LOVE IN OUR HOUSE

An Oral History of the Gust and Mabel Larson Family

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Edited by Scott Shay Larson

First Printing

"I think about mom and dad quite often and I am sorry I didn't tell them how I felt, but I guess they knew they were loved without the verbal expression. They were not overtly demonstrative and I guess we are not either, but I know there was love in our house and I am happy to have been a part of their union."

Paul Shay Larson

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Editor's Note

Although I didn't realize it at the time, the seeds for this book were sown in late 2010 when I began to transcribe some of the conversations I recorded with my father, Marion Omar Larson, before he passed away in 1999. This initial project gradually expanded in early 2011 as I turned my attention to a box full of other cassette tapes that included interviews with aunts and uncles reflecting on their parents, their siblings, and what it was like to grow up on a small farm in South Dakota in the first half of the 20th century. Over time a book began to take shape, eventually turning into what genealogists in Norway would call an "ættesaga" – a family saga, or story. This book was never intended as a detailed or comprehensive genealogy of the Larson family. It is worth noting that the genealogical information included at the beginning of this book is based on relatively cursory research, and is by no means complete. References to names, dates, and other information are only as accurate as the resources I relied on to document the family's Norwegian lineage. I take full responsibility for any errors or omissions that may have occurred while preparing this book for publication. I am reticent, however, to accept responsibility for any confusion resulting from differences in the spelling of names, for the simple reason that consistency, one learns rather quickly, is not the friend of the Norwegian genealogist.

Naming customs in 19th century Norway[1] are partially responsible for variations in the spelling of family names in genealogical records and documents. These customs included the use of patronymic surnames (i.e., adding the suffix "son" or "daughter" to the father's name, such as Larssen, meaning "Son of Lars") and the addition of a third name derived from the farm where a person lived. In conforming to the American system of surnames, some emigrants used the last patronymic surname assigned before arriving in America, while others chose their farm name. In some cases all the members of one family ended up with the same American surname. In other cases the same family members ended up with different names, or different spellings of the same name, the latter often a result of the non-standard manner in which emigrants, or those processing their immigration documents, translated Norwegian names into American English, a

particular challenge given problematic vowels such as Æ, Ø, and Å. Add to this the sometimes arbitrary changes made by the immigrants themselves as they subsequently registered their names in official records and documents in their new country.

It doesn't get any easier as you trace your roots back even further. As I was reminded by Allan Kvalevaag, a Sweden-based genealogist with Norwegian roots, names represent a special chapter in genealogical research:

> *"It must be remembered that in many cases only the priest or local government officials could read and write at that time in Norway. Farmers and fishermen often did not know how to spell their names or even know what year they were born. One priest could have spelled the name at birth one way, such as "Marta," while another priest might have written the same name as "Martha" at the time of confirmation, and a third priest "Marthe" at the time of marriage. And then you might find a completely different spelling altogether on the gravestone, the spelling as the person wanted it. The same happens to surnames, especially in Norway which has two ways of writing, "nynorsk" (new Norwegian) and "bokmål" (book language)."*

The Notes section includes references for some of the discrepancies in spelling that I came across during my research, as well as further points of clarification related to a variety of subjects referenced in this book. In the case of historical records included as part of the oral narrative, such as newspaper obituaries and personal memoirs, I've retained the spellings as they appeared in the source documents.

Foreword

This story begins in the southwest coastal region of Norway, where the winds blow hard off the North Sea and the land opens up to a stunning labyrinth of Arctic fjords, the narrow inlets and steep cliffs carved in the western landscape by thousands of years of glacial activity during the ice age. It was along these scenic yet harsh shores that Lars Østensen of Gismarvik[2], a small farming district near Tysvær, courted the young Grete Einarsdatter of Stavanger. They married in 1831, settled into a rural life in Gismarvik, and over the course of the next twenty one years gave birth to twelve children. Their eleventh child, Ole Gabriel Larssen, is the father of Gust Larson, and their sixth child, Anna Gurine Larsdatter, is the grandmother of Mabel (Shay) Larson.

The children of Lars Østensen Gismarvik (July 5, 1807 – April 30, 1887) and Grete Einarsdatter (1809 – November 19, 1852)[3]

- Østen Larssen (1832 – unknown)
- Eilert Larssen (1835 – 1839)
- Søren Larssen (1837 – unknown)
- Elen Sofie Larsdatter (1838 –1913); married Lars Larsen Lundgaathen
- Eilert Larssen (1840 – unknown)
- Anna Gurine Larsdatter (1842 – 1918); married Hans Larsen Lundgaathen
- Lars Larssen (1843 – unknown)
- Laura Marie Larsdatter (1846 – 1900)
- Johan Ludvig Larssen (1846 – 1900)
- Matias Larssen (1848 – unknown)
- Ole Gabriel Larssen (1850 –1914)
- Grete Larsdatter (1852 – 1852)

The story continues just north of Gismarvik in two farming districts of Kvinnherad, a municipality in the county of Hordaland. In 1838, Lars Larsson of Långaten[4]

and Anna Larsdatter of Undarheim[5] united in marriage and began a life of their own that witnessed the birth of six children. Their second child, Hans Larsen Lundgaathen, is the grandfather of Mabel (Shay) Larson.

The children of Lars Larsson Långaten (1787– May 22, 1852) and Anna Larsdatter Undarheim (1812 -1883)

- Lars Larsen Lundgaathen (1839 –1923); married Elen Sofie Larsdatter
- Hans Larsen Lundgaathen (1842 –1935); married Anna Gurine Larsdatter
- Guro Larsdatter Lundgaathen (1846 – 1850)
- Brita Larsdatter Lundgaathen (1849 – 1849)
- Lars Larsen Lundgaathen (1849 – unknown)
- Knut Larsen Lundgaathen (1852 –1939)

Lars Østensen and Grete Einarsdatter lived and died in Gismarvik. Similarly, Lars Larsson and Anna Larsdatter lived and died in Kvinnherad. Neither couple ventured beyond the shores of their homeland. Many of their children, however, packed what little possessions they owned and boarded transatlantic steamships in the port cities of Stavanger and Bergen, where they joined a wave of hardworking Norwegian emigrants bound for America and the promise of a better life.

Dedication

This book would not have been possible without the love and respect that the children of Gust and Mabel Larson shared throughout their lives, and which they bestowed to their own children, nieces, nephews, and grandchildren in many ways, not least of which was through the lively stories they told, and retold, at family reunions over the years. With my deepest respect and sincere appreciation, I dedicate this book to Gust and Mabel's colorful and caring offspring: Orland, Mayola, Bud, John, Darell, Margie, Don, Paul, Wayne, Martin, and Melba. It is, after all, their story.

Acknowledgements

This book was compiled from a variety of sources, including taped interviews, notes from conversations, newspaper clippings, Internet resources, historical records and, on a very special note of appreciation, the writings of Mayola Gladys Larson and Paul Shay Larson.

With respect to the Larson family genealogy, I am indebted to a book entitled "*Midway 1882-1982*[6]," a rich collection of historical documents and photographs related to the region in South Dakota where Gust and Mabel raised their family. Details in this book, including an extended family tree, served as important starting points for subsequent research. The Internet also proved an invaluable tool, and on this front I'd like to express my gratitude to Ginger Metcalf Dingus, a distant relative who documented her passionate and extensive genealogical research in a number of online databases and discussion threads. Likewise, I am indebted to Allan Kvalevaag, a genealogist based in Sweden who operates a website[7] that includes a wealth of genealogical information sourced from historical records in Norway. This website, and Allan's gracious assistance, helped me gain a deeper understanding of Gust and Mabel's Norwegian roots.

I also wish to add a note of thanks to my father's best childhood friend, George Larson, who kindly gave me a copy of his own family's history, "*Larson Roots: Memories, Myths and Folklore*[8]," when my father and I visited him in South Dakota in the late 1980s. Edited by his son David, this intimate family chronicle includes a number of first hand essays about growing up in Mt. Vernon at the same time that Gust and Mabel were raising their family. George passed away in 2007, but he is remembered fondly in this book as a caring friend and good neighbor.

Lastly, a very special thanks to my sister Diane who, by facilitating recorded interviews with Wayne, John, and Melba Larson in 2009, allowed me to incorporate their voices into this story.

Although I've relied on a number of written sources in compiling this narrative, I've chosen to call this an "oral" history because the stories and memories that make up the core of this book were first and foremost shared verbally at Larson family gatherings over the years, as brothers and sisters reminisced on lawn chairs pulled close together, drinks in hand and faces bathed in the summer shade, as they congregated on beds and chairs in one or another's motel room late into the night, the din of laughter and gossip keeping young nieces and nephews awake, and as they shared breakfast, lunch, and dinner meals together, sometimes with bags under their eyes, and always with cups of coffee glued to their hands.

With the exception of certain discrepancies in historical records, occasional lapses in memory, and a tall tale or two, most of what follows is true.

Dramatis Personae

The Parents:

Gust Larson, born in 1879
Mabel Shay, born in 1891, married Gust in 1909

The Children:

Orland, aka Orlie, born in 1910
Mayola, born in 1912
Marion, aka Bud, born in 1914
John, born in 1916
Darell, born in 1918
Majorie, aka Margie, born in 1921
Don, born in 1923
Paul, born in 1924
Wayne, born in 1926
Martin, aka Mart and Marty, born in 1928
Melba, born in 1932

Chapter 1

An Adventurous Element

Emigrating and Homesteading

T.K. Derry[9]**:** At mid-century Illinois ('Ellenaais') had 2,500 Norwegians in a population of 81,000 and in the next two decades their numbers were multiplied by five. But Norwegians were not content to stay put. New arrivals from home commonly used the existing settlements as a starting point from which to move to other, possibly more desirable, areas which were just being opened up; and there was nearly always an adventurous element in the existing settlements which preferred to join them.

Ole Gabriel Larssen

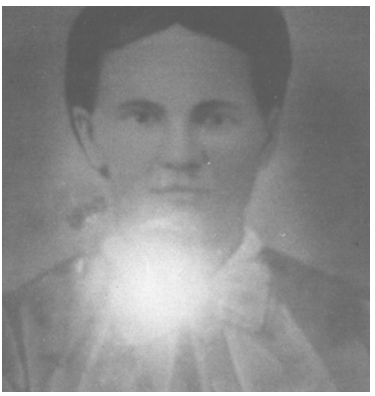
Newspaper Obituary[10]**:** Ole Larson was born in Norway in June 1850, being nearly 64 years of age at death. He came to this country in 1871 and settled in

Illinois, where he was married a couple of years later. He came with his family to South Dakota in 1882 and took a homestead in Bristol Township, where he lived until he bought his farm in Elliot Township. Shortly after he came to South Dakota his wife died and he was left with several small children. Later he was married to Miss Martha Runestad. Mr. Larson was a good Christian character, well known in this vicinity, and loved and respected by all. He was one of the founders of Trinity congregation. He was always a faithful worker in his church, and for a number of years he served as deacon. Through his death both the congregation and the whole neighborhood suffer a loss, but he has gone to his reward.

The children of Ole Gabriel Larssen (June, 1850 – May 8, 1914) and Mary Knutson[11] (1852 – April 4, 1885)

- Lewis John Larson (February 6, 1874 – July 18, 1933)
- Martin Lars Larson (December 9, 1875 – August 1970)
- Gust Larson (March 10, 1879 – October 7, 1959)
- Laura Sophia Hoefert (1882 – 1972)
- Otto Larson (April 3, 1885 – December, 1914)
- Myron Larson (April 3, 1885 – April 3, 1885)

Midway 1882-1982[12]: Mary S. Knutson, first wife of Ole G. Larson, born in 1852, died March 3, 1885. She was buried in Elliot.



Mary Knutson

Ole Gabriel Larssen

Dakota Dateline[13]: Ole and Mary Knudson Larson came to a farm north of Mt. Vernon in 1883. She died soon after they came and he in 1914.

Tri-County Journal: The death of Ole G. Larson of Elliot, one of the pioneers of this community, occurred at the Mitchell Hospital last Thursday night (May 8, 1914) following an operation for intestinal trouble. The death of Ole Larson takes from this community one of its staunch and honorable citizens. He will be missed, not only by relatives and friends, but in the church where he took an active part, and was one of the main supporters. The bereaved relatives have the sympathy of the entire community.

Gust Larson

Bud: I remember dad saying his ancestors in Norway were fisherman.

Mayola: Our father, Gustav Larson, was born in 1879 in Pontiac, Illinois. His father, Ole Larson, son of Lars Gismervik, was born in Norway in 1850. He came to America in 1870 and settled in Illinois. In 1884 Ole took a homestead in South Dakota and built a home for his family. The family came by covered wagon. Our dad, who was five at the time, remembered how tired he got herding the cattle on the way. Shortly after they arrived, dad's mother, Mary Knutson, died giving birth to twins.

Bud: Dad came out to South Dakota in a covered wagon, in 84' or '85, I think. But he never really talked about it. He never talked much about when he was young and what it was like then.

Mayola: He remembers having to trail along behind the wagon and herding the cattle.

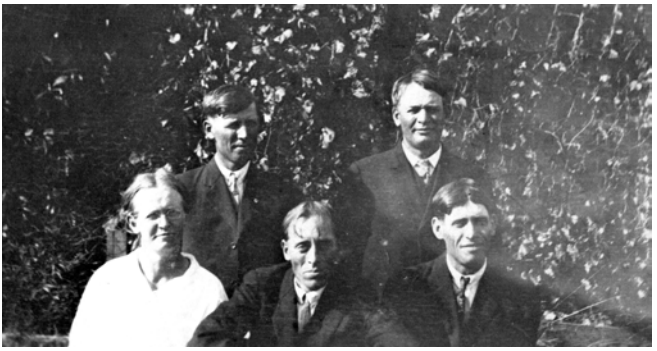
Newspaper Obituary[14]**:** Gust Larson, son of Ole and Mary Larson, was born near Pontiac, Illinois, on March 10, 1879, and departed this life October 7, 1959, at his home in Mt. Vernon, at the age of 80 years, 6 months, and 27 days. In the spring of 1884 at the age of five he came with his parents to South Dakota.

After his mother passed away in April of that same year, he made his home with his aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Hanson[15]. He spent the greater part of his life farming north of Mt. Vernon.

Mayola: After his mother died, dad and his sister Laura went to live with relatives, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Hanson. Dad and Laura grew up in that family. The two older brothers, Lewis and Martin, stayed with their father.

Bud: Dad was basically raised by the Hanson family. He wasn't raised by his father.

Mayola: The twin who lived, Otto, was taken by a relative, Hans Larson[16], who later moved to Tacoma, Washington. Dad and his brothers had little contact with each other until they were all out on their own.



Gust and his siblings
(Top row, left to right: Martin, Lewis. Bottom row, left to right: Laura, Otto, and Gust)

Newspaper Obituary[17]: Otto Larson was born April 3, 1885, in Bristol Township, Aurora County. His mother died when he was a day old, and he was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. H. Larson, who at that time lived in Elliot Township, Sanborn County. He had a bright personality, was a loyal son and brother. He was generous and kind, and the memory of his life will linger long in our hearts.

John: I remember dad telling me about when he and his two brothers, Martin and Lewis, Lew they called him, and his sister, came from Illinois, across Iowa,

and settled in South Dakota. Originally he was born in Illinois. I remember he said how tough it was coming by covered wagon. “It was really bad,” he would say, “But we made it.” When he was growing up, he probably didn’t pay too much attention to some of that stuff. They just never talked too much about it. They didn’t think that much about it, I guess.

Mayola: The Ben Hanson family, they considered dad a part of their family because he grew up with them. Gust and Alfred, the Hanson boys, they were like brothers to him. They didn’t really adopt him on paper, but he was like their brother[18].

Bud: I never did see my grandfather, my dad’s father. I don’t know why. He lost his first wife, my dad’s mother. She was quite young when she died. Dad was around six or seven years old then.

Hans and Anna Gurine Larson

Newspaper Obituary[19]: Hans Larson was born March 9, 1842 in Kvinhered, Hardanger, Norway. He died October 20, 1935, at the home of his daughter, Gustava[20] Shay in Elliot Township, Sanborn County, at the ripe old age of 93 years, 7 months and 11 days. As a young man he spent a number of years following the sea as a sailor. On July 27, 1866 he was united in marriage to Anna Gurine Larson of Stavanger, Norway. After their marriage he engaged in the grocery business at Kvammen for a number of years, after which he operated a dairy farm near Bergen for two years. In April 1881 he emigrated to America with his family and located at Rowe, Livingston County, Illinois, but in the fall of the same year during the Free Homestead boom in the west, he decided to try pioneer life and took up a homestead in Elliot Township, Sanborn County, then Dakota Territory, where for a number of years he and his family suffered all the hardships of pioneer life. Mr. Larson was the first settler in Elliot Township, having located there in the fall of 1881.

The children of Hans Larsen Lundgaathen (March 9, 1842 – October 20, 1935) and Anna Gurine Larsdatter (February 9, 1842 – 1918)

- Lauritz Oswald Larson (October 3, 1867 – February 25, 1941)
- Gustava Shay (September 27, 1869 – December 26, 1957)
- Alfred Larson (September 6, 1871 – July 26, 1954)
- Gunhilde Larson (1873 – 1891)
- Eilert Larson (1875 – 1893)
- Gertrude Katinka Shay (1877 – 1951)
- Olaf Larson (September 7, 1879 – January 31, 1971)
- Laura Paulson (1881 – 1965)
- Ellen Schoenfelder (June 17, 1884 – March 2, 1965)

Bud: Mother was born in Mt. Vernon. She was a Shay. Grandma Shay, her mom, was born in Norway though. I seem to recall that she had a couple of cousins and an uncle who emigrated with her.

The Hans Larson Family (1895)
(Top row, left to right: Gertrude, Alfred, Augusta, Oswald, Olaf, and Ellen. Bottom row, left to right: Otto Larson, Gust's younger brother, Gurine and Hans Larson, and Laura)

Dakota Dateline: The Hanson Larson[21] family came in 1882. Children: Alfred, Augusta (Shay), Laura (Paulson), Ellen (Schoenfelder), and Olaf.

Newspaper Obituary[22]**:** Augusta Larson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hans Larson, was born near Bergen, Norway, on September 27, 1869, and died December 26, 1957 at the Methodist Hospital in Mitchell at the age of 88 years, 2 months and 29 days. In 1881 at the age of 11 years she emigrated with her parents to Rowe, Illinois. In 1882 the family came to Dakota Territory as homesteaders. She lived the greater part of her life on the farm in Sanborn County, also living in Davison County and Mt. Vernon. She was married to Ole A. Shay in 1887 and five children were born to them.

The children of Ole A. Shay (January 26, 1856 – 1904)[23] **and Gustava Larson (September 27, 1869 – December 26, 1957)**

- Mabel Julia Shay (January 21, 1891 – December 6, 1973)
- Elmer Howard Shay (August 2, 1893 – July 6, 1972)
- Lillian (1897 – unknown)
- Wilmer A. Shay (February 3, 1899 – September 16, 1974)
- Hazel G. Shay (May 19, 1901 – November 11, 1971)

Ole and Augusta Shay

Bud: Grandma Shay's brother, Oswald, he was a newsman. He lived in Storla, and he started a local newspaper called the Tri-County Journal. I heard that he rode all the way to Washington on a bicycle. I don't remember who told me that.

H. R. Christopher[24]: L. O. Larson's Tri-County Journal was published at Storla in Belford Township between 1912 and 1924.

Newspaper Obituary[25]: In April, 1881, at the age of 13 years, Lauritz Oswald Larson emigrated to America to Rowe, Livingston County, Illinois. In 1882 he came with his parents to Dakota Territory, where his parents homesteaded in Elliot Township, Sanborn County.

H. R. Christopher[26]: About the turn of the century Oswald Larson made a trip by bicycle to Tacoma, Washington. He filled the hollow handle bars with dimes and removed the grips each morning to shake out a day's allowance, always taking coins from both sides to maintain good balance.

Tri-County Journal: We are in receipt of a copy of Bergen, Norway, Aftenblad (Evening Journal) which contains a column article relating to the 50th anniversary of Mr. L. Larson[27], of Bergen, as manager of the Bergen Steamship Co. Mr. Larson is 76 years of age and has been manager of the line for 50 years. He is an uncle of the Tri-County Journal Man. (December, 1915).

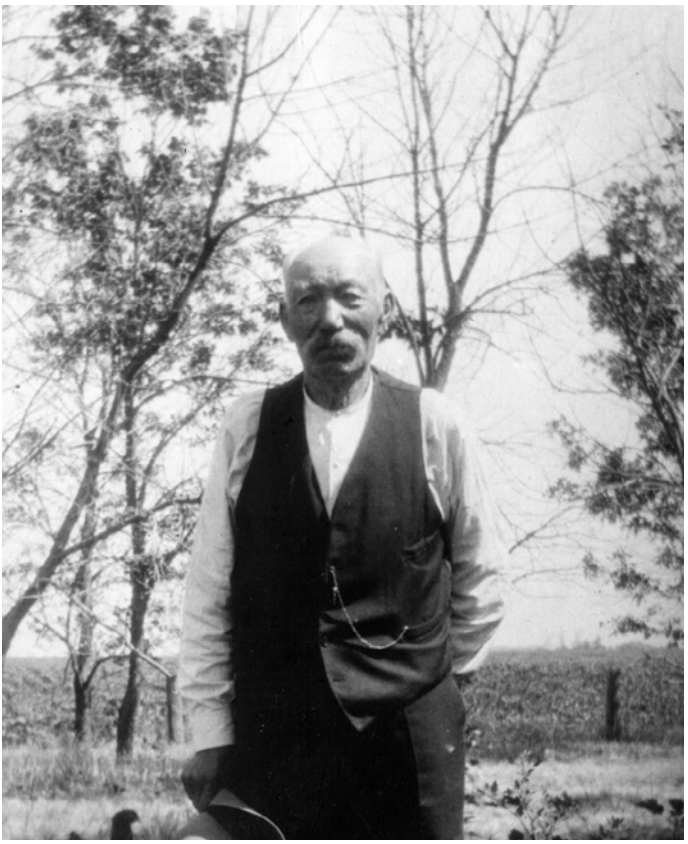
Shay Family gathering at the Alfred Larson home (1902)
(Top row, left to right: Harvey Shay, Lars Wagner Helgeson, Mrs. Burt Shay, Anna Helgeson, Mrs. Ole Shay, and Ole Shay. Bottom row, left to right: Marie Helgeson, Burt Shay, Mabel, Wilmer, and Elmer Shay)

H. R. Christopher[28]**:** The Ole Shay family first lived on the Sumner's place, NW ¼ sec 5, Blendon. His first wife was Adlaide Olson, born 1861, died 1887, buried at Victor. They had four children: Burton (1877 – 1949), Harvey (1884 – 1904), Alfred (1886), and Celia (1881 – 1898). Ole Shay's second wife was Augusta Larson. They had five children: Mabel (1891 – 1973), Elmer (1893 – 1972), Lillian (1897), Wilmer (1899 – 1974), and Hazel (1901 – 1971). The family moved to the Risetter place, NE ¼ sec. 34, Elliot, where Ole Shay died in 1904 at the age of 48. Mr. Shay was buried at Victor. The widow and children then lived in Mt. Vernon for several years before returning to the farm. Ole Shay and son Burton were married to sisters, "Gustava" and Gertrude Larson.

Mayola: Mother's mother, Gustava Larson Shay, was born in Bergen, Norway in 1869. When she was eleven years old she immigrated with her family to America. In 1882 they settled in Sanborn County in Dakota Territory. Gustava married Ole Shay in 1887. Ole was born in Woodstock, Illinois. His parents from Norway spelled their name Schieie; later it was changed to Shay. Ole died at the age of 49. Gustava, our grandmother, moved with her family to Mt. Vernon for a few years, then moved back to the original farm.

T.K. Derry[29]**:** As early as 1880 the Dakota Territory contained more than 20,000 people of Norwegian stock, who had come direct from the transatlantic steamers or from existing settlements where life had become unadventurous and land expensive. When it was divided into states in 1889, Norwegians of the first or second generation totaled nearly 50,000 in North Dakota and nearly 35,000 in South Dakota.

Darell: My great grandfather on my mother's side, his name was Hans, and he settled that area north of the place where I was born, up near Storla. He could only speak Norwegian. He was the first to settle that area. He'd have to walk, as a crow flies, about twenty miles to get a sack of flour and salt and the necessary ingredients for living. He would walk to Mitchell, which was about twenty miles from there. My grandmother, his daughter, remembers the Indians came by one time and she just went out and put food out and fed them. She said they were happy and smiled, and then took off. I imagine they were part of the Sioux. They were just hungry, I suppose, and evidently they sneaked away from the reservation. It was after Custer's Battle of Little Bighorn.



Hans Larson

Newspaper Obituary[30]**:** Mrs. Gust (Mabel) Larson was born January 21, 1891, at Mt. Vernon to Mr. and Mrs. Ole Shay and died December 6, 1973 at a Mitchell hospital. On June 2, 1909 she married Gust Larson.

Mayola: I remember mother used to say it was a good thing we didn't keep the name Gismervik because everyone would have called you "Kiss me quick."

Mabel Shay's baptism picture

Chapter 2

Faith, Love, and Caring

Gust and Mabel

Mayola: Mother and dad seemed to take everything in stride. With faith, love and caring the time had passed.

Paul[31]: My mom, Mabel, was a good, honest, conscientious, loving, religious, faithful, imperturbable, gracious mother with a sense of humor and a love for all. My dad, Gust, was an honest, reserved, disciplined, dependable father who was good to his wife and his children, and whose love was more restrained.

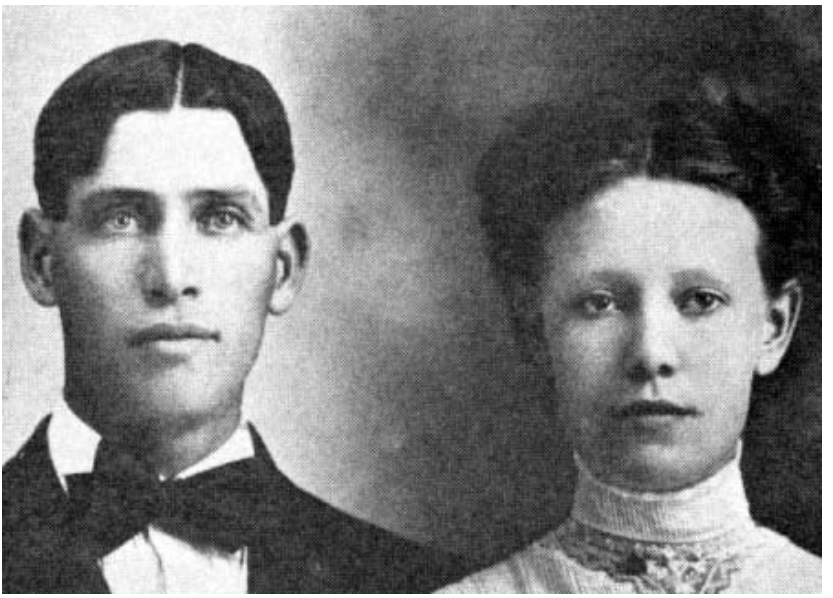
Mayola: Without a doubt mother and dad were the most special persons in our lives. Both parents instilled in us respect for everyone, responsibility to ourselves and others, tolerance, and lots of caring.

Mayola: Dad was quiet[32], but he never scolded us or spanked us.

Don: He was very firm, but he was a good father.

Bud: I didn't really know him. He was a very quiet guy. He never really said too much.

Mayola: Dad could really carry on a good conversation, but he wasn't one to just talk. But mom…well, she was a talker. She always said she had to talk for Gust.



"Without a doubt mother and dad were the most special persons in our lives."

Wayne: My dad was very strict, not very communicative. We always knew he cared, and in his own way he probably loved you, but you'd never know it. I mean, he never expressed it. But a lot of people did that at that period of time, especially the Lutherans. They had very little emotions, no hugging or kissing like you see today with friends. You hardly ever saw anything like that.

Paul: I wish I could have understood dad better. He was such a private person, that all of his children could not really communicate with him.

Bud: We respected him. We worked for him.

Mayola: I'd say mother and dad shared responsibilities and discipline in raising eleven children. Dad was the quiet one. However, his decisions and opinions were respected by his children, family members, and friends. Mother was the one we usually went to about requests or problems, things like that. Dad was

more apt to get involved with bigger decisions. When mom would say "Go see your dad," we knew we'd better listen.

John: Dad was doing something all the time. But he never milked the cows. We were the ones who always did that.

Mayola: Dad was serious about teaching the boys about farming and how to deal with the animals respectfully.

Bud: He worked as a carpenter sometimes[33], when his cousins or Lew wanted work done or something. He was a good carpenter. One of the Hansons once told me that when dad was only seventeen years old he was building barns just like an old timer.

Darell: By the time my dad was around seventeen years old he'd already built many buildings like barns and houses.

Bud: I remember dad always had a square and a level with him, and a carpenter's marking pencil behind his ear.

Mayola: The only time I remember dad whistling was when he was doing carpenter work.

Bud: My dad was a farmer all his life, but he was also a good carpenter. He was building barns and things like that, even up to when he was almost seventy years old. So he must have been pretty good.

Darell: He was quite a successful as a farmer. He was diversified in the crops that he planted. We had wheat, oat, barley, and hay. Then we raised pigs, chickens, and cattle.

Paul: I feel that from dad I received the mental toughness necessary to not be intimidated by anyone physically or mentally.

Don: When he snapped his fingers, why, we lined up.

Melba: I think I learned patience from my father. My brothers would tell me that

I had a different dad than they did. And I did. I was the baby, and I was a girl. They were all boys up until Margie.

Darell: My father, if somebody got sick, he'd stay with them all night long. When Margie got sick he sat up with her night after night.

Paul: I think my parents Gust and Mabel were the ingredients for a strong and durable family.

Mayola: Mother had a tolerance for everyone. I remember her saying, "Anything can happen in the best of families," whenever there was gossip in the neighborhood.

Wayne: Mabel was a very loving person. You could always see it when you were sick. She was always right there.

Don: She was loving and affectionate, but she was also firm.

Paul: Mom was a religious person with a faith that was impenetrable and I somehow relate the 23rd Psalm to her dedication. And I honestly believe that even though at the time when every morning this 23rd Psalm was read and I got tired of the repetition, I can quote it verbatim, and it has given me strength in times when I needed it. Even though no emotion was displayed, I believe this morning ritual gave dad some inner strength, too, during those tough times. I know that he was always patient and respectful during this devotional period.

Darell: I can remember when I was ten years old and my mother was dragging me off to Sunday school. I didn't want to go, and I went screaming and crying to my dad, who was working over by the barn. I said, "What's it all about?" And my dad said, "I don't know, and you don't know, but your mother thinks she knows and she has faith, so you do what she says."

John: She always believed in the church, and she had very strong faith.

Paul: From mom I feel that I received that compassion and strong faith that gave us a feeling of confidence in times when things are going bad, or not to be carried away when things are going well. Mom had the humility because of her faith, but

she also loved herself as she loved her children and her neighbors and friends. She truly lived her religion, and now I understand the impact of that better.

Darell: Dad was not very religious. He never sang a hymn, never said a prayer. But mother was. Every day, three times a day.

Bud: Dad wasn't too religious. He wound up going to church, though, more to please mom, I'm sure.

Mayola: Mother would always say a prayer over dinner. Dad let her have that part of her life while remaining silent.

Mabel Shay (left) and her friend Sarah Christopher

Wayne: I learned a lot of tolerance from my mother. She was biased in only one respect, and that was against Catholics. She was a Lutheran, and that was typical of that time. You never heard her talk negative things about Indians or black people, ever.

Bud: I think she became more religious when Margie got so sick. You know, she didn't know what was going to happen, whether Margie was going to pass away or not. But the whole family, all her uncles, they were all religious.

Wayne: She was very, very religious. She had a lot of faith. And that was kind of amazing in itself. She went through some very tough times during the depression. She had a nervous breakdown, because of that I'm sure, the money part of it and all.

Darell: Mother had a great sense of humor. And she was happy-go-lucky, except when one of us got hurt. She'd stitch us up and then nearly pass out. Bud was using a scythe one time and was cutting down sunflowers and he cut Don in the knee. And Don was yelling and screaming and crying. And she ran off the porch excitedly saying, "Don is hurt, Don is hurt," and fell right down on the ground. Oh, boy.

Mayola: By action, not a lot of talk, mother and dad instilled in us respect for people and work, responsibility to ourselves and others, tolerance and caring – in spite of the hard work, worries with the big family, money situations, etc. I, for one, never had the feeling that things were bad. They must have kept a lot of their worries to themselves. There always seemed to be a way to solve the problems without a lot of fuss.

Mayola: Education was important. Mother and dad participated in school activities and attended programs whenever possible. Most of the boys participated in athletic activities during high school years. Dad was an ardent supporter. By the time Melba, the youngest, was in high school, mom really got involved, too.

Darell: Gust, he was a hard worker. We'd be up at six o'clock most of the time. When harvest time came around we'd be up as early as four or five o'clock, getting our chores done, milking the cows, or whatever he needed. Then you'd

"Both were outstanding persons, mom in her way and dad in his."

start doing harvest work, all the grains and all. And that required a neighborhood almost, working together. My father, he ran the threshing machine. The threshing machine was owned by our neighbor, and dad ran it. He was also an excellent mechanic as far as machinery was concerned. He would be standing on the threshing machine while people drove up with their hay racks and grains and bundles. They'd throw them into the threshing machine and out of the spout would come the grain. We'd usually put the grain in storage, and then sometimes he would drive and take a load in the wagon to the town, where they had storage for graineries, big storage granaries, right next to the railroad tracks.

Bud: He had a tough life, I tell you. But it didn't seem to bother him any.

Mayola: No, it didn't. I don't think he ever spanked any of us. I don't think dad ever gave anybody a spanking.

Bud: Maybe mom did, but I don't think dad ever did.

Mayola: Mother said she had given the first-born son, Orlie, enough spankings

to last for the other ten children.

Darell: My dad only spanked me once. I was about five or six, and a Chautauqua had come to town. A Chautauqua[34] is kind of like a carnival. They had a stage, and entertainment, and things like that. It was one of the first things I remember. He took the family, the kids, and mother had to stay with the babies, probably Paul. And I had so much fun I wanted to go again the next day. But my dad said it was mother and my older sister's turn, and I had to stay at home. I started crying and crying, saying, "I want to go, I want to go again." I just carried on like that and I guess he'd had enough. He dropped my pants right there and then smacked my but until I peed on the floor. That's the only time he touched me.

Bud: Dad never really got after us badly. He only got after me one time. We had this white horse named ol' Doc. We used him when we did the plowing. And one time I was leading him out to the field, and the plow tongue was down this way and ol' Doc, he stepped right on it and broke it. And dad cussed me out. He blamed it on me, but I didn't have anything to do with it. I was just leading him out. Doc was the one who broke it. He was a good horse, but he was a clumsy thing.

Darell: When I turned sixteen, on my birthday, he came up and shook my hand and said, "You are a man, now. You look like one, you act like one, you fight like one, and you drink like one. You're a man, no longer a boy. And the most important thing is that you work like a man." He never really gave me any advice, or seldom did, but I remember that.

Wayne: He didn't milk any cows as I recall, except once. He milked cows once. Martin and I were playing in a tournament, and we won the tournament, and instead of calling us and getting us up the next morning, he milked all the cows for us. I don't know if it was a reward, but it was a good deal anyway.

John: On Saturday night dad would get the car and take us into Mt. Vernon for ice cream, treats, and things like that. But all the time my mother was always in the house, taking care of the kids, and cooking.

Darell: I was crazy about baseball, and I was pretty good. My dad taught me how to pitch. First thing he taught me with was…well, you see, he got this old

tire out and had me throw ninety balls through the tire. And he taught me how to throw curves and sliders, but he didn't let me throw many curves. He played baseball when he was young, out in Washington, and he was good, real good.

Tri-County Journal: The Blendon Northern Lights and the Storla Crescents met on the Storla diamond last Saturday afternoon for their first matched ball game of the season. The game was well played, though there were a number of errors made by both sides. The score was 5 to 4, in favor of the visitors. Crescents: Gust Larson, left field. (June 20, 1912)

Mayola: When Melba was born I didn't even know mother was pregnant.

Bud: Mother was always quite heavy, quite heavy set. Anyway, up in the school one morning the coach came up to me and said, "Well, congratulations Bud." And I said, "Congratulations for what?" And he said, "You have a baby sister." This was when Melba was born. And I didn't even know that mother was pregnant. This was in 1932, so I was about eighteen.

Wayne: My dad never missed a basketball game. He didn't go to football games because that was during the day. But at night he never missed a ballgame. He never said a word the whole time that he was there. He never said a word about anything. He just sat there. And one of his friends said, "You know, I've been going to basketball games for four or five years and I've never heard him say a word. Not about the coach. Not about the players. He just watched." He was a man of few words.

Melba: The only time that I can ever remember my dad getting after me was when I was in high school, I was a cheerleader, and he drove me everywhere. I never had to worry about getting a ride to the ball games; he'd always give me a ride there and home. But this one night I had been going with this one fellow, and for some reason my dad had gotten in an argument with this boy's older brother about basketball, because my dad would be on the referees constantly. He wasn't very nice to the referees. He was screaming at them. Anyway, dad was arguing with this fellow's older brother about something and my dad got really mad at him. So we drove into town that night, and I thought he was really quiet that night. He didn't say anything. We always pulled up to the hang out, which was the drugstore, and as I started to get out of the car he said, "Just a minute. I want

to tell you something." He said, "I do not want you hanging around with that boy – ever!" I wasn't serious with him, but just the fact that my dad would say that to me. Because my mom was the one who was always on me. Then after that, I screwed up. One day my mom called school and told the principal to tell me that when my dad picked me that I was supposed to bring bread and milk. The principal said, "Well, she's not here." Mom said, "Well, where'd she go?" "I don't know," he said. "She's just not here." See, what I had done was ride with this guy on his motorcycle to Mitchell. Luckily we got there safe. And I got a willow switch when I got home. I never did it again.

George Larson[35]: Bud and I were in a small car wreck. Poor lights on that Model A coupe and we came upon a car, no lights or reflectors. We swung wide to miss it, hit the ditch, and turned over. Perhaps you noticed an old scar on Bud's wrist. He put his hand through the car window. We simply put the car back on its wheels and drove into town to the doctor's. We went home to Bud's parents and his mother was home with a younger one or two. We told her what happened. I guess I was crying by then. But she gathered us gently in her arms and told us how thankful we should be no one was seriously hurt.

Melba: Dad was always on the boys. I had a couple of them say that they had a different dad than the one I grew up with. And my best friend who was right on the farm just north of us, she'd always come down and say, "Your dad is so funny." One night we were sitting there, and he'd gotten a letter from Mayola, and he was looking at it. He was just being kind of funny, and he said, "I don't know if that girl's really a teacher, because she sure can't write. I can't read it, can you?" And I couldn't read it either. You know, she wrote so different. My girlfriend was staying over that night. I was the only one left at home then, and so we had all these rooms. And I said, "Which room do you want to sleep in?" And my dad turned around, I don't even know why I remember this, but he turned around and said to me, "Well, you can't dirty them all." And my friend thought that was so funny. And I said, "No, we won't. We'll just sleep in one."

Melba: When my first daughter was born, we wanted Mary Ann as a name for some reason. I think because that was what Mayola and Margie wanted to call me – Mary Ann or Mary Jane, but somebody wouldn't let them. That was too common. So mom and dad came down to Sioux Falls to see the baby and stayed for a few days. And my dad was very frugal. And he was going to go home and

pick my mom up later, you know, in a week or so, and as he was leaving he handed mom a twenty dollar bill and said, "Give that to Melba for Mary." Mom said I almost fainted. "Why did he do that?" she wondered. And then she figured it out – dad's mother's name was Mary. And I don't think any of the other kids got that, I was the only one.

Paul: It has always bothered me that I could not do more for my parents, who have had such an impact on my life.

Immanuel Lutheran Cemetery, Mt. Vernon, South Dakota

Bud: He died of old age. He had some dementia, but he died of hardening of the arteries. The last time I saw him he didn't really know who I was. And he used to go into town in the car, and when he started heading home he'd head out to the farm instead of their house in Mt. Vernon. Of course, everybody knew who he was and helped out. They finally got him to quit driving.

Don: Later, when he was older, he would confuse me at times with Orlie, and then he would tell me about the days back when he used to hang around at Firesteel Creek, where they did hunting and stuff like that.

Mayola: Both were outstanding persons, mom in her way and dad in his. I've always hoped I could carry forward at least a few of my parents many fine qualities.

Paul: I didn't realize that one can miss one's parents long after they are gone, the things we take for granted, for all the years and all the things not said or done. We say little thanks or "I love you, mom and dad," for words alone can't express the feelings one has had. It seems that parents are respected, honored and loved more after they are gone, and I know in my case this is true. I know I respected them and loved them when they were alive but now in retrospect I can see the scope of their responsibility, in raising such a large family during the depression, and being able to administer enough love, discipline, respect and work habits so their children could be good citizens, good persons, good parents, etc.

Chapter 3

A Spot on the Gently Rolling Prairie

Mt. Vernon Bound

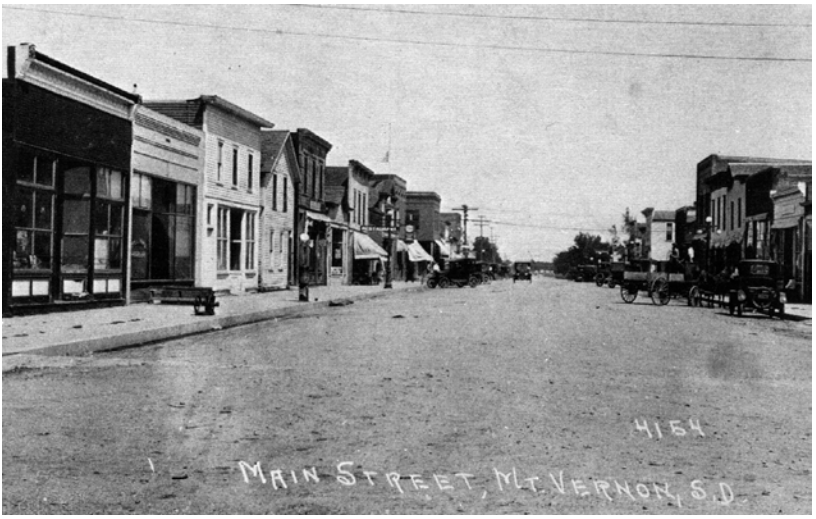
Dakota Dateline[36]: In the beginning it was just Dakota Territory, a spot on the gently rolling prairie half way between the Big Sioux River and the Missouri. Then it got a name. Travelers who followed the Old Fort Thompson Trail called it Arlandton after the man in whose home they found shelter as they went westward. And so it appeared on the survey map of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul railroad in 1879. Arlandton had a depot, a paper, and a post office. It became Mt. Vernon when the railroad pushed westward from Mitchell after 1881. The Post Office Department requested the change because Arlandton was too much like the already organized Arlington.

Darell: Mom and dad were married in Minneapolis in 1909[37]. They went there by train, catching the train from Mitchell. My mom was wearing a lavender dress that got torn on the train. She was too embarrassed to have my dad come in and button up her dress, so she was married in that lavender dress. She only wore her wedding dress for the pictures.

Bud: They went to Washington after they got married. I think my dad or mom had a relative out there, in Tacoma[38]. They went from Minneapolis. Dad got work in a wheat field there.

Mayola: Dad and mother went out to Washington State before they settled in Mt. Vernon. He and mother stayed there about a year. He worked in the grain fields out there.

Darell: He worked as a carpenter and in the wheat fields. But he also played semi-pro baseball out in Washington. He was a pitcher, and I heard he had such a fast ball the catcher had to put extra padding in his glove. But that was a hard life, and Mabel didn't approve. She wasn't going to let Gust ride in a dirty old bus and lead that kind of life. So they went back to South Dakota to become farmers. Their first farm was near Storla.



Main Street, Mt. Vernon, South Dakota

Tri-County Journal: The school land sale at Plankinton last Thursday didn't draw a very large crowd, but there were some lively bidders for some of the land adjoining the village of Storla, in section 36, Belford. The purchasers and price per share as follows: Gust Larson, the s-e forty in n-e quarter, $55.00. (April 3, 1913)

Bud: Mom and dad moved once or twice before getting the farm in Mt. Vernon.

Tri-County Journal: Joe Johnson purchased Gust Larson's 40 acres of land on the school section adjoining Storla last week. Price, $60 per acre. (January 7, 1915)

John: Somehow or other, I think my parents inherited some money or something. I think dad had inherited some money, and he used that to buy that place in Storla.

O. M. Norlie[39]: The average size of the Norwegian farms in 1920 was 240 acres over against 180 acres for the country at large. The average price of land in the Northwest where the Norwegians live was $25,518.00 in 1920 over against $12,084.00 for the country at large.

Mayola and Orlie

Mayola: I was about three or four. It was a time of moving. I can remember a sale with people there, and Aunt Annie, and a boiler with coffee. That evening I can remember Orlie going home with grandma in her buggy. I didn't want him to go. We didn't move very far, still near Storla. There was a long driveway with rows of rhubarb plant. I can remember Aunt Hazel being there. The next

big move was to Mt. Vernon. Darell was a baby. While mother and dad made the move, the rest of us stayed with grandma. Orlie and John were happy there, but not Bud and me. It was a big day and a long way, we thought, to our new home near Mt. Vernon. Mother teased us about how we all ran to the barn to see what it was like. The house was secondary as far as we were concerned.

Mayola: Three brothers, Bud, John and Darell, were born while we were at the Storla farm. In the spring of 1918, shortly after my sixth birthday, my father bought a 160 acre farm near Mt. Vernon in Davison County. While mother and dad were making the move, my brothers and I stayed at Grandma Shay's. It was a lonesome time for me, but grandma's sons did their best to entertain us. I was happy when grandma took us to the new farm.

Darell, Mayola and John

Bud: I can't remember exactly, but I somehow recall that dad paid $16,000 for the farm in Mt. Vernon[40]. It was 160 acres. He bought it in 1918. I remember when we moved there. The Hansons lived in Mt. Vernon, and my mom had family there as well. And she went to school in Mt. Vernon, too. I guess it was like coming home to her people in a way.

Darell: In 1918 my father was leasing land in Sanborn County for farming. I was born in August, and that summer he bought a farm near Mt. Vernon called Ashland Farms.

Mayola: We lived in Storla before we moved to Mt. Vernon. I remember the day we came to Mt. Vernon. We went to stay at Grandma Shay's when mother and

dad were moving. Darell was the baby, so he went with them. And when we got to the new place, the first thing that Orlie, Bud and I did was run out to the barn to see what it was like. And mother said, “Of all things, those kids ran to the barn instead of looking to see what the house was like.” You see, up at Grandma Shay’s we spent all of our time out in the barn. We played games out there with Uncle Bill, drew pictures, and things like that. So I guess we thought the barn was an important place.

John and Bud

Chapter 4

A Beautiful Place

Ashland Farms

Darell: It was a beautiful place, a real beautiful farm. And dad was a tremendous farmer. He would always end up with ten or more bushels more than the other farmers in the area.

Bud: We owned a quarter of a section, 160 acres. And then we rented another quarter. So that was half a section that we farmed. A section is one square mile. When times were good, they were doing pretty good.

Darell: Ashland Farms consisted of an area of ash trees off to the right, and further in were all the buildings, the barn, the chicken house, the granaries. The house was close to the front, and further back was every kind of tree that grew in that area, every kind you can think of. It was a beautiful place. And it remained that way.

Mayola: The farm was about four miles from Mt. Vernon.

Bud: From the house to the garage it was about fifty feet. And I remember the outhouse was at the end of the plum thicket.

Darell: As you came around the corner and looked right, you'd see the ash trees, planted in rows, ten feet apart, out by where we had the hog barn. Behind that was an orchard, with plum and cherry trees, mulberry trees, crab apples, and apple trees. Nobody kept them up, and there was a thicket so deep you could

hardly walk through it. As a homesteader you had to plant those trees, which worked as a wind break in the winter.

Bud: North of the barn we had Russian olives.

John: You can't believe all the trees we had out there. We had a lot of cottonwoods, and maples. We had a lot of trees, and we always had wood to cut.

"The farm was about four miles from Mt. Vernon."

Bud: About 10 acres of the 160 was our living area – the house, the barn, the garage, a chicken house and hog barn, things like that.

Mayola: It was a playground for kids.

Darell: Dad raised corn, wheat, oats, and barley. And he had cattle, anywhere from 100 to 300. He also raised pure-bread Poland China hogs. We had chickens, for the eggs, that we could use for further house consumption and to sell to the local merchants. He sold the pigs. The cattle, he'd keep them until they were neutered, then he would feed them out with grain and sell them at a certain weight. If he had a good load he'd put them on a train and take them to Chicago,

to the stockyards. I remember one trip when he rode in the caboose with the cattle on the freight train, taking that load of cattle. I don't know how many they'd hold in a car, but I think it was about eighty. He went all the way to the Chicago stockyards. And I remember he said he had a good time.

George: Farming in South Dakota at that time generally was a simple rotation of corn and oats. Whenever sod was plowed up and broken, it was put into corn the first year, and then the following year was oats, and then the cycle was repeated[41].

Darell: Before the kids were born he would hire men at certain times of the year, but he did most of it himself, because it wasn't a big farm, you know. He was an excellent farmer. It was good soil. And when he planted his crop, it was done just right. He wouldn't let any of us kids plant. He did the planting. Even when we were older, he always did the planting. He planted those corn rows just as straight as an arrow.

Bud: The farmers all got together and had the threshing machine come in. And we'd all do the shocking. We'd haul the bundles, bundles of wheat and the like, cut it to the ground, and then bind it, and wrap a rope or a cord around it in a bundle. Then you'd throw it into a threshing machine, and that would knock all the wheat off the stalks. Everybody did that back then.

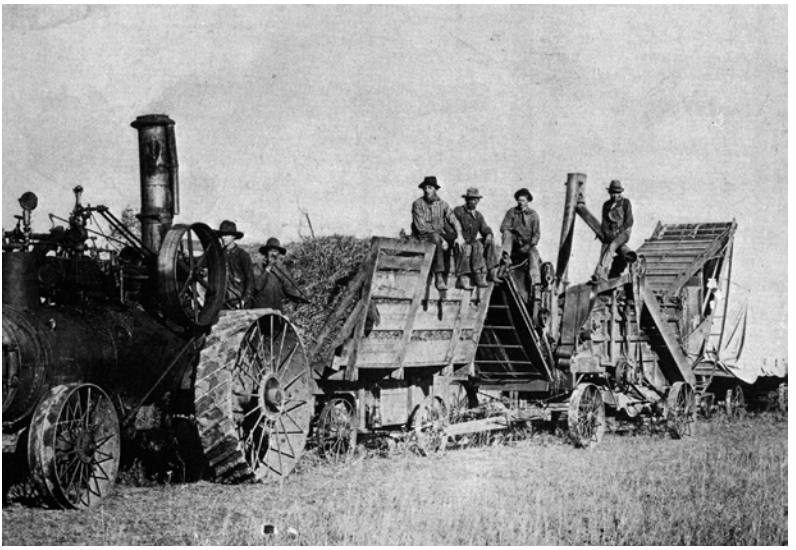
Mayola: Dad used to operate the threshing machine. He operated the machine that did the threshing.

Bud: Yeah, dad used to be the boss of the threshing machine.

Mayola: That was in the summertime. And that was his job. And he went to all these other places, all over. And that's when mother would go out and help the boys with the milking. But I couldn't milk. I couldn't make any milk come out. But mother could, so she'd help the boys with it. But that was a lonely summer. I remember that being a lonely summer.

Melba: We worked out in the fields a lot. I remember how hard mom worked when they were threshing, when you had people coming over. She'd cook, and it was so hot then. Mom would get up early and make all this food for all the threshers. And she never complained.

Darell: The planting was seasonal, you know. When it got warm enough that was when you could plant. We planted oats, and what we called small grains – oats and wheat and barley, especially oats and barley first, and then wheat, and then later on we'd plant the corn. Then he raised some alfalfa, and we had a pasture for the cattle. Sometimes we had so many cattle that he had to put them, in the summer, in a pasture that we leased out about ten or twenty miles away. That's all they had there, just pasture land.



"Dad used to be the boss of the threshing machine."

Bud: Oh, yeah, we worked hard. We had all kinds of chores to do. We had to milk cows when we were only six or seven. Everyday we milked at least ten or twelve cows. We didn't have many other than that. Most of them were for milking.

John: We always had the cows to milk, you know. That was always part of our chores on the farm.

Bud: Dad never worried about milking the cows. We all had our cows to milk. And we just did it. We just went ahead and did it, so he could do something else.

Darell: We had to milk cows and herd the cattle.

Wayne: Mostly it was doing work. We fed the hogs. We fed the chickens. We fed the horses. We milked the cows, even starting very young I started milking cows.

Melba: I remember once my dad had to go to Sioux Falls, which was a big deal back then. I think it was for circuit jury. I was the only one home at the time. He had to travel there, and he stayed over for probably a week. And he said, "Melba, you have to milk the cow." And I said, "Dad, I don't even know how to milk the cow." He just looked at me and said, "Well, you got to have milk." And Mom said, "You got to do it," and she wouldn't help me. And I remember going down there and not having any idea. I mean, I had watched the boys do it all the time, but I had no idea. I couldn't even do it, and I remember sticking my hand and… oh, that smell! I only got a tiny bit of milk, and mom said, "Oh well, we'll just wait until your dad gets home again."

Wayne: That's the way farming was. There were times when you were really busy, times when you didn't have time for anything, and then you'd have a few days or a week maybe when you didn't have anything to do but milk the cows. You always had to milk the cows. We had to milk the cows before we went to school and we milked the cows when we came home at night.

Bud: We ate wild onions sometimes. But when the cows ate them, it spoiled the milk, because you could taste the onion in it.

Bud: We all helped out. Dad depended on us for all the chores. And I think that Orland being a little older really helped a lot, too.

Darell: In the early summer we'd cultivate the soil for the corn using one-row and two-row cultivators. About the time Bud was thirteen and Orlie was about sixteen, they'd be on the two-row cultivators. John and I would be on the one-row cultivators. We had two horses per team. My dad would stand around watching, making sure we were doing it right.

Mayola: One time I remember I was supposed to help. The boys were out in the fields shocking, and I thought to myself, oh, this is fun, you know, I'll just go out and help them. And then I stuck the pitch fork on my foot. So that was the end of that.

"You can't believe all the trees we had out there."

Darell: My father used to have an old time watch that opened up, a pocket watch. We'd take it out. We always came home at noon. And we would quit at six, for the farming part of it, you know, the cultivating and the threshing and the plowing part of it. Then when we got home, of course, we would have to do some chores. Then we'd eat and, if we had to finish the chores, we would go out and complete whatever was necessary. We always had about ten or twelve milk cows. My dad never milked a cow. I never saw him milk a cow. I guess he did later on when the younger boys were all good athletes and had to go to basketball games and football games. He would do their chores on nights when they had games.

Bud: Dad always kept us busy, from morning until night. He had plenty of work for us, me and my older brother Orland. And Mayola, she worked in the house all

the time. She was really a big help to mom, because she was the only girl around until Margie came along.

Don: I remember one time we were plowing corn. We had single-row riders, so the four brothers all had a separate cultivator. I wasn't on the cultivator. It was Darell, John, and Orlie, and maybe Bud, too. I was riding a weeder.

Darell: It was about 1924 or 1925. Dad bought a tractor. He didn't like John Deere. Some of the neighbors had bought John Deere tractors and he'd hear those "boom, boom, boom" noises early in the morning and say, "Oh I'll never buy one like that." So he bought a Farmall Tractor. He used that for plowing and other things. Prior to that, he had what we called a one-sulky plow, a two-sulky plow, and three-sulky plow. The one-sulky plow required three horses, the two required four, and the three-sulky plow, the larger one, required more horses.

Bud: In the fall, when it was harvest time, we'd be up really early. First we had chores to do, like milking the cows and feeding the pigs and chickens. Then we had to get ready to go threshing, to harvest the wheat, oat, and barley and things like that. When you were fourteen you had to run a bundle rack and do the spiking, too. We always took a lunch break at noon, to feed the crew and feed and water the horses. We usually had sandwiches, cake, and coffee. Then we'd go back out around one o'clock and work until about five or six o'clock. We always had more chores to do after that as well, so we would really finish up until about eight at night.

Wayne: As I got older, we started doing more industrious things. We shocked grain. My dad would run the grain binder and the four of us – Don, Paul, Martin and me – we would follow the binder and put the grain in shocks**.** You'd just pull them together so that the grain stands up straight, so in this way the water runs off the shocks. And I ran a cultivator, with a horse, a one-wheel cultivator, with a drag. And then as we got older, probably thirteen or so, two of us would be running a hay rack, and we'd pick up the shocked grain, the grain that was in the field, and put it in a rack of some kind, I can't even remember what we called it. Then we'd take those to the threshing machine, which my dad ran. We'd do that all day long, and then before we did all that we'd milk all the cows. I think we had ten or twelve cows, so we usually had three or four cows to milk before we went to work. And then when we came home at night we had to milk them

again, so the days got pretty long during that period of time. We also cut cane and sorghum and put those in shocks too, in the field, and I can't recall what we did with that, but most of it was feed for cattle and other things, I guess.

"You'd just pull them together so that the grain stands up straight, so in this way the water runs off the shocks."

Chapter 5

It Started in a One-Room Schoolhouse

School Days

Mayola: It was a one-room school house, with one teacher. That's where our school days started[42].

John: All of us went to that country school. It was about one mile from our folk's home, one mile south. We went to that country school first, and then when we got to eighth grade we all went to Mt. Vernon High School in town. We all went, from Orlie all the way to Melba. All eleven of us went there.

Mayola: When we came to this new school, I was a first grader and Orlie was two years ahead of me. And they had double seats, you know. And I guess there wasn't a single seat left and Orlie and I had to sit together, and Orlie was so mad about that. Then they found a seat and he got to sit by myself, and we became good friends[43].

Mayola: I'll never forget the first day at the new school. I was a first grader, and Orlie was in second grade. He was so upset with me because I cried and wouldn't sit by myself so he had to share the seat with me.

Mayola: Going to the new school was quite an ordeal for Orlie. Mrs. Wittig, the teacher, was nice, but she couldn't persuade me to sit at a desk without Orlie. The desks were for two pupils, and I cried until Orlie would sit with me. He was so disgusted with me. No boys sat with girls. I did adjust though, and made one of the first friends I've ever had – Sara[44] Larson. She stood up for me when another girl accused me of taking her crayons. Sara and I became best friends.

Paul: The school was a one-room structure with a potbelly stove.

Mayola: I was six years old when we moved to Mt. Vernon. I was born in 1912. Before that we were up by Letcher. That's where Bud was born as well. Then we moved to Mt. Vernon. I was in the first grade then, so Bud wasn't even in school. I remember Bud and George, they were barely six years old, and they thought they had to go to school, so they went to school and the teacher had too many students, and she said, "No, I can't have you, you have to go home." They ran all the way home in joy because they were so delighted they didn't have to go to school.

"The school was a one-room structure with a potbelly stove."

George: It seems so long ago when Bud and I tried to enter the first grade at the little one-room country school. We were both five years old and our birthdays did not come until the following year. The teacher was kind enough to let us begin. She found an old desk and seated us and gave us work to do. Now, there were already twenty four students in that room and all eight grades, so she was busy. After about three weeks and a visit with the school board, we were sent home with a note saying we needed to wait until the next school session[45].

Bud: It was just a one-room schoolhouse, with all the grades together. George was my best friend all through school.

George: In the first grade we found two more. They were sisters. The older one had waited until her sister was old enough to start so they could both go together. They had three miles to come and used a horse and buggy. For whatever reasons kids will find, we thought these sisters just didn't measure up to our standards, so from then on we had a competition going. Bud and I just had to do better than those two. In retrospect I see now that Bud had far more of a competitive spirit than I did. But at the same time a special friendship was growing[46].

Mayola: School days were fun. The Larson, Malde, and Loon kids became our friends. At this time Mrs. Dougherty[47], the teacher, came into our lives. I had the feeling that she thought we were pretty special kids and loved us all.

The Bierce School, Mt. Vernon, South Dakota
(Bud Larson is on the far left holding his hat)

Mayola: We'd all be in the same classroom but not the same class. At that time there were two families of Larsons. There were the Larsons, the Maldes, the

Loons, and one Bierce, Ward Bierce. Well, Ward Bierce wasn't there all the time, but he was there. I remember we had one teacher that wasn't as good as the other teachers. And then we had Mrs. Dougherty. She was a marvelous teacher. She didn't care what we did outside in the playground; that was not her problem. She just cared about teaching. If we got into trouble, too bad, settle it yourself. She was there to teach. She was a marvelous teacher, and a marvelous person. She was there five years. She lived in Mt. Vernon. Sometimes she stayed at the Bierce place.

Elephant walk at the Bierce School
(Left to right: John Larson, Darell Larson, Bud Larson, Ward Bierce, Clifford Loon, Orin Storla. Standing: Millard Zeal, George Larson)

Bud: I remember one girl saying one time that you could always tell the ones who went to Mrs. Dougherty's class, because they were really sharp.

Mayola: Mrs. Dougherty was our grade school teacher. She was happy when she heard another Larson was beginning first grade, but disappointed when she found out Marion was not a girl, because our school was short on girls.

Sara Larson: Playing school was my favorite play activity – If I could recruit

at least one or two pupils. This was because I thoroughly enjoyed school, particularly under Mrs. J. B. Dougherty who made a lasting impression on me. She had us all so busy and excited about learning, and I particularly remember the special projects we did.

Mayola: We created paintings and poems, participated in spelling contests and county projects.

John: We all went to that country school, all except Melba. She did the last two grades in Mt. Vernon, seventh and eighth grade. We went to high school in Mt. Vernon, but it was such a chore because we were four miles out from town. We always had an old car, and dad would keep the car going all the time. And then finally in 1928 they got a new Ford, a green four-door.

Wayne: I went to school in a country school. From the first grade through the fifth grade I think. I think there were ten kids in school. Four of them were Larsons[48].

Mt. Vernon News[49]**:** When Martin Larson graduated Wednesday, May 22, the Gust Larson family has had ten members of its family graduates of Mt. Vernon high school. This surpasses by one, the record by the Bromwell family set in 1912 when the ninth member of its family graduated. Melba Larson will enter high school next year. Since 1925 there has been a Larson in Mt. Vernon high school. From 1929 to 1944 there has always been two, and three times, 1929, 1939 and 1941, three members. Nineteen forty five was the first time since 1921 there has been only one from the family present. Of the ten members only two have been girls, Mayola and Marjorie. The eight boys, Orland, Marion, John, Darell, Don, Paul, Wayne and Martin, were prominent in basketball and the last four were lettermen in football as well. Five of the boys served in the armed forces.

Mayola: Education was important. Mother and dad participated in school activities and attended programs whenever possible. Most of the boys participated in athletic activities during high school years, and dad was an ardent supporter. By the time Melba, the youngest, was in high school, mom really got involved, too. Neither mother nor dad ever kept us out of school to help with farm or household chores. I'm sure there were times help would have been welcome, but

we never missed school because there was work to do at home. Mother could have kept me at home, because God knows she was mighty busy. But she never did.

Margie (fourth from the left in the front row) and her classmates

Wayne: In the country school, there was Don, Paul, and Martin, and me. And there were some other families. There weren't many, though. We'd play basketball there. We'd sneak out and play basketball whenever we felt like it. It was kind of a waste, those five years. And then we went to town school.

Melba: In third grade I had Addie Bromwell as a teacher. She was a tough teacher, and I was scared to death of her. So everyday I'd fake sick, and they'd call Don and say, "Don, you've got to take Melba home. She's sick." And one day he said, "That's it, no more. You're *not* sick, you're just scared of your teacher and you just don't want to go to school." I guess I got over that. She was probably a good teacher, but she was just strict and I was probably scared to death of her. But then Don put an end to that.

Mayola: In high school, when we started driving, this other family would drive one week, and the other week we would drive. We'd take turns.

Wayne: I can't remember ever learning anything. That's true of the whole experience in grade school. Now, I did have some good grade school teachers in the seventh and eighth grade. But high school was a waste, because that was during the war and teachers were not the best in a small town. We had two alcoholics. And one teacher was intimidated by everybody. The superintendent even put me in charge of the chemistry lab, and I knew nothing about chemistry. But I was in charge of the chemistry lab, so that was another, what they call *good* experience.

Paul

Wayne: I played football. I was the quarterback of the football team. And I played basketball. I was the center and a forward on the basketball team. And I ran track. I ran the 880 and half mile, which Don did too when he was going to school.

Paul: I remember high school and sports and particularly basketball and the tournaments and I really did enjoy playing this game. I remember dad coming to our home games and complaining a lot about the referees.

Wayne: In high school I remember initiation when we were freshman. We refused to be initiated and wear caps or whatever you were supposed to do. We captured one of the seniors and put him in a pig crate and put him in the study

hall up in front. The freshman did that to a senior, and we thought there'd be retribution, but there wasn't any retribution that I recall.

Bud: Mart was a good basketball player as well. The younger boys were all good basketball players, and they won a few tournaments, too."

Mayola: During Darell's high school years, he and a friend, Ward Bierce, skipped school. They were expelled and needed a parent's signature to get back into school. Ward's parents signed the note, but when Darell came home to get dad's signature, it was a different story. In no quiet encounter, dad let the administration know that he wanted to know when his children were in trouble. Darell said that was a turning point in his life, when he realized how important education was to dad.

"The younger boys were all good basketball players, and they won a few tournaments, too."

Chapter 6

Long Days and Good t imes

Life on the Farm

Darell: Oh, those were long days, long days for kids. And we had a lot of good times, you know.

Mayola: I remember when we got our first radio. And dad, he was more of a listener than we were. First he said we don't need it because we've got enough noise around here. But I think he was the one who really enjoyed it. He'd be the one who would always listen to the news, listen to the reports about the price of grains, and things like that.

Bud: For breakfast we usually had eggs and bread, and things like prunes and grapefruit. My dad used to buy grapefruit by the case.

Darell: One time dad sent me out to herd the cattle. The pastures weren't very good so we would use the growth along the roadways, along the fences. I had the neighbor's saddle horse. I was only about nine or ten years old. I had to make sure that I could get near a fence post or a broken down tree so I could get back on the horse, because I'd gotten off to go the bathroom. Well, it was a really good horse and a lot of times I'd just lift the reins down on the ground and that horse would keep going. I'd have to get it near a fence post so I could get down and get the reins and get back on again.

Mayola: I remember one time, when we lived on the Storla farm and mother scolded us for bothering her when she was canning peaches. Orlie suggested we

run away, so we hid in a hay stack and waited and waited, but no one came to get us so we went home.

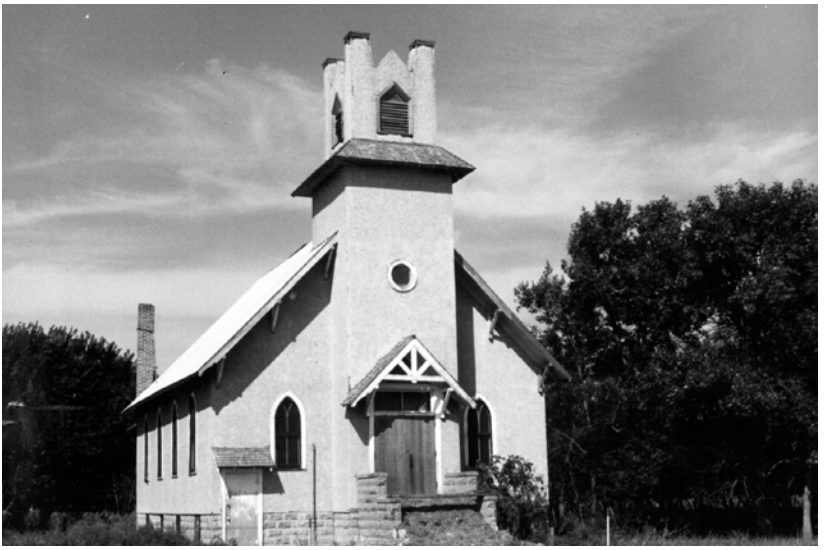
Darell: We used to get together on Sundays. A lot of people would get together. It wasn't uncommon to have thirty or forty people over for picnics. We'd sit down and the kids would eat first. And sometimes the parents would eat first.

John and his chickens

Wayne: We always went to church[50], from the time I was probably three or four until I left home. We had to. We had no choice. I don't think my dad was very religious. He always went, but he didn't participate in singing or anything like that.

Darell: We were always quite an athletic family. After we'd get home from church we'd get the baseball out and start playing baseball. And later on, we had one big cottonwood tree out front where we put up a basketball hoop. We were always playing sports. And my brother Don would put up a pit where he could broad jump and vault. He was very athletic.

Darell: Up until my oldest brothers were about seven, eight or maybe ten years old, about the time they were ready to do some work around the farm, my dad drove those prancing horses, the kind with beautiful harnesses. And I heard him say to my mother one day, "I'd better get rid of those and buy me some of the big Belgians and other types of horses of that size because those aren't going to run away, they aren't so wild." Finally he sold all those.



Immanuel Lutheran Church

Mayola: We had a dog named Buddy. Actually, we had two Buddies. We named two of our dogs the same thing.

Wayne: We used to hang out in the drug store. That's where everybody hung out. And there was a little cafe, Martin's Cafe, and that's where we went after basketball games.

Mayola: Bud was considered the best runner, so he'd be the one to chase and catch the chickens for dinner.

Bud: We had lots of pigs. I remember one time, I couldn't have been too old, but they hauled all the pigs in one day, three wagon loads of pigs, hauled them into town. That's how they made their money.

George: After the haymow was full, the upstairs in the barn became another favorite place for me. You could burrow back into the hay, making holes and tunnels that turned the haymow into a three-dimensional playground. This was a fun place to play, especially after it turned cold in the fall[53].

Mayola: And we had a big pig barn, with all these different sections where the pigs could be.

Melba

Melba: Out in the country where we lived, we had gypsies[51]. We could look up the road and see them coming. About a mile away you could see them coming. I remember mom saying, "Go! Go hide! Go anywhere. But don't talk, and don't cry. Don't do that, because they'll take you away." They were always wrapped with scarves around their necks, and were selling wares and stuff, but I don't think they were dangerous. I think she'd buy stuff from them and they'd buy stuff from her. But mom scared us, though. I think mom was scared because she thought the gypsies would take the kids.

"I think mom was scared because she thought the gypsies would take the kids."

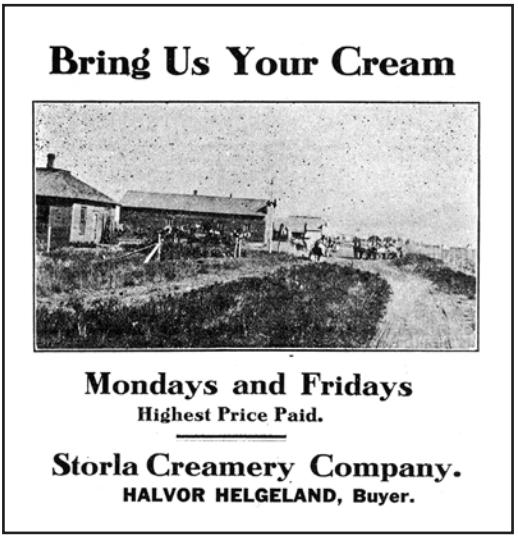
Mayola: I was a junior in high school when I became ill with scarlet fever. At that time the whole family was quarantined when anyone in the household had a dangerous and contagious disease, such as scarlet fever. This meant that all of us were to be at home and have no contact outside the home. The town physician, Dr. Smiley, told us about a vaccine that was being experimented with, so he decided we should all be vaccinated. But it didn't work. One by one over the next few weeks all my brothers and sisters became ill. All but Orlie, that is. Orlie, a senior at high school, was allowed to stay in town because he had scarlatina at age ten. Orlie was our lifeline, picking up the crates of eggs and selling them at the grocery store. This provided the money needed to buy groceries and other essentials. He was allowed to drive out to the farm, but he couldn't come into the house. Mother and dad stayed well. It was a long six weeks. We were blessed that only one of us was seriously ill. Paul, the two year old, lost hearing in one ear and he had to relearn walking and talking. When the six weeks had passed and we were all well, Dr. Smiley had us go through a fumigating procedure. Friends would remark that we didn't look like we'd been sick. No wonder; we'd eaten well. Milk, meat, and eggs from the farm provided good food – eggnog, milk shakes, and lots of ice cream. It was no trouble to get ice from the stock tank to churn out a gallon of ice cream.

Bud: You'd take your eggs and your cream into town, and that's what you bought your groceries with.

Darell: About 1928 or 1929 my dad installed his own electrical system, a Delco battery operated outfit[52]. He put lights in the house, the barn, and the hog house. A man named Olson from town ran the wires for him. Every so often he'd have to go and crank the engine for power. The charge usually lasted about two or three days.

Bud: You know, we were busy on the weekends, too. We had to pick corn in the fall. And then we had to haul manure, clean the barn, hook up the horses, spread the manure, and pick wood for the fire.

Don: We played a lot of basketball, and we'd stack hay along these things you use for feeding cattle and we used to play football up on those, the four of us – me, Paul, Wayne and Marty. It was usually Marty and me against Wayne and Paul.



"You'd take your eggs and your cream into town, and that's what you bought your groceries with."

Mayola: There was one family that lived near us. We didn't care much for them. One time at Halloween we played a trick on them. We pulled their wagons or something like that; it was probably their buggies. Anyway, we pulled them in front of their gates, so in order to get out they'd have to remove them.

Larson kids on the farm
(From back to front: John, Darell, Marge, Don and Paul)

Mayola At the township hall they had a pretty good dance hall. So a whole bunch of us would go up there on a Saturday evening and have a dance. This was when we were in high school. We didn't have any chaperones, you know. But we quit after somebody started bringing in liquor. One family, I don't remember who they were, but they had some friends that lived south of town, and they had invited them. I guess they were the ones. Maybe it was just beer, but we quit doing that. We had just never had that at the party, you know. Nobody had gotten involved in drinking in the group that was from north of town. And the kids who brought the liquor were from south of town. And they were German. That was a German area. And one of the boys in our group was, I think, dating a girl from that group, and that's why they got invited.

Bud: I remember that, the Norwegians lived north of Mt. Vernon and the German's lived south of Mt. Vernon.

Mayola: I can remember the first time that the lights came on in the house. You see, we bought this house from town and it was already wired. So it just had to be hooked up to the electricity. So dad got an electric plant, you know, to hook it up. And that day when we came home from school mother was standing in the doorway waiting to turn all the lights on. We had lamps before that, kind of like Aladdin lamps, which were fueled by kerosene.

Don: We used to go fishing out at Firesteel Creek. And we'd go skating there, too, in the winter.

George: Bud and I were glad we had older brothers and sisters for they would get together for different things but they couldn't leave us at home. We insisted on being a part of the ice skating parties in the winter and kids gatherings through the summer, even if we were a bit younger.

Don, Wayne, Paul, and Margie

Mayola: In the summer we sometimes had lawn parties. We'd play games, and sing. It was all the kids, not the parents. And we used to have them at the Malde's farm, which seemed to be one of the favorite places to have the lawn parties.

Orlie and I would go, and Sara Larson and her brother George, too. And Marion Malde was always there. And then there was one family that lived next to the Maldes, but we didn't care much for them.

Melba: I remember having whooping cough. It was the worst thing you could have, coughing and coughing and coughing. I don't ever remember being sick except for whooping cough. Measles and that stuff didn't bother me.

Paul: I recall the animals we had – Browser our dog who we became very attached to, Trinket our pony who I am sure got tired of so many riding her at once. I can't remember whatever happened to Trinket. In regard to horses (which I have always liked!), I remember Dick and Dan, Shorty, Daisy, Bill, and Doc' and others, and one had a good feeling about them because they were not only like "animal family," but they were also the source of power for farming.

Mayola: We had to walk by Joe and Laura Pollard's place on the way to school. And our dog used to follow us. We didn't want him to follow us, but he always did. And one day Joe said, "Oh, I'll teach him." He'd seen him go way down the pasture, and we didn't know he was still following us because we were on the road and our dog was out in the field. And Joe shot at him and the dog jumped, slumped over, and died. Oh, that was so bad. Joe didn't mean to kill him. He was just going to shoot over him, scare him, you know. But at exactly the moment he shot, the dog jumped. Anyway, we didn't see it. It was like a Shepherd dog. I remember it was brown and white, so I guess that's a common type of Shepherd dog. But he was good dog. Mother used to tell us that he would always get in front of us and push us back with his nozzle. We'd stand in front of him and he'd push us back. Mother also said that if strangers came onto the property, especially if they jumped out of car and were trying to sell something, that dog would get right in front of them, whoever it was, and not let them get any closer.

Mayola: Bud had this really good friend, George Larson. And mother always said, "Well, if one of those boys was a girl, they should get married." They were such good friends, and so close. They did a lot of things together.

George: I often had a car to drive when Bud didn't. We explored life, we went to our first dance, we went roller skating at several pavilions around the area. We even dated, making a foursome, but in those days money was a very scarce commodity.

Marie Larson[54]: In 1934 George and I met at a party at Leif Hanson's home near Mt. Vernon. Lois Brewick and I had caught a ride to the event, and during the evening George asked me to dance. I was impressed with this young man, admired him very much and wanted to get better acquainted with him. A few weeks after the party, Bud Larson and George asked Lois and I to go to a show with them. We went to the Paramount Theater in Mitchell, sat in the balcony and held hands as we watched the movie *Men Must Fight* starring John Wayne.

Mayola: On Saturday nights we would all go into town. Dad would drive and he would often stop and pick up Sara and George Larson, because their dad was a salesman and he was never home. Everyone thought we had this really big family, all those Larsons. We thought that was funny. It was a puzzle to the town people, who all those Larsons were, who belonged to whom.

Bud: There was a movie theatre in Mt. Vernon. It was only 10 cents. I mostly remember cowboy movies.

Mayola: Sara liked to go to the movies. And then when she started driving, we'd go to Mitchell to see the movies.

Wayne: On the weekend we would clean out the barns, haul the manure out in the field and spread it, with a manure spreader, for fertilizer for the fields. And we played basketball. We had a basketball hoop in the yard, on a tree. And then the tree crashed or died, so we put it on the granary instead. So we did play a lot of basketball.

Darell: As soon as we got out of Sunday school and got home, we'd get the baseball out and start playing ball.

Paul: In the summer, you nearly roasted to death.

John: My brother Darell and I, we'd herd the cattle together. We were herding them at a field about a half mile away one time and we fell asleep, and the lady across the street caught us sleeping and gave us a hard time.

Mayola: In the summer we were involved with lawn parties, going roller skating, and to the lakes. Our neighbors had a shortage of girls, so I got to go to those activities before the boys of my age did.

Mayola: One time Don and the other boys, having outgrown the washtub on the lawn for baths, they contrived a shower out of a big bucket with punched-in holes and hung it on an available tree limb. Someone had to fill the pail each time, but that was better than a bath on the lawn.

"There was a movie theatre in Mt. Vernon. It was only 10 cents. I mostly remember cowboy movies."

Paul: I recall working in the fields in the hot summer sun, picking corn and sweating like a butcher, and at times sick of it all, and in the winter getting up and starting a fire in the kitchen stove, which was each person's job as he became the oldest at home. This was really hard to do because it was so darn cold, and then after that fire was going we had to go out and do the milking before going to school.

Mayola: The one bad wind storm we had was one summer when Orlie had scarlet fever and we were quarantined. Because of the quarantine, dad had to stay at the

Pollards so he could sell the eggs and cream. I always felt safe no matter what was happening if dad was at home. This particular evening he wasn't. Mother had us putting knives in the door frames and holding pillows on the windows to keep them from blowing in. John was quite small and he'd run around looking out the windows saying, "Oh, another tree is falling!" That evening dad literally crawled under the trees from the Pollards to get to us. So many trees had been uprooted he couldn't get from the house to the barn until a path was cleared.

Mayola: One summer Orlie had scarlet fever, so we were quarantined. It was this sort of a summer kind of scarlet fever, scarlatina they called it. And dad stayed at Laura and Joe's. And one night there was a real bad wind storm, and dad came running through those trees. There were quite a few trees at our place. We had a storm cellar and we were in the storm cellar and he came running through those trees, which were blowing off branches, so he could get over to us. And mother was so scared.

Bud: I remember one of the storms back then. John and I sat by the door, our backs against it, with the door blowing, so the wind wouldn't blow off the door. It felt like the whole house was going to blow down.

Mayola: And we would be holding pillows on the windows. I'm sure mother was really scared. She had us take a pillow and hold it up against the windows so the windows wouldn't blow out.

Melba: I remember a lot of storms and a lot of burning. We used to burn the fields, you know, which was a lot of fun.

Mayola: One time we had this Christmas tree when Melba was just a little girl, and we gave her decorations to hang, like those streamers, you know. And she hung them all around the bottom of the tree because she couldn't reach any higher. We just laughed and laughed at that.

Melba: We did a lot of things with our neighbors. I can't remember their name. We played Chinese checkers. Martin and I went over there everyday because she had Kool-Aid and cookies for us. We'd walk maybe a mile to get over there, and she loved that, and so did we because we got cookies and Kool-Aid.

Mayola: I remember we had the chicken house and the granary, they were kind of connected. And there was a space in between. And when Emma Jean Shay, she was our cousin, when she would come, or some other girls would come over, we'd go up on that and have a show. The people who weren't performing, dancing or doing all that stuff, they would sit up on the roof. So they were the audience, and then the performers were down on the flat space.

Melba: The boys worked a lot. Bud was the head of the one group, and Don was the head of another group. And I just coasted.

Bud: I know some people have said that growing up on a farm at that time was tough, and I guess it was in some ways, but at that time we all just did what we had to do and didn't think so much about it all that much.

"The days on the farm were not easy but there was happiness despite the hardships."

Wayne: Mostly I remember, in early life, about baseball games. Older kids and I would try to get involved but I was too little to be playing and I got upset about that.

Bud: I remember the train that always went through town. About eleven o'clock in the morning it would always go through town, and you could always hear it out there.

Melba: It was just a normal life on the farm, I guess, doing what everyone else did. We just entertained ourselves.

Paul: The days on the farm were not easy but there was happiness despite the hardships.

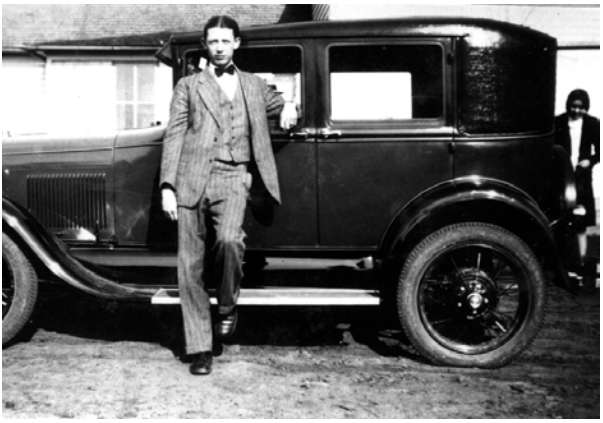
Chapter 7

Cars, t ractors, Wagons, and Horses

Getting Around

Mayola: I can remember when we lived up in Storla we had a car. You couldn't get around without a car. If you lived out in the country you had to have a car or a truck.

Bud: I always had a car. Dad bought a Ford sedan. He went with a load of pigs to town one day and came back with a car. I got a kick out of that.



"When Orland graduated from high school, dad bought him a Rumble Seat Ford, a new one."

Mayola: That car went to high school for four years at least.

Don: Well, we had that pony that was given to Margie. And we used the pony pretty much for herding cattle, not in our pasture but along the roads, you know. We'd pasture them on those grassy roads.

John: Dad always got us to school, driving back and forth, every day, until we finally bought a brand new Ford in 1928, a green one, with four doors. Then pretty soon Orlie was driving. They got some good use out of those cars.

Don: We had two places that we farmed. One was about two miles away from the house. And one time I remember when John was coming home. He had been over there, and he was coming home with a team of horses, and they got carried away and were racing, or running away from him. And dad got mad at that. He took those horses out in the pasture and drove them around until they got dog tired[55].

Paul, Melba and Wayne

Mayola: In the summertime they had what they called bible school. And Orlie and this kid named Sam Johnson, he came from west of us…well, they rode horses to go there in the summertime. It was like a church school, you know. And all these Hanson and Osterman boys and other kids would get into big fights in the playground. And Orlie and Sam would sit high up on their horses and just watch these kids fight. They thought that was funny.

Darell: When Orland graduated from high school, dad bought him a Rumble Seat Ford, a brand new one. When I went off to college, my dad and I drove that car all the way to Sioux Falls, with no breaks. All they had was bands for breaks.

Wayne: We had a pony that our Uncle Martin gave us, a pony called Trinket. We rode it to get the mail, and we rode it to confirmation. We rode it in races. In fact, we even raced during confirmation. Most of us went for that reason, so we could have horse races.

Darell: When Bud was eleven years old he drove the car through the garage door[56]. I think it was our four-door Buick.

Mayola: Lorraine and I were going to go over to the Hanson's to visit. Lorraine Hoefert, she was a cousin. Well, we had this horse. I guess we were both riding it. And before we got to the Hanson's, we got off and left our horse, just let it go, you know. I don't know why we got off. Maybe we both weren't riding. Anyway, the horse just stayed there until we got back. We walked the rest of the way there.

Darell: He had about three cars. One was a great big Buick. And another, I'll never forget, one had curtains on the side. And when he chewed tobacco, as he spit, you wanted to make sure you sat on the other side, because it would cover the back seat.

Bud: As long as I can remember we had a car. We had a Buick sedan for awhile. In those days if you owned a Buick, you had to be somebody.

Darell: And he also had a couple of other cars, an old Overland and a Star, well I guess you've probably never even heard of them.

Melba: I rode a lot of horses. I had a horse and neighbor of mine had a horse, so we did all of that.

"When Bud was eleven years old he drove the car through the garage door."

Darell: I'll never forget the day that we had a runaway. Dad was on this scraggly old horse. I saw him about a little over a quarter of a mile away, heading home. And all at once that old horse just took off. And dad couldn't stop him, even with the reins. They came running right through the yard, then across the driveway, and right up to the barn door. He tried to get in, and then finally dad backed him up and took him out to the pasture and ran him around and around for about twenty minutes until he was all sweated out. He never ran away like that again.

Chapter 8

Cracking the Whip on Firesteel Creek

Winter Fun

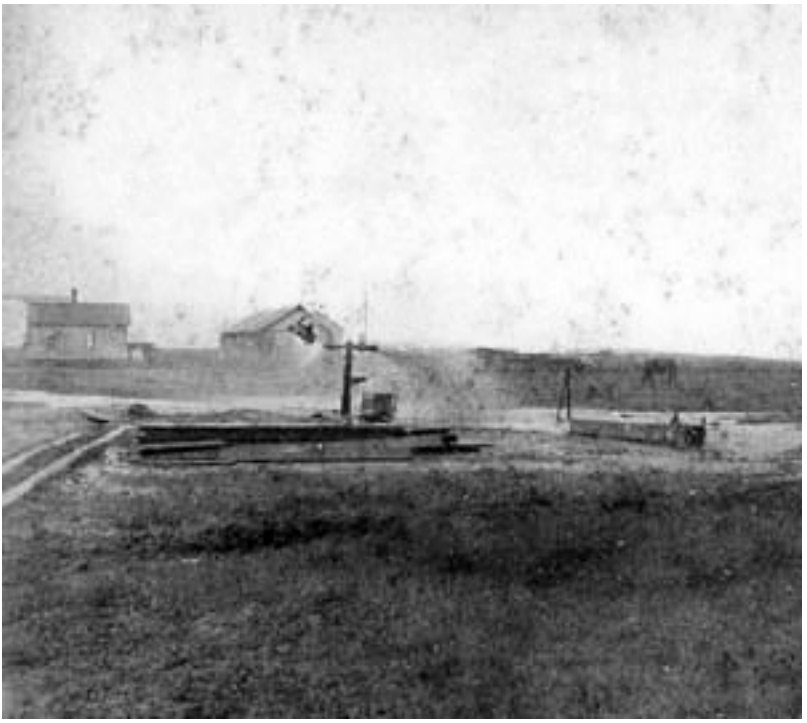
Mayola: Our neighbor kids and we spent fun times skating on the creek in the winter. We used to go skating at Firesteel Creek. It wasn't too far away. We'd take a horse sled and go out to the creek and go skating there. We'd even go out at nighttime. We'd also go up there and take our sleds and slide on the hills. We even used an old scoop shovel as a sled sometimes. I did that, because I could get into it.

Bud: That was a big thing that we'd look forward to every Thanksgiving. Most of the time we could do that by Thanksgiving. You could skate for a long ways on that creek.

Mayola: Firesteel Creek was about two miles or so from the farm, at least two miles. You went down this one road and then kind of went over the hills. We usually went on a sled, with horses. I remember one night after we were skating there, when we got back to where the sled was supposed to be, it was gone. It was Orlie, I think, who forgot to tie up the horses. At least we always blamed Orlie. We could hear them though. They were off somewhere not too far away. Orlie went and got them. They probably wondered what in the world happened to the people who were supposed to be driving them. Sometimes we went skating there during the day, but that time it was nighttime.

Darell: In the wintertime we used to go ice skating on Firesteel Creek. You know, that was one of the first things you had to learn from your dad – you had

to learn how to ride a horse, you had to learn how to milk a cow, and you had to learn how to ice skate. We had an artesian well[57] that ran all the time, year round. It had a faucet on it, and we turned it off when we didn't need it, but my dad let it run over so the pigs could, you know, wallow in the mud, and in the wintertime the water around it would get frozen and that's where we first learned how to ice skate. You had clamps that you put on.



"We had an artesian well that ran all the time, year round."

Mayola: I remember one Christmas when Orlie and I got new skates, and we went out and skated in the artesian. The artesian well flowed all the time, you know. That filled the tanks for the cattle, and there'd be a pond around it that would freeze in the winter. And that's where we'd go out and skate. My first skates were the ones that clamped on your shoes. I can't remember what kind of shoes I would have been wearing when I put those on.

Mayola: There were three families that went skating, our family, the Maldes, and the Larsons, George and Sara. There were other families that actually lived closer to the creek, like the Hansons and Helgersons, but they that didn't do that. They didn't go skating.

Paul: I remember the cold winters, sleeping upstairs with blankets a foot deep, riding to school when it was really cold with ol' Doc's hooves crunching on the snow.

Mayola: Oh, we had a lot of fun on the ice. We used to play crack the whip. We'd line up, you know, hands locked. There were a couple of strong fellows at one end, the girls in the middle, and then Bud and George were always at the tail end because they were the smallest. We'd skate around and around and then whip them off, and they'd go flying off. We had so much fun doing that. Then one time there were two older girls with us, Sara Larson, who was older than me, and Marion Malde. I remember that one Christmas, or winter, they were both working, or teaching, and they had these nice new sweaters they were wearing. And one of them got thrown into the bank of snow with this nice new sweater.

Mayola: When we were bigger we went at night. I remember there was a hill that we went sledding down. And one time, I think it was Ward Bierce, the sled runners ran over his wrist.

Bud: Yeah, I remember that.

Mayola: Usually on the way home mother would have a big kettle of cocoa warmed on the stove for us. And in our house there was a floor furnace, heating that came from the furnace below on the floor. So when we came in we would sit around that floor furnace and warm up, and have our cocoa. We'd dry out sitting around the floor furnace drinking hot chocolate mother made and left on the back of the stove.

Chapter 9

Born in a House on Fire

Quite a Night

Wayne: I was born in a house on fire. It started upstairs. I was delivered downstairs. And a country doctor came out from town. And mother, she was frightened to death. He said, "It's alright, Mabel. Don't worry about it. We'll get you out of here before it burns the place down." And it did burn the place down.

Bud: That was quite a night.

Paul and Wayne

Mayola: It was the beginning of Christmas vacation and the younger ones had been to Christmas practice for a show at the Lutheran Church.

Mayola: The house was cozy with both the hard coal heater and kitchen stove providing plenty of heat.

Don: The fire got started in the closet upstairs. Orlie and Bud were taking care of me upstairs. And I guess for years I thought that I started the fire. It was like a closet, and smoke was coming out, and you could see it starting to burn.

Mayola: The boys were upstairs changing their clothes and playing hide-and-seek after attending practice for the Christmas program. Hoping to find a place to hide, Bud opened the side attic door and smoke rolled out.

John: Darell and I had been to Christmas practice, about a mile east and a mile south. On the way back, about half mile away, we could see smoke up around by where the house was, so we just kept going and then we could see the house with some smoke starting to come out.

Bud: I think John and Darell were outside playing in the snow.

Mayola: I remember how we ran up and down the stairs with buckets of water, and threw the water where the fire started, in a kind of side attic. We kept running up and down with pails of water. It did stop it somewhat, so we all had a chance to get out.

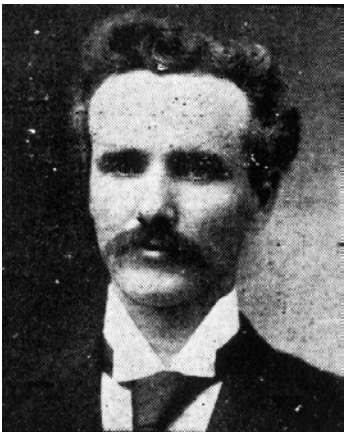
Mayola: The house had a big stove in the dining area. Dad was stoking the fire. It was a big stove, a soft coal stove, and evidently it was the chimney. Sparks went up above where all the dust was, I guess. Nobody knew for sure exactly how it got started. Aunt Ellen was baking bread in the kitchen. She was using the other stove.

Bud: I must have been about eleven or twelve years old or so. Dad had a really hot fire going because they needed hot water. I had poked my head in the attic and saw the fire. Dad didn't believe me until he heard Margie scream.

Mayola: Dad had us all running to get water to throw on the fire like a bucket

brigade. Those children who were big enough carried buckets of water to throw into the attic.

Darell: I was eight years old. And I do remember very clearly. Aunt Ellen was working for us, and she was making every kind of bread you can think of. She used to come quite frequently to help out mom. And we had a roast in the oven, and my dad had two other stoves working. It was late December, and it was cold. What I remember the most was my dad and the doctor, Dr. Smiley, sitting at the dining room table having a conversation. That was probably for three or four hours, as I recall. Well, maybe not quite that long. Then Aunt Ellen had that stove going, and my dad had the two other stoves, a soft coal stove and a hard coal stove, and there was only one chimney, which went up through the attic. There was a hole where a spark got out and lit some old papers or something and caught fire.



Dr. T. B. Smiley

Bud: Like dad always said, when Margie came screaming down the hall, he knew something was wrong.

Mayola: As soon as Wayne was born, mother and the baby were put on a cot. The front window was broken out and she and Wayne were taken over to the Pollards by sled. Laura wasn't even home. Can you imagine the shock at coming home and finding her house full of people?

Mayola: Dr. Smiley was there attending to mother, with Aunt Ellen helping. His driver was asleep sitting on a milk can in the kitchen. The doctor told me to ring five long rings on the telephone to let neighbors know that our house was on fire. Five long rings was a signal that there was a crisis in the neighborhood. Then he told me to awaken his driver and to put the little ones into his car, and have the driver take us to our neighbors, the Pollards.

From Dr. Smiley's Obituary[58]: The life of a country doctor never is, in any sense, a life of ease. Fair weather or foul they answer the call of distress without thought of recompense. Sometimes they are paid, sometimes not.

Bud: Mother stayed in there until the last minute. Because there was snow on the ground they got a sled and put her in there.

Mayola and Wayne

Mayola: The baby was born. Mother and the baby were taken through the large living room window. They broke out a window and carried them out to a sled. The doctor told me to gather the kids, the younger ones, and put them in his car, and tell his driver to take me over to the Pollards, our next door neighbor around the corner, to Joe and Laura's house. And Laura and Joe weren't even home. And when they came home, oh boy, did they get a surprise.

Don: When the house was burning, I remember Mayola took me by the hand and we went over to our neighbors, to Joe Pollard's house, which was kitty corner to our farm. I just remember looking back and seeing it burning and all.

Bud: Everybody in the country came that night. Uncle Lew and Uncle Martin, and they lived in a different town altogether. By the time the firemen came from Mt. Vernon they said just let the house go. They didn't really have the equipment to stop it, and the house was pretty much gone by then. They opened a hole in the house and when they did that, everything went up in flames.

Mayola: Neighbors and friends and relatives came to help. All the rooms, except one upstairs bedroom, were cleared of everything, even down to the curtains and windows and the linoleum on the floor. Afterwards mother said they could have let the kitchen rug burn; it was a wreck anyway.

Mayola: Dad had just sold some cattle and he had the money in his suit. He'd just been to Chicago and he had the money in his suit in the bedroom. But because mother was having the baby, we took all that stuff and hung it upstairs in the closet. Well, he knew that. So what did he do? He went up over the porch, through the window to the room, which was the girls' room, into that closet, and just grabbed his suit with the money.

Mayola: Dad had just sold some cattle or hogs or both and still had the cash in his suit pocket. When he found out his suit had been moved to an upstairs closet, he went up over the front porch into that bedroom closet, crawling through the smoke filled room to keep below the smoke. He grabbed everything in the closet hoping he got his suit – and he did. One of my dresses in that closet had the lace on it singed from the heat, so you can imagine what a risk he was taking. No one saw what he did.

Darell: My dad had just sold some of his China pigs, and he had his money in his suit. And he crawled up over the porch, crawled into the house, and reached in and grabbed his coat with the cash. I don't know, I think it was about four thousand dollars. That was a lot of money. But he owed some money, too. It wasn't much later that he bought me a purebred China sow for about a hundred bucks.

Mayola: Luckily, no one was hurt, but dad could have been injured or even killed.

Bud: When I got outside I remember seeing this great big guy, I think his name was Mulberg, and he was putting a rope around a milk shed or a garage, or some structure that was next to the house. They put a rope around it and pulled it off the foundation to get it away from the house so it wouldn't catch fire. And Alfred Hanson was there, and he was behind this guy Mulberg, and when he started pulling, Alfred barely got away.

Mayola: There was no fire department in our area, but the town's firemen[59] brought fire extinguishers, which helped slow the fire. The neighbors arrived and removed almost all of our possessions from the burning house. My brothers' things were missed because in the confusion someone mistakenly said the boys' room had already been cleared.

Mayola: The night of the fire Grandma Shay came and got me and the little ones – Paul, Don, and Margie. I stayed until Christmas vacation was over. When school began, I came back to the Pollards and mother and Wayne went to stay with grandma. The older boys went home with Uncle Martin and Aunt Annie, but when school began, all those going to school came back to Laura and Joe's. Mother and the baby stayed at Joe and Laura's until she was able to go to grandma's house. Aunt Ellen was still with us to help. Now dad and all of us of school age were at Joe's, along with Aunt Ellen to help with the housework. We were there almost two months.

Mayola: I think about what a change for Laura and Joe – from no children to a household full. Joe enjoyed it, but I'm sure there were times when Laura wished we would all disappear.

Bud: It was really nice of Joe to take the family in. Otherwise I don't know what we would have done.

John: Our neighbor, Joe Pollard, he was a really good guy. We had to take mother and Wayne on a sled from the house to his on the night of the fire.

Mayola: Grandma came, but not that night. Well, she came that night I guess,

but mother didn't go up to grandma's for a couple days or so. But dad was with us, at the Pollards. Laura and Joe had a kind of big house. Aunt Ellen was there, too. She was mother's aunt, but we all called her Aunt Ellen. She was at the house. She always came when mother needed help. And suddenly here we all were with Joe and Laura, who had no kids. So she stayed there to help out with all of us. And this Aunt Ellen was the fussiest person. She was always fussing about things, and she practically ruined Laura's stove because she'd get things too hot and then pour salt on it to get the smoke down. I'm sure it just ruined that stove.

Bud: Some people said the kids started the fire. They told dad that his kids were probably playing with matches, but that wasn't true. We didn't start it. And dad knew we didn't.

Don: They sent Paul and me up to Grandma Shay's. I think Orlie and the other boys lived in town with somebody.

Bud: After the fire, John and I stayed with Uncle Martin for about two or three weeks. When we got up there and went into the bedroom, they had these sheets, and of course we never had sheets on our bed before, so we thought that was really something.

John: We lived with Joe and Laura until we got that new house moved to the farm. I remember every morning Joe would have pancakes.

Bud: I remember that it wasn't too long before we had that house moved out there. They brought a house out. Not a new one, but one that they bought from town. They just raised it up with a jack and moved it out on a truck. And it didn't take much to get the house ready.

Don: They moved a house out from Mt. Vernon, already put together. They just moved it out, dug a foundation for it, and set it down. They never did finish pouring the basement. It was a pretty good-sized house.

Mayola: It was a mild winter, so the foundation for a house was built. In February dad bought a house in Mt. Vernon and it was moved out to the farm.

Bud: They had to build a foundation and a furnace underneath. But in the middle of winter, to have to do something like, that couldn't have been easy.

"They moved a house out from Mt. Vernon, already put together."

Mayola: Orlie and I watched our house move out on a trailer. We were in high school, and we knew when it was going to be done, so we made a plan. We saw it being pulled out on a big flatbed trailer.

John: After the house burned down, I think it was around March when they got that other house. Dad bought that house and moved it onto the farm, and boy it was a big house.

Mayola: I think it was February when we moved in. What an exciting day when we could move into our new home! It was a big house. I have no recollection of preparing the place to be livable or getting all our things together. I was fourteen at the time, a freshman in high school.

Bud: The new house was set on a different part to the lawn. They had to put a

foundation down before they could put the house down. Dad did most of the work. George Malde and Alfred Loon came to help him, but he did most of it, pouring all that concrete and stuff.

Mayola: I think dad paid three thousand dollars for that house. I don't know why I remember that. It was a big house. It had a big kitchen, and there was another separate room where he had the cream and all that stuff. We had a dining area and a bigger room that we used for a dining room. But we only used that room for company. And it had a living room, which we hardly ever used. Then upstairs there were three bedrooms and a closet. And it had a porch, too.

Bud: I always wondered if Uncle Lew and Uncle Martin didn't help out dad a little bit after the fire. If they could, they would have for sure.

Mayola: I remember it was a really nice winter, the winter Wayne was born. Not too much snow and not too cold. It was a beautiful winter. All winter it was nice.

Chapter 10

t umbleweeds, Grasshoppers, and Dust

Hard Times for Sure

Bud: Those were hard times, for sure.

Wayne: It was a tough time for my parents, a real tough time. It was tough for all parents at that time.

Bud: It wasn't the depression that hurt them; it was the drought, all that dryness. It lasted for three or four years. There wasn't much to look forward to for farmers then. During the 1933 dust storm I remember Alfred Larson and his sister thought the world was coming to an end, it got so dark.

Darell: I remember I woke up one Sunday morning and I couldn't see a darn thing, couldn't even see the barn.

Paul: Those were hard times, with drought, grasshoppers, dust blowing until the clouds almost shut out the sun.

Associated Press: An unprecedented dust storm swirled aloft by a gale, turned day into night over virtually all of South Dakota Sunday, seriously hampered communication lines and highway traffic and left heavy deposits of grit everywhere before blowing itself out late in the evening[60]. (November 13, 1933)

Mayola: They didn't have any crops, so they didn't have any money. And then we had the windstorms. I can remember the tumbleweeds. They were just all

over the place because it was so dry. And the corners of all the yards and all the fields would have these piles of tumbleweeds bunched up in the corner. At school we used to take hold of the end of them if it was windy, and they'd just pull you across the yard like a parachute. They made good fires, I remember that.

"I can remember the tumbleweeds. They were just all over the place because it was so dry."

Bud: The dry spell started in 1931, I think. It must have lasted maybe six or seven years. It was bad. All the big trees died. Then they started planting different types of grain that could handle that kind of weather better, things like sorghum and cane. Typically we planted corn and wheat and barley.

Mayola: I remember going out on a date to a movie and there were grasshoppers in the city, in Mitchell. There were grasshoppers all over. And you didn't dare hang anything out on the line that they could get to or otherwise they'd eat holes in them. There were so many of them it became dark. And you could hear them, like a whirring sound.

Bud: After I graduated from high school, I stayed home awhile. I can't remember exactly how long. But soon after graduating I went out and looked for work, but it wasn't easy at that time. There weren't many jobs.

George: In the dirty thirties things were not so good economically in our area. There were no jobs to be found. Orland had bought a Model A Roadster and so he, Bud and I made plans to go to the Red River Valley in North Dakota. We had heard there was a good wheat crop there, in North Dakota, so that's where we headed. Orland made the contact and the three of us were hired by a rancher who owned the threshing rig and furnished the crew, so we were set for that job. We were to come in time to cut and shock the wheat crop. Orland being the oldest was put on one of the three binders, and Bud and I were to do the shocking.

Bud: One summer Orland and I went up to North Dakota to work in the harvest field, and we took George with us. And nobody knew George was going. He just went, and he didn't tell anyone. At some point they found out, I guess. Somebody must have told them.

"We heard there was a good wheat crop there, in North Dakota, so that's where we headed."

George: Bud found work at various farms and worked for more than a year at one place.

Darell: Mom and dad did the best they could do. Those were hard times on everyone. We all did the best we could do given the circumstances.

"During the 1933 dust storm I remember Alfred Larson and his sister thought the world was coming to an end, it got so dark."

Bud: I'm sure it bothered both mom and dad, but they never complained about anything.

Mayola: They didn't bring it into the family like some other parents did, saying things like, "This is so awful, we can't do this, and we can't do that because we don't have any money, and you can't go to the party because you don't have a nice dress," and things like that. Well, mother and dad never did that to us.

Bud: But we weren't the only ones that had a bad time on the farm those days. Lots of folks did.

Mayola: And that's why you didn't feel too bad, because nobody else had good clothes or money to spend on all those things, not even the kids in town, I don't think. There weren't that many of them then. I don't think Mt. Vernon was that populated.

Don: When things got tough, dad rode on the train with the cattle to Chicago and sold them. I was ten or eleven. He just loaded them up and rode them in the train to Chicago. The reason he got rid of them was because we weren't growing enough stuff to feed them. It was right after the depression started, maybe 1933. And then we had the droughts. You couldn't raise anything. It was just Russian thistle, a tumbling weed. And some of them tried to mix them in with sorghum, but it just wasn't good eating.

Mayola: We still went skating in the winter and in the summertime we had lawn parties, and we just sort of went on with our lives, I guess.

Wayne: Everyone back then had a big picture of Roosevelt in their window. He was seen as a savior by most people. And he *was*, in that sense. He helped create the agencies that created the jobs, like the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) which Bud was involved in. Orlie was involved in the CCC, too. Don was in a high school program where he worked and got paid some money while he was going to school. And dad worked on the WPA. He worked on the road crew part-time when he wasn't farming. And then there were the relief funds. So there were a lot of programs that helped families survive. I remember getting big sacks of apples, and peas, and things like that. Of course, you were ashamed to be seen to be on relief, so you put them where people wouldn't see them.

Mayola: Melba grew up during the depression years. There were changes being made in our lifestyle that she was not really aware of. Dad's Saturday night shopping treats were less or missing. Dad went to work on the roads for the WPA. When he'd come in from the farm work or the road job, Melba would take his hand and walk him to the wash basin, almost as if she recognized dad was unhappy.

George: I was accepted as head of the family in my dad's place and went to work on the WPA. We hauled gravel for a number of roads around the area. We also graded a mile of grass road. Here Bud's dad was chosen as foreman. He was a good one, too. We all pulled our weight and did our jobs. Bud came home a time or two, catching a ride with other fellows from nearby towns. We just had to get together to celebrate. Mind you, the celebrations were mild, perhaps a show and a treat afterwards – a nickel root beer and a piece of pie, fifteen cents; two bits for the show at the big theater. But we enjoyed ourselves. We tried to think of things for the future. The land remained dry.

Bud: Orlie made his living working for a farmer. I did some of that, too. I worked for Thor Jefferson for ten dollars a month. Of course, he gave me room and board, too. He was a farmer not too far from where we lived, maybe three or four miles. I worked for Harry Moulder during that time as well.

"Actually, we kids didn't feel like it was a bad time.
But a lot of people complained."

Mayola: Dad got some work on the WPA. They worked on projects like road projects, and he got paid for that. And we had eggs and cream to sell. Actually, we kids didn't feel like it was a bad time. But a lot of people complained.

Wayne: I was sitting in class one day, and there was a girl, I think her name was Betty Harmon. And she was looking over at me. It was my first day in my first year at town school, and she said, "Wayne, why do you wear such funny clothes?" And up until that time, I never thought about poverty, because we *were* poor. We wore hand-me-downs all the time, and we had holes in our shoes, holes in our trousers, and I remember that was kind of a wake up call, you know. And I remember one time when Mart was walking down the street in a pair of Margie's shoes with the heels cut off, and there was this basketball star making fun of him, and I never forgot that.

Bud: I went off to work at a CCC camp. I don't know what year that was, maybe 1935. And Orlie went to CCC camp, too, I think. We weren't together. I didn't even know he had gone until much later. The reason we got into the CCC camps was because we had a big family and they knew we needed the money. I got paid $30.00 dollars a month. I kept $5.00 and the rest was sent home. And mother said they pretty near lived on that for awhile.

George: All the young, single men were encouraged to join the Civilian Conservation Corps and then to send their money home to help their folks survive. They were allowed a limited amount for spending money but all their needs were supplied. Bud and one of his classmates from high school joined up.

Mayola: Orlie eventually took work on a farm in Illinois. He got there first. Then John went. John did that before he went to college.

John: When I graduated from high school there weren't any jobs because of the depression. My brother Orlie and I went to Durand, Illinois and we got jobs there on a farm. It was owned by an older couple. There was an older couple and a younger couple. I had a room there. And I went there to work from March until October. They had cattle and they had a lot of pasture. We had to do the milking, too. The older couple owned the place, and the younger couple, they had a little one, so we lived upstairs. Then during my second year there they wanted me to start working on small motors, as well as help them take care of records.

Bud in the Black Hills as part of the Civilian Conservation Corps

Melba: We lived in the country then. I was about four. I was mad at my mom because she wouldn't let me come in her bedroom. Her door was closed and I could not get in that bedroom no matter how hard I tried. I was so mad I ran away from home. I went over to our neighbors, who were great people. And I said, "Laura, can I work for you for a penny a day?" They had no children and we were like their kids. And so I went and stayed over for maybe an hour, I don't

remember. Before I went back home, they took mom to the hospital. That's the thing that really stands out to me, when my mom had a breakdown. To this day I can see that door closed and the blinds drawn, the window shades down, curtains pulled, no lights in there whatsoever. And she just laid there.

Melba: When she was gone John had to put all of the face cards away, because mom didn't believe in playing cards. He had to put all the cards away so that there was no card playing when she was away in the hospital.

Mayola: During the depression dad lost the farm. It was a sad day when a sale was held and dad and mother moved to a farm nearby. Dad took odd jobs on farms and in construction work for a few years before they moved into Mt. Vernon.

Mayola: After they lost the farm they lived in Leif Hanson's place for awhile. All the kids were gone except for Melba.

Bud: Leif, he was really good to dad.

Mayola: He was good to all of us.

Bud: Yeah, he was.

Bud: When dad lost the farm, I think that hurt him more than anything. They weren't making enough money to pay the taxes. And he had payments besides the taxes. So he just couldn't make enough money out of it. And I think that hurt him more than anything. That was in 1933 or 1934.

Don: They rented another farm for awhile, and then mother and dad moved over to Leif Hanson's. That was when I was starting college. I don't know if the guy who owned their place wanted more rent or what. But they eventually moved over to the Hanson's place. They farmed it for a little while, maybe a year or two. Leif let them stay there. Then some of the kids got together and bought this house for them in Mt. Vernon.

Bud: The place where they were living was owned by one of my cousins, Leif Hanson. It was north of Mt. Vernon. They stayed there for awhile. Then the kids got together and chipped in to buy them a house in Mt. Vernon.

Bud: That was a tough thing for mom and dad to go through, for sure.

Mt. Vernon News: Gust Larson Auction Sale, Tuesday, February 26, 1946. Gust Larson, 2 ¼ miles north of Mt. Vernon, having decided to quit farming, will sell at auction his personal property on next Tuesday, February 26, at 12:30, the following: 2 head of Horses; 28 head of Cattle; a good lot of Farm Machinery and Miscellaneous items. Lunch will be served on grounds. Rube Earl is the auctioneer, and the Commercial Trust and Savings Bank, the clerk. Usual terms. Don't forget the date.

Bud: After the auction in '46 mom and dad lived on a second farm, in the house, while the farm land was tilled by others. They stayed there until about 1952 or 1953, I think, when they moved into the house in Mt. Vernon.

"That was a tough thing for mom and dad to go through."

Mayola: We all helped them buy that house in Mt. Vernon. Darell was working then as a doctor, and he probably paid the most. But everybody helped.

Bud: I didn't pay very much. I sent them some money every so often, but Darell sent them money every month.

Gust and Mabel's house in Mt. Vernon

Mayola: When mother and dad lived in Mt. Vernon, Wayne had the store there, and Mart had been teaching. I was teaching, too, and Margie was working as a bookkeeper in Sioux Falls.

Wayne: It was a general merchandise store[61]. We mostly sold groceries, but we also sold clothing. It was a lot of work, and a lot of anxiety because at that time the chain stores were moving in.

Bud: I seem to remember that Don offered to stay and help work the farm, but dad said to forget about it. He'd already given up by then. He retired after that. He did some carpenter work for other farmers, but he was up in age at that time when he was doing that heavy work.

Chapter 11

Fire on the Prairie

A Family Secret

Mayola: It was midsummer 1932 and the barn was filled with newly mown hay. The heat and the hay caused combustion, and a fire started. That's what everyone thought at the time, that is.

Darell: I was fourteen when the barn burned down. My dad and I were lying on the dining room floor, the cool linoleum floor. It was really hot that day and we were trying to cool off. Then we heard someone shout "Fire!" I thought I was a fast runner, but my dad, boy, he was fifty something at that time, and we were about 100 yards from the barn, and he took off and shot 40 yards ahead of me in no time. He grabbed a hay rack from inside the barn, a thing with wheels that you use to haul hay. It had a steel tongue on it and he just grabbed that thing and pulled it out of the burning barn with one hand, all by himself. Then he just stood there and watched the barn burn.

Mayola: That's why it went up in flames so fast…all that hay in the barn.

Darell: Mom was in the house. She was washing dishes and cleaning up.

Mayola: It was a Sunday afternoon. The fire started in the hayloft, at about 1:30 or 2:00. It was summertime. I wasn't home right at that moment, but I was there after that, when it was burning. I must have been high school age because I was out with some friends on a picnic that day. When I got home there were all these cars in the yard and people standing all around. And I thought – what in the world!

Bud: Don was up at Grandma Shay's. He wasn't home that day. I was playing ball in town. I could see the smoke, which looked to be about four miles away, right where our farm was. I had Orland's car, so I headed home to see.

Don: I was about ten or twelve miles north. We could see the smoke, and we thought it was in the area of our farm.

"It was midsummer 1932 and the barn was filled with newly mown hay."

Mayola: Bud was playing baseball in Mt. Vernon. The fire alarm rang and Bud said he'd hoped it wasn't at our farm.

Mayola: There was a water tank right close by, but there wasn't too much that they could do. For a long time I didn't know that the boys started the fire. I just thought it was, you know, combustion.

Darell: The younger brothers set a match in the barn. They tried to put it out by putting more hay on it. Finally they got a brigade going from the water tank where the cattle were, and tried to put it out. Then they ran and hid under the porch, all three of them.

Mayola: The barn burned down but no livestock was lost.

Bud: It was the kids who burned the barn down. He admitted it, Wayne did. He said they even tried to put it out by putting stuff on it, like hay.

Paul: We had started it by smoking on a very hot, windy day. And I remember how we were trying to put out this blazing inferno with little coffee cans, which was both heroic in trying, and ludicrous in implementation.

Bud: When the fire got started, Paul thought to throw more hay on it, thinking it would help, and he sent Marty to the water tank.

Darell: I remember the boys hiding under the porch.

Bud: Dad burned the back of his hand, I remember that.

"I could see the smoke, which looked to be about four miles away, right where our farm was."

Mayola: They said that dad knew. But mother didn't. She didn't know that the boys had started that fire. But dad did.

Darell: I think dad had an idea, but he didn't say anything.

Mayola: When people saw the fire they came from all over. While mother was out with the crowd she heard someone say, "Those boys look like Indians." Mother glanced at my younger brothers who ranged from ten to twelve years old that summer, and sure enough there they were in their bibbed overalls and no shirts. They were so suntanned that they *did* look like Indians; they were brown as can be.

Bud: I don't remember what we did with all the cows. I'm pretty sure he had insurance on the barn, though. It wasn't too long before another barn was built.

Mayola: That fall, with help from our neighbors, dad built a new barn.

Don: Dad built a new barn from scratch after that, a bigger one, a wider one. It was a good-sized cattle barn for milking cows and stuff.

Bud: Dad built the new barn. He was a good carpenter. It was Albert Hanson who said he should never have been a farmer; he should have been a carpenter. When he was seventeen years old he was building barns and everything.

Darell: My dad built the barn. And I'll tell you what he did, he put house siding on it, and tar insulation. I was a young kid then. John and I helped him put the siding on. And we said, "Dad, why are you doing that?" And he said, "Because I don't want it to be cold. I'm going to be able to take my duck coat off in here."

Mayola: Dad built the new barn right away. The fire was in August and the barn was rebuilt by Christmas vacation. It had a long, pitched roof. The older boys helped shingle it. Dad was a perfectionist, and he wanted the roof to be perfect. John and Darell were up on top of the roof, and all of the sudden John started sliding away, and he said he waved to Darell as he went over the edge. Fortunately he landed safely in a six-foot snow bank.

Bud: Dad built the new barn, but we shingled it, Orland and me. It was a long,

steep roof, and John was up on top helping. He was up on the top of the roof and he slid off. He was screaming and hollering. Orland and I were shingling, but I don't know what John was doing. He shot right off the roof. It wasn't too high where he fell off of, only six feet or something like that.

Mayola: I would come home on weekends from my teaching job near Mt. Vernon. The younger boys always wanted me to go with them to see the new barn. I always seemed to find other things to do. But they didn't give up. One Saturday they pulled me there to see the new barn.

Mayola: The boys had tried to smoke a cigarette and that was how the fire started. They thought dad had probably known what had happened, but mother had been kept in the dark for all those years.

Paul: I honestly believe this was the beginning of my ulcers as dad had gotten burned and there was a terrible guilt feeling which left me with a knot in the pit of my stomach for days. We kept this secret for many, many years, and it is something I will always remember about the ferocity of fire.

Darell: Nobody talked about it until after mother died. She never knew what really happened.

Chapter 12

The Larson Mafia

Don, Paul, Wayne, and Marty

Darell: The younger ones, they called them the Larson Mafia. They were tough. They even scared me. I was kind of in the middle. The older boys, they were mild in comparison.

Bud: I wasn't around that much when the younger boys were growing up, at least as they got to be older. But I sure heard stories about them.

Don

Don: The four of us younger guys, we were always causing problems – me, Paul, Wayne and Martin.

Darell: Both Paul and Don were really tough. And they fought a lot, with each other, and with others. One day my dad saw Don and Paul fighting. Paul threw a pitchfork which landed just above Don's head. My dad saw this, but didn't get upset. He just took off his shirt and said, "You think you're both tough, huh? I'm taking you both on, either one at a time or together at the same time." My dad was about sixty years old then. He whipped both their asses, really taught them a lesson.

Paul: Myself, Wayne and Martin were not the best behaved of the students, and I do not know how that one particular teacher put up with it.

Paul

Bud: The younger boys, Paul and Wayne and Martin, they made a name for themselves in basketball. Wayne told me one night they were playing in Stickney, and they made most of the points, just the two of them, Wayne and Martin.

Bud: We had a big cottonwood tree in the yard, and the boys put up a basketball board on it. And that's where they practiced.

Mayola: When I was at Marion, Mart was playing close by. I've forgotten the name of the town, but it was close by. So I went to the game. I guess Leif Hanson must have come down, and we went to the game. And Mart had this idea before a game started. I think he was the captain of the team, and he would rub his big toe. He took off his shoe and rubbed his big toe for luck.

Bud: I don't remember them fighting so much, but they did get into trouble sometimes. And then there was the barn fire, of course. That was really something.

Wayne: I got into a lot of trouble in school.

Wayne

Darell: I'll tell you this one story. There was this teacher at the school house. It was her first year of teaching, and Don…well, he kind of ran the school, you know, and he'd say, "Ok, I'm going to teach everyone geography." So he gets everybody on the floor and pulls out the book and asks where is this place and where is that place, and then Paul gives the answer and Don tells him, "Ok, you can go out and shoot baskets for five minutes now." And then Wayne gives the next answer, and then he gets to go out and shoot baskets, and then some of the other kids after that. Don, you see, he was running the school. He was the boss. But then one of the kids in class squealed on him, and they were going to go after him and give him a whipping after school, but he ran away to a neighbor's house.

Bud: They really got in trouble for that.

Mayola: Mart was the youngest one. I suppose he was learning from his older brothers, but he had a mind of his own. He was smart, and he was really good at sports. Marty was really special.

Martin

Bud: I guess the younger boys were tough, but they were good kids. They helped out mom and dad just like the rest of us.

Don, Paul, Wayne, and Marty

Chapter 13

Do Something With That Boy

Off to College

Darell: I remember when I was seventeen, I was standing in the doorway between the kitchen and living room, and I heard my mom say to my dad, "You got to do something with that boy, send him to college, a good Christian college, not a university."

Bud: I graduated high school in 1932. It was right in the bad part of the depression. I don't know where I got the idea, but somebody told me that Uncle Martin and Aunt Annie would have helped me out if I wanted to go to college, but I wasn't really that interested.

Mayola: I remember one time when Dorothy Osterman was at our house and Bud was home and we were talking about that, that all the kids went to college, but Bud didn't go. Bud was the one that she knew well because she taught at our school. I think about that sometimes.

Darell: My dad offered to send Bud to college, but he didn't want to go.

Mayola: I often wonder how it came about that I got to go to college, because some of my friends didn't go.

John: I went to business school in Mitchell. The rest of them – Don, Paul, Wayne and Martin – they all went to Augustana College in South Dakota.

Mayola: I was the first to go off to college after I graduated from high school in 1930. Dad drove me to Augustana College at Sioux Falls. At vacation, like Thanksgiving, he drove both ways to pick me up from and take me back to school.

Darell and friend at high school graduation

Mayola: I remember dad taking me down to Augustana College, and him going in and talking to the president. Dad knew the president of the college. For some reason or other he and mother met him in Minneapolis when they went to get married. And he remembered that, because when my dad took me down there one time, he went up to the office to see the president.

Darell: When I was heading off to college, my dad drove me there. We took turns driving. He was about fifty seven at that time. We were passing a road stop, like a rest stop, called Larson's Corner, between highway 10 and highway 81, and my dad said, "Let's have a beer." And we did. That was really something.

Mayola: The younger boys, they were all at Augustana College at one time. Marge was working in Sioux Falls before she went to Topeka. I was teaching at Watertown and I'd take the bus to Sioux Falls and meet her and the boys. I had a picture of them all dressed up in their suits. We'd always have dinner with them, and then I would go back to Watertown. Mart went into the service, and I think he finished when he got back.

Margie's college graduation day (May 19, 1942)

Darell: When we got to the college, dad went up to meet the president. And dad said to him, "I just want to tell you something. We may have some financial problems getting him through, but we'll do our best." Then he gets up, and I get up, and we're heading to the exit. At the door, Gust turned back toward the president and said, "Now, if Darell gets in trouble, don't call me." Well, three years later I got in trouble for knocking a guy out. I was working as a waiter in the cafeteria and one day this guy was giving me trouble. After that, I had to go before the board, the president, the dean, the professors of chemistry and biology,

all of them. And the president says to me, “Darell, do you remember what your father said?” I said I did. Then he said, “Well, I didn’t call him.” I was demoted to a dishwasher after that, scrubbing pots and pans, but I got paid the same.

Bud: The reason they could all go to college at that time was because of the church, the Lutheran Church. I don’t think they paid for all of it, but I think they helped out.

Chapter 14

An Important Part of Our Lives

Relatives, Friends, and Neighbors

Bud: We got together a lot of with Uncle Martin and Aunt Annie, and with Grandma Shay. That's about all they did, mother and dad, visit with relatives. We were always visiting with relatives. It was an important part of our lives.

Tri-County Journal: L. J. Larson and family, Mr. and Mrs. Martin Larson, Tobe Hoefert and family, and Mrs. O. A. Shay and family spent Sunday at Gust Larson's. (October 16, 1913)

Mayola: Grandma Shay's home was a special place to all of us. We had good times there, and even after we grew up and were away from home, we always took time to go see Grandma Shay when we returned.

Bud: Before Grandma Shay was married, her name was Larson.

John: Elmer, Hazel, Bill and mom, they were all brothers and sisters. We saw a lot of them when we were growing up.

Melba: We loved to go to Grandma Shay's.

Bud: I can remember when I was just a little kid and we would go up to visit at Burt Shay's house. One time their boys Harvey Shay and Verne Shay were there and I thought, God, they were awfully big people. You see, I was just a punk kid then.

A Larson Family gathering
(Left to right: The Hoefert children, the Lew Larson children, and Orlie and Mayola)

Mayola: Friends and family gave Melba attention. Aunt Hazel was one of those special people. When we'd go to visit Grandma Shay, Aunt Hazel would have a treat for her. Melba would always ask if Aunt Hazel had one for Marty, too. Of course, she always did.

Bud: Grandma Shay used to come when the babies were born and stay at the house. I can remember when Paul was born she said he had big ears.

Mayola: Aunt Ellen, she was mother's aunt, my Grandma Shay's sister. We didn't like her when we got older. She always came to help mother when the babies were born. She was good at that. Even when the house burned down, she was there. She was very good with the babies, but she wasn't much good for anything else. When I got home from high school I would clean up all the rooms, and make the beds. Aunt Ellen just took care of the babies, and that's all she did. She was good at that, and that's why mother would say, "Well, I can put up with everything else because she's good with the kids." Then she got married to a

fellow that had something like four kids. She was happy then. She had a family of her own.

Bud: Mother's aunt, Ellen, I never liked her. Actually, I couldn't stand her. And Orlie…he really hated her, too. And she despised him. I remember one time we came back home after being at Uncle Martin and Aunt Annie's, and she gave us a look and said, "Oh, so you two are back?" And I just shot back, "Oh, and you're still here, huh?"

Augusta Shay

Mayola: She was the one mother always called on when she needed help. And mother always said that she was so good with the little ones, and that's why she had her help out. But she was not a good housekeeper. When she washed clothes, mother could hardly stand it. But Lottie[62] was fun to have around. She was younger, and she had a boyfriend. He'd come to see her from time to time.

Bud: Grandma Shay and Aunt Hazel, they always got us something for Christmas.

Darell: Aunt Hazel, she was my mother's sister. She was a lovely lady. She lived right north of town, about two miles out. They called it Midway.

Melba: Aunt Hazel had this beautiful library table, so any chance that I could get up there, I loved to play librarian. It was a big, old library table, a big table that had lots of shelves where you could put books, and a place to write.

Aunt Hazel

Bud: Both Uncle Bill and Aunt Hazel were special to us. Neither of them married. For awhile they lived together in a house in Mt. Vernon, not too far from where our farm was.

Uncle Bill

John: Elmer and Hattie, they farmed about three quarters of a mile going east. Elmer was mother's brother. He married Hattie Christopher. Doris was their daughter. They eventually moved to Minneapolis because that's where Doris lived. Their son Duane, he became a pastor. And their other boy, Robert, he was killed in World War II.

Newspaper Obituary[63]**:** Staff Sergeant Robert Ellard Shay, son of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Shay, was born on September 29, 1922 near Letcher. He was killed in action returning from a bombing mission to Kassel, Germany. His plane was set afire by enemy fighters, exploded and crashed near Hersfeld, Germany.

Don: We would go up to Uncle Elmer's and Grandma Shay's a lot, and we'd go over to Uncle Martin's out in Plankinton. Uncle Martin was dad's older brother. He was a supervisor in a training school for boys. They had a lot of Indians there. He was the head of the agriculture department there.

Darell: Dad's younger brother Otto, he died of tuberculosis. He was young when he died, about thirty years old. He once took a bicycle clear across the country, from the Dakotas to the West Coast, over the Rockies[64].

Bud: Dad was a quiet person, but Orlie and I remember that the one who was really quiet was Gusty Hanson. He never talked to anybody. His brother Albert did all the talking.

Mayola: Yeah, he was a real jabberbox.

Bud: Dad had three brothers, Lewis, Martin and Otto, and one sister, Laura. Lew, he was a really big fellow. He was on the school board from a very young age, and he became a State Representative for the Plankinton area of South Dakota. They say he was bound for Washington, that if he hadn't died he would have become a U.S. Congressman. They lived about twenty miles or so from where we lived. He passed away in 1933. I went to the funeral, I remember that.

Bud: I heard that when Uncle Martin and Aunt Annie got married, they lived in a dirt house, an old sod house. There were quite a few of those back then.

"Even after we grew up and were away from home, we always took time to go see Grandma Shay when we returned."

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Newspaper Obituary[65]**:** Lewis John Larson was born in Livingston County, Illinois on February 6, 1874 and died July 18, 1933 at the age of 59 years, 5 months and 12 days. In 1883 he moved with his parents to Aurora County where they homesteaded what was known as the Theodore Meoska farm. When he was but nine years old his mother died. He held several township offices and in 1911 was elected to the State Legislature. He served two terms in the House of Representatives and six consecutive terms in the Senate. A procession over a mile in length, of relatives and close friends of the family escorted the remains to Plankinton from the farm home in Bristol Township.

Bud: I remember old Tobe Hoefert and his family coming to visit on Sunday. And I remember that he'd always come early and he'd just sit there by himself in the car for the longest time. He was the husband of dad's sister, Laura. He'd just sit in the car. He never had much to say. He'd just sit there in that car all by himself. It was the strangest thing. I don't know why I remember something like that. But dad and his sister Laura were very close.

Mayola: After I found out that her husband, Tobe Hoefert, had used a whip on one of his daughters for some reason or other, I just didn't like him anymore.

Mayola: Their daughter Lottie used to come to work for mom at our house, because with the baby, mother always needed extra help.

Bud: Uncle Martin and Aunt Annie, they were so good to us. And they helped out mom and dad a lot, too. I always enjoyed when they came to visit or when we went over to their place.

Uncle Martin and Aunt Annie

Mayola: Yes, they were. They really helped out, even if it was just a pair of socks, you know, because they didn't have a lot of money, either. They were very special people. They didn't have any children.

Bud: We saw Uncle Martin quite a bit, but not Uncle Lew so much. Uncle Martin, he was really good to us kids. He always brought us pencils and rulers and stuff like that.

John: Uncle Martin and Aunt Annie, they were always doing things for the nephews and nieces.

Bud: Uncle Martin, he worked for the state. He was in charge of a reform school,

in charge of the farming part and anything on the outside. He wasn't the head of the whole thing, just the farming part of it. They had land and farmed corn and stuff like that. He must have worked his whole life there, for the state, but he never got a pension.

Bud: Laura, dad's sister, she lived to be quite old. She had about seven kids.

Mayola: Joe and his wife Laura, they had no children of their own. Except for our dog Bowser, we all loved every pound of Joe. When at our house, Joe's favorite spot to sit was on the wood box next to the kitchen stove. Mother, dad, and any of the kids who were around enjoyed discussing news, coming events, and so forth.

Aunt Annie and Mayola

Mayola: Laura and Joe lived closer than a mile. They were just around the corner from our place. We used to walk to our school, which was about a mile away, and we always passed their house. Joe and Laura became much a part of our family, too. Between mother and Laura making ice cream and everybody helping with the freezing, we consumed gallons of ice cream during the summer. We had a storm cellar near our house and Laura was so afraid of wind storms that many times she and Joe would come over to be safe in the storm cellar. Sometimes it would be at night. They would watch the storm and then awaken us if it seemed bad.

Darell: Joe and Laura Pollard, they were our closest neighbors. They lived a quarter of a mile away, maybe less than that. Dad and Joe weren't really good friends. But my mother and he were good friends, because they would like to argue between Lutheran and Catholicism, and dad would just shake his head because he wouldn't want to listen to any of it.

Mayola: Mother and Joe would always argue about religion. He was a Catholic. Dad would say, "Oh, no, not again." Mother was stronger in her opinions, though, and she always seemed to have the upper hand.

"We were always visiting with relatives. It was an important part of our lives."

Mayola: One time when Joe was visiting in our kitchen, he wondered aloud what Bowser would do if he grabbed Melba, the youngest. She was about two at the time. Well, he found out. Bowser shot across the room and would have attacked Joe if dad had not yelled. I guess Bowser thought he was the family protector, not Joe.

Mayola: The boys were happy to help with Joe's chores. They respected him. Of course, the pancakes and ice cream Joe made added to the fun.

Mayola: Joe was always in a good mood. He liked to tease Darell. I remember he called John "sunshine" and Bud "early riser." And every morning he would have pancakes and syrup.

Mayola: Some evenings Joe and Laura would come over and we'd make ice cream. We especially liked the chocolate syrup and custard ice cream that Laura would make.

Bud: You know something…I don't think dad ever appreciated what Joe did for him after the fire. They never really seemed to get along too well.

Mayola: No, they didn't. I don't know what it was.

Bud: I'm sure dad appreciated it though. He must have. Joe was always good to us kids.

Mayola: Oh, yeah, he loved the kids. He used to come over and sit on our wood box by the stove in the kitchen. He'd sit on the wood box and talk to the kids and play with the dog.

Mayola: Another time we realized Joe's concern for us was real. Dad was coming back from town with a grain wagon. The horses got spooked and dad lost control. They headed for home. Joe had seen them racing by with dad still in the wagon. Joe ran as fast as he could to see if anyone had been hurt and dad was ok.

Bud: He and mother got along really well. I think dad and Joe got along alright, but I think there was a little friction there. I think dad thought he was not always honest in his dealings.

Mayola: I think I know why. Because dad was a much better farmer than Joe was and I think dad thought Joe should be doing some things that he probably didn't do.

A family gathering celebrating Gust and Mabel's 25th wedding anniversary

Mayola: Dad didn't think much of Joe as a farmer. He kind of did a lot of talking. We loved Joe, though. We thought he was great. His wife was pretty quiet. They didn't have any kids. Well, they had someone I think that lived with them awhile, an older boy, but I'm not sure if they adopted him. But Joe treated us like we were his kids.

John: The Maldes, they were a good family. They lived just a mile from the school, the country school. I remember the Loons, too. They always had a horse with a buggy to ride in. They lived about three miles from us. And George Larson, he lived a mile east of us. He was Bud's best friend.

Bud: George Larson, my best friend, he was from a different Larson family altogether.

Mayola: And Ward Bierce…boy, dad would get so mad at him. He only lived about a mile away. I don't know if he rode a horse or what. He would come over to the house when the boys were supposed to be working. But he didn't work; he just wanted to play. And dad would get so upset with him. He didn't like Ward. He didn't care much for his dad, either.

Bud: He was down at our house all the time. He was like one of the Larsons.

Mayola: I remember he said to his mother, "I don't know why I wasn't born down at the Larson's." He had a sister, but she was quite a bit older. So he was alone at his place.

Bud: I think he was closest to Darell. It was kind of between Darell and John for awhile, but later on he got to be closer to Darell than John.

Mayola: He was down there all the time. His mother said he just lived down there. One day she found his underwear under the bed, and she couldn't understand why he didn't have them on. And he said, "The Larson boys don't have to wear underwear like that, so I'm not going to." And they didn't. They just had their overalls. But Ward never did stay unless it was somebody's birthday. Then he would be invited to stay. He was there in the morning, but when it got to lunch time, he'd go home.

Chapter 15

God Will t ake Care of Them

Prairie Soldiers

Bud: The only time I remember my dad getting really worked up was during the war. You see, he had five or six sons in the army, but some of the other families, they had one or two sons, and they weren't even in it; they were still there on the farm. And that really upset him. But mother never said anything about that. She just said, "God will take care of them." I suppose she was upset about it, too, though.

John: I was in the South Pacific. I was with a division out of Chicago, the 33rd infantry division. I was with the field artillery battalion. I was a kind of clerk. I took care of records and payroll. I knew all those guys from top to bottom, because that was part of my life.

Bud: John was with an army group out of Chicago. They called it the Prairie Division.

Don: I was in the army, in the 81st infantry division, the Wildcat division. We were over in the Pacific. We didn't see a lot of action, but we saw enough. We were sent to Peleliu Island in the Palaus. The marines went into Palau first. They had a lot of losses.

Bud: I was working for the state of Washington, and I wasn't too satisfied with my boss, so I applied for a couple of other jobs, and the one I got was in Hawaii. I worked in the navy yard at Pearl Harbor. Most of my work was with telephones

and intercoms for the ships. I didn't work out on the ships; I worked on the materials that came in, like the motors and telephones. We worked on them and then sent them back to the ship when we were done. I worked with a Korean, a really nice guy, and really smart. Then I worked for a Chinese fellow. He and I used to work nights, and when I would come in he used to give me all the work then he'd go and lay on the bed.

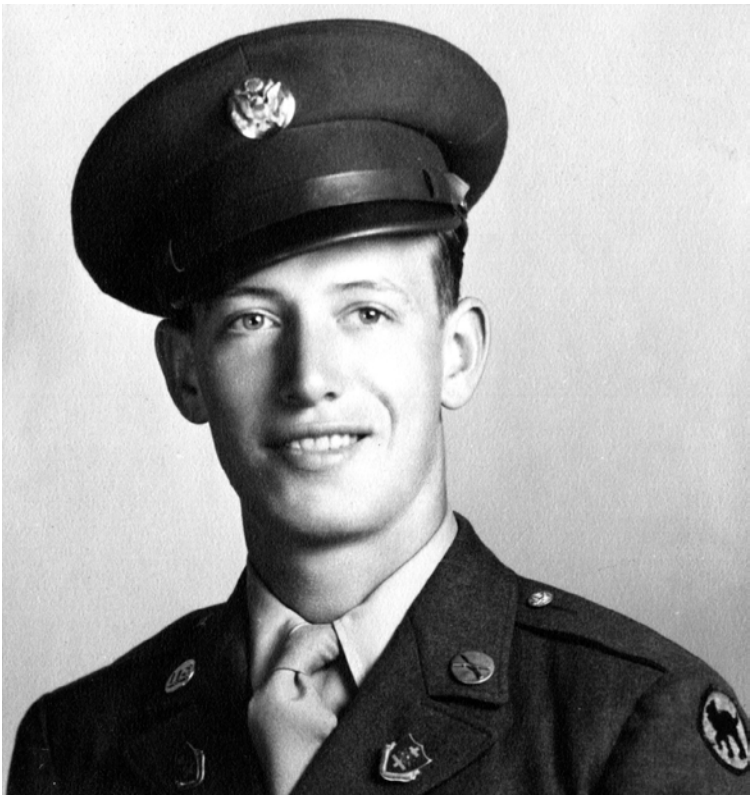
"I recall Orlie's respect for animals, and I suppose that's one of the reasons for his being in the K-9 Corp during the war."

Bud: I married Gen[66] over there, in Honolulu. She was over there when I went. That was probably one of the reasons I went to Hawaii. While I was there, I had a chance to see both Don and John. They were short visits, but it was really good to see them.

John: We first went to basic training at Camp Forrest in Tennessee, and then had more basic training in Oklahoma. After that we went to Fort Louis in Washington for field training, and then we were in the Hawaiian Islands for about nine months. And that was nice. Then we went to New Guinea, and then the Philippines, and then to Japan.

Bud: Nobody was thinking about the Japanese doing anything. We were worried about Germany because they were sinking subs. There was stuff going on with Japan that we just didn't know about, and I guess the tension was getting higher all the time. But when they attacked Pearl Harbor that morning, we were all surprised.

John: We were supposed to go over in February of 1942, and we were supposed to go in September of that same year, but our commanding general was killed in a car accident. He was killed in a car accident in Tennessee. Then we had to get a new commander, so it was another year before we left.



"Don was right out there in the fighting, in the ditches."

Bud: My older brother Orland was over in Italy during the war. He trained dogs for the army. I don't know exactly what the dogs did. He always liked animals, I remember that.

Mayola: I think he trained the dogs to spot bombs and things, anything that was in the ground.

Bud: He was in Italy, I think.

Darell: Orlie was a guard, with the dogs. He guarded barracks. He was a little older when he went into the army. He was about thirty years old, and he was one of the oldest. He worked with guard dogs, guarding barracks. When he was discharged, he kept his dog. They gave it to him. He brought it to his home in Wisconsin. It was a beagle.

Paul: I recall Orlie's respect for animals, and I suppose that's one of the reasons for his being in the K-9 Corp during the war. He reiterated to me some of the experiences he had with the dogs, and their expert training and intelligence, and you could really feel the pride he felt in this endeavor.

Bud: We were out by Waikiki Beach when the bombing started. I had an apartment there with a friend of mine. We met on the boat on the way over. We stayed in barracks close to the navy yard for awhile, and then we got an apartment up at Waikiki. That's where we were when we heard the bombing. They were always doing shooting off of Diamond Head, and so at first we thought, boy, they sure are celebrating out there, because you could hear the bombs dropping, and we weren't very far from the base. Pretty soon we realized it wasn't our own guys doing the bombing.

Mayola: I remember calling Bud and Gen from Marion, South Dakota to find out if they were alright. I had Bud's number, or her number, and I called to see if they were ok. And that was when the war broke out.

Bud: I worked every other Sunday, but that day, the day the Japanese bombed, happened to be my Sunday off. I guess you can say I was lucky.

Bud: After the bombing pretty much stopped they called us and told us to get

down there, to where we worked. Everybody started heading down to the harbor, but then they called us all back. After about another hour they called everybody back again. The bombing was over by then. That's the reason they called us back the first time because they didn't want us down there in case there was still bombing going on. There was one bomb that dropped about fifty feet in front of our electric shop, but it never did much damage.

"John was with an army group out of Chicago."

Bud: After they called us back and we were heading to the base, I saw one of the Japanese planes. It was just flying around, shooting. He wasn't shooting at anyone; it just looked like he was shooting randomly. I think he was taking pictures of everybody. I saw these guys ahead of me running like hell to get

under a tree. Then pretty soon he was coming along, and I didn't see what he was shooting at. I think he was just shooting to scare us away. That was quite a day.

Bud: After all the bombing that day, we didn't know whether we were going back to Japan or staying in Hawaii. I worked for this Chinese fellow, and he said, "It doesn't bother me either way; I got a Japanese flag and I got a Chinese flag."

John: After Fort Louis we were sent to the island of Kauai. I was there probably eight or ten months. When we went to the Hawaiian Islands we replaced another battalion, so they moved on down closer to the action, and then another one would be following us.

Bud and John in Hawaii

Bud: Both John and Don came through Hawaii on the way to the Pacific. They came through not too far apart. I had a chance to see them both.

Don: We stopped in Hawaii and had about a month of jungle training there. That's when I saw Bud and Gen. I stayed at their house overnight. I didn't really know her. I was with a friend of mine from Chicago, and I really didn't get to know her that much. I only really had that one chance.

John: I was on the island of Kauai. If you had a brother or a relative on one of

the other islands, then you could get a pass. Bud was in Honolulu, so I put in for a pass. And another fellow in the battery put in for a pass because he had a brother in the service there, too. We had to travel at night, in a little boat, because it was wartime. We had to go across in this darn little boat, and we were stuck down below.

Mart, Wayne and Paul

John: When we went from the Philippines to Japan, it was in an LST. Oh, God, we ran into some really bad weather over there. I thought for sure the ship was going to tip over or something the way the wind was blowing us.

Mayola: Don was right out there in the fighting, in the ditches. Then he got hurt. It wasn't much, but they didn't let mother know. And she was so upset. She found out about it in the newspaper.

Mayola: Darell never left the United States during the war. He was in the service, but he was in the East, in Washington.

Darell: Paul couldn't go into the war because of his ear. He couldn't hear in one ear, a result of the scarlet fever he had when he was young. It really bothered him. In a Mitchell dancehall during the war, two marines at the bar were giving him a hard time about being a draft dodger. He knocked them both out in one punch and snuck out the back of the bar.

Bud: Paul was upset that he couldn't go into the army. He tried real hard, though. He and Wayne tried to sneak him in, but he had a medical problem.

Mayola: It was an ear infection. He had a really bad ear infection when he was two years old, and he could only hear out of one ear. I think that's what it was.

Don: Paul couldn't go in the service because of his ear. He stayed home with dad at home and helped him out.

Bud: Darell was in the army, in the medical corps. I think he was a captain, but he didn't go overseas. He worked as a surgeon out on the East Coast, near Washington D.C.

Mayola: Mother amazed us; she knew all their APO[67] addresses by memory. Many letters were exchanged.

Don: John, he was pretty much there all the time. I moved around quite a bit, not always a lot of action. The main one was Peleliu. That was bad.

Darell: Don was in Asia during the war. He got two Purple Hearts, but he never talked much about it. But he saw action. He got hurt, and they reported it in the Mt. Vernon newspaper. Mother and dad hadn't been informed. That's how they found out, in the newspaper. Boy, she really gave it to the people at the Mt. Vernon News for that, for not telling her before they put it in the paper.

Don: I think John was in New Guinea most of the time. He was in the artillery group, or what you call the artillery battalion. It was a group out of Illinois.

Mayola: Don was right out there in the fighting, in the ditches. Then he got hurt. Mother and dad were upset to hear from the Mt. Vernon News that Don had been injured in combat instead of being told by the army. Luckily, it was nothing serious. However, his habits changed. Don had always been the biggest eater of the family, but not anymore. Those army rations took care of that. It was a year before he felt like returning to college.

Wayne: I went into the service in 1945. I went to boot camp in Great Lakes Stable training center. I think that was about two months, a very short period of time. From there I went to Farragut, Idaho, to hospital corps school, where I got training to work as a hospital corps man. And from there I went to Seattle and worked at the naval hospital there. That's were I stayed until I got out of the service in late '46.

John: In the Philippines we took the town of Baguio, from February until June. It was up in the highlands and was built like an American city, with buildings just like in America. It was our job to take the city, but when we got there though, there wasn't much going on. We got to go on rest and rehabilitation after that, in July and August. We were still in the Philippines when they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. After that we went on to Japan and stayed there until November. I came back to the U.S. on a ship.

Don: After the fighting stopped we went to Japan for the occupation. There were a bunch of guys who were the last of the group, and we went up there on cargo ships. We went up and occupied the northern most Island of Japan. I don't remember the name of the island. I was only there about a month and a half, and then I had enough points to come home.

Wayne: It's kind of interesting that I ended up at the naval hospital. I had one of the best scores on shooting down sleeves that they carry in an airplane, with 40 millimeter and 20 millimeter guns. And that's where I thought I'd end up. Instead, they put me in the hospital corps. I don't know if it had to do with the fact that I had a brother in medical school, I have no idea. Maybe they just needed corpsmen. I was eighteen or nineteen years old at that time.

John: When you're in the service, you learn to get along with people. The worst guy, well…he wasn't that bad, and the best guy, well…he wasn't perfect. Pretty

soon you get to know them just like they were your brothers. I was a battery clerk. I bet I could tell you 90% of their first names, middle initials, last names, their ranks, and the selective service number of all those guys. It was part of my everyday work then.

Wayne: I remember one night I got to be in charge of a ward. Somebody got sick or something and there must have been four surgeries. There were two surgeries that day and two the day before, and there were people convalescing and thirty or forty people, and I'd been put in charge of this. Today, I would probably pass out, but then you didn't think about it. That's what your job was and you just did it. And I enjoyed it, taking care of patients, both old people from World War I and then young people. Some of them were unforgettable, a lot of marines, badly wounded. Then I got out of the service. My brothers were at Augustana College, and I went there to look for a job.

Bud: And then Martin, you know, he was in the Korean War.

Chapter 16

Remembrances

Eight Brothers and Three Sisters

Orland Eugene Larson (June 18, 1910 – October 9, 1977)

Darell: I called Orland the lover. He had the girlfriends, and the car, and he'd take them out to the house.

Paul: Orlie was an honest, kindly, patient, humble and good father and human being. I always looked up to him because of what he was as a person.

Mayola: Orlie was two years older than me, so to me he was the big brother in everyway. He was there to protect me. When we lived on the Storla farm we would go to our neighbor's to play. One day as we were coming home through the pasture and a cow started following us. Orlie threw me over the fence. I still have the scar from the barbed wire, but we were safe.

John: Orlie, he was the oldest. There were always some farmers around there that needed some help, so sometimes they would get Orlie to help out.

Mayola: Orlie was easygoing and tolerant. He behaved as if everything would turn out ok.

Paul: Orlie was kind, considerate, loving, had a sense of humor, honest, hard working, respectful and respected in turn.

"Orlie was easygoing and tolerant. He behaved as if everything would turn out ok."

Mayola: The younger kids always said Orlie was a much easier boss than Bud was. Bud was a tougher boss on the younger ones.

Paul: I am proud to have known and loved him as a brother and a friend. My early recollections of Orlie's life go back to Mt. Vernon and of him driving that Model A Ford with the rumble seat; working for other farmers, etc., because of the hard times for very little pay. Being the oldest he had the ability to get respect from us and giving it in return, and a certain sense of humor he had that was endearing. I recall sometimes if we did something stupid or made a mistake, he would say, "Oh, you dumbbell, what's the matter with you?" But we knew it was more out of love and understanding than a stern reprimand.

Bud: Dad depended on Orlie for a lot of things, because he was the oldest.

Mayola: Orlie was so good-natured, and he was easier on the younger kids than Bud was. He was so easygoing.

Mayola: Because of a shortage of girls in our neighborhood, I entered into social activities before the boys my age did. I suppose my parents permitted me to go to parties because Orlie did the driving. I'm sure there were times he'd wished that he didn't have me along.

Orlie and Bud

Darell: Dad was against athletics at first. But my older brother was a real good athlete. He could run faster than anyone. One time they were having a race, a 100 yard race. Orlie was running against one of the best runners, and he beat him. He was wearing these old shoes, regular old dress shoes. My dad let him go out for track after that. He won the district and the regional finals.

Mayola: Orlie left the farm after high school. He went to work in North Dakota, and then he went to Illinois to work on a farm there. John was down there for awhile, too.

Mayola: After high school Orlie took farm jobs in the area. It was always fun to have him come home when he'd been away on a job.

Newspaper Obituary: Orland E. Larson, 67, 412 Church St., manager of Clinton Lumber Yard 25 years and an employee of Wolohan Lumber Co., Janesville, 10 years, died Sunday in Beloit Memorial Hospital following a long illness.

Mayola Gladys Larson (April 23, 1912 – January 4, 2005)

Don: Mayola was teaching school when I was in eighth grade. It was south of Mt. Vernon, down that way. She was there quite a while then she went to Watertown and then she went out west.

Mayola

Bud: Mom and dad really relied on Mayola. She had to take care of a lot of things.

Mayola: Kenny was older than me. He was Sara Larson's brother. I really had a crush on Kenny. Then he left home suddenly, because his dad wanted him to stay home and work the farm and not go to high school. So he ran away. I think he went to an uncle's place, somebody he knew somewhere. Then he came back and he was at that party. And I was so delighted because he asked me to be his partner. I really had a crush on him.

Mayola: I left for school in the fall of 1930. I studied for one year, which was all you needed to be a school teacher. I became a country school teacher in 1931. The school was south of Mt. Vernon. I taught there five years. I stayed with the family of a man who was a dentist, people named Michaels. There were about 20 to 28 students studying there each year. My first year salary was $60 a year, but it went down to $40 after that because of the depression.

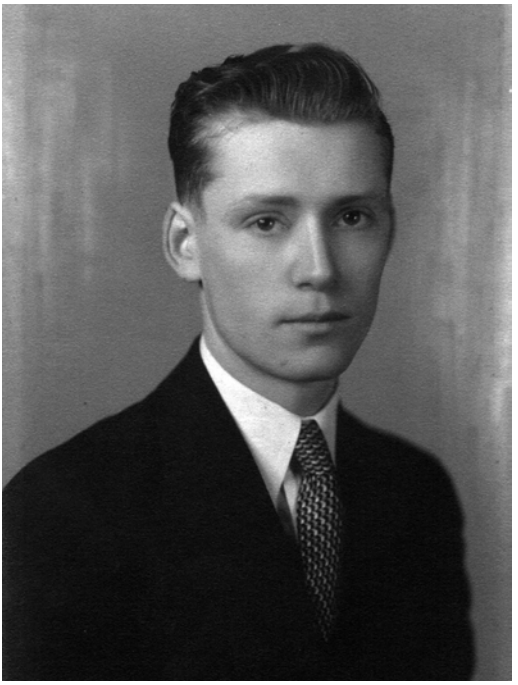
Mayola, Melba, and Margie

Mayola: The rural schools were kind of fun to teach in, because you had a variety of kids and a variety of parents. Even some of the girls wore overalls then.

Marion Omar Larson, aka Bud (April 11, 1914 – February 18, 1999)

Bud: I can't quite remember how I got the name Bud. My birth name was Marion. I think dad used to call me Buster, or Bud, and the Hansons, Gusty Hanson and Albert Hanson, I remember them calling me Buster as well.

Mayola: Nobody called Bud the name Marion.



"Bud was serious and ambitious."

Bud: Oh, I think Aunt Annie did. She was the only one who called me Marion.

John: Bud, he always got his work done. He was always doing something. But Mayola complained sometimes, because when we got all the friends around, he wanted to run the show.

George Larson and Bud

Mayola: Bud was serious and ambitious. He was more organized than the rest of us. Sports and athletic activities were his early interests.

Mayola: Bud was a really good skater. I remember he was such a good skater.

Mayola: Bud was pretty independent. He was a good worker. Dad always depended on him. If dad gave him a job, he got it done. And he was ambitious, I know that. And he wanted everybody else to be ambitious. But the younger boys never liked to work for Bud because he was tough. That's what the boys used to say about Bud – it's better to have Orlie as a boss, because with Bud, he would make you really work. I think Bud was kind of dad's best worker.

Bud: I remember Wayne telling me one time, "We were going to kill you one day." John didn't mind, but Darell, he couldn't stand it. But you have to understand that there was a lot of work to be done.

Wayne: I grew up not knowing Bud. I was quite a bit younger. He came home once and awhile. And when he did come home, the four of us younger brothers would be doing something on the farm and, of course, Bud would have to tell us how to do it, when to do it, how not to do it. We got pretty upset with him. And we made all kinds of plots of how we would get even with him. But I'm glad we didn't.

Darell: Sometimes Bud would give John and me a hard time, but he was the best worker we had. If things had to be done, Bud organized things. John and I would rebel a little bit, and he'd give us a hard time. One day I said to John, "Let's take him into the barn and beat the heck out of him." And then Bud came over and he said, "Ok, you guys want to fight. I'll take you on one at a time," and both of us decided right then to forget about it.

Mayola: Bud was the first one to leave the farm.

Bud: I left with a kid name Jim Olson. I think I had only $40.00 in my pocket.

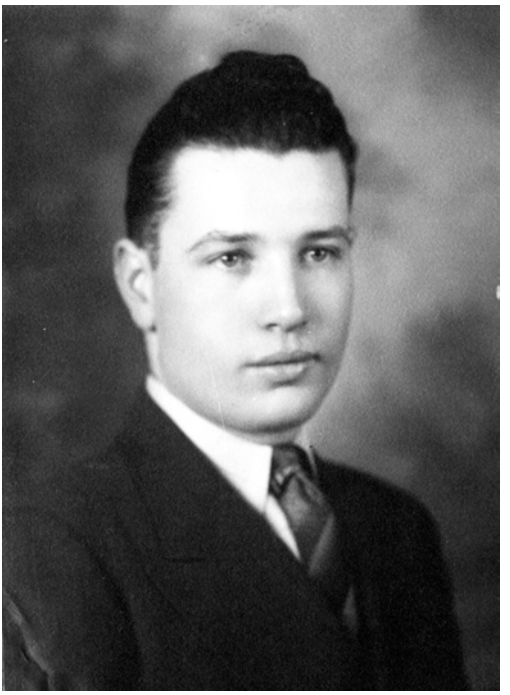
Mayola: There was a side to Bud that no one would have known unless you attended the parties where he and his friend, George, were the life of the party.

Bud: I left South Dakota in about 1936 or 1937. I went to the CCC camps for one year. Then I went out to the West Coast with Jim Olson, George's cousin. He had a Chevrolet, quite an old one. We went out to the coast in that, and the clutch was bad, and the tires were bad, and we just repaired it along the way, and just kept going. George and I stayed there, but Jim didn't. He went to Los Angeles. I don't know whatever happened to him from then on.

Darell: I was in high school when Bud went off to CCC camp. He graduated the year before I started. I didn't see him for a couple of years after that. I mean, I'd see him, but it was just a short period of time. When I graduated from college he came all the way from the state of Washington to come to my graduation. I think they drove. He was with George Larson.

John Raymond Larson (March 13, 1916 – October 7, 2011)

Mayola: Mother often said that John should have been a girl because he was so good helping with the younger ones. He was quiet with a good sense of humor, and always neat and orderly; he would look cleaner than the other boys in spite of having been working outside.



John

Melba: John was always my favorite. He was Johnny boy. He was the one who took care of me when mom was recuperating. I'm sure he got sick of me because he always had to watch over me.

Mayola: Darell depended upon John to accompany him to school. John would be ready but Darell would be saying "Wait for me, John," and John did.

Bud: John, he was quiet, but he was really smart. He was never like the rest of the boys in school, playing ball or and things like that. He never really did that. It never bothered him to be left out.

John on the farm

Mayola: John went to business school in Mitchell, and then after he came back from the war he lived his whole life in Mitchell. He was a bookkeeper there.

Bud: I seem to recall he worked for the Loon brothers, at the automobile place. And then he worked for Scott's, a farm equipment place.

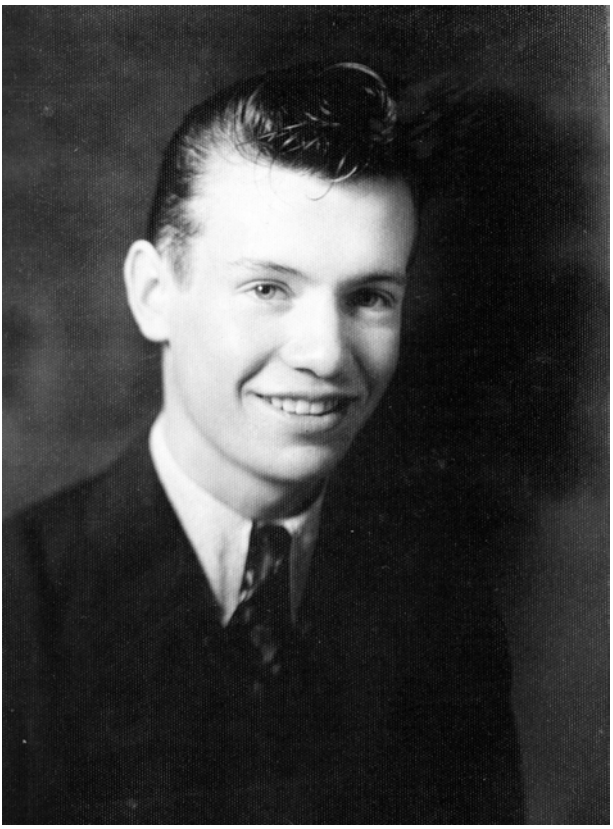
Darell Harvey Larson (August 12, 1918 – August 24, 2001)

Mayola: I heard that when Darell was born he was anemic. The doctor said he would only live six months or so. The doctor told mother and dad to butcher a cow and pound the liver, put the juice in a bottle and have him suck on it. Without the liver juice he may not have lived.

Don: Darell, he was kind of the wild one of the bunch at that time. Of course, I don't remember the older brothers too much, because they weren't around too much when the four of us younger ones were growing up.

Bud: When Darell got out of school and was going to come out to Washington, he didn't have a lot of money. I remember I lent him some money and he thought that was the greatest thing. It didn't amount to much at all, but he really appreciated it.

Don: Darell, he had his wild moments.



"Darell, he had his wild moments."

Mayola: You would never believe that Darell, who became a doctor, was the scatterbrain. By the time he was ready for Sunday school, the creases in his white pants were gone and his shirt tail was already out. When he got into high school, his taste in dress changed. I recall the time he was dying his gray corduroys purple. That seemed the fad at the time.

John: Darell and I were pretty close.

Bud: I think Darell was a little closer to dad than any of the rest of us. When he went off to college, dad drove him down there, and they talked quite a bit, I think. Darell always claimed that dad spoiled me, but I don't know what he meant by that.

Darell and John

John: Well, Darell and I were kind of buddies. He and I goofed off a bit though. But he really went places. At first it was surprising that Darell ended up becoming a doctor. But he just made up his mind. When he wanted to do something, he just did it. And he was always good to help people all the time. I remember that.

Mayola: Darell used to pick me up on his way back from high school. I was teaching then. One time I found out they were skipping school, Darell and Ward Bierce and another kid. They actually told me when they picked me up. That's how I found out. So I said I was going to tell dad, and Darell said, "Do you remember that time when you were driving home from Sunday school and you looked over to wave to our neighbor and you drove off the road and into a ditch? You told me not to tell dad, and I didn't." So I didn't say anything. But they still found out.

Don: I don't remember why he got expelled. There were three of them that got expelled when he was a senior.

Don: I think Darell and I were the only two that were expelled from school, in senior year. One hot afternoon, there were about fifteen or sixteen of us or so, and we all loaded up in a couple of Model Ts and went out to this dam to go swimming. They didn't miss me until I came back to work after track, then the whole bunch got expelled. And we didn't know it until the next day, you know, that we were done, expelled. The superintendent of schools there, he was also a banker, in fact John worked for him for a little while. Anyway, he said that if we had gone with one or two more that would have been a whole class.

Marjorie Marie Larson (January 25, 1921 – December 12, 2003)

Mayola: I was nine years old when the second girl was born. Majorie had the honor of being the one in the middle of the family with four older brothers and a sister, and four younger brothers and a sister. She was also the first one to be born at the Mt. Vernon farm.

Mayola: I don't recall much about Don or Paul as babies, but I do Margie. She had colic, and mother, Ellen and I would take turns carrying her. It seemed I spent hours swinging her in the tube swing that hung from the cottonwood tree.

Mayola: She injured her leg and it became infected. She was about nine. They had been sledding at home, and she got injured. That's what the doctor thought, at least. I remember the day it happened. Orlie and I were in high school, and they called and told us to come home because they needed the car to take Margie to the hospital. The doctor decided Margie needed surgery for osteomylitis. Dad spent most of the time with her at the hospital. It was the first time we had been apart for any length of time. I'm sure it was a difficult time for mother.

Darell: I was about ten when Margie got sick. They took her to the hospital in Mitchell and operated on her. She had osteomyelitis. It's a bone infection. They had to scrape her bone. They even put maggots on the bone. Dad stayed right by her bed the whole time.

"Margie had the honor of being the one in the middle of the family."

Mayola: Margie was young, only about nine when she had osteomyelitis. Dr. Smiley, our doctor, said he didn't know if it would get better. The treatment, the surgery, it was new, and they didn't know if it would work. You know, they scrapped it, the bone, and she had a big scar on her leg where the surgeon made

the cut. After the operation mother would heat water in a tub and have hot water in a towel. She'd put that on Margie's leg. A lot of nights she would just get such a pain in there, and I guess the hot water helped. She even went to school on crutches. After she got through with the crutches she still kind of limped, because it still hurt some.

Margie and Mayola in Chicago

Bud: She was just a young girl. I remember going down to the hospital with John to see her. I guess at that time they didn't know how to treat it. She stayed out of school for about one year.

Mayola: She was in the hospital awhile. I don't remember how long. And dad would go down there and stay with her. He would stay at the hospital. I suppose they had a cot that he could sleep on. It was winter, I think. It wasn't summertime

anyway, so he didn't have that much to do. And Orlie and Bud were big enough to do what they needed to do on the farm, I guess. That was probably the longest siege of something being wrong with somebody when we were growing up.

Mayola: After high school graduation Margie spent two years at Augustana College earning a teaching certificate. She taught one year and then decided to go into the business world.

Mayola: Margie taught for a little bit, but she didn't like it. In the summertime she had been working at a business place, and that's where she stayed, and then she left Sioux Falls to go to Topeka.

Melba: Margie had taught in Brandon and then she started at National Reserve Life Insurance. And she lived with a lady who had a boarding house. And I started work at Standard Casualty Insurance Co., which I loved. And I lived there with her. We had one tiny little bedroom. And we lived at 12th Street and Minnesota. I worked on 26th and Minnesota, and I walked everyday, back and forth. After awhile I thought it was getting a little bit crowded, so we ended up getting an apartment. It was just a one bedroom apartment, but it was still a nice place, and I lived there until I got married.

Melba: Margie got promoted. She was vice president. And that was hard when she left. We were very close.

Bud: She lived most of her life in Topeka, Kansas. She had a really good job there. She did really well for herself.

Donald Gustav Larson (February 3, 1923 – December 24, 2011)

Mayola: Don was an active child from the beginning. When he was less than two years old he crawled out onto the porch and fell off. In falling, he damaged some ribs. To help the healing and keep him quiet, we had to make him stay on the bed. The brothers and I took turns watching and entertaining him. He did heal, but Don swears he has a crooked chest because of the accident. As Don grew he continued being active, helping with farm chores, planning games to

play, and things to make. If the proper equipment wasn't available, he and the older brothers found a way to make do, like using barrel staves to make skies for winter.

Don

Bud: Don was a really good athlete, too. I remember he was a runner, and like the other younger brothers he was a good basketball player as well.

Mayola: During his high school years, from 1937 to 1941, Don participated in all available sports. In his junior year the Mt. Vernon basketball team went to a state tournament. As a runner on the track team, he won a scholarship to Augustana College.

Bud: After the war, when he got back from the Pacific, Don went into the business world. I think he started college before he went into the army, and then finished his degree after the army, when he got back. He studied economics or something like that, and then started a business of his own.

"Don was a really good athelete."

Mayola: Don spent three years at Augustana College before he was called to serve in the army. He returned to Augustana College in 1946 to finish his last year, majoring in economics and accounting.

Paul Shay Larson (November 18, 1924 – June 14, 1986)

Mayola: Paul was real sick with scarlet fever. He was very young, about two or three. We all had scarlet fever. We were out of school for about six weeks. The whole family got it, but not mother and dad.

Don: Paul liked telling jokes, and he was good at telling stories. He had a lot of good ideas and stuff like that. And he had a good vocabulary. We did a lot of things together. We went to school together, and we were on the basketball team.

Mayola: Paul was always pretty good-natured about everything.

"Paul was always pretty good-natured about everything."

Melba: I remember the day that John brought Evelyn out to meet all of us. We had this terrible storm, and we had this cottonwood tree in the yard, and lightning hit it. The lightning split it, kind of right down the middle. The wind was so bad. And Paul had been working. And all of the sudden the storm hit, and we had, I don't know how many bedrooms upstairs, but the wind was pulling so hard on the door that Paul couldn't get it open. The handle was gone, and he was scratching at it. He had been sleeping and he was naked, and so here he comes down the stairs like that. And Evelyn, she had just met us, and she turned white as a sheet. I don't remember all of that. I was just little. I was not that old. But I remember mom saying that here John is bringing Evelyn out for the first time and the house is a mess.

Bud: Paul was kind of a negotiator.

Darell: Paul couldn't hear out of one ear very good. I don't know if it was from the scarlet fever. But he was a great athlete. We'd get behind six or eight points and the coach would say, "Paul, it's your turn." And he'd go out there and make those points, just like that. Then he'd start goofing around, and the coach would have to take him out again. But he was good, real good.

Wayne Lewis Larson (December 18, 1926 – December 24, 2018)

Bud: He was kind of a wild kid, Wayne was.

"He was kind of a wild kid, Wayne was."

Wayne: My earliest memories are looking out at the water tank. I was looking at my brothers, who were on the tank, looking down into the tank, and I don't know what happened after that, but I think they were trying to drown me, but I'm not sure. Anyway, I survived.

Wayne

Mayola: When Wayne got to high school, they all knew the story about him being born in the fire. They made kind of a special person out of him. I guess he told that story to his English teacher. He was kind of different, too. He was sure different than Martin.

Don: He was always getting in trouble, Wayne was. That's how he got the nickname "Moon." I never found out where that nickname came from though.

Bud: Wayne lived in Mt. Vernon for awhile, after mom and dad moved there. He had a grocery store in town. I know that mom and dad really depended on Wayne when they lived in town. He really helped them out."

Wayne: I was lucky to have a good family to be brought up in, and good brothers and sisters who helped out when they could.

Martin Arvid Larson (July 7, 1928 – November 29, 1977)

Paul: Marty was probably the most outgoing of the Larson boys.

Wayne: One thing I remember during high school was Martin and me in the district tournaments. We won the games essentially single handed, the two of us. We became very close. We played on the basketball team and football team as well, and we shocked grain together. We did a lot of things together.

Bud: Marty, he was a deep thinker. You could tell that about him.

Martin and Melba on the farm

Paul: In high school he had an "all-American boy" profile, with his respect for authority, honesty, integrity, and leadership ability. He had many friends and could relate to the young and old alike.

Mayola: Martin was the youngest boy. He was pretty quiet. Wayne was more aggressive about things than Martin was.

Bud: Martin was the one who got it really bad. He was in the Korean War, in the army. I don't remember what unit it was, but I think it was mostly foot work. He was right on the front lines for a long time. And he told Wayne one time that they just kept coming and coming, and they just kept shooting and shooting, but they kept coming. Then he got hurt, and he became a driver, like a chauffeur, for one of the important commanders in charge there. I'm sure it was because of the war that he started drinking.

Martin

Darell: He said it was bad. He told me about standing in the water. They were in water for six weeks. They had to stand in the water for six weeks up on the front lines, and they'd get foot rot. He told me one story – he said they were up on a ridge, and his buddies took turns going to get booze or food. They had to go across this bridge in a jeep, and they'd choose who on the run. The North Koreans could see them and took shots at the jeep as it crossed the bridge. They were stationed way up on the front lines, and I guess they wanted some beer or something. So they'd go back to the commissary somewhere. He said it that was quite a run.

Paul: I always felt like I was Marty's protector in his younger years, a "big brother" role, which I am sure he didn't realize or necessarily need.

"Martin was the one who got it really bad."

Mayola: He was teaching in Moses Lake. He was a counselor. And we never understood why he took his life. Nobody knows or understands why, but it could have been because he had been ill when he was still in South Dakota, and he was worried that it was something that would come back. He had to be in the hospital for a while. I don't know exactly. But he was quite ill. Some of us thought he was worried about getting real sick and having to have Mary take care of him. He really loved Mary.

Darell: Martin had a brain aneurysm. That was back in 1955 or 1956. He was in the hospital for six weeks. I got a call from Dr. Kirkpatrick from Huron, South Dakota who said they were treating him for a muscle spasm, so we got him moved to Sioux Falls for the proper treatment. They took him to Sioux Falls in an ambulance. Mabel was at Orlie's when he was going into the hospital, and the first air flight that she ever flew in was to visit and stay with Martin. She stayed with him for the whole time. Later on he had a big fear he was going to have another aneurysm, and he didn't want to put Mary through that.

Paul: At first I was in shock and, after Mayola had called me at the office, I wept unashamedly for several minutes, as I felt this compassion and love for a brother.

Melba Jane Larson (February 4, 1932 – November 30, 2008)

Mayola: Melba, the youngest Larson, was born on a cold Tuesday night. Heavy snow had blanketed the region, making the roads impassable for cars. Orlie had to go by sleigh to pick up the doctor at the highway. Mrs. Loon, a neighbor, came to help until I arrived home from my teaching job. Mrs. Loon gave me some instructions on how to take care of the baby. She said I could give the baby a bath while holding her in my lap. What an experience! We were all happy to have a baby sister. Bud was staying in town so he could be on the basketball team. The roads were clear by Friday. On the team's way to an out-of-town game Bud, his coach, and teammates stopped by to see our baby sister. We were all involved in helping with the baby. Our brother, John, he seemed to be the one who helped the most. Besides bathing and dressing her, he taught her songs she learned to sing. When anyone asked her who her favorite was she'd say "Everyone," but we knew it was really John.

Melba

Mayola: Everyone was involved in choosing her name. Mother wanted to call the baby Mary, but we all thought it was old-fashioned. We convinced mother that if she was named Melba Jane, it would be like she was named after mother. The letters in Melba were the same as those in Mabel and the Js stood for Julia and Jane.

"When anyone asked her who her favorite was she'd say 'Everyone,' but we knew it was really John."

Mayola: Giving up the farm was a sad event for all of us. We moved to a friend's farm close by. The country school was closed so Melba went through grade school and high school at Mt. Vernon. With the brothers involved in music and athletics, Melba had the opportunity to participate in and enjoy high school activities. She influenced dad and mother in getting involved in attending these activities. She'd be right there explaining the rules of the game.

Melba: When I was a junior or senior in high school, I was in a play. I got big reviews, which was fun. I remember everyone was at Augustana College and they all came home to see me in the play and I thought that was a pretty big deal.

Mayola: When Melba attended school in Mt. Vernon she was active in music and athletics, being part of the cheering squad.

Melba: I was a cheerleader for three years in high school, and attended all the games. Of course, all my brothers were great basketball players. But after they left we had good teams, too.

Afterword

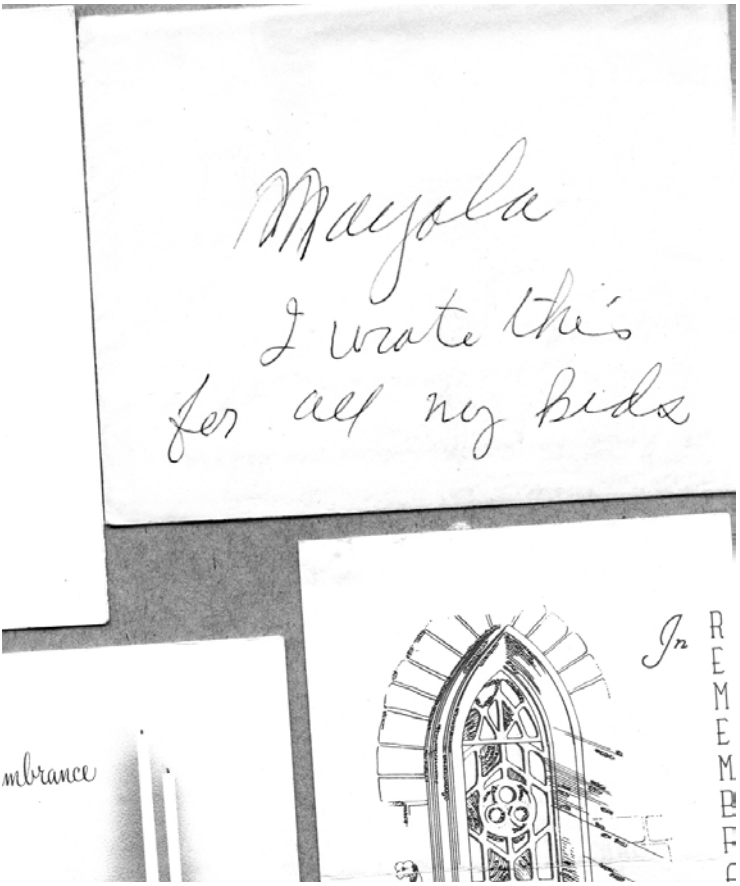
Something We Have to Experience Ourselves

Taped in the back of Mayola's Larson Family photo album is a letter from Mabel. On the envelope, Mabel writes,"Mayola, I wrote this for all my kids." The letter inside reads:

> *"This is something I have wanted to say a long time ago. When I was 35-years old I was converted and knew Christ as my personal Savior. And I was so happy it's just something I can't explain. And how I wished I had found my Savior when I was young and first when I was married. How different it would have been. I know how I have even now failed to witness for him when I should, and not prayed enough. But I can say thank you Lord. He has kept me and forgiven me, and will until I leave this world if I am faithful and my prayer is. Are you ready to meet your God? We are all here today, tomorrow may be eternity. Where are we going to spend it? Each day my prayer is may not one of us be missing in the place Thou has prepared for us. I always think if I could only give this precious gift of knowing Christ as your personal Savior to my dear ones. But this is something we have to experience ourselves.*

And so it seems only fitting to close this narrative with the 23rd Psalm, in honor of Mabel and her beloved faith. In doing so, however, I can't help but conjure up an image of the youthful, somewhat irreverent, and ever-inquisitive Darell turning to his father and saying, "What's that all about, dad?" Gust, in my imagination,

simply turns to him and replies, “Well, Darell, I don’t know, and you don’t know, but your mother thinks she knows, and she has faith, so you just get along now and do what she says.”



A letter from Mabel

The Twenty-Third Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for though art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Though preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: though anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Gust and Mabel Larson

Notes

Forword

1. From the *Norwegian-American Historical Association* website (www.naha.stolaf.edu/): "In the old days, Norwegians were identified by their Christian name and their father's name, plus the appropriate suffix. For example, Olav Håkonsen meant that this man was the son of Håkon. (The surname might also be spelled "Håkonsson" or "Håkonsøn.") And Sigrid Håkonsdatter was the daughter of Håkon. (The surname might also be spelled "Håkonsdotter"). In addition, a third name was often used. This was usually a farm name. This "surname" did not necessarily identify a family or a relationship; it signified a place of residence. If farmer Ole Olsen Li moved from Li to another farm, such as Dal, he would then be known as Ole Olsen Dal." (Accessed April 2011; available from http://www.stolaf.edu/naha/genealogy/naming.htm)
2. In a Wikipedia entry related to the municipality of Alvaldsnes, Gismarvik is referred to as a *district*: "On January 1, 1965 Alvaldsnes was divided and merged into the municipalities of Karmøy and Tysvær. One part of the municipality with a population of 4,153 inhabitants was merged along with the municipalities of Kopervik, Skudenes, Skudeneshavn, Torvastad, Åkra into Karmøy municipality. Another part, consisting of the districts of Førre, Gismarvik and Stegaberg with a population of 994, was merged with Tysvær municipality." According to Eirik Hustvedt, the operator of Haugalandet.net, an unofficial web magazine focusing on Haugesund and the Haugesund region of southwest Norway, Gismarvik is a "countryside place," not a town or a village. I spoke briefly with Eirik by phone during my research. He told me that Gismarvik is a quiet, sparsely populated place, but very beautiful. He added that up until about two years ago there was a small grocery store in Gismarvik, but it has since closed. A further note: Gismarvik appears to be more commonly written as "Gismervig" in

historical documents in Norway, such as church records, suggesting it was the bokmål" (book language) form of the word at that time. Church records for Lars Østensen, for example, include reference to "Gismervig" as the place of his birth and death. However, the name does appear as "Gismarvik" in the district books of Avaldsnes, which is where most of the information in Table 1 was sourced from, courtesy of Allan Kvalevaag's genealogy website (www.kvalevaag.se).

3. The information related to the Lars Østensen family noted here comes from Allan Kvalevaag's genealogy website (http://kvalevaag.se/familytree/tot/p781ca44b.html). This information, including spellings and dates, appear to be sourced from official Norwegian documents (e.g., the district books of Avaldsnes), therefore they are, I believe, more reliable than some of the information sourced from the book *Midway: 1882 – 1982*. Although this website includes reference to Gismarvik as the place of birth and death, it does not attach Gismarvik as a third name for Lars Østensen, which I have chosen to do for the purpose of this book. Church records at the time of Ole Gabriel Larssen's birth show his parent's names as Lars Østensen *Gismervig* (not Gismarvik) and *Grethe* (not Grete) Einarsdatter, yet another reminder of the vagaries of spelling in genealogical documents. In one online genealogy resource I cam across (http://familytreemaker.geneaology.com/users/d/i/n/Ginger-Lee-Dingus-WA/COL1-0205.html), the name does appear as Lars Østensen Gismarvik. I did not, however, include the Gismarvik farm name for Grete Einarsdatter in this particular instance. Based on Norwegian naming customs she would have ultimately taken this third name after moving to Gismarvik with her husband. This fact seems to be confirmed in data from the 'familytreemaker' link above, where her name is listed as Grete Einarsdatter Gismarvik. Meanwhile, below is an expanded version of the Lars Østensen family tree that includes additional information related to Lars and Grete's children. This information was sourced from various resources, including the Midway book, genealogy websites, and newspaper obituaries. Also noted below are other names these individuals were known by during their lifetime. One final note: Lars Østensen married four times. Grete Einarsdatter was his second wife.

The children of Lars Østensen Gismarvik (July 5, 1807 – April 30, 1887) and Grete Einarsdatter (1809 – November 19, 1852)

- Østen Larssen (1832 – unknown); emigrated to U.S., unmarried
- Eilert Larssen (1835 – 1839);); also Larsen; lived in Holland
- Søren Larssen (1837 – unknown); also Larsen; emigrated to U.S., unmarried
- Elen Sofie Larsdatter Gismarvik (September 5, 1838 – November 14, 1913); married Lars Larson Lundgaathen on June 9, 1863
- Eilert Larssen (1840 – unknown)
- Anna Gurine Larsdatter (February 9,1842 – 1918); also Larsen; married Hans Larsen Lundgaathen
- Lars Larssen (1843 – unknown); U.S., married twice
- Laura Marie Larsdatter (1846 – 1900); also Larsen; married Barney Helgerson
- Johan Ludvig Larssen (1846 – 1900); emigrated to U.S., unmarried
- Matias Larssen (1848 – unknown)
- Ole Gabriel Larssen (June 1850 – May 8, 1914); also Larsen and Larson; emigrated to U.S. in 1871
- Grete Larsdatter (1852 – 1852)

4. Långaten and Undarheim refer to farming districts within the municipality of Kvinnherad where the original family farms of Lars Larsson and Anna Larsdatter were located. This and other information related to Lars Larsson Långaten family were found on a genealogy website (http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/d/i/n/Ginger-L-Dingus/GENE7-0008.html) that Ginger Metcalf Dingus, a distant relative, contributed to. Her name in genealogy websites also appears as Ginger Lee Dingus, though the most recent entry I found (2007) listed her name as Ginger Metcalf Dingus. Unfortunately my efforts to contact her were unsuccessful.

   I have included here an expanded version of the Lars Larsson family tree that includes additional information related to Lars and Anna's

children. This information was sourced from various resources, including the Midway book, genealogy websites, and newspaper obituaries. Also noted below are other names these individuals were known by during their lifetime.

The children of Lars Larsson Långaten (1787– May 22, 1852) and Anna Larsdatter Undarheim (1812 -1883)

- Lars Larsen Lundgaathen (December 19, 1839 – January 19, 1923); also Larssen Lungeaaten and Larson; married Elen Sofie Larsdatter
- Hans Larsen Lundgaathen (March 9, 1842 – October 20, 1935); also Larson; arrived in New York in May 1881; resided in Rowe, Illinois; married Anna Gurine Larsdatter
- Guro Larsdatter Lundgaathen (1846 – 1850); died in Longgoto, Kvinnherad, Husnes, Hordaland, Norway
- Brita Larsdatter Lundgaathen (1849 – December 1849); died in Longgoto, Kvinnherad, Husnes, Hordaland, Norway
- Lars Larsen Lundgaathen (1849 – July 10, 1926?); also Larson; married to Anna Gurina Runestad?
- Knut Larsen Lundgaathen (January 30, 1852 – March 18, 1939); also Larson; married Bertha Petterson (Bertha Marie Bernsdatter) in about 1879 and had four children (Emma, Lauritz, Bella, and Bernhard); moved to Tacoma, Washington from Elliot Township around 1900; died in Tacoma

As noted at the beginning of this book, the information included in this oral history is only as accurate as the resources I relied on during my research. In a few cases, working with fragmented pieces of information, I was left to do some speculation based on the facts available to me. For example, as noted above, two of the children of Lars Larsson and Anna Larsdatter were named Lars Larsen Lungaathen, one older than Hans Larson and one younger. I believe the second Lars Larsen may be the Lars Larson referenced as the husband of Anna Gurina Runestad in the latter's obituary, a copy of which is included on page 366 in *Midway: 1882 – 1982.* My rationale in this regard is based on the fact that Anna's obituary appears in close

proximity to a picture of Hans Larson (on page 367) and information related to the family of Knud (Knut) Larson Lundgaathen, another brother of Hans. Hans Larson appears in the picture on page 367 with a Lars Larson, presumably his younger brother and husband of Anna Gurina (there is no other explanation for why Anna's obituary would have been reproduced in this section of the book). Both Hans and Lars Larson appear elderly in this picture (taken, perhaps, during the late teens or early 1920s), which suggests the latter is not Hans' older brother Lars Larsen Lundgaathen, who would have been living in Norway at that time. Hans' older brother Lars married Elen Sofie Larsdatter Gismarvik on June 9, 1863 and, according to my online sources, "homesteaded in Sanborn County on April 4, 1887" and "resided in Bergen, Norway after 1885." This online source also indicates that Lars Larsen was a "Ship Captain/Real Estate Warehouse Head at Stromsnes in Sogn og Fjordane, later "lagerbestyrer" before fylkeslatene" in Sogn og Fjordane." I believe this Lars Larsen is the same "Mr. L. Larson" referenced as manager of the Bergen Steamship Co. in the 1915 article from the Tri-County Journal (included in this oral narrative and originally sourced from *Midway: 1882 – 1982).* My belief here is based on simple arithmetic – the 1915 article indicates he is 76 years old, which puts his birth date at 1839, a date that aligns to a second source. However, the article highlights that Mr. L. Larson is celebrating his 50th anniversary (in 1915) as manager of the Bergen Steamship Co., which begs the question of how he was able to manage the company continuously for 50 years if he homesteaded in South Dakota (however briefly). in 1887.

A further side note: Anna Gurina Runestad was the sister of Martha Runestad, who married Ole Gabriel Larson on July 22, 1890 after the death of Gust's mother, Mary Knutson, in 1885).

Meanwhile, on the following page are some additional details related to the children of Hans and Anna Gurine Larson. This information was sourced from various resources, including the Midway book, genealogy websites, and newspaper obituaries. As in the previous case, I've noted other names by which these relatives were known.

The children of Hans Larsen Lundgaathen (March 9, 1842 – October 20, 1935) and Anna Gurine Larsdatter (February 9, 1842 – 1918)

- Lauritz Oswald Larson (October 3, 1867 – February 25, 1941); born in Kvinnherad, Hardanger, Norway; in April 18, 1881 at the age of 13 years, emigrated with his parents to America, to Rowe, Livingston County, Illinois; started the Tri-County newspaper; at one time was the editor of the Letcher Chronicle; never married; introduced the Matrimony Vine to the community, "This is a very delicate tropical plant," he cautioned when he first shared the precious roots
- Gustava Shay (September 27, 1869 – December 26, 1957); also Augusta; born in Kvinnherad, Hardanger, Norway
- Alfred Larson (September 6, 1871 – July 26, 1954); born in Kvinnherad, Hardanger, Norway; died in Mitchell, South Dakota
- Gunhilde Larson (1873 – 1891); also Hilda
- Eilert Larson (1875 – 1893)
- Gertrude Katinka Shay (1877 – 1951); born in Kvinnherad, Hardanger, Norway; married Burt Shay, son of Ole Shay from his first marriage to Adelaide Olson (1861 – 1887)
- Olaf Larson (September 7, 1879 – January 31, 1971); born in Kvinnherad, Hardanger, Norway; died in Storla, South Dakota
- Laura Paulson (1881 – 1965); mother of Herb Paulson, Mayola's husband
- Ellen Schoenfelder (June 17, 1884 – March 2, 1965); born in Elliot Township; married Emmanuel Schoenfelder of Kennebec, South Dakota on August 14, 1929; died in Mitchell, South Dakota

5. Ibid
6. Christopher, H. Richard, ed., *Midway: 1882 – 1982* (Freeman, South Dakota: Pine Hill Press, 1982). Editor's note: This resource is periodically referred to as "the Midway book" in the Notes section.
7. www. kvalevaag.se
8. Larson, David, ed., *Larson Roots: Memories, Myths and Folklore* (Camrose, Alberta, Canada: Studio Word Processing, 1989).

Chapter 1

9. Derry, T. K., *A History of Modern Norway* (Oxford: Oxford University of Press, 1973), p. 212.
10. From an obituary reproduced in *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 361. The source of this obituary is unknown, though it was clearly published in one of the local newspapers. Based on the date of Ole Larson's death, the source may have been the Tri-County Journal, a newspaper started by Augusta Shay's older brother Lauritz Oswald Larson. The Tri-County Journal ("The Paper that Covers this Territory Like a Blanket") was published in Storla of Belford Township between 1912 and 1924, and covered news in the Storla, Aurora County area, including Mt. Vernon. According to this obituary, Gust was living in Belford at the time of his father's death. Ole G. Larson died on May 8, 1914 of tuberculosis and cancer. He died at the Mitchell Hospital.
11. I came across two spellings for Gust's mother's last name, Knudson and Knutson. It appears, however, that the latter is the correct, or at least more common, spelling. In Elliot Cemetery records her name is written as Knutson. According to a handwritten note on page 361 of *Midway 1882 – 1982*, Mary Knutson and two of her sons (twins Otto and Myron) are buried in Elliot Cemetery, which is connected with the Trinity Lutheran Church in Elliot Township, Sanborn County, South Dakota. Mary Knutson was 32 at the time of her death. Unfortunately I was unable to locate genealogy information related to her side of the family. A note on the birth/death dates for Gust's brother Martin: This information was sourced from an online genealogy website (http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/d/i/n/Ginger-Lee-Dingus-WA/COL1-0323.html). This website also includes reference to the maiden name of Martin's wife - Annie Marie Williamson.
12. Christopher, *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 361. This information comes from a handwritten note beside a picture of Mary Knutson in the Midway book. Mary Knutson died after giving birth to twins. The March 3, 1885 death date noted in the Midway book does not match with Otto Larson's birth date noted in his obituary (April 3, 1885). In Gust Larson's obituary his mother is noted as passing away in April, however the year is noted as 1884, not 1885. My best guess is that Mary Knutson died on April 4, 1885, which is what I've indicated in

the family tree on page two. I am basing the month of her death on the "April" reference in both Gust and Otto's obituaries, and the day of her death on the following information from Otto's obituary: "Otto Larson was born April 3, 1885, in Bristol Township, Aurora County. His mother died when he was a day old."

13. Wiseman, Maxine Schrader, ed., *Dakota Dateline 1881 - 1956: The Story of Mount Vernon, South Dakota* (Mount Vernon, SD: The Mount Vernon News, 1956), p. 37. This is one instance in which Gust's mother's name is spelled as "Knudson."

14. Obituary reproduced in *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 360. The source of this obituary is unknown, though clearly it would have been a local publication such as The Mount Vernon News. Unless otherwise noted, sources for all obituaries referenced hereafter are unattributed. One further note: As far as I can tell, Gust did not have a middle name, or if he did it is now lost to us. I didn't come across any reference to a middle name for him during my research, and when I spoke to Wayne about this topic could not recall that he had a middle name either.

15. After his mother died, Gust and his sister Laura moved in with their father's stepsister (Grete Larsdatter) and her husband (Ben Hanson). Berent Balzerson (Ben) Hanson (October 31, 1854 – June 20, 1904) married Grete Larsdatter (June 11, 1854 – April 16, 1899), the first daughter of Lars Østensen and his third wife Brønla Marie Simonsdatter (1833 - 1867). The birth/death dates for Mr. and Mrs. Ben Hanson were sourced from page 362 of the Midway book. The family tree for Lars Østensen and Grete Einarsdatter on page 358 of the same book, however, is partially incorrect, as it suggests that Grete Larsen (Larsdatter) was Grete Einarsdatter's daughter.

16. The Hans Larson referenced here is Mabel Larson's grandfather, the father of Gustava, or Augusta, Larson (i.e., Grandma Shay). According to his obituary reproduced in the Midway book (p. 360), Hans Larson lived about nineteen years in Tacoma. In Ole Larson's obituary included in the same book (p. 361), one of Ole Larson's sisters was "Mrs. Hans Larson" of Tacoma. In the same obituary, Otto, one of Ole's five surviving children, is noted as residing in Tacoma at the time of Ole's death in 1914. Gust and Mabel moved to Washington in 1909 after their wedding, and it is my understanding that one or both of these relatives played a role in their decision to choose Tacoma as

a destination (An entry in my notebook indicates that Gust and Mabel lived with Hans and Gurine Larson while in Tacoma, but it does not say for how long). Hans Larson's younger brother Knud (Knut) Larson Lungaathen and his family also lived in Tacoma, having moved there like Hans from Elliot Township. Hans also had a younger brother named Lars, who was born in 1849 or 1852 (I believe it is the former, but I came across both dates in my research). While I was unable to confirm this information, I believe this to be the same Lars Larson that married Anna Gurina Runestad in 1889 and gave birth to seven children, two of whom died in infancy. According to Anna Gurina's obituary, her husband Lars Larson died July 10, 1926. There is a picture of the Lars Larson family in 1900 on page 363 in the Midway book. On the same page are two references to Olaf Larson, Hans Larson's son. Again, this proximity suggests that this Lars Larson was related to Hans Larson. Obituaries for Anna Gurina Larson and three of her children are reproduced on page 366 of the Midway book.

17. Obituary reproduced in *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 360.

18. According to my handwritten notes based on interviews with Mayola, Bud and Darrell, Gust helped raise the Hanson boys after their father died in 1904. Gust would have been about twenty five years old at that time, while Alfred and Gust Hanson would have been around twelve years old. According to the obituary of Emma Christine Hjelm (Mr. and Mrs. Hanson's oldest daughter) reproduced in the Midway book: "Her mother died in 1899 and her father in 1904. It fell to her lot to take the place of mother to the younger children. With the assistance of Laura Larson (Mrs. Hofert) she governed the little family with great credit to herself." So it appears that both Gust and his sister Laura (whose married name appears in documents as both Hofert and Hoefert) lent a hand in helping raise the younger Hanson children.

19. Obituary reproduced in *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 360. The correct (or more common) spelling for the place of birth is Kvinnherad, however it appears as "Kvinhered" in this 1935 obituary.

20. Mabel's mother's official Christian name, according to the sources I came across, was Gustava. It appears, however, that she was more commonly referred to as Augusta, the name which appears in her obituary (*Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 387).

21. Wiseman, *Dakota Dateline 1881 - 1956: The Story of Mount Vernon,*

South Dakota, p. 37. This is not the only case I found where Hans Larson is referred to as 'Hanson Larson'. An obituary for their third child reprinted in the Midway book (p. 360) reads: "Alfred Larson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Hanson Larson, was born near Bergen, Norway, September 6, 1971, and departed this life July 26, 1954."

22. Obituary reproduced in *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 387.

23. According to one genealogy website (http://genforum.genealogy.com/cgi-bin/pageload.cgi?Mount,Vernon::sd::4196.html), Ole A. Shay was born in 1856 in Illinois and died in 1905 in South Dakota. The information on this site also indicates that he married Gustava Larson in 1888, not 1887 as noted in her obituary. As for his year of death, Augusta's obituary includes the following: "She was preceded in death by her husband, in 1905." This obituary was reproduced in the Midway book (p. 387). However, the "5" in 1905 is crossed out in a handwritten note and replaced with a "4," suggesting that someone of knowledge knew the 1905 date to be incorrect.. Further, according to an obituary reproduced in the Midway book (p. 385), Burton Shay was born at Lee County, Illinois, January 31, 1877 and moved to South Dakota at age five. A handwritten note also in the Midway book (p. 386) indicates Burton's place of birth as Pontiac, Illinois and his date of birth as January 21st. Based on this information, the Ole Shay family would have migrated to South Dakota in 1882, which aligns with other information sources. Ole's day of birth was sourced from Mayola's handwritten family tree, though the reliability of this source may be in question given that Mayola also wrote down 1910 as the year of his death instead of 1905 or 1904. (Similarly, the only place I came across a birth month/day for Anna Gurine Larsdatter was on Mayola's family tree). With only this piecemeal information to work with, I've taken my best shot and indicated Ole's birth date as January 26, 1856 and his year of death as 1904.

24. Christopher, H. Richard, ed. *Midway: 1882 – 1982,* p. 65.

25. Obituary reproduced in *Midway 1882* – 1982, p. 66.

26. Christopher, H. Richard, ed. *Midway 1882 – 1982,* p. 65.

27. Christopher, H. Richard, ed. *Midway 1882 – 1982,* p. 139. As noted above, the Mr. L. Larsen referred to in this article is, I believe, Hans Larson's older brother Lars Larson Lundgaathen, husband of Elen Sofie Larsdatter, daughter of Lars Østensen and Grete Einarsdatter.

28. This information is from a handwritten note inscribed beneath a photograph of the family ("1902, at the Alfred Larson home, section 28, Elliot") in the Midway book (p. 387), and reproduced in Figure 9 in this book. The dog in this picture was named "Pub," and belonged to Ole Shay.
29. Derry, T. K., *A History of Modern Norway*, p. 214.
30. This obituary was one of several pasted in the back of Mayola's Larson Family photo album.

Chapter 2

31. Unfortunately I never had the opportunity to interview Uncle Paul before he passed away in 1986. In my brief encounters with him at the family reunions, I always found him to be warm, articulate and philosophical, and these and other qualities come through in the writings he left behind. These writings provided the source for his voice in this oral narrative.
32. *Midelfort, C.F.*, *Midelfort, H.C.*, *Norwegian Families*, (1982), p. 443. "Among Norwegian Americans emotional expression is strictly controlled. As they see it, resentments must not lead to open confrontations, especially within the immediate family. In certain situations, however, it is tolerated, as, for example, in the just punishment of disobedience. If wronged, they are permitted to be angry, but not excessively so. Aggression is channeled mainly through indirect means: teasing, ignoring, silence, averting the glance, or staring balefully. Words at all times are used sparingly and considered powerful. Actions are considered to be more indicative of true thoughts and feelings than are words. When words are used, directness, brevity, clarity, and truth are prized. The nonverbal aspects of communication – a straight glance, a calm tone of voice, and an erect yet respectful posture – are seen as demonstrating the inner motivations of honest and sincerity. These qualities along with modest, which is also highly valued, demonstrate respect for others."
33. According to an entry in my notebook, Gust worked part time in a Mt. Vernon hardware store. There is no reference to who it was that mentioned this. As this never came up during my recorded interviews, I can't confirm the veracity of the information.

34. Wiseman, Maxine Schrader, *Dakota Dateline, 1881-1956, The Story of Mount Vernon, South Dakota*, p. 18. "Mt. Vernon saw its first Chautauqua in 1915. For several years, the Chautauqua pitched its big tent in the school yard and provided the town with a week of entertainment, usually in July."
35. This anecdote comes from a letter that George Larson sent me after my father's death in 1999. George Edwin Larson, Bud's best childhood friend, was born March 7, 1914 at Mount Vernon, South Dakota to Ole S. and Gertrude (Loon) Larson. He attended the Bierce School, District 15 for eight years then graduated from Mount Vernon High School in 1933. He was Bud Larson's best friend when they were growing up together in Mt. Vernon. They both left Mt. Vernon for Washington State in the 1930s, and remained in touch all their lives. George passed away on November 10, 2007.

Chapter 3

36. Wiseman, Maxine Schrader, *Dakota Dateline, 1881-1956: The Story of Mount Vernon, South Dakota*, p. 6.
37. According to my notebook, "Mabel and Gust met in 1907 but probably knew of each other before that." I believe this was a comment that Mayola made to me.
38. As noted above, several close relatives lived in Tacoma, Washington, including Mabel's grandmother and grandfather (Hans Larson and Anna Gurine Larson), and Gust's younger brother Otto.
39. Norlie, Olaf Morgan, *History of Norwegian People in America* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1925), p. 349.
40. An entry in my notebook indicates that Gust paid $16,000 for the 160 acre farm. Beside this note is a reference to the Farm Bank of Omaha, presumably the lending institution. I thought this price seemed rather high, but based on the information I found in Norlie's book, the price may indeed be correct. It was the same price that Bud mentioned in one of the interviews.

Chapter 4

41. George Larson, "Childhood in South Dakota," *Larson Roots:*

Memories, Myths and Folklore, p.76.

Chapter 5

42. The name of the small one-room schoolhouse that the Larson children attended was Bierce School, Mt. Vernon District #15. In the 1921 – 1922 School Year, Orland is listed as being in the fifth grade and Mayola is listed as being in the fourth grade. In the same school year, George and Bud are listed as being in the second grade. The school teacher that year was Mrs. J. B. Dougherty. One side note here related to education: An entry in my notebook indicates that Gust never went beyond the sixth grade. This may be one reason that he placed such importance on education, including higher education, when raising his children.
43. There are quite a few instances in this book where I've included different versions of the same story by the same person, the result of having interviewed relatives on more than one occasion over the years, as well as having received additional versions of stories in written format, as was often the case with Mayola's writings. In a few cases the retelling of certain stories at different points in time was nearly identical, and in these instances I simply edited the different versions into a single entry. In most cases, however, there was enough interesting variation in the retelling of the stories that I chose to include the different versions in order to give as much color to the story as possible.
44. Sara Larson was George Larson's sister. According to a footnote in *Larson Roots: Memories, Myths and Folklore*, "the name on her Baptism Certificate, written in Norwegian, is Sarah Maguerite. However, she dropped the "h" in her first name while in grade school and spelled it that way thereafter." She was older than Mayola, but they were very good friends.
45. This anecdote also comes from a letter that George Larson sent to me after my father's death.
46. Ibid.
47. According to official school records I received from George Larson, Mrs. J. B. Dougherty taught at the Bierce School, Mt. Vernon, District #15, from 1921 to 1925. The records I have only go back as far as

1921, so it is unclear if she was teaching at the school before 1921. In Mayola's writings her name is misspelled as Daugherty.

48. According to official Bierce School records, the students in the 1935 – 1936 School Year included Donald Larson (7th grade), Paul Larson (6th grade), Richard Larson (5th grade), Wayne Larson (4th grade), Martin Larson (2nd grade), and Donald Williams (1st grade). Their teacher was Eldora Petersdor.

49. This comes from a news article (presumably the Mount Vernon News) that was pasted in Mayola's Larson family photo album.

Chapter 6

50. The Larson family attended the Immanuel Lutheran Church. The church, located 3 ½ miles north and 1 mile west of Mt. Vernon, shuttered its doors in 1973. Both Gust and Mabel Larson are buried in the Immanuel Lutheran Cemetery, which is on the north side of the road opposite the church building, which still stands today (2011), though in a rather dilapidated form. From Wiseman, *Dakota Dateline, 1881-1956; The Story of Mount Vernon, South Dakota*, p. 81: "In the fall of 1893, those Lutherans who had drifted away from Victor to attend other churches began to think about forming a congregation nearer Mount Vernon. They first met in September and named a committee to write a constitution. On October 18, 1893, a second meeting was held in the Johnson School. A model constitution of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church was adopted and Immanuel was the unanimous choice for the congregation's name." (Hans Larson and Ole Shay are listed as charter members).

51. "They lived off the country, lived by cunning, and many of them – not all of them – lived by stealing whatever they could. A number of them made a living as traders, good traders, bringing in a band of horses and trading horse down through the country. These individuals paid their way, and people welcomed them. But others simply stole their way across America and often were not too good to their own horses either." This is a small sample from a much longer essay on "Gypsies" that George Larson included in *Larson Roots: Memories, Myths and Folklore*, his own family's history. The essay references a somewhat chilling tale that suggests Mabel had every right to be fearful when

these mysterious, nomadic clans came rolling into town.

52. Delco was the name of a popular generator of the time, Also called a "farm" outfit, it provided 32 volts for household electric use and was intended for use in farm or rural areas. The "Delco" outfit generated power locally rather than getting it from a city or a main power grid.

53. George Larson, "Childhood in South Dakota," *Larson Roots: Memories, Myths and Folklore*, p.65. Editor's note: I included this interesting anecdote because I imagine the Larson kids enjoyed similar fun in their own barn during the fall.

54. Marie F. Larson, "A Love Story," *Larson Roots: Memories, Myths and Folklore*, p. 145. Marie was George Larson's wife.

Chapter 7

55. There are several different stories about a horse, or a team of horses, getting away from the rider, and Gust taking the horse, or horses, out in the pasture and running them around until they got too tired to cause anymore trouble. I'm still not sure if this is the case of one incident that has, with fading memories, blurred into two or three, or if, on the other hand, runaway horses were fairly common happenings on the Larson farm. I guess we'll never know.

56. This anecdote came from an interview with Darrell. My notebook includes reference to the fact that Mabel and Mayola were in the car when Bud drove it through the garage door, a fact not mentioned by Darrell during the interview.

Chapter 8

57. Wiseman, *Dakota Dateline, 1881-1956: The Story of Mount Vernon, South Dakota*, p. 48. "Flowing Artesian wells were a 'Godsend' to the pioneer. Water became the cry in the late 1890s and the flowing wells made it possible to have fresh water for the stock. It was rarely good for irrigation because it was 'hard' water."

Chapter 9

58. Christopher, ed., *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 60. Editor's note: One has to

imagine that Wayne's birth was one of the more exciting home visits that Dr. Smiley made in his career.

59. Wiseman, *Dakota Dateline, 1881-1956: The Story of Mount Vernon, South Dakota*, p. 22. "Some of the fires that have done considerable damage to Mt. Vernon are: The school house in 1917; the light plant in 1920; W. D. Anderson Mercantile Store in 1936; and Newton & Link store in 1937. A few houses were destroyed and they were called for many chimney fires."

Chapter 10

60. This is part of an Associated Press article that was reproduced in *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 63.
61. Wiseman, *Dakota Dateline 1881-1956: The Story of Mount Vernon, South Dakota*, p. 44. "Business Places in Mount Vernon, July 4, 1956. Larson's Store, Wayne and Betty Larson; Employees: William Herring, Janice Earl and Garey Stark."

Chapter 14

62. Lottie Hoefert was the daughter of Laura Hoefert, Gust's sister.
63. Obituary tribute in *Midway 1882* – 1982, p. 389.
64. I believe this may be a case where Darrell confused Gust's brother Otto with Gustava Shay's brother L. O. Larson, the one who made the trip to Tacoma on bicycle "about the turn of the century" (*Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 65). However, I suppose Otto could have done the same thing.

65. Obituary reproduced in *Midway 1882* – 1982, p. 361.

Chapter 15

66. Genevieve (Gen) Baker was Bud Larson's first wife and mother of Diane Larson, Bud's first child. Bud married Gen in 1943 and, according to my notebook, drove around the island after the wedding.
67. APO stands for Army Post Office.

Illustrations

1. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
2. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 361.
3. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 361.
4. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
5. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
6. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 360.
8. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 360.
9. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 385.
10. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 387. A handwritten note in the Midway book identifies who the individuals are in this photo. Editor's note: While I could be wrong, I believe Augusta Shay may in fact be third from the left in the top row, rather than fifth from the left as the note in the Midway book indicates. This is just my guess based on other photographs of Augusta.
12. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
13. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
16. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
19. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 48.
21. From the photo collection of Bud Larson.
25. Photo the photo collection of Scott Shay Larson
28. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 14.
29. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
30. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
31. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
34. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
36. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 17. This is a picture of a threshing rig and its crew from Letcher Township. Gust Larson is *not* shown in this picture.
38. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
40. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 11.
42. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 281. This is a picture of the Storla School in 1912, not the Bierce School, where the Larson family attended school. Presumably the Bierce School would have been very similar, if not identical, to this one-room country schoolhouse in Storla.
43. George Larson sent me this photo. A handwritten note on the back of the photo reads: "L to R: Bud, Cliff, George Larson (me) in front of

teacher, Miss Austerman. 2nd row: Last on Right, John Larson. Darell can be in this row but I can't see him. 1st row: First one is Margie. According to age and classmates, it has to be her." According to Bierce School records, this photo would have been taken during the 1927 – 1928 school year (this is the only year that Dorothea Austerman is listed as a teacher).

44. George Larson sent me this photo as well. His note on the back reads: "L to R Elephant Walk. John Larson and Darell Larson. Bud Larson and Ward Bierce. I am sure it was Bud. Clifford Loon and Orin Storla. Standing, Millard Zeal and George Larson."
46. Another photo from George Larson, who indicates in a handwritten note that Margie is fourth from the left in the front row. No other children in the picture were identified.
47. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
48. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
50. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
51. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
52. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
53. Sourced from the Internet.
54. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 93.
55. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
56. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
59. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 81
61. From the photo collection of Bud Larson.
63. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
64. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
66. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
68. Sourced from the Internet: *South Dakota State Historical Society*. This is not the Larson farm, though presumably the artesian well on Gust and Mabel's farm would have looked something like this.
71. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
73. *Midway 1882 – 1982*, p. 60.
74. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
78. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
82. Sourced from the Internet.
83. From the photo collection of Bud Larson. Although this is not one of the Larsons who went to North Dakota to work in the wheat fields

during the depression (i.e., Orlie, Bud or Bud's best friend George), the inscription beneath the photo in Bud's photo album reads: "North Dakota, about 1932 or 1933, working in the wheat fields." The person in the photo is likely one of the farm hands who worked with them.

84. Sourced from the Internet. Editor's note: While this is not a Larson in the photo, the photograph gives one an idea of how brutal the dust storms were during the depression years.
86. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
88. From the photo collection of Bud Larson.
90. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
91. From the photo collection of Bud Larson.
94. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album. This photo was one of several under the heading of "The Farm…as it is today". These photos appear to be from the 1970s or 1980s, so clearly this is not the original barn, but presumably the one that Gust built after the fire.
95. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
99. From the photo collection of Bud Larson.
100. From the photo collection of Bud Larson.
101. From the photo collection of Bud Larson.
102. Both photos from the photo collection of Bud Larson.
104. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album. I believe the other person in this photograph is Ward Bierce, but I could not confirm this.
105. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
108. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
109. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
110. Both photos from Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
112. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
113. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
114. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
115. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album. George Larson is on the far right.
117. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album. The people in this photo include relatives of Gust and Mabel's, and was taken during a family gathering to honor Gust and Mabel's 25th wedding anniversary in 1934.
120. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
121. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
123. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.

124. From the photo collection of Bud Larson.
125. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
130. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
131. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
132. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
133. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
134. From the photo collection of Bud Larson.
135. From the photo collection of Bud Larson.
137. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
138. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
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140. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
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143. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
145. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
146. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
147. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
148. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
149. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
150. From the photo collection of Bud Larson.
151. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
152. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
153. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
154. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
158. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.
159. From Mayola's Larson Family photo album.

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