a brand new house we helped plan in Creekside. We were the first house to be built with plans by a California architect. They had two sets of double windows in the kitchen and we wanted to make one into a sliding door to get out to the patio. So, they agreed and it is funny how many people later chose that

design. It was fun to come out every night after work to see the progress. They started building in October 1983 when there was a huge flood. The dry river beds were overflowing, even with waves. The streets were overflowing and you wondered how they would ever build it. But in three months, it was ready. We have lived here longer than any other place in our whole lives. This is probably where we are going to stay.

There is a dry creek outside our walls and it is quite a distance to the next houses. It is a cul-de-sac, so it is very quiet. One of the reasons we like this position is that a block away was a line of eucalyptus trees parallel with the Catalina Mountains. We have loved these trees, reminding us of Australia. They had one big trimming, but are huge now. The owls like them. The hawks like them.

We had three more grandchildren born. Anna was born in June 1982. Ned and Judi had Ethan in 1985 and Kelsey three years later. That completed our cycle of grandchildren. Most interesting is that each of those families had a boy and a girl. That was it, no more children. It will be fun to see what happens with the great-grandchildren when they have their second children to see if that pattern continues.

When Ethan was born, we were on our way to see Bill's sister Helen, who was dying. I helped Judi cover a bassinet and lined the bookshelves with fabric we chose. We would see them two or three times a year during those early years. We watched Ethan grow up with his interest in music. He put his little hands on my hands at the piano at about age 2 and every Christmas with Ethan and Kelsey we would play simple carols. When they were older, they came to Tucson during holiday times. They were best of buddies but also knew how to fight. One time Kelsey came with a girlfriend. I liked sewing doll clothes for her. Both Kelsey and Ethan learned to knit which was great.

We had fun with their growing up. Keif was a long-distance runner and was as slim as can be. He later went into the Navy and when he came back in uniform said, "Yes, Ma'am! No, Ma'am!" When he came back he brought home a Japanese bride-to-be and we all loved Tomo. She didn't know much English at the beginning. They bought a house and she went to school. That relationship ended, and now he is happily married to Corin and they have two darling daughters. Marshada has a lovely partner, Adam, and works from home.

We continued to be active in our church, St. Francis in the Foothills United Methodist Church. We were a part of many concerts and plays. Basically the people who go there have been our closest friends. Many of them are younger than we are, and it is great to have friends this age. We have had some friends from Minnesota who come to Tucson for the winter, but our constant friends have turned out to be loyal, caring people for us during our health problems.

My 50s were my career years when I felt like I was riding on top of the world. I've had a lot of satisfaction with my choices. For my health, it has been better that things were paced.

I'm not sure how I would have done with a full-time job, keeping the house and having friends over, doing all the things I've been able to do. I don't consider myself a Wonder Woman in that way. I have often regretted that I didn't have enough credits in the Social Security system, so I don't get my own check from them (based on my working history). I receive a smaller spousal support check based on Bill's working history. Ours has been private money earned on our own, not by an employer. I taught in Minnesota for three years and was a social worker for almost two years in my early days. But the things I've done, I've enjoyed. Most of them I would have done without pay. Bill always worked for a government agency.

I refused, finally, to be used by the system as a woman with a low-paying job at Pima College. In a way, it may have been a selfish thing. Bill wanted me to be available to have a retirement with him. Whereas a lot of women go into active work after menopause with their increased energy, I had that energy and felt it, but put it into life with Bill. About 10 years after our study, we went back to interview the study participants to make a longitudinal study. We took annual trips back to Minnesota, especially with the impetus of class reunions or the Gymanfu Ganu, the Welsh singing festival in the last weekend of September. I loved to be in Minnesota over my birthday in October, when the leaves are pretty. We traveled to California to see Ned's and David's families in their homes.

We got in near the beginning of a program for professionals who were interested. We applied and were appointed by a Judge in the District Court; to do Court Visitors work for almost ten years. Bill and I worked separately throughout the County, so sometimes we had to drive quite a distance. As Court Visitors, our job was to bring factual material together for the use of the lawyers who were involved. We assessed whether people needed mental health or other support. It was a kind of guardianship or conserving estates. It wasn't lucrative pay, anywhere from \$100 to \$500. It opened our eyes to what can happen in families by not doing enough, or doing too much. Sometimes they were difficult to resolve. We talked with doctors, conferred with each other and were known to be thorough and our reports were well done. It was good professional work to finish up our working lives. We missed it when we gave it up about 12 years ago.

I loved having the children but when they were grown, they were on their own basically. We were happy to answer questions. I remember Ned calling to ask about buying a car. That was about the last thing anyone ever asked us. You just step back, step away, and give them a chance to live their own lives. I believe it is the role of the parent to be there to protect and to honor the new family. They don't have to be like us, or do the things we did. I like the fact that ours are kind and caring children, and have our values. They have chosen their own mates, without our input really. I hope we have not been interfering.

It was unusual. Children usually leave home when they are ready. It was different because we left some of them in Australia. I have regretted that sometimes, but other times I think it

gave them a chance to know we trusted them, that we felt they were capable and responsible. I believe they were. It could never be done that way today, because things are so much more expensive. I have talked with other parents who have the experience of having their children live overseas, away from them. There are tons of people, it seems like, in Tucson, in that situation. We all go on and make new friends. Friends become our family in some ways.

Kahlil Gibran, who wrote *The Prophet* says you do not own your children. They come through you and you shoot them out like an archer. Because Bill and I were together, it was easier to adapt to our lives when things suddenly changed: for Bill, a new job and for me, graduate school before we were fifty years old. The stage was set for new beginnings for both of us.

Chapter 11 - My Seventies and Eighties - 1996 – 2013 so far!

Bill had surgery on his heart at the Veteran's Administration Hospital and it really slowed him down. He was in the hospital for about 10 days. Both David and Ned were here at that time as well as Suzanne. One of the things he did in recovery was to embroider a long-stitch art piece that Becky gave him. He gradually got better and was able to pick up to his usual speed.

We continued to go to Lake Crystal for five year school reunions. My class has 24 of the original 37 classmates still living. Now they have had their 65th reunion. My guess is that in two years I will be going to a 70th high school reunion. It was a very close-knit class. You don't really feel that we are aging unless people are sick.

In our study we found the most difficult times of people's lives were when they were ill. It wasn't poverty, loneliness or lots of other things. In our study's generation, they lost their children in wars or with diseases that are not common any more. We haven't had children fighting in wars, thankfully and very thankfully, we have not had children precede us in death. That is an experience a lot of people have through accidents and sickness. We feel so proud of our children, the way they take care of themselves health wise and in every way.

In January 2013, Bill had two serious falls within a week after a long period with no falls. The stress forced us to check out a two-week respite at a familiar assisted living home, Cascades of Tucson where Margaret had lived. We moved in as an emergency rest, and then decided to stay. We feel very comfortable and plan to be permanent residents. Sue, Tony, Judi, Ned and Becky all helped tremendously to move things out of the house, have a yard sale, sort old papers, sell the car and piano, move some things to Cascades, and all the other things that come with downsizing. We are finding settling in a good experience with all the support, and hope our background of having new experiences helps with our settling.

We continued with our music. We have this wonderful big grand piano that is the centerpiece of our living room. Anybody who comes in says, "Oh, that is really beautiful!" I was still accompanying the church choir at that time and people were enchanted by Bill singing "Sweet Little Jesus Boy" on Christmas Eve and "In the Garden" on Maundy Thursday before Easter. They still have that Christmas Eve program and people say I wish Bill was there. He knew how to use a microphone and he sang softly into it making a very magical sound.

I also accompanied Bill's barbershop quartets. He likes the sound of a mixed group but the companionship of an all-male group is also great. Sometimes, they did programs together with acts. In between I would play *Claire de Lune* by Debussy, the song that brought us together. We made a recording in our home at Seneca Street, courtesy of our friend Dr. Winter Griffith's patronage. We chose some of our favorite songs and it is a pretty good display of our range. It will be available on this website to hear.

It has only been the last 2-3 years that Bill has not been able to sing in a choir. That is because it is hard to see the music and stand to sing with his Parkinson's disease. He was diagnosed 8 years ago. Becky thought he had it before that, perhaps 15 years. The diagnosis was very tentative, because of his shuffling with his feet. He had a light dose of medicine and went to see the neurologist once a

year. Gradually he has become more crippled by the disease. He has not had much tremor which we're thankful for. I feel it now when we hold hands. He doesn't need much help with his food. He can dress himself but likes to have help getting into the second sleeve of his shirts. He can shower independently but he likes help, so I dry him off. He still stands in the shower. His legs have been powerful at keeping his balance. He's now starting to have falls lately but even when he has had falls, he curls up and doesn't seem to get too injured.

The biggest influence of Parkinson's on him is the inability to live the life he would have chosen, being with people more often, going out to eat, going to friends' homes. He has a Stephen Minister who visits him weekly but sometimes he finds it too hard to have people come to visit. He likes people who talk and he can listen. He's always been a good listener. He had a lot of fun laughing and joking with Pete Anderson, his Minnesota caregiver who lived with us for 6 months before his untimely death from cancer. I'm sure he misses Pete a lot.

He loves word games and puns and can still beat us at Scrabble. He beat Becky, Marty and I at Scrabble recently and it did boost his morale. He still has a lot of ability. He has a cataract in his right eye which makes it hard to use the computer. His left eye is pretty good from cataract surgery a few years ago. He sleeps after breakfast, gets up for an hour and a half at lunch, and then goes back for a nap. Then we meditate together and go to early dinner at Cascades from 4pm, watch a bit of TV news or U of A Wildcat games, then go to bed about 8pm.

My role has definitely changed from career woman to caregiver. I don't need to be near him but I can't be too far away because he gets anxious. We have some trouble hearing each other. I try to sit with him and hold hands as much as possible. That is the essence of our time together. Fortunately, we found a good helper the last six months since Pete died. Elaine kept the house nice, did our laundry and took care of the shopping and driving. I have given up driving since my hip surgery a year ago. And now at Cascades, we have a roster of mostly very caring helpers and we take the bus to places. Things move on.

Speaking of my health, I have considered myself a well person. I did have flu and allergies in the early years. I had back surgery in 1998 for an ruptured disc in my lower back. I recovered from that very fast. I remember going to Australia several times with a brace on my back. I'm not too sure where that came from.

In my late 70s, I got some other news that wasn't so positive. I was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma and I've had recurrences twice in an 8 year period. The first time I had radiation treatment and that was successful. I tried different outside therapies for help. Bill and I did Chi Lil, a kind of slow Tai Chi that we did to a tape, for many years. I had Reiki healing many times, including a Japanese style, Jo Rei. I sat in a chair and a trained volunteer worked from my head down. There were other people in the room, but all the focus, the love and healing was wonderful.

We were lucky that some of this time coincided with Becky's frequent visits after Richard died in 2004. She came twice a year and once, three times a year, sometimes with her children but always spent a lot of time with us. It was so valuable to have her help when I was in treatment and her wisdom in making decisions about things. We started a health journal to keep track of all my various

treatments. All of the kids have helped us over these years in so many ways, with computers, new TVs and things that have meant a lot to our lives.

About 5 years later, I got Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma again. I had chemotherapy and a new kind of treatment with a mask that was made to fit my face. I had good help from friends who helped with meals, drove us and shopped. I started listening to healing tapes and a friend helped me focus on distance Reiki. Through illness, I tried to use all the resources I could. We have the power within us. One Sunday after church, Bill took Becky to the opera and I stayed home resting. I decided to try distance Reiki. I had probably made contact with my friend who can do it away from me. I lay on the bed with my hands turned up. The electricity started going through my arms, starting with my hands, up through the shoulders and gradually my whole body was tingling. It was an extraordinary experience because it lasted and lasted, almost 45 minutes. It must change some dimension in the body or the brain.

After that, I had a meningioma between my brain stem and my spinal cord. The doctor watched it growing for about three years. Becky was with me when we went to two neurosurgeons. One said not to do anything and the other gave me the options to go up to Phoenix for laser treatment or for him to do this surgery which he had performed two times before. He was a very confident doctor and was sure that he could do it. I had decided to do that when I met the other neurosurgeon in the hall and it was kind of embarrassing. I think it was the right decision to have the surgery. I had follow-up for two years and it hasn't caused me problems. I believe it's not there.

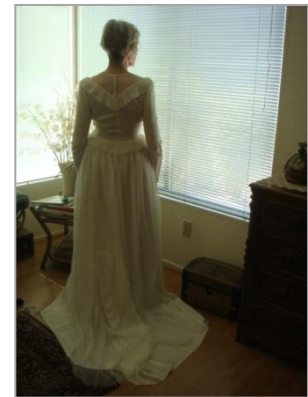
We have been very pleased that our children have been willing to come to events to honor us. Bill had his 80th birthday coming up. So we invited the kids to come to Lake Crystal, which had been an important time and place in their lives where their grandparents, aunts and uncles live. Both Bill's sisters died in their 60s. But he still had a deep connection to family through my sister Helen and his brother Earl. Each time we visited, Earl came to get him from the Jones home and take him to the coffee shop and drive to farm country and cemeteries to reminisce about people. So it seemed appropriate to have our families get together in Lake Crystal for his big birthday.



We rented rooms in a big guest house. That was fun in itself with big bountiful breakfasts. The children were surprised how beautiful Mankato was – so green even in September 2005. This was the first time the family got together after 1981 in Hawaii, so a 24 year gap was quite a while. It was so wonderful that almost everybody could come. We paid for the guest house B& B but not their transportation this time. The Jones families were great hosts. It was great for the Jones family and Bill's niece Kathleen and her son to catch up with their cousins on their home territory and there was much fun had by all.

An extra gathering we enjoyed so much was Judi's parent's 50th anniversary. We were invited to go to Florida and stayed in a hotel with all the family members. We also visited a cousin's home. The reception was real dress-up and even though I wore my best dress, it was a bit 'sensible' compared to what others wore. Judi has been so generous giving me beautiful jewelry and loaning us jewelry for special events. It was lovely to be included in her family, including her sister and niece, so they are a kind of extended family.

The next gathering was three years later in 2008 for our 60th wedding anniversary. Becky came early and we had a lot of fun with my old wedding dress, which I somehow managed to keep through all the moves. We split a few seams, ironed all the skirt and took pictures with Bill in his 1940s suit and me wearing my original dress. We put an ad in the paper with our original wedding picture and this. I have only seen it done once. People have talked to me about that many times because I was able to get into the gown. We only did that in Tucson. We took the photos at church, where we had a party after the service. Becky helped with that. She made heart-shaped cookies and we served punch.



For the 60th, Ned and Judi had invited us all to an anniversary celebration at their house in Truckee, California. They had added a deck, redone their kitchen and had done a lot of work to get the house ready. All our children and a lot of our grandchildren came.



Sue and Tony got there first from Tucson. Seven came from Australia: Jim, Anna and John, Morgan and Sonya, Becky and then Marty came from New York where he had been studying artist book-making. That was amazing to have them all. David and Janie came with her mother, Pat, our grandchildren Marshada and Keif, and Keif's fiancé Corin who got married the next weekend. Janie and Bill had trouble breathing at that elevation. Kelsey and

Ethan were there too. Everyone did their own thing, hiking, going to the lake, using the Jacuzzi, cooking, and it was such a fun happy time.

Judi and Ned had organized a magnificent anniversary dinner at their nearby club where Kelsey cooked on summer breaks. There were photos from our wedding and flowers on each table. The surprise was Ned brought in a barbershop quartet that he newly sang in. They sang on and on and we enjoyed it so much. There were speeches and a sing-a-long and we were all in good spirits. The young couples told us that they found it inspiring to celebrate our long marriage. There was lots of laughter and good cheer.

It was a time of a lot of celebration – ours on June 18th, then Kelsey's birthday on June 19th and Anna's on the 20th. We had most of our meals at Ned's and everyone chipped in to help. It was one of the few times all the cousins got together and they really bonded together as adults.

Two years later, we had a wonderful surprise when Marty became Becky's second husband in their marriage at our church in Tucson. They brought 17 people from Australia to St. Francis and had a nice chat with our Minister. At the time we were not having wedding celebrations at our church because we were protesting about gays and lesbians not being able to marry. How could you resist two Australians wanting to marry in front of their family! Grace, their granddaughter, was a little flower girl about 2 years old. Before the wedding, she lay on her tummy on the dais, put her chin in her hands and looked at the cellist and violinist who were playing and generally entertained us all. The music chosen was special. Friends Lisa and Diane sang. A bell choir played *Ode to Joy* for the recessional.

My sister Helen and many of her family came. Marty had his two sons as his best men and Becky had her daughters. Caro had helped her buy all the dresses in New York where she lives. She wore a beautiful New York dress in bronze shading. Morgan and Sonya were in the front row, teary eyed, and they were the next couple to get married. Bill wore a tuxedo to walk Becky down the aisle. I read *Dance me to my song*, by Leonard Cohen during the traditional service officiated by David Wilkinson, our minister that Becky has known since we started at the church.

The bridal couple released white doves at the end of the wedding that circled in the clear sky and returned to us. A very special surprise planned by Becky. The crowd blew bubbles all around. We had a big family picture with all the family from Minnesota and several parties before and after the wedding at our house and Cody's Beef and Beans. What a wonderful life we've had and so generous of everyone to make the time and spend the money to come. Some of the gang stayed at a hotel and had a great time around the fire pit and pool. Then the Aussies went on to Truckee for a family honeymoon and to party some more on a ski holiday with Ned's.

Four years ago, I had my third and last diagnosis of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. It was interesting that there was a doctor who knew from his experience in the state of Washington about a nuclear medicine with some success. I had that treatment, first with a chemo injection at Dr. Boxer's office. Then at noon, I rushed over to St. Mary's Hospital, where I was given a shot of this nuclear medicine. The next day I had x-rays and a week later, one last shot. I was cured so relatively easily. There are continually new ways to treat people and I don't expect to have it again. At this stage of life when I'm 86, you question how much time to just prolong your life.

A year ago I had a hip replacement in the same year that we made a final last trip to Australia. We were invited to Morgan and Sonya's wedding. I felt I had a special connection with Morgan because I

was present at his birth, and he was our first Australian grandchild. One of the highlight trips I had early on was going to be in Australia when Morgan and Nellie were born in July 1979.

Bill was on his sabbatical trip to London. I went west and was so happy to be welcomed into the Llewellyn family. We waited for five days and practiced exercises for labor and Richard had a role in counting the time for contractions. Becky woke me up that morning saying “I think it’s time to go because my waters have broken in the shower.” She got Richard up and dressed and into the car, starting childbirth. I didn’t even drive the car to the hospital which was local. Richard and I had a roast lamb dinner waiting in the birthing room for the baby to arrive. We didn’t know the gender or anything. It was wonderful to be there for Morgan’s birth. I put him into a warm tub of bathwater and lowered him into the bath – an idea from the Lamaze childbirth method. He unfolded in the water and kind of blew bubbles. They were thinking of names while I did this and decided on Morgan, Welsh for *song of the sea*. I was there for five weeks or so to help and was in my element with the young baby. Then I went to Melbourne, to St. Kilda, to meet our granddaughter Nellie, born 11 days after Morgan to Jill and Jim, and to give some support. I loved holding and rocking this beautiful little girl who has now grown into a beautiful mother of young Jack Gehling.

So a wonderful highlight was to be with the Australian families one more time. We have had so much time with them, playing games, watching their activities, singing, playing on the beach, having picnics. So Bill and I took the long trip to Adelaide. The airlines were good with wheelchairs and support. On the way out, Ethan and Katie met us at the baggage carrier in LA. He is now engaged to Katie but it was our first time to meet her and we had lunch together. We stayed with Marty and Becky in their home in the hills and enjoyed the beautiful new surroundings. Kelsey was there after traveling in Africa and India so we had a big family welcome party. We seemed to have dinner parties every night, saw everyone and had the best time.

We knew Sonya from our 60th anniversary party and Becky’s wedding here in Tucson so it was a joy to see Sonya and Morgan so obviously in love and well-suited for each other. They had a beautiful big wedding and reception with a rehearsal party the night before. I think we kept up pretty well, taking naps when we could. It was such a happy time. We were honored at the reception for



having come such a long way. I've always admired Australians toasts and speeches and there were excellent ones by Sonya and her Dad, Becky, Morgan and their friend. The next day we had a wonderful day after party at the Esplanade house where Becky and Marty now live. It was wonderful to be reminded of all the fun we had there over the years.

On the return trip, Jim took us around Sydney to catch up with their kids for the weekend. Jim drove Nellie's car so we could visit the family and see the city we lived in briefly in 1969. Our family really took care of us. We met Nell's new husband Karl and baby Jack, who was less than a month old. We have a Jack on the Llewellyn side and now one on the Roberts-Fanning side. We could bless him and love him. They have an interesting house that had been done up with a view of the Harbor Bridge. Then we drove to David and Polly's, our first chance to meet Polly. They made a meal for us. They were married last year in her homeland of Borneo with her family, and Jim, Jill, Nellie and Karl all present.

Marty had volunteered to come back with us to make the trip easier. We met at the Sydney Airport and he helped with luggage and other help we needed. He stayed five days in Tucson to settle us back in, then went back home. That was such a generous gift to us!

A very nice support we have also had from our church has been the provision of spiritual advisers, the Stephens Ministry, who come weekly for an hour to spend time with us and listen. They are trained in this valuable work. My adviser came weekly for three years. Bill's still comes and he really looks forward to these visits. Then I had Elaine who helped most mornings for a few hours, cleaned the house, helped with the laundry, drove us shopping and to appointments. And now there are so many people in Cascades that we meet as we move around the dining room tables, all with interesting stories and lives to get to know.

I look back on some of our health challenges in our later years and think we have experienced diseases of longevity. How lucky we have been to live many years. Most of our friends are still living but many of them are fragile as we are. When I was first studying aging, it was expected that you would withdraw from life as you got older. Since then, people expect you to have a rich life, with quality time more than an emphasis on longevity. I absolutely do not want to live past 100, because I don't see how my mind would stay as alive as I would want it to be.

Bill and I had wanted to age in place, in our home, as long as we could find help. Our preference at this stage was to enjoy the quiet of our home. But now we have moved into the retirement living apartment and assisted living for Bill at Cascades of Tucson. Our children have been great at coming and helping massively to clean up the house and contents for rent. Sue and Tony drop in and have been very helpful when we need them. This fall we've had a great visit series from David and Janie, Becky and Marty and Ned and Judi. Everyone sees Sue and Tony for a visit. It takes about an hour to get out to their home west of Tucson.

I was part of a large extended family as I grew up. I see this pattern of geographical closeness still exists for some people. With all our moving, we have denied that possibility for ourselves. In other ways, the world brings us together in new ways. We love our Skype calls (free internet video/audio software) that keep us in touch. We see each other and keep in touch with what is happening. We started out writing aerograms in 1972. If you answered right away it would be two week's

turnaround time to see how each other were doing. We didn't phone because it was way too expensive, about \$3.00 a minute. Then we went into audiotaping our stories. That also took two weeks. But with Ned in Australia for 7 years and Jim and Becky there permanently, we were the ones that needed to be in touch more. We still wrote some letters.

Our bonds of love are very strong in our family. There is a lot of strength and caring. Almost everyone has had a spouse who has needed care at some time, surgery, pregnancy. We have a great crop of kids and wouldn't trade them for anyone! They have all honored their marriage vows in a time when that is changing. So many people prefer to live alone but I feel that can destroy children's lives. It is just marvelous to see some of our children now beginning to enjoy being grandparents and watch the cycle go around again.

We are known in our town and our church as one person, because we are thought of together. We realize that we are codependent and for us, that works fine because we get along so well. We have given hope to many people, seeing us holding hands with joy in our lives, but I think most people want to live somewhat more separately than I demand. We hope for everyone that they can find a supportive partner if they need it. There will be some bumps on the road, usually relating to illness. When the children were young that was the hardest part and now that we're old, we're both kind of frail. We still walk to the mailbox together. One day we know one of us will be alone and that will be a new story. Perhaps one of us would die soon after the other. It's been 64 ½ years together and are working on our 65th!

For myself, I'm not afraid of dying, but death can be short or prolonged. Most people are afraid of how they die. We found in our study that the older people got, the less they believed in God. That isn't true for me, although I believe that we will be together and we'll be alive as long as you remember us. Life is for the living and we have had all our beautiful family to make it so.